

**CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET 11 FEBRUARY 2014**

Background Papers, if any, are specified at the end of the Report

**CHILTERN OPEN SPACE & RECREATIONAL STRATEGY UPDATE
2014 -2017**

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That Cabinet agree the updated Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2014 – 17 be published for final community consultation. (Attached)**
- 2. Following community consultation the completed Open Space and Recreation Strategy to be resubmitted to Cabinet for final approval in May 2014.**

Relationship to Council Objectives

Objective 2 – Safe, healthy and cohesive community

A -Build capacity and cohesion in our communities

B - Work closely with Parish and Town Councils and local neighbourhoods

F - Work with partners to address crime and anti-social behaviour

H -Support opportunities for young people to participate in community action and society

I -Address the needs of an increasingly elderly population and the needs of vulnerable people

J - Promote healthy living, well-being and address health inequalities

K- Support the local economy

Objective 3 – Conserve the environment & promote sustainability

A – Protect the Green Belt, conserve the areas of outstanding natural beauty (ANOB) and enhance the environment

F – Provide & safer and cleaner environment

Implications

(i) This is a key decision within the forward plan.

(ii) It is within the policy and budgetary framework.

Financial Implications

The strategy does not commit the Council to any additional financial resources and will help enable a range of partner and community organisations to access external funding by highlighting existing shortfalls in

open space and recreational facility provision.

Risk Implications

The strategy directly informs and supports the Council's Delivery Development Plan (DDPD) and Core Strategy. Not having an up to date open space and recreational evidence weakens their value and credibility and also reduces the potential of both the Council and community groups to access external funding by not being able to definitely confirm existing shortfalls in provision.

Equalities Implications

The strategy will help attract inward investment to improve the provision of local open space and recreational facilities. Improving the physical access will enable more residents and visitors to enjoy a broad range of facilities and natural open space that is available to enjoy across the District.

Sustainability Implications

A key focus of the investment will result in more energy efficient buildings and an improved infrastructure network that will enable and encourage residents and visitors to enjoy green modes of transport including cycling and walking.

Background

- 1 In November 2006 Chiltern District Council formally adopted its first Chiltern Open Space and Recreational Strategy. The document's purpose was to bring together key community organisations and develop a co-ordinated approach to managing recreational facilities and open space provision identifying any shortfalls in provision.
- 2 The plan helped support local community groups develop and improve facilities which included upgrading and developing play areas, sports halls, astro turf pitches, skate parks, youth facilities, footpath access to natural open spaces, community centres, sports pitches and pavilions.

Refreshed Open Space and Recreational Strategy

- 3 The refreshed strategy aims to build on the success of the old. Whilst the level of resources used to inform the new strategy is significantly less than those used in 2006 the principal of consulting and working with the local community has remained. The new plan reflects the emergence of the new Green Infrastructure Strategy and a county-wide multi-agency approach to managing green open space provision of over twenty hectares. Consequently, large open space localities are now managed and co-ordinated through the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership. The updated strategy

does however directly support Chiltern District Council's Core Strategy and the emerging Delivery Development Plan Document.

- 4 The process of updating the new strategy was twofold. Firstly, town and parish councils, sports clubs and schools were invited to detail new developments that have taken place since 2006 from the categories listed below.

- community/ village halls
- leisure centres
- swimming pools
- synthetic turf pitches
- amenity open space (Twenty hectares and below),
- parks, playing pitches
- informal youth facilities
- children's play grounds
- allotments

These are captured fully in Appendices, 1, 2 and 3 of the updated strategy. Once completed the areas across the district were re-evaluated using the same methodology as in 2006 to determine if any shortfalls in provision still remain. (Appendix 4 of the draft strategy)

Key Findings of the Audit

- 5 Whilst there has been a range of improvements since 2006 the updated strategy identifies localities that have a range of shortfalls in provision which are detailed below.
- 6 **Amersham Old Town** - There is a shortfall in both youth facilities and equipped play areas. Gore Hill Residents Association is currently developing plans to create a new play area and a community green open space area. Although Market Hall is located in the main High Street, the building's internal access is of a poor standard and overall there is insufficient provision of indoor community facilities.
- 7 **Chalfont St Giles** - Whilst there is sufficient indoor community space there are issues in relation to the quality of existing provision and the lack of indoor sports facilities. To address this Chalfont St Giles Youth Club has secured planning permission to extend the youth club with the aim of developing a new indoor sports facility for dance and other sports/leisure activities.
- 8 **Chalfont St Peter** - Although there has been significant investment in play areas there are still localised areas of the village that do not offer sufficient play provision. Plans are in place through the local Community Appraisal Group to upgrade play and youth provision at Cheena Meadow, Mill Meadow and Boundary Road sites. There is also an identified shortfall in youth football provision which is being addressed by Chalfont St Peter Football Club and the Parish Council

who are working collaboratively to develop the Mill Meadow site and offer additional sports provision.

- 9 **Chesham Town** - There are still areas across Chesham that have limited access to local public open space which includes the outlying Green Belt area that borders the town. Despite investment in youth facilities at Lowndes Park there are still shortfalls in provision in some communities particularly, Ashridge Vale and Newtown wards. Currently there are insufficient playing fields to serve existing demand levels for youth sports. This would be partially met with the development of a new astro-turf pitch identified as the preferred location in the 2006 strategy. In terms of the number of allotments, sports pavilions and community centre provision the town has sufficient capacity to meet local needs. However, many of the existing facilities are old and in need of investment in order that they are accessible and fit for purpose.
- 10 **Great Missenden** - Accessible indoor community provision is the key issue that needs addressing in Great Missenden.
- 11 **Little Chalfont** - There is still a shortage of indoor community provision but there are plans in place through Parish Council and local Community Association to replace and upgrade the existing community hall and sports pavilion buildings. Little Chalfont Community Association is also developing a nature park as a public amenity open space in a central location in the village.
- 12 **Prestwood** - The village has a significant shortfall in youth facility provision, equipped play areas and playing fields. There is also an identified need to develop a new community centre facility in the village.
- 13 **Seer Green** - There are currently no youth facilities provided in the village and the existing play area is insufficient in size to meet the population needs.
- 14 **District Wide Recreational Facilities** - The Sport England Facility Planning Model identified that Chiltern currently has sufficient leisure centre and swimming pool provision. However, Chiltern Pools Centre is well over forty years old and is likely to need replacing in the near future. There is a potential need to increase bowls facilities to serve the larger settlements of Amersham, Chesham and Chalfont St Peter as existing provision will be insufficient to meet growing future demand. There is no dedicated athletics track in Chiltern or the neighbouring South Bucks authority despite an active athletics club and a strong heritage for the sport in the district. Consequently there is an unfulfilled demand to develop a new athletics track facility in the district.
- 15 **Next Steps**
It is proposed that the updated draft Open Space and Recreational Strategy is re-circulated to key community partner organisations to

confirm that it has captured all the key developments since 2006 and that its recommendations are appropriate to local needs. Following this the finalised document will be presented to Cabinet in summer 2014 for formal adoption.

16 **Conclusion**

The Chiltern Open Space strategy is a key document in helping inform the Council's Delivery Development Plan Document and Core Strategy. It consequently plays an important role in improving access and provision to open space and recreational facilities directly helping to improve health and wellbeing of residents.

The document also enables Parish & Town Councils and local community groups to attract inward investment by providing robust evidence of existing shortfalls in provision.

Background papers: None
