

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Green Spaces Strategy

2008 - 2018

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Introduction to the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Green Spaces Strategy 2008 - 2018

Kingston is often referred to as a 'green and leafy' suburb of Greater London. This characterisation is given partly because of the diverse range of open spaces, from the formal parkland of Canbury Gardens in Kingston Town to the informal hay meadows of Tolworth Court Farm Fields. There are many large and small parks, playing fields and wayside gardens in between. The other open spaces include large mature private gardens in the north of the Borough to the Green Belt farmland in the south. Many of the streets are lined with mature large trees in the Victorian and Edwardian areas and smaller ornamental species in the post-war and modern developments. A visitor would regard the 'green and leafy' description as accurate.

A comprehensive forward looking strategy for the long term management of the Borough's open spaces is paramount for sustainable growth. The Green Spaces Strategy is one of a suite of natural resource strategies the Council has that considers the spectrum of issues that these assets require. Other strategies include the Tree Strategy, Allotment Strategy and the Cultural Strategy.

This Green Spaces Strategy (GSS) will help focus resources efficiently and effectively on land that is owned or managed by the Council on behalf of others. There will always be a demand for open space. The challenge is to make its availability and management relevant to people's needs. This strategy provides a framework for the maintenance and enhancement of the Green Spaces thus seeking to meet people's needs and expectations of the Borough's Green Spaces. Two supporting strategies one for allotments and one for trees have been developed independently but in parallel to the development of the GSS. Although for ease of use and reading they are three separate strategies they should be regarded as a single strategy in terms of taking a holistic and integrated approach to the management of the Borough's green spaces

Initially the strategy must respond to the current corporate medium term financial plans as set out in *Changing Kingston – Choosing our Future 2007-2011*. But the strategy will also provide a longer vision to guide the Council through the inevitable changing circumstances beyond 2011.

Section 1

1.1 Green Space Definition

1.1.1 The term Green Space has a variety of meanings. It includes:

- a. spaces used for recreation and amenity purposes such as parks, public gardens and sports fields.
- b. spaces managed for nature conservation.
- c. spaces that have a specific function such as allotments and cemeteries.

There are green spaces within the transportation corridors, public squares and streetscape (for example wayside gardens and planters). These more unconventional green spaces are equally important to the quality of life as they provide relief from buildings and define the townscape where larger green spaces may be scarce.

1.1.2 In the summer of 2005 a comprehensive assessment was undertaken by Atkins in response to the requirement of Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Planning Policy Guidance 17. This survey included both private and public open space over 0.25ha that are of public value. Together these spaces comprise a total of 815ha. Parks represent the largest proportion in terms of area (19% of total open space) golf courses (15% of total open space) and public playing fields (14% of total open space).

1.1.3 For the purposes of the Green Spaces Strategy it was important to consider defining the ownership and/or management responsibility and level of public access to the green spaces. Having given this consideration it has been concluded that the strategy should be for those green spaces to which the public have unhindered or limited access and which are managed by the Council's grounds maintenance partners. Consequently the strategy will focus on the following green space categories:

- Public playing fields
- Parks
- Public Gardens
- Children's play areas
- Wayside Gardens
- Cemeteries and Churchyards
- Green Spaces on RBK Housing land
- Council owned (or managed on behalf of the owner) sites managed for nature and biodiversity conservation
- Highway verges
- Allotments (integral to the GSS, but with an independent strategy)
- Street Trees (integral to the GSS, but with an independent strategy)

1.2 What is a Green Spaces Strategy?

- 1.2.1 A Green Spaces Strategy is an assessment of the natural spaces and features that exist for the local community. It provides a framework for action to ensure that the quantity, quality and accessibility of the spaces keep pace with community needs.

1.3 Importance and development of the GSS

- 1.3.1 At present there is no long term strategy for the green spaces in Kingston. A strategy for parks was developed by Greenstede Leisure Consultants Ltd in 1993. In the ensuing years there have been service realignments in response to changing circumstances; the management of the parks has been addressed in different ways during this period but there has been no update or revision of the 1993 strategy.
- 1.3.2 The Council entered into a long term grounds maintenance partnership contract with Quadron Services Ltd (QUADRON) in February 2006. The contract is for 10 years with an option to extend for a further 5 years. This new progressive partnership is a significant driver for the development of the strategy. This strategy is deliberately written to cover a ten year period and should be reviewed in time for the renewal of the current contract in 2021.
- 1.3.3 Green spaces affect everyone who lives in, or visits the Borough. The strategy has been developed by a cross directorate officer steering group, with input from member workshops, analysis of detailed studies and stakeholder and public consultation. This shared approach ensures that the content of the strategy joins up the expertise and activities of everyone who has a long term stake in the management of the Green Spaces. As a result this overarching strategy is intended to raise the profile and realise the long term potential of our green spaces for all.

Section 2

Legislative and Policy Context

2.1 National Policy and Strategies

2.1.1 Government concern over the decline of urban parks over the past 20 years led to the establishment of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force (UGSTF) in 2001. The UGSTF advises on proposals for improving the quality of urban parks, play areas and green spaces. The UGSTF report '*Green Spaces, Better Places*' (2002) recognised the value of good quality parks, and the benefits that parks and green spaces provide.

2.1.2 These benefits included:

Urban renaissance – good quality parks contribute to regeneration and create sense of place, which is vital to community spirit and attract visitors;

Health and Well being – green spaces can play a role in promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing illness.

Social Inclusion, community development – green spaces give people the chance to participate in design, management and care of local spaces, fostering local pride. They are places to socialise, and, because access is free, provide an affordable alternative to other leisure activities.

Education and Lifelong Learning – green spaces provide an outdoor classroom for schools, and provide work experience and learning opportunities in environmental management.

Environment and Ecology – green spaces help counter pollution, provide wildlife corridors, serve as 'lungs' for towns and cities, absorb noise, and provide sustainable urban drainage solutions.

Heritage & Culture – green spaces are part of the heritage and culture of local communities. They provide venues for local festivals and civic celebrations.

2.1.3 The Government produced a revised Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) in 2002 building on the work of the UGSTF. The reasoning behind this revision is that the government recognised that open space can strengthen people's quality of life, and assist in delivering broader Government objectives.

PPG17 states that local authorities should:

- Carry out assessments of existing and future needs of the community for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Local Authorities need to cover differing needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities.
 - Undertake audits of existing open space and facilities, use of existing facilities, access in terms of location and cost, and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should consider quantitative and qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities.
 - Standards should be set locally. Local authorities should use the information gained to set standards for the provision of open spaces and sports and recreational facilities in their areas. These standards should include quantitative elements, a qualitative component and accessibility. These standards will help redress deficiencies through the planning process. Standards should be included in the local authority's Development Plan.
 - Adopt a strategic approach and plan positively for provision, enhancement and maintenance of open space.
- 2.1.4 Kingston's approach has been developed to be consistent with Government guidance. The Open Space Assessment was produced by Atkins in May 2006. The information collated in the assessment has been instrumental in the direction of this GSS.

2.1.5 **“Towards a Level Playing Field: A Guide to the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies” (2003)**

This Sport England Guide was developed to assist local authorities, consultants and others in producing robust local playing pitch strategies. The Guide replaces earlier publications and is designed to simplify the production of a playing pitch strategy.

2.2 Greater London Policy and Strategies

- 2.2.1 The Greater London Authority (GLA) London Plan (Feb 2004) sets out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework to develop London as a sustainable world city over the next 15 – 20 years. This plan provides a London wide context for London boroughs to align their local planning policies.
- 2.2.2 The London Plan seeks to protect and promote open spaces and recognises that the value of these spaces will increase as London becomes more compact and intensive in its built form. The Plan includes a policy that encourages boroughs to prepare open space strategies.
- 2.2.3 Policy 3D.11: London boroughs should prepare Open Space Strategies to understand the supply and demand of open spaces and identify ways of protecting, creating and enhancing them.

- 2.2.4 Policy 3D10: Boroughs should identify, protect and develop Green Corridors and chains and protect local open spaces that are of value or have potential to be of value.

2.3 Mayor of London's Biodiversity Strategy

- 2.3.1 The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy sets out how London's biodiversity can be protected and looked after. It also aims to make sure everyone can enjoy and learn about the natural world. The Biodiversity Strategy relies heavily on partnership working between many organisations to help carry out the proposals, including borough councils, community groups, businesses and conservation organisations, as well as the support of individual Londoners
- 2.3.2 The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy (July 2002) is linked closely to the London Plan and aims to provide a London wide framework for maintaining London's diversity of wildlife. It has two overall targets: firstly no overall loss of wildlife habitats in London; and secondly, more open spaces are created and made accessible, so that all Londoners are within walking distance of a quality natural space. The Mayor's Strategy has taken account of the local Biodiversity Action Plans, which have been published by local authorities in London. Kingston has developed an initial plan that is integrated into this strategy.

2.4 Local Policy context

- 2.4.1 The Council's vision for the Borough is established in the Community Plan (2004-2009 currently being updated). Priorities are set out under a number of themes:
- An Environmentally Conscious Community and a Sustainable Borough
 - The Safest Borough in Greater London
 - A Regional Centre for Health Care
 - A Learning Community
 - A Diverse and Balanced Economy
 - Well Maintained, Sustainable Housing
 - A Sustainable Transport System that is Accessible to All
- 2.4.2 The Community Plan is supported by a raft of strategies of which the following are influential to the GSS:
- a) LA21 Plan 2000
 - b) RBK Unitary Development Plan (adopted 2005)
 - c) Cultural Strategy 2007-2012
 - d) Waste Strategy August 2004
 - e) A Play Strategy 2005-2008
 - f) Environmental Awareness Strategy 2006
 - g) Biodiversity Action Plan 2004
 - h) Local Development Framework (in preparation)
 - i) Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2010

2.4.3 The Council's Corporate Policy Programme (2006-2010) has a number of strategic aims and key objectives which support the values of the Community Plan. Responding to central government has resulted in revised governance arrangements. Hence, the strategic context of the policy programme has led to *Changing Kingston – Choosing our Future 2007-2011*. This is a process through which the council will make the choices about what matters most for the future and this will have a significant impact across the Council for the next three years.

2.4.4 The corporate ambitions for Kingston in 2011 and beyond remain the same. They are:

- National reputation as the best place to live and work.
- Residents confident about the future – a place where things happen.
- Residents consider services which matter most are high quality.
- Outstanding reputation for innovation, engagement, and designing services with users (co-production of public value).

2.5 Local Development Framework

2.5.1 The Local Development Framework (LDF) will be a set of spatial planning policy documents for the borough, replacing the current Unitary Development Plan. The LDF will be a strategy for accommodating the borough's development needs (e.g. more housing, town centre regeneration) in a sustainable way. It will set out a vision for the future of the borough, along with policies and proposals to deliver that vision. Environmental protection has long been a mainstay of planning policy, and planning policies have been very successful in protecting valued open spaces.

2.5.2 A key feature of spatial planning (the approach that LDF's must embody) is that the plan reflects and helps deliver wider Council objectives, and the objectives of partner organisations (such as the health bodies and the police). The LDF must therefore be closely aligned with the community plan, and other strategies, including the Green Spaces Strategy. To this end the LDF will seek to meet the objectives of the GSS in so far as spatial planning can, for example protect existing open space from built development, and require developer contributions to improve existing open spaces or provide new open spaces. As well as taking account of local strategies the LDF must comply with national planning policies (e.g. PPS17 referred to previously) and be in general conformity with the Mayor's London Plan.

Section 3

3.1 The Open Space Assessment Key Findings

- 3.1.1 The Kingston Open Space Assessment (Atkins May 2006) investigated the supply, quality and value of open space in the Borough. The report provides detailed analysis of all public and private open space provision. This detail has been used to extract the information on green space categories and identify key findings by Neighbourhood with a particular emphasis on play provision and other more general opportunities for improvement.
- 3.1.2 The standardised categories listed below are those used in any open space assessment. For the purposes of this document the open space categories as described in paragraph 1.1.3 are a derivative of the tabulated categories.

Open Space Type	No. Sites	Area (ha)	% Total Open Space
District Park	1	10.36	1.2%
Local Park	17	113.38	13.3%
Small local park/open space	13	18.93	2.2%
Linear park/open space	12	22.34	2.6%
Total park provision	43	165.01	19.4%
Allotments	23	41.70	4.9%
Amenity Green space	92	17.81	2.1%
Cemeteries	5	18.54	2.2%
Horticulture	6	2.22	0.3%
Natural/Semi-natural	18	102.13	12.0%
Play space	37	22.09	2.6%
Playing field (public)	28	87.47	10.3%
Woodland	14	47.83	5.6%
Total other space provision	223	339.79	40.0%
Total park + other space	266	504.8	59.4%
Private open space	49	346.32	40.6%
Total open space (includes private landholding)	318	851.12	100%

Figure 1: Open Space provision by type (Atkins 2006)

3.2 Key findings by Neighbourhood

Glossary of terms used in the following section

*LEAP (Locally Equipped Area for Play) - should include at least 5 types of play equipment and a small games area. Sites should be at least 0.36ha and within 400m (5 mins walking time) of home.

^NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) - should include at least 8 types of equipment, along with kick about and cycle play opportunities. Site must be at least 0.85ha and within 1000m (15m walking time) of home.

#1 Cromwell Avenue Open Space has since gone through improvement to the quality and utilisation of site.

#2 Churchfield Recreation Ground has since improved access, and path network around site.

Kingston Town Neighbourhood

3.2.1 Kingston Town is one of the four neighbourhoods that make up the administrative and political area of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The neighbourhood comprises of the wards of Canbury, Grove, Norbiton and Tudor covering an area of approximately 610ha. Kingston Town is the smallest neighbourhood by area covering 16.4% of the borough.

3.2.2 *Play provision by Ward*

- Canbury - This ward has one children's play area in fair condition. Provision in neighbouring wards extends to Canbury to meet some of its need for play.
- Grove - Although there are two play facilities in the ward, areas in the south and west are deficient in access to children's play facilities. Neither of the two facilities are classified as LEAP* or NEAP^.
- Norbiton - This ward is well served, particularly by provision in surrounding wards. There is one play facility of fair quality in Norbiton.
- Tudor - There is a strong provision of children's play areas in this ward, with four facilities located there. One of these is classified as a LEAP*, and only a very small area of this ward is deficient in access to children's play facilities.

3.2.3 *Opportunities for improvements*

- Athelstan Recreation Ground, Kingston Road Recreation Ground, and Latchmere Recreation Ground all fall short of qualitative standard, so improvements should be made to the quality of these sites.
- Athelstan Recreation Ground, Elm Road Playground and Fairfield Recreation Ground are all above average value to the community, but below average quality so need improving to meet needs.

- Athelstan Recreation Ground, Elm Road Recreation Ground and Kingston Road Recreation Ground identified as having potential to improve landscaping. This would improve the value of the site to the community through providing a more varied environment.
- There is potential to upgrade to LEAP*/NEAP^ standards at Athelstan Recreation Ground, Canbury Gardens, Elm Road Recreation Ground, Kingfisher and Kingston Road Recreation Ground.

Kingston Road Rec

- There is potential to improve ecology at Latchmere Recreation Ground to meet deficiency in Tudor Ward.
- Overall Athelstan Recreation Ground was identified as having the greatest opportunity to introduce change.

Athelstan recreation ground

Maldens and Coombe Neighbourhood

3.2.4 Maldens and Coombe is one of the four neighbourhoods that make up the administrative and political area of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The neighbourhood comprises of the wards of Beverley, Coombe Hill, Coombe Vale, Old Malden and St James covering an area of approximately 1,190ha. It covers 32% of the borough, and within its boundaries is New Malden, a major transport interchange in the borough.

3.2.5 Play provision by Ward

- Beverley - There are three play areas in the ward, one of which is classified as a LEAP*. Two of the areas are in fair condition.
- Coombe Hill - Although there is only one children's play area in this ward, it is classified as a LEAP*. Around 80% of the ward does not have access to a play area within 400m of home (although some of this deficiency may be met by provision across the borough boundary).
- Coombe Vale - Two play areas were identified within this ward, one of which was the only play area in the entire borough classified as NEAP^.
- Old Malden - Although this ward does not have any play areas located within its ward boundaries, play areas in neighbouring wards have catchment areas which extend across boarders and give a fairly high level of provision.
- St James - Primary provision comes from the play facilities at the borough's only district park, Manor Park. This play area is classified as LEAP* and is in good condition.

3.2.6 Opportunities for improvement

- Green Lane Recreation Ground, Barton Green and Cromwell Avenue open space are all short of qualitative standard and improvements should be targeted to these areas. #1

- There is potential to upgrade to LEAP*/NEAP^ at Blagdon Road Recreation Ground.
- Green Lane Recreation Ground is above average value to users, but below average quality so needs improvements.
- Green Lane Recreation Ground identified as in need of improved landscaping and site utilisation (areas within park serving no purpose, or is under used due to condition).
- Cromwell Avenue Open Space identified as having potential for improved site utilisation.
- There is potential to improve ecology at Dickerage Lane Recreation Ground and Blagdon Road Recreation Ground to meet deficiency in public accessible natural/semi-natural open space.
- Sites identified as having overall greatest opportunity for change are Barton Green, Cromwell Avenue open space, and Green Lane Recreation Ground.

Green Lane Rec

South of the Borough Neighbourhood

3.2.7 South of the Borough is one of the four neighbourhoods that make up the administrative and political area of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. It consists of the wards of Chessington North and Hook, Chessington South, and Tolworth and Hook Rise. Within its boundaries are the smaller district centres of Tolworth and Chessington. It covers 32.4% of the borough, an area of approximately 1,205ha.

3.2.8 Play provision by Ward

- Chessington North and Hook - This ward is very well served with children's play facilities. There are three play areas in the ward, one of which is a LEAP* in fair condition.
- Chessington South - Although there are large areas within this ward which fall outside the 400m catchment areas for play facilities, there are five play areas which provide a reasonable amenity for local residents. One of these is a LEAP* in good condition.
- Tolworth and Hook Rise - There are no children's play facilities in the ward and little provision from neighbouring wards spill over. Around 85% of the ward is outside the 400m catchment area of play facilities in surrounding wards.

