

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT  
CABINET MEMBER**

**CREATION OF A PARKS STRATEGY FOR NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member of work undertaken to develop a parks strategy.
- 1.2 To outline the benefits of establishing Friends Groups for parks, particularly in relation to maximising park funding streams.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 North Lincolnshire parks are a key asset to the area. They contribute to the life of communities in countless ways. They offer places to relax, take a break from the pace of daily life or pass through on the way to school, work, shops etc. They are regularly used by children, parents and families to play together, by people exercising, improving their health and wellbeing and to take part in sport or simply a place to meet friends. They are the heart of a thriving, sustainable and attractive area.
- 2.2 The council and its predecessors have recognized the importance of our parks and green spaces since the beginning of the growth in the steel industry in the area. To continue with this investment the council intends to develop a North Lincolnshire Parks Strategy setting out the vision for the area over the period from 2017 to 2026.
- 2.3 North Lincolnshire's parks come in all shapes and sizes from the green flag award winning Kingsway Gardens, Scunthorpe's highly used Central Park to smaller local neighbourhood parks. There are also many parks that are looked after by Towns and Parish Councils in addition to those maintained by North Lincolnshire Council.
- 2.4 Nationally it is evident that more people are using parks and indeed supporting them through initiatives such as Friends Groups. These groups allow community engagement, a strategic overview and also attract external investment. North Lincolnshire's most recent parks friends group was established in January 2016 in support of Baysgarth Park, in Barton.
- 2.5 The Baysgarth group is now in the process of creating a five year plan to develop the park and bidding for funds to enhance the park in future years. The group is made up of people from other groups in Barton, including members of the town council, local councillors, civic society,

living memorial trust, heritage society, bowls club, and interested members of the public. They meet on a monthly basis.

- 2.6 The council's role in supporting Friends Groups is to provide advice and guidance until groups are ready to proceed on their own to attract investment using the five year plan created together to guide them. The council also has a role in tailoring its own maintenance and investment programs for each park to match any Friends Group plans. It is hoped the success of creating Friends Group, such as the one at Baysgarth can be replicated across the area as they could form a key element of any future Parks Strategy.
- 2.7 The intention is for Baysgarth Park to be entered into the Green Flag national parks awards in January 2017 alongside Central Park in Scunthorpe. North Lincolnshire already has two Green Flag Parks in Kingsway Gardens and Woodlands Memorial Park and Crematorium, both located in Scunthorpe. It should be noted that although award winning parks generate good publicity and encourage more park users they also require enhanced maintenance and therefore incur additional costs to maintain their Green Flag standards.
- 2.8 An overarching parks strategy is required to set out our aims, objectives and goals for all parks across North Lincolnshire. This will help direct the work of the Highways and Neighbourhoods Parks Service who maintain them. As such the new needs to provide a clear vision. As a starting point it is suggested that parks should be "areas of high quality, accessible, and welcoming open spaces that are safe, well used and valued by the local community". They should also meet the needs of the current generation of users as well as planning to meet the needs of future generations".
- 2.9 The strategy will be informed and refined by consultation, on-going research and data collection and analysis. Consultation will involve both individuals and other key stake holders. The strength of any strategy depends upon the outcomes of consultation on the journey towards producing a final document.
- 2.10 The strategy is important as parks and green spaces continue to make a major contribution to the council's priorities and provide economic opportunities, environmental, health, recreational and social benefits for residents. They make a regular and important contribution to quality of life by providing free, accessible, high quality provision at a local level. They also contribute to vibrant neighbourhoods which will attract people to want to live, work, visit and invest in North Lincolnshire.
- 2.11 North Lincolnshire is in a period of growth with an expanding population, improvements to transport networks and residential growth with developments like Lincolnshire Lakes. We are entering into a new era of devolved local governance arrangements, in return for the devolution of significant additional functions and fiscal responsibility by the Government. The network of parks in the area will support the response to some of the challenges and opportunities posed by this period of change.

