

**Decision Maker:** ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday 22 November 2022

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** OPEN SPACES STRATEGY: YEAR 1 UPDATE

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**Chief Officer:** Colin Brand, Director of Environment and Public Protection

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for decision/report and options

1.1 This report provides an update on the delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy following its adoption in November 2022.

1.2 This report recommends the re-programming of some of the activities identified in the strategy's action plan and identifies three areas that will be prioritised for delivery in Year 2.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **The Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress made on the Open Space Strategy during its first year of implementation.**

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Open Space Strategy has been designed to provide specific benefits to vulnerable adults and children, including actions to use open spaces to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as inclusive playground equipment and environmental education.
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## Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: Open Space Strategy 2021-2031
  2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority:
    - (3) For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
    - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
    - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks Management and Greenspace
  4. Total current budget for this head: £6.214m
  5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budgets 2022/23
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## Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 3
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Unknown
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory – Government Guidance
  2. Call-in: N/A
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## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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## Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
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## Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: The Open Space Strategy supports the ambitions of the Council's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan.
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): The Open Space portfolio covers a range of sites and habitats across all wards and therefore affects all those who live, work and visit the borough.
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### 3. COMMENTARY

3.1 Following scrutiny from the Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021, the then Portfolio Holder for Environment agreed to the adoption of the Open Space Strategy 2021-2031 (**ES20132**).

3.2 The Strategy sets out the council's vision for 'an open space portfolio that promotes the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the borough, allowing our residents, communities and wildlife to thrive'. To enable to delivery of this vision, the strategy agreed five Strategic Objectives (SOs):

SO1	Quality and accessibility	To improve the quality and accessibility of Bromley's open spaces
SO2	Natural, cultural and historical assets	To enhance Bromley's diverse natural habitats, protect its cultural and historical assets and to increase public understanding of these sites.
SO3	Health, wellbeing and community	To manage Bromley's open spaces for improved health and wellbeing
SO4	Local economy	To support local economy through attractive open spaces in town centres and the provision for sustainable community events
SO5	Financially viable open space portfolio	To ensure that Bromley's open spaces are financially sustainable by identifying new income and commercial opportunities that allow sensitive enhancement and modernisation of the portfolio.

3.3 Under each Strategic Objective, there are identified Action Points, with associated timescales and milestones. This report provides an update against each of the action points with a target date for delivery before December 2022, with progress identified in **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Overall, there have been some key achievements following the adoption of the Open Space Strategy; these are highlighted in the table below:

SO1	Open Space Management Plans	Open Space Management Plans have been reviewed for the first tranche of open spaces. Eight <sup>1</sup> sites achieved a Green Flag in 2022 with the support of the local Friends groups.
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<sup>1</sup> Biggin Hill Recreation Ground, Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Commons, Chislehurst Recreation Ground, Darrick & Newstead Woods, Hayes Common, Keston Common, Queens Gardens and South Hill Wood.

SO2	Change in Management Regimes	A Biodiversity Strategy has been adopted which identifies potential alternative management regimes to improve biodiversity in open spaces, including a trial of naturalised grasslands. Additionally, a member-led working group has been established to review proposals for a Nature Friendly Verges pilot in the borough with recommendations made elsewhere on this agenda.
	Natural Regeneration of Open Spaces	A major heathland restoration project is currently being scoped for Hayes Common and Keston Common.
	Woodlands Establishment	Three sites <sup>2</sup> have been identified with potential for woodland establishment, with grant funding secured from the Forestry Commission to do detailed design work and consultation as part of the next stage of feasibility; this is required to support applications for funding to deliver new woodlands.
	Scadbury Park	Emergency repair works to the Moated Manor at Scadbury Park have now been completed.
	Other Key Borough Locations	Fundraising has secured funds to deliver a restoration project for the Bowie Bandstand. The works have been specified by an appointed conservation architect lead and tendering activity has commenced to appoint a specialist contractor to undertake the works.
	Bromley Environmental Education Programme	The number of educational visits to the BEECHE centre has exceeded the target, and some activities have been delivered at Crystal Palace Park. idverde colleagues are now working on a new outreach offer to take education activities to open spaces adjacent to schools to improve the accessibility of the service.

