

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
12TH APRIL 2005

EXECUTIVE – 18TH APRIL 2005

Report by the Director of Leisure and Amenity Services on a Management Strategy for the Parks,
Commons and Open Spaces managed by the Parks Service.

SUMMARY

This report provides information on the results of consultation on the draft management strategy for the parks, commons and open spaces managed by the Council's Parks Service. A wide range of responses was received from members of the public and local organisations and these have been included in the final draft of the Parks Management Strategy where applicable. The strategy clarifies service objectives and priorities, and identifies plans for the production of detailed management plans for all open spaces managed by the Parks Service. The five-year action plan for the management plans and function reviews will support the management, conservation and improvement of all parks, commons, cemeteries and open spaces managed by the Parks Service.

1. **Recommendations.** The Environment and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on the report, these will be reported to the Executive for its consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended to approve the final version of the Parks Management Strategy and the five year action plan as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to this report.

The Parks Management Strategy

4. **Introduction.** The draft Parks Management Strategy was reported to Committee in Paper No. 04-651, which outlined a programme of public consultation on the content of the Strategy. This paper summarises the responses to that consultation process, and proposes a final version of the Parks Management Strategy and five-year action plan for the Service. The Parks Management Strategy and five-year action plan incorporate the results of the consultation and are attached as Appendices 1 and 2.
5. **Consultation.** In November 2004, the Parks Service published a document summarising the draft Parks Management Strategy and a questionnaire seeking comments on the draft. The draft strategy was covered in the November 2004 edition of Brightside and residents were encouraged to write in for the consultation document. In January 2005, the consultation document was mailed to 600 households which have been actively involved in parks related issues in the recent past including the Friends of Battersea Park; committee members of the Management Advisory Committees for the Commons; and allotment plot managers. It was also made available on the Council's website and 1000 summary documents were distributed via the libraries and facilities within parks and open spaces such as cafes. Posters highlighting the consultation process were displayed at the entrances to parks and open spaces.
6. The draft Parks Strategy was formed around ten strategic aims that underpin the Green Flag Award Criteria for judging excellence in Parks. Respondents were asked to comment on these aims and to place them in order of priority.
7. A total of 188 responses from individuals and 13 responses from local organisations were received. Of the individual responses, most respondents supported the strategic aims but some highlighted concerns. Interestingly these concerns and priorities were very similar to a public consultation exercise conducted in June 2003 when 1000 residents were questioned, of whom 88% were users of open spaces in the Borough.
8. The most important of these (cited by 24% of respondents) was a lack of involvement of the community and park users in delivering work in parks.....Comments included 'community should be actively involved in this;' 'volunteers could assist in achieving this aim;' 'mobilising volunteers would encourage greater involvement of the community and contribution to their health,' 'as long as all sections of the community are involved, not just the most vocal; 'minority groups and disadvantaged people need to be heard as well.'
9. The second most important issue (23% of comments) concerned cycling within parks. There were views both supportive of and opposed to cycling expressed and a clear desire to see cycling byelaws rationalised. Statements included: 'older people do not feel safe if cyclists are permitted to use the same paths;' and 'allow and encourage people to cycle in the parks - this brings better health, and more considerate cycling'.
10. Eleven percent of respondents referred to the provision within parks for young people and children. Comments included: 'youths as an age group are not currently well provided for in park;' 'the priority should be to encourage responsible use of open spaces by young people'; and 'more Nature Study Centre type places for children would encourage visits and promote education'.

11. Fourteen percent requested a greater visibility or greater presence of Parks Police and community support officers. Remarks included: ‘you need more parks police patrolling’; and ‘uniformed presence only way to achieve a better feeling of safety.’ .
12. Thirteen percent of comments indicated more emphasis was needed on the environment, including: ‘biodiversity is important;’ ‘much thought needed on sustainable practices;’ and ‘much more thought given to biodiversity and wildlife habitats.’ Several respondents requested the inclusion of a reference specifically to biodiversity within the Parks management strategy.
13. **Local Organisations**. The responses from local organisations were varied and included some long and detailed responses. Copies of these are in the Members Room. Short summaries of each response are detailed below:
 - (a) West London River Group wholeheartedly supported the ten aims but expressed concern about the absence of direct reference to the River Thames and other waterways and water bodies within Wandsworth. These “bring environmental, social, visual and psychological/spiritual benefits which mere land-bound open space cannot”.
 - (b) Wandsworth Environment Forum acknowledged the good work and achievements of the Parks Service to date and supported the development of a five-year plan. They agreed with the aim of meeting the accreditation requirements of the Green Flag Awards and encouraged the Parks Service to work towards exceeding these criteria wherever possible. Comments on specific aims have been included in the final strategy.
 - (c) Green Vale Society considered that there should be a direct reference to allotments and asked that they be properly recognised as a valuable “green” contributor to life in urban areas. The group agreed with aims 5,6,7 and 8, and suggest that funding be allocated to improve infrastructure and amenities on allotment sites. They noted that open spaces can serve to relieve the stresses and strains of urban living and can help to develop a better sense of well being for its citizens.
 - (d) Roehampton Garden Society approved of the mention of allotments in the introductory paragraph. They noted that allotments contribute to all ten aims but particularly fulfil the aim “to provide open spaces which contribute to the health and well being of all who use them”. Their response underlines that working on an allotment provides the opportunity for exercise, the growing of unpolluted fruit and vegetables and relaxation in the open air.
 - (e) Battersea Society welcomed the consultation process and welcomed the five-year plan for open spaces in Wandsworth. The Society noted four issues of particular concern to them: the omission of mention of the open space along the River Thames; the limited mention of wildlife; the “silent selling” of public spaces for the use of corporate organisations; and the overuse of Battersea Park. The Society noted its support for Wandsworth Environment Forum’s submission (para 13 b)
 - (f) Wandsworth Society indicated they would like further evaluation of priorities. They would like to be assured that sufficient money will be allocated to allow the parks to be appropriately maintained. The Society asked for clarification as to how biodiversity

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will be encouraged and how the parks and commons will always be preserved for the benefit of the borough.

