

SUBJECT:	<i>Chiltern and South Bucks Open Spaces Strategy</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Director of Services – Steve Bambrick</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Head of Healthy Communities - Martin Holt</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Principal Leisure & Wellbeing Manager - Paul Nanji Tel: 01494 732110 pnanji@chiltern.gov.uk</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 On 26th June 2018 the draft Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy was presented to Cabinet. The report detailed the strategy's key findings and recommendations in relation to the quality and provision of open spaces/parks across the district.
- 1.2 To verify the strategy's accuracy, Cabinet requested that it be subject to an additional further round of public consultation with the district's Town and Parish Councils and other key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The attached updated strategy reflects the feedback captured through the additional consultation.
- 1.4 Cabinet is requested to formally adopt the strategy so that it can be used to inform the emerging Local Plan and support local Town and Parish Councils and other community groups improve facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. To formally approve the proposed Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy and utilise its findings to support the implementation of the new Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan.**

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 As well as helping inform the new Local Plan the strategy is a key document in helping improve access and the quality of open space provision, contributing directly to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 2.2 An up to date audit of Chiltern's existing open space will provide a valuable resource to Parish Councils, Town Councils and local community groups, helping them attract external funding by providing an independent robust evidence base of existing shortfalls in provision.

- 2.3 The proposed Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy has been through two rounds of consultation with local town and parish councils to ensure it accurately reflects existing open space provision as well as capture recent changes in local open spaces across Chiltern.

3. Content of report

- 3.1 In March 2016 Chiltern and South Bucks Councils jointly commissioned a specialist consultant, Strategic Leisure, to undertake an Open Space Strategy. The Strategy's key aims were to

- Inform and support the newly emerging Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan to provide a concise, robust and comprehensive evidence base that enables both Councils to develop planning policies which are supported by sufficient evidence to withstand external scrutiny.
- Increase participation in recreational facilities by bringing together key community organisations to develop a co-ordinated approach to effectively manage recreational and open space provision.
- Achieve a joined-up strategy with localised priorities to develop sustainable facilities that support increased participation.
- Support community groups and others to access external funding.

- 3.2 The types of open space included in the strategy assessment are detailed below with a visit to each individual facility involving both a qualitative and quantitative assessment:

- Public parks and gardens
- Amenity greenspace
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments and community gardens
- Recreation grounds (where applicable)
- Accessible areas of countryside on the urban fringe
- Cemeteries
- Civic spaces
- Natural and semi-natural greenspaces

- 3.3 The methodology employed to inform the strategy's conclusions included a number of elements which are detailed below:

- Review of national, regional and local strategies and policy documents relevant to the exercise.
- Use of quantitative standards in accordance principles contained in the Planning Policy Guideline 17 (PPG17) and by applying a local standard based on new Fields in Trust standards.
- Division of open spaces into typology consisting of a number of different and discrete amenity "types".
- Creation of a qualitative template to include key elements of design and maintenance.
- Qualitative on-site assessment of open spaces distributed throughout Chiltern and South Bucks in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the principles contained in the PPG17 Companion Guide.
- Analysis of results to qualitatively assess the condition of open spaces as well as their overall accessibility standards.
- Devising a parish questionnaire, distribution to all parishes and analysis of questionnaire results.
- Drafting key conclusions relating to the current state of open spaces in Chiltern.
- Drafting recommendations relating to the significance of open space Chiltern in relation to the Local Plan.

3.4 Following the site assessments a range of key findings were identified. These included:

- The District having healthy quantities of Natural and semi-natural greenspace which is accessible to residents and other visitors.
- A more than adequate supply of allotments.
- More public parks and gardens being required in Chiltern.
- A need for more amenity greenspace. Public parks and gardens are required in some communities, particularly in the south of the District to the south of Little Chalfont.
- Many open space sites can be improved by making entrances more welcoming and by introducing informative signage to interpret the district's interesting heritage and history.
- Softening of many grass areas with natural meadow and tree planting would increase their landscape value and enhance biodiversity.
- A general shortage of interesting and exciting play space when compared to the national standard. An additional Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) and

more Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAPs) should be considered in the Chalfont St Giles area, and more Local Areas of Play (LAP) for very young children in and around Chalfont Common.

- Some playgrounds have rubber surfacing which may pose a risk to safety if not attended to.

4. Consultation

4.1 Following completion of the draft strategy it was agreed by Services Committee that there should be an additional round of consultation with key stakeholders to verify the accuracy and content of the document. Town and Parish Councils were given an additional month to report back issues specific to their respective localities. Collectively these two rounds of feedback have provided invaluable information in improving the accuracy of the strategy.

4.2 This has included updating and incorporating the correct site names of the all the assessed sites, capturing any recent improvements which have recently been undertaken, updating any inaccuracies in the strategy's findings for specific sites and ensuring the population data used to ensure any shortfall and over-supply in provision was accurate.

4.3 Looking ahead given the ongoing changes to open space provision Town and Parish councils along with local community groups will be encouraged to provide the district councils with information of any improvements. This will allow the strategy to be regularly updated and accurately reflect local needs.

4.4 Internally, the Council's Planning and Economic Development Department has supported the strategy throughout its development, advising on key issues such as population growth, planning issues and settlement sizes.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial – There are no direct financial implications to the Council arising from the report. There may be indirect costs arising from the use of Section 106 agreements or the implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to generate funding to cover costs of open space facility development

5.2 Legal – the National Planning Policy Framework require local authorities to

- Avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain and enhance the character of open spaces
- Ensure that open spaces do not suffer from encroachment (from traffic flows, etc.)
- Protect and enhance rights of way
- Consider the impacts of development on biodiversity and nature conservation.

- Base planning policies on an up-to-date assessment of the needs for open space sport and recreational facilities

6. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 6.1 Sustainable Environment – The strategy will help protect the district’s green infrastructure and facilitate improved provision for residents to access both now and in the future.
- 6.2 Safe, Healthy and Active Communities – Chiltern District Council has a duty to consider the health and wellbeing of its community, enabling improved access and provision of open spaces would directly support this as well as strengthen partnership working with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Once adopted following consultation the strategy will be presented to key stakeholders including Town and Parish Councils and local environmental community groups so that they are aware of its key findings and recommendations.
- 7.2 Following this the strategy will be promoted on social media and made available on the Council’s website to support stakeholders in funding bids to improve provision in their local communities.
- 7.3 The document will form an important part of the emerging Local Plan evidence base and will be used to support both councils emerging Local Plan policies

Background Papers:	Appendix 1 – Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy
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