Walsall Green Space Strategy

2018 - 2022

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Summary

This document represents the third green space strategy for Walsall with previous versions adopted in 2006 and 2012. It is being written in a time of enormous and often irreversible change within local authority green space services and also at a time when over 50% of local authorities across the UK no longer have an up to date strategy[1]. Resources, skills and experience for strategic planning have largely disappeared at the same time that many services across the country are being expected to be more commercial, secure more external funding and do more with less.

Also, during the time of working on this strategy the Heritage Lottery Fund, the single biggest funder of parks restoration and redevelopment over the past 21 years, closed the Parks for People programme.

Walsall parks and green spaces have not escaped the revenue budget reductions with the service losing £1m over the last five years and around 25% of its management and development staff. As a consequence, the service has not been able to deliver the objectives set out in the previous strategy.

Despite this, the service has maintained some key levels of output and engagement;

- The number of Green Flag Awards has risen to five (3 in 2012) – new awards have been secured for Rough Wood and Blackwood Park.
- The number of Friends Groups has remained fairly constant and membership is increasing
- Through supporting community engagement over £120k per annum of in kind contribution is generated (and this is thought to be an underestimate)
- The restoration of Walsall Arboretum is almost complete and visitor numbers are close to 1,000,000 per year making it one of the most visited parks in the region
- External funding is still being secured and a leverage of around five times is being attained (i.e. for every £1 the council invests a further £4 is secured)
- Site quality has increased on key spaces through external funding, council match and investment by Friends groups
- Basic operational and infrastructure maintenance is being improved on selected sites
- Partnership working is a key priority and it highly valued by internal and external partners

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[1] State of UK Parks 2016

[2] APSE (2018)

The next five years will no doubt continue to be challenging. The Council's Medium Financial plan has been agreed and sets the service's position for the next two years. Following detailed discussions with officers, councillors, stakeholders and Friends groups this strategy intentionally focuses on 2018/19 as a time to continue the strands of detailed review work that have begun during the strategy and to build a case for investment in green spaces, to review the allocation of resources, to gather more comprehensive data and information and through so doing enable a more informed targeting of resources and interventions over the following years.

As senior managers, councillors and Friends groups all recognise 'the easy revenue budget reductions have been made' and parks, as a non-statutory service and traditionally lacking information about the value of green space and the benefits to local communities has often been 'an easy target'. Recently the Walsall service has begun to gather some powerful data that will be built on to show just how valuable the borough's green spaces are.

The first year will not be about just taking stock but also some clear ambitions to improve, there is a recognition amongst staff and stakeholders that some things could be done better and there is a commitment to try to achieve an improved service. Many staff have expressed their passion about parks and green spaces and as a profession we rely heavily on this.

The longer term aims of this strategy are to manage, maintain and develop green spaces

- To develop an economically viable Parks & Green Space Service
- To provide opportunities for people and communities to actively participate in green spaces
- To develop and strengthen existing partnerships to bring added value to green spaces
- To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across green spaces
- To realise the potential that green spaces can play in addressing health inequalities
- To ensure green spaces play their part in the economic growth of the borough
- To provide safe, accessible, clean and well-maintained green spaces and facilities

The five year action plan at the end of the document sets out how the service and its partners can begin to address the recommendations of the strategy.

1. Introduction

As set out above this is the Council's third Green Space Strategy and it has been developed through detailed consultation including a household survey, Friends group and allotment association surveys, staff, Friends groups and stakeholder workshops and face to face discussions. There has been extensive interrogation of council information to try to establish trends and the net change since the last strategy and to begin to be able to benchmark key areas of performance and also develop what might form some key measures of success in the future.

The scope of the strategy was focussed on the parks and green spaces that are managed and maintained by the Parks & Green Space Service.

Green space is the collective term used to describe all parks, public gardens, playing fields, children's play areas, woodlands, nature reserves, allotment gardens, linear and other open space. It excludes public space that is primarily built development, agricultural land and private (residential) gardens. Green Belt land is included where it meets the definition of green space, but the two terms are not synonymous.

The green space strategy has considered all the land greater than 0.4 hectares that is used formally or informally for recreation or is managed for nature conservation or visual amenity. Land owned and managed by the council and in other ownership has been considered as part of the strategy.

2. The national context

A lot has changed in the world of parks and green space since the last strategy was written in 2012. Under Section 3 below we will explore what the changes have been within Walsall specifically both positive and negative but in this section, we want to summarise some relevant national information.