- (g) Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People welcomed the commitment of the Council to provide pedestrian access to and mobility within open spaces, and enclosed their own walking strategy policy statement. They also recommended consultation with local organisations for the visually impaired to seek their advice on detailed implementation.
 - (h) Ranelagh Sailing Club suggested that the River Thames should have a prominent place in the strategy. They also referred to tree management issues.
 - (i) Wandsworth Action Volunteers for the Environment (WAVE) have not yet formally responded although they have indicated that they will. They asked that the Strategy and Action Plan consider how the objectives will be achieved and they regretted that there is only a minor reference to wildlife.
 - (j) Commons for Wildlife supported the opportunity for the public to give feedback. They considered it a disappointment that none of the key aims of the strategy specifically concerned ecology or biodiversity. They agree that green spaces provide an escape for people from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. They support objectives to obtain outside funding and urged that an aim concerning the important wildlife habitat value of the open space is fully recognised.
 - (k) Wandsworth Pensioners Forum emphasised that many people wish to relax in parks and that commercial enterprises are often a limiting factor for this. They requested composting demonstrations within parks and more space for people to sit down. They hoped to see a consultation process for the site-specific parks management plans.
 - (l) Carmalt Gardens Residents Association endorsed the Parks Management Strategy. The Association confirmed its active support in the execution of the Strategy and confirmed that they were reassured by the Council's confirmation of its commitment to the long-term protection of open spaces.
 - (m) Thames 21 endorsed the Parks Management Strategy but expressed their wish that the pivotal role of the River Thames and the River Wandle be recognised more clearly within the document.
 - (n) Friends of Battersea Park. The Committee of the Friends considered that the priorities identified were positive, and due to their general nature they decided to invite members to respond individually. They decided also that the Committee should respond, on behalf of the group, to issues directly pertaining to Battersea Park.
 - (o) Elderly people in a survey of social and leisure activities of people aged over 60 living in Wandsworth 38% of respondents said they used Parks. Of these 33% were women and 44% were men.
14. The consultation responses have been considered and the final draft of the Parks Management Strategy has been amended to incorporate many of these views where relevant. Similarly the aims within the strategy have been re-ordered to reflect the priorities indicated by comments

received, notably moving safety and security to the top of the priority list, and moving both the adaptability of staff and maximising financial resources to support the Strategy up the order of priorities.

15. In order to ensure that the management plans, as they are developed, meet the needs of the widest possible range of users (and potential users) of the open spaces new opportunities for consultation will be sought and developed. In order to ensure that the views of young people are taken into account the Parks Service plan, in future, to use the two existing Connexions BASE websites (based at Tooting at Roehampton). These websites are being developed, amongst other things, as young peoples' consultation forums for all/any issues rather than just for BASE operations. Further details of these developments will be given in the Phase II review of the Integrated Youth Services, which, it is anticipated, will be reported to the June cycle of this Committee.
16. A greater emphasis within the text has been placed on key issues such as cycling, biodiversity, rivers and informal use of parks and open spaces. Within Aim 1, "Safe and Secure" (Appendix 2), direct reference to ensuring that byelaws regarding cycling are rationalised has been included. Within Aim 4, "Health and Well-being" (Appendix 2), specific reference to maintaining and enhancing informal areas for quiet relaxation has been added. Aim 7, "Sustainability" (Appendix 2), now addresses biodiversity more specifically with plans including maximising our management of natural resources such as the lakes and rivers, and championing biodiversity across the borough to ensure that habitats and species are safeguarded from negative impacts. In all areas working with the community has been highlighted as part of the delivery plan.
17. **Priorities.** As a part of the consultation respondents were asked to list their three top priority aims of the ten listed and the new list in order of priority, reflecting their views, is:
 - (a) To provide open spaces in which people feel safe and secure.
 - (b) To ensure that our open spaces are welcoming places that encourage people to visit.
 - (c) To provide clean and well maintained open spaces.
 - (d) To provide open spaces which contribute to the health and well being of all who use them.
 - (e) To have adaptable staff with the skills, knowledge and values required to deliver the strategy.
 - (f) To effectively engage with, and involve the community in decisions made relating to open spaces.
 - (g) To work in a sustainable way to conserve the historic assets and natural environments within our care.
 - (h) To maximise financial resources to support our strategy.
 - (i) To plan and manage our service delivery more effectively.

