

WAMP

14 SEPTEMBER 2009

Subject:	Open Space Strategy for the Canterbury District 2009-14
Director/Head of Service:	Head of Environment and Street Scene
Decision Issues:	These matters are within the authority of the Council
Decision type:	Key
	Date entered on forward decision list 15 December 2008
Classification:	This report is open to the public.
CCC Ward(s):	All
Summary:	<i>This report presents the council's second open space strategy to members for consultation.</i>
Next stage in process	Executive 15 October 2009 Full Council 26 November 2009

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Introduction

The council's original Open Space Strategy for the Canterbury District was published in 2004 and was one of the first to be developed in Kent. It has made a tangible difference to open space provision in the district including:

- The adoption and implementation of Supplementary Planning Guidance has levered in approximately £350,000 to develop open space and play throughout the district. (April 2009)
- A successful Big Lottery Fund bid for £281,000 for various play initiatives.
- Helped to develop a Play Strategy including a priority list for developing and upgrading playgrounds that has led to the upgrading of 5 playgrounds.
- Actively engaged local communities in the management of open space: i.e. Friends of Prospect Field in Whitstable.
- Set up a youth website to promote appropriate play and sports opportunities to young people

This second strategy is a revision of the 2004 strategy and again is based upon PPG 17 guidance. It retains many of the key principles and long-term ambitions of the original version and has been brought up to date with new data and consultation with

stakeholders, children, young people and parents. It includes a new action plan for the next five years.

The second strategy incorporates the Playing Pitch Strategy issues as an element of the strategy.

The strategy has been developed via a cross department working group engaging with a range of partners and agencies. It has included a comprehensive programme of consultation with the community; which included a stakeholder event, consultation with targeted groups and general online consultation.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with a number of organisations such as Kent Wildlife Trust, The Blean Woodland Initiative and Kent Police and can be effectively delivered with their support.

2. **Detail**

The Open Space Strategy for the Canterbury District 2009 – 2014 is split into four parts: the strategy, action plan, appendices plus supporting maps and plans. All four parts are available online at www.canterbury.gov.uk/openspacestrategy.

The strategic vision, policy aims and objectives for the strategy evolved from the 2004 strategy and the stakeholder event. The strategic vision is

“ To develop an interconnected network of diverse, high quality open spaces which meet the needs of local people and make a significant contribution to raising the quality of life for all residents and visitors to the Canterbury district”

The strategic policy aim is to

“Aspire to protect and enhance the existing quality of our open space and promote its usage”

The strategic objectives are linked to the policy aims:

Aspire for quality policy objectives

- 1 Provide high quality open space.
- 2 Provide quality open space fit for purpose.
- 3 Maintain safe and accessible open space.

Protect policy objectives

- 4 Protect existing open space through planning policy.
- 5 Protect existing open space through general policy and strategic links.

Enhance policy objectives

- 6 Seek to enhance open space via use of the priority lists.
- 7 Seek to develop partnerships to maximise opportunities to fill the gaps in provision and enhance open space.

Promote policy objectives

- 8 Actively promote appropriate usage of open space
- 9 Actively involve communities in decision making, developing and managing open space locally.
- 10 Recognise and reward community led projects.

These ten specific objectives inform the action plans.

A number of service areas from across the council are involved in the delivery of the action plans, so its development and implementation is overseen by a cross-service officer working group including community development, environment and street scene, housing, planning and the public safety unit.

This group will liaise with partners, update the action plans quarterly on line and report to the appropriate committee. An annual open space conference will be an opportunity for further community involvement.

In the interests of best value, the council also needs to ensure that resources are used effectively, and high demand for open space provision coupled with limited budgets means that local need must be prioritised. Public expectation about what can be achieved needs to be managed and the council's intentions need to be clearly expressed.

Therefore priority lists have been developed for parks and gardens, green corridors, amenity open space, fixed play areas, semi natural open space and outdoor sports pitches.

This should assist with focusing funding, staff resources, supporting community groups and bidding for external funding

There is a strong correlation with the Play Strategy regarding fixed play area.

3. Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents

Corporate Plan

Community Development Strategy

Canterbury District Youth Strategy

Cultural Strategy

This strategy has been reviewed in parallel with the play strategy to ensure the two are aligned

4. Consultation planned or undertaken

Original consultation carried out for the 2004 strategy has been retained, tested and updated with additional consultation in 2008 and 2009.

The consultation has included:

- stakeholder consultation event October 2008, where key partners and stakeholders were consulted on the play, open space and allotment strategies strategic vision aims and objectives.
- consultation with over 600 children and young people through schools
- consultation with families of children with disabilities
- online consultation through the council's website and advertised through District Life with 960 responses
- consultation with agencies and partners
- consultation with Community panel

Input from the police has been welcomed, especially on community safety and anti-social behaviour elements of the strategy.

The final consultation stage is on the strategy document itself, prior to adoption. This stage includes this report, hard copies in divisional offices for public comment, public online consultation and attending various meetings such as Housing Tenants Group and Active Canterbury.

As the strategy is delivered ongoing consultation will be carried out with children, families and local communities as new open space provision is developed – this is integral to the successful implementation of the strategy.

5. **Options available with reasons for suitability**

- a) Do not recommend the strategy to the Executive
- b) Recommend the strategy to the Executive with or without amendments

The failure to recommend the strategy will undermine much of the ongoing work and impact on potential community or partnership projects

Recommending the strategy will give direction, support the ongoing work and help develop partnerships and community projects.

6. **Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment**

Adoption of the strategy by the Council will help ensure that the value of open space is recognised, maintain a cross-service focus on this key element of council work, and help improve outcomes for the people in the district.

7. **Implications**

- (a) The strategy will be delivered within existing budgets –with opportunities for external funding being maximised where possible.
- (b) Legal Implications - none

Other implications

- (c) Staffing/resource – the strategy will be delivered within existing staffing arrangements, unless external funding is secured to deliver additional services.
- (d) Environmental/Sustainability – ensure open space areas are designed with sustainability issues to the fore and develop green links with existing open space.

- (e) Planning/Building Regulations – embed open space design at the start of the planning process for large developments.
- (f) Human Rights issues – the strategy responds positively to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes their right to play
- (g) Crime and Disorder – the strategy contributes to the reduction of crime and fear of crime, through designing out crime in the design of open space / play spaces, tackling perceptions about young people and providing diversionary activity.
- (h) Biodiversity – the strategy has an increased focus on biodiversity as an integral part of designing open space areas in new developments to ensure they can be part of the green infrastructure.
- (i) Safeguarding Children – the strategy impacts positively on children and young people’s lives. The council’s duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (to ensure their safety, take their well being into account and respond to their views) is discharged through the consultation, participation and risk assessments involved in the delivery of the strategy.

8. Conclusions

The revision of the Open Space Strategy for the Canterbury District 2009 – 2014 has engaged widely with the community and partners. It has involved research and prepared according to best practice and national guidance. It includes an action plan and sets out a performance management framework to oversee their delivery.

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