3.2.9 Opportunities for improvement

- King Georges Recreation Ground could upgrade to District Park with additional facilities like extra children's play and recreational facilities.
- Chessington Wood could upgrade facilities to upgrade status to Local Park or small Local Park which could alleviate deficiency in southern tip of the borough.
- King Georges Recreation Ground is above average value, but below average quality so needs improvements.
- Churchfields Recreation Ground identified as having potential to improve access within park (identified because barriers to pedestrians and people with disabilities discourage people from using the space, or condition of paths is inadequate). #2

- King Georges Recreation Ground identified as having potential to improve access and site utilisation.
- Churchfield Recreation Ground and Woodgate Avenue Open Space could be upgraded to meet LEAP*/NEAP^ standards.

Churchfields

- Churchfields Recreation Ground could improve ecology to meet deficiency in natural/semi-natural green spaces.
- King Georges Recreation ground, Woodgate Avenue Open Space and King Edwards Recreation Ground were all identified as having the best opportunity to implement change.

Surbiton Neighbourhood

3.2.10 Surbiton is one of the four neighbourhoods that make up the administrative and political area of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. It comprises of the wards of Alexandra, Berrylands, St Marks and Surbiton Hill. It covers 19.2% of the borough, approximately 720ha.

3.2.11 Play provision by ward

- Alexandra - Three play facilities along the western and eastern border of the ward create a fair level of provision for the ward. However, there are issues with the quality of these play spaces.
- Berrylands - There are no children's play facilities in this ward. Provision in neighbouring wards does meet some of the need, but around 50% of the ward is not served by children's play areas.
- St Marks - The central portion of the ward does not have sufficient children's play provision, but two facilities in the ward help to meet the needs of the eastern and western portions. One of these play areas is classified as an LEAP*.
- Surbiton Hill - As with Berrylands, there are no children's play facilities in this ward. There is minimal provision extending from other areas, and as such a large majority of the ward lies outside the 400m catchment area for play facilities.

3.2.12 Opportunities for improvement

- The Wood could accommodate children's play facilities to upgrade status to small Local Park.
- Elmbridge Avenue Open Space, Rose Walk Open Space, and Raeburn Avenue Open Space are all above average value, but below average quality, so need improving.
- There is potential to improve ecology at Alexandra Recreation Ground and Tolworth Main Allotments to fill deficiency in natural/semi-natural green spaces.

Alexandra Rec

Section 4

4.1 The Green Spaces Strategy Framework – Outcomes and Principles

- 4.1.1 The strategy concentrates around ten top line functions. This ‘multifunctional’ approach moves away from the ‘one size fits all’ historic philosophy of parks and grounds management. The functions will act as the guiding principles for implementation.
- 4.1.2 The overall ambition of this strategy is to chart actions so that each green space will fulfil at least six functions with the majority of sites being able to fulfil nine or ten. This will ensure that green spaces in Kingston are truly sustainable, multifunctional landscapes that are visually pleasing, environmentally vibrant, functionally productive and socially useful and accessible (DEFRA 2004).

4.2 Annual implementation Plan

- 4.2.3 The actions will be met through an Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) ensuring the strategy remains relevant and forward looking whilst responding to any resource pressures of the time. The AIP will include individual Development Plans for each key park created and delivered in partnership with QUADRON. Monitoring progression and delivery of this strategy will be a function of the AIP.
- 4.2.4 The AIP will address the long term step changes required for improvement as well as the more immediate operation changes required for the development of the service delivery.

The Functions

Function 1 A place for sustainable living

Aim

- To plan and manage our green spaces to maximise community benefit

Function 2 A productive landscape.

Aim

- To support the local economy, and help create employment opportunities.

Function 3 A link to the country.

Aim

- To make our green spaces welcoming and accessible, and provide opportunities for people to thrive, contribute and develop.

Function 4 A safe environment.

Aim

- To make sure people feel safe and secure by undertaking measures to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Function 5 A learning environment.

Aim

- To enhance play facilities;
- Improve skills and understanding in relation to parks and green spaces.

Function 6 An opportunity to improve health and fitness

Aim

- To contribute to the health and well being of residents.
- To provide young people with a place to ‘hangout’;
- To provide sporting opportunities for all.

Function 7 An environment for sustainable development

Aim

- To secure sustainable development/sustainability
- To use our resources efficiently, effectively and flexibly

Function 8 To enhance biodiversity

Aim

- To protect and enhance the natural environment

Function 9 A cultural legacy.

Aim

- To advertise the wider benefits of green space.

Function 10 An engine for regeneration (to develop local communities and neighbourhoods.)

Aim

- To involve the community.

4.3 Opportunities and challenges facing Kingston’s green spaces

- 4.3.1 Many challenges and opportunities for improving the management and enhancement of green spaces will arise from trends in green space use and the evolving nature of the local community.
- 4.3.2 A significant opportunity for the green space is the long-term contractual partnership with QUADRON. This partnership approach permits continuity of service delivery not found in shorter term client based arrangements. The permanence of the partnership promotes a creative and ambitious culture.
- 4.3.3 A significant challenge is that open space provision is not a statutory requirement and therefore may not be a high priority when prioritising services. This will inevitably have an impact during the first three years of implementation (2008 – 2011). Therefore the Implementation Plan must reflect this whilst still ensuring travel towards the intended multifunctional principles.
- 4.3.4 Current satisfaction with green spaces is generally very high. 83% of all respondents in the Residents’ Survey of the Open Space Assessment (Atkins 2006) were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’. This is an improvement on the 2004 MORI Survey result where 68% were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. These results must not generate complacency. Any current or future budget pressure will have an inevitable impact on resource allocation. If the Kingston population increases, demographics vary or there are significant changes to green space usage this will put an increasing pressure on the existing infrastructure.
- 4.3.5 Playing pitches are a vital community resource facing significant challenges to their effective and efficient management. Pressures range from an evolving population, shifting popularity in different pitch sports, ongoing maintenance of associated equipment and facilities and consistent and transparent implementation of access and charging policies.
- 4.3.6 Walking is the main reason for people visiting a green space. If the Council is to continue to meet people’s needs it will be important to ensure the equitable distribution of quality green space and facilities across the Borough. However, with increased demand for spaces to support activities, such as walking or informal exercise, and the desired increase in sports participation a potential conflict could result between users.
- 4.3.7 The influence of climate change will have implications for the costs of, and approaches to maintaining the spaces. More intensive use of green spaces, a longer growing season and the need to irrigate are all likely to lead to an increase in maintenance costs. Poor air and soil quality combined with increased pests could affect the vitality of trees and vegetation.

Section 5 Issues

In developing the content and range of subject matters that will influence the Green Spaces Strategy various themes were discussed with our partners, members, officers and stakeholders. These discussions resulted in the following suite of relevant issues.

5.1 Improving range and quality of green spaces

5.1.1 The Green Spaces in Kingston are not evenly distributed across the Borough for geographical and demographical reasons. While it is impossible to transplant historical or cultural features or hold events and celebrations on unsuitable open spaces it is a realistic aim of the strategy to improve community access to certain facilities. Any quality improvements to grounds and facilities will have a significant impact on residents' enjoyment of any park. This strategy provides a framework of policies to enable the prioritisation of investment and improved management to meet the outcomes. It also provides a framework from which access to new funding opportunities can be made.

5.2 Improving accessibility to pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users

- 5.2.1 Getting to, and around parks and open spaces is perhaps the most important factor determining people's choice, use and enjoyment of parks. Many of Kingston's parks and open spaces have limited accessibility due to their location. Improvements can be made by planning new public transport alternatives to meet current or expected demand. Access by walking and cycling will promote a better distribution of facilities across the neighbourhoods and encourage people to use alternatives to the private car.
- 5.2.2 Encouraging people to access parks on foot and by bicycle will require investment in appropriate facilities (improved paths, signage, bike stands, shelters, security) and identification of safe access points that do not adversely affect the safety and enjoyment of the park by pedestrians and disabled users.
- 5.2.3 Many people with mobility impairments cannot make use of parks unless there is adequate blue badge parking within a few metres of the park entrance. For those parks without their own car parking areas consideration will be given to providing on-street disabled parking bays.

5.3 Ensuring green spaces are relevant to all members of the community

5.3.1 Green spaces provide an essential setting for social interaction and public life. Care must be taken to ensure they are relevant to the needs of all members of the community. Thus, careful planning must include and involve particular groups, for example youth, ethnic minorities, impaired mobility, sight or hearing, learning difficulties, mothers and toddlers and local people. By anticipating potential conflicts benefits for all can be maximised.

5.4 Climate Change

- 5.4.1 On-going research has identified that there will be key environmental changes to our climate mainly due to an increase in temperature. As climate change increases, green spaces are likely to become more important as they contribute to cooling raised temperatures, especially in urban areas. There will be a reliance on the cooler local temperature for recreational activities as people seek retreat from the heat emanating from buildings.
- 5.4.2 All green spaces help urban areas adapt to the impact of climate change regardless of whether they are parks, private gardens or street trees, but the size, quality and shape of a space, vegetation type and proportion of coverage all influence the level of impact.
- 5.4.3 Green spaces will play a significant role in adapting to climate change, for example improving biodiversity, managing flood risk, absorbing pollutants (acting as carbon sinks), and influencing behaviour by ensuring green spaces are well-planned, safe and appealing so that people will want to visit them. The spaces will provide recreational activities nearer to home, which reduces car journeys and removes a reliance on activities that require higher energy output which in turn reduces carbon emissions.

5.5 Infrastructure and Access

- 5.5.1 The infrastructure of our parks consists of the seating, signage, path networks, railings, walls, gates and buildings.
- 5.5.2 It is vital that once a user arrives at a park or green space that they have appropriate infrastructure in place to use the site in the way that they like.
- 5.5.3 In recent years a great deal of capital investment has gone into improving the infrastructure of our parks.
- 5.5.4 The Disability Discrimination Act places a duty on service providers to take reasonable steps to make sure disabled people can make use of their service. Many of our parks and playgrounds now have highlighted entrance gates for visually impaired users. New path networks have been created at Churchfields and King Edwards to allow access to areas of the park previously un-usable by people with mobility difficulties.
- 5.5.5 Canbury Gardens saw an improvement project to all steps leading from the towpath to the main park. The steps were re-built with highlighted nosing and hand railings, and anti-slip tactile paving located at the top and bottom of the steps. This now provides access points all along the park which complies with Part M of the Building Regulations

DDA steps at Canbury Gardens

Railings

- 5.5.6 The use of railings can add aesthetically to a site and define the area.

- 5.5.7 However, in certain situations questions need to be asked as to whether railings or fencing is needed. Where a green space is used for dog walking or children’s play, it is accepted that railings are needed to enclose the area, particularly where the space borders a busy road. In other instances railings can limit use and act as a barrier to entry, for example people have to take an indirect route to enter the park, and this may put them off visiting again.
- 5.5.8 There have been several projects to repair or renew railings around the perimeter of some parks, such as Fairfield Recreation Ground, Athelstan Recreation Ground, St Andrews Square and Barton Green.
- 5.5.9 Key parks will have a Development Plan which will evaluate the location on its merits and make recommendations to remove unnecessary railings. In addition to making a park more welcoming the removal of railings reduces or removes maintenance costs.
- 5.5.10 Where railings remain we will investigate the possibility of increasing access points into the site.

Case Study – Claremont Crescent Gardens, Surbiton

Claremont Crescent Gardens is a small town centre park, covering around ¾ of a hectare in size. It has no formal sporting facilities and is used for passive recreation and enjoyment of its water features.

Until the early to mid 1990’s this area was enclosed by a chain link fence. The exclusiveness of the area encouraged youths and drunks to gather in the evening, making it a no-go area for many. Since the railings have been removed the park can be entered, and also exited, from any point. This now encourages passers by to pop in and enjoy the park for the first time, when they may not previously have done.

People feel more secure using the park, and the aesthetics are improved as well.

This is an example of where removing fencing or railings has benefited the site by opening up access.

Claremont Gardens

Signage

- 5.5.11 Good signage in and around a green space is an important tool for communication. It lets people know where they are, what they can do, and how they can move around the site. The current supply of signage in the majority of our parks is old and out-of-date.
- 5.5.12 We will seek to invest in new signage that welcomes users to the space and informs them how they can use the facility. Ideally aim to replace at least one primary sign per year in each park, until funds allow more extensive replacement. All new signage will comply with the guidance in the Council’s Access for All Supplementary Planning Document.

Old signage at Beverley Park

Buildings

- 5.5.13 There is a mix of buildings in the Borough’s parks and open spaces. Some are used solely as sporting pavilions, such as at Fairfield Recreation Ground. Some are leased out to

commercial organisations such as the Café along Queens Promenade. Other buildings are used by community groups or community based organisations. For example Kingston's Youth offending team work out of a building in Canbury Gardens where they produce bird boxes.

5.5.14 A pavilion in use can add to the perceived safety and security in the park by providing a presence during operating hours. It can act as a focal point and help build a sense of community if utilised in the correct manner.

5.5.15 Where we have existing buildings in good condition we should explore the options for diversifying their use to increase park usage and utilisation. Where buildings are nearing the end of their useful life other avenues should be explored for example demolish the buildings or seek commercial or charitable activities that benefit the wider community.

Case study – Canbury Community Pavilion

Volunteers rescued the old bowling pavilion weeks before it was scheduled to be knocked down and have turned it into a vibrant, sustainable resource for Kingston.

The pavilion is self financing, using money made from the hire of the facility by private organisations to allow a cheap, sometimes free venue for several voluntary organisations. Situated in the Canbury Gardens, next to the Thames, the Pavilion provides a venue for a wide range of activities.

Canbury Community pavilion

On a weekly basis activities range from an Iranian older person's gathering, to a Muslim youth group, Aikido, Qicong to Canbury Buttons (a mothers and toddlers 'drop in').

Other activities include:

- Sit-down fund raising events for Breast Cancer, Peruvian nurseries, Shooting Star trust.
- Kids Karaoke
- Carol sing-along around the piano with mulled wine and karaoke.
- Exhibition of photographs
- Public meetings to discuss local planning issues
- ...even a funeral and wake for a local angler.

The pavilion is a focal point for the park, attracting people to the events mentioned above, and also providing 'eyes and ears' for the needs, wishes and concerns of local users to be expressed to the volunteers running the pavilion. It is a great example of partnership working, using existing park infrastructure for greater community benefit.

Memorial benches

- 5.5.16 There is a demand in Kingston upon Thames for benches, sponsored by friends or relatives in memory of a loved one. The most popular location requested, almost exclusively, is along the Queens Promenade, where there are currently over 200 benches.
- 5.5.17 In the past the friend or relative purchased the bench from a recommended supplier and the Council paid for the installation.
- 5.5.18 When the process was first started it was of benefit to both parties as the Council was able to replace old or damaged benches and the resident was able to have a memorial to their loved one. In recent years the majority of the old and damaged benches have been replaced,.

Benches along Queens Prom

- 5.5.19 Any new memorial benches are now being installed in available space. However, the available space is limited especially in the more popular areas such as Queen's Promenade and Canbury Gardens. The council will no longer replace benches, or introduce new ones along Queens Promenade; this is due to there being no real benefit to the public from the additional benches given the saturation of benches in this one location; .
- 5.5.20 Where there is still a demand for memorial benches in other locations the council will consider the request if an old or damaged bench needs replacing. Should the resident wish to proceed the total cost will be borne by the purchaser with a commuted maintenance fee for the life time of the bench. The cost of benches and their installation and maintenance will be set out in the Annual Implementation Plan.

Public conveniences

- 5.5.21 There are publicly accessible toilets at 11 parks in the borough, either as a stand alone building or as part of the playing pavilion. There is no current legislation that requires local authorities to provide public conveniences.
- 5.5.22 The cleansing of the public conveniences is undertaken by Quadron Services. The facility is challenging to keep clean, especially if people abuse them or act irresponsibly. The upkeep and general building maintenance is, at present, part of the responsive maintenance budget held for parks
- 5.5.23 Some of the existing public conveniences have had recent improvements to provide reasonable access for disabled people as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 5.5.24 The parks' Development Plans will investigate the improvement or actual provision of public conveniences on a site by site basis. This will depend upon the current structural and internal condition of the convenience, issues with vandalism, and the demand for use.

5.6 Security

Fear of crime

- 5.6.1 Green spaces provide an essential setting for social interaction and public life. This builds a sense of community, provides opportunities for relaxation and escape, and the space for sport and recreation.
- 5.6.2 However, on the flip-side, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is high on the list of things people worry about. Some members of society, such as older people and mothers with children, are put off from using green spaces, consigning them as no-go areas that they are afraid to visit.
- 5.6.3 In reality there is little statistical evidence to prove that high rates of crime and anti-social behaviour are a particular problem in parks and green spaces. But what we do know is that people are afraid of going to parks because they **believe** they may come across anti-social behaviour. A main factor in this is a perceived poor standard of maintenance, which communicates a lack of care and authority.
- 5.6.4 Whether or not anti-social behaviour is actually witnessed, the sense of its presence exerts such a negative influence on users that it must be taken seriously.
- 5.6.5 There are different ways of tackling this issue. Evidence from CABI Space (national organisation that works with local authorities and other national, regional and local bodies involved with the delivery of parks and public spaces) suggests that investing in the design and care of quality public spaces is more effective in tackling anti-social behaviour than blanket use of tough security measures such as CCTV. Nevertheless, carefully targeted security measures are often a part of successful improvement projects.
- 5.6.6 Many issues can be designed out by removing opportunities for vandalism. Lines of sight and inter-visibility of one space with another need careful consideration. Exits should be visible and long corridor spaces with no alternative way out should be avoided. A rapid response to vandalism will send a message that it will not be tolerated and high standards of care can generate respect and local pride.
- 5.6.7 The Council must also be aware that however vital the design and maintenance of a green space it only has one part to play in reducing anti-social behaviour. The design cannot ever deal with the reason why people offend in the first place. Therefore, there needs to be a considered approach before removing large scale shrubs beds or trees. In order to reverse the problems, the root causes rather than the symptoms need to be addressed.
- 5.6.8 Improving the design and maintenance of our green spaces will be part of a coordinated and holistic response, working together with the police and other partners to identify and address as many of the contributing factors as possible.
- 5.6.9 In partnership with Quadron Services, we will work with Safer Neighbourhood Police teams to design out crime by auditing all parks and green spaces, to ensure public safety is not put at risk.
- 5.6.10 We will consider positive actions aimed at those who are perceived to be committing anti-social acts. For example provide 'youth shelters' or areas for teenagers and young adults with a place to 'hang out'. Here, they can take ownership and in turn, respect.
- 5.6.11 The use of 'youth shelters', lighting of parks and CCTV will be examined more closely in the action plans.