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- (j) To communicate our plans and objectives effectively.
18. The emphasis on the perception of safety, welcoming and well maintained parks and open spaces, reflects the results of previous consultation that the Service carried out prior to drafting the Strategy. The Service will work closely with the Parks Police to enhance the perception of security within the Parks, as well as reviewing key issues such as signage and litter collection within the Services' current working practices to deliver those priorities.
19. The amended order of priorities will underpin a series of management plans and function reviews that are scheduled in the Action Plan to the Parks Management Strategy (Appendix 1) for the next five years.
20. **Comments of the Director of Finance.** The cost of any proposals emanating from the Action Plans will be met from within existing budgetary resources or by identification of external funding sources.
21. **Conclusion.** Elements of the strategy and it's five year Action Plan have been amended following consideration of the views of those individuals and organisations who responded to the consultation. The Action Plan outlines a programme to produce management plans for all of the sixty sites managed by the Parks Service, as well as a series of function reviews. The Strategy and Action Plan will be circulated widely and will underpin the work of the Parks Service for the next five years. The consultation process has proved very valuable in developing the Strategy and Action Plan

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4th April 2005

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- 1 Paper No. 04-317 – Environment and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6th April 2004.
- 2 Paper No. 04-651 – Environment and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7th September 2004, Executive – 20th September 2004.
- 3 Results of consultation, including responses from individuals and organisations.
- 4 Survey of the social and leisure activity and aspirations of people aged over 60 living in Wandsworth. Policy Unit – August 2004

If you wish to inspect any of these documents, please contact initially the Committee Secretary on 020 8871 7032.

<u>Parks Management Strategy</u>						
Action Plan for the Production of Site Management Plans and Function Reviews						
<i>Management Plan</i>	<i>Function Review detail</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>
TOOTING						
College Gardens Open Space		X				
Fountain Road Recreation Ground		X				
Furzedown Recreation Ground		X				
Garratt Green		X				
Garratt Park		X				
Tooting Commons		X				
Tooting Gardens		X				
WANDSWORTH						
Bramford Road Open Space			X			
Causeway Island			X			
Coronation Gardens			X			
Dromore Road open Space			X			
Garratt Lane Old Burial ground			X			
Godley Road Open Space			X			
King George's Park			X			

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Queen Mary's Rose Garden			X			
Suffolk Hall Open Space			X			
Swaby Gardens			X			
The Spit			X			
Wandsworth Common			X			
Wandsworth Park			X			
PUTNEY						
Clarence Lane Open Space				X		
Leaders Gardens				X		
Putney Hill Conveniences (Waterman's Green)				X		
Putney Park Lane and The Pleasance				X		
Putney Tennis Courts				X		
Putney Vale Open Space				X		

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BATTERSEA						
Battersea Park					X	
Christchurch Gardens					X	
Dorothy Road Open Space					X	
Elsbeth Road Open Space					X	
Falcon Park					X	
Fred Wells Gardens					X	
Harroway Road Open Space					X	
Heathbrook Park					X	
Latchmere Recreation Ground					X	
Montifiore Street Gardens					X	
Queenstown Road Open Space					X	
Shillington Street Open Space					X	
Tideway Industrial Estate					X	

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Vicarage Gardens					X	
York Gardens					X	
GENERIC					X	
Riverside Walk Sites						X
Allotments						X
Sports Fields						X
Churchyards						X
Cemeteries						X
Play / Youth Sites						X
Library grounds						X
Sites belonging to other services within DOLAS						X
Sites belonging to services within DTS						X

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FUNCTION REVIEWS						
Park users code	To develop a park users code in conjunction with Parks Police.	X				
	To display this code at the entrance to parks and open spaces in a phased programme	X	X	X	X	X
Enhance provision for young people and children	To review on a site-by-site basis the existing provision and the projected future demand locally as part of the management plan process.	X	X	X	X	X

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	To seek to fulfil any additional demand for provision in conjunction with the Playground Development Officer and Youth Service.	X	X	X	X	X
Signage review	To review on a site-by-site basis the existing provision	X	X	X	X	X
	To seek to renew or provide additional signage where necessary	X	X	X	X	X

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Facilities and structures monitoring programme	There is already an ongoing system in place for this but it will be refined and formalised					X
Security and safety strategy	Commence discussions with Parks Police and Metropolitan Police on overall principles to be applied.	X				
	Implement principles through the site specific management plans		X	X	X	X
Health and well being strategy	In conjunction with the ICT review opportunities for enhancing the health and well being of park users	X				

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	seek to implement these opportunities with relevant partners through site specific / area specific management plans.		X	X	X	X
Walking review	hold discussion with relevant organisations to view opportunities for walking within parks		X			
Cycling review	investigate current reviews to determine the opportunity to alter approaches to cycling in parks and open spaces	X				

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	If applicable, hold discussion with relevant organisations to review opportunities for cycling within parks	X				
	Implement changes if required through the site-by-site management plans.		X	X	X	X
Traffic in parks review	Write scoping document to identify all element of traffic use within parks and open spaces		X			

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Publicity strategy	In conjunction with the Publicity section of DOLAS write a Parks Publicity and Communication strategy to disseminate our progress more widely to users of parks and open spaces and residents of the borough.		X			

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Allotments action plan	In conjunction with allotment plot holders devise an action plan for allotments. Include within this any action detailed in the Allotments Biodiversity Action Plan.		X			
Fishing appraisal	Review the appropriateness of fishing on parks, commons and open spaces across the borough as part of the site-by-site management plan process.	X				