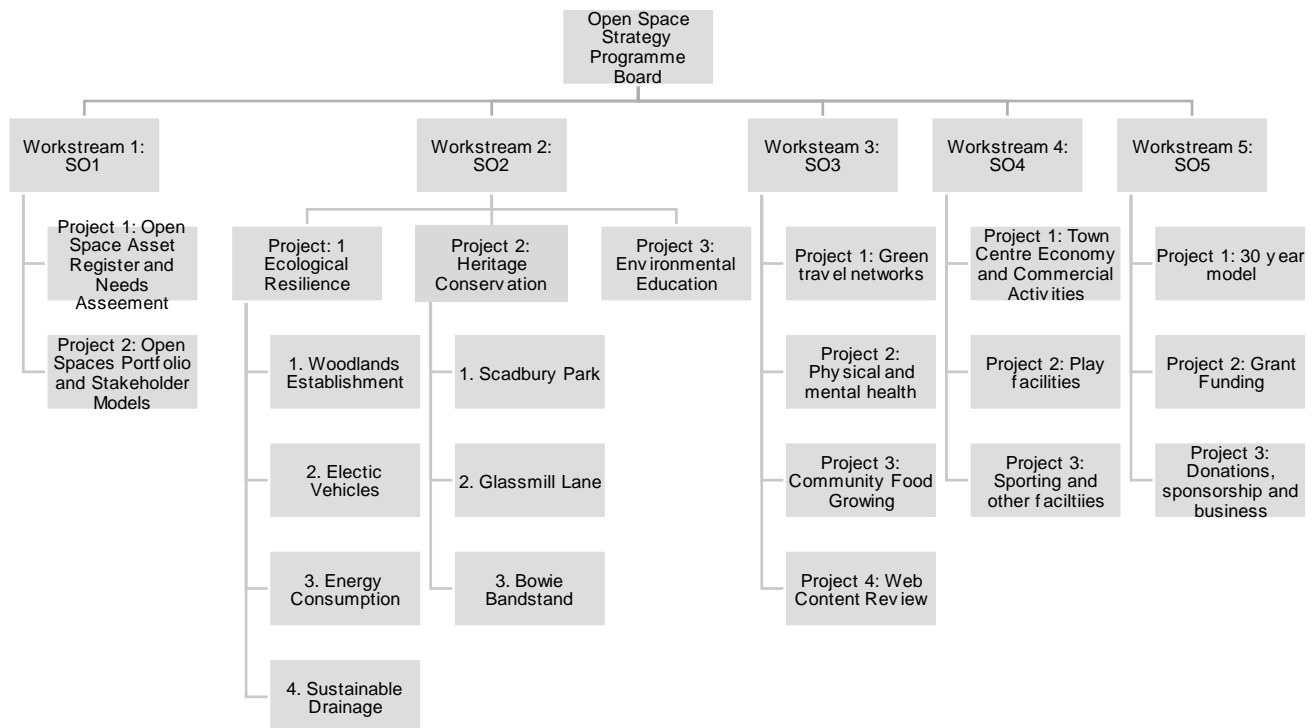
<sup>2</sup> Edgebury Grazing Land, Kemnal Road, World's End Lane.

SO3	Review of web content	The council's web pages have been reviewed and recommendations have been submitted to the council's web team for review and action.  Changes recommended include: a new web page structure to make information more accessible, better information on park amenities and links to local groups including Park Friends groups.
SO4	Playground facilities	Enhanced play facilities have been delivered at Kings Meadow Playground, which is now fully open to the public.
	Grassroots sports facilities	The improvement works to Farnborough Recreation Ground Cricket Square and Outfield are now complete, with the pitch now in active use by the tenant club.
SO5	Open space grant funded programmes	The BMX Pump Cycle Track at Hoblingwell Recreation Ground has completed and is open to the public. Work continues to establish a community cycle club that can operate structured sessions at the site.