2.1 Research / policy / guidance

The detailed policy review produced in August 2017 as part of the research leading in to the development of this strategy identified some key areas to consider.

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation was published in 2002, and the subsequent Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17 was published in the same year. The latter documents gave very clear guidance on how local authorities should assess their open space provision and Walsall followed this model in 2006 and 2012. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced this guidance in 2012 and retained the requirement in PPG17 for planning policies for open space to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the specific quantitative and qualitative needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

The NPPF is currently under review and is subject to a public consultation exercise. A key implication in the consultation draft is that local authorities are expected to take a more proactive approach to bring forward more housing, with a focus on the use of small sites. This, together with the continued presumption in favour of sustainable development, an aspiration of nationally delivering 300,000 new homes per year, protection of the Green Belt and a prioritisation of brownfield over greenfield sites is likely to lead to increased tension over the protection of green spaces versus the need to deliver housing growth.

The Planning Act 2008 and the CIL Regulations 2010 set out a change in the securing of planning obligations from Section 106 contributions to the scheme called the Community Infrastructure Levy to collect developer contributions. Walsall is currently undertaking a review of its planning obligations process relating to Greenspace and this is set out at 5.2 below

The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) found that there is sufficient land across the Black Country to deliver at least 63,000 net new homes over the plan period 2006-2026. Of these, the BCCS indicates that 11,973 can be accommodated in Walsall, and work on the Council's Site Allocation Document (SAD) has found that there is sufficient land to meet the borough's

development needs to 2026 without having any significant impacts on the availability of open space. However, local authorities are under pressure to review their plans and initial work on a review of the Black Country Core Strategy indicates that more land will be needed for development from 2026 - 2036, placing increasing pressures on land resources while at the same time increasing the demand for open space.

The State of UK Parks was a piece of research funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2014 and then again in 2016. This was ground breaking research as no-one had previously commissioned research that included three national surveys; a survey of local authority parks and green space managers, a survey of friends and user groups and a survey of the general public. The 2014 report was titled "Renaissance to Risk?" in recognition of the finds that parks were very much felt to be at a tipping point due to funding reductions. There were positives to be found in that visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction were still increasing, volunteer involvement through Friends groups was also increasing as was the in kind contribution that such groups make. The 2016 research sought to measure the change since the first report and see whether predictions for the future were any different. The same surveys were repeated and found that even more in kind funding had been generated and overall parks usage appeared to be increasing but there were some stark findings about the overall funding picture and the condition of parks across the UK at that time.

2.2 Funding

The State of UK Parks (2016) gave a comprehensive picture of the scale of cuts and their impact on green spaces across the country.
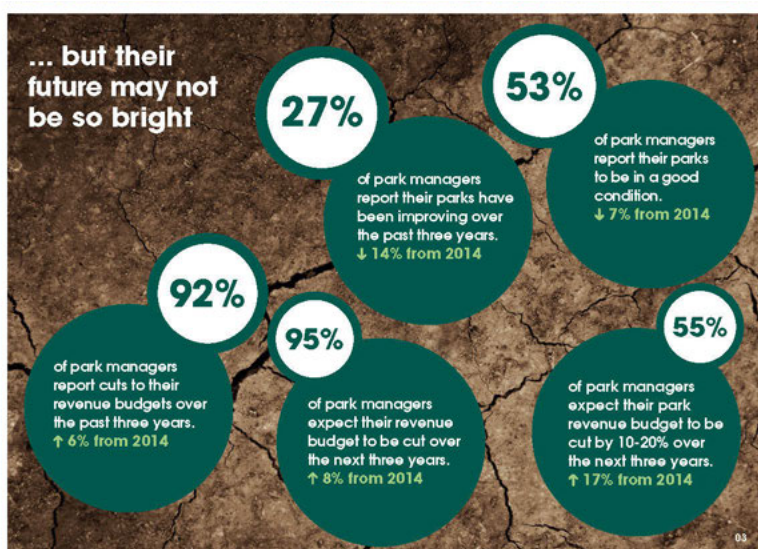
Image source: State of UK Parks 2016

When parks managers across the country were asked "Looking back over the past three years (from 2013-15), what would you say the changes in your <u>revenue</u> budgets has been?" the findings were quite stark. The average change in revenue budget was -18% and the reductions were certainly deeper than the previous survey in 2013.

