

## PART A

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016  
**Report of:** Environmental Services Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)  
**Title:** Progress on delivering a Green Spaces Strategy for Watford for 2013-2023

### 1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In November 2013, a new 10 year Green Spaces Strategy was adopted by Cabinet as a blueprint for improving green spaces across the borough.
- 1.2 It was based on qualitative and value assessments carried out as well as incorporating the Council's new Corporate Priorities and Green Infrastructure principles. It also recognised the significant current reductions in core funding the Council continues to face, and the outsourcing of the parks and open spaces service to Veolia in July 2013.
- 1.3 Since the strategy was adopted, there has been significant progress over the first 2 years of the strategy. This is summarised in Appendix 1. Progress on the HLF / BIG Parks for People Project is also summarised below.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the progress with the Green Spaces Strategy Action Plan as appended in Appendix 1
- 2.2 Note the progress on the Cassiobury Park project

#### **Contact Officer:**

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**Report approved by:** Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

### 3.0 UPDATE

3.1 Please see Appendix 1 for details. However, highlights are as follows (with associated short powerpoint slides):-

- Completion of the Parks Improvement Programme in December 2013 with £1.5 million improvements to Oxhey Park, Callowland Rec, King George V Playing Fields, Waterfields Rec;
- Significant improvements to the town's play areas including Riverside Rec, East Drive, Berry Avenue, Fern Way, Waterfields Rec, Knutsford Playing Fields, Harebreaks Rec, Harwoods Rec, Meriden Park;
- 11 Adult gyms introduced;
- Increase in Green Flags from 3 to 6;
- HLF bid successful for Cassiobury Park and new posts appointed;
- £800,000 invested in improving allotments;
- Sports Facilities Strategy adopted;
- Volunteering opportunities increased in Cassiobury Park; and
- New Sports Legacy Zone at the Meriden.

3.2 In particular, the success of Cassiobury Park HLF / BIG Parks for People Project is very significant for the town, with the maximum grant being attracted and a £6.6 million project to be commenced on site in February 2016 to April 2017. This will see Cassiobury Park transformed yet preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Key elements of the project are:-

- New Park Hub building with café facility, education and exhibition space, changing rooms and staff office;
- Pools revamped;
- Bandstand relocated from town centre to the park;
- Entrance improvements including interpretation of the former gates entrance;
- Ongoing events, volunteer and education opportunities;
- Landscape improvements throughout; and
- Enhancement of the Cha surrounds and toilet facilities improved.

Changes were made after tenders were returned due to budget constraints and resulted in the omission of the Cha extension and new croquet pavilion to bring back into budget. Further updates will follow on progress of this landmark project.

### 3.3 Conclusions

3.3.1 The Green Spaces Strategy recognises the difficulties faced by the Council as well as the importance of green spaces to local people and communities. This strategy is ambitious yet seeks to build on the continued successes in Watford in managing, maintaining and developing its green spaces. To date, much has been achieved in partnership with the Councils partner, Veolia, and there is still much to achieve. Further priorities are:

- Green Flag applications for North Watford Cemetery and Garston Park;
- Improvements to sports facilities across the borough in line with the Sports Facilities Strategy;
- Improvements to both cemeteries in line with the draft cemetery strategy, including a potential HLF Parks for People bid for Vicarage Road Cemetery;
- BMX / Cycle Hub / Skate park project delivery; and
- Improvements to Garston Park up to Green Flag standard.

### 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

#### 4.1 Financial

4.1.2 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that a considerable financial investment has been made over the past few years in upgrading our green spaces offer. This ability to invest in the future health and well being of our community will be further constrained as available local authority funding continues to reduce from 2016 onwards.

This detailed Action Plan requires a financial commitment, but with the reductions in funding, the Action Plan for 2016 onwards will need to recognise a longer delivery period for some projects. Alternative funding mechanisms such as government funding and partnerships will need to be further developed in order to make some elements of the Action Plan a reality.

Traditional funding through Section 106 capital receipts and the community infrastructure levy will be used wherever possible and this Green Spaces Strategy will continue to provide the evidence base to justify such investment.

#### 4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

#### 4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 N/A

#### 4.4 Risk

4.4.1

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Unable to secure capital funding	2	4	8
Changes in policy	1	2	2

locally and nationally			
Staff pressures and lack of resources to deliver	2	4	8

#### 4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 The delivery of the Strategy will continue to be monitored in partnership with Veolia by the Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces and Projects).

#### 4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 Not applicable

#### 4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 Not applicable

#### 4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 Not applicable

#### Appendices

Appendix 1: Green Spaces Strategy Monitoring Update

#### Background Papers:

Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023

File Reference: None