



Report of Director of Communities and Environment

Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Date: 12th September 2019

Subject: Consultation on Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy to 2030

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|--|---|
| Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Has consultation been carried out? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Will the decision be open for call-in? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary

1. Main issues

- Leeds City Council's current Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is due for renewal in 2020.
- This report outlines plans for a public consultation on developing the next strategy (a plan for how the Parks and Countryside Service will manage public green space in Leeds) to 2030.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The Best Council Plan will be integral to the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, with common themes including; Safe, Strong Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Child Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds, Culture, Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Infrastructure.

3. Resource Implications

- The resource implications for the consultation process and production of the strategy include staff time, venue hire for consultation events and design time for publicity materials and related documents, which will be met within existing revenue budgets.

Recommendations

It is requested that Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Review, and provide feedback on, the 'Towards a Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2020 – 2030' document, including the proposed consultation questions and emerging themes described in there.
- b) Review the consultation plan and methodology outlined below (in 3.2) so that the consultation on the future of public parks and green spaces can commence, and the strategy can be completed by end 2020.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals for a public consultation on developing a Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (a plan for how the Parks and Countryside Service will manage public green space in Leeds) for the period 2020 to 2030.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The current Parks and Green Spaces Strategy for Leeds (see Appendix 1) was adopted by the council's executive board and published in 2009 for the time period to 2020. It was based around the following themes:
 - Places for people: *To engage the community in promoting parks and green spaces as accessible places for everyone to experience and enjoy*
 - Quality places: *To provide good quality parks and green spaces that are well managed and provide a range of attractive facilities*
 - Sustaining the green realm: *To plan for the development of new, and to protect existing parks and green spaces that will offer lasting social, cultural and environmental benefits for the people of Leeds*
 - Creating a healthier city: *To promote parks and green spaces as places to improve health and well-being and prevent disease through exercise, relaxation, and contemplation*
 - An enabler for regeneration: *To promote liveability and the economic benefits of quality parks and green space provision as an integral part of major regeneration*
- 2.2 The key aims of the strategy, as set out in the accompanying executive board report (in 2009), were as follows:
 - For all community parks to meet the Green Flag standard for field based assessment
 - To develop an investment strategy
 - To establish a parks and green spaces forum
 - To develop a city centre park
- 2.3 National research undertaken by HLF in 2014 and 2016 showed a link between councils with parks and green spaces strategies and local parks being in a good and improving condition. As a result, they recommend that all councils have such a strategy in place.
- 2.4 Given that the current strategy is due for renewal, and there is evidence of the benefits of having a strategy, it is proposed that the development of a new strategy

for the management Leeds parks and green spaces over the next 10 years is begun.

3. Main issues

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This report is accompanied by a public consultation document entitled '*Towards a Leeds Parks and Green Strategy 2020 – 2030*' (see Appendix 2).

3.1.2 The purpose of the '*Towards a...*' document is the development of a vision for the future of Leeds City Council owned and managed public parks and green spaces beyond 2020, and a strategy for how best to deliver that vision over the next 10 years.

3.1.3 The document has been produced by Leeds City Council's Parks and Countryside service (the lead agency for the management of public parks and green space in the city).

3.1.4 The strategy needs to reflect the views of residents and visitors to Leeds, so that the council can ensure it provides a service that meets the needs of all our communities, now and in the future. The consultation process outlined below, and described in the accompanying '*Towards a...*' document, will facilitate that.

3.1.5 The aim of this report is to get feedback on the proposed public consultation process, and on the emerging themes that have been identified as an initial discussion point for use in the consultation process.

3.2 Consultation

3.2.1 Approach to consultation

3.2.2 Both the University of Leeds and the Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum have offered to assist the council in undertaking the consultation for the strategy:

- University of Leeds have been partners with the Parks and Countryside Service for 4 years, undertaking a range of research projects into parks, including their past, present and future. They are national leaders in park research and have secured funding to run a large-scale public event at the City Museum as part of the national Festival of Social Science in November. The event is aimed at educating and inspiring people about parks in Leeds and consulting them on the future of their parks – a perfect opportunity to collate public opinion on local parks for the strategy.
- Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum is a voluntary, community network of organisations and individuals dedicated to protecting, promoting and enhancing public green spaces in Leeds. They have over 90 members from organisations such as *Friends* and *In Bloom* groups, Resident's Associations and local environmental charities. Members are knowledgeable, experienced and enthusiastic about public green space, and the committee, are keen to support the development of the new strategy.

3.2.3 The consultation process will involve a 3-pronged approach involving using the results of the 2016 residents survey, an online questionnaire and face to face consultation at public and stakeholder events, meetings, conferences and workshops.

- Residents' Survey: In 2016 the University of Leeds, in partnership with the Parks and Countryside Service, undertook a large-scale survey of Leeds residents' use of, and attitudes to, parks in the city. The results of this survey, which received nearly 6,500 responses, will feed into the strategy.
- Consultation events: The proposed consultation process going forward will involve a range of opportunities for the general public and stakeholders to have a say in the future of public parks and green spaces at events, public meetings and workshops around the city.
- Online questionnaire: People who would like to have a say in the strategy, but who are unable to attend one of the face to face events, will be able to respond to the questions online.

3.2.4 Questions

3.2.5 Through the consultation process, members of the public and stakeholders will be asked a short series of questions enabling them to express their opinions on public parks and green spaces in Leeds in general, along with an opportunity to comment on some key themes identified (which are listed below). The proposed questions are provided in the '*Towards a...*' document accompanying this report.

3.2.6 Draft consultation methodology and timeline

3.2.7 It is proposed that consultation with both the general public and key stakeholders takes place between September 2019 and February 2020.

