

Cabinet Meeting

24 February 2016

Report title	City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Nick Edwards, City Assets	
Originating service	Planning	
Accountable employee(s)	Michèle Ross	Senior Planning Officer
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Report to be/has been considered by	Planning for Growth Board	2 December 2015
	Corporate Landlord Board	12 December 2016
	Strategic Executive Board	9 February 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Adopt the updated City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan which is available at [web link](#)

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval to adopt an updated version of the City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP), which will direct investment and planning decisions on open space across the City in future years, help the Council to secure external funding (including developer contributions) and release surplus assets to maximise local community and regeneration benefits.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Well managed and located open spaces make a vital contribution to the quality of life and health of individuals, families and communities across Wolverhampton. The Council owns and manages most of the open space in the City, providing a range of recreational opportunities for sport, exercise, play, contact with nature and growing produce. The Black Country Core Strategy is clear that a network of good quality open space is vital to attract people to live and work in Wolverhampton.
- 2.2 Investment is currently taking place in open space across the City, to improve key sites, create open space to serve new and existing residents such as at the former Goodyear site and Ward Street, and maximise use of existing sites such as playing fields. Much of the funding for on-going improvements has been secured from developers through the planning process.
- 2.3 During 2012-14, the Council adopted a strategic approach to open space in Wolverhampton, set out in a suite of documents: Sport Development Investment Strategy (SDIS); Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (PPSAP); Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP); and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document. The strategic approach makes efficient use of open space assets and ensures delivery of regeneration priorities within constrained budgets through working with local communities and reconfiguring sites and services, where appropriate, to release funds for reinvestment. To make decisions about where this should happen, secure external funding and guide delivery it is important to have an up-to-date evidence base, strategy and action plan based on realistic open space standards.
- 2.4 When Cabinet adopted the OSSAP on 26 March 2014 it was agreed that the Action Plan part of the OSSAP would be monitored and updated every year and the Strategy element reviewed at an appropriate time or a minimum of every five years. The PPSAP was updated in 2015, as reported to Cabinet on 13 January 2016. Therefore it is now appropriate to update the OSSAP Action Plan and make minor changes to the Strategy to reflect recent policy and operational changes.
- 2.5 It is important that the Council adopts the updated OSSAP, which is available at [web link](#) in order to:
- Secure investment for priority open space, sport and recreation projects which will support regeneration, housing delivery and health objectives and increase the attractiveness of Wolverhampton as a place to live, visit and work;
 - Provide clarity and certainty to developers and land owners, including the Council, in relation to the disposals programme and planning obligations; and
 - Provide a strategic context for external funding bids and future budget decisions.

3.0 Delivery of the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.1 The OSSAP is an investment strategy and evidence for planning decisions, which:
- Applies deliverable open space standards to different parts of the City and highlights areas of surplus and deficiency;
 - Provides clear, prioritised actions to protect, improve and extend open space provision where there are deficiencies, and rationalise open space provision where there are surpluses or this could improve quality or access (taking into account cross-boundary effects and City-wide priorities);
 - Maximises effective use of existing physical and financial resources in improving open space provision.

- 3.2 The OSSAP sets out quantity, quality and access standards for seven different types of open space:
- Parks
 - Natural green space
 - Amenity green space
 - Provision for children
 - Provision for young people
 - Outdoor sports (including playing pitches)
 - Allotments

It applies these standards to five Analysis Areas and highlights areas which have surpluses or deficiencies against the standards. The standards are generally lower than those set by neighbouring authorities, reflecting the densely built, urban nature of Wolverhampton.

- 3.3 The City-wide aims of the OSSAP are:
- To broadly retain the same amount of open space across the City (4.2 ha per 1,000 residents);
 - To target investment in key open spaces to address gaps and support growth;
 - To allow poorer quality open spaces to come forward for development, subject to levels of compensation which provide reasonable capital receipts;
 - To set out playing pitch priorities (based on the Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan) which provide a clear framework for disposal of school playing fields.

- 3.4 The priority projects set out in the Action Plan part of the OSSAP provide clear guidance on the Council's priorities for open space improvement by Analysis Area, which will form the focus for investment and allocation of developer contributions and other funding.

