



**Author/Lead Officer of Report: Lisa Firth** Parks and Countryside Service

**Tel:** 2500500

**Report of:** Laraine Manley, Executive Director, Place  
**Report to:** Cabinet Meeting  
**Date of Decision:** 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018  
**Subject:** Building Better Parks Strategy

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:- Yes  No   
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000   
- Affects 2 or more Wards

Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? Culture, Parks and Leisure  
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? Economic and Environmental Well Being

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken? Yes  No   
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? **384**

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes  No   
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

**Purpose of Report:**

*(Outline the decision being sought or proposal being recommended for approval.)*  
The report seeks agreement for the Parks and Countryside Service Building Better Parks Strategy. The Strategy is intended to be used as a framework for decision making to assist with maximising the benefits derived from our land and property portfolio.

## **Recommendations**

- Approve the Parks and Countryside 'Building Better Parks Strategy' report to establish the strategic framework which will guide decision making on the use and management of the Parks and Countryside Service land and property portfolio.

## **Background Papers:**

*(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)*

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Paul Schofield
		Legal: Nadine Wynter
		Equalities: <i>Beth Storm/Annemarie Johnson</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	<b>EMT member who approved submission:</b>	<i>Laraine Manley</i>
3	<b>Cabinet Member consulted:</b>	<i>Mary Lea</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> Lisa Firth	<b>Job Title:</b> Head of Parks and Countryside
	<b>Date: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018</b>	

## 1. PROPOSAL

*(Explain the proposal, current position and need for change, including any evidence considered, and indicate whether this is something the Council is legally required to do, or whether it is something it is choosing to do)*

### 1.1 Background

- Comparisons with other core cities show there is a need to invest further into the management and maintenance of the cities' Parks and Green Spaces. Whilst the council recognises this link, and has committed to improving the facilities in parks to enhance the quality of life of people living and working within the city, it accepts this requires substantial financial investment.
- The city's Parks and Green Spaces are part of what makes Sheffield a great place to live. We are one of the greenest cities in the UK with 74 public parks and hundreds of local green spaces knitted into communities across the city. We are also the only major UK city with a national park within its boundaries.
- The parks not only make a major contribution to people's health, they also provide places that bring people together, act as the focus for community activity and improve the look and feel of an area, making it a more attractive place to live, work, invest or study.
- The government has estimated that if everyone in the UK had sufficient access to parks, the health benefits would save the NHS over £2bn per year. What's more, the World Health Organisation states that the health and social benefits of parks are greatest for people living in deprived areas and the National Children's Bureau estimates that children in deprived areas are nine times less likely to have access to green space and play spaces.
- A 2016 study in Sheffield attempted a 'capital accounting' view of the overall economic, social and environmental value of the public parks and green space. The study identified a cost/benefit return of £34:1 on parks and that Sheffield's parks have a combined asset value of around £1.2 billion (based on the contribution of parks to the asset value of residential property).
- In Sheffield, the public are vocal and active in their support for parks. This is then reflected in the postbags and priorities of the city's councillors and MPs. There is a consensus across the political parties on the importance of parks and the need to sustain and invest in them for current and future generations.

- However, the city council is sole investor in the day to day running costs of our parks. Despite the brilliant work of volunteers and friends groups across the city, the council's resources are vital to the future upkeep and development of the city's green spaces. The council's budget has faced unprecedented cuts over recent years with continuing and growing pressures in the years to come.
- The council's Parks and Countryside (P&C) budget has had to shoulder a share of the cuts, whilst attempting to protect core funding and basic service standards. In the last 5 years, the P&C budget has faced a 30% reduction which has been offset as far as possible by protecting frontline staff numbers and increasing income alongside management savings. The current net spend on parks by the council is c. £3m (excluding public realm/housing and woodlands)).
- Customer feedback shows there is an increase in public satisfaction with the general quality of Sheffield's Parks and Green Spaces, and there is now a significant amount of academic research to support the link between good quality Green Space and improved Health and Wellbeing. However, there is also an increase in the number of sites that require significant investment to achieve and maintain the Sheffield Standard Assessment.

