



## Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

**Report of:** Richard Webb and Simon Green

**Subject:** LAND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN HRA

**Author of Report:** Janet Sharpe, Interim Director of Housing and Paul Billington, Director of Culture & Environment

### Summary:

This report confirms detailed work that has recently commenced between the Communities and Place portfolio to look at future land responsibility and management arrangements within the Council. This draft project is at an early stage and any recommendations will be subject to more detailed consultation with Cabinet members. This project will also incorporate a number of core principles.

1. Positive outcome for tenants and residents
2. Consultation with tenants and residents on future proposals
3. To improve the quality of green-space management
4. Seek ways of maximising efficiency and effectiveness in the way the Council maintains open space

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Reviewing of existing policy              |   |
| Informing the development of new policy   |   |
| Statutory consultation                    |   |
| Performance/budget monitoring report      |   |
| Cabinet request for scrutiny              |   |
| Full Council request for scrutiny         |   |
| Community Assembly request for scrutiny   |   |
| Call-in of Cabinet decision               |   |
| Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee | ✓ |
| Other                                     |   |

### The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Approve the formation of a project to look at Council owned land across the city.

### Background Papers:

There are no background papers.

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **Background:**

Sheffield is the most geographically diverse city in England and built on a number of hillsides making it an attractive city. It is approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> urban, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> rural and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its land within the Peak District. Sheffield also has more trees per person than any other city in Europe making it an attractive 'green' city where trees outnumber people 4 to 1. It also has:

- Over 170 woodlands covering 6,985 acres (28.27km<sup>2</sup>)
- 78 public parks covering 4,522 acres (18.30km<sup>2</sup>)
- 10 public gardens
- 33,275 acres of national park areas (134.66km<sup>2</sup>)
- 2,686 acres of water (10.87km<sup>2</sup>)

Approximately 61% of the total land area that the city encompasses is green space. A significant proportion of land in Sheffield still remains in Council ownership and is maintained each year from funding from the Council's own resources, mainly general fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Over the last 50+ years Council land has been divided up and managed within Council individual portfolios and based on old historic agreements. This makes having a consistent maintenance standard difficult to achieve and communicate to customers in the city.

The Housing Service re-joined Sheffield City Council in April 2013 and detailed work has taken place to develop a 30 year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to ensure that all housing, community assets and land is well maintained over the next 30 years. As part of this work an audit of land that sits within the HRA is required to make sure that the general fund is not subsidising the HRA and vice versa.

Discussions have taken place at the Great Place to Live (GPL) Strategic Outcome Board as part of the review of budgets for future years to agree a consistent maintenance standard for open space, parks and, highways which will also take on board any outcomes from the HRA audit.

## **Future Maintenance**

Over the years pockets of land have been in a number of portfolios. As part of the Future of Council Housing Project during 2013 a number of Service Design Project Groups were established with tenants, leaseholders and officers to develop a vision for the city for each service area within the Housing and Neighbourhood Service. The 'Greener, Cleaner, Safer Group' recommended that this mapping exercise takes place and a consistent standard for the maintenance of Council land is considered. This would also enable tenants to have a greater say in the management of all the green open space funded from the HRA within their neighbourhoods and improve customer satisfaction, value for money but also what a single green 'operating model' to manage the Council's open space would look like for customers.

## Project Proposal:

A draft project brief has been agreed between the Communities and Place portfolios to carry out a review of land management arrangements and a project group made of officers from both portfolios has been established.

The Project Group will comprise of:

| <b>Communities Portfolio</b> | <b>Place Portfolio</b>  |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jayne Foulds                 | David Hargate           |
| Mark Cowley                  | Ian Turner              |
| Zoe Barlow                   |                         |
| Liam Duggan                  |                         |
|                              |                         |
| <b>Project Sponsor:</b>      | <b>Project Sponsor:</b> |
| Janet Sharpe                 | Paul Billington         |

The project will initially look at around 400 Housing Sites where land sits in or has the potential to be managed in future from the HRA:

This land has been categorised into the following:

- All the sites form part of the local environment for housing areas and form part of the natural infrastructure and/ or, the majority of people who benefit from the sites are tenants or leaseholders of Council Housing
- Each site will be measured to quantify the approximate percentage of Council Housing in the catchment for each site
- Sites that form part of a larger site that has a greater catchment will be excluded
- Identification of any site that does not have Council housing nearby but is being managed from within the HRA

**Project timescale and next steps:**

- It is estimated that the project will complete in January 2014 with recommendations to Cabinet members by the end of the financial year and if required will be presented to the Council's Cabinet meeting in June 2014.

**Janet Sharpe**  
**Interim Director of Housing Service**

**Paul Billington**  
**Director of Culture &  
Environment**

**21 November 2013**