Q3 Changes in revenue budget (past 3 years)

	2013	2016
Decreased by more than 20%	32.1%	32.7%
Decreased by between 10% and 20%	29.6%	35.7%
Decreased by less than 10%	24.7%	23.2%
Not Changed	6.8%	8.3%
Budget Increased	6.8%	0.0%

The predictions for the next three years

Q4 Changes in revenue budget (next 3 years)

	2013	2016
Decreased by more than 20%	32.5%	20.8%
Decreased by between 10% and 20%	37.7%	54.9%
Decreased by less than 10%	16.9%	19.1%
Not Changed	9.1%	5.2%
Budget Increased	3.9%	0.0%

Image source: State of UK Parks 2016

The impact of the cuts on the condition of parks was also explored and what this showed was that

- The percentage of parks whose condition will be in decline by 2020 will be around 39% (up from 18% in 2016)
- The percentage of parks whose condition will be improving by 2020 will be around 19% (down from 27% in 2016)

There was also a notable shift towards replacing lost council revenue support. The average amount of revenue budget from external sources in 2016 was 22.5% and the next three years predicted average was up to 29%. The top four priorities for generating revenue were use of facilities (e.g. buildings), sports use, refreshments and commercial events.

A recent report from APSE[2] also showed that parks mangers felt that Green Space Services were being disproportionately affected compared to other local authority service areas. It also showed that 94% of respondents were expecting further revenue budget reductions.

2.3 Current issues

There are three issues that are current at the time of writing this strategy (March 2018) the impacts of which on the green spaces within Walsall will vary.

2.3.1 HLF changes

In December 2017 HLF announced that it would close the Parks for People programme after 21 years of a targeted programme that has invested £millions in many parks across the UK, including three in Walsall.

Good-quality parks are needed more than ever to combat the stress of surviving in austerity Britain, and the loss of Parks for People is another lurch into a spiral of decline which this time could prove terminal for many places.[3]
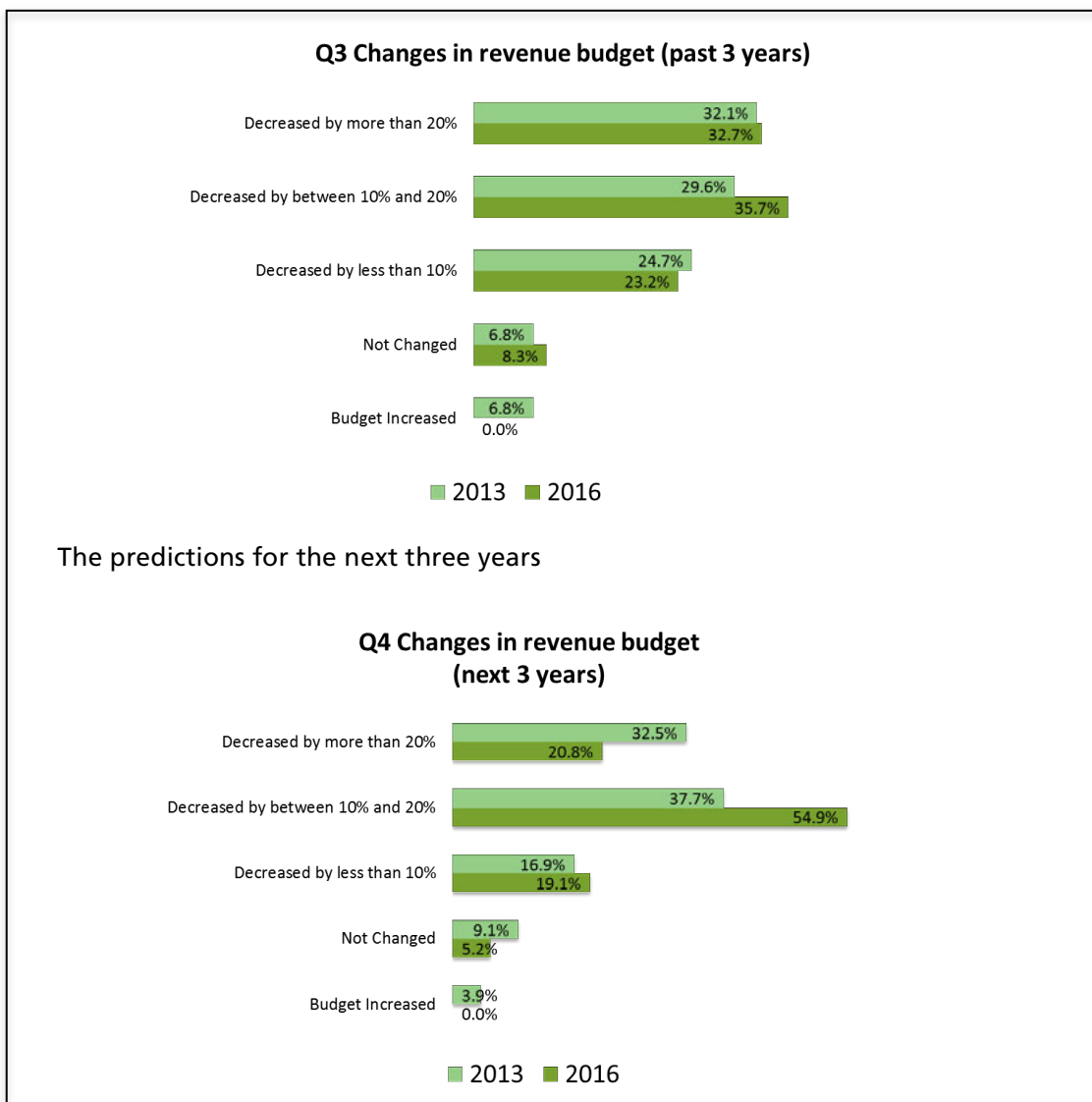
Walsall Council has not developed a new Parks for People bid since the Arboretum bid was first submitted in 2007. Parks and green spaces will still be able to apply for funding under the main Heritage Grants programme but the competition is expected to be much tougher. Authorities nationally are also struggling to find the match funding needed to deliver the projects and recent research in the region has shown that finding the resource to undertake the feasibility work for a Round 1 bid is now the biggest barrier[4].

