

Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO
HOLDER

For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Environment & Community Services
PDS Committee on:

Date: 17th November 2020

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non- Key

Title: OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2021 – 2031.

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Chief Officer: Colin Brand, Director of Environment and Public Protection

Ward: All Wards

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Environment and Community Services Performance Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the Draft Strategy as set out in Appendix 1

And the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder is recommended to:

2.1 Endorse the full strategy as a framework for decision making in the Portfolio for period 2021-2031.

2. Reason for report

- 2.1 To provide a strategic document, that sets the context for the Council's aspirations for its Open Space Portfolio for the next 10 years. This strategy is to apply to all sites over which the council has custodianship that are maintained by its grounds maintenance service provider idverde UK and includes Council owned parks, gardens, allotment sites, cemeteries and closed churchyards.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The strategy contains provision to ensure that those who are not traditional users of Open Spaces are included within the strategy so as to ensure social cohesion and equality of opportunity. This includes the advancement of Open Space for health and well-being initiatives, the improvement of Open Space play areas and facilities so that they are inclusive of and cater for a wide range of needs, and the expansion of the outdoor educational offering across the Borough for a variety of ages, backgrounds and abilities.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. MBEB Priority: Children and Families Adults and Older People Communities and Business Safe, Clean and Green Resources and Efficiencies
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: c£6k (to facilitate the engagement process)
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks Management & Grounds Maintenance
 4. Total current budget for this head: £4.6m
 5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budget 2021/22
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
 2. Call-in: N/A
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: *Many of the proposals outlined in the Open Space Strategy, will require the correct use of the Council's Procurement procedure to ensure that consultants, contractors and providers are exposed to fair and transparent tendering or quotation.*
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The Open Space Portfolio covers a range of sites and habitats including formal and informal parks, recreation grounds, nature reserves and woodlands. Accordingly, it affects all customers, including specifically residents, businesses, visitors and tourists to the borough.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1 The Open Space Strategy is included as Appendix A and its appendices as Appendix B to this report. Both are presented in a basic designed version, with a fully designed version to be available on the Council website once endorsed.
- 3.2 A draft Open Space Strategy was considered and endorsed by the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee in August 2020. This draft strategy was produced by the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Parks Management contractor, (*idverde* UK) as required within its contract, (2019 – 2027).
- 3.3 An open consultation period followed between 12th November 2020 and 7th January 2021 in which the strategy was made publicly available and stakeholders such as residents and Parks Friends groups were given the opportunity to comment on the draft with suggestions of improvements. A total of 838 responses were received. The main observations and responses from this feedback then formed the basis for the redrafted strategy and are included in Appendix C to this report.
- 3.4 Upon completion of the redraft, key partners and stakeholders from the consultation were invited to a further engagement session facilitated by consultancy Anthesis on 7th October 2021. This session enabled Council officers to report back any changes made as a result of feedback from the original consultation to key parks and open spaces stakeholder groups. The commentary is included in Appendix D of this report.
- 3.5 Attendees to the engagement session were also able to pose questions to Council officers on the redraft of the strategy. Questions were wide ranging but focused mainly on the strategies referencing of other local and national strategies, concerns around the commercialisation of Open Space and public access to the redrafted strategy and any documents that will come from it. The feedback was then considered to determine any further amendments to the redrafted strategy. Any feedback that did not make it into the final strategy were noted as aspects to consider when putting different parts of the strategy into action through detailed delivery plans.
- 3.6 Attendees were appreciative of the opportunity to hear how the strategy had been redrafted and for the Council taking into account their comments. Many noted that they looked forward to a positive final version of the strategy covering the next 10 years in the Portfolio.

Strategy Overview

- 3.7. The strategy reflects the Council's overarching vision for the Portfolio, which is '*An Open Space Portfolio that promotes the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the borough, allowing residents, communities and wildlife to thrive*'. This is reflected within 5 Strategy objectives that set goals for achieving such a vision, and are influenced by identified baselines, any challenges facing the Council in maintaining these baselines, and the overall enhancement of the Portfolio.
- 3.8. The strategy identifies all the Portfolio sites to which the Strategy shall apply and includes proposals to improve its quality and accessibility, enhance the natural habitats and protect any cultural and historical assets within it, increase public understanding of its value, and to enhance its benefits for improved community health and wellbeing. Similarly it also seeks to enhance the Portfolio for the benefit of the local economy, including in or near to strategic town centres and via community events.

