

**REPORT OF THE SERVICES DIRECTOR – SPORT, LEISURE, AND PARKS****'BREATHING SPACE' – LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT****1 SUMMARY**

This report sets out proposals for the strengthening of local community engagement in the management and improvement of open and green space. This follows on from a report to Executive Board on 19 December 2006 presenting the City-wide 'Breathing Space' – a strategic framework for open and green space. Local people will have an opportunity to have say in the prioritisation of open and green space improvements and investment across the city. Importantly, the report also details the current Section 106 contributions that each Committee Area currently has.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is RECOMMENDED that the Area Committee:-**

- (i) notes the adoption of 'Breathing Space' as a strategic framework for the management and maintenance of the City's open and green spaces and its implications and opportunities;
- (ii) notes the new one voice and 'corporate sponsor' role that will be carried out by Leisure and Community Services;
- (iii) agrees to the strengthening of local engagement in the prioritisation of open and green space improvements and investment;
- (iv) endorses the development of detailed area based prioritised investment and implementation plans for open and green spaces, aligned with the Local Community Plans;
- (v) nominates an area representative from the area to sit on the citywide forum;
- (vi) notes the current section 106 funding aligned to this Area Committee, shown as Appendix 1.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 'Breathing Space' is the strategic framework for the management and maintenance of the City's open and green spaces for the next 10 years which was adopted by Executive Board on the 19 December 2006. This report seeks to provide an overview of this document and proposes for discussion some future ways of working and planning.
- 3.2 Area Committee's have already played a significant and important role in the development of 'Breathing Space' and the future success of this strategic

framework is reliant upon continuous engagement and consultation with individuals, communities and officers, as we move to implementation.

3.3 A key part of the Executive Board report proposed that ‘in consultation with Area Committees and across the Council, a detailed action plan be developed based upon the strategic outcomes agreed, and following this a detailed investment and management plan be developed’.

3.4 ‘Breathing Space’ has a clear strategic vision for the City’s Open and Green Spaces.

**“Better quality, sustainable open and green spaces that are accessible and inviting to use”.**

This vision is therefore seeking to achieve **more people using our City’s open and green spaces.**

3.5 In addition, for the first time in the City’s history there is a full understanding of the quality, quantity, and accessibility of the City’s open and green spaces. Audits have been carried out looking at location, types of spaces, and the condition. A series of standards have been developed based on this information that now enables a better understanding of each areas open and green space and this can be used for local open and green spaces planning, identifying future management, maintenance and investment priorities. The standards used and the prioritisation plans will also help to inform the development of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

3.6 Summary of the agreed recommendations from the adoption of ‘Breathing Space’:-

- a new strategic vision for the future of the City’s open and green spaces;
- a set of clear Strategic Outcomes on which to build more detailed action plans;
- the need to strengthen engagement with local communities and stakeholders to develop detailed area based prioritised investment and implementation plans through a Neighbourhood Management approach;
- the need to develop detailed area based prioritised investment and implementation plans for open and green spaces, aligned with the Local Community Plans;
- the adoption of the standards set for the two main typologies (land types) ‘Parks and Gardens’ and ‘Natural & Semi Natural sites’;
- to undertake further work over the next two years to develop the remaining typologies and set the necessary standards;
- to use this information help inform the Local Development Framework (LDF);
- the designation of the Corporate Director of DOLACS as ‘corporate sponsor’ for the management of all the City’s open and green spaces.

## **4 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 In order to drive improvements at a local level, it is proposed that the Head of Parks and Open Spaces work with the Neighbourhood Managers to identify the most appropriate mechanisms for: strengthening local engagement in the prioritisation of open and green space improvements and investment; and developing detailed area based prioritised investment and implementation plans for open and green spaces, aligned with the Local Community Plans.
- 4.2 The Head of Parks and Open Spaces and the relevant Neighbourhood Manager (for each area) will ensure that there is wide engagement from neighbourhoods and communities and that the Area Committee is kept regularly informed of progress in relation to the management, maintenance and investment in open and green spaces. Monitoring of progress on open and green spaces would be aligned with wider performance management and scrutiny of the Local Community Plan.
- 4.3 Equally, the development of area based prioritised investment and implementation plans for open and green spaces would inform future Local Community Planning in respect of the city-wide priority 'Respect for Nottingham' and local priority of 'Cleaner and Greener Public Spaces'. Both are key priorities in all local plans.
- 4.4 The area based plans relating to open and green spaces will be updated annually and the information will be used to inform a citywide prioritised action and investment plan that will be reported back to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Community Services, and Tourism (including the Champions Group) and to Executive Board, as required.
- 4.5 The specifics of how this will all work needs to be given more thought and the Head of Parks and Open Spaces will be working closely with the Neighbourhood Managers to flesh out the operational details. However it is envisaged that the Neighbourhood Management approach provides the opportunity for local people to; become the local advocates for open and green spaces, to be the consultative lead within the each area with the community on specific development and master planning projects taking place; to identify sites that are surplus to local need and consider realignment of these sites in line with a city wide need, to consider all types of open and green space land within the prioritised plans using the tools provided through 'Breathing Space', to investigate ways in which open and green spaces and the way in which they are developed can be used to mitigate the effects of climate change and improve biodiversity.

