

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

19 June 2014

Report by Director of Environment

OPEN SPACE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise the Cabinet on the completion of the East Renfrewshire Open Space Asset Management Plan 2014 (Appendix 1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the East Renfrewshire Open Space Asset Management Plan.

BACKGROUND

3. This is the first Open Space Asset Management Plan to be prepared and outlines a range of work being undertaken by the Council in relation to the range and management of open space provision across its area. The preparation of asset management plans is considered good practice.

REPORT

4. This Open Space Asset Management Plan seeks to provide a policy context for open space and provides an overview of the quantity, existing uses and current activities.

5. It identifies future actions and potential risks and seeks to provide a well managed, accessible, attractive environment with a variety of opportunities for residents and visitors to exercise, learn and enjoy.

6. The context for this Plan is informed by a range of legislation, policy, plans and strategies. There are also a range of key drivers which serve to shape the content of the plan and these are mainly development issues, performance measures and future activities.

7. The Plan highlights that open space management and maintenance within the East Renfrewshire area is moving forward and a great amount is currently being achieved. Increased emphasis is now placed on the benefits that open space provision can bring to an area and its residents. Significant funding is in place to assist develop a network of sites, sports facilities and access routes which will provide multiple benefits for the area and its residents.

8. There is however greater need for a co ordination of efforts across Council Services and to develop a better understanding of the Council's assets in terms of condition, future requirements and associated financial expenditure.

9. A number of actions are identified in the Plan which prioritise activity and which seek to achieve a strategic approach to open space management resulting in multiple benefits and value for money. These actions will be updated annually and reported back to Cabinet in due course.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

10. Costs associated with the maintenance of land are generally met through the Council's core revenue budgets. In addition, Capital Programme bids are submitted by the Planning and Parks Services annually and have allowed implementation of a range of access and environmental enhancement works across the Council area.

CONSULTATION

11. The Asset Management Plan has been jointly prepared by Parks, Planning and Property and Technical Services. There has been no wider consultation.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

12. A number of activities within the Asset Management Plan demonstrate an established pattern of partnership working on the part of the Council. Key actions are detailed which will require continued collaboration with community groups, landowners and key stakeholders.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

13. The Plan will help to achieve a co-ordinated and inclusive approach to open space management resulting in multiple benefits and value for money. There are no new staffing, property, IT, sustainability or equalities issues at this point in time.

CONCLUSIONS

14. With the continued pressure on budgets and expenditure asset management is an even more critical tool in ensuring best use is made of available funding. The Open Space Asset Management Plan will now be refreshed each year to assist in this process and highlight improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the East Renfrewshire Open Space Asset Management Plan.

Director of Environment

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East Renfrewshire Council

Environment Department

Open Space Asset Management Plan 2014

Contents

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
- 1. INTRODUCTION 2
- 2. BACKGROUND 3
 - National Context 3
 - Local Context 4
 - Key Drivers 5
- 3. EAST RENFREWSHIRE OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT 6
 - Capital/Revenue/External Funding Allocation 7
 - Open Space Provision within East Renfrewshire 8
- 4. POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE 18
- 5. ASSET RATIONALISATION/ACQUISITION PROGRAMME 19
- 6. CONCLUSION 20

Appendix 1: Cemetery Management Plans

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government requires local authorities to formulate appropriate policies and plans to effectively manage, protect and promote the natural environment including open space and green networks. Open space is important to the health and well being of our communities and natural processes which provide a wide range of services on which our society and economy depends.

This Open Space Asset Management plan seeks to provide a Policy context for open space and provides an overview of the quantity, existing uses and current activities.

It identifies future actions and potential risks and seeks to provide a well managed, accessible, attractive environment with a variety of opportunities for residents and visitors to exercise, learn and enjoy.

The context for this Plan is informed by a range of legislation, policy, plans and strategies. There are also a range of key drivers which serve to shape the content of the plan and these are mainly development issues, performance measures and future activities.

The Council through its corporate statement 2013-17, East Renfrewshire: Your Council, Your Future states that “East Renfrewshire Council is committed to improving the lives of local people, promoting equality and fairness and enhancing the area in which we live, now and for the future.”

The importance of a well structured and maintained environment is highlighted through the Single Outcome Agreement and a key outcome of this is to ensure “Our local people are healthier, more active and inequalities in health are reduced.”

Open Space is recognised through national planning policy as a means of delivering a step change in environmental quality to support quality of life and stimulate investment. Providing a high quality built and natural environment that encourages physical activity and active travel is also proven to be hugely important in terms of health and disease prevention.

Considerable information on the quantity and quality of open space provision across East Renfrewshire is held by the Council and is used to inform planning of its future use, value (financial / non financial) and opportunities for development.

The development of planning policy framed to deliver the correct type of open space in the best location, along with identification of surplus open space provides an effective tool to better manage the Council’s open space asset.

There is a significant level of investment, expenditure and activity relating to open space however, a strategic approach to its management across the Council area will lead to improved decision making and better coordination of effort across all open space assets.

1. INTRODUCTION

East Renfrewshire Council serves a population of 91,000 living within an area of approximately 18,000 hectares.

East Renfrewshire is viewed as a desirable place to live within a high quality built and natural environment. There is a network of open space across the Council area including parks, play areas, recreational areas, green corridors and semi-natural spaces. The urban settlements and villages have a full range of open space provision within walking distance addressing a diverse range of local need including a country park, public parks, formal sports provision, woodland, access opportunities, play areas and play spaces, green corridors and semi-natural spaces.

This is the first Open Space Asset Management Plan and has at its core the aim to provide fit for purpose open space assets that meet the needs of the communities whilst minimizing costs and enhancing service delivery.

It will ensure co-ordination and effective management of open space within East Renfrewshire and will drive towards consistent approaches for maintenance recharging, clarifying responsibility and upkeep whilst making best use of available funding.

A cross discipline team comprising officers from the Planning, Parks and Roads Services will meet on a regular basis to maximize partnership working and ensure effective project updates are communicated and opportunities maximized.

The Council adopted guidance issued by CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) in October 2008, which provides a common framework for the progression of asset management and capital planning arrangements. The approach adopted is that the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) is compiled from six Service Asset Management Plans (AMP's), of which the Open Space Asset Management Plan is one.

BACKGROUND

National Context

The importance of a sustainable, high quality, accessible environment is a fundamental objective in planning for the future and Scottish Government provides direction on the creation, protection and management of an environment where physical well being is improved and activity made easier.

The importance of a good quality environment is increasingly highlighted as an essential component of successful, healthy and sustainable communities.

Access to good quality open spaces can encourage people to be physically active and in settlements, green networks of linked, good quality open spaces are important for their contribution to amenity and their role in nature conservation, biodiversity, recreation and physical activity.

The planning system sits at the heart of this and the policy context for open space and green networks is well defined at national and strategic levels.

Scottish Planning Policy supports the protection of the landscape and natural environment and directs planning authorities to take a broader approach to this rather than simply conserving designated or protected sites and species. It recommends wildlife sites and corridors, landscape features, watercourses and areas of open space are linked together in integrated habitat networks.