- 3.9. The strategy notes that the Council will continue to fund the ongoing maintenance and management of the Portfolio, whilst also identifying new income streams, external grant funding and commercial opportunities to allow its sensitive modernisation and enhancement. All such proposals will be delivered in conjunction with relevant friends and stakeholder groups.
- 3.10. The strategy contains Action Points and undertakings that will be subject to a monitoring framework to ensure that milestones are being met both by the Council and its principal service provider idverde UK. It also makes provision for ensuring that its focus remains relevant throughout its duration, and to ensure any socio-economic, environmental, developmental and financial changes are considered as it progresses.
- 3.11. The strategy has been designed so that it actively responds to the requirements of both national and regional legislation, whilst also being careful to align with specific Bromley context and policies, such as Making Bromley Even Better 2021-2031 and the 2020 Regeneration Strategy.
- 3.12. The strategy will require a multi-disciplinary approach for project delivery, along with the involvement of the appropriate experts, including Council officers, consultants, and service providers.

4. SUSTAINABILITY / IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 4.1 The Open Space Strategy has been designed to ensure the following sustainability features are incorporated throughout its duration:
 - Carbon Reduction and Net Zero Initiatives in the everyday management of the Portfolio.
 - Natural Capital Accounting Assessments.
 - Managing Wellbeing and Resident health using Open Space Areas.
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
 - The reduction of the use of Glyphosate across the Portfolio, with Foam Stream Application as preferred herbicide method.

5. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 5.1. Included in the Open Space Strategy document is the provision to ensure that those who are not traditional users of Open Space are included within the strategy so as to ensure social cohesion and equality of opportunity. This includes:
 - The enhancement of Open Space for improved mental and physical health benefits, including as ways to facilitate social networking between different members of the community to combat loneliness and social isolation.
 - The modernisation of the play provision within the Portfolio to include equipment that is fully inclusive and caters for a wide range of needs including those with physical disabilities and learning difficulties.
 - A diversification of sporting facilities across the Portfolio to in turn help diversify the type and number of active users that one space can accommodate.

- An enhancement, promotion and expansion of the outdoor educational offering across the borough for a variety of ages, backgrounds and abilities including those with Special Educational Needs.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Open Space Strategy 2021 -2031 supersedes the previous Parks Strategy document which covered the period from 2015 – 2019. Following approval, this would then act as a framework for all future policy documents that are derived from or link to the strategy for its duration.
- 6.2 The “Making Bromley Even Better” objectives of ‘Children and Young People’ and ‘Adults and Older People’ refers to the ability of them to be able to thrive within an environment that they are proud to call home. The objectives of ‘Business and Enterprise’ and ‘Safe, Clean and Green’ refers to the Council’s intention for its residents to live responsibly and its businesses to prosper in a safe, clean and green environment for today and a sustainable future. The objective of ‘Resources and Efficiencies’ refers to the need for the Council to manage its resources well, and provide value for money, efficient and effective services for its residents.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of the adoption of the Open Space Strategy as policy. However, many of the projects and proposals will have cost implications when they are separately considered. These schemes would be subject to external grant identification and funding applications.
- 7.2. The estimated cost of the consultant used to facilitate the engagement process is £5808 which will be funded from the service’s existing revenue budget.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is no legal requirement to acquire or maintain land, (to any specific standard) although where it is accessible to the public, then it must demonstrate adherence to the Occupiers Liability Act 1982. Where land contains wildlife, it is protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and equally many Open Space sites have statutory responsibilities placed upon them.
- 8.2. Section 111 of the Local Government Act gives a local authority power to do anything calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.
- 8.3. Furthermore, under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Many of the proposals outlined in the Open Space Strategy, will require the correct use of the Council’s Procurement procedure to ensure that consultants, contractors and providers are exposed to fair and transparent tendering or quotation. In accordance with CPR 2.1.2, Officers must take all necessary professional advice.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Report No ES20027. Draft Parks and Green Space Strategy 2020 – 2025. Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2015-2019.

	Net Zero Action Plan and associated Year 1 and year 2 Performance Reports.
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