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Dog management review	In conjunction with the Dog Control Section, investigate current byelaws to determine the opportunity to alter approaches dog control issues.	X				
	Implement any plausible changes to site management structures to reduce issues relating to mis-use of open spaces by dog owners.		X	X	X	X
Rivers plan	To formalise our responsibilities with regard to riverbank and in-channel management.		X			
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<p>Equality of access review</p>	<p>Through production of site management plans, address any inequalities in accessibility. Work in partnership to do this with various disability and accessibility groups who have offered help in this matter.</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>Commitment to informal use</p>	<p>Define informal use and seek to enhance status of informal use as a management priority.</p>	<p>X</p>				

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Fundraising strategy	In conjunction with the Fundraising Officer, devise a fundraising strategy for parks and open spaces using as a basis for work the needs identified within the site management plans.	X	X			
Review of client and contractor skills base	As part of the preparation for the tender of the Horticultural Maintenance Contract (due for renewal Feb 2007) review required skills base and seek to implement this with tender.		X			

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	Address any deficiencies in Client skills base through providing training opportunities	X	X			
	Investigate "best practice" in lone working guidance			X		
	Implement a lone working protocol amongst Client staff.					
	Influence Contractor to adopt lone working protocol if they do not already have one.			X		

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Composting and recycling statement	Publicise the existing composting practice within Parks service to a wider audience		X			
	Seek to extend this composting of parks waste if suitable sites can be identified	X	X	X	X	X
Biodiversity review	To identify further opportunities for enhancement of existing habitats within parks and open spaces to address actions with the Wandsworth BAP.	X	X	X	X	X

Parks Management Strategy

This Parks Management Strategy plans the future management, conservation and improvement of the parks, commons, cemeteries, and open spaces managed by the Parks Service. The Strategy sets out the aims and objectives that will guide our work for the next five years, from 2005 to 2010. The approach taken is driven by concepts of excellence in organisations. Truly excellent organisations are measured by their ability to achieve outstanding results for all their stakeholders. In this case stakeholders include parks and open space users, employees, councillors, contractors and other council services.

Our service vision is:

To create excellent and enjoyable green spaces for all

To provide a cohesive service of beautiful green spaces to encourage fun and relaxation. These will support a range of activities and opportunities encompassing goals of biodiversity, access, learning, safety, well-being and continuous improvement.

In order to achieve this vision and to ensure continuous improvement ten strategic aims have been identified. These are aligned to meet the requirements of external accreditation criteria of Green Flag Awards. The Green Flag Awards are currently the national standard for the assessment of excellence in Parks Management. We have expanded these criteria to ensure the strategy is comprehensive:

Our Strategic Aims

1. To provide open spaces in which people feel safe and secure.
2. To ensure that our open spaces are welcoming places that encourages people to visit.
3. To provide clean and well maintained open spaces
4. To provide open spaces which contribute to the health and well being of all who use them
5. To have adaptable staff with the skills, knowledge and values required to deliver the strategy.
6. To effectively engage with, and involve the community in decisions made relating to open spaces.
7. To work in a sustainable way to conserve the historic assets and natural environments within our care.
8. To maximise financial resources to support our strategy.
9. To plan and manage our service delivery more effectively.
10. To communicate our plans and objectives effectively.

The strategic aims are designed to deliver the vision of the parks service; to focus the delivery of the service towards the needs of the local community; to support the Community Strategy and to emphasise themes of health, well being, and sustainability. These aims must be fulfilled in a climate of competition for funds.

At present satisfaction ratings by users of the open spaces are high, but certain areas have been highlighted as areas for improvement, and certain issues have emerged as barriers to people using parks. These are the perception of safety, the provision of toilets and the level of cleanliness of the open spaces. Our strategic aims support a work programme that will seek to deliver improvement in these areas.

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It is apparent that the open spaces are being used by increasing numbers of people throughout the year, placing substantial additional pressure on the whole of the infrastructure. It is a priority to secure sufficient, additional long term funding to both maintain current standards and to introduce the improvement highlighted in the strategy.

To achieve this, partnerships must be developed with community groups, outside funders, other council services and government initiatives to maximise funds dedicated to maintenance and enhancement of the open spaces. These partnerships will contribute added value for park users in the form of additional resources, activities and opportunities for health, education and enjoyment.

Safe and Secure

Survey results indicate that Wandsworth's residents feel safer in their open spaces than do the residents of other boroughs in theirs. Across London some 39% of women expressed concern at feeling unsafe in parks, whereas in Wandsworth the figure drops to 14%. Despite these positive findings, improving the perceptions of safety is a factor in achieving the aim of increased usage of the parks.

The majority of respondents (87%) did not mention safety as an issue that affects, or might affect their use and enjoyment of parks. This was, however, cited as the second most important area for improvement, and 13% of respondents considered this to be a shortcoming although it did not deter users unduly as only 3% stated that they would use parks more if they were safer. 49% of women and 44% of men surveyed indicated that they would feel safer in the Borough's open spaces if there was a park ranger or Parks Police person on site. Increasing the number of visible staff on site is likely to encourage greater numbers of people to use the Borough's open spaces and it supports the Community Strategy's priority for "Making Wandsworth Safer", targeting the objectives to reduce anti-social behaviour and securing more police and uniformed officers.

Many people also expressed concerns regarding the level of traffic and the large numbers of dogs in our parks. These are issues we will seek to address in the management plans, through byelaws and working with other services in the Council. Finally, cycling in parks remains a key issue for many people, both for and against. We will seek to rationalise our cycling byelaws.

Aim 1: *To provide open spaces in which people feel safe and secure.*

Why is this important?

It is a key issue discussed in the recent survey of borough residents.

