

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</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the completion of the Chiltern and South Bucks Council Open Space strategy highlighting its key findings and recommendations and to approve the draft strategy for public consultation with Town and Parish Council and other agencies. The finalised strategy will inform the emerging Local Plan.

The PAG to advise the Portfolio Holder on the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities approves the draft Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy for public consultation.**

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy is a key document in helping inform the new Local Plan.
- 2.2 Improving access and the quality of Open Space provision contributes directly to improving the health and wellbeing of residents. An up to date audit of South Bucks existing open space will enable Town and Parish Councils, and local community groups to identify the priorities for improvement and enable organisations to plan and attract inward investment.

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 scrutiny at an Examination in Public.
 - 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 open space 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 reach 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 PPG17 Companion Guide (i.e. by applying a local standard based on new Fields in Trust standards to different types of open spaces grouped in accordance with the PPG17 typology in terms of ha per 1,000 population). Although PPG 17 is no longer a government guidance document the companion guide remains as a source of guidance which has not been replaced
- 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 South Bucks and Chiltern in accordance with the NPPF and the principles contained in the PPG17 Companion Guide.

- Analysis of results to qualitatively assess the condition of open spaces.
- Use of accessibility standards as defined by the Fields in Trust Guidance Document.
- Defining a parish questionnaire, distribution to all parishes within South Bucks and Chiltern and analysis of questionnaire results.
- Drafting key conclusions relating to the current state of open spaces in South Bucks and Chiltern.
- Drafting recommendations relating to the significance of open space South Bucks and Chiltern in relation to the Local Plan.

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

- There is an oversupply of amenity green space, and parks and gardens with an under supply of children's facilities
- The District has very healthy quantities of Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace which is accessible to residents and other visitors.
- A more than adequate supply of Allotments.
- Many open space sites could have been improved by making entrances more welcoming and by introducing informative signage to interpret the District's interesting heritage and history.
- The Grass cutting and litter collection of Amenity Greenspace were generally carried out to a high standard however many are poorly landscaped, with just an area of lawn and no tree or other planting.
- Some more sites with challenging and interesting play equipment would encourage greater usage. However, it should be noted that some contained some new and exciting equipment.
- Some playgrounds rubberised safety surfacing is in relatively poor condition
- 16 Parks and Gardens in South Bucks Most are attractively landscaped, but few use informal landscapes (e.g. "meadow" or prairie planting) to provide variety and increase biodiversity

4. Consultation

4.1 As detailed in the methodology (Section 3.3) the plan was informed by consultation with key stakeholders. Externally, all of South Bucks Town and Parish Councils were given the

opportunity to contribute directly to inform the proposed strategy directly reporting back issues specific to their respective localities.

- 4.2 Internally, the Council's Planning department has supported the strategy throughout out its developments advising on key issues such as population growth, planning issues and settlement sizes.
- 4.3 It is now proposed to undertake public consultation on the draft strategy to enable Towns and Parishes and other agencies the opportunity to comment on the findings

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-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 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 the councils emerging Local Plan policies

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