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[2] APSE (2018)

[3] https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/dec/25/in-austerity-britain-people-need-parks

[4] unpublished West Midlands Parks Forum research undertaken by CFP Feb 17

As a response to the government's Public Parks Inquiry of 2017 a Parks Action Group (PAG) was set up and currently has identified six key strands of work

- Explore the funding landscape and solutions
- Set Parks and Green Space Standards
- Share a Vision for Parks and Green Spaces
- Empower Local Communities
- Increase Knowledge and Build skills
- Increase usage by all.

It is not currently known what PAG intends to do with the £0.5m it has been allocated by government nor indeed whether it will undertake research, produce case studies or indeed be able to bring any influence to bear at a national level.

The West Midlands Parks Forum, which Walsall Council has been a part of for over 25 years, has already begun to lobby this group and the Council needs to continue to support its officers to contribute to the regional and national agenda.

2.3.3 Rethinking Parks II

Launched in December 2017 Rethinking Parks II is a follow on to the original Rethinking Parks launched by HLF with NESTA in 2014. The programme is badged as "a two-stream innovation fund that will help support parks innovators." The two streams are

1. Replication award: Grants of up to £200k over two years aimed at supporting organisations to set up, run and learn from innovative, tested, operating models for parks
2. Prototyping award: Grants of up to £100k over 9-15 months to support testing and learning from digital innovations with the potential to address challenges that parks face

The Replication award application window closed on the 27th February 2018 and the Prototyping Award on 28th March. Walsall Council made an application to develop commercial involvement in six parks.

The council is proposing to develop a range of activities as follows;