Addressing these issues is currently resource intensive.

If open spaces are seen to be safe and secure more people will feel able to use them.

What are we doing about this now?

There is a Parks Police Service patrolling our Parks, operating a 24-hour service with 27 officers patrolling all of the open spaces within the Borough.

There is a Dog Control Section for the borough, with 7 officers, carrying out enforcement and education about responsible dog-ownership in the Borough, as well as picking up strays, and offering a micro-chipping service.

There is a council Graffiti Removal Service, which removes offensive graffiti in 24 hours, or all graffiti within three days.

We manage our open spaces with public safety in mind through woodland management and good design of new developments.

We have CCTV cameras in Battersea Park.

We have lighting on major pedestrian routes in our larger open spaces.

What are our plans?

To increase the positive perception of safety and security in open spaces.

To inform users and residents about low crime levels in open spaces.

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To establish a greater staff presence on key sites, learning from the positive experiences of other patrol services.

Identify fly-tippers and ensure that fly-tips are quickly removed.

Limit opportunities for vandalism by ensuring that all buildings and structures are in regular use, monitored and well maintained.

To ensure effective byelaws are in place and are enforced.

To ensure byelaws regarding cycling are rationalised.

Ensure graffiti is removed quickly.

Continue the programme of CCTV installation in open spaces.

Seek to install further lighting in our open spaces.

Involve the Youth Offending Team in projects in our open spaces.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

Other council services including the Parks Police, Dog Control, the Graffiti Removal Service, Waste Management Team, Community Safety Teams, The Metropolitan Police, Community groups and park users including elderly and disabled groups.

National and regional government (funding programmes)

Local crime and disorder reduction partnerships

Welcome

Our goal is to increase usage of our open spaces. To do that we need to ensure that all people feel welcome and that they are given the information they need to use our spaces responsibly and to learn and enjoy them. We need to ensure that people of all ages and backgrounds have equal access, and that everyone can use our parks easily. We need to ensure that information is clearly provided on why we do things, and to update it regularly in response to any changes that we make.

Whilst we will continue to encourage further use of open spaces by older people it is pleasing to note that 70% of 65 year and older residents already visit our open-spaces; this compares with 93% of 45-64 year olds.

We need to ensure that, through well-targeted consultation, we are meeting the needs and aspirations of all age groups, including young people.

We will ensure that our open spaces contribute to the cultural and historical value of the Borough.

Aim 2: To ensure that our open spaces are welcoming places that encourage all people to visit

Why is this important?

To enable new and existing users to find their way around.

To enable visitors to know what is available to them .

To indicate what is expected of responsible people using our parks.

What are we doing about this now?

We are improving signs in Battersea Park, including interpretative material.

We are installing new information cabinets at the entrance to many of our open spaces.

We install temporary notices about safety or management issues.

We have achieved the Charter Mark, an external quality validation scheme.

What are our plans?

To create a “Park Users Code” to educate people about how to use our parks responsibly.

Improve signs and interpretation in all of our open spaces.

To review all of our parks for equality of access.

Review and update our Citizens Charter to reflect changes to the service.

To work with the planners to create new spaces and partners to fund their maintenance.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

External Funding Bodies

Other Council services, including Borough Planners, Premises Section, Graphics, Parks Police Service, Dog Control Section

Groups and organisations representing the widest range of ages, abilities and interests

Corporate Sponsors

The Parks Management Strategy

Clean and well maintained

The importance of the appearance of all open spaces is a priority. The standards of horticultural maintenance, litter clearance and the maintenance of buildings, furniture and pathways all contribute to creating a positive appearance.

Satisfaction in the maintenance of our parks is consistently high, most recently recorded at 84% of respondents. There are, however, areas of improvement that would result in greater usership. From the recent survey of borough residents, 81% state that clean and tidy parks that are free from litter, graffiti and vandalism are important factors in encouraging the use of parks. Currently 56% of respondents agree that parks are kept free of litter but only 46% think that litterbins are emptied often enough. Whilst these findings suggest that more people would use the parks if they were cleaner and tidier only 4% of respondents cited cleanliness and tidiness as features that would encourage them to use parks more often. Litter tends to be a problem at sunny weekends when Parks are heavily used.

Aim 3: *To provide clean and well maintained open spaces.*

Why is this important?

Feedback from key stakeholders has highlighted this as a priority area.

It is a key issue discussed in the recent survey of Borough residents.

We need processes to ensure that the infrastructure within open spaces is well maintained.

What are we doing about this now?

Horticultural standards are defined in our horticultural maintenance contract.

We work in partnership with the horticultural maintenance contractor to deliver those standards.

Another role of the horticultural maintenance contract is the clearance of litter from open spaces.

Currently parks infrastructure is inspected annually to assess the renewal and repair requirements.

What are our plans?

To define and maintain high standards of horticultural maintenance within the next horticultural maintenance contract.

To consult with our existing horticultural maintenance contractor and others in the field about future improvements to the horticultural maintenance contract.

To ensure that future horticultural maintenance contracts meet evolving changes in requirements, for example cleanliness within open spaces, during the contract term.

To maintain a regular and effective monitoring programme of the horticultural maintenance contract.

To maintain the regular, effective and recorded monitoring schedule of facilities and structures to assess standards of repair and to identify the need for renewal.

To seek external funds to augment the repair and renewal programme.

To seek to reduce litter and feeding of wildlife in our open spaces through public awareness campaigns.