- 5.6.12 All parks and green spaces suffer to a greater or lesser degree from graffiti and vandalism. By working in partnership with the Safer Neighbourhood Police teams, local service providers and Quadron Services problems can be addressed early on and actions followed. This may be by direct action such as applying anti graffiti protection or indirectly by working with youth organisations.
- 5.6.13 Trends on playground reports and site inspections provide information about problems as they occur. Hence, regular inspecting and reporting will continue throughout the lifetime of the playground and equipment.

CCTV

- 5.6.14 The use of CCTV in our parks is currently limited to three cameras in Canbury Gardens. There is no doubt that the use of cameras can add greatly to users sense of safety when using a green space. The link up to the Council's main CCTV control room can give rapid response to any incident happening in the park, and may deter anti-social behaviour.
- 5.6.15 The capital cost of installing a camera is considerable and carries an annual maintenance cost. When finance is available we will consider the use of CCTV cameras for Health and Safety reasons. However it is more manageable to look for other options to improve safety in our parks, such as the methods outlined above.

Lighting in parks

- 5.6.16 The issue of lighting in parks is sensitive, with views split on whether or not it should be provided in certain situations.
- 5.6.17 Those in favour of lighting wish to improve safety and security after dark. Within our Thames-side locations of Canbury Gardens and Queens Promenade, users would like to improve the ambience of an evening riverside walk.
- 5.6.18 The opposing view is that increased lighting will be detrimental, encouraging greater use and resulting in more noise, litter and graffiti and can cause disturbance to wildlife that is only active at night.
- 5.6.19 Experience in some parks where lighting has been improved suggests that this encourages groups of youths to gather and stay in the location until a far later time, bringing with it the associated anti-social behaviour. In some situations residents who originally sought improved lighting, within months of its installation requested that it be turned off or removed as the associated problems had escalated to such extreme levels.
- 5.6.20 If schemes are suggested extensive investigation and consultation on the environmental impacts will be required before decision. The following factors would be taken into account:
- Demand from users and residents;
 - Environmental impacts;
 - Consultation with Police;
 - Consultation with councillors;
 - Financial implications.

5.6.21 In some instances mitigation may overcome the primary problems.

5.6.22 Finding capital for a lighting project will be the biggest limiting factor, with a scheme likely to cost tens of thousands of pounds. Any monies required for such a scheme will most likely need to come from a capital bid, developer's contribution or external funding. However, such is the capital implication that implementation would be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Locking Parks

5.6.23 One of the key themes of this strategy is to increase access to our green spaces for all users.

5.6.24 However, at times a debate arises around locking park gates. This polarises into two views, one that parks should be locked and secured, the other that locking is ineffective and consequently all parks should remain open.

5.6.25 Those in favour maintain that locking will discourage unauthorised use. Whilst all accept that a locked gate and fence will not deter those determined to gain access, those in favour maintain that the deterrent of a locked gate reduces incidents of misuse, and makes the few remaining incidents easier to police. They would also claim that not locking the park could be seen as an invitation to enter.

5.6.26 Those in favour of not locking gates feel that a locked gate and fence will not deter those determined to gain access but a locked gate does deter the bona fide innocent user, limiting the use of a facility that should be inclusive, free and accessible to everyone.

5.6.27 Locked gates reduce access for emergency services. Moreover some would claim that the privacy afforded by a locked park is an incentive in itself to gain access and make use of the park for activities such as illegal under age drinking or drug abuse.

5.6.28 There is a significant resource issue around locking park gates. The manpower needed to lock gates in the evening and to unlock in the morning would take away from other operations in the grounds maintenance contract and in all probability produce other unmanageable service pressures.

5.6.29 Where an issue is raised we will work with the police to look at other ways to reduce the cause of the problem, rather than tackling the symptoms. The Council's policy is not to lock park gates. There will consequently be a resistance to any requests to locking any park gate.

5.6.30 However, to follow due process, if a request is made to lock gates the consultation process will be as follows:

- The nature and function of the request will be clearly established
- The capital and revenue cost implications will be established
- Consultation will take place with current users
- Consultation will take place with the Police
- Findings of a Health and Equalities Impact Assessment.

5.6.32 The consultation process to be followed in light of requests of this type can be found in section 7.1.

Presence in parks

- 5.6.33 Since the demise of direct service operations in parks, park keepers have become a thing of the past. However, when consulting on the way the service could be improved a presence in parks was high on the list of priorities.
- 5.6.34 In response Quadron Services piloted two models, the first in year one and the second in year two. The first model was a static presence using temporary seasonal staff where the operative remained in the park through normal working hours. Model two was using permanent mobile staff who visited the parks at different times of the day during normal working hours in one park per neighbourhood.
- 5.6.35 The future deployment of this presence, and its function, must be considered against a number of factors and opportunities.
- 5.6.36 During the consultation process the Neighbourhood Committees agreed that a presence in parks should stand in principle as a desirable service to provide, but that it should be explored creatively to find different ways of delivering the principle within financial constraints. This may be by working with other internal and external partners such as Sports Development and the YMCA, and/or encouraging the 3rd Sector and volunteers to become involved. The AIP will set out both options to be explored in progressing the principal and proposals to establish a presence in parks where possible.
- 5.6.37 It must be stressed that this presence is not about increasing the level of security and direct response to anti-social behaviour issues. This responsibility remains with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the Police.

Dogs

- 5.6.38 Dog-walking is one of the primary reasons people visit parks and open spaces on a regular basis. Conversely it can deter others from using them. The enjoyment of other users can be negatively impacted when dog owners fail to manage faeces and uncontrolled dogs.
- 5.6.39 Dog faeces are unpleasant, can spread disease (toxocariasis) especially to children, and have a negative impact on the growth of vegetation especially in areas managed for nature conservation or hay making.
- 5.6.38 To counter this there are segregated areas for dogs and humans in some parks. A number of children's play areas have fenced off areas adjoining them, classed as 'dog free zones' in which children and adults can sit, play and enjoy without the threat of dog mess or dog presence. In some of the smaller parks and fenced gardens such as St Andrews Square the presence of dogs can be detrimental to the ambience of the garden. Here, signage could be employed to discourage the use of the garden for dog exercise. If this is unsuccessful then the garden could be deemed dog free (see 5.6.42). Other sites will be considered as dog free zones if there is public pressure to do so.
- 5.6.39 Elm Road Recreation Ground contains a dog walking zone. Here a fenced off area of the park allows dogs to be let off the leash in a controlled environment, positively reducing the problem of dog mess in the remaining area of the park.

- 5.6.40 Traditional methods such as interpretation signs about responsible dog management, provision of dog bags and dog waste bins should continue, and increase in areas of demand.
- 5.6.41 By virtue of Section 64 (1) Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act the Council has powers to make under Section 55(1) Dog Control Orders which include under 55(3)(c) the exclusion of dogs from land. Land means any land open to the air and to which the public have access with or without payment. The maximum penalty on conviction in the Magistrates Court is currently £1000 although a fixed penalty notice may be given as an alternative to prosecution of an offence. The Council sets the amount of the fixed penalty although the act provides a default figure if the Council do not set out a sum in the dog control order. The provisions governing fixed penalties are in Sections 59-62. Only in exceptional circumstances where a sound case is well made and justifiable will the Council use these powers.

5.7 Young People and Play

Youth Shelters

- 5.7.1 Parks and open spaces are key places in the social development of young people. Most spaces have facilities for the under 12's, but are found wanting when it comes to providing anything for teenagers.
- 5.7.2 Most teen's are looking for a place to 'hang out', where they can develop their independence away from adults, and become integrated into the community.
- 5.7.3 Youths often congregate in a play area where they grew up. However, when they are older they have less respect for the equipment and are more likely to damage it rather than play on it.
- 5.7.4 A more focused effort is needed to engage and consult with teenagers about what facilities they would like to see and where they should be located. In cases where young people have been asked, their requirements are surprisingly modest – just somewhere dry where they can meet their friends.
- 5.7.5 Given the correct situation, it would be of benefit to provide youth shelters at certain locations. The choice of location is important. Local residents are often concerned about noise and behaviour, and the size of the shelter needs to be in proportion to the immediate surroundings. Shelters will not necessarily encourage a problem, as alternative locations to congregate will always be found.
- 5.7.6 The benefits of providing a shelter could be great. For youths it will offer a place to go and meet friends in a non-confrontational environment, which can develop involvement and pride in their neighbourhood. It will shift focus away from children's play areas, reducing any damage or vandalism, allowing resources to be focused on improvements rather than repairs.
- 5.7.7 We will review the facilities aimed at teenagers and where a demand is expressed, an appropriate location found, and funding is available, we will seek to provide youth shelters or

similar structures. This would be best utilised in conjunction with some sporting or informal activity.

5.7.8 It is important that where we look to provide a youth shelter we work closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Police Team, and local users and residents so we can monitor and evaluate the use of the shelter.

Play

5.7.9 Nearly every child is taken to, or visits a park to play. These visits are fundamental to the childhood experience of most urban children. Green spaces and playgrounds provide wide open spaces and large scale play equipment not found in their domestic setting.

5.7.10 Play is important to the development of children in the following ways:

- Play nurtures children's creativity and problem solving capabilities.
- Play is health promoting. It builds children's strength and coordination and is beneficial for children's emotional health.
- Play stimulates the healthy development of children's brains.
- Play allows children to acquire competence and skills that help them feel good about themselves.
- Play provides the context in which caring adults teach children how to behave, how to treat others, and the social conventions of the community.
- Play provides the opportunity to learn essential social skills: to take turns, to share and to cooperate.
- Play helps children develop friendships with their peers. Good interpersonal skills are essential to children's lifelong success.
- Play environments produce natural opportunities for children to learn self respect and how to treat others with respect.
- Play promotes a child's development and their development enhances their play - creating an upward spiral.

5.7.11 This places a strong emphasis on the Local Authority to provide play spaces that will allow children to experience these benefits.

5.7.12 The Open Space Assessment (Atkins 2006) gives guidance on the quality of play spaces, and the areas of deficiency which need improving. This will be taken into consideration when planning for future improvements.

5.7.13 The Council, in partnership with Quadron Services, currently manages 23 playgrounds across the borough, of varying size and quality.

5.7.14 Currently daily visual inspections are carried out to all equipment, along with formal checks on a monthly basis to identify any repairs or replacements needed. Most of the dedicated capital budget is used for these repairs or maintenance. Additionally, there is an annual work programme for the replacement or improvement of equipment in priority areas. This Annual Implementation Plan will identify areas where improvement can be made such as removal of old equipment and replacement with more innovative and creative play equipment.

5.7.15 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) places a duty on service providers to take reasonable steps to ensure no one is excluded in the planning and management of services, including play facilities. Latest guidance indicates that the use of high quality play equipment is inclusive to all, rather than specialised equipment for disabled children which excludes the able-bodied, is the most effective way of delivering an inclusive play environment.

5.7.16 A considerable amount of money has been spent over the last few years to update the playgrounds. This has been through improving access by highlighting entrance points and creating ramps, and through the provision of inclusive play equipment, such as the Park Leisure DDA Kidabout roundabout which has been installed flush to the ground to allow for wheelchair access.

Park Leisure DDA roundabout

5.7.17 In addition to the capital budget for play equipment we will seek external funding to improve our play facilities by working with local community group and Residents' Associations, or securing developers contributions, s106 money, for play improvements.

Case Study King Georges Playground

King Georges is the largest park in the borough but lacks facilities for certain sectors of society, most notably children.

Large areas of the park are under utilised but the space offers great opportunity for development.

A successful bid was made to the Big Lottery Fund to provide play facilities at the site.

Consultation is still out with local young people and councillors regarding what sort of facilities will be provided, however the aim is to provide an 'adventure style' playground, totally removed from the conventional playgrounds found in the rest of the borough.

The playground will be sited on an old area of hard standing which was once tennis courts but has now fallen into a state of disrepair. This has dual benefits of tidying up an eye-sore, and providing high quality play facilities. The site has car parking facilities which opens up access for users from around the borough.

5.7.18 If of a good standard, play facilities will be highly valued by families and young people. An example of this is Dickerage Adventure playground run by Kingston Youth Service. This facility is a good quality example of what can be achieved in our play areas with the correct resources, and could be used as the model for Kingston in the future.

Dickerage adventure playground

5.7.19 The outdoor activities included at this site include:

- skate ramps and street circuit

- basketball court
- tennis court
- slide, swings and climbing apparatus
- play houses
- large and small inflatables
- Outdoor trike trail.

5.7.20 The indoor activities include:

- snooker and pool
- table tennis
- indoor playroom with reading corner, dressing up, arts and crafts, toys and games, face painting, badge making.

5.7.21 Young people must pay to use the skate park but all other facilities are free.

Play Strategy

5.7.22 The play strategy (2005-2008) for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames will be reviewed in 2008. The strategy aims to improve play facilities and increase the opportunity to play for all children and young people, irrespective of race, gender or disability. The strategy sets out Kingston's vision for improving play and is intended to be a practical working document. Hence, the Green Spaces Strategy will take into account the outcomes of the play strategy before making decisions regarding the development of playgrounds.

5.7.23 When Kingston's young people were asked what they thought play was, most thought that play was something that takes place at home or in the park. Parents mostly associated play with playgrounds.

5.7.24 This places huge responsibility on the authority to ensure the play facilities in parks and green spaces are challenging and stimulating, and can assist in the social development of users.

5.7.25 The uses of play:

- develops independence, self-esteem and respect for others;
- supports healthy growth and development;
- increases knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

5.7.26 Benefits to the community:

- reduces the involvement of young people in anti-social activities;
- supports informal networks and communities;
- offers opportunities for exploring cultural identity.

Play in the natural environment

5.7.27 Play can also happen in the natural areas that are linked to playgrounds. When we think about our childhood play experiences it seems much of it took place in wasteland, parks, riverbanks or up trees. Most outdoor play happens in the natural environment, but this does not mean it is intrinsically better than play with equipment such as slides and swings. Manufactured play equipment signifies to children that they are valued by the community, and that being around such equipment is a proper place for them. However, some of the best municipal play areas in the country incorporate both natural environments and manufactured equipment. The problem with this is that it requires the removal of fencing to allow children to explore the whole area. This is not always practical when young children are present because physical barriers are needed to secure the area and ensure safety. But we can look to incorporate some natural features such as planting and mounds in our larger and more suitably equipped play areas such as at Beverley Park.

Beverley Park play area

5.7.28 We should also look to develop links to schools so the benefits of our green spaces can be enjoyed as an outdoor classroom, allowing pupils to experience hands on contact with nature outside the confines of their school. This sort of contact with nature at a young age fosters an understanding and respect that will be continued as the child grows up. A possible example of this would be to learn about coppicing techniques at one of our managed woodlands. Hazel, Sweet Chestnut or Willow can be broken at the root, used to make things, and then re-grow into a thick bush with lots of shoots, ideal for creating a den within it.

5.7.29 Signage and interpretation boards can be used as wider education tools for young and old alike, to inform them of the natural environment and its protection and management. This can be incorporated into the desire to improve signage in all parks.

Paddling Pools

5.7.30 Currently there are no traditional swimming and/or paddling pools in any park or open space in the borough. The maintenance implications of this type of facility are expensive and resource heavy, requiring the water to be drained and re-filled each day for Health and Safety reasons, along with the removal of debris and litter. The staff resource to manage and monitor such a facility is above what we can currently offer through our partnership with Quadron Services.

5.7.31 However, any proposal by private enterprises for introducing these types of facilities into a park through leasing of our land or buildings will be considered on its merits. Where any such demand is expressed we can then investigate the possibility of swimming, paddling pools or other water play feature to be managed by a lessee.

5.8 Sport and Recreation

- 5.8.1 Green Spaces provide the environment for sections of the Cultural Strategy to be delivered.
- 5.8.2 With the deterioration in the general health of the population and growing problems of obesity, particularly of young children, focus must be placed on encouraging a more active lifestyle.
- 5.8.3 Parks and green spaces can offer a range of opportunities for sport and exercise to assist in achieving this. We will aim to ensure that sports activities, and therefore the infrastructure for these, are accessible to all.
- 5.8.4 Within Kingston's parks and green spaces are a range of sporting and recreation facilities, organised and informal, available for public use. These facilities include football pitches (junior, senior and 5-a-side), cricket squares, bowling greens, tennis courts, basketball courts and trim trails. This is in addition to informal pursuits such as walking, jogging or cycling.

Football at Fairfield Rec

- 5.8.5 Sport specifically and physical activities more generally are not the sole answers to solving widespread health issues. Nevertheless, there are clear health gains to be obtained by a general increase in regular participation in sport and other physical activity, especially amongst those who are most inactive, and even starting to exercise in middle age will have a proactive effect.
- 5.8.6 It is important that users are informed of the health benefits provided by actively taking part in sport and recreation, and that they are provided with good quality, relevant and accessible facilities to use.
- 5.8.7 In conjunction with the physical health benefits of sport and recreation, it is worth considering the social and mental health benefits to individuals.
- 5.8.8 Research shows that physical activity, and associated processes, can contribute positively to mental health and have a positive effect on anxiety, depression, mood and emotion, self-esteem and psychological dysfunction.

Playing Pitches

Football

- 5.8.9 Within the borough there are currently 19 senior football pitches, and 16 junior or 'little league' pitches. The pitch booking and operational management are the responsibility of Quadron.
- 5.8.10 At present the demand for football pitches by organised clubs outstrips the supply of pitches in the borough. The consequence of this is that the existing stock is over used, to the detriment of the quality of the pitches. In addition there is un-organised use of the pitches when matches are not being played, which further adds to the wear and tear. This is a major issue in itself, as such pitch usage cannot be easily monitored or controlled.