- establishment of a Walsall Parks Business Network

- promotion of a new offer of three corporate 'packages'
- roll out of 'corporate park champions'
- new programmes of volunteering
- provide linkage to Walsall Council's social value agenda
- development of unique and online marketing platforms
- establishment of a 'Perpetual Fund'
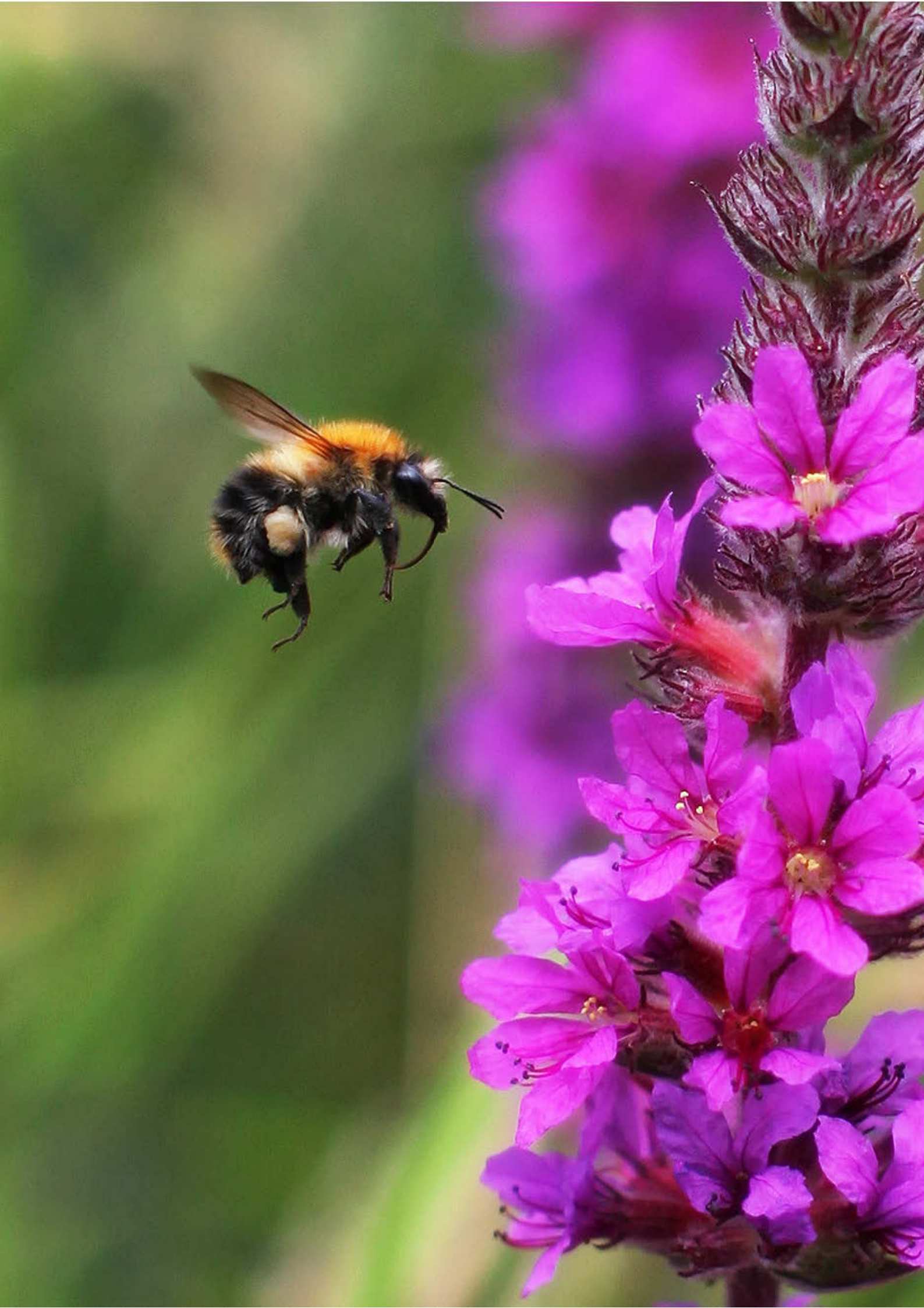
3.0 The current picture

3.1 About Walsall

Walsall is one of seven Metropolitan Boroughs located in the West Midlands and one of the four Black Country authorities. The Borough contains a mixture of urban and rural landscapes. With a population of just over 280,000[5], there are 107,822 households in Walsall. This represents a population increase of 9.5% since 2001 (when the population was 253,499) and an increase of 6,500 households (6.4%) since 2001.

There has been a significant increase in the level of ethnic diversity in Walsall over the past decade. With 21% of residents from a minority ethnic group, higher than the England and Wales average, the diversity of its population is one of Walsall's key strengths. While 'White British' remains the largest single group, at 76.9%, the number of residents from a minority ethnic group has risen to almost one in four (23.1%). Furthermore, the population of 5-15-year olds continues to increase in Walsall, which is another key strength, placing the Borough in a good position for a strong economic future if they are nurtured and supported.

However, there remain high levels of deprivation and associated problems such as health, housing, education and employment, particularly in the west of the Borough. On a number of key Public Health indicators, Walsall falls significantly below the England average, including numbers of children (under 16) in low income families, long term unemployment, infant mortality and rates of illness such as diabetes and TB. Life expectancy is also lower in Walsall than the rest of England, with a difference of nine years between the most and least deprived wards.