To encourage visitors who picnic in Parks to take their rubbish home.

To seek improvements, and additional new facilities where necessary, to the provision of facilities and structures within open spaces.

To assess the potential of a school of horticulture within the Parks Service.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

Serviceteam, our horticultural maintenance contractor

Other council services including Premises Section, Finance, Parks Police Service, Waste Management Services, Street Care Teams

External funding bodies

Community groups and park users

Learning and Skills Council

Education professionals; specific and non-specific higher education providers.

The Parks Management Strategy

Health and well being

The findings of the recent survey indicate that open spaces contribute to the health and well being of the Borough's residents. 56% of park users come to 'relax and get away from it all', 46% to go for a walk and 29% to exercise. These figures show the importance of informal recreation, so a balance must be maintained between provision of areas for organised sport and peaceful areas for informal recreation and relaxation. Organised sport and informal recreation are seen as key functions of the service. Creating partnerships with other health providers will enhance the recreational provision and add value in the form of activities and opportunities for Borough residents to be physically active.

Open spaces are seen as a critical resource in encouraging regular physical activity amongst the general population and those at risk of poor health as part of health policy by the government and the NHS. Wandsworth Primary Care Trust's Physical Activity Strategy has identified the Borough's parks and open spaces as a critical resource for improving the health of the local population. The Chief Medical Officer recommends that people should aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 days of the week. Walking is an ideal way to achieve this recommendation and allotments also provide the opportunity to get fit through activities such as digging.

Aim 4: To provide open spaces which contribute to the health and well being of all who use them.

Why is this important?

Feedback from key stakeholders has highlighted this as an area of opportunity. The council has local public service agreement (LPSA) targets to promote physical activity among specific groups e.g. older people and the young.

What are we doing about this now?

The Parks Service contributes to partnerships seeking to encourage walking through the publication of leaflets such as Green Links, The Wandle Trail and the Active Living Map.

The Parks Service has worked to secure cycle paths along strategic routes through open spaces, including most recently Wandsworth Park.

Working alongside colleagues in Sports Services we provide and maintain a wide range of sporting facilities across the boroughs open spaces.

We ensure the availability of areas of open land, away from formal sports pitches, for informal recreation and relaxation.

We are supporting the Primary Care Trust who run walks in parks for the general population as well as those at risk of poor health.

What are our plans?

Develop partnerships to generate activities and opportunities for exercise in our parks, particularly through Wandsworth's Local Exercise Action Pilot (LEAP)

Work with others to enhance provision for specific groups including young people and those over 50.

To maintain a balance between formal (e.g. sports pitch) provision and informal physical activity. Maintain and enhance formal play provision within open spaces.

Maintain and enhance informal areas for quiet relaxation.

To further promote and support walking within open spaces.

To further promote and support cycle routes and cycling within open spaces

Who will we need to work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

National government via LEAPs and LPSAs

Wandsworth Primary Care Trust, including GP surgeries and the Public Health Department.

Other council services including Sports Facilities and Development Services, Integrated Youth Services, Play Services.

Private sector

Community, sports and park users' groups

Other Health Providers and interest groups

The Parks Management Strategy

Our People

We need to retain key skills and knowledge within the service and develop a succession plan for key roles. Partnership working, tighter resources and deadlines require good management skills. Teams and individuals are expected to work in less traditional ways across services and roles, viewing the service in a more holistic way, understanding the services broader role within the Council and within the customer context.

The development of I.T. systems means that staff will require the relevant skills and support to take advantage of these improvements and add value to services offered.

Aim 5: To have adaptable staff with the skills, knowledge and values required to work effectively to deliver this strategy.

Why is it important?

It is part of our commitment to the Investors in People standard.

We need to get the right people in the right places and be able to offer them opportunities to grow and develop as our service grows and improves.

What are we doing about this now

Team development and away days, which focus on communication.

Technical and role development training is on offer from Central Training and from external suppliers.

Encouraging managers to achieve professional qualifications and accreditations; currently one manager has achieved NVQ Level 3 accreditation, two others are working towards the qualification.

All staff have appraisals and personal development interviews, the outcome of which are development plans and the opportunities for identified learning gaps to be met in a variety of ways. Including our maintenance contractor's managers and operatives in training and development workshops.

Facilitating task specific training courses for the contractor's gardeners and grounds staff, opportunities to date have included ecological maintenance techniques, fine turf maintenance and specific hazard identification training.

What are our plans

Review and improve, where appropriate, our recruitment and selection process and related skills.

Review our induction processes, and improve as necessary.

We will ensure that our managers develop leadership and people management skills.

We will align our learning and development plans to our strategies.

To review roles in the light of individual strengths and areas for improvement.

We will involve key partners in learning and development activities.

We will continue to encourage our maintenance contractors to invest in appropriate staff training and development,

To build teams across traditional boundaries.

To seek to create and develop new roles through partnerships and external funders.

We will develop a knowledge management culture.

We will encourage others to learn from our expertise.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

External training providers

Internal training providers

Other council services with similar development needs

Serviceteam and other horticultural maintenance contractor.

Other council services .

Staff communications group

External funders such as the Learning and Skills Council

Other local authorities

The Parks Management Strategy

Community involvement

Dialogue with the users of our open spaces is critical to the provision of services that will meet the needs of the residents of the Borough. The recent residents survey has indicated that 84% of respondents were satisfied with the management of the parks in the borough with only 2% dissatisfied. The feedback from the survey did highlight areas for improvement, and indicated that the requirements/expectations of users are changing. Younger users, in particular place greater importance on the need for facilities such as toilets and cafes. Information such as this is vital in steering the focus of the service towards their needs in the future.