## 1.2 Proposal

- The purpose of this report is to set out an investment proposal for our green spaces for the next five years that seeks to sustain and improve them, especially in the city's areas of greatest health inequality where the health benefits of parks are the greatest.
- How the Council uses its land and property assets has a vital role in supporting the changes and developments that communities want to see across the city's green spaces, through providing spaces for businesses and local groups to develop and thrive, making land and property available for new homes or businesses; or disposing of low recreational value land or property to generate new income.
- Therefore, there is an opportunity to make a change that demonstrates both ambition and showcases the possibilities for Parks and Countryside across the City. We want to use our assets to enable positive social and economic outcomes whilst delivering a better service. It is therefore essential that assets within the Parks and Countryside Service are managed strategically.
- In delivering the Building Better Parks Strategy, we will be aligning to the Corporate Land and Property Plan principles, in that we recognise that each land and property asset within the Parks and

Countryside Service Portfolio is potentially unique, diverse and we will be putting in place a robust assessment criteria and checklist for each proposal. Our approach, therefore, needs to be flexible.

- Our parks will need to maximise investment and optimise income if they are to navigate the council's continuing budget pressures. The overall approach to investment in our parks will be based on the following key proposals to generate new investment for parks and green spaces for the period 2018 – 2023.
  - £900k S106 (secured).
  - £2.0m Public Health Funding 2018-2023, which includes an amount of £800k already committed for 2018/19 and 2019/20 plus a further £1.2m commitment for the three years from 2020-2023. (subject to budget approval).
  - £3.1m from HLF for Sheffield General Cemetery (secured – with requirement for agreed match funding from SCC).
  - £900k New capital grants to organisations such as HLF and sport governing bodies (or similar) (prospective).
  - Grow Revenue Income: £1m other revenue investment from this and other projects. This revenue income target is a best estimate of the amount that can be generated within the service from growing income in areas such as new sponsorships / income from cafes and concessions / ancillary offers such as adventure play facilities.
  - Any additional revenue income would form part of the overall budget process, and would therefore be subject to both Corporate Finance and Member approval.

#### 1.21 Grow Revenue Income

- The Parks and Countryside Service already generates c. £1.8m revenue income from a combination of sponsorship, leases, car parking income and fees and charges. We do not propose a step change in the 'commercialisation' of our parks given that maintaining the balance between peace and tranquillity and income generating activity is vital. However, we will selectively seek out and secure appropriate increases in income; for example more and better catering opportunities; increased social value initiatives through complementary sponsorship and new franchises and activities/events. It is estimated that an additional £1m revenue will be generated over the coming 5 years and this will be reinvested to protect the service from further cuts in core council funding and to improve services.
- The proposal will increase income from commercial lettings as part of its income growth strategy with the intention of attracting local, regional and national investors to the city which, in turn, will contribute to easing budgetary pressures by reducing the Council's overall costs for delivering the Parks and Countryside

Service.

## 1.22 Partnership and Volunteering

- The P&C Service has a proud record of working with local people; sports clubs; friends groups, trusts and many others. These relationships range from simply working together on a maintenance project through to leases and joint funding, such as the recently opened skate park in Grenoside. The council enjoys positive relationships with parks friends groups across the city and many of these groups now work together as a single forum, sharing expertise and ideas and seeking funding. In particular the forum is working with the council to attempt to address the disparity in resources faced by friends groups in the more disadvantaged parts of the city.
- At the same time, the council is constantly seeking new partners to invest and/or operate services resulting in greater quality and participation. There are many examples of this including Handsworth Sporting Club at Oliver's Mount, Hillsborough Sports Association in Hillsborough Park, management agreements with Sheffield Wildlife Trust and most recently capital investment from the Lawn Tennis Association in parks' tennis and the introduction of a specialist operator who now runs low cost tennis participation and coaching programmes as a concession arrangement bringing income into the city.
- Whilst much has already been done, the financial pressures on the council are such that more partnerships will be needed in future to build as the council is required increasingly to focus on core maintenance.
- However, all partnerships must be guided by the following principles:-
  - Affordable public access.
  - Addressing inequalities and promoting activity and participation in our most deprived communities.
  - The council maintaining policy and asset control.
  - Improving quality across all our facilities – in all areas of the city.
  - Seeking and supporting partnerships that are aligned with the council's priorities and values.
  - Ensuring potential partners are viable and sustainable.

## 1.2.3 Reinvestment Criteria (Leases and Licences)

- The Council's P&C Service manages over 500 greenspaces in the city. The demand for these spaces and the facilities within them is constantly changing. Some assets remain vital such as footpaths, play facilities and natural features such as woodland. However,

over time, other aspects of our parks become under-utilised or unsustainable or indeed new uses become more relevant. Whilst the council proposes changes of use only rarely, such changes can improve the use of the park and/or provide a source of new investment for improving the park or the wider parks service.

