

## Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Date: 24 Jan 2023

Report of: Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities).

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with delivering the actions set out in the *Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy* one year on from its publication. It covers the period March – December 2022.
- 1.2 A copy of the strategy is available in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 A spreadsheet detailing each agreed action and a progress update on those actions is provided in Appendix 2.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Following an extensive public consultation process, which included the formal Scrutiny process, the *Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy* was published in February 2022.
- 2.2 The strategy sets out a vision for Leeds City Council's Parks and Countryside Service, and the actions that will be undertaken by the service to deliver that vision over the 10 years from 2022 – 2032.
- 2.3 The vision set out in the strategy is for Leeds City Council to '*provide the best parks and green spaces in the UK.*'
- 2.4 To ensure this vision is achieved, eight priorities for the Parks and Countryside Service are outlined in the strategy:
  - i. Quality
  - ii. Climate and biodiversity
  - iii. Access for all
  - iv. Culture
  - v. Child friendly
  - vi. Working with communities
  - vii. Financial sustainability
  - viii. Health and wellbeing
- 2.5 The priorities support the Best Council Plan and are closely aligned with the 3 pillars of the Best City Ambition – Zero Carbon, Inclusive Growth and Health and Wellbeing.

2.6 For each priority, specific goals, and the actions that will be undertaken to achieve them, are identified in the strategy document along with a time scale for delivery (short term - 1-3 years, medium term – 4-6 years; long term – 7-10 years, for each action).

2.7 This report, and the accompanying document in appendix 2, outlines progress on those actions.

### **3. Highlight report**

3.1 Progress on each action listed in the strategy is set out in appendix 2.

3.2 Key developments that have taken place in 2022 towards the goals set out in the strategy are outlined below.

3.3 Quality priority - *Providing high quality parks and green spaces*



Horsforth Hall Park, Japanese Garden September 2022

3.4 All city parks (Roundhay, Middleton, Temple Newsam, Golden Acre, Chevin Forest Park and Kirkstall Abbey) achieved the national Green Flag standard in 2022.

3.5 One of the 2 Key Performance Indicators in the strategy is an aspiration in the Quality priority 'For all community parks to reach the Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard during the life of the strategy'.

3.6 In 2022, 72% of community parks achieved LQP standard – this was an improvement on all previous years since assessments began in 2010 (when just 22% of community parks passed).

3.7 Efforts continue to be made to source and direct external funding to those parks that are failing LQP to achieve the goal of getting them all to the standard by 2032. For example, in 2022, £400k of S106 was allocated for investment in community parks. In addition, the council was successful in obtaining approximately £3 million for park improvements through the Morley Town Bid and bids were made for substantial investments in 9 community parks through

the Levelling Up fund (a decision on the allocation of Levelling Up funding is still awaited).

- 3.8 All cemeteries and crematoria were judged against the LQP criteria for the first time in 2022, 56% passed.
- 3.9 A '*Plan on a Page*' has been produced for 11 community parks through the Morley Towns and Levelling Up Fund bids.
- 3.10 Climate and Biodiversity priority - *Increasing wildlife and biodiversity and reducing the impact of climate change.*
- 3.11 The second key performance indicator in the strategy is to help combat the climate emergency by planting 50 hectares of trees each year.
- 3.12 We can confirm that 50 hectares of trees were planted in the 2021-22 (autumn-winter) season and that 88 sites have been confirmed as suitable for tree planting in the current season - tree planting is currently underway at these sites.
- 3.13 Peat has been completely eliminated from our operations.
- 3.14 With regards making improvements to our green spaces for the benefit of wildlife, seasonal bedding was reduced by 50% in 2022 and replaced with a mix of pollinator-friendly wildflower mixes which proved popular with the public.



Wildlife-friendly wildflowers that replaced seasonal bedding in Farnley park in summer 2022.

- 3.15 Access for All priority - *Ensuring that parks and green spaces are accessible for everyone who wants to use them.*
- 3.16 In 2022, 69% of community parks and 72% of cemeteries and crematoria achieved 7 or above on the Equal Access for All LQP criteria.
- 3.17 Visitor information about Temple Newsam, the Arium, Tropical World and Kirkstall Abbey was added to the *Euan's Guide* 'accessible venues' website (to promote the sites as accessible venues and enable people with disabilities to plan their visits in advance).
- 3.18 With regards the goal of 'ensuring our parks and green spaces feel safe and welcoming for girls and women,' we were involved in an externally funded 'Safer Streets' research project in partnership with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and others in 2022. We assisted in developing and promoting the research to maximise feedback, and some of the Parks and Countryside team were interviewed. The findings of the research were reported back at a national workshop on 31 October and a Parks and Countryside representative took part in the panel discussion. The findings of the research will contribute to the production of a design-guide that we will use for ensuring future park design is as women-friendly as possible. In addition, we were involved in a small, local research project specifically focussed on Woodhouse Moor and Holbeck Moor as part of this scheme - it identified improvement works that would make the sites feel safer. £10k funding has been allocated to each site and the improvement works (which focus on replacing damaged, old infrastructure such as benches, signs and bins that make the parks look uncared for) are in progress.
- 3.19 Culture priority - *Providing exciting, diverse, interesting and enjoyable green spaces that reflect the history and culture of their local communities.*
- 3.20 We have some very exciting plans in progress to improve the cultural offer of the city by developing the visitor attractions at key parks.
- 3.21 An indoor 'play-barn' is currently being constructed at Temple Newsam Home Farm.
- 3.22 New family visitor facilities based at Temple Newsam golf are awaiting planning permission – these include cycle trails, a 'Learn to Ride' area, a new playground and a new café.
- 3.23 A new flagship play area is planned at Lotherton (subject to Planning permission).
- 3.24 Plans for a natural history-themed indoor play area at Tropical World are being developed.