More focused work with the community will be a priority in the development of management plans for all of the open spaces. This will enable the parks service to change and adapt service delivery to the needs of specific areas and user groups.

Aim 6: *To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in decisions made relating to open spaces.*

Why is this important?

We have identified that we need to improve in this area.
This will enable the open spaces to better fulfil the needs of local people / users.

What are we doing about this now?

We meet regularly with groups representing local communities and other users such as sporting groups.
We are developing the Parks Service website as a tool to involve local people.

What are our plans?

To consult more widely to ensure views are gained from a cross section of park users and non-users, to prioritise management decisions.
To consult specifically with young people about what they would like from open spaces, in particular to make use of the “Connexions” websites established at the Tooting and Roehampton BASEs.
To encourage and support partnerships to involve the community, to raise funds and generate activity within parks.
To focus service delivery on the needs of the community we serve.
To consult more effectively with community groups and park users in the development of management plans for individual sites.
To deliver relevant aspects of the Community Strategy.
To ensure that staff and contractors are sufficiently well trained and supported to participate in, and react to, wide ranging consultation

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include Groups representing local communities, park users, diverse faith and ethnic communities.
Young people through the youth website

Voluntary organisations including elderly and disabled groups

Private sector

Wandsworth Local Strategic Partnership

Wandsworth Primary Care Trust

Other council services including Education, Social Services, Policy Unit, Premises Section,
Finance, Borough Planners, Integrated Youth Service

Sustainability and the environment

“Improving the Local Environment” is a priority in the Community Strategy, and involves the following objectives: reduce the environmental impact of transport without reducing access; to manage waste more effectively through reduction, reuse, recycling and recovering energy from waste; to promote wiser stewardship of natural resources, wildlife habitats, energy and water, and to create healthy environments for people.

Open spaces can help to achieve all of these objectives, and the Service is currently a leader in many areas of good environmental practice, contributing to policy on a London-wide and national level. Priorities for the service include involving people with their natural environment (e.g. through allotment provision) and fostering opportunities for environmental learning.

The Borough contains a diverse range of species within many habitats including a number of watercourses and water bodies. We need to ensure that we work to safeguard the natural quality of these environments and the species within them.

The Service cares for several historic listed Parks, including Battersea Park, King George’s Park and Wandsworth Park. We need to ensure that we conserve the historic fabric of these Parks and manage them sensitively.

Aim 7: To work in a sustainable way to conserve the natural environments and historic features in our care.

Why is this important?

To fulfil obligations to future generations and safeguard the natural resources and biodiversity.

To fulfil obligations to future generations and safeguard the historic spaces and built features in our care.

To fulfil obligations to meet targets on waste management.

What are we doing about this now?

Managing natural resources to achieve a balance between competing uses.

Using our expertise and influence to protect biodiversity resources across the Borough.

Educating the public in how we can all contribute to the safeguarding of environmental resources.

Sharing good practice knowledge with other council services to safeguard the natural environment and promote biodiversity.

We are national leaders in the management of shallow urban lakes.

We compost our horticultural maintenance “green waste” in Battersea Park.

We are working with Learning Through Landscapes on a HLF funded programme to educate primary school children about the cultural heritage of plants in Battersea Park.

We work with our contractors and staff on sustainable transport initiatives, we currently run electric golf buggies for staff transport in Battersea Park, and limit traffic through a new traffic management scheme.

We use borehole water to fill lakes in Battersea Park and King Georges Park, and will use the borehole water to fill fountains, irrigate plants and flush toilets in Battersea Park.

We follow a policy of sustainable procurement and ensure our contractors follow the same standards.

We have restored Grade II* Battersea Park.
We are restoring Putney Old Burial Ground.

What are our plans?

Managing our resources to ensure standards remain at their current level or higher.
To fulfil our obligations in meeting targets within the Local Agenda 21 action plan.
To minimise the amount of parks service waste entering the waste stream, in particular green waste.
Minimise the negative impact of our work on the wider environment e.g. reduce water consumption.
Maximise our natural resource management e.g. lakes, rivers.
We will champion biodiversity across the borough to ensure that habitats and species are safeguarded from negative impacts.
Develop volunteer programmes and environmental learning opportunities.
Work to increase opportunities within open spaces for recycling.
We will maintain and manage the boroughs tree resource to meet relevant standards.
To seek to achieve the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) as detailed by English Nature.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:
Other council services including Waste Management, Policy Unit, Premises, Integrated Youth Service, Planning Service, Education. Serviceteam and other horticultural maintenance contractors.
Statutory bodies such as English Nature, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, and the Heritage Lottery Fund.
Voluntary bodies such as Learning Through Landscapes.

The Parks Management Strategy

Maximise financial resources

The Parks Service needs to use resources wisely in a climate of continuing competition for funds. In the past two years, the restoration of Battersea Park has concentrated the Parks Service budgets and the repair and renewal budgets towards one park, reducing available resources for necessary works in other parks. The contest for funds amongst different services must be factored into future planning. This is balanced by a very positive climate for raising external funds for parks. Various government and charitable funds have expanded their criteria to focus on green space issues, offering opportunities for the council and their partners to gain funding for capital schemes. While these are potentially extremely beneficial to the open spaces, these projects must be managed so that the impact of higher maintenance expectations for completed improvement schemes can be met from existing maintenance budgets.

