

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND  
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

REVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report introduces the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013 – 2018. This replaces the previous strategy following a comprehensive review and update which explores its effectiveness and revises its direction of travel for the next five years.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</u></b> <b>That:</b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>The Committee scrutinise and comment upon the Draft Strategy prior to publication for external consultation.</b>
<b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE: That:</u></b>	
<b>(B)</b>	<b>The Draft Strategy be approved for public consultation.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 The original Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007-2012 formed the policy framework under which Parks Management Plans for individual sites have been developed and consulted upon. Following an extensive consultation process it defined the key objectives relating to the management and development of the Council's open spaces.

1.2 The original strategy was first presented to the (former) Policy Development Scrutiny Committee for comment and consideration

on 20 March 2007. Subsequently the Strategy was open to public consultation during July 2007 prior to its adoption.

- 1.3 Results and achievements against the previous strategy were reported to the Environment Scrutiny on 13 September 2011 and it was agreed that it should be reviewed and an updated draft that was appropriate for the next 5 years brought forward.
- 1.4 Officers have consulted internally with those departments which affect the delivery of the revised strategy and who have shared interests in the outcomes.
- 1.5 The Draft Strategy will be submitted to the Executive for approval for public consultation on 5 March 2013. It will be published on the Council's web site and circulated by email to external stakeholders including "Friends of" groups for consideration and comment. This part of the consultation process will be open for a period of 4 to 6 weeks. Following consultation the Strategy will be considered by the Executive and Council for final approval in summer 2013.
- 1.6 Residents will be asked to focus their feedback on three main areas:
  - Does the strategy cover the key areas relating to open spaces that they feel are important?
  - Is the strategy sufficiently inclusive?
  - Are the objectives appropriate to meet the identified needs?

## 2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013-18 has been reviewed and developed to set out the policy framework for the parks and open spaces owned and managed by East Herts Council for the next five years. Green spaces represent one of the things that are best about East Herts and are consistently seen as important by our customers. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that parks and open spaces, as a valuable natural resource, are managed and developed in a responsible and effective way.
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out aims and objectives within a framework that considers:
  - The wider context
  - The vision for parks and open spaces provision
  - An overview of existing provision in East Herts

- What is our strategy aiming to achieve?
- Our commitment

2.3 The document recognises that parks and open spaces serve different needs and groups and aims to deliver quality and accessible services described in the context of:

- Parks for people
- Parks for recreation and enjoyment
- Parks for wildlife, conservation and heritage

2.4 The resultant draft strategy considers the needs of our customers and how the asset of open space can deliver an important contribution to enhancing health and wellbeing. This aspiration has been realised in a number of ways during the previous 5 year plan. Our experience from delivering a high standard of maintenance along with successive improvements shapes the ongoing strategy. Our parks are under various pressures relating for example to the need for us to:

- protect their natural beauty
- conserve their importance for wildlife and the environment
- provide outlets for leisure and play
- control anti social behaviour and
- rise to the challenge of the current economic climate

The strategy considers these and other pressures and provides a balanced way forward for the next five years.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

### Background Papers

Report to Policy Development Scrutiny Committee - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Green Flag Award accreditation - 20 March 2007

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=3363> Item 8

Report to Executive - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 and status report on current projects - 4 September 2007

<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeed=119&MeetingId=518&DF=04%2f09%2f2007&Ver=2> Item 8

Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee - Parks and Open Spaces  
Development Programme – Progress Report – 13 September 2011  
[http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1404  
&Ver=4](http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1404&Ver=4) Item 282

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