Indicative plan of *Learn to Ride a Bike* area proposed for Temple Newsam (near golf clubhouse).

- 3.25 Over 800 events have taken place at our parks this year including funfairs, community galas, sponsored walks and rock concerts. Significant events included Live at Leeds and Let's Rock music festivals at Temple Newsam, the Black Music Concert and West Indian Carnival based at Potternewton park and the popular, council-run, Halloween and Christmas events at Lotherton.
- 3.26 Plans are also in place for parks to host many events this year as part of Leeds, City of Culture 2023.



Lotherton Christmas Experience

- 3.27 Child Friendly priority - *Providing green spaces that children and teenagers love to visit so that they can gain the health, wellbeing and educational benefits of spending time in them.*
- 3.28 £530k S106 was approved for investment in playgrounds at 11 sites in 2022.
- 3.29 An independent audit of play facilities in parks is currently being undertaken - this will enable us to prioritise resources for maximum benefit going forward.



New play facilities at Pudsey Park funded by S106, installed September 2022

- 3.30 Working with Communities priority - *Having a positive, open, helpful and collaborative approach to delivering the Parks and Countryside Service.*
- 3.31 Bereavement services achieved the gold standard for cremations and the silver standard for burials in the Charter for the Bereaved (which sets standards of excellence for the industry) in 2022.
- 3.32 The Parks and Countryside Service currently works with approximately 94 *Friends* groups, 40 *In Bloom* Groups, 650 Sports clubs and 58 self-managed allotment sites to care for and improve green spaces across the city.
- 3.33 Volunteers have spent over 2,000 days undertaking a range of tasks (from litter picking to tree planting) at our sites.
- 3.34 Charity partners *Love Leeds Parks* have, with the ongoing support of the Parks and Countryside Service, secured funding for community engagement (including public consultation, volunteering opportunities, developing park plans 'on a page' and events) at 6 community parks over the next 3 years – they plan to start at Burley and Harehills parks in 2023.



Volunteers planting trees at the former South Leeds Golf Course, Dec 2022.

- 3.35 Financial Sustainability priority - *Ensuring that quality green space is available for the long term.*
- 3.36 External funding such as S106 continues to be used for parks and green space improvements (such as new play facilities, benches, re-surfacing paths) alongside smaller pots of external funding like WBI and Veolia. In 2022 £1.3 million of S106 funding was allocated for spending in local parks and green spaces. In addition, a bid to the Town's Fund for a range of work in Morley resulted in £3 million being secured for improvements to parks in the area. Unsuccessful bids were also made to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for £16 million for investment in 8 community parks. The work done to create Plans on a Page for community parks in the Morley Town and LUF bids suggested it would cost on average £1.3 million per park to deliver them (with significantly less investment required for parks passing LQP than those failing) – all plans will be costed so it will be clear how much it will cost to deliver them for each park.
- 3.37 Our medium-term attraction development plan, which is in the process of being delivered, sets out our approach for increasing income through our visitor attractions including indoor play at Home Farm and Tropical World, new playgrounds at Lotherton and the Arium and a new café at Temple Newsam
- 3.38 Health and Wellbeing priority - *Providing and promoting a wide range of opportunities for people to get the health benefits of spending time in green spaces*
- 3.39 A number of sports facilities at our sites have been developed or improved through a variety of partnership schemes in 2022. Those that have received significant investment through external funding (e.g. from Sport England and the

Football Foundation) include a new multi-use games area at Street Lane Recreation Ground in Gildersome, a new pump track at The Rein in Seacroft and football pitch improvements at Queens park, Pudsey and King George Playing Fields, Horsforth.



New Multi-Use Games Area, developed with the Parish Council, at Street Lane Rec, Gildersome.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Parks and Green Spaces strategy was published in February 2022 and officially started being implemented from 1 March 2022.
- 4.2 This report, covering the period March – December 2022, demonstrates how the Parks and Countryside Service have been implementing the actions in the strategy, focussing on the priorities set out in it and working towards achieving the vision of providing the best parks in the UK.

#### **5. Appendices**

- 5.1 Appendix 1 - Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2022 - 2032
- 5.2 Appendix 2 - Progress update for each action in the strategy.