- 3.5 Whilst some good progress has been made on specific projects identified for delivery in year 1 of the Open Spaces Strategy, there are some areas where progress has not been made in line with the anticipated milestones, with 32% of Action Points set for delivery in year 1 with a red RAG status. This is primarily because of the realignment of the Environment division and the unavoidable delay recruiting the lead officer.
- 3.6 It is therefore proposed that some of the action points are reprogrammed to make them achievable considering the delay to actions not completed in the first year of the strategy's implementation. The suggested dates for re-programming are also identified in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7 There are three key challenges that need to be addressed as a priority to unlock the delivery of the remaining actions within the strategy:
1. **Understanding the open space portfolio** – identifying requirements in terms of investment and enhancement and prioritising these against the strategy.
  2. **Maximising the resources we have** - reviewing governance arrangements for management and stakeholders to get the most out of our open spaces
  3. **Having a plan for funding the delivery of the strategy** – developing the model for long-term funding, including a fundraising plan for the lifetime of the strategy that supports delivery of the strategic objectives and associated action points. This should include reference to grant funding, donations, sponsorship and opportunities to generate income through sensitive commercial uses.
- 3.8 Therefore, it is recommended that officers prioritise the following actions for delivery in year 2:

SO1	Audit of open spaces	The audit will support decision making on a number of related actions, particularly in relation to prioritisation and resource allocation.
	Review of governance arrangements and structures for Open Space Stakeholders	To review the governance and organisational structures for Delegated Sports Managers, Friends Groups, partners and volunteers to ensure that the council, idverde and relevant stakeholders communicate and work together for the benefit of open spaces and the communities they serve.
SO5	Financial sustainability and modernisation	To review the long term and project specific funding opportunities and to use this, in conjunction with the audit of open spaces, to determine resource allocation and what is achievable in terms of scope for Action Points, and to make recommendations about ways to improve the financial sustainability of open spaces.

3.9 To manage and monitor delivery against Action Points identified in the Strategy, a new governance structure has been established, led by the Assistant Director, Carbon Management & Greenspace, as set out in the figure below. The Programme Board includes relevant officers and members of staff from idverde who meet monthly to review progress against each of the live projects.



3.10 Officers will provide annual updates to the Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Strategy, and ward members will continue to be engaged and consulted on any ward specific Action Points at key milestones.

#### 4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 The Open Space Strategy includes Action Points which aim to ensure that those who are not traditional users of Open Space are included to promote social cohesion and equality of opportunity. This includes:

- The enhancement of Open Space for improved mental and physical health benefits, including as ways to facilitate social networking between different members of the community to combat loneliness and social isolation.
- The modernisation of the play provision within the Portfolio to include equipment that is fully inclusive and caters for a wide range of needs including those with physical disabilities and learning difficulties.
- An enhancement, promotion and expansion of the outdoor educational offering across the borough for a variety of ages, backgrounds and abilities including those with Special Educational Needs.

#### 5. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Open Space Strategy 2021-2031 supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy, Making Bromley Even Better. Whilst there are elements that support each of the council's ambitions under this strategy, it has the greatest impact on:

Ambition 3: For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.

Ambition 4: For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.

Ambition 5: To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.

5.2 The Open Space Strategy also supports the delivery of priorities identified in the council's Regeneration Strategy.

#### 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of the progress report on the Open Space Strategy. However, many of the projects and proposals will have cost implications when they are separately considered. These schemes would be subject to external grant identification and funding applications.

#### 7. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Open Space Strategy includes the following sustainability benefits:

- Carbon Reduction and Net Zero Initiatives in the everyday management of the Portfolio.
- Natural Capital Accounting Assessments.
- Managing Wellbeing and resident health using Open Spaces.

<b>Non-Applicable Headings:</b>	Personnel Implications, Ward Councillor Views, Property Implications, Procurement Implications, Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Open Space Strategy 2021 – 2031: <a href="#">Open space strategy – London Borough of Bromley</a>



	ES20132 – Open Space Strategy 2021 -2031 ES20027 - Draft Parks and Green Space Strategy 2020 – 2025.
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