

Report for: Environment and Community Safety Panel 3rd November 2020

Title: Parks and Greenspace Strategy, “People need Parks” update

**Report
authorised
by :**

Stephen McDonnell: Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods

Lead

Officer: Simon Farrow: Head of Parks and Leisure (Interim)

Ward(s)

affected: ALL

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The council made a commitment in the borough plan 2019-2023 to develop a new Parks and Greenspaces Strategy for the borough to guide the development, management and use of parks and greenspaces over the next 15 years.
- 1.2. A significant amount of research, engagement with partners and colleagues and initial drafting has been completed. Although the timetable this year has been impacted by COVID-19 as officers were diverted to other activities to keep people safe in parks and respond to the government directions to close facilities and implement social distancing.
- 1.3. This update will provide some insight into the emerging issues from the work completed to date and provide a timeline for the next stages.

2. Background

- 2.1. The current Strategy was developed in 2005 and much has occurred since; austerity, climate change, COVID-19. The role of parks has become more obviously important whilst direct funding has decreased significantly. Although the service has benefited from being able to generate alternative sources of income. There is a need to update the role of parks in meeting the needs of Haringey's residents, business, and workers.

3. What is the Strategy for?

- Define how parks can contribute to the wider needs of Haringey based upon the identification of current and future needs.
- Set out what the Council intends to do and the roles of other organisations in contributing to meeting Strategy outcomes.
- How the Strategy will be funded and implemented.
- Will steer the development, management, funding and investment within Haringey's parks and green spaces over the next 15 years.
- Supporting the Local Plan

4. Key Outcomes of the Strategy

- That residents' lives are being improved by access to quality parks and greenspace.
- Communities take an active role in the decisions about the future of parks and green spaces.
- Civic pride and community ownership of parks are encouraged through a diverse range of volunteering opportunities.
- A diverse range of events is offered, providing a backdrop for communities to celebrate together and enhance the boroughs cultural offer.
- Wildlife flourishes and habitats are maintained, expanded, and connected.
- Parks are contributing to carbon reduction and climate change.
- Spaces are protected and future proofed for the next generation.
- Funding for parks is sustainable and sufficient to deliver the agreed service standards.
- Full advantage is taken of the health and wellbeing benefits.

5. Core Ingredients

5.1. The overarching strategy will be supported by a range of plans that exist both in the own right and contribute to the overarching strategy contents and outcomes. The plans that are being prepared are as follows:-

- Biodiversity action plan
- Trees and woodlands plan
- Asset management plan
- Watercourse and flood management plan.
- Volunteer and community engagement plan
- Parks Workforce development plan
- Natural Capital Account
- Health Strategy
- Accessibility study
- Funding Plan - the future funding of revenue and capital expenditure needs
- A five-year action plan, plus medium- and long-term action plans

5.2. The strategy will also be supported by several policy documents and a new set of service standards. Policy documents on:-

- Food Growing
- Dog control
- Licensed activities
- Park Safety
- Enforcement
- Barbecues
- Waste Management
- Herbicides
- Sustainable design and planting

- Project development and prioritisation

5.3. Service Standards for the four different types of parks and green space

- District parks (3 parks)
- Local parks and gardens (17 parks)
- Small parks and gardens (35 parks)
- Other green space (circa 100)

6. **Key Emerging Issues**

6.1. Ability of parks and green spaces to meet Council outcomes for health and equality

- Strong link between health needs and equalities
- In part this is an access issue with open space deficiencies prominent in the east/coupled with less gardens/more apartments
- Service role is currently based on providing the facility (parks) with limited capacity to enable direct engagement/service development with key target groups.
- Parks currently working with Physical Activity Group on Pilot Projects to be based at Lordship Rec and Albert Road and focused on usage by older people. Is sponsored by CCG and supported by PH and Adults.
- Will look at both facilities and activities with support through wider health resources from buddies.
- Partnerships like this will be critical for improving health and equality outcomes
- Will also look at marketing and comms aspects
- Parks expectation is of need being confirmed for additional funding on entrances, pathways, lighting and toilets

6.2. Climate Emergency

- Hotter and wetter!
- Shade, drainage, planting sustainability being addressed through AMP
- Increased usage impact on natural environment
- Exploring potential to create new habitat through housing open space and highways verges
- Species loss, failure to protect Biodiversity
- Funding identified for fleet renewal and making buildings more energy efficient
- Have considered the option of carbon neutral parks service
- Potential to build partnerships with community for tree care, habitat capture and reporting

6.3. Waste/litter

- Estimated annual spend of £0.5m against context of -£25k subsidy from LBH
- Exacerbated by COVID because of increased use and changing use towards more informal social gatherings involving food and alcohol.

- Would like to aspire to “Zero waste” left in parks in the knowledge that this is not achievable!
- Savings could be reinvested in on site rangers in line with public feedback
- Limited examples of the “Zero waste” approach from elsewhere and will require its own dedicated project
- Potential for positive community involvement via Community/family litter pick days and local press and social media

6.4. Changing usage/users throwing up new challenges (e.g. unauthorised music events)

- Waste and litter (London Fields £100k clean-up bill)
- Drugs
- Off putting for other users who may have more urgent needs to use parks
- Health and safety issues
- Cost implications from seeking to prevent/enforcement
- Service is struggling to engage with/find the resources to engage with this issue

6.5. Enforcement

- Range of issues that require enforcement
- Litter, dog walking (and excrement), personal trainers, usage by schools, unlicensed music, barbecues, drug dealing.
- Seeking to regularise through policies
- Will need to also review Parks’ Bye Laws

6.6. Stakeholder engagement (internal and external stakeholders)

- Some very positive developments across the Council for inter service working and for parks with Planning, Regen and Climate Emergency
- Also, very encouraging to witness the current interest being taken by health colleagues in parks
- Engagement with Friends groups and Friends Forum is currently adequate/weak with mixed commitment towards engagement in different parts of the service. Proposal is to agree engagement with Friends groups via MOU’s
- As referred to previously, v limited capacity/activity for engagement with communities whose voices are seldom heard. Currently exploring options to address this.

6.7. Poor (Council) service marketing/comms about using and use of the service

- People are using parks as customers. Are we informing them about what is on offer to encourage their use?
- We could benefit from working with the Community to protect and safeguard our open space assets from anti-social use and illegal use.
- “Keep Haringey’s Parks tidy!”

- The Council needs to generate more income. Part of being able to achieve more income whilst mitigating opposition requires letting residents know that the Council needs to do this and why.

7. Timetable

- Lead Member Briefings October to December 2020
- Health and Wellbeing Board – November 2020
- Members Steering Group being established in November 2020 and then ongoing
- All plans and policies in draft form for February 2021
- Cabinet to consider key issue report and seek approval to go to formal consultation March 2021
- Public and Partner consultation – June to September 2021
- Finalisation of strategy, supporting plans and policies December 2021
- Cabinet approval of Strategy and supporting plans and policies February 2022
- Launch of Strategy February 2022