### **Recognition of Conflicting Priorities/Challenges to be faced:**

- 4.6 'Breathing Space' the strategic framework has identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed both to improve customer satisfaction and to improve current management practises. It is important that customer expectations are managed and that there is recognition of the huge investment required to upgrade much of the City's open and green spaces assets. The audit work undertaken, based on Green Flag criteria, has indicated that there is a city wide need to invest in the open and green space network and in order to bring existing sites up to an agreed 70% quality benchmark that over £7 million is required for capital works and over £500,000 is required to support the maintenance of existing sites let alone address any future developments and improvements.

- 4.7 It is therefore imperative that investment is prioritised carefully at a local level fitting into a citywide strategic framework. Officer time to manage this improvement is also a key consideration and must be factored into the action planning process.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The approval of the recommendations have limited financial implications at this stage. However in the medium term, especially following the completion of the consulted open and green space action plan, a realignment of existing funding presently committed across the Council relating to open and green space expenditure will need to be considered. The local action plans will also form the basis for how all financial investment including Section 106 and other external funding is prioritised and spent within each area.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

It is a requirement of PPG17 to carry out an assessment of the needs and opportunities for open space. This requires a comprehensive assessment of quantity, quality, and accessibility. Based upon these assessments local authorities are required to develop local standards of provision through the development plan (the Local Development Framework). 'Breathing Space' forms part of the evidence base in the development of local standards and open space planning policies. The development of the local open and green spaces forums and prioritised action plans are a major contributor to informing this process.

## **7 OBSERVATIONS OF OTHER OFFICERS**

Neighbourhood Management is taking a lead role, in liaising with other services across the council and partner agencies, in:

- raising satisfaction levels with neighbourhoods as a place to live;
- raising satisfaction with the quality of Council services;
- increasing numbers of people who feel that they can influence decision-making.

The Neighbourhood Managers and their teams are committed to working with communities and providers to jointly plan and manage services to transform neighbourhoods and improve satisfaction with neighbourhoods.

## **8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

The strengthening of engagement will increase the opportunities for local communities and visitors to access and use open and green spaces and help shape future provision.

## **9 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Not adopting the recommendations will result in the continued deterioration of the infrastructure, rendering sites unusable, unsafe, unviable, driving up costs and increasing complaints and liability. Open and green space land in the City will reduce and become even more fragmented.

## **10 CONSULTATIONS**

In the production of the 'Breathing Space' a strategic framework considerable consultation has already been carried to inform the strategic outcomes. In order to create more detailed action plans further consultation is needed.

## **11 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

The approval of the recommendation will make a significant contribution towards the delivery of the following Corporate Priorities, People feeling safe in their communities, a cleaner city. The recommendation will also contribute towards the deliver of all the Corporate Plan themes.

## **12 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS**

Through improving the quality and design of open and green spaces, antisocial behaviour can be reduced. The strengthening of engagement and action planning will help to identify issues and help to prioritise investment that may result in reduction of crime and disorder therefore improving the quality of live within our neighbourhoods.

## **13 VALUE FOR MONEY**

By implementing 'Breathing Space' a strategic framework and developing prioritised action plans, improvements will be made to current management and maintenance costs. Use of these highly valued open and green space areas by residents will increase.

## **14 \*List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information**

- Executive Board Report Breathing Space December 2006
- 'Breathing Space' a strategic framework to the management and maintenance of Nottingham's open and green spaces
- <http://intra.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/corporate/docs/BreathingSpaceFrameworkDec2006.doc>

## **15 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

None

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**Section 106 confirmed funding**

<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>REF.</b>	<b>BUDGET LOCATION</b>	<b>BALANCE £</b>	<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>	<b>DATE TO BE SPENT</b>
West Area	WEST AREA	NS Parks	1,514.00	Unallocated	
Cocked Hat	COCKEDHA		42,250.70	Unallocated	04/04/11
Melbourne Court	MELBOURN	NS Parks	28,341.75	Unallocated	14/02/11
Plantation Site	PLANT	NS Parks	3,167.00	Unallocated	02/05/07
<b>Total for West Area</b>			<b>75,273.45</b>		
Total Allocated			0		
Total Unallocated			75,273.45		