3.2.8 Key stakeholders include community committees and ward members, volunteer groups like 'Friends of', Parks and Countryside staff, other Leeds City Council services like Active Leeds and Children's, and partner organisations (like Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum, RSPB, Middleton Bike Hub and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust).

3.2.9 The proposed timeline for the development of the strategy is set out below:

| Action | Date |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Report to Scrutiny | 12 September 2019 |
| Consult Parks and Countryside Management Team | 13 September 2019 |
| Consult Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum committee | 16 September 2019 |
| Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum members consultation event | 17 October 2019 |
| Parks and Countryside Staff Briefings | October 2019 |
| Large-scale public consultation event at City Museum with University of Leeds | 9 November 2019 |
| Consulting key internal stakeholders including Environment Subcommittee and other LCC services like Active Lifestyles, Visit Leeds, Public Health, Environmental Action. | November 2019 - February 2020 |
| Consulting key external stakeholders such as partners Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Middleton Bike Hub, Groundwork, Gotts Park Golf CIC. | November 2019 - February 2020 |

| Action | Date |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Public consultation outreach to community committees and other community organisations to ensure a wide range of audiences are reached including children and young people, older people, people with disabilities, people from ethnic minority backgrounds etc. | November 2019 - February 2020 |
| Collating responses and pulling out key themes/patterns/representative comments from consultation | September 2019 - April 2020 |
| Composing first draft of strategy document Update report to Scrutiny | July - September 2020 |
| Consultation on draft strategy with key stakeholders - Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum, Ward Members and relevant Leeds City Council staff. | Oct-20 |
| Strategy goes to Leeds City Council, Executive Board for approval | Dec-20 |
| Publication of final strategy document | Dec-20 |

3.3 Emerging themes

3.3.1 As outlined in the attached document, based on Leeds City Council's experience of delivering Parks and Countryside services and the last strategy alongside communities, and our understanding of local and national research and policy around public green space, it is proposed that the strategy for 2020 – 2030 focuses on the following themes:

- Community
- Quality
- Environment
- Health and wellbeing
- Equality of opportunity
- Sustainability
- Culture

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 This report outlines proposals for a public consultation on the future of Leeds Parks and Green Spaces in autumn-winter 2019 – 20. In addition to taking into account the comments of the 6,400 people who responded to the 2016 residents' survey, the consultation process aims to engage at least 500 people in the next, more detailed and focussed stages of the consultation process.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 Equality and diversity, cohesion and integration will be key to the consultation process which aims to engage a significant number of representatives from all the communities of Leeds. As well as publicising the consultation as widely as possible, and listening to all responses, this will involve undertaking outreach to groups that can be harder to reach by attending meetings such as Leeds Older People's Forum, Leeds Disability Hub and the Leeds Youth Council.
- 4.2.2 Furthermore, in the consultation document, it is proposed that Equality of Opportunity is one of 7 key themes for the strategy to focus on, so that due consideration is given to the service provided for all the diverse communities of Leeds over the next 10 years.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The Best Council Plan will feed in to the development of the Parks and Green Spaces strategy with common themes including; Safe, Strong Communities, Health and Wellbeing, Child Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds, Culture, Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Infrastructure – the key links are explained alongside the themes in the '*Towards a...*' document. In terms of specific outcomes identified in the Best Council Plan, the strategy should contribute to enabling everyone in Leeds to; 'Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives' and 'Enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts'.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 Parks and green spaces currently contribute, in a range of ways, to mitigating the potential impacts of climate change from carbon storage to flood alleviation as well as providing habitats for wildlife. There is opportunity, as part of a strategy going forward, to intensify action by planting more trees and woodlands, developing alternative approaches to managing grassland and generally adopting a more environmentally sustainable approach to managing parks and green spaces. As outlined in the '*Towards a...*' document, it is proposed that the environment, including combatting the 'Climate Emergency,' is a key priority going forward.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 Resource implications of the consultation process and production of the strategy include staff time, venue hire for consultation events and design time for publicity materials and the final strategy document. Costs will be incurred in the financial year 2019-20 and 2020-21 and will be met within existing revenue budgets.
- 4.4.2 The consultation process will help identify peoples' perceptions of the city's parks and green spaces and ensure that Leeds City Council is providing a service that local residents and visitors use and value.
- 4.4.3 Longer term, having a strategy for local parks and green spaces should improve value for money by helping identify priorities and the best way to allocate resources to public green space in Leeds going forward.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 Data protection law will be a consideration when collating responses to the consultation. In all cases personal data will only be used for the purposes it was gathered for, and will be kept secure and destroyed when no longer required.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The risks of undertaking this consultation process overall are minimal as any problems or issues that are likely to arise (such as the proposed themes not being in line with public opinion) will be taken into consideration as part of the consultation and fed into the final strategy.
- 4.6.2 There is a risk of a data protection breach which will be managed by following data protection law.
- 4.6.3 The timescales for delivery of the next strategy for the end of 2020 are fairly tight but if we stick to the schedule provided above, should be manageable.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 To ensure Leeds is the 'Best City for Parks and Green Spaces', it is important that a strategy is developed as part of a coherent and focussed approach to green space management. This document, and the accompanying 'Towards a Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2020 – 2030,' outline the stages of development for a strategy to 2030, including a consultation plan, timescales and emerging themes for people to comment on.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is requested that Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):
- Review, and provide feedback on, the 'Towards a Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2020 – 2030' document, including the consultation questions and the emerging themes listed above (in 3.3).
 - Review the consultation plan and methodology outlined above (in 3.2) so that the consultation on the future of public parks and green spaces can commence, and the strategy can be completed by end 2020.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 'Towards a Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, 2020 – 2030' is provided with this report (see Appendix 2).
- 7.2 The current Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (to 2020) is also provided (see Appendix 1).

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.