- Therefore common sense dictates that changes that lead to improvement and/or reinvestment should be considered by the council as part of its wider approach to parks investment. However, this should be done within a transparent and rigorous framework and in line with the council's wider Asset Management Strategy, following the Reinvestment Decision Making Process and include an evidence based assessment of each proposal. (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

*(Explain how this proposal will contribute to the ambitions within the Corporate Plan and what it will mean for people who live, work, learn in or visit the City. For example, does it increase or reduce inequalities and is the decision inclusive?; does it have an impact on climate change?; does it improve the customer experience?; is there an economic impact?)*

- 2.1 The Building Better Parks Strategy contributes to the Sheffield City Council Corporate Plans' ambitions for a strong economy, thriving neighbourhoods and communities and better health and wellbeing.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

*(Refer to the Consultation Principles and Involvement Guide. Indicate whether the Council is required to consult on the proposal, and provide details of any consultation activities undertaken and their outcomes.)*

### **3.1 Consultation**

- The Parks & Countryside's Senior Management Team have undertaken a mapping exercise to identify existing stakeholder groups. Parks and Countryside have voluntarily carried out an informal consultation with the Friends of Groups at a recent Parks Forum meeting and feedback welcomed. These groups are volunteers who work in partnership with our service to raise the profile of sites, carry out fund raising, hold community events, and encourage volunteers (not limited to). Attendees of the forum supported the proposals and positive verbal feedback was noted.
- There has been a positive response through consultation with Friends Groups, existing park café owners and activity operators.
- Further Internal consultation across the Council has been undertaken with our portfolio Cabinet Member Mary Lea and her Working Policy Group, Procurement, Corporate Property,



Business Sheffield, Planning & Development Services, Legal Services, Licensing, Place Leadership Team and the Labour Group.

- Further consultation will be undertaken on a site by site basis as required as proposals are received.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

##### **4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications**

- 4.1.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed. Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative equality impacts arising from this proposal.

##### **4.2 Financial/Commercial Implications**

- 4.2.1 The income generated by the Building Better Parks Strategy will be the Parks and Countryside Service's reinvestment proposal for our green spaces over the next five years and will seek to sustain, improve and protect the service from further cuts in core council funding. Any capital receipts will continue to be deposited in the council's Growth & Investment fund, thus contributing to the wider council budget.

- 4.2.2 The purpose of this paper is to set out the strategy for the development of Parks. Specific proposals to deliver the strategy will be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the specific financial and commercial implications will be considered fully at that time.

- 4.2.3 Any Procurement that arises from the delivery of the Strategy will comply with the relevant EU and UK procurement law and the Council's own standing orders.

##### **4.3 Legal Implications**

###### **4.3.1**

Local authorities have a number of different statutory powers in relation to parks and green spaces, including the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which gives wide powers to provide recreational facilities. The 1976 Act also permits the Council to make recreational facilities available for use by such persons as the authority thinks fit either without charge or on payment of such charges as the authority thinks fit, which includes:

- (a) indoor facilities consisting of sports centres, swimming pools, skating rinks, tennis, squash and badminton courts, bowling centres,

dance studios and riding schools; .  
(b) outdoor facilities consisting of pitches for team games, athletics grounds, swimming pools, tennis courts, cycle tracks, golf courses, bowling greens, riding schools, camp sites and facilities for gliding; .  
(c) facilities for boating and water ski-ing on inland and coastal waters and for fishing in such waters;  
(d) premises for the use of clubs or societies having athletic, social or recreational objects;  
(e) staff, including instructors, in connection with any such facilities or premises as are mentioned in the preceding paragraphs and in connection with any other recreational facilities provided by the authority;  
(f) such facilities in connection with any other recreational facilities as the authority considers it appropriate to provide including, without prejudice to the generality of the preceding provisions of this paragraph, facilities by way of parking spaces and places at which food, drink and tobacco may be bought from the authority or another person.

4.3.2 Subject to advice from the Chief Property Officer, potential lease agreements will be a mixture of one year licence agreements to long term leases depending on investment. These agreements will be submitted to the Council's Legal Services to complete the relevant documentation and any charitable sites proposals, not subject to the Council's powers as Charity Trustee, will be submitted to the charity commission via a scheme.