- 2.12 Provision of access to public parks is recognised as a key contributor to wellbeing and quality of life which includes parks being central to;
- The character of the built environment
  - Social functions, especially health, recreation and play, social inclusion and community development
  - Environmental quality, economic vitality and sustainability.
- 2.13 However nationally councils are facing financial constraints, and finding the investment necessary is not always easy. As such moving towards a parks strategy that engages with communities through parks groups can help with identifying the additional funding all park need as they continue to develop to support our communities and meet future expectations.
- 2.14 The council adopted a Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) Compliant Open Space Strategy in 2011 to inform the preparation of policies in the Local Development Framework and provide evidence for considering planning applications for developments affecting open space, outdoor sport and recreational facilities.
- 2.15 The work involved in developing the policy included a study into local needs and provision and how to make the most effective use of available resources both now and in the future. The focus was;
- To identify local needs
  - To audit and digitally map local provision
  - To set local provision standards based on findings identified in the PPG17 assessment for quality, quantity and accessibility
  - To apply the provision targets
- 2.16 The study set standards for differing types of open space, outdoor sports and recreational facilities in the area. The standards were set using baseline data collated from the quantity and quality auditing and the accessibility evidence of consultation with stakeholders, user groups and local residents.
- 2.17 The standards that were established as the minimum for the future and are outlined below:

	Quantity	Quality	Accessibility
Parks and Gardens	<u>Standard</u> To ensure provision does not fall below the current 1.75 ha per 1,000 population	<u>Standard</u> To strive for all sites to be average to good quality (46% or above)  To achieve and maintain Green Flag status in 2 parks across the district	<u>Standard</u> To provide access to parks and gardens for all households in the district to be within 800m or 10 minutes travel time.

- 2.18 The quantity standard will not have changed much since 2011, as North Lincolnshire has not removed any parks from its asset register. An audit at the time found that 85% of homes meet the accessibility standard. It is important to note that of the remaining 15% there will be opportunities to access some form of open space, other than a park or garden. The quality standard was only a snapshot in time, from consultation with stakeholders, and would need updating as part of the parks strategy.
- 2.19 The council maintains a comprehensive inventory of its existing parks assets. Early indications from audits suggest that there is a lot of parks equipment that is coming towards the end of its asset life and requiring replacement over the next few years. To ensure any strategy is comprehensive we must also access information from towns and parish councils and social housing providers to help provide an overall assessment of parks and open spaces in North Lincolnshire.
- 2.20 Following this review it is intended to establish a five year programme of works covering all parks. This programme would include an assessment against funding sources available, which in turn would identify where it might prove beneficial to establish additional Parks Groups.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member notes the on-going position in relation to developing a Parks Strategy for North Lincolnshire and supports continuing work to develop the strategy further.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Developing a Parks Strategy will help to ensure the ongoing provision of high quality parks and open spaces for the benefit of all North Lincolnshire residents and visitors to the area.

### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

#### **5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1 There are 24 parks maintained in the Scunthorpe area by a protected budget of approximately £300,000 from the Scunthorpe Special Expenses (SSE). This budget is for maintenance and capital investment in new play equipment.
- 5.1.2 The council provides 41 parks in total across North Lincolnshire. It is anticipated that further investment above current funding will be required to deliver the five year programme of work in relation to these parks.
- 5.1.3 A one off £100,000 capital budget was created by the council in 16/17 for the development of Almond Grove, Brigg (also known as Donkey Park). The council also supports town and parish

councils via the community grant programme towards upgrading town and parish parks.

5.2 There are no other resource implications to consider.

## 6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 Statutory

6.1.1 None.

6.1.2 An integrated impact assessment will be created for the final parks strategy.

6.2 Environmental

6.2.1 Environmental issues will be taken into account for the creation of a parks strategy.

6.3 There are no other implications to consider.

## 7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Comprehensive consultation was carried out in developing the PPG17 Compliant Open space strategy that will help shape the parks strategy. Additional consultation may be required to update aspects of previous consultation.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the development of a parks strategy and the benefits that can be achieved through the creation of "Friends of" groups for other parks in North Lincolnshire.

8.2 That the Cabinet Member receives a follow up report when the data has been analysed and any funding gaps identified.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

Civic Centre  
Ashby Road  
Scunthorpe  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB

Author: Mike Simpson/Ken Wardman/ Chris Matthews

Date: 19 September 2016

### **Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Assessments of all parks held at Billet Lane Offices.  
PPG17 Compliant Open Space Study, March 2011