Scottish Government clearly states its overarching purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth; contributing to sustainable development; the emphasis on climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions and an emphasis on the creation and maintenance of high quality places and developments.

National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2) highlights the role green networks can play in delivering environmental, economic and social benefits and highlights the planning system as a key method of delivery. It identifies the Central Scotland Green Network as a national development and something which must be considered and planned for at strategic and local authority levels.

The aim of the Central Scotland Green Network is to make “a significant contribution to Scotland’s sustainable economic development”. That aim is to change the face of central Scotland by restoring and improving its rural and urban landscape. The vision is that:

“by 2050, Central Scotland has been transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people’s lives are enriched by its quality.”

Open space forms part of this and Scottish Planning Policy states that “planning authorities should take a strategic and long term approach to managing the open space in their area, assessing both current and future needs and protecting all spaces which can help to meet them”.

Planning Advice Note 65 states that “the planning system performs two functions in relation to open space:

- Protecting areas that are valuable and valued; and
- Ensuring provision of appropriate quality in, or within easy reach of new development.”

Scottish Government Policies Designing Streets and Designing Places also highlight that most successful places are generally well located, designed, managed and adaptable. Spaces that exhibit these characteristics are likely to be of a high quality, safe and therefore well used. Spaces that do not exhibit these characteristics are likely to appear neglected, feel unsafe and contribute little to the quality of the surrounding environment.

Local Context

The Council’s Open Space Asset Management Plan is configured through a range of Corporate guidance.

The Council is working to deliver better outcomes for its customers and residents and aims to reduce inequalities within populations and between areas. The Council’s “A Place to Grow” campaign is about showcasing East Renfrewshire as a great place to invest, work, live and explore and the work that is undertaken in relation to open space management contributes significantly to this.

The Asset Management Plan demonstrates linkages to the Single Outcome Agreement (see Table 1) and key activities are detailed in and reported on through the Outcome Delivery Plan.

Table 1 Key linkages exist between the Plan and the Council’s Single Outcome Agreement

Asset Management Plan Objectives	Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Outcome
Provide a variety of opportunities for residents and visitors to exercise, learn and enjoy.	SOA 2 East Renfrewshire Residents are fit and active and have the skills for learning, life and work.
Provide a well managed, accessible, attractive environment.	SOA 3 East Renfrewshire is a thriving, attractive and sustainable place for residents and businesses to grow.

Key Drivers

A number of strategic drivers will shape the council's future asset requirements over the life of the plan.

➤ **Departmental Plans**

Departmental priorities will be reflected in Plan updates including, Environment Department Service Delivery Plan, Local Development Plan;

➤ **Local Strategies/ Plans**

A number of strategies/ plans are in place which will influence future activity including the Adopted Local Plan/ Proposed Local Development Plan, Sports Pitch Strategy, Parks Strategy, Open Space Audit, Core Paths Plan, Local Transport Strategy, Regeneration Strategy and emerging Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.

➤ **Burial Space Improvements**

Further development of burial space is required across the authority to meet the forecast depletion of existing lair capacity;

➤ **Funding**

The allocation of funding for the maintenance, enhancement and creation of open space is fundamental. Funds are currently made available through the capital and revenue budgets, although future planning is required to address shortfall. Significant work has been done to secure alternative sources of income, including external grant funding and development contributions;

➤ **Health & Safety**

European Safety Standards for play equipment have changed over the years and the council is removing and upgrading play equipment and play areas to meet the current safety standards;

➤ **Challenge and Review**

We hold quantitative and qualitative information on all of our assets to inform us of the assessment of our open spaces portfolio.

2. EAST RENFREWSHIRE OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT

Open space assets across the Council area are in both public and private ownership and the Council manages these through a variety of means. Responsibility for the management of open space within East Renfrewshire lies jointly with the Parks and Planning Services.

The Parks Service aims to provide quality public parks, open spaces, sport pitches, play spaces, woodlands and cemeteries and provides operational responsibilities and day to day management of these. It is responsible for the maintenance of nearly 500 open spaces equating to over 345 hectares.

The Parks Service has a well established maintenance regime in place which is carried out on behalf of a number of Services including Planning and Housing and is funded through established revenue budgets.

Alternative, less intensive maintenance regimes which support biodiversity and sustainable water management and, reduce overall maintenance costs are now being investigated and have been implemented at a number of locations including Rouken Glen and Cowan Parks.

The work of the Planning Service seeks to manage the wider open space resource (both publicly and privately owned) and in doing so provides strategic direction to the future development, enhancement and protection of it within the East Renfrewshire area through policy development and project implementation.

The quality and quantity of open space in the built up area contributes much to the local amenity and provides a resource that can be enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike. It provides a setting for development and contributes to the area's natural environment, offering valuable habitats and helping to offset the impact of climate change.

Leisure opportunities exist for people of all ages and abilities and can take many forms. They are supported by a range of different outdoor facilities, including areas of informal open space, walking and cycling routes and tracks, sports pitches, play areas and growing spaces.

Walking and cycling as leisure pursuits are becoming increasingly popular. Indeed, according to Sportscotland, they are the recreational activities with the highest participation for adults.

The demand for leisure and recreation facilities is continuing to increase and become more varied and multi faceted. Activities range from organised and active sport pursuits to more sedate and informal recreation. Contemporary demands stem both from the increasingly sophisticated leisure expectations of the population and from national guidance to promote sport, health and access.

Furthermore, the leisure industry is increasingly important in economic terms. The area's leisure and recreation facilities, notably Dams to Darnley Country Park, Rouken Glen Park and Whitelee Windfarm, Greenbank House and local walking and cycling routes have a role to play in making East Renfrewshire a tourist destination, particularly for day visitors.

The wider management of open space to provide multiple benefits remains a priority and current work seeks to achieve opportunities for health and well being coupled with wider environmental and educational benefits for both existing and new residents. The Council's Countryside Ranger Service runs a variety of events primarily focused around Dams to Darnley Country Park, Rouken Glen Park and Whitelee Windfarm.

Capital/Revenue/External Funding Allocation

➤ **Capital Investment**

The Prudential code placed a formal requirement on local authorities to take account of asset management planning and option appraisal when agreeing capital investment proposals. The current process for the allocation of funds for open spaces is service led. It is envisaged that the creation of this plan will require even greater coordination for the future allocation of investment.

➤ **Revenue Expenditure**

A core contract budget of £3.49 million is available to the Parks Service to undertake grounds maintenance of open space, sports pitches, play areas, cemeteries (including burials), woodland and provision of Parks Rangers (excluding Countryside Rangers associated with Dams to Darnley Country Park who are jointly funded by the Planning Service and Glasgow City Council and Whitelee Windfarm where funding is provided via development contributions by the Planning Service and South Lanarkshire Council) and Pitch Let Attendants.

Revenue expenditure for maintenance is distributed amongst the various Services based on a historical allocation. The majority of revenue is expended by Environmental Services on focused maintenance activity, largely grass cutting, weed killing, litter picking, street cleaning and associated work. Some of this work is recharged to other Services. Demand for other works such as fence replacement, path improvements, drainage and so forth are not specifically revenue funded and there is little scope for reprioritisation across the Service revenue streams under the current arrangements. It is envisaged that the creation of this plan will require greater coordination for the future allocation of revenue funds and may offer the ability to allocate revenue on a priority basis.