- 3.5 Since the OSSAP was adopted in March 2014 considerable progress has been made to deliver priority actions, funded by both internal and external resources. These actions include:
- Completion of a significant programme of improvements to East Park, including fitness trail, natural play area and multi-use games area;
 - Completion of new community use Artificial Grass Pitch at Our Lady and St Chad Catholic School and Sports College and Heath Park Business and Enterprise College;

- Completion of Penk Rise de-culverting to promote natural drainage and biodiversity;
- Completion of fitness trail at Claregate Playing Fields;
- Substantial completion of a new multi-pitch site to serve the north of the City at Barnhurst Lane;
- Substantial completion of improvements to Colman Avenue Park, including new pitches, play facilities, path network and trim trail;
- Substantial completion of the City Centre Youth Zone, providing two multi-use games areas and an outdoor recreation area.

4.0 Proposed Changes to the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan

4.1 Individual changes made to the original OSSAP 2014 are available on request. The Strategy and Action Plan have been subject to minor updates to reflect:

- Changes to the Local Plan;
- Changes in public consultation arrangements and input from the Neighbourhood Plan groups on detail for their areas;
- Amended playing pitch priorities following completion of an updated Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan;
- Changes in the Council's approach to allotments (to promote self-management);
- Progress made in delivering priority actions;
- Changes to details, timescales and funding arrangements for remaining priority actions;
- Emergence of new priority actions in accordance with the Strategy, including:
 - Play facility investment at West Park; Hickman Park, Muchall Park, Peace Green, Merridale Street Open Space, Bushbury Recreation Ground, Northwood Park, Howlands Close, Renton Road, Kingsclere Walk and Long Knowle Open Space;
 - Open space and access improvements at Hickman Park, Rocket Pool, Graiseley Recreation Ground and Heath Town Estate;
 - Creation of a new playing pitch at St Luke's Primary School;
 - Improving tennis court quality at East Park

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 The OSSAP is a working document and the Action Plan will be monitored and updated every year and the OSSAP as a whole reviewed at an appropriate time or a minimum of every five years. It is proposed to report annual progress and any updates to the Action Plan to Cabinet through the Council's agreed Asset Management governance and reporting groups.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 The Action Plan contains details of projects that have either been successfully completed in recent years, are on site or have been identified as priority actions and therefore make up a programme of potential projects.

6.2 Elements of projects on site, namely Barnhurst Lane, Bilston Park (Bilston Urban Village), Ashmore Park, Castlecroft play provision, Heath Town Park, West Park and Taylor Road open space, are already reflected in the approved capital programme.

- 6.3 The programme of potential projects will help support future bids for external resources and direct private developer contributions in line with Council priorities. Not all of the potential projects will involve the Council incurring capital expenditure. However any required on-going maintenance of the sites will impact on the Council's revenue budget. The costs stated in the Action Plan are indicative based on the costs to complete the desired works and do not include any future maintenance costs. However, potential projects will not be progressed until any additional maintenance costs have been quantified and at least 10 years future maintenance costs secured.
- 6.4 The completion of desired works is dependent upon external resources from grant funding and developer contributions and until such time as funding is confirmed it is not possible to finalise any capital and revenue estimates. Included projects will be subject to future reports to Councillors seeking approval for terms and costs once known in line with current approval processes. [TT/04022016/Y]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. [TS/1002016/F]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equality Analysis has been completed, which concludes that, overall, the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP) will have positive equal opportunity implications, by seeking to achieve equal access for all to a sufficient quantity and quality of open space and sport facilities of different types. The OSSAP will increase participation in sport and physical activity and access to high quality open space across the City.
- 8.2 There is identified potential for some localised adverse impacts through development of a limited number of open spaces. However, in these cases there has been careful consideration to ensure that any impacts are balanced by secured mitigation measures which will result in overall improvements to quantity, quality and/or access to open space in the local area.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 The OSSAP update will have positive implications for the improvement of open space for people and wildlife across the City.

10.0 Human Resources implications

- 10.1 There are no human resource implications directly arising from this report.

11.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 11.1 Any potential Council schemes will require approval by the Council before any capital expenditure is incurred as ongoing maintenance of the sites will impact on the Council's revenue budget. This will involve the submission of proposals to Corporate Landlord Board to be reviewed on value for money and appropriateness based on the current

financial climate. Capital expenditure has a direct impact upon the Council's revenue budgets and therefore needs to be restricted to projects essential to the Council's priorities. Any projects endorsed by Corporate Landlord Board will then be reported to Councillors for approval.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, KKP for Wolverhampton City Council (January 2016)

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (2015)

Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (February 2014)

Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Equality Analysis (January 2014)

Cabinet 11 April 2012 – Sport Development and Investment Strategy

Wolverhampton Open Space Audit and Needs Assessment, PMP for City of Wolverhampton Council (2008)

Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment, KKP for City of Wolverhampton Council (2015)

City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (February 2016)