Aim 8: *To maximise financial resources to support our strategy*

Why is this important?

Feedback from stakeholders and the residents survey has highlighted this as a priority area. We need to ensure that best value is being gained from our resources. We need to ensure that we have the financial resources to deliver strategic priorities.

What are we doing about this now?

Working with partners and community groups, we have successfully raised £800,000 in the past two years to contribute towards improvements in parks. The repair and renewal programme is focused towards areas of greatest need.

What are our plans?

To raise funds to achieve elements of individual site management plans.
To appoint a fund raising officer, initially on a fixed term, two year contract, to co-ordinate fund raising efforts and so derive maximum benefit to the Service
Ensure the provision of sufficient, and appropriate, staff resources to maximise funding from external providers.
To generate and maximise income from facilities within parks.
To manage our budgets effectively and rationalise them regularly to reflect current ways of working.
To maintain a constant review of initiatives to identify cost savings.
To generate income by sharing our expertise.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:
Other council services including Finance Section, Premises Management, The Planning Service, Valuation and Estates Services, the Legal Service and the Events Team.
External funders and grant giving bodies.
Community groups and park users.
Serviceteam and other horticultural maintenance contractors.
Private sector.

Effective service delivery and quality

The Parks Service aims to be pro-active in our service delivery, identifying priorities linked to our customer requirements, as well as responding to threats and opportunities. This approach to forward planning will strengthen our applications to external bodies for funding and support, which will add value to our service delivery. We want to continuously improve our open spaces both through our planned management regimes and our grant-aided improvement projects to focus on the quality of the open spaces and of the service we give the residents of the Borough.

Aim 9: *To plan and manage our service delivery more effectively.*

Why is this important?

To deliver good quality open spaces to meet peoples' needs.
To enable us to prioritise expenditure more effectively and respond to change.
To be respected as a quality organisation delivering excellence.
To maximise opportunities to gain additional, external funding.

What are we doing about this now?

Preparing a Parks Service Management Strategy.
Meeting regularly with community groups and park users.
Preparing a woodland management plan for the commons.
Finalising the details of the heritage management plan for Battersea Park.

What are our plans?

Develop and implement a management plan for each park and open spaces to identify areas for improvement and investment.
Carry out a series of function reviews e.g. allotments and water bodies, to ensure effective use of resources.
To achieve a balance between benefits to users and effective use of resources.
Instigate an ongoing review programme to ensure up-to-date information is available.
To identify funding opportunities linked to a fundraising plan.
Develop a programme of improvement plans to seek external funding, based on management plans and function reviews.
We will formalise relationships with other council services and partners, through the development of processes to support our aims.
Continue to consult with representative groups and develop opportunities to engage with other groups e.g. young people.
To review progress against the action plan annually in the Parks Service AQPR
To review this strategy after five years.
To develop IT systems to better support our work.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:
Other council services including Premises, Finance, Planning, Integrated Youth Service, the Borough Valuer and Estates Surveyor.
External funding bodies.

The Parks Management Strategy

Communication

Key to the success of the Parks Service Management Strategy will be the ability to communicate our plans and objectives effectively to our stakeholders and our customers. Much of the emphasis of better communication will be to broadcast our successes and to ensure that open spaces are perceived to be safer, more attractive and have more to offer in terms of opportunities for recreation and relaxation. Equally important is to communicate our objectives to our staff and contractors so that shared values influence the sense of purpose and fulfilment in what we do. Communicating with our customers through the web, through interpretation signs and publicity will help us explain the choices available for the management of open spaces. We can explain the knowledge and priorities that have guided our decisions and reduce complaints that emerge from lack of information. Better communication with our customers will help to clarify park users expectations and focus the delivery of results.

Additionally, we like to communicate our successes nationally through entering awards programmes, and to engender support.

Aim 10: *To communicate our objectives, plans and actions effectively*

Why is this important?

To maintain and improve the customer perception of open spaces.

Feedback from key stakeholders has highlighted this as a priority area.

To maintain our national and regional reputation as an example of good practice.

To gain external accreditation for our open spaces, which in turn supports bids for external funding.

To communicate plans, objectives and targets to stakeholders and the community to gain their support.

What are we doing about this now?

We promote ourselves via annually entering London in Bloom and the Green Flag Awards.

We are improving our website to enable it to hold up to date information.

We have received extensive national press coverage for the re-opening of Battersea Park.

We host prestigious events in our open spaces, especially Battersea Park, including the launch event of Great Parks Great Cities, an international conference for parks professionals.

What are our plans?

To devise and implement a publicity and promotion strategy to include interpretation of open spaces.

To raise the profile of the parks service (in part through assessing the potential of a school of horticulture.)

To develop our internal communication processes and to develop better reporting mechanisms.

To devise and implement a process to seek and gain feedback from key user groups.

To communicate plans, objectives and targets to stakeholders and the community.

To communicate in plain English and in a consistent style.

To sustain our standards in customer care, support our Charters for Parks and Bereavement Services, and respond to customer's complaints and suggestions effectively.

Who will we work with?

Our key partners in this area will include:

Other council sections including Publicity, Press Office, Graphics, Website Administrators, Brightside, Integrated Youth Service, Housing.

Local and national papers, and professional journals.

National and Regional accreditation bodies.

Community groups and park users.