➤ **Capital Expenditure**

Capital Project Appraisal Form (CPA) bids are submitted by the Planning Service annually and have allowed implementation of a range of access and environmental enhancement works across the Council area including within Dams to Darnley Country Park and Council owned land. The availability of capital funding has varied and wherever possible has been matched with external grant funding.

➤ **External Funding**

The Council has had considerable success in securing external funding for project implementation through a variety of sources including Heritage Lottery Fund, SportsScotland, Scottish Rural Development Programme, Leader, Central Scotland Green Network, Forestry Commission and Sustrans. In order to achieve this, it is important to demonstrate a planned approach to open space management in line with Scottish Government and Council Policy.

Great emphasis is placed on the multiple benefits which can be achieved through well managed and planned open space provision and it is important that Council Policies continue to reflect this and influence future investment within the area.

External funding will continue to be sought to ensure that opportunities are maximised and best use of Council resources is achieved.

➤ **Development Contributions/ Community Benefit**

The Council has adopted Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Guidance associated with the Local Plan/ Proposed Local Development Plan. This Guidance seeks to offset the social or environmental impact of new development by securing new community, infrastructure and environmental benefits (including parks, open space, access, education, community and leisure and job creation).

Where a proposed development would create new or exacerbate existing deficiencies in local physical or community infrastructure, facilities or the environment, the Council will seek contributions from developers to assist in making good the deficiencies.

The Development Contributions Policy has the potential to bring environmental benefits including open space provision and enhancement to any part of the Council area affected by new development and can be used to match other sources of funding including external grant. In most cases development contributions can be held by the Council for a period of 5 years which will allow greater ability to plan projects and attract external funding, without being bound to what is a relatively restrictive financial year.

On receipt, development contributions are held by the Planning Service in a suspense account and distributed to the relevant Services to implement previously agreed projects. Future infrastructural enhancement works to Dams to Darnley Country Park will be funded through development contributions emerging from development at Greenlaw, Newton Mearns and Strategic Development Opportunities identified through the Proposed Local Development Plan at Maidenhill/ Malletsheugh and Barrhead South.

In addition to this, a number of projects have been funded through community benefits provided by developers agreed as part of the planning process. A key example of this is Whitelee Access Project.

Open Space Provision within East Renfrewshire

The following sections look at the various forms of open space which exist within East Renfrewshire and highlight key work which is underway. A number of actions come out of this section and are detailed later in the Plan under Key Actions and Appendix 1.

➤ **Major Public Parks**

There are 4 major public parks within East Renfrewshire which are an attraction to both residents and visitors alike. The character and potential of each Park varies and opportunities exist to maximise their popularity, attractiveness and longevity.

Whilst the Council has direct responsibility for their maintenance, a range of interested groups influence ongoing activity and management.

Site	Partners/ Engagement	Designations/ Interest	Lead Officer
Rouken Glen Park	Heritage Lottery Fund; Friends of Rouken Glen	Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Designed Landscape Local Biodiversity Site; Green Network Green Flag	Donnie McManus; Sharon McMurtrie Julie Nicol
Cowan Park	Friends of Cowan Park	Dams to Darnley Country Park Core Path Green Network	Donnie McManus; Julie Nicol
Busby Glen		Queen Elizabeth Field in Trust Site of Special Scientific Interest Local Biodiversity Site Tree Preservation Order Core Path	Donnie McManus; Julie Nicol
Orry, Eaglesham	Eaglesham Development Trust	Local Biodiversity Site Eaglesham Conservation Area Green Network	Donnie McManus; Julie Nicol

Management Plans have been prepared by the Parks Service which detail the Council’s proposals for the future management and development of these areas. They set out a range of objectives and are monitored by the Parks Service and reviewed twice yearly.

The Parks Service has identified a range of projects, however greater benefit can be achieved through the concentration of efforts on one individual park rather than a fragmented approach in several parks.

- **Funding**

Significant investment in Rouken Glen Park has been made possible through the successful award of £2.1 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund’s “Parks for People” programme to support a £3.2 million programme of works and activities to conserve various heritage features in Rouken Glen Park and make these features more accessible to people, especially park visitors.

Works will be implemented over a 3½ year period and will lead to improvements in infrastructure and activities within the Park through the development of a diverse range of events and programmes for visitors.

Work is also underway to identify future improvements to Cowan Park. The masterplanning exercise will seek to enhance the existing resource and build upon the opportunities which could arise from the construction of the replacement Barrhead High School and the creation of a new area of open space fronting onto Aurs Road, Barrhead. External funding has already been obtained for the construction of a skate park and works will commence on this shortly.

There is £50,000 available annually from 2013/14 for improvement to the park's path network over the next five years, through the General Fund Capital Programme.

➤ **Playing fields and outdoor Sports activities**

There are extensive resources in place for outdoor sport and physical activity at a local neighbourhood level as well as across East Renfrewshire. A range of key Council policies emphasise the importance of providing opportunities to meet positive outcomes for people through sport and physical activity in relation to health and well being, lifelong learning, regeneration, community safety and a sustainable environment.

The Council manages 16 facilities which provide 9 grass pitch locations and 7 synthetic pitch locations. Tennis courts are available for public use at Cowan Park, Barrhead.

A number of new synthetic pitches are currently being constructed/ programmed at Eastwood, St Lukes, St Ninians and Barrhead High Schools. Further upgrading of tennis courts at Cowan Park are also being considered as part of the wider Park masterplan.

The sport seasons vary and whilst the Council is continually looking to create new opportunities and maximise the use of existing pitches, the sharing of facilities is restricted due to the overlap in seasons e.g. football and cricket. Efforts will however continue to investigate requests and opportunities for new and diverse sports provision.

- **Funding**

Maintenance of grass pitches for pre season works is important and funding of £20,000 is allocated annually towards this. Additional works are undertaken throughout the season including grass cutting, drainage, spraying and lining parks for games. These additional monies come from the main Parks Service revenue budget.

Synthetic pitches have a life span of 8-10 years before surfaces require to be replaced at a cost of £160,000. Replacement of the pitches relies on a successful bid to the Corporate Asset Management Group. The maintenance and repair of these pitches also comes from the main Parks Service revenue budget as there is no money allocated for the maintenance of synthetic pitches.

Use of sports pitches is at a premium and generates approximately £130,000 income to the Council on an annual basis.

External funding is often available for the upgrade and provision of new facilities and has helped secure the upgrade of 3 of the 6 tennis courts at Cowan Park. Future funding will continue to be investigated in collaboration with Educational Services who have responsibility for the provision of sports facilities within the Education campuses.

