

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET

16 September 2015

1. **REPORT TITLE:** URBAN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2014
- Submitted by:** Head of Operations – Roger Tait
- Portfolio:** Environment and Recycling
- Ward(s) affected:** All Urban Wards of the Borough

Purpose of the Report

To inform Cabinet of progress made with the implementation of the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and the associated Action Plan over the last year.

To update members on the review of the current Green Space Strategy to reflect changes in national planning policy, local government finance and projected resources to ensure the strategy remains fit for purpose for the future and is a robust evidence base for the proposed joint Local Plan.

To reaffirm the link between the Green Space Strategy and the Asset Management Plan in which green spaces which are identified as not required to deliver local standards for green space nor for operational purposes are included in the Asset Management Plan for consideration for alternative uses.

Recommendations:

- (a) That the report be received and progress noted.
- (b) That the link between the Green Space Strategy and Asset Management Plan is reaffirmed in respect of sites which are identified as not required for green space use.

Reasons

- (a) To ensure that the green space asset base in urban North Staffordshire and in particular Newcastle fulfils it's potential to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits through a strategic approach to planning and management, and that the document remains fit for purpose and a robust evidence base for the emerging joint Local Plan.

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet of 7 September 2011 a report was considered in relation to the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy. It was resolved:-

“That Officers be instructed to undertake an annual review of the progress made with implementation of the North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and the associated Action Plan to ensure that objectives are being met”.

- 1.2 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy was formally adopted by the Cabinet of the Council at the meeting of 2 December 2009. Since this time, work has been progressing with delivering the actions identified in the Action Plan programme and in developing processes and mechanisms to deliver the aims and objectives of the Strategy.

2.0 **Issues**

- 2.1 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy promotes the environmental, economic and social benefits which green space brings to parallel strategic regeneration initiatives and to the Council’s corporate priorities and core values. The Strategy demonstrates how good quality green space supports economic regeneration and provides opportunities for people to live a healthy and active lifestyle in a clean and safe environment.
- 2.2 The Strategy aims to ensure that the residents of the Borough have the right amount of green space to cater for their needs in terms of parks, play, sport, nature and green routes. The Strategy seeks to provide these sites in places which are accessible and easy to reach for as many people as possible and by grouping facilities together into larger, multi-functional high quality green spaces.
- 2.3 To achieve these aims, the Strategy includes a phased and prioritised Action Plan programme to strategically manage the Council’s green space assets to ensure that they deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits and that the financial and community value of green space is recognised and reflected in the way the Council sets priorities and allocates resources.
- 2.4 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Action Plan for the Strategy and a progress report is attached to this report at Appendix 1. In addition to this, annual consultation is carried out with residents of the borough to gauge their views on a number of green space and cleanliness indicators including meeting expectations, safety, cleanliness of streets and open spaces and appropriate provision of facilities.

Key Achievements To Date Include:-

- (a) In the last seven years a total of over £5.05 million in external funding has been secured towards delivering the projects in the Action Plan and a number of key capital development projects have been completed or are in progress to provide and improve community green space provision.
- (b) Restructuring of the Streetscene Service to deliver the cleaner, safer and sustainable agenda and neighbourhood working.