- 5.8.11 Measures must be put in place to ensure these issues are tackled, and that good quality usage can be sustained over the period of this strategy.
- 5.8.12 A review of Kingston council's football pitch stock has been carried out by our grounds maintenance partners, Quadron Services, to assist in the preparation of a playing pitch assessment. This assesses problem issues such as drainage, pitch usage and renovation requirements, and will be constantly monitored and amended to keep pace with current need.
- 5.8.13 The playing pitch assessment will be the tool for determining what provision of sports pitches is needed; the Green Spaces Strategy will deal with the management of sports facilities where they exist in parks and green spaces.
- 5.8.14 To realign the current service arrangements a review will be carried out to improve the current pricing policy and pitch booking system and will be readjusted annually. There will be a resistance to long term leasing unless self-managed arrangements are put in place that reflect both the needs of the Council, the lessee and annual increases.
- 5.8.15 We also have 5-a-side goals available for more informal use at a number of Sites, including Manor Park, Athelstan Recreation Ground, Elm Road Recreation Ground, and the newly renovated Cromwell open space. These facilities are enjoyed by the younger generations, and are usually found in conjunction with other recreational play facilities.

Cricket

- 5.8.16 Within the borough there are 8 cricket pitches available to hire. The problem of over usage experienced on football pitches does not extend to cricket facilities, although they are still well used.
- 5.8.17 The use and provision of our cricket squares will be viewed as part of the overall demand for sports provision in Kingston. Where demand is minimal for cricket pitch provision a review will provide details to make a decision if the space can be better utilised providing another resource, such as a football pitch.

Tennis

- 5.8.18 There is a good supply of tennis facilities across the borough, with recognised Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) coaches running centres out of Alexandra Recreation Ground, Canbury Gardens, Manor Park and Victoria Recreation Ground. They provide professional coaching and membership but, as a condition of the lease, courts are also available for use by members of the public through 'pay and play' tickets.
- 5.8.19 As well as these LTA run facilities courts are available for free use in the Borough, notably at Beverly Park, Kingston Road Recreation Ground and King Edwards Recreation Ground.
- 5.8.20 These courts are in a state of disrepair and being located on isolated sites, are prone to vandalism.
- 5.8.21 To realign the current service arrangements a review will be carried out to improve the current pricing policy and court booking system, and will be adjusted annually.
- 5.8.22 There will be resistance to long term leasing unless self-managed arrangements are put in place that reflect both the needs of the Council, the lessee and annual increases.

- 5.8.23 A review of all non-leased sites will identify how capital can be secured to make necessary repairs and improvements, and whether the area can be used for another (or multiple) activities in order to give the user the flexibility to choose what they would like to do, rather than having something imposed upon them.
- 5.8.24 The Tennis Strategy (in preparation) has a commitment to provide ‘Tennis For Free’ Flexibility of sporting usage is a key theme in the Cultural Strategy,

Bowling Greens

- 5.8.25 There are bowling greens at various locations in the borough. Some are privately leased to clubs who manage and maintain the greens in their entirety. Other public greens are maintained by Quadron Services (Alexandra Recreation Ground).
- 5.8.26 Highly manicured bowling greens cost a significant amount of money to maintain which is not sustainable in the current climate. Players traditionally have a high expectation of the playing conditions.
- 5.8.27 A review of all bowling greens in the Borough will reconsider the pricing policy and lease arrangements. The new pricing policy will reflect the necessary annual resources required to manage a bowling green to the exacting standards the clubs require, and charges will increase year on year to reflect the current costs.
- 5.8.28 There will be resistance to long term leasing unless self-managed arrangements are put in place that reflect both the needs of the Council, the lessee and annual increases.
- 5.8.29 In the long term any bowling green in Kingston will be leased from the Council on a self-managed basis, thus developing the concept of community ownership.
- 5.8.30 A condition of the lease will be that the facility is made available for public use on a specified day, or period of time.

5.9 Community Involvement

- 5.9.1 There are many benefits to involving local communities and users in the decision making process and management of their Local Park or green space.
- 5.9.2 Local people know what they want and need and some of the most successful spaces are created and cared for by those people that use them the most. However, communities need support and direction to achieve their aims.
- 5.9.3 There are different ways of enabling people to get more involved in their local green space, ranging from informing them better, to direct ownership and management.

Community bulb planting

- 5.9.4 Empowering local people is a priority for central government and the Council and is a strong theme running throughout this strategy. People want to be involved in decisions relating to

their green space but do not believe that they can actually affect that decision. To counter this we need to look to provide information, consult and enable ownership of new schemes on our green spaces. Therefore, the Park Development Plans will relate to local residents by the establishment of 'user' groups. These groups may become active if there is a specific issue that needs action, but it is not the intention to keep a group 'live' unless there is a will from the group.

- 5.9.5 When consulting with the community, the diversity of its people should be taken into account. The needs of different users can often conflict, so we need discussion, understanding and tolerance of those needs. There is an opportunity to explore the active involvement of the 3rd Sector. Here, this group may have an interest in longer term volunteering especially as a 'presence' in their local park. However, any persons taking on this responsibility must have support; this will need to be addressed with the Development Plan for the Park.
- 5.9.6 Currently there are two active groups in the community who have a special interest in the natural environment. They are: Hogsmill Action Group Volunteers and the Sustainable Gardening Group. The Council will continue to work with these and other groups as they develop to encourage further involvement in the areas of their particular interest.
- 5.9.7 There are small wayside gardens that could be considered for adoption by local residents. Here, the residents take on the management responsibility for the regular maintenance of the wayside, in consultation with Quadron Services and other active community groups who have the expertise such as the Sustainable Gardening Group and the Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. The areas will be managed according to set guidelines which will have been agreed between all parties.
- 5.9.8 The benefits that these bring are that they give the local community a voice to air grievances or ideas for the local area, and also offer a mechanism for bidding for external funding to complete schemes and projects that are of interest to them, and will benefit the community as a whole.
- 5.9.9 See also Lower Mole Countryside Management Project (section 6.5).

Case Study – Cromwell Open Space

An example of this is the Cavendish Area Home Zone Community Association (CAHZCA). Within this area was a small, under utilised piece of green space known as Cromwell open space. It had 2 informal 5-a-side goals, some areas of grassland set aside for conservation, and not a lot else. In fact, it was mostly used by people for walking their dogs. Initial demand came from a small group of local residents, and councillors, to increase the quality and usage of this space. A sum of money was identified within the council's existing budget to make improvements to the space. Quadron Services approached residents with ideas for improving the area, and set up a drop in session on site with examples of what could be done in the space. During this session ideas were invited from local residents to see what they would like in the space.

Some 30 local people turned up to express their far ranging views. What became clear was that all their ideas could not be implemented within the budget for the project. Under the guidance of Quadron Services, the residents decided to help themselves by creating a formal residents' association and making bids for environmental grants to further improve the area beyond the financial capabilities of the local authority.

The outcome is an improved green space which is more relevant to the needs of its users. The informal 5-a-side goals have been marked out with set lines, and the pitch area renovated. A small trim trail has been installed, for the benefit of younger children.

There is only one entrance into and out of the open space, which made access difficult in adverse weather conditions. An area of hard standing was created at the entrance, and a boot scraper installed so dog walkers, battling in inclement weather, can clean themselves off and muddy football boots can be unclogged.

Subsequently CAHZCA applied for, and received, an environmental grant for whip planting in areas of the green space to improve the aesthetics and conservation value of the area.

However, their main success has been in securing a grant from the London Marathon Trust which will allow a brand new children's play area to be built. Once completed, all future maintenance will be undertaken by Quadron and RBK.

The Association is also hoping to secure more third party funding to enable a perimeter path network to be created. This will be especially helpful in making this green space fully accessible to both the elderly and people with disabilities.

CAHZCA members now feel that they have a strong, collective voice through which they can lobby both the council and external funders for improved amenities in their park *and* throughout the Home Zone.

5.10 Horticultural Development

Green Flag and London in Bloom

Green Flag

- 5.10.1 The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.
- 5.10.2 Winning a Green Flag Award brings excellent publicity. Both the media and the public are becoming increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space. It is realised that all green spaces are different and this diversity is welcomed. Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves.
- 5.10.3 Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status.
- 5.10.4 There has recently been much discussion nationally about the declining quality of our city parks and lack of focus upon rural green spaces. While this is undoubtedly a cause for concern in many places there are also many examples of thriving, popular sites run by dedicated, enthusiastic people working closely with their local communities. Many places that were run-down and neglected just a few years ago are now shining examples of outstanding green space management, and this shows the way forward. The Green Flag

Award Scheme is the impetus to an ever-increasing improvement in the quality of parks and green spaces.

Benefits of Green Flag status

Promotion

5.10.5 Management of award winning green spaces may use the Green Flag Award logo on stationary, promotional literature, vehicles, uniforms, and in other appropriate situations for the duration for which the green space holds the award.

Best Value & Service Improvement

5.10.6 A Green Flag Award visibly demonstrates to everyone a clear improvement to that park or green space. Widespread coverage of green flags raises the standards within a local authority and meets the needs of best value for the Council and the community.

Regeneration

5.10.7 Regeneration of a park or green space benefits whole communities and raises the profile of a particular area. It is a vehicle for community involvement and a means of securing funding, not least from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Good Community Facilities

5.10.8 Improvements to community facilities and the engagement of local people will improve health & education, reduce crime and be a visible benefit to an area.

Revenue Opportunities

5.10.9 The Green Flag Award scheme is a lever for obtaining external funding through improvement grants and is also a means of maximising revenue opportunities from within.

Tourism

5.10.10 People will visit award winning parks from afar and successful venues for events bring repeat business. The Green Flag Award makes a statement as to the quality of the experience the visitor can expect and word of mouth is a very effective marketing tool.

Part of a National Standard

5.10.11 The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces.

Key criteria

- 5.10.12 The following is an outline of the Key Criteria against which every park or green space for which an application is made, will be judged. Where certain criteria are not met, an applicant may provide justifications that will be taken into account in the judging process.
- 5.10.13 Parks or green spaces will inevitably offer a variety of facilities and be managed and developed in response to a wide range of opportunities and constraints. Judging criteria will be sufficiently flexible to allow for these as well as recognising and encouraging innovation.
- 5.10.14 In principle any facility or feature which the park or green space offers, should conform to the relevant key criteria, but the range of facilities offered and their appropriateness to the needs of the user community will also be taken into account.

A Welcoming Place

- 5.10.16 The overall impressions for any member of the community approaching and entering the park or green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are visiting. Features of particular importance are:
- Good and safe access
 - Good signage to and in the park or green space
 - Equal access for all members of the community

Healthy, Safe, and Secure

- 5.10.17 The park or green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues must be addressed in management plans and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately. Particularly important issues are:
- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use.
 - The park or green space must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse.
 - Dog fouling must be adequately addressed.
 - Health & Safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
 - Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park or green space, and clearly sign posted.

Clean and Well Maintained

- 5.10.18 For aesthetic as well as Health and Safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:
- Litter and other waste management issues must be adequately addressed.
 - Grounds, buildings, equipment and other features must be well maintained.

- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

Sustainability

5.10.19 Methods used in maintaining the park or green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Specifically:

- An environmental policy or charter and management strategy should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Pesticide use should be minimised and justified.
- Horticultural peat use should be eliminated.
- Waste plant material in the park or green space should be recycled.
- High horticultural and arboriculture standards should be demonstrated.
- Energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures should be used.

Conservation and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna.
- Landscape features.
- Buildings and structural features.

5.10.21 These features should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment.

Community Involvement

5.10.22 Management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park or green space user groups as possible. Management should be able to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use.
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved.
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community.

Marketing

- Marketing strategy in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved.
- Promotion of the park or green space as a community resource.

Management

- 5.10.23 A Green Flag Award application must have a management plan or strategy in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and clearly and adequately addresses all the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park or green space must also be demonstrated.
- 5.10.24 All of the key criteria needed for winning a Green Flag award correlates to the actions that we are trying to deliver within this strategy. Therefore it is essential that one of the main outcomes from this strategy is that we look to achieve green flag status for our parks.
- 5.10.25 One key exemplar park will be identified in each neighbourhood in 2008 that can be brought up to the required standard by 2010.
- 5.10.26 To meet this challenge the park must have a development plan to highlight the gaps in provision that need capital funding. This will ensure resources are spent with a clear purpose and working towards clearly defined outcomes i.e. achieving green flag status
- 5.10.27 An important aim and best measuring tools, for improving the quality of our parks and open spaces is to enter into nationally recognised award schemes, such as the Green Flag awards, and London in Bloom.

London in Bloom

- 5.10.28 In 2006, for the first time in recent years, the Council entered London in Bloom and won a Bronze award from the London in Bloom judging panel. This was bettered in 2007 with the winning of a silver award. The entry was judged on the quality Kingston has to offer in terms of:
- Floral displays – public spaces, commercial spaces, residential gardens.
 - Permanent landscaping – public spaces, commercial premises, residential areas, community involvement.
 - Biodiversity – natural areas, protecting the environment, community involvement.
 - Local environmental quality – cleanliness of town centre.
 - Public awareness – marketing, publicity and promotion of London in Bloom. Fundraising and other 'in kind' benefits.

Wayside garden at Red Lion, Towloth

- 5.10.29 Not all of what is judged is managed by the Council. Some categories such as commercial premises and residential front gardens are privately owned and managed but contribute to the overall appearance of the Borough.
- 5.10.30 In conjunction with our partners at Quadron Services, we will continue to improve the spaces the Council manages year on year so there are current and relevant projects to be entered for London in Bloom.

- 5.10.31 This is particularly relevant to the community involvement awards, where we can plan and manage to offer support to local users groups for certain schemes.
- 5.10.32 An example of this is the Tolworth Community Gardening Group. Through donations in kind from local businesses and external funding from RBK's external grant officer, a raised gardening bed is being created for use by wheelchair users and the physically impaired. This scheme was started too late for inclusion in the 2007 entry, but would be ideal for 2008.
- 5.10.33 Moving forward from the silver award in 2007, we will endeavour to sustain this in the future whilst seeking further recognition (Silver Gilt and Gold) through improved planning and management in subsequent years.

Design, Plant and Maintain

- 5.10.34 A positive result of social and economic growth is the continual updating and revising of the infrastructure of the highway and byways. These schemes are usually the result of successful bids through the Borough Spending Plan. In the past the on-going maintenance of the subsequent soft landscaping has been largely overlooked. This has resulted in an unrealistic reliance on existing resources, and is a factor in the unsustainable number of wayside gardens.
- 5.10.35 To promote landscape uniformity across the Borough Quadron Services are the sole contractor for any landscaping works undertaken as a result of these highway or any other landscape development schemes.
- 5.10.36 To ensure effective delivery of schemes a commissioning, planning and implementation project management model is followed. This ensures that future schemes carry a maintenance sum for the following 3-5-10 years depending on the complexity agreed by Quadron Services.
- 5.10.37 This model removes any unexpected issues and the client is kept up-to-date with progress and amendments that occur during the scheme. The model can be seen in Annex 4.

Highway verges

- 5.10.38 When work takes place on the highway, it is often to the detriment of the verges. Placement of skips, tracks from vehicles or the creation of new grass areas are common results of such work.
- 5.10.39 Quadron and RBK will work co-operatively with other partner contractors involved in the construction to limit the damage and ensure satisfactory reinstatement following damage / works.

Example of unsatisfactory renovation

- 5.10.40 This co-operation will include joint inspections by Quadron and RBK and the partner contractors undertaking works to the highway. Any issues identified by Quadron will be rectified at the expense of the highways contractor.

5.11 Funding, training and development

- 5.11.1 Many of the outcomes highlighted in this strategy are forward looking. Delivery will be reliant on the rate that capital can be generated.
- 5.11.2 With this in mind, we must be clear that any money we spend on parks and green spaces is spent efficiently, and with a clear purpose in mind.
- 5.11.3 There are two types of funding available – capital and revenue. Capital funding is mainly available for short term development projects, such as creating new play or sporting facilities, or the renovation of existing infrastructure. Revenue funding is longer term, and can be used to fund training, maintenance costs, and salaries. Quite often funding schemes will only provide for the capital cost, so we have to ensure we identify that available resources that need to be available for the ongoing revenue costs.

External funding sources

- 5.11.4 Working in partnership with other organisations and community groups offers opportunities for external funding. Below are some examples of agencies that offer funding for improving open space, and sporting facilities.

Heritage Lottery Fund –

Lottery distributor who grants funds for heritage projects anywhere in the United Kingdom. The aim is to conserve and enhance natural and cultural heritage and ensure that people can learn about and have access to heritage sites.

Grants can be made for historic parks, gardens and other urban green spaces to restore, regenerate and improve access to these historic sites.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is particularly interested in awarding grants to parks that contribute significantly to urban regeneration projects.

BIG Lottery Fund –

The BIG Lottery Fund is responsible for giving out half the money for good causes raised by the national lottery, giving them a budget of about £630 million a year. They are committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.

New Opportunities Fund (NOF) –

The NOF is a lottery distributor created in 1998 to award grants to education, health and environmental projects throughout the UK.

Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities –

This programme supports the disadvantaged urban and rural communities throughout the UK to understand, improve or care for their natural environment, focusing on disadvantage.

Living Spaces –

Grant programme run by the office of the Deputy Prime minister, Groundwork and the Urban Parks Forum. It provides grants to any existing neighbourhood groups helping to improve open space in their neighbourhood and create valuable community spaces. Living spaces aim to create a variety

of spaces including: play areas; community gardens; local parks; village greens; nature areas; kick about areas; ponds; courts; squares; city farms.

The only requirements are that the space is open to the public, within 2 miles of a residential area and not a formal sports pitch.

Sport England –

Sport England advises invests in and promotes community sport to create an active nation. They are looking to get two million people more active in sport by 2012.

They distribute funding and invest in a range of sporting projects, including the Active England fund.

Football Association (FA) –

The FA invests in facility improvement through the football foundation. Grants include:

- Grass roots – aims to provide opportunities for anyone of any age, background or ability to participate. Primarily for building, developing or refurbishing facilities in order to sustain or increase participation.
- Community and education – which aims to increase participation amongst certain sections of the community (disabled people, black and ethnic communities, people on low incomes, and women and girls) to create inclusive communities and promote healthy life styles.