Location of Grass Pitch	No. of pitches
COWAN PARK	4 x 11 a-side 10 x 7 a-side
CROOKFUR PLAYING FIELDS	2 x 11 a-side
EAGLESHAM PLAYING FIELDS	1 x 11 a-side
HUNTLY PLAYING FIELDS	3 x 11 a-side 2 x 7 a-side
KINGSTON PLAYING FIELDS	2 x 11 a-side
MUIREND PLAYING FIELDS	2 x 11 a-side 5 x 7 a-side
NETHERLEE PLAYING FIELDS	6 x 4 a-side
OVERLEE PLAYING FIELDS	2 x 11 a-side 5 x 7 a-side
WOODFARM PLAYING FIELDS	2 x 11 a-side

Location of Synthetic Pitch	No. of pitches	Type of pitch
CARLIBAR PRIMARY (Responsibility of BAM)	1 x 7 a-side	Football – tiger turf
CROSSMILL PARK	1 x 7 a-side	Football – sand based
MACTAGGART & MEIKLE	1 x 11 a-side	Football – 3 rd Generation
MEARNS PRIMARY (Responsibility of Jarvis)	1 x 11 a-side	Football – sand based
MUIREND	2 x training areas (4 x 5 a-side with goals)	Football – 3 rd Generation
WILLIAMWOOD HIGH (Responsibility of BAM)	1 x 11 a-side 1 x 11 a-side 1 x Running Track	Football – 3 rd Generation Football/Hockey – sand based Polymeric
WOODFARM	1 x 11 a-side 3 x training areas	Football – 3 rd Generation Football – sand based

➤ **Outdoor play facilities**

There are 36 equipped areas for play throughout the Council area which are inspected 2-3 times per week by Parks Service staff. An annual report is carried out by an independent consultant on all play areas for insurance purposes and to also highlight defects, repairs and out of date equipment.

- **Funding**

An annual budget of £15,000 is allocated from the Parks revenue budget for carrying out repairs to play equipment, however this sum has proven inadequate over the last three years with an annual overspend of approximately £60,000. From 2013/14, £30,000 is available annually over the next 5 years through the General Fund Capital Programme for replacement of playground equipment.

➤ **Woodland**

There are 250 hectares of woodland within East Renfrewshire which lie within both the urban and rural areas. They provide a setting for development, recreational opportunities and are an important component of the environment and the wider climate change agenda.

The scale of woodland is significant and funding only permits the active maintenance of 116 hectares of this by the Council.

To assist in the management of its woodland the Council has produced a Woodland Strategy (extract attached, Appendix 2) and in doing so has taken a lead from the Forestry Commission's National Forestry Strategy "Forests for Scotland". The Council's Strategy is firmly based on the following five core principles:

- **Sustainability:** Woodland management must contribute positively to the Council's wider commitment to sustainable development and meet recognised standards of sustainable forest management.
- **Integration:** Woodland management must fit in with other parts of the rural economy, such as farming, fishing and tourism and take account of the many social and economic demands on urban open space
- **Positive value:** Woodlands contribute to quality of life in many ways and these need to be recognised and understood. Most woodland will have a primary function, such as timber production or recreation. It will also have a wide range of other social, economic or environmental benefits that need to be measured against costs.
- **Community support:** Wherever possible, woodland management operations should have the understanding and support of local communities. Mechanisms should be in place for developing participation, sharing and explaining views and for working towards consensus.

- *Diversity and local distinctiveness*: The contribution of woodlands to local landscapes and cultural heritage needs to be fully recognised, along with their great importance as habitats for wildlife.

The strategy proposes four strategic directions for the Council:

- to deliver best value from the Council's woodland holding through developing a diverse and productive wood resource that will contribute to the economic development of East Renfrewshire;
- to ensure that East Renfrewshire's Council's woodlands make a positive contribution to the Environment;
- to create opportunities for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests in East Renfrewshire;
- to help communities to benefit from woods and forests

Priorities for action are listed for each Strategic Direction and Woodland Management Plans are currently being prepared for all major parks and large open spaces. The actions are designed to build on work that is already being undertaken and set a clear baseline for developing an approach that is Council wide, benefits from external partnership and involves local communities.

- **Funding**

An annual budget for Woodland Management at present stands at £13,500, however over the last three years there has been a considerable over spend. During year 2012/13, £61,500 was spent on dealing with storm damaged trees and maintenance of neglected woodlands. Funding requires to be invested in the management of the Councils tree stock in order to reduce costs of tree failure. Preventative management will help, and regular spend on woodland management will reduce seasonal storm damage costs. Grant assistance is available for management and new planting works from a range of sources. Funding was recently secured from the Scottish Rural Development Programme for new native woodland planting on Council owned land at Capelrig Road/ Leslie Avenue. Further funding will shortly be sought for planting on the vacant and derelict land at Glasgow Road, Barrhead. The Parks/ Planning Service will continue to investigate other opportunities as they arise.

- **Cemeteries**

The provision of adequate land for burials is of a paramount importance and requires forward planning. The Council has responsibility for the maintenance of and holds records for four cemeteries within its area:

- Cathcart Cemetery
- (Muslim and Hebrew sections with a 7 day per week burial service)
- Mearns Cemetery
- Eaglesham Cemetery
- Neilston Cemetery

The records for the following kirkyards are kept at their locations:

- Mearns Parish Kirkyard

- Eaglesham Kirkyard

The Parks Service has highlighted the diminishing availability of land for burials within existing cemeteries and is actively looking at ways to generate more ground to accommodate this. There will be a potential loss of finance unless this is addressed.

A Cemeteries Management Plan is attached at Appendix 1 which highlights key issues to be addressed over the period of this Plan and beyond including the provision of new land for burials.

- **Funding**

Parks maintenance is funded through the core contract budget and amounts to £251,000 annually. This covers grounds maintenance, burials, arboriculture and management of the plan.

- **Open Space Provision in New Development**

The adopted Local Plan and Proposed Local Development Plan include guidance which sets out aspirations and requirements in relation to the provision of open space and green infrastructure e.g. swales, wetlands, greenspace, within new development. This is intended to contribute to placemaking, environmental enhancement/ mitigation and recreational activity.

All new development should incorporate or have satisfactory access to appropriate open space and the provision of a range of open space and water management solutions including landscaping, wetland creation, access routes and play spaces contribute positively to mitigate climate change and enhance biodiversity and physical activity.

Developers may also be required to include other leisure and recreation facilities appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposal e.g. multi use games area (MUGA), 5- aside pitch. Specific guidance is contained within the Adopted Local Plan/ Proposed Local Development Plan on the provision of open space and green infrastructure provision within new development.

- **Development Contributions**

As previously mentioned, where a proposed development would create new or exacerbate existing deficiencies in local physical or community infrastructure, facilities or the environment, the Council will seek contributions from developers to assist in making good the deficiencies.

It is important that developers are given clear guidance in relation to development contributions at the earliest opportunity and the Council must be in a position to provide this. In terms of open space provision, the Council must understand the resource, how it will be affected by development and therefore what opportunities exist to mitigate.

Mitigation in relation to open space can take a number of forms including enhancement of existing open space/ sports facilities or the creation of new space altogether, access improvements and habitat enhancement.

The development contributions are negotiated by the Planning Service in consultation with other Council Services. At present £1.5m has been secured by the Council through Development Contributions and this will be directed towards increasing capacity and enhancing a range of services and facilities including open space, green network, education, community facilities and transportation. Of this £310,000 has been received from the Barrhead Asda development and £71,000 from residential development at Hillfield, Newton Mearns. These monies will be put specifically towards greenspace enhancement works close to the sites.