- (c) Review of potential surplus green space assets incorporated into the asset management plan and site allocation development plan document consultation process.
 - (d) Consistent high performance and achievement of highest quality standard in Britain in Bloom campaign and Green Flag Awards.
 - (e) Projects have been completed or are currently in progress to create or improve facilities at Wolstanton Marsh, Lyme Valley, The Wammy, Cotswold Avenue and Thistleberry Parkway.
 - (f) Programme of work ongoing to maintain the Council's playground stock and green space footpaths/roads/railings in a safe condition.
 - (g) Implemented the Community Engagement and Participation Framework to enable and support residents to take an active role in looking after their neighbourhood, with over 5000 hours of volunteer time (estimated value of £60,000) contributed in 2014/15. This work is key to the success of the strategy as it creates the opportunity for communities to be fully involved in shaping and delivering green space services in their neighbourhoods. A highly successful "Communities Day" was held on 5th June 2015 where 25 different community events took place in the Borough's parks, open spaces and neighbourhoods involving large numbers of volunteers.
- 2.5 Further work is underway to identify and bid for funding to deliver other projects prioritised in the Action Plan programme. These projects, and their proposed funding mechanisms, will be the subject of future reports to Cabinet at appropriate times.
- 2.6 Work is also underway with partner agencies to investigate the potential to jointly deliver initiatives identified in the Action Plan programme. The outcome of this work and any associated resource implications will be reported at appropriate times.
- 2.7 Following a review of the current policy, legislative, financial and demographic influences which affect North Staffordshire, and in particular Newcastle, in relation to green space provision, management and maintenance, a robust Green Space Strategy is required as part of a suite of supporting evidence documents for the new joint Local Plan. Other evidence documents will include the Playing Pitch Strategy which has recently been adopted, allotments strategy, urban forest strategy and policy for play.
- 2.8 Following the scoping of a review of the Green Space Strategy, a budget was approved from within the existing approved Local Plan budget and a subsequent portfolio holder authority was granted to invite tenders for the review of the current strategy to bring it in line with current national policy and to ensure the strategy remains a robust evidence base for the emerging Joint Local Plan.
- 2.9 A commission for the review of the Strategy has been tendered and following the evaluation process a consultant has been appointed. The tender was within the approved budget and the review is due to be completed within 9 months by the end March 2016. A report on the outcome of the strategy review process will be brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

- 2.10 As is the case with the current Green Space Strategy, the review will identify sites which are currently not required to deliver local standards for green space, nor for operational purposes. These sites will be included in the Asset Management Plan for consideration for potential alternative uses.

3.0 **Options Considered**

- 3.1 To continue with the delivery of the existing Strategy in line with the strategy document in the short term.
- 3.2 Proceed with the review of the Green Space Strategy to ensure that it remains a robust evidence base for the emerging joint Local Plan, alongside the other supporting documents.

4.0 **Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the report be received and progress with the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan be noted.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the progress with the review of the existing Strategy be noted.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the link to the Asset Management Plan be reaffirmed in relation to sites which are identified as not required for green space use.

5.0 **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To ensure that the green space asset base in urban North Staffordshire and in particular Newcastle, fulfils it's potential to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits through a strategic approach to planning and management.

6.0 **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities and the Sustainable Community Strategy**

- 6.1 A clean, safe, and sustainable Borough.
- 6.2 A Borough of opportunity.
- 6.3 A healthy and active community.
- 6.4 Becoming a co-operative council, delivering high value, community driven services.

7.0 **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has various powers and duties relating to green space provision and management, set out in statutes relating to open space, public health, miscellaneous provision and well being.

8.0 **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 It is considered that the Strategy has a positive impact on equality issues.

9.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 **Major Risks**

10.1 The major risks associated with this report are:

- 10.1.1 Failure to prove that the current Green Space Strategy is valid and up to date evidence could create a situation where funding and open space provision is unable to be secured through planning processes.
- 10.1.2 Failure to realise savings and/or capital receipts from prudent management of the council's green space asset base.
- 10.1.3 Failure to provide a robust evidence base for the joint Local Plan.

11.0 **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

11.1 Cabinet:	09 February 2005	– Resolution No. 761
Cabinet:	03 August 2005	– Resolution No. 285
Cabinet:	21 May 2008	– Resolution No. 39
Cabinet:	02 December 2009	– Resolution No.
Cabinet:	07 September 2011	– Resolution No. 13
Cabinet:	23 May 2012	- Resolution No. 5
Cabinet:	17 July 2013	- Resolution No. 4
Cabinet:	23 July 2014	- Item 12
Cabinet:	10 December 2014	- Item 5

Portfolio Holder Authority: -13 March 2015

12.0 **List of Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: Action Plan Progress Report

13.0 **Background Papers**

- 13.1 Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy.
- 13.2 National Planning Policy Framework