Football foundation –

The Football Foundation is a unique partnership funded by the F.A. Premier League, the FA and the Government. The Foundation is the UK's largest sports charity.

The Foundation is playing a key role in revitalising grass roots sport, investing in our parks, schools and playing fields and harnessing the power of the game within communities, to promote education and social inclusion. Their mission is to improve facilities, create opportunities and build communities.

Developers' contributions –

The Town and Country Planning act (1990) enables planning obligations (often known as section 106 obligations) to be entered into between a developer and a local planning authority. Planning obligations, if properly used, can enhance the quality of a development and enable proposals to go ahead that might otherwise be refused. They should however be relevant to planning and directly related to the proposed development.

Sections 106 obligations can be used to:

- Restrict development or use of land;
- Require specific operations to be carried out in, on, under or over land;
- Require land to be used in a specified way;
- Require payments to be made to the local Authority either in a single sum or periodically. The council, in carrying out its land use planning duties, may secure developer contributions to open space, sport and recreation facilities. However, to ensure accountability, planning obligations should be:
 - Necessary – without it the proposal would be unacceptable in land use planning terms;
 - Relevant to planning – they shouldn't require actions outside of the planning system;

- Directly related to proposed developments – there should be a link between the obligation and the planning permission;
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development – obligations should not be used as a means of extracting excessive sums from developers;
- Reasonable in all other respects.

5.11.5 Any landscaping works as a result of developer contribution must cover the cost for on-going maintenance for a set period of up to 10 years depending on complexity

5.11.6 We will liaise with the planning department to draft a specification for what we would expect to be covered with a new development. We can also influence the developer's contribution towards the creation or improvement of facilities in certain areas of need, by informing on what those needs or deficiencies are.

Training for improvement

5.11.7 Working in partnership with Quadron Services will raise the standard of workmanship, contributing to an efficient working environment.

5.11.8 Training needs will be discussed at monthly reporting meetings which include a list of employee training records, including basic items like health and safety, and operational in-house training.

5.11.9 The skills of the grounds maintenance workforce will be enhanced through continuous professional development for all staff, such as RHS gardening qualifications. The aim is to have at least 1 formally trained member of staff in all teams. Other areas of training and development being progressed include IOG (Institute of Groundsmanship) qualification in sports pitch markings and fine turf works.

5.11.10 Staff members have a 100% pass rate for the ROSPA play area inspection and maintenance training, where at least 1 member of each team is formally trained in the playground inspection process.

5.11.11 As well as ongoing operational development of staff on the ground, the management team will develop strategic and operational skills by attending events and seminars focusing on community development and external funding opportunities.

5.11.12 The structured career development programme for staff will be monitored through the duration of the partnership agreement between Quadron Services and RBK.

Development plans for key sites

5.11.13 An important outcome of the strategy is to have a development plan for the key sites in each neighbourhood, aiming to achieve green flag status for the park. In the first year a development plan will be completed by Quadron in all four of the neighbourhoods. By year five of the strategy there should be a least four plans completed for each neighbourhood.

5.11.14 Management and development plans enable the service to logically and efficiently plan and prioritise the work and initiatives that need to be taken forward. They might include redesign, physical ground works, new features, community and educational projects, and plans to manage and enhance general grounds maintenance upkeep of sites.

5.11.15 The commitment and direction of a development plan generates a strong position to react when external funding becomes available. Example of a Development Plan in Annex 5

5.12 Wayside Gardens

- 5.12.1 The number of wayside gardens in the borough has grown significantly as a result of highway improvements, creation of home zones, and associated schemes
- 5.12.2 As a result the resource required to maintain the wayside gardens has escalated to unmanageable proportions. Some of the older sites are unattractive and past their useful life. Without considerable short term investment they will continue to degrade and become both unsightly and the source of complaints.
- 5.12.3 A review of all wayside gardens was undertaken in spring 2007. The aim was to grade all sites into one of four categories, A, B, C or D based on the horticultural content, geographic locations and visual importance of the garden to residents and visitors alike.
- 5.12.4 A maintenance regime (horticultural and cleansing) was allocated to each of the 4 categories, taking into account the available resource needed to maintain the gardens to the appropriate level.
- 5.12.5 Category A was awarded to sites containing the greatest number of horticultural features. These sites are deemed highest profile sites in the borough being close to civic amenities, train stations, high streets or acting as general gateways into the borough. They bring with them a high level of pedestrian traffic meaning a greater litter impact.
- 5.12.6 Category B was awarded to sites containing a lesser number of horticultural features than category A sites. These are deemed high profile sites, but consideration had been given to their locations and reduced litter impact.
- 5.12.7 Category C was awarded to sites which contain a lesser number of horticultural features than category B sites. They are deemed medium profile sites with consideration given to their locations and a lesser litter impact.
- 5.12.8 Category D was awarded to sites containing the least number of horticultural features. These sites are deemed low profile due to their features, location and low litter impact.
- 5.12.9 Even with these service standards and re-categorisation, the standards are not uniformly acceptable. The numbers of wayside gardens now need to be reduced in line with the budget available. A set of criteria will be used to appraise each site with respect to location, aesthetics, added value etc. From this a decision will be made whether maintenance should continue, the vegetation changed to reduce maintenance or the site returned to grass or hard surface. This will be completed with a view to varying the management regime of 50% of the present number of wayside gardens during the first 2 years of the strategy.
- 5.12.10 The information will be uploaded into the ISIS system and will have the added benefit of providing timely information to the Contact Centre in dealing with queries relating to specific wayside gardens.
- 5.12.11 Roundabouts, planters and other gardens along all major routes into Kingston, provide advertising opportunities. There is current sponsorship for displaying small advertising boards at College roundabout and Fountain Roundabout. The sponsors are charged

annually for maintenance which may include new planting. We will continue to seek sponsorship from local businesses at other high profile sites. Any new procurement policies on street advertising and sponsorship would be relevant to these sites.

- 5.12.12 There are some wayside gardens that could be considered for adoption by local residents. Here the local residents take on the management responsibility for the regular maintenance of the wayside garden, in consultation with Quadron Services and other active community groups who have the expertise such as the Sustainable Gardening Group and the Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.

5.13 Cemeteries and churchyards

- 5.13.1 The Council manages and maintains two cemeteries namely Kingston & Surbiton and four 'closed' churchyards; Kingston War Memorial Gardens, All Saints in Kingston, St Mary's in South of Borough and St Marks in Surbiton.
- 5.13.2 The primary purpose of the cemeteries is to provide a bereavement service. However, a vital part of the service is the peace of mind that a well maintained and aesthetically pleasing site offers to its users.
- 5.13.3 Therefore, the cemeteries also serve the secondary purpose of adding amenity value, which if developed properly could be of real benefit to the borough.
- 5.13.4 The bereavement services have their own in-house staff that are responsible for grave excavation and certain elements of the horticultural works at cemetery sites. In addition to this Quadron Services are responsible for maintaining the grass areas and some ad-hoc horticultural works. The continuous career development of Quadron staff will be applicable here in raising the standards of workmanship at Council maintained sites.
- 5.13.5 There is potential within cemeteries to enhance the natural and conservation value of the sites, by developing walking routes and spaces where people can relax and enjoy the benefits of guided/self guided history & nature trails. This in turn could be opened out to local schools as part of an extended curriculum.
- 5.13.6 The bereavement service holds budgets relating to the maintenance and development of cemeteries that is outside the control of this strategy, however the amenity value of cemetery green space needs to be recognised as a positive secondary benefit to the borough.

5.14 Green Spaces on Housing Land

- 5.14.1 Currently the Council manages its own housing stock. There are approximately 140 sites distributed across the borough with a varying amount of hard and soft landscaping surrounding the dwellings and ancillary buildings. Quadron carry out the grounds maintenance of the soft landscaping as part of their contract.
- 5.14.2 The soft landscaping consists of close mown ornamental grass, shrub beds and borders, some rose beds and highway verges. These areas are highly valued by the tenants.

- 5.14.3 The land has, over the lifetime of the dwellings, been managed with decreasing intensity and replanting. Hence, there are some planted areas which appear in a poorly managed state. For example a single rose bush in a central bed measuring 3m diameter. Such areas now require a reassessment of their fundamental value to the site with a view to changing the management regime as a priority, especially in light of the Council's current financial position. The reassessment and management changes will ensure that the overall aesthetics are pleasing whilst contributing to the sustainability of the site, using the rose bush example, removing the rose bush and reseeding with grass.
- 5.14.4 The assessment and recommended management reviews will form part of the Annual Implementation Plan.
- 5.14.5 As with any proposed change early and transparent communication is key to success. There will be a targeted communication plan within the AIP to ensure tenants are kept informed of any changes and the justification for those changes throughout the process.
- 5.14.6 On some sites there are areas which have been managed by individual tenants ranging from a single shrub to elaborate planting schemes. Whereas, it is not the intention to dissuade community involvement on housing sites, indeed this is positively encouraged, it is not realistic to allow individuals to manage areas for their own purpose, due to the problems this has when tenants no longer wish or are able to continue management, or start without consultation with the Housing Department or Quadron. To address and accommodate those who wish to become actively involved with their site there are community projects and groups working in the Borough that encourage participation in these types of areas. They are the Kingston in Bloom competition and the Sustainable Gardening Group and formalised Residents' Associations.

Section 6

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

6.1 Biodiversity

- 6.1.1 Biodiversity is the variety of living things around us, from mammals and birds to plants and microbes, and the habitats they live in. Biodiversity is at the heart of the government's aim for a more sustainable future, and we have a duty to ensure a diverse and thriving natural environment (ODPM 2004).
- 6.1.2 The biodiversity of a site or locality is the range of species found there, for example an urban park includes the familiar biodiversity of the blackbird and robin, ducks, butterflies and the trees and grass, as well as many hundreds of species of smaller, more elusive and less familiar organisms such as bats, hoverflies, molluscs and fungi. On the other hand, a site that is identified for nature conservation has habitats that support a range of specific species associated with it, not found beyond the habitat.
- 6.1.3 Urban biodiversity depends on the quality and connectivity of all of the green spaces. The grassland, shrubs, trees, open water and bare ground of these spaces provide the habitats vital to sustaining plants and animals.
- 6.1.4 Managing for biodiversity in parks and green spaces means working to improve the ecological qualities and to maximise the opportunities for people to experience nature.
- 6.1.5 There is a common perception that spaces managed for biodiversity are wild and neglected and should not be touched. However, biodiversity should be encouraged everywhere. A fundamental principle of managing sites for biodiversity is to make the most of what is there.
- 6.1.6 In 1993 the London Ecology Unit surveyed the borough primarily to compile a database of all London's habitat. This data was used to identify Sites Important for Nature Conservation for designation by the council. This advises the planning process and ecological land management of the sites. The information is documented in *Nature Conservation in Kingston upon Thames Ecology Handbook 18*. The open space and habitat audit was updated in 2006 by the GLA Biodiversity Unit as part of the rolling programme across London. The survey data is stored on the Greater London Authority London Wildweb website (<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/biodiversity/wildweb.jsp>). The website details over 140 of London's most important wildlife sites. These sites can be found via a searchable interactive map or by entering a postcode. The website gives details of the habitats and species that can be found at the site. All Kingston's sites are logged on to the database.
- 6.1.7 In the Mayor of London Biodiversity Strategy a key objective is to identify Areas of Deficiency (Mayor of London's Improving Londoners' Access to Nature Consultation draft March 2007). Other key objectives are to encourage, support and facilitate projects that significantly improve biodiversity within parks and open spaces and Londoners' access to them. And to assist boroughs with the preparation of planning policy for access to nature in their development plan documents. This has now been completed by the Greater London Authority Biodiversity Unit.
- 6.1.8 These recommendations will be used by Quadron and the Council's ecologist when assembling the Development Plans for individual open spaces.

6.2 Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan

- 6.2.1 The Kingston Biodiversity Partnership (Annex 3) was brought together to develop a Kingston Local Biodiversity Action Plan (KLBAP) for the borough. The introduction to the plan was adopted by Executive in August 2004.
- 6.2.2 The partnership recognised that the key to conserving Kingston's biodiversity is by the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, ultimately achieved through land-use policies. Hence the partnership developed a Good Practice Guide (GPG) for Biodiversity in the planning process for use by all those involved in the process.
- 6.2.3 The GPG highlights the various land-use designations with regard to biodiversity and the protection of species and habitats. One of these is Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) which in Kingston is an important designation for wildlife protection and enhancement as many nature conservation sites are within MOL.
- 6.2.4 Metropolitan Open Land is an area of predominantly open land forming islands and wedges in the built up area and which provide it with strategic and attractive breaks. Strategic Guidance stresses that there should be a strong presumption against development in these areas (RBK UDP 2005)
- 6.2.5 The habitat and species action plans in the KLBAP will be reviewed and updated.
- 6.2.6 All Kingston's ecological data is held by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL). The record centre aims to collate and manage all data for London's green (and brown) space and disseminate it to all of the GIGL partners in London who can then use that data within their work. GIGL is set up according to the guidelines produced by the National Biodiversity Network, a partnership of many of the organisations producing or using biodiversity information in the UK.

6.3 Sites managed for nature conservation

- 6.3.1 In Kingston there are 21 sites identified for nature conservation (annex 2) where the priority is enhancement of the habitats found on the site. These sites are mainly fragments of remnant or spontaneous semi-natural vegetation or the remains of old farmland. These fragments are very important for biodiversity because of their longevity, stability and habitats present. Some species are rare in Kingston such as the pyramidal orchids found on a fragment of old meadow in Nigel Fisher Way, Chessington or the swaths of loosestrife and meadowsweet found on the ancient Malden Meadow near the Hogsmill River in Surbiton, not recorded anywhere else in the borough. Others are important examples of quality or relict habitats such as traditional field system and ancient species-rich hedgerows of Tolworth Court Farm Fields Local Nature Reserve.
- 6.3.2 Managing a site for nature conservation requires a specific set of skills. Therefore any site-specific ecological land management remains independent of the parks and grounds maintenance with a dedicated budget. The management of nature conservation sites is

planned, commissioned and overseen by an appropriately qualified ecologist employed by the council. There are management prescriptions for each habitat covering all sites. These plans are followed when commissioning work. Specialist local contractors with countryside management knowledge and/or farming expertise are used to implement any work. This approach allows the necessary year on year flexibility required when dealing with semi-natural and natural habitats.

6.4 Local Nature Reserves

- 6.4.1 There are 9 designated Local Nature Reserves in Kingston and a further one proposed; Hogsmill Meadows. This site comprises of several smaller interconnecting sites (Oak Tree Meadow, Long Meadows, Sheepphouse Open Space, Jubilee Mead, West Meadow, Six Acre Meadow, Malden Meadow and the The Hollows) is currently is at the survey, mapping and habitat compartment stage of designation. This work will continue as a priority throughout 2008, the Management Plan required for approval by Natural England prior to formal designation by the council will be the viewed as Development Plan for the site as a whole.
- 6.4.2 Different sites offer different opportunities to experience wildlife. Each site has a set of particular features that make up the mosaic of habitats. In some cases there are parcels of habitat within an open space that is managed by the grounds maintenance contract e.g. central reservation of native scrub dissected by paths on Elmbridge Meadows. These areas are not included in the Quadron Services Ltd contract, although the paths and close mown grassy areas are. The routine mowing of grass paths, litter picking, hard landscaping and infrastructure requirements remain within the grounds maintenance contract.
- 6.4.3 In many of the parks and open spaces managed by Quadron biodiversity enhancement or opportunity will be encouraged to create more species-rich and structurally diverse vegetation as part of the on-going service development and will be included in the Development Plans. Any enhancements will be undertaken alongside the general horticultural maintenance works. For example reduce the total area of closely mown grass and change the cutting regimes, converting to flowering lawns for periods of the year. This will encourage a greater range of species diversity over time and reduce cost of management. Other initiatives will be developed such as increasing the number of native species hedging and shrubs which require less intensive management and increase the range of species.
- 6.4.4 Sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) will be encouraged in response to the challenge of adapting to climate change. These schemes can be beneficial to the ecological function of wetlands whilst coping with the predicament of increased run-off. The use of grey water will be explored for watering programmes.

6.5 Lower Mole Countryside Management Project

- 6.5.1 The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project (LMCMP) is a partnership with boroughs, districts and other organisations and has been in existence since 1983. It was the first

countryside management project to be established in the north Surrey area (in south Surrey it is the Downlands C'side Man Project). The project has built up a large and enthusiastic volunteer group which carries out a wide range of tasks to implement improvements to the local countryside, 4 days a week, including weekends, throughout the year.

- 6.5.2 RBK has provided core funding to the Project since its inception in 1983. The Project has a high standard and broad spread of skills for tackling specialist countryside management work including landscape enhancements, woodland management and pond restoration as well as access initiatives such as the Thames Down Link footpath. The project works on many sites throughout the borough, installing gates, fences and finger posts with locally sourced wood, laying paths, restoring old hedgerows and providing advice and support on all aspects of nature conservation.

6.6 Green Belt and Green Arc South West

- 6.6.1 The Green Belt starts in the south of the borough. Since its establishment in 1935 it has prevented urban sprawl and helped keep land in agricultural use. From a land-use point of view this has important implications for the protection and the connectivity of natural habitats. Much of the green belt in the borough is privately farmed but there are small relict pieces of land such as Winey Hill and Jubilee Wood and Meadows that are council-owned and managed for nature conservation.
- 6.6.2 The Green Belt provides good quality access to the open countryside on the urban fringe close to where people live. For example the green corridor along the Bonesgate Stream through Castle Hill SAM, LNR to Horton Country Park and beyond. However some of this is fragmented and the habitat quality has suffered through lack of resources and political boundary constraints.
- 6.6.3 In recognition of the constraints Green Arc was devised in 2003. Green Arc is a strategic initiative aimed at significantly improving the environment and accessibility of the urban fringe and countryside around London. This initiative provides a mechanism for engaging key partners.
- 6.6.4 A stakeholder group made up of Surrey County Council and South West London boroughs (of which Kingston is one) and other organisations such as the LMCMP aims to bring enhancements to the Green Belt in north Surrey and south west London. Any projects aim to be multifunctional – to highlight the benefits of green space for people's health, education, access, nature and the environment.
- 6.6.5 As part of the Green Arc Kingston is working in partnership with Epsom and Ewell BC and the Environment Agency to enhance the watercourse and access routes along the Bonesgate Stream. The project criss-crosses the boundaries hence a partnering approach is vital. RB Kingston will continue to develop the partnership and identify opportunities for improvement.