Another key body of work which is currently ongoing relates to a number of key Strategic Development Opportunities which have been identified through the Proposed Local Development Plan. These will bring large scale mixed use development to land in Newton Mearns and Barrhead over a period of time to 2025 and beyond. Development Frameworks are being drawn up for these areas which will set out the planning context and provide clear guidelines for the development of these sites. As part of this process a range of wider community benefits will be identified and development contributions sought towards these.

In particular, contributions will be sought towards the enhancement of Dams to Darnley Country Park and the Glasgow Road Corridor in Barrhead.

Specifically Dams to Darnley will benefit from the provision of visitor and recreation opportunities including a watersports facility, visitor centre and environmental education base.

To ensure maximum benefit from the Development Contributions Policy, work is currently underway which will gather information using a range of data and knowledge to identify opportunities close to development sites for improved access, greenspace or habitat enhancement work. This strategy will form the basis of future discussions with developers during the planning application process.

➤ **Project implementation**

A range of other project implementation work being taken forward by the Planning/Regeneration Services is currently ongoing and is focused around the communities involvement in the wider open space resource. The creation of a community growing space on the Council owned former Waterworks site in Barrhead and the preparation of a Neilston Greenspace Strategy will promote new sites for community access and activity.

Carlibar Park in Barrhead will shortly benefit from £310,000 in community gain funding contributed from the Asda development on Main Street, Barrhead. This will be used to match a future application for external funding to implement a masterplan which will help reattach the Park to the town centre and identify opportunities to help it play a larger role in the life of the town. The new Asda supermarket is viewed as an opportunity to catch more footfall through the Park, but only if the right connections are put in place.

Project implementation work is generally funded through the Planning and Regeneration Services Capital Programme and supported by external grant funding and development contributions.

➤ **Partnership Projects**

A number of cross boundary projects run in partnership with other local authorities and organisations have been established to implement greenspace, access and biodiversity policy development and implementation at a strategic level.

A number of partnerships projects operate within East Renfrewshire and sit within the Planning Service. They are taken forward by dedicated staff members at relatively low cost to the partner authorities.

○ **The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership**

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership is integrated within the Central Scotland Green Network and provides the framework for a wide range of action on the ground. It is supported by the 8 local authorities which sit within the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Planning area.

The role of the Green Network Partnership is to co-ordinate action at a strategic level, ensure local activity fits in to the big picture and projects undertaken by key agencies and the local authorities contribute to making the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network prosper.

○ **Dams to Darnley Country Park and Whitelee Access Project**

Both Dams to Darnley Country Park and Whitelee Access Project provide the basis for a range of activities to protect and enhance heritage and environmental resources, support opportunities for improving health and well-being, facilitating sustainable transport and providing learning and engagement. Project Officers are in place for both projects and they oversee the implementation of strategy and physical enhancement works.

Dams to Darnley Country Park is run in partnership with Glasgow City Council and is currently being developed through a series of improvements, leading to new recreation and visitor facilities and infrastructure. The Dams to Darnley Plan 2014-17 has been prepared to guide the development of the Country Park and aid its effective and efficient management.

Work is currently ongoing in partnership with key landowners and stakeholders to develop a range of visitor facilities and recreational opportunities within the Park, including a watersports facility, visitor centre and environmental education base. Funding for these developments will come through development contributions, external grant assistance and private sector capital investment.

It is anticipated that elements of the watersports facility will be in operation by spring 2015.

Whitelee Access Project is run in partnership with a number of key agencies including South Lanarkshire and East Ayrshire Councils and is currently being developed through a series of improvements, leading to new recreational infrastructure. An Access Plan has been approved covering a 5 year period from 2009-14. This identifies a wide range of

improvements including new or upgraded paths, upgraded site entrances, viewpoints, signage and interpretation amounting to £680,000.

Construction of Mountain Bike Trails at Whitelee will be completed in June 2014. The trails will cover an area of 0.35 hectares and will satisfy a strong demand for technical mountain bike facilities which cannot be provided by windfarm roads and multi user paths alone.

Both Dams to Darnley and Whitelee have a Countryside Ranger Service in place. The Rangers run a series of events for the public, volunteers and school children including health walks, biodiversity and educational events. From April 2013 until March 2014 over 3,000 people attended organised events which promote healthy activities and well being and environmental education at Whitelee and Dams to Darnley.

The 4 Rangers also provide an on-site presence, liaise with visitors, landowners and undertake survey work.

- **Carts Greenspace**

Carts Greenspace is run through a Service Level Agreement between East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council. The Council contributes £25,000 per annum towards the cost of the 2 members of staff (a project officer and assistant).

The role of the project is to develop and deliver projects within both East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Council areas which are identified through the Local Development Plans and the Open Space and Greenspace Strategies.

The initiative aims to attract external funding and to deliver greenspace related projects on the ground. It encourages community participation and encourages people to use, appreciate and enhance greenspace in their community.

Carts Greenspace supports Rouken Glen Parks' heritage lottery funded Friends of Rouken Glen. In addition to this, it is also working with local schools through the Kingfisher Schools Initiative.

3. POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

The Council has various tools at its disposal which can assist decision making around the creation, enhancement, management and disposal of open space including pitches, play areas, access routes, growing spaces and informal open space.

The Adopted Local Plan and Proposed Local Development Plan aim to ensure that the provision of open space and recreational facilities keeps pace with development and that the range and availability of facilities are suited to the varying needs of the whole community.

A range of measures are in place which seek to ensure the protection, management and enhancement of open space and the wider green network.

The Parks and Sports Development Services have prepared a Sports Pitch Strategy which they use to determine how the Council can best use current facilities to meet the future needs and demands of clubs. The objectives and aims of this report are to ascertain how best to facilitate usage, bookings, terms and conditions to enable the Council to manage the future demand and growth. In addition it looks at national charter mark recognition.

The Parks Strategy assists the Service to look at financial, manpower, labour and equipment, to establish a high standard of work aligned to Green Flag status and to allow bench marking against other Local Authorities.

The preparation of a Council Sports and Physical Activity Strategy is underway and will be completed by summer 2014. A number of Council Services, together with Sportscotland are contributing to its preparation. The future management of open space provision and opportunities for informal recreational activity will be specifically referred to and addressed throughout the Strategy.

Policies will continue to be developed to ensure that they remain effective and up to date.

4. ASSET RATIONALISATION/ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

➤ Asset Value

The assessment of value allows an objective approach to identifying those spaces that should be given the highest level of protection through the planning system, those that require enhancement and those that may no longer be needed for their present purpose.

The Council's Land and Property Asset Disposal Framework sets out the procedures for disposal of assets.

➤ Asset Enhancement

The Planning Service has developed qualitative, quantitative and geographical information on open space including the East Renfrewshire Greenspace Strategy 2008-2012 and Green Network Analysis Study. This is informed by data relating to biodiversity, social deprivation, health and accessibility and guides the allocation of resources, identifies opportunities and guides future development.

