



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

## **FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

OSMB

7<sup>th</sup> April 2011

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Report of the Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Task Group  
**“Review of Leicester City Council’s Green Space Strategy”**

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Report of Councillor Clair, Task Group Leader, Culture and Leisure

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Task Group’s review into Leicester City Council’s Green Space Strategy (2009-15).

### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 In Autumn 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Management endorsed the Culture and Leisure Task Group’s proposed review of the Council’s Green Space Strategy. The aim of the review was to:
- Assess the progress to date in increasing the number of Green Flag Awards in the City;
  - Determine the extent to which the Council has secured the necessary funding to support the additional Green Flag applications;
  - Consider the progress made on the design and development of District Parks as identified in the Strategy.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1. OSMB is asked to endorse the recommendations and conclusions outlined in section 4 below and to request a divisional update against these recommendations not later than September 2011.

### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

- 4.1 The Task Group makes the following **conclusions**, namely that:

- 4.1.a Given the evidence presented to the Task Group, which shows a strong correlation between Green Flag status and the satisfaction level of users, it is right for Parks Services to continue to place emphasis on the attainment of Green Flag Awards;

4.1.b In consideration of the current economic climate, the council should focus on sustaining the existing Green Flags and that the target for achieving future awards be amended in the Green Spaces Strategy, and related corporate documents, to a total of 9 by 2013;

4.1.c The economic climate has shifted so dramatically since the inception of the Green Spaces Strategy that partnership between the Council and external agencies will be integral to meeting the aspirations and objectives of that strategy.

4.2 In addition, the Task Group makes the following **recommendations**:

4.2.a That every effort be made to establish and resource a full-time post of Green Spaces Strategy Officer within the most relevant pending organisational review;

4.2.b That regular meetings of a City-wide parks forum be held six-monthly, this forum to include community groups with an interest in open spaces;

4.2.c That the Director, Environmental Services, encourage parks users and “friends of” groups to use the existing Community Meetings framework to promote their activities and apply for funding for their activities;

4.2.d That Parks Services report back to the Task Group Leader, Culture and Leisure within six months on:

- A desk-top assessment of the feasibility of forming partnerships with other organisations and/or individuals for the maintenance and improvement of the City’s green spaces (including the possibility of promoting the City centre’s architecture through high quality hard and soft landscaping);
- Progress towards the development of the six District Parks.

4.2.e That a complete audit of existing toilet provision in the City’s parks be carried out, to establish the current standard of provision and enable a planned maintenance schedule to be devised. The Task Group carried out some sample visits and found, for example, that the disabled toilets in Abbey Park require urgent refurbishment;

4.2.f That a study be undertaken to establish the feasibility of providing toilet facilities in those City parks where there are currently none.

## 5. Report

5.1 Parks and open spaces have a high public profile in Leicester and have the potential to engage residents and visitors in a positive and inclusive way. There is also evidence to suggest that the state of parks and open spaces has a direct link to the way the Council is perceived by the public. It is with this background that the Task Group decided upon this area of study.

5.2 The Task Group review was conducted across five meetings held between October 2010 and January 2011. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board endorsed the scope of the review at its meeting in September 2010, the objectives of which are set out at Annex A. The agendas and minutes of those meetings can be found at the following internet links:

<http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=620&Year=2011>

5.3 These Task Group meetings, and the information provided to them by officers, provide the bulk of the evidence for this review. Members wish to place on record their thanks to officers for their time and contribution to the review.

5.4 As part of the review Members received detailed briefings on the distribution of green spaces across the city, the workings of the Green Flag criteria and the key criteria by which Green Flag status is assessed.

5.5 It was explained to Members that development of the six District Parks, as outlined in the Green Spaces Strategy, was dependent on the allocation of designated development officers. As things stand it was felt that these plans would be achievable over a six year period. Additional resources might allow for this to happen, instead, over roughly two years. The development of these District Parks was considered by the Task Group to still be vitally important as a means of equalising the standard and accessibility of parks and green spaces across the City.

5.6 During the course of their review Members were also made aware of how the Parks service intends to consult with residents concerning the oversupply of green spaces in the City, and of the good work around making work placements available to young people.

5.7 As well as the formal Task Group meetings, views and opinions were sought from "Friends of" and user groups across the city. These responses were presented to Members and have informed the outcome of the review.

5.8 Members undertook site visits to a number of parks and investigated the state of the public toilets. Whilst the bulk of these were of good or satisfactory condition it was noted that the disabled toilets in Abbey Park were in a state of significant disrepair. These visits bring context to recommendation 4.2.e above.

## **6. Implications**

6.1 The Task Group asks the Executive to take into consideration the financial, legal and other implications when responding to the recommendations in this report.

## **7. Consultations**

7.1 As already stated, relevant user groups have been invited to share their views within the context of this review. Parks officers have been an integral part of the review and have checked this report for factual accuracy.

**8. Report Author**

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## **Annex A**

***Extract of scoping document submitted to OSMB 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2010***

### **Purpose and Objectives of Review**

The aim of this review will be to determine the extent to which the Green Space Strategy is currently being implemented, together with looking at the design and development of a comprehensive funding strategy to realise its intended aims and objectives

In addition, the Strategy aims to carry out a number of public consultations both in relation to the disposal of land for housing purposes where there is an over-supply but also in the development and implementation of forward plans for those District Parks highlighted for support in the Strategy. The review aims to look at progress to date on the design and development of 3 key areas:

- Progress to date in increasing the numbers of Green Flag Awards in the City;
- The securing of additional funding to support the additional Green Flag applications;
- The design and development of the District Plans as identified in the Strategy.