6.7 Rights of Way and Bridleways

- 6.7.1 The most widely known right to enjoy the countryside is that given by "public rights of way". Rights of way can be in or near to towns or in remote countryside. They can be wide tracks or narrow trails but all public rights of way are highways in law. Anyone may use a right of way, and may do so at any time, just as they would any other kind of highway.
- 6.7.2 Kingston is generally well-served by its network of footpaths. The paths form an extensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, in addition to the regular network.
- 6.7.3 As well as being a way for the public to access open land for healthy exercise, some of these rights of way are extremely important in their own right – Green Lane, Chessington for old hedgerow trees and ancient woodland indicator plants & footpath 17, Tolworth/Chessington for veteran trees and ancient woodland indicator plants. Many other rights of way (including those named) are also important wildlife corridors linking areas of habitat together.
- 6.7.4 Right of Way numbers 13 to 38 are annually inspected by the Lower Mole Countryside Management project. These routes are primarily in the South of the Borough and lead into the open Surrey countryside. The inspection looks at the condition of the route, missing or damaged furniture, safety improvements and other practical improvements.
- 6.7.5 All Highway Authorities have a duty to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. This is a long-term strategic document covering how the council plans to manage the rights of way network. This plan will improve the accessibility of the paths for the benefit of everyone. Improvement to the paths can tackle problems such as illegal motorbike use through provision of gates and bollards.

Section 7

7.1 Consultation Process for major requests

7.1.1 There follows a theoretical request for new lighting along Queens Promenade, for Health and Safety reasons.

- The resident or user will make the initial enquiry through the contact centre by phone, letter, e-mail or in person. The request is to introduce lighting along the Queens Promenade to improve safety in the evenings for users walking along the river.
- The GSS (in theory) states that lighting is a sensitive issue in many locations, and that the capital implications are so great that a scheme would not be able to be funded out of existing resources. This would be reported to the contact centre to reply to the request.
- However, a great demand is expressed with a number of users signing a petition campaigning for lighting.

A clear process will then be followed:

1. Consultation with Police regarding positive and negative benefits on introducing lighting at the site, in terms of health and safety and crime reduction.
2. Consultation with all users of the site to get a balanced view on the issue.
3. Consultation with specialist groups to consider the environmental impact of introducing lighting at the site.
4. A health and equalities impact assessment would be required.
5. A full scheme will be costed for the installation and maintenance of the lighting.
6. The findings will be reported to neighbourhood committee with recommendations and actions.

7.2 Events in parks

7.2.1 There are, on a regular basis requests for events in parks. The Council currently has no published policies or terms and conditions for such events. This leads to a number of issues around what events are permitted and how permitted events are managed.

7.2.2 An event strategy will be developed that sets out how events will be delivered that enhance the vibrancy of the parks, nurture community well being and enable expression of diversity and community spirit. All events should be safe, low risk, accessible to all, and protect and enhance the natural environment.

7.2.3 The strategy will identify resource gaps such as Health and Safety training for event management.

Section 8

8.1 Implementation by Function

Introduction

- 8.1.1 Priority 1 – This is an action of highest priority in the context of the Green Space Strategy, to be delivered within the first **2 years** of the strategy. It is highest priority because it is either an essential step in the overall development of green spaces, or can be delivered easily and quickly within current resources. Available capital and resources should be directed to delivering priority 1 actions in the first instance.
- 8.1.2 Priority 2 – This is an action that is a medium priority in the context of the Green Spaces Strategy, to be delivered within the first **5 years** of the strategy. It is important, but can only be delivered on the back of a priority 1 action, or when capital and resources becomes available.
- 8.1.3 Priority 3 – This is an action that is low priority in the context of the Green Spaces Strategy, to be delivered within **10 years** of the strategy. These are ambitious actions which can be developed as and when capital and resources become available, or on the back of higher priority actions being delivered.

Function 1. A place for sustainable living

Aim

To plan and manage our green spaces to maximize community benefit.

Objective 1

Ensure the local supply of green spaces meets the demand of users.

Parks and green spaces create a sense of place, which is an essential element in gaining community spirit. For this reason it is important that our green spaces appeal and are relevant to local people and users.

Outcome

We will improve existing opportunities, and develop new forums, for people to be actively involved in decisions relating to parks and green spaces. This will enable us to change and adapt our resources to meet the needs of specific areas and user groups.

Actions

Priority 1

- Produce guidelines outlining the consultation process for requests on council land, such as locking of park gates.
- Advertise proposals for major new projects in parks, where appropriate, and invite comments from users.
- Welcome, and respond to comments and ideas from users for development opportunities.

Priority 2

- Promote the use of web-based monitoring tools such as Green Stat. This allows users to score and comment on the parks in their borough.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 2

Support and encourage the creation of "friends of" groups, and projects by local users, community groups or volunteer groups.

Local user groups often provide valuable feedback to monitor trends and usage in our green spaces. When focus groups are formed it is often with a common purpose of enhancing the local area for all users and giving the community a voice.

Outcome

Where local user groups take an active interest in the enhancement of their Local Park or green space, support and advice will be offered on potential projects or schemes.

Actions

Priority 1

- Establish quarterly meetings with all focus groups.
- Advise and assist groups on funding sources, and donations in kind.
- Offer support and expertise with operational issues.
- Consult with local user groups on decisions relating to their local green space, where appropriate.
- Explore community involvement through an 'Adopt a Plot' scheme.
- Promote 'user groups' through Development Plans.
- Community Involvement on Housing land through existing groups such as Sustainable Gardening Group and Kingston in Bloom.

Priority 2

No actions.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 3

Review policy for the hire of parks and open spaces for events.

We receive a large number of requests each year for events or bookings to take place in parks and open spaces. Currently there is no clear policy in place in terms of what events we will or will not allow, what spaces are available for hire, how much we will charge for hire, and the specific conditions to the hire of our land.

Outcome

Create an up-to-date policy and price list for the hire of our parks and open spaces for events.

Actions

Priority 1

- Create an events strategy for parks and open spaces that sets out the policies for such events and that makes clear the process for requesting a booking on council land from the moment the enquiry is made to the day of the event.
- Develop a communications plan for liaison on large events.
- Review the price structure for bookings on council land.
- Develop internal skills through relevant health and safety training.
- Create an on-line events calendar.

Priority 2

Priority 3

No actions.

Function 2. A productive landscape

Aim

To support the local economy, and help create employment opportunities.

Objective 1

Attract more people to the area by providing high quality, multi-functional green spaces and promote them as such.

The more our green spaces are improved, the more people will be attracted to Kingston to live, work, visit or set up business.

Outcome

Improve the quality and marketing of our green spaces.

Actions

Priority 1

- Raise horticultural standards at all Quadron maintained sites through staff training.
- Work in conjunction with Quadron Services to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to monitor progress.
- Identify one key exemplar park in each neighbourhood that will achieve Green Flag Status by 2010.

Priority 2

- Improve the marketing of parks and green spaces through press releases and national parks campaigns, thereby contributing to the improvements of Kingston's image and reputation.

Priority 3

- Develop opportunities for commercial or community organisations to operate from existing park buildings, to increase park utilisation and usage.

Function 3. A link to the country

Aim

To make green spaces welcoming and accessible, and provide opportunities for people to thrive, contribute and develop.

Objective 1

To plan and manage our green spaces so that access is available for all users into, and around, our parks and green spaces.

A major barrier to the use of green spaces is accessibility. It is all very well having an interesting variety of functions and uses within a green space, but if some users cannot gain access to the space, or move around it, then the benefit will be greatly reduced.

Outcome

Review the accessibility of our green spaces with a view to providing infrastructure and signage that will allow all people to move around the space, irrespective of any physical or mental impairment.

Actions

Priority 1

- Starting with key parks, identify entrance points, steps and ramps that can be amended, to allow better access for all users.

Priority 2

- Advertise and signpost available facilities, including those for use by disabled people
- Review quality and location of seating or sheltered areas in our green spaces.

Priority 3

- Review quality and location of existing pathways and, where appropriate, provide new pathways to open up access to areas of green space.

Objective 2

To increase usage by publicising information about our green spaces.

Physical barriers are only part of the story in green space accessibility. If you do not know whether car parking is available, where the nearest bus stop is, or what you can do once you arrive, it is unlikely you will take the risk and visit a green space for the first time.

Outcome

Increase awareness by publicly promoting green spaces. Arrival points are where many people make decisions about what they are going to do on site, so is a key opportunity to inspire people to explore.

Actions

Priority 1

- Starting with key parks, replace at least one primary sign per year in each park, following the guidance contained in the Council's Access for All SPD.

Priority 2

- Through the council web-site and local press we will advertise the range of facilities at each green space, any up-coming events or improvement schemes, and a green travel plan to get to the site.
- Take part in, and promote, national schemes such as 'love parks' week.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 3

Develop the use of parks and green spaces by all people, including minority ethnic groups, older people and those with physical, or learning disabilities and mental health difficulties.

Green spaces are where public life takes place, and where people can connect with the natural world. Some green spaces are valued mainly for recreational or educational use, while others are an important part of daily life, such as a route to the local shops. Many people, including disabled people, are often excluded from enjoying the use and benefits from such spaces because of a lack of planning or awareness of their needs.

Outcome

Develop links with organisations representing minority groups.

Actions

Priority 1

No actions

Priority 2

- Understand how various groups use, or would like to use, parks and green spaces by building relationships with partners from key voluntary sector groups and consultation forums, including Age Concern, Milaap, Kingston Mencap, Kingston Pensioners' Forum, Kingston Disabled and Older People's Forum, Kingston Centre for Independent Living, Kingston Racial Equality Council, the BME Forum and others.
- Develop schemes to accommodate all cultures.

Priority 3

- Investigate sites in which to create 'sensory gardens' for visually impaired users.

Function 4. A safe environment

Aim

To make sure people feel safe and secure by undertaking measures to reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Objective 1

Create a safe horticultural environment.

We can make every effort to ‘design out’ crime and anti-social behaviour through good horticultural techniques, and management of our green spaces.

Outcome

Increase the positive perception of safety and security in our green spaces.

Actions

Priority 1

- Work with police to complete environment audits of our parks and green spaces to ensure good sight lines and well maintained vegetation.
- Rapid response to graffiti and vandalism repairs to discourage further damage.
- Encourage a ‘visual’ presence when possible in our green spaces. This can come from a variety of organisations such as park keepers, safer neighbourhood police teams, contractors or community groups.

Priority 2

No actions

Priority 3

No actions

Objective 2

Identify and respond to issues of public concern.

The threat of crime or anti-social behaviour, whether real or perceived, can act as a barrier to the use of our parks and green spaces. We must listen to the concerns of green space users and respond in the most appropriate way.

Outcome

Review and respond to green space security issues.

Actions

Priority 1

- Investigate issues as raised by green space users. When we receive correspondence highlighting an issue we will give that issue due diligence and reply within the timeframe as agreed with the customer contact centre.
- Monitor trends from playground and site reports to be pro-active in managing problems.

Priority 2

- Advertise best practise for dog control on green spaces, by using byelaws and highlighting good practice by considerate users.

Priority 3

- Explore options for provision of CCTV and lighting where applicable.

Function 5. A learning environment

Aims

To enhance play facilities.

To improve skills and understanding in relation to parks and green spaces.

Objective 1

Allow access for all to play equipment.

Our play equipment should be stimulating and challenging for children of all ages and from all sectors of society.

The social and mental development of children can be greatly increased through their play opportunities. We must look at how we can aid this development.

Outcome

Review the current supply of play equipment to ensure a good, challenging and accessible variety of equipment is available to use.

Actions

Priority 1

- Review and up-date equipment in line with the play strategy.
- Through daily monitoring ensure playgrounds and play equipment are safe and accessible.
- Complete an audit of all children's play facilities in the borough, and produce a phased programme of maintenance and replacement works.

Priority 2

- Look to introduce inclusive play equipment, where appropriate, in play facilities.

Priority 3

- Look for opportunities to develop 'natural play areas'.

Objective 2

Encourage hands on contact with wildlife and nature.

If we teach the next generation to respect the natural environment now they will have a greater appreciation for it when they grow up, encouraging a sustainable outlook towards green spaces.

Outcome

Increase the opportunity for people to visit our green spaces and learn about the natural environment.

Actions

Priority 1

No actions.

Priority 2

- Working with relevant partners, develop information on the natural and horticultural environment, through signage and interpretation boards.
- Establish community events and participation, such as bulb planting or coppicing, to help people appreciate nature and connect to their green spaces.

Priority 3

- Use parks and nature reserves as outdoor classrooms to develop understanding of the environment and its management.
- Establish links to schools, or other organisations, so pupils can experience nature outside the boundaries of their classrooms.

Function 6. An opportunity to improve health and fitness

Aims

To contribute to the health and well being of residents.

To provide sporting opportunities for all.

To provide young people with a place to 'hang out'.

Objective 1

Promote the mental and physical benefits of sport and recreation for health of residents.

Regular physical activity can contribute to a reduction in a number of health problems including cardiovascular diseases and obesity. By providing high quality, accessible green spaces we can greatly contribute to the health and well-being of users.

Outcome

Provide accessible and attractive green spaces for people to relax, walk and exercise.

Actions

Priority 1

- Implement the Allotment Strategy to promote and sustain allotments.

Priority 2

- Advertise the benefits of walking as part of a health regime.
- Develop partnerships to generate activities and opportunities to exercise, such as 'walking for health routes' in major parks and green spaces.
- Explore opportunities for commercial investment for football, bowls and tennis.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 2

Increase participation in outdoor recreation in line with the Cultural Strategy.

Outcome

Encourage the use of parks by improving facilities for a wide variety of sports and recreation for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Actions

Priority 1

- Implement a playing pitch assessment, to raise the quality of facilities and maintain a sustainable usage.
- Review the current demand and usage for sport's provision in Kingston, including cricket, tennis and football.
- Review and amend pricing policy and leasing arrangement for Bowls Clubs and Tennis Clubs.

- Review and amend public booking and playing arrangements for tennis and bowls
- Review and amend Football and cricket pitch booking, pricing policy and leasing arrangements

- **Priority 2**

- Provide free sporting and leisure facilities in our parks and green spaces, such as tennis, basketball, trim trails, walking and cycling routes.
- Identify and amend tennis courts that could be better utilised as multi-sport areas.
- Support and respond to issues identified in the Football and Tennis Strategies.
- Identify appropriate sites to accommodate youth shelters, or similar structures.

- **Priority 3**

No actions.

Function 7. A place for sustainable development

Aims

To use our resources efficiently, effectively and flexibly.

Objective 1

Secure external funding.

In the council's current financial situation the opportunity for capital and revenue expenditure is limited. However, external funding opportunities exist and we should actively seek to secure such opportunities.

Outcome

Obtain external funding for projects.

Actions

Priority 1

- Actively explore opportunities for external funding from sources such as Heritage Lottery Fund, New Opportunities Fund, Sport England, Living Spaces, and developers contributions (section 106 agreements).
- Work with "friends of" groups, or other local user groups to secure external funding for environmental projects in our parks and green spaces.

Priority 2

No actions.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 2

Improve forward planning for the repair and replacement of infrastructure and equipment.

With a reactive maintenance approach to our assets we can get caught out by unexpected repair or replacement costs. Good forward planning ensures money is spent with a clear purpose in mind.

Outcome

Implement a pro-active management approach to our green spaces.

Actions

Priority 1

- Survey the condition of our parks assets, including pavilions, and come up with a priority replacement list.
- Realise future maintenance costs at the beginning of a project. If these costs cannot be met for future years then the project cannot be sustained, and will not be allowed to go ahead.

- Produce development plans for one key park in each neighbourhood.

Priority 2

- Invest more money into forward planning, and less for responsive maintenance.
- Produce development plans for at least 4 parks in each neighbourhood.

Priority 3

No actions.

Function 8. To enhance biodiversity

Aim

To protect and enhance the natural environment.

Objective 1

Encourage biodiversity in our parks and green spaces.

Outcome

Create quality 'green corridors' to allow wildlife movement and encourage biodiversity.

The need for Green corridors arises from the need to promote sustainable forms of transport, such as walking and cycling, and to provide opportunities for wildlife migration. Areas used as green corridors can include towpaths along riverbanks and canals, rights of way, or disused railway lines.

Actions

Priority 1

- Enhance biodiversity in parks through actions contained in the development plans for key parks.
- Work with partners from the Thames Landscape Strategy to develop and implement a riverbank management plan.
- Introduce sensitive mowing regimes where appropriate in line with Development plans.
- Designate Hogsmill Meadows as Local Nature Reserve

Priority 2

- Review and update the Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Ensure each site (not those identified for nature conservation) has at least 10% opportunity for wildlife with the larger sites up to 30%, this may include different boundary treatments or native planting schemes.
- Identify potential Local Nature Reserves.

Priority 3

- Improve green corridors through obligations in development proposals.
- Investigate the possibility of creating wetland habitats in appropriate locations.

Objective 2

Raise awareness about the protection of our natural environment.

Outcome

Provide green spaces that will act as Kingston's 'lungs'.

Green spaces are the 'green lungs' of our towns and cities contributing to improving people's physical and mental health by providing places for informal recreation - walking, cycling, sitting, socialising and children's play - and 'breathing spaces' to take time out from the stresses of modern life. They bring the countryside into our towns and cities, and make it accessible from our 'backdoors'.

Actions

Priority 1

- Investigate the use of sustainable planting techniques at all Quadron maintained sites.
- Proactively adapt maintenance practices in view of climate change issues.

Priority 2

- Publicise information and ‘best practice’ with regard to usage of green spaces.
- Educate green space users on the safeguarding of natural resources.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 3

Protect and enhance our green spaces by informing the preparation of local planning policies.