Understanding the existing resource and the deficiencies which exist will allow us to develop specific open space strategies for local areas and work has already begun to do so within Neilston in conjunction with the Neilston Development Trust.

Where there are known to be deficiencies in open space provision or opportunities to maximise benefits, we will investigate ways of increasing value. Work can be undertaken to raise awareness of the health, environmental and educational benefits of open space and the Council's Ranger Service is integral to this. Investing in site infrastructure including interpretation and encouraging community involvement are important and should be tackled strategically.

5. CONCLUSION

Open space management and maintenance within the East Renfrewshire area is moving forward and a substantial amount of activity is currently underway. Increased emphasis is now placed on the benefits that open space provision can bring to an area and its residents. Significant funding is in place to assist and develop a network of sites, sports facilities and access routes which will provide multiple benefits for an area and its residents.

There is however greater need for a co ordination of efforts across Council Services and a better understanding of the Council's assets in terms of condition, future requirements and associated financial expenditure.

A number of other outstanding matters which require to be addressed:

➤ **Private Open Space**

There is a need to separate Council owned open space within the existing dataset to allow improved analysis to take place. There will be a correlation between the extents of open space maintained and land owned by the Council.

Legal Services are currently investigating which areas of private land are currently being maintained by the Council to determine if arrangements are ad hoc.

➤ **System Maintenance**

The open space asset data requires to be kept up to date. It is important that this process is established to ensure the currency of data is appropriate and fit for purpose.

➤ **Site Infrastructure Condition Assessments**

Clarification is required on the need to undertake condition assessments of infrastructure elements such as fencing, signage, drainage.

➤ **Capital and Revenue Expenditure**

There is a need to consider the level of capital and revenue expenditure allocated and/or spent against each of the open space typologies. There is a significant level of investment and expenditure relating to open space, however, the current financial systems do not allow easy analysis and work is required to permit such analysis to take place. This will allow a critical analysis of the investment strategy across the wide range of types of open space. This in turn should lead to improved decision making, better allocation of resources and better coordination of effort across all open space assets. This will require the current financial systems to be examined to determine how best to satisfy this need.

➤ **Co-ordination of Effort**

The effect of investment on revenue budgets is not properly understood and systems are not robust enough to ensure coordination of effort. The drive for development can override any concern with resultant additional maintenance costs. It is often expected that maintenance providers simply absorb such costs. This is unsustainable. Furthermore, when considering the change of use or the disposal of open space sites there can be poor co-ordination with each

part of the council looking at the open space site from their own perspective rather than from the perspective of the Council as a whole.

Within the Planning Service, an Action Plan will be prepared which will set out how key actions emerging from a range of plans and strategies including the Local Plan/ Local Development Plan, Dams to Darnley Country Park Plan, Whitelee access Plan and the Core Paths Plan will be implemented. This Plan would also have the capacity to reflect wider project implementation including that detailed in the Parks/ Sport Pitch Strategies, in collaboration with the Parks Service.

The Action Plan will outline bodies of work, key personnel, funding and associated timeframes and will be updated annually. The development of this will be agreed through the Open Space Working Group and will allow wider open space issues to be tackled strategically and resources to be directed to the correct areas.

➤ **Recharging Model**

The vast majority of open space is maintained by Parks Services and the majority of the sites have a revenue budget directly allocated to the grounds maintenance service. There are different arrangements in place across the different services, for example, Educational Services have a budget for maintenance of school grounds. The school grounds which are maintained by Parks Services are recharged to the budget holder. In this example it is clear that the budget holder has responsibility for all matters affecting the open space. In other cases, for example Housing services, there is a recharge made by the grounds maintenance service for some works in some areas. This leads to confusion as to who has responsibility for matters affecting the open space beyond its ground maintenance. It would be beneficial to assess and perhaps apply a consistent recharging model across the asset base.

➤ **Key Actions**

In addition to this a number of key actions have been identified which will help to ensure that progress continues to be made.

Actions	Lead Service	Timescale	Cost
Continue to protect a range of open space provision in line with Council Plans and Strategies	Parks, Planning and Property and Technical Services	Ongoing	
Establish an Open Space Working Group	Planning Service	June 2014	
Prepare an Action Programme	Planning Service	July 2014	
Identify Surplus Assets	Property and Technical services	Ongoing	
Continue to investigate external sources of funding to implement open space enhancement	Planning/ Parks Service	Ongoing	
Investigate the development of a consistent recharging model	Parks Service	Ongoing	
Cowan Park, Barrhead: Preparation of a masterplan for Cowan Park to ensure the integration of the new Barrhead High School within the existing open space.	Planning Parks PATS Friends of Cowan Park	Short/ medium term	TBC
Carlibar Park, Barrhead: Implementation of a masterplan for Carlibar Park to help reattach the Park to the town centre and identify opportunities to help it play a larger role in the life of the town. The new Asda supermarket is viewed as an opportunity to catch more footfall through the Park but only if the right connections are put in place.	Planning Parks	Medium term	£250,000
Dams to Darnley Country Park: Implementation of the Dams to Darnley Country Park Plan and opportunities arising from the Proposed Local Development Plan Strategic Development Opportunities. This will lead to improved access and recreational provision within the Park including the development of watersports and visitor facilities.	Planning and Regeneration Services Glasgow City Council Landowners Scottish Water SNH Parks Governing bodies and user groups	2013- 2030	£575,000

Actions	Lead Service	Timescale	Cost
<p>Whitelee Outdoor Access Project: Implementation of the Access Plan which will lead to existing paths within the windfarm site upgraded, the construction of new paths, creation of recreational opportunities, improved site entrances, car parking and signage.</p>	<p>Whitelee Project Officer(based within ERC Planning Service) ERC, Planning Service South Lanarkshire Council East Ayrshire Council Scottish PR FC SNH Local community Governing Bodies and user groups</p>	Short/medium /long term	£680,000
<p>Woodland Management Plans: Plans to be prepared for all major parks and large open spaces incl. Eastwood Park, The Orry, Arthurlie Park</p>	Parks Service	October 2014	
<p>Parks infrastructure : Ongoing enhancement works e.g. fence/ railing replacement, signage, seating.</p>	Parks Service		£35,000
<p>Tree Management Preventative Plans : Implementation of tree management plan. £250,000 has been spent on storm damaged trees and works are now required to improve condition of Council owned stock.</p>	Parks Service	Running programme over 5 year period	£50,000
<p>Play equipment : Repairs and replacement of equipment.</p>	Parks Service	Running programme over a 5 year period	£30,000
<p>Path Maintenance: Repair and replacement of the path network which falls under the remit of the Parks Service.</p>	Parks Service	Running programme over a 5 year period	£50,000

