

URBAN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted by: Head of Operations – Roger Tait

Portfolio: All

Ward(s) affected: All Urban Wards of the Borough

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of progress made with the implementation of the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and the associated Action Plan.

Recommendations:

That the report be received and progress noted.

Reasons

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

1 **Background**

1.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet of 7 September 2011 a report was considered which detailed the findings of the Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group 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. Prior to this, at the meeting of 21 May 2008, Cabinet had approved the draft final Strategy and Action Plan for consultation with key stakeholders and adopted the local standards for green space and the calculation for developer contributions. Since this resolution in May 2008, 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.

1.3 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy was scrutinised in detail during the summer of 2011, when the Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group considered evidence from officers and external experts.

The evidence reviewed a number of key lines of enquiry in relation to national, regional and local policy, financial and legislative drivers, community needs assessment, consultation and community involvement.

The evidence concluded that the strategy had been prepared in accordance with available best practice guidelines and that it was fit for purpose.

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. It also demonstrates the positive impact green space has on carbon reduction.
- 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.

Key Achievements To Date Include:-

- (a) In the last four years a total of over £3.4 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.
- (a) Implementation of the Streetscene Service to deliver the cleaner, safer and sustainable agenda and neighbourhood working.
- (b) Review of potential surplus green space assets incorporated into the asset management process.
- (c) Green Space Strategy embedded into Local Development Framework process and validated as evidence base of the Core Strategy.
- (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 Brampton Park, Wolstanton Marsh, Bathpool Park, Lyme Valley, Birchenwood Playing Fields, former Silverdale Colliery, Westlands Sports Ground, Keele Cemetery, Silverdale Cemetery, Chesterton Memorial Park, The Wammy, Silverdale Park, Cotswold Avenue, Thistleberry Parkway and the Castle Motte in Queen Elizabeth Park.

- (f) Programme of work ongoing to maintain the Council's playground stock and green space footpaths/roads in a safe condition.
 - (g) Review of staffing structures and working methods to achieve savings of £ in the last four years.
 - (h) Launched the Community Engagement and Participation Framework to enable and support residents to take an active role in looking after their neighbourhood.
- 2.5 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and its Action Plan programme is designed to be delivered over a fifteen year timescale, ending in 2022, following which the Strategy should be reviewed and developed for the future. The Strategy and Action Plan are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate changes in residents' needs and priorities over the fifteen year life of the document and in recognition of the financial and staff resource constraints which may influence its delivery. However, the Strategy sets out a framework and core principles for green space management which, if followed, will assist in ensuring that it's main objectives continue to be met throughout periods of change.
- 2.6 Your officers have reviewed 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.
- 2.7 Whilst there are some minor changes to these factors which would normally be expected and are allowed for in the strategy, there is no material change which would necessitate a review of the strategy in it's current form and it is therefore considered to continue to be fit for purpose.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 It is proposed that progress with delivery of the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy is formally reported to Cabinet on an annual basis and that reports on individual actions and projects are brought forward for approval at the appropriate time.
- 2.11 The Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested the opportunity to scrutinise this report prior to consideration at your meeting. At the time of writing, there was no scheduled meeting of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview Committee prior to your meeting. However the report was sent to the Member Services team for distribution to members of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any comments received will be verbally reported at your meeting.
- 3.0 **Options Considered**
- 3.1 Options for delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan are detailed in the Strategy document.

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.

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 its 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 Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough.

6.2 Creating a Borough of opportunity.

6.3 Creating a healthy and active community.

6.4 Transforming our Council to achieve excellence.

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 Financial and resource implications have previously been considered.

10.0 **Major Risks**

10.1 Major risks have previously been considered.

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

12.0 **List of Appendices**

12.1.1 Appendix 1: Action Plan Progress Report

13.0 **Background Papers**

13.1 Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy.

13.2 Report to Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – Green Space Strategy Theme Paper (6th July 2011)