Outcome

This strategy will act as a material consideration in planning applications to decide if the space has a relevant use, or could be utilised in another way.

Actions

Priority 1

- Through developer’s obligations ensure specific areas of land are protected and improved, or continue to be used in a specified way, such as green corridors.

Priority 2

No actions.

Priority 3

No actions.

Function 9. A cultural legacy

Aim

To inform users of the cultural history and potential of our green spaces.

Objective 1

Promote green space use across cultures.

Culture is all around us, through the many sports and clubs that use our facilities each week, the events and community involvement in our parks and green spaces, and perhaps our biggest cultural asset, the Thames.

Outcome

Assist in sustaining the growth of cultural activities, and identify how we can open up cultural activities to all.

Actions

Priority 1

- Identify and support opportunities to encourage the use of our parks and green spaces by people of different cultures and backgrounds, such as the Korean Festival.

Priority 2

No action.

Priority 3

No action.

Objective 2

Consider green space history as a tool in the decision making process.

Outcome

Ensure future development is in keeping with the cultural history of a space, where relevant.

Actions

Priority 1

No actions.

Priority 2

- Explore and advertise the history of our green spaces, and consider this history when planning for the future.

Priority 3

No actions.

Function 10. An engine for regeneration

Aim

To develop local communities and neighbourhoods.

Objective 1

Make neighbourhoods more "liveable".

Parks and green spaces are central features of local community life, making a significant contribution to people's well being and quality of life. By providing good quality spaces that are relevant to users we can improve neighbourhoods as places to live, thereby increasing the number of people who feel satisfied with the area.

Outcome

Consult all local people about what they would like in their area, and work with them to develop and promote green spaces which are accessible, sustainable and of high quality.

Actions

Priority 1

No actions.

Priority 2

- Increase the number of local people involved in community or voluntary activities.
- Encourage all sections of the community to participate in local forums, and the decision making process.
- Promote popular local cultural and environmental activities as a way to engage socially excluded people, and then raise awareness about other opportunities for healthy lifestyles, safety, education and skills.

Priority 3

No actions.

Objective 2

Review areas of green space deficiency in the borough.

The Open Space assessment (Atkins 2006) has identified the areas of the borough which are deficient in green space, or play provision, and those spaces that are of low quality and need improving.

Outcome

Develop opportunities to increase green spaces in areas of deficiency, or to increase access to existing provision.

Actions

Priority 1

No actions.

Priority 2

- Develop play facilities in areas of under provision, and enhance existing play facilities where appropriate.

Priority 3

- Through developer's contributions, look into providing new green space in areas of deficiency, or improve the quality of the current provision.
- Look into increasing access to current facilities, from surrounding wards, where this will reduce deficiencies.

Annex 1 Full Equalities Impact Assessment

<p>Function being assessed:</p> <p>Green Spaces Strategy</p>
<p>Is this a new function or a review of an existing function?</p> <p>New Function</p>
<p>What is the aim/purpose of the function?</p> <p>To set out how the council will manage, maintain and develop our parks and green spaces over the next 10-15 years. It will ensure efficient use of our resources by setting out our long term goals, and will aim to provide all members of the community with an opportunity to assist in the future development of their local space, with a view to making green spaces relevant to users.</p>
<p>Is the function designed to meet specific needs such as the needs of minority ethnic groups, older people, disabled people etc?</p> <p>We are looking to develop parks for all sectors of the community, irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, religion or disability. As an action of the strategy we will make contact with minority and under represented groups to get them more involved in the decision making process in relation to their local green space. We must follow certain legislation when developing our green spaces, such as:</p> <p>Race Relations Amendment Act 2000</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to promote race equality by having due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate unlawful discrimination• Promote equality of opportunity; and• Promote good relations between people of different racial groups <p>Disability Discrimination Act 2005</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to carry out its functions with due regard to the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people• Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act• Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability• Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

Sex Discrimination Act as amended by the Equality Act 2006

The Council has a statutory duty to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful sex discrimination.
- Promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

Equalities legislation also requires the Council to avoid discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and sexual orientation.

What information has been gathered on this function? (Indicate the type of information gathered e.g. statistics, consultation, other monitoring information)? Attach a summary or refer to where the evidence can be found.

The Open Space assessment (2006) sets out the current provision and deficiency areas, for the supply and accessibility of parks and green spaces in Kingston. The production of this document is a driver for the completed Green Spaces Strategy, and we will look to address issues raised in the Open Space assessment where they fit in with the overall objectives of the Green Spaces Strategy.

Does your analysis of the information show different outcomes for different groups (higher or lower uptake/failure to access/receive a poorer or inferior service)? If yes, indicate which groups and which aspects of the policy or function contribute to inequality?

Our information does not suggest that our service adversely impact on any equalities group through discriminatory practices. However the assessment shows that some groups and individuals need and expect more from the service than is currently delivered in order for them to use the service more easily.

What action needs to be taken as a result of this Equality Impact Assessment to address any detrimental impacts or meet previously unidentified need? Include here any reasonable adjustments for access by disabled people. Include dates by which action will be taken. Attach an action plan if necessary.

As an action resulting from the Green Spaces Strategy will we look to make improvements to ensure that we provide reasonable access for disabled people. This will include reviewing infrastructure to improve access points into and around spaces, and the provision of inclusive, accessible play equipment. This will occur as and when resources become available, and where the actions fit in

with longer term implementation plans.

When will you evaluate the impact of action taken? Give review dates.

The implementation plan for delivery of the green space strategy will be constantly monitored and evaluated yearly, and progress on actions undertaken, specifically in response to this impact assessment, will also be reviewed at the same time.

Annex 2 List of nature conservation sites**South of the Borough Neighbourhood nature conservation sites**

Site name		Bonesgate stream	Castle Hill	Green Lane	Jubilee Wood	Jubilee Wood Meadows	Tolworth Court Farm Fields	Winey Hill	Nigel Fisher Close	Land rear of Kelvin Grove	Rear of Borax Cox Lane	Land at Moor Lane
Grid reference												
Status			SAM		LNR		pLNR			SLI	SLI	
Area (ha)			6.6	3.6	2.07	0.8	55	10	0.2		0.6	
Habitats and management specifications	Specification code	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Meadows	M	<input type="checkbox"/>	X			X	X		X		X	
Mowing spring meadows	MS1		X	<input type="checkbox"/>		X						
Mowing summer meadows	MS2							X				
Hay cutting	MH						X					
Rotational meadows	MR											
Other meadows	OM										X	
Horse pasture	MHP											
Mowing along hedges	MH					X	X					
Weed control	MWC						X		X		X	
Jap knotweed	MWCjp											
Creeping thistle	MWCct					X	X		X			
Bramble			X		X							
Bracken												
Dock							X					
Ragwort	MWCr					X	X					
Hedges	H					X	X				X	
Boundary hedge trimming	HT1					X	X				X	
Hedge trimming	HT2					X	X					
Planting up gaps	HP1						X				X	

Site name		Bonesgate stream	Castle Hill	Green Lane	Jubilee Wood	Jubilee Wood Meadows	Tolworth Court Farm Fields	Winey Hill	Nigel Fisher Close	Land rear of Kelvin Grove	Rear of Borax Cox Lane	Land at Moor Lane
Hedge laying	HL						X					
Dead hedging	HD											
Wetland	W					X	X					
Informal pond	WP					X	X					
Wet meadow	WM						X					
Ditches	WD						X					
Riparian	WR						X					
Coppicing	WC					X	X					
Invasive plant species	WIP					X	X					
Floating	WIP1					X	X					
Emergent	WIP2					X	X					
Algal blooms	WIP3					X	X					
Propagation	WP					X	X					
Sediment removal manual	WSR1					X	X					
Sediment removal mechanical	WSR2											
Litter						X	X					
Scrub	S						X				X	
Pruning and clearing	SP&C						X				X	
Semi-natural areas	SN					X					X	
Maintenance	SNM					X					X	
Woodlands	W		X		X		X					
Thinning	WoT		X		X		X					
Removal of problem trees	WoR		X		X							
Low pollarding	WoLP		X		X		X					
Coppicing	WoC		X		X		X				X	
Site name		Bonesgate stream	Castle Hill	Green Lane	Jubilee Wood	Jubilee Wood Meadows	Tolworth Court Farm Fields	Winey Hill	Nigel Fisher Close	Land rear of Kelvin Grove	Rear of Borax Cox Lane	Land at Moor Lane
Planting trees, shrubs and whips	P				X		X					
Developing woodland	DW											
Glades	G		X		X							
Strimming	GS		X		X							
Path and rides	SP&C, SNM		X		X	X	X					

Surbiton Neighbourhood nature conservation sites

Site name		Edith Gardens	Fishponds meadow area	Rose Walk	Elmbridge Meadows	Long Meadows	Knollmead	Raeburn Avenue open space	Six Acre Meadow	Malden Meadow	West Meadow	Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary
Grid reference												
UDP Designation		LN R	SINC 2	LNR	LNR	LNR	?	LNR	pLNR	pLNR	pLNR	LNR
Area (ha)		0.5	3.8					4.8				
Habitats and management specifications	Specification code											
Meadows	M	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Mowing spring meadows	MS1							X				
Mowing summer meadows	MS2	X		X	X	X		X	X			
Hay cutting	MH		X									
Rotational meadows	MR				X	X				X		X
Other meadows	OM								X			
Horse pasture	MHP											
Mowing along hedges	MH			X	X	X						X
Weed control	MWC				X				X			
Jap knotweed	MWCjp											
Creeping thistle	MWCct											
Ragwort	MWCr											

Site name		Edith Gardens	Fishponds meadow area	Rose Walk	Elmbridge Meadows	Long Meadows	Knollmead	Raeburn Avenue open space	Six Acre Meadow	Malden Meadow	West Meadow	Richard Jefferies Bird Sanctuary
Hedges	H	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Boundary hedge trimming	HT1	X	X	X?	X	X			X	X		X
Hedge trimming	HT2							X				
Planting up gaps	HP1											
Hedge laying	HL											
Dead hedging	HD											
Wetland	W				X							
Informal pond	WP											
Wet meadow	WM				X				X	X		
Ditches	WD				X							
Riparian	WR			X				X				
Coppicing	WC			X	X	X			X			
Invasive plant species	WIP							X				
Floating	WIP1											
Emergent	WIP2											
Algal blooms	WIP3											
Propagation	WP											
Sediment removal manual	WSR1				X							

Maldens and Coombe neighbourhood nature conservation sites

Site name		Beverley Park	Traps Lane	Coombe Wood	Kingshill Avenue (Beverley Brook)	Jubilee Mead	St John's Hill	The Hollows	The Leyfield	Plough Pond
Grid reference			TQ 210700							
Status				LNR		pLNR		pLNR	pLNR	
Area (ha)		0.5		3.4	1			0.5	1	0.1
Habitats and management specifications	Specification code									
Meadows	M					X		X		
Mowing spring meadows	MS1					X		X		
Mowing summer meadows	MS2							X		
Hay cutting	MH									
Rotational meadows	MR									
Other meadows	OM						X			
Horse pasture	MHP									
Mowing along hedges	MH						X			
Weed control	MWC							X		
Jap knotweed	MWCjp							X		
Creeping thistle	MWCct									
Bramble	MWb		X			X		X		
Bracken	MWbk									
Dock	MWd									
Ragwort	MWCr									

Site name		Beverley Park	Traps Lane	Coombe Wood	Kingshill Avenue (Beverley Brook)	Jubilee Mead	St John's Hill	The Hollows	The Leyfield	Plough Pond
Hedges	H						X			
Boundary hedge trimming	HT1					X	X			
Hedge trimming	HT2					X				
Planting up gaps	HP1									
Hedge laying	HL									
Dead hedging	HD									
Wetland	W									X
Informal pond	WP									X
Wet meadow	WM									
Ditches	WD									
Riparian	WR									
Coppicing	WC									X
Invasive plant species	WIP									X
Floating	WIP1									X
Emergent	WIP2									X
Algal blooms	WIP3									X
Propagation	WP									X
Sediment removal manual	WSR1									X
Sediment removal mechanical	WSR2									X
Litter										X
Scrub	S		X			X	X	X		X
Pruning and clearing	SP&C		X			X		X		
Semi-natural areas	SN		X			X		X		

		Beverley Park	Traps Lane	Coombe Wood	Kingshill Avenue (Beverley Brook)	Jubilee Mead	St John's Hill	The Hollows	The Leyfield	Plough Pond
Site name										
Maintenance	SNM		X			X		X		
Woodlands	W		X	X				X		
Thinning	WoT		X	X				X		
Removal of problem trees	WoR			X				X		
Low pollarding	WoLP			X				X		
Coppicing	WoC		X	X				X		
Planting trees, shrubs and whips	P			X						
Developing woodland	DW			X						
Glades	G		X	X						
Strimming	GS			X						
Path and rides	SP&C, SNM			X		X	X	X		

Kingston Town Neighbourhood nature conservation sites

Site name		Royal Park Gate
Grid reference		
Status		
Area (ha)		4.9
Habitats/General management prescriptions	Specification code	
Meadows	M	
Mowing spring meadows	MS1	
Mowing summer meadows	MS2	
Hay cutting	MH	
Rotational meadows	MR	
Other meadows	OM	
Horse pasture	MHP	
Mowing along hedges	MH	
Weed control	MWC	
Hedges	H	
Boundary hedge trimming	HT1	
Hedge trimming	HT2	
Planting up gaps	HP1	
Hedge laying	HL	
Dead hedging	HD	
Wetland	W	
Informal pond	WP	
Wet meadow	WM	
Ditches	WD	
Riparian	WR	
Coppicing	WC	
Invasive plant species	WIP	
Floating	WIP1	
Emergent	WIP2	
Algal blooms	WIP3	
Propagation	WP	
Sediment removal manual	WSR1	
Sediment removal mechanical	WSR2	
Litter		
Scrub	S	
Pruning and clearing	SP&C	
Semi-natural areas	SN	
Maintenance	SNM	
Woodlands	W	
Thinning	WoT	
Removal of problem trees	WoR	

Site name		Royal Park Gate
Low pollarding	WoLP	
Coppicing	WoC	
Planting trees, shrubs and whips	P	
Developing woodland	DW	
Glades	G	
Strimming	GS	
Path and rides	SP&C, SNM	

Annex 3 Introduction to the Royal Borough of Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan

1. What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of living things whether they are trees or fungi, butterflies or mammals, birds or fish. Biodiversity includes the range of habitats on which all living things depend.

2. How and why is biodiversity important to everyone?

As a species we rely on biodiversity more than we realise. Without healthy ecosystems we cannot exist. We depend on natural structure and processes for the air we breathe, the food we eat, the breaking down of our waste products and many of our medicinal needs. Natural processes in our environment provide 'services' in ways we cannot replace for example flood control and reducing pollution. Biodiversity provides the insurance that these processes will continue.

Fluctuations in species numbers and habitat quality can provide an indicator of environmental change giving us an early warning of potential harm to the natural environment.

Finally biodiversity gives us a sense of well-being. It provides psychological, educational and health benefits and enriches our lives.

3. What has the UK government done to protect biodiversity?

In 1992 the United Kingdom signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in recognition of the prime importance of biodiversity to every living thing. On a global scale the objectives of the convention are to:

- Conserve the earth's biological diversity
- Ensure the sustainable use of its components
- Share, fairly and justly, the benefits from the use of genetic resources.

By signing the convention we stated our commitment to protecting and enhancing wildlife and habitats in the UK. In response to this commitment the UK produced a national Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) in 1994, highlighting species and habitats of concern.

4. The Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan (KBAP)

The UK BAP recognises that 'biodiversity is ultimately lost or conserved at a local level'. The Plan urges that every Local Authority should develop its own Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) involving the community. These local BAPs are

described as “*a plans of action for protecting, conserving and enhancing wildlife at a local level.*”¹

One of the key objectives arising from the RBK Local Agenda 21 Plan (2000) was to develop a Local Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan in partnership with members of the local community. Why a partnership? Successful implementation of a Local BAP requires involvement from various sectors, including government and its agencies, land managers, voluntary bodies, academic institutions and many commercial concerns and individuals. A partnership approach will mean the workload can be shared and a wide range of resources and skills used. It will also ensure a shared commitment to, and ownership of, the plan. The process will initially require a core partnership, with particular motivation and expertise. As the plan develops a wider partnership will be involved.

The core KBAP partnership consists of several individuals and groups with particular biodiversity expertise. Its role is to produce the first draft of the KBAP. Together core partners will agree on the aims and objectives of the KBAP and divide up the work needed to formulate the Plan. Progress will be facilitated by formation of subgroups within a wider partnership.

The core partnership is represented by:

Lead Partner is Kingston Council

- Service Manager (Green spaces)
- Green spaces Officer
- Tree Officer
- Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar
- Local Development Framework Manager

Partners:

- London Wildlife Trust
- Horticultural Development Manager – Quadon Services Ltd
- Surrey Wildlife Trust
- Lower Mole Countryside Management Project
- Surbiton & District Birdwatching Society
- Oecophilia
- London Natural History Society
- St. John’s Church, Old Malden

¹ Leigh-Hunt, S., M. Frith and P. Guest, 1998. *Biodiversity Action Plans – getting involved at a local level.* London Wildlife Trust for the London Biodiversity Partnership.

The KBAP will be an evolving, living document concentrating on key habitats and species found in the Borough.

5. Biodiversity in Kingston

In Kingston we have a characteristic and unique mix of habitats and species that reflect the Borough's history and culture. These habitats are found on sites that are remnants of semi-natural countryside and/or farmland that have been left during development of the surrounding area. They have become absorbed into the urban setting and act as refuges for both common and rare species. Parks, woodland, meadows, green corridors and private gardens are valuable because they form part of the ecological integrity of the environment in the urban and suburban context.

The majority of the species found on such sites are well adapted to the urban environment. They are mobile, tolerant of disturbance and have no specialised habitat requirements but others are susceptible to change because they have very specific requirements.

The key to conserving Kingston's biodiversity is by the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, ultimately achieved through land-use policies. The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) is the current vehicle that influences the way the Council decides on land-use. In the future this will be achieved through the Local Development Framework (LDF), which will be guided by the Community Strategy.