Actions	Lead Service	Timescale	Cost
<p>Grass pitches: A ten year renewal of all 7 and 11 a side goals and nets has been identified and a request for capital investment to cover this.</p>	Parks Service	Ongoing renewal over 5 years	£50,000
<p>Sports pitches, 3G Synthetic: Continuous investment in equipment and machinery to ensure income to the council. prepare sports pitches during the preseason period an average spend of £20,000 for essential works is needed; Additional spend of £5,000 for fertilizer throughout the season is also needed; £4500 in pitch lining material and the cost of lining equipment at around £700 x 5 which gives a total of £3,500; Regular maintenance incl. grass cutting, litter removal etc; Capital bid for new carpet for the 3G pitches (lifespan of 8/10 years); Woodfarm High School upgrade of infrastructure incl. 5 a-side courts, replacement of all equipment e.g. new goals and drainage works.</p>		<p>Rolling programme of investment</p> <p>Year 6 onwards</p> <p>2014</p>	<p>£20,000</p> <p>£ 5,000</p> <p>£ 8,000</p> <p>£160,000</p>

Appendix 1: Cemetery Management Plans

Cemetery	Condition	Actions	Timescale
Mearns	Presently 1385 lairs are available which over 15 years equate to 92 burials a year and 15 years of capacity.	Identify and make ready land for future burials.	5-10 years
Eaglesham	Presently 880 lairs are available. Additional land will be required and the surrounding private landowners will need to be contacted if the council wish to increase the size and capacity of these 2 cemeteries.	Future purchase of land to provide 110 lairs.	5-10 years
Neilston	A new section of the cemetery was opened in 2005 and the last phase of development was completed in 2012. There are presently 986 lairs available to purchase. In addition, opportunity exists to develop further lairs at the bottom end of the cemetery.	Identify and make ready land for future burials.	5-10 years
Memorial Garden (Neilston Cemetery)	Due to ground conditions part of the cemetery is unsuitable for Christian burials. Discussion has taken place with the Muslim community to establish whether they would be interested in utilising this space however they have confirmed that it is unlikely. It is recommended that part of the cemetery could be used as a memorial garden.	None at present. The cost of developing this section would be around £50,000 as a one off to include a path network flower beds seating etc. This garden would be able to generate future income with a range of charges to the public for a wide range of services e.g. scattering of ashes planting memorial trees and shrubs etc.	

Cemetery	Condition	Actions	Timescale
Cathcart	<p>Within Cathcart capacity exists for a total of 611 lairs which equates to 76 lairs a year for burials. It is estimated that in 8 years time additional land will be needed.</p> <p>The Council currently spends £15,000 per year on headstone safety and erect up to 100 fallen headstones per year.</p>	<p>Identify and make ready land for future burials.</p> <p>Headstone maintenance.</p>	<p>5- 10 years</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Eaglesham	There are a low number of internments at Eaglesham Cemetery.	None at present.	
Cathcart Muslim Section	<p>With the Muslim section now full there is no capacity to develop in this area.</p> <p>There is one area in the cemetery which could be looked at for development but there would be problems with the shape and contours of the land. In 2013 a feasibility study may be drawn up for this area.</p> <p>Consultation with the Muslim community would be a major consideration before progressing.</p> <p>The income from the closure of the Muslim section has dropped by around £60,000 a year.</p>	<p>The Council has invested £200,000 in developing a new section within Cathcart Cemetery for Muslim burials. This section should be opened by early 2015.</p> <p>There are approximately 740 lairs available and discussions are ongoing with the Central Mosque about future burials that will become available from 2015.</p>	

Appendix 2: Tree Management Policy Strategy

INTRODUCTION

- **18,000 HECTARES THROUGHOUT EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**
- 500 open spaces equating to 345 hectares maintained by parks.
- £1.7 million is available for Parks to undertake ground maintenance.
- Woodland – 250 hectares of tree cover with no budget to manage.

To assist in the management of its woodland the council has produced Management Plans/surveys on all major Parklands and smaller woodland areas.

Woodland management must contribute positively to the Council's wider commitment to sustainable development and meet recognised standards of such.

Woodlands contribute to quality of life in many ways and this need to be recognised and understood. Most woodland will have a primary function, such as timber production or recreation. It will also have a wide range of other social, economic or environmental benefits that need to be measured against costs.

Tree Management lets us set out the guidelines for managing our tree stock, to assist and influence our management decisions, particularly in relation to pruning planting and removal of trees throughout the district.

Trees enhance the quality of life in our urban environment and form an integral part of its shape, colour and diversity. They are essential to our health and well being, not only in reducing some of the adverse impacts of the Urban environment, but enhancing our enjoyment.

The need to regularly maintain trees in order to safeguard their long-term health is clearly not understood here. Regular maintenance enables the retention of trees which are thought to be hazards due to their proximity to property or roads or which would otherwise be lost due to storm damage.

There are considerable cost benefits to be gained from regular maintenance from removing dead, dying and dangerous trees which can cause more damage to surrounding standing healthy trees.

Planned maintenance can be a preventative measure to the loss of trees within our Parks, Woodlands and open spaces. Thinning works, removal of identified dead trees that can be more costly to remove if left to blow down into more awkward locations which ultimately increase cost to remove.

Standing trees are easier to deal with as they can be dismantled or felled in the direction you require therefore reducing costs on its removal and the type of machinery you require.

When dangerous unhealthy trees fall due to storms the direction is uncontrolled and is more likely to cause further damage as it falls hitting other trees and causing more damage.

The machinery that has to be brought in to extract timber and access the areas adds additional costs. The volume of timber having to be extracted, the areas where the timber is lying, the removal of weakened trees, damaged trees particularly within Pollock Glen, Uplawmoor, Rouken Glen Park, Broom Pond and Balrae Woods, Waterfoot.

Since the start of the works on the 5/12/2013 our three companies within our framework have supplied two squads each thus doubling labour costs, this has continued in areas such as Pollock Glen and Rouken Glen Park as it would be virtually impossible to tackle such works with a one man squad.

Additional and specialist machinery has been brought in when required to remove and access the timber and damage, these areas are proving difficult to reach and extract timber. There are additional costs on a daily basis for such machinery which is mandatory to execute the works safely and efficiently.

Many trees throughout our parks and woodlands have also been identified as dangerous due to root plates lifting rendering them unsafe, these also have to be removed.

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy identifies the Council's approach to the management of trees on land owned by the Council. It is intended to act as a point of reference for the public, Councillors, Council Officers and professionally interested people to ensure a clear, consistent and structured approach to the management of trees.

2. Our Policies

The benefits of trees are well known. Trees don't just brighten our urban environments, they also help reduce air pollution and have a positive impact on the incidence of asthma, skin cancer and stress related illnesses. This is because they capture particulate pollutants, filter solar radiation and bring a sense of relaxation to our bustling cities. They also help to combat the effects of climate change.

Trees provide valuable refuges and habitats to the wildlife living alongside us. They can add up to 18% to property values as well as reduce energy consumption by 10% by modifying microclimates.

In short, trees matter

As we state in our environmental policy, the Council's "overall aim is to continually improve our performance in everything we do..." This includes helping to enhance the built environment, minimising pollution and energy consumption, improving the environment for health benefits, and protecting the variety of wildlife in the city.

We have developed our tree management policies in line with this to make sure we manage trees in the best way and make the best use of our resources.

Our policy includes all the Council's trees, and those for which we are directly responsible. We cannot impose our tree management policy on schools, but we do recommend it to them as a guide for good tree management.