4.3.3 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The implementation of any of the proposals arising from implementation of the Strategy may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the legal implications will be considered fully at that time.

4.4 Other Implications  
*(Refer to the Executive decision making guidance and provide details of all relevant implications, e.g. HR, property, public health).*

4.4.1 Property Implications:

All proposals for lease and partnership arrangements will be developed with input from Property Services.

4.4.2 Human Resources

No Human Resources Implications.

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

*(Outline any alternative options which were considered but rejected in the course of developing the proposal.)*

- 5.1 The alternative option would be to do nothing. This would impact on the opportunity of investment, potential revenue income and improving the customer experience within Parks and Open Spaces. This would also lead to a significant decrease in public satisfaction with the general quality of Sheffield's Parks and Green Spaces and will affect the opportunity for Sheffield's Parks to be a major contributory factor to people's health, providing places that bring people together and act as the focus for community activity. It will also have a negative effect on the look and feel of an area, making it a less attractive place to live, work, invest or study.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

*(Explain why this is the preferred option and outline the intended outcomes.)*

- This preferred option means that the Parks and Countryside Service can develop a new strategic approach which will deliver investment proposals for our green spaces for the next five years. The Strategy will seek to sustain and improve our green spaces, especially in the city's areas of greatest health inequality.
- The preferred option will improve facilities; allow Parks and Countryside to engage with new business partners to secure new business opportunities, generate much needed income to sustain the Service whilst also securing investment for underutilised land and property, all subject to Legal Services, Corporate Property, Procurement, Business Sheffield, Licensing and Planning guidance.
- There is an opportunity to make a change that demonstrates both ambition and showcases the possibilities for Parks and Countryside land and property.
- There is an opportunity to encourage organisations to exercise their social value, through sponsorship, by investing in under-utilised parks by providing new assets. Private and Third Sector organisations will be invited to further generate income through the sponsorship of existing assets.
- We also want to use our assets to enable positive social and economic outcomes whilst delivering a better service. It is therefore essential that the Parks and Countryside Service adopts a strategic approach to the management of its assets



## **Appendix 1:**

### **Decision Making Process**

#### **Stage 1:**

Assess proposal against Reinvestment Assessment Criteria

#### **Stage 2:**

Consultation with key stakeholders: Local Councillors, Friends Groups, Sports Clubs, Park Users and the wider community

#### **Stage 3**

Discuss with SCC Property Services, Planning and Legal Services and undertake further work to establish the realistic potential and options.

#### **Stage 4:**

Authority to Progress: Agree with Parks and Countryside Senior Management Team / Cabinet Member/Members

#### **Stage 5:**

Property Services to formally inform Members, Parish Councils and other consultees of intended proposal

#### **Stage 6:**

No objections from Members/Parish Councils or other consultees. Proceed under delegated powers of the Head of Parks and Countryside Service or Head of Property Services or Cabinet Approval.

Note: To proceed under the appropriate and relevant scheme of delegation

## Appendix 2

### Assessment Criteria

1. Will the proposal have recreational or non-recreational benefits? If the benefits are non-recreational, do they still benefit the wider goals of the park (for example, a broader leisure use which is generally sympathetic to the park and its users)?
2. Is the site charitable – if so, any change must benefit the park (charity) directly and contribute to the park's charitable objectives. Consultation with the Charity Commission may also be required.
3. Do the benefits to the park outweigh any potential loss of green space and if so, how? If not, does sharing the benefit amongst other parks outweigh the loss of space?
4. Is the site a designated Field in Trust, Statutory Allotment or Village Green?
5. How much other public open space is there in the area? Has the open space assessment data been reviewed? If there is insufficient open space, then the presumption will be against the loss of any further space
6. Has any consultation been carried out with key stakeholders, including, for instance, local councillors, parks friends groups, sports clubs, park users and the wider community?
7. Are there any equalities issues resulting from the proposed change i.e. are any particular groups disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged? An Equality Impact Assessment should be carried out.
8. How does the proposal fit with the wider policies for parks and other council policies such as the Corporate Asset Management Plan, Public Health Policy and Safeguarding principles?
9. Have relevant council departments been consulted to ensure a holistic approach is being considered for the green space?
10. Is there a better alternative proposal that would offer greater benefit and/or is maintaining the status quo the best option?
11. Are special conditions required for inclusion in the lease / licence that restrict or encourage particular usage of the space?
12. Each proposal will require a business case in terms of resources needed and future sustainability.