The objectives and targets in the KBAP apply several policies in the UDP (Policy STR7a Biodiversity, OL11a Species Protection, OL10a Green Corridors, OL11 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance) therefore the KBAP can be used as material consideration when deciding planning applications.

6. Who is the KBAP for?

Internal – Council Officers	External – Groups and Individuals	Service Providers
Councillors Planning Officers Building control Education – schools colleges, university Operations managers Area parks officers Highway engineers Asset managers RoW Officer Community development Street care Housing Youth services	Specialist Anti-social behaviour Co-ordinator Grounds Maintenance Contractors Environmental Consultants and Contractors Landscape architects Tree specialists Non Government Organisations (NGO) Developers Major local businesses Local farmers Local Landowners Neighbouring Boroughs	Thames Water Environment Agency Network Rail Kingston University Health Service Primary Care Trust National Grid Communication Companies Gas Companies

	Golf course managers Non-specialist Local residents Community groups Voluntary groups	
--	--	--

7. How the KBAP will be presented

The plan will consist of an introduction (presented here). This can be used as a guide by all groups listed above to explain how biodiversity affects their areas of interest.

The main body of the plan will be made up of Habitat Actions Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs). Each individual plan will describe the local and national context of the habitat or species concerned and set out actions needed for maintenance or regeneration. The habitats and species chosen will have been identified by the partnership as being locally important or characteristic. In addition techniques will be developed for ensuring biodiversity is a priority in key areas such as Planning and Development, Community Involvement and Biological Monitoring.

The Plan will:

- Put into action national conservation targets appropriate to the Borough
- Concentrate on habitats and species characteristic to the area and valued by the local community
- Develop effective and lasting local partnerships
- Promote the broader conservation message by concentrating on what is important to us
- Ensure that opportunities for conserving biodiversity are recognised and pursued
- Provide a basis for checking progress both locally and nationally.

8. Aim, objectives and targets

The following have been agreed by the core partnership.

Aim

To ensure the protection and enrichment of biodiversity in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames for current and future generations.

Our guiding principle is to allow no further net loss of biodiversity and to achieve positive gain.

Objectives	Targets and outcomes
To produce a comprehensive audit of biodiversity within the borough	Dec 2010
To determine species and habitat	2008/09

<p>priorities within Kingston, with regard to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and London targets, • The specific situation in Kingston and surrounding areas, • The elements valued by local people. 	
<p>To launch a proactive strategy integrating biodiversity conservation into planning policy and procedure.</p> <p>Develop an improved mechanism for flagging conservation concerns in proposed developments.</p>	<p>Task force of planners and ecologists. July 2004</p> <p>Good Practice guide – published Jan 2007</p> <p>Biodiversity Partnership included as a primary consultee</p>
<p>To develop and implement long-term plans for protecting and enhancing Kingston's priority habitats.</p>	<p>Habitat Action Plans</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Targets and outcomes</p>
<p>To develop and implement long-term plans for protecting and enhancing Kingston's priority species.</p>	<p>Species Action Plans</p>
<p>To identify biodiversity indicators and develop a means of monitoring the progress of the plan,</p> <p>Develop a means to review the habitats, species and threats in need of action.</p>	<p>Set of indicators identified by 2008/09</p>
<p>To raise awareness of biodiversity issues throughout the process and improve availability of information to the people of Kingston,</p> <p>To encourage practical involvement in biodiversity conservation projects by local people.</p>	<p>Webpage updated June 2008</p> <p>Work with Community Environment Officer to ensure integration of community projects</p>
<p>To implement a strategy to ensure access to quality natural space in all parts of the Borough where such access not in conflict with nature conservation interest.</p>	<p>Green spaces Strategy adopted by the Executive committee Feb 2008</p> <p>Annual Implementation Plans run from April to April according to budget allocation.</p>
<p>To work with the Kingston Sustainable Communities Group to ensure relevant actions are resourced.</p>	

9. Examples of how the KBAP can be used.

Development Control (DC)

The KBAP will provide DC with a list of priority habitats and species to which they can refer when dealing with planning casework. This plan complements the policies within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which deal primarily with protected species and land designation. The targets in the individual habitat and species action plans will help provide ideas and examples where biodiversity gains can be made within the planning framework. This would be especially useful when designing a planning brief.

Quadron Services Ltd and Green Spaces Officer

The KBAP will include an audit of all the open space sites in the Borough. This includes lists of habitats and some associated species. Having this detailed knowledge to hand can be useful for example: when planning planting schemes near to nature conservation sites, or seeking information on how to manage sympathetically hedge or woodland boundaries to avoid conflict of interest between the primary purpose of the open space and nature conservation. The contractors and Street Scene Officers are the 'eyes and ears' of the local area and so are well placed to identify change.

Street Care and Waste Management

This may not at first seem an obvious context, but these operatives are out and about in the same local area on a daily basis. They are in a good position to spot ecological changes. For example an increase in rat activity in a location known to be important for water voles or finding indications of activity of locally rare species for example some species of solitary bees.

Asset Managers

The KBAP can be used as an information source when deciding on land management practices. The KBAP will develop a set of 'triggers' to help managers understand the possible ecological impact of some actions particularly the timing of some operations. For example not removing mature shrubs and trees during the bird breeding season or mowing grassland before the meadow flowers set seed.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)

Many wildlife NGO's are Lead Partners in the UKBAP. For the aspirational targets of the UKBAP to be met there needs to be a cohesive relationship between the Lead Partners and the Local BAP partnerships. Kingston BAP Partnership is working with Bat Conservation Trust to put together guidance notes on how Local Bat Groups can influence the Local BAP.

Developers

When planning and submitting development proposal developers should have regard for the KBAP. The KBAP will provide information about the priority habitats and species in the borough. It will highlight what is locally important, this will effectively add to the list of existing protected species which at present tends to be the only factor taken into account. This document will encourage effective dialogue with the Council at the early stages of the proposal and will guide the applicant towards positive biodiversity gains. For example conservation of existing nature conservation features or creation, restoration and enhancement of nature conservation features.

Householders

The KBAP will provide detailed information on habitats and species which the householder can use to create more opportunities for biodiversity. It can provide advice on what to look out for relating to protected species or locally characteristic habitats.

Service Providers

E.g. Thames Water, Network Rail, National Grid, Gas, Communication Companies

Most service providers produce their own BAPs, which set out their targets for managing biodiversity on landholdings. This means establishing a formal system to manage the company's overall impacts on biodiversity. The KBAP will provide the context for developing site-level BAPs for the company landholding. This means providing information that the Service Provider should have regard for if their land when monitoring their own BAP or land acquisition and proposals.

Youth Service

One of the objectives of the KBAP is to encourage practical involvement in meeting the targets of the HAPs. In general, young people are curious, and to offer a 'different' way of spending time might appeal to some. In addition, the HAPs and SAPs are aimed at raising awareness of the problems and issues, which need to be addressed when protecting our environment.

Annex 4 Design Plant and Maintenance flow diagram

Annex 5 Development Plan for an Exemplar Park

Woodgate Avenue - Development plan**Introduction to the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames**

Kingston is often referred to as a 'green and leafy' suburb of Greater London. This characterisation is given partly because of the diverse range of open spaces, from the formal parkland of Canbury Gardens in Kingston Town to the informal hay meadows of Tolworth Court Farm Fields Local Nature Reserve in Tolworth. There many large and small parks, playing fields and wayside gardens in between. The other open spaces include large mature private gardens in the north of the Borough to the Green Belt farmland in the south. Many of the streets are lined with mature large trees in the Victorian and Edwardian streets and smaller ornamental species in the post-war and modern developments. As a whole, the 'green leafy' description is accurate.

The Kingston Open Space Assessment (Atkins May 2006) investigated the supply, quality and value of open space. The report provides detailed analysis of all public and private open space provision.

Open Space Type	No. Sites	Area (ha)	% Total Open Space
District Park	1	10.36	1.2%
Local Park	17	113.38	13.3%
Small local park/open space	13	18.93	2.2%
Linear park/open space	12	22.34	2.6%
Total park provision	43	165.01	19.4%
Allotments	23	41.70	4.9%
Amenity Green space	92	17.81	2.1%
Cemeteries	5	18.54	2.2%
Horticulture	6	2.22	0.3%
Natural/Semi-natural	18	102.13	12.0%
Play space	37	22.09	2.6%
Playing field (public)	28	87.47	10.3%
Woodland	14	47.83	5.6%
Total other space provision	223	339.79	40.0%
Total park + other space	266	504.8	59.4%
Private open space	49	346.32	40.6%
Total open space (includes private landholding)	318	851.12	100%

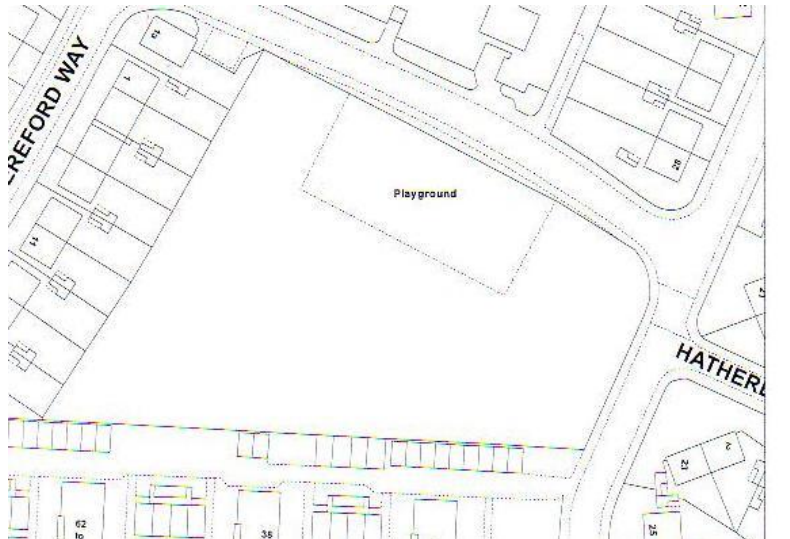
Open Space provision by type (Atkins 2006)

Introduction to Woodgate Avenue

Woodgate Avenue is a small open space of 5882 square metres in size. The site is located off of Woodgate Avenue and Hereford Way in The South of the Borough Neighbourhood, just off the A243 Hook Road.

The nearest bus stop is on the K4 route at Ripon Gardens. There is no dedicated parking available for the site, but on-street parking is available on adjacent roads..

The space consists of a children's playground, a basketball court and an amenity grass area. It is surrounded on all sides by flats and housing.



The space offers provision for 3-14 year olds through the play facilities, and for teenagers in the provision of the basketball court. The open grassed offers a place for informal recreation or dog walking.

There is currently no horticultural provision or tree stock within the boundaries of the park.



Maintenance

The site is managed and maintained by Quadron Services (QS), on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBK).

Inspection and maintenance of the play equipment is carried out by Ash Reid Design (ARD), who are specialists appointed to oversee the health and safety of play equipment across the borough. Monthly inspections are carried out by an appropriately qualified inspector to highlight the works needed at each playground. The budget for playground repairs and improvements is held by QS. In addition, daily visual checks are carried out on all play equipment by QS.

The general grounds maintenance of the site is carried out by QS.

The repairs and maintenance of the remaining infrastructure of the park (seating, pathways, fences, gates, signage) is administered by the councils appointed building maintenance partners NPS.

Although currently there is no tree stock at Woodgate Avenue, the park trees across the borough are maintained by Advanced Tree Services (ATS) under the instruction of QS. A 3 year cyclical maintenance programme has been drawn up for the management of the tree stock across the borough.

Site Development

As with many parks and open spaces in the borough, Woodgate Avenue has suffered from a lack of capital investment and clear direction in the allocation of resources.

This development plan will ensure that any capital outlay in the park will contribute towards the overall improvement as set out in this plan.

Woodgate Avenue has the potential to offer more functions for users than the current play facilities and potential for dog walking. Increasing the horticultural and ecological value of the space is a key function to improve in the future, as is the promotion of healthy living through offering a wider range of free sporting and leisure facilities. A priority replacement and improvement list will set out the projects and timescales for raising the standard of Woodgate Avenue, with the ultimate aim of achieving green flag status for the space.

Green Flag

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.

Winning a Green Flag Award brings excellent publicity. Both the media and the public are becoming increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space. It is realised that all green spaces are different and this diversity is welcomed. Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves.

Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status.

There has recently been much discussion about the declining quality of our city parks and lack of focus upon rural green spaces. While this is undoubtedly a cause for concern in many places there are also many examples of thriving, popular sites run by dedicated, enthusiastic people working closely with their local communities. Many places that were run-down and neglected just a few years ago are now shining examples of outstanding green space management, and this shows the way forward. The Green Flag Award Scheme is the impetus to an ever-increasing improvement in the quality of our parks and green spaces.

Key criteria

The following is an outline of the Key Criteria against which every park or green space for which an application is made, will be judged. Where certain criteria are not met, an applicant may provide justifications that will be taken into account in the judging process.

Parks or green spaces will inevitably offer a variety of facilities and be managed and developed in response to a wide range of opportunities and constraints. Judging criteria will be sufficiently flexible to allow for these as well as recognising and encouraging innovation.

In principle any facility or feature which the park or green space offers, should conform to the relevant key criteria, but the range of facilities offered and their appropriateness to the needs of the user community will also be taken into account.

A Welcoming Place

The overall impressions for any member of the community approaching and entering the park or green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are visiting. Features of particular importance are:



- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park or green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

In order to hit these criteria it is proposed that the improvements in the tables below are carried out in the park. The projects have been split into three categories dependent on need, cost and functionality. Available capital should be directed towards Category A projects in the first instance. From time to time circumstances may change which will result in a lower category project moving up through the list.

Project Description	Category	Approx Cost
Improve 2no entrance points into the park (including pathways, gates and ramps), with due consideration to DDA requirements.	A	£2,500
Introduce new signage to include site name, facilities and relevant byelaws.	A	£500
Introduce cast iron park notice board	A	£2,000
Increase the number of access points into the park through new gates.	B	£2,500

Healthy, Safe, and Secure

The park or green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues must be addressed in management plans and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately. Particularly important issues are:

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use.
- The park or green space must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse.
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed.

- Health & Safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park or green space, and clearly sign posted.

Project Description	Category	Approx Cost
Complete an environmental safety audit of the park, in conjunction with Safer Neighbourhood Police.	A	Zero
Provision of new furniture (seating and bins).	B	£1,500
Remove section of hard standing in playground and return to grass.	B	£5,000
Replace wire mesh fencing along southern boundary with palisade fencing.	C	£30,000
Renew bow top railings around playground, to include the formation of a dog free/walking zone on grassed area.	C	£20,000

Clean and Well Maintained

For aesthetic as well as Health and Safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management issues must be adequately addressed.
- Grounds, buildings, equipment and other features must be well maintained.
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

Sustainability

Methods used in maintaining the park or green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Specifically:

- An environmental policy or charter and management strategy should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Pesticide use should be minimised and justified.
- Horticultural peat use should be eliminated.
- Waste plant material in the park or green space should be recycled.
- High horticultural and arboriculture standards should be demonstrated.
- Energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures should be used.

Project Description	Category	Approx Cost
Complete a green travel plan for the park.	A	Zero
Install bike stands to encourage sustainable travel to the park.	B	£500

Conservation and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna.
- Landscape features.
- Buildings and structural features.

These features should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment.

Project Description	Category	Approx Cost
Amend grass cutting regime to leave pocket of grass uncut as a 'conservation area'.	A	Zero
Whip planting of tree's to provide shade.	A	£1,000

Community Involvement

Management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park or green space user groups as possible. Management should be able to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use.
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved.
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community.



Project Description	Category	Approx cost
Replace items of play equipment with new inclusive equipment.	A/B/C	£3,500 per item
Create shrub beds along wall at west side of the site.	A	£2,000
Installation of moveable 5-a-side goals and sockets in grass area.	B	£,1,500
Replace basketball court with a Multi-use games	C	£20,000

area.		
Installation of trim trail/outdoor gym around perimeter of the park.	C	£10,000

Marketing

- Marketing strategy in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.
- Good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved.
- Promotion of the park or green space as a community resource.

This development plan is linked into other over arching strategies being developed by RBK.

An Environmental Awareness Strategy has been developed that will outline the marketing and communications plan for all the boroughs parks. This will range from information in notice boards, libraries and community centres to inform on a local level, to press releases, publications and web-based communications informing on schemes at a borough wide level.

Management

A Green Flag Award application must have a management plan or strategy in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and clearly and adequately addresses all the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park or green space must also be demonstrated.

As the site develops over time new improvement projects may be identified that will enhance the overall development of the park.

Delivery

Bids will be made through the council's existing capital budget allocation to fund major projects (over £5000). Playground improvements will be funded through the dedicated playground maintenance and improvements budget. There is the possibility that minor improvement (under £5000) can be funded through the council repairs and maintenance budget for parks and open spaces, administered by NPS.

External funding opportunities for these projects will be explored through the development and joint working with residents or 'friends of' groups.

AIP

The delivery and monitoring of actions contained within this development plan will

be detailed in the Green Spaces Strategy Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). This will outline how each of the objectives will be delivered, and will be updated yearly with updates on successful projects, and the reasons for the failing of any objectives.

The AIP will be scrutinised at RBK's Environmental Services Project Board to keep tabs on delivery progress, and any problems encountered.

Design, Plant and Maintain

When commissioning any improvement projects in our parks we must be aware of future maintenance costs that will arise as a result. This could be in the form of new playground equipment needing monthly health and safety inspections, or new trees and shrubs needing watering in order to establish.

To ensure that these implications are considered in the inception stages of a project, all new planting works will go through a process called design, plant and maintain. This process follows a model that ensures a correct flow of information between client and designer throughout the process, and flags up issues such as future maintenance. If a scheme is deemed to be un-sustainable or unrealistic it will be identified early in the process, and rejected or amended as appropriate. This model can also be applied to the commissioning of hard landscaping or infrastructure improvements.

Annex 6 Green Spaces Map

Annex 7 Parks Map

Annex 8 Nature Reserves Map

Annex 9 Playground Map

References

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