3. The Benefits of Trees in Towns

3.1 Trees are essential to the creation of an environmentally sustainable and economically successful town. Some of the benefits that trees provide are listed under the Council's Strategic Priorities, below:

Places

- Creating an attractive environment where people will choose to live
- Providing wildlife habitats
- Releasing oxygen, whilst absorbing carbon dioxide
- Reducing air pollution
- Noise reduction
- Providing shade from the sun
- Contributing to energy conservation by reducing wind speeds

People

- Helping to reduce everyday stress levels
- Contributing to the well being of the community
- Bringing beauty to the district all year round

Prosperity

- Positively affecting property values
- Creating an attractive physical environment that encourages investment
- Screening ugly views

4. Prioritising Tree Work

When considering requests for tree works our first consideration will be the impact on the community. For example, we don't usually do any work which will benefit an individual but which means a loss to the community.

Additionally, because of the limited funding available for tree work we need to carefully manage the need for tree pruning and will always give priority to health and safety issues, such as:-

- Unsafe trees
- Diseased and damaged trees
- Trees obstructing footpaths or roads
- Trees touching/damaging buildings
- Trees obscuring street-lamps or road-signs

This means that there will be requests for pruning or other work on trees that is not considered a priority and will normally be declined. For example, we will not normally carry out work on trees for one or more of the following reasons:-

- To reduce leaf litter
- To improve television reception

5. The Council's Responsibilities as Land Owner

- 5.1 If a tree fails and causes injury or damage, its owner could be held negligent if they had omitted to take sufficient care of the tree. As landowner, the Council has a duty of care to ensure that all of the trees on its land are kept in an acceptable condition and do not put persons and property at unreasonable risk. Woodland management plans are in place for the majority of our parks which have identified necessary works, these works must be executed as they have now been highlighted.

Statutory Duties

- 5.2 The Occupiers Liability Acts (1957&1984) requires occupiers of land to have a common, duty of care to all visitors. This Act requires the occupiers to take reasonable care to maintain their land in such a condition that it does not harm any person or damage any property. The duty of care is extended where the landowner invites the public onto land for recreation.
- 5.3 The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) require the Council to manage trees and undertake work on trees with regard to the health and safety of the public and employees. Failure to do so could lead to criminal action against the Council by the Health and Safety Executive.

Government Guidance

- 5.4 Government guidance contained in Circular 52/75 requires local authorities to regularly inspect trees adjacent to highways. Whilst this Council does not own trees growing within the highway, it does own trees that are adjacent to highways.
- 5.5 The department of Environment's report "Trees in Towns" recommended that each local authority should inspect the tree stock that is responsible for in a systematic way and to store this information on a data base so that it is accessible.

6. How the Council Will Manage Trees in Parks and Green Spaces

- 6.1 The aim of this Policy is to establish a reasonable, defensible and proactive tree management system that conserves and enhances the tree population on the land for which the Council is responsible.
- 6.2 Best practice now strongly favours a risk-based system of tree management relying on a programme of regular inspection prioritised by potential hazard. In the event of a tree failure causing
- 6.3 The basis for repeat inspections will be graded; so a high-risk tree may be inspected annually and a tree with negligible risk inspected five or more years after the initial survey.
- 6.4 All trees and groups of trees for which the Council is responsible will be categorised in relation to the risk they represent. This is in conformity with industry best practice and is a significant step in ensuring a defensible system of tree management is implemented.

7. Principles

Greening of the City

The Tree Management Policy is based on the fundamental belief that trees are an important community asset for the following reasons:

- Trees provide a softening influence on often harsh urban landscapes, providing an amenity to residents and visitors through the introduction of colour, form and texture to either highlight or mask architectural and natural features.
- Trees have practical as well as aesthetic benefits for the community as a whole. These include a capacity for reduction in noise and air pollution, reduction of erosion, positive effects on the micro-climate of the surrounding areas in modifying extremes of temperature and wind, as well as influencing in a positive way, the human psyche.
- Trees have an important role in the retention of natural habitats for indigenous plants and animals. This is particularly applicable to those parts of the City that are to be preserved in their natural state for future generations and to retain their biodiversity.

Why Manage Trees?

The value of trees to the urban environment cannot be overstated. However, there are many factors that need to be taken into account maintaining or introducing trees to the landscape which, at least potentially, can have the adverse effect.

Poor selection, placement and management of trees can result in:

- Risks of personal injury to residents and visitors to the District;
- Hazards to property through the failure of trees and tree limbs, and the potentially adverse influence of root systems on soils supporting built structures.
- Interference in the provision of infrastructure and services (roads, power, sewer and water) through the use of inappropriate species adjacent to these services;
- Fouling of waterways and the introduction of pest plants; and
- The proliferation of animal pests, especially introduced bird species.

8. Tree Maintenance Objectives

Council will ensure that all trees growing under its care and control in the District, be they on roads or Community Land, are adequately maintained in accordance with tree maintenance procedures suitable for the circumstances.

The allocation of resources by Council for managing trees will determine the extent of implementation of any maintenance programs developed for the purpose. Therefore the implementation of maintenance programs will be prioritised based on the level of funding and resources available.

Maintenance programs will be developed which aim to:

- Promote long term tree sustainability with health and habitat benefits;
- Promote biodiversity and conservation values where appropriate;
- Manage the level of risk to provide adequate public safety;
- Improve the amenity values provided for the community of all vegetation;
- Ensure the compatibility of proposed and existing trees with local infrastructure and sites uses; and
- Record all aspects of planning and management.

Maintenance programs will be reviewed on an “as needs” basis, and where stakeholders affected by the tree maintenance program have an interest in its outcomes, Council will ensure that public consultation occurs according to the provisions of its Public Consultation Policy.

Trees on land specifically excluded from the Community Land classification and yet still on land under Council’s direct care and control, will be managed in accordance with the provisions of Council’s Risk Management Policy. The development of maintenance programs for these areas will occur in all cases where the assessment of risk levels for a particular location dictate the need for such action.

9. Health

In urban areas, trees help to modify the climate by providing shade from the sun, reducing wind speeds, and reducing the extremes of temperature. They are an important agent in reducing air pollutants, especially particulates. They absorb carbon dioxide from the air, as well as sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide in the form of dust and smoke. Trees can also help screen harmful ultra-violet rays from the sun, and help to absorb noise.

Attractiveness

Trees form an important component of the urban landscape. They provide form, colour, texture and movement, changing with the seasons. Trees can be important local landmarks giving a sense of continuity and place. They help people orientate themselves and, in a well maintained location, can therefore decrease perceived risk and fear of crime.

Local Economy

Trees enhance the character and appearance of areas, and have been shown to enhance property values (for example, the word Avenue or Grove heightens the appeal and value of areas as compared to Road or Street). They can help provide privacy, frame the appearance of building, and screen eyesores. This creates qualities which encourage businesses to locate and attract people to live, and can help to reinforce a sense of place. Rateable value and local reinvestment and therefore also affected.

Ecology

Trees, particularly indigenous species, can provide valuable support to a range of wildlife. Trees can provide food, shelter, nesting and roosting sites, particularly for invertebrates, birds and bats.