As of December 2014, 3.0% of the working age population claimed Jobseekers Allowance. Although, lower than the rest of the Black Country (3.5%), this figure is higher than the West Midlands (2.4%) and the rest of England (1.9%).

Figure 1, overleaf, shows the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2015) at Lower Super Output level. This demonstrates the significant levels of deprivation found within the west of the Borough, with large numbers of LSOAs within the West, South and Northern Area Partnerships within the top 20% most deprived in England. In contrast, the East Area Partnership has relatively low levels of deprivation, with only five of the 57 LSOAs within the top 20% most deprived, and 14 within the top 20% least deprived in England.

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[5] ONS data projection for 2018

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 1
Indicies of Multiple
Deprivation at Lower
Super Output Level
(2015)

LEGEND

IMD, 2015 (%)
Least deprived

	80 - 100
	60 - 80
	40 - 60
	20 - 40
	0 - 20

Most deprived

Walsall Localities

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LH	IB	16/03/18

Walsall
Council

cfp
people spaces places

The Council's Corporate Plan (2017 - 2020) seeks to "*Reduce inequalities and maximise potential*" thus ensuring that Walsall is "*A great place to live, learn, work and* invest". The Council recognise the current issues in Walsall Borough, namely population increases in children and the elderly, health inequalities across the area, levels of deprivation associated with education and income and unemployment, resulting from a lack of skills and qualifications.

The plan is based on three elements: place, economy and people (split into children, adults and young people). Corporate priorities have been themed and put in four general areas, with service delivery priorities for each;

- Pursue inclusive economic growth
- Make a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people
- Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best
- Safe, resilient and prospering communities

Whereas the Plan makes specific reference to the role of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation, delivery of the Green space Strategy will make a significant contribution to a range of themes including cultural engagement, air quality, biodiversity, flood management, transportation, community empowerment, housing quality and economic growth.

The key strategy for Health in the Borough is the Walsall Plan (Walsall Health and Well Being Strategy) (2018 – 2021). The Plan recognises the link between poor health and living conditions and sets out the key priorities for a number of key areas, including mental health, childcare, housing and finances, aging and disease prevention.

Recently, the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed on its priorities for the following year the 12 priorities provided by the HWB can still be applied to the GSS. Green spaces can not only contribute to a healthier environment (Priority 9) through improving air quality (Priority 10) but they can also provide volunteering opportunities (Priority 1) and encourage better physical and mental health through providing a space to exercise and keep fit (Priority 3).

A further board is the Walsall Economic Board and their key priorities are:
- Improve access to appropriate skills and training
- Ensure people possess the skills to enter and progress in work
- Build the business environment to create more local, added value, jobs
- Support local people to secure and stay in employment

- Ensure services recognise cultural barrier, and are inclusive and accessible for existing, new, and emerging communities
- Actively support inward investment to make Walsall and attractive place to live and work
- Promote environmental sustainability

3.2 About Walsall's Health

3.2.1 Historical links

In 1833 a report to parliament highlighted the benefits parks could bring to urban society.

"the provision of parks would lead to a better use of Sundays and the replacement of the debasing pleasures"

With an urban population expanding at alarming rates following the industrial revolution, conditions in towns and cities were becoming a concern for government. Some authorities recognised the benefits that parks could bring. Victoria Park in Tower Hamlets was created in 1843 when it was recognised (in 1839) that:

"a park... would probably diminish the annual deaths by several thousands… and add several years to the lives of the entire population".

In 1848 the Public Health Act recognised that money spent on improving public health would save money in the long term. The Act focussed on improving drainage and sewers, clearing refuse and clean drinking water. The government were forced into action due to a Cholera epidemic.

Eventually in 1875, 42 years on, a Public Health Act empowered local authorities to raise central government loans for them to be able to purchase land for recreation.

Whilst life expectancy has now increased massively since the Victorian era we are now facing serious issues in health. As Duncan Selbie has recently said[6]:

"Improving life expectancy is important but even more so is improving healthy life expectancy"

Within the medical profession there are those that recognise that we now have:

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[6] Public Health Matters: Duncan Selbie's Friday Message – 19 January 2018

"a current epidemic of chronic lifestyle-related conditions"

The government has also recently published a new guide on health equity[7], which includes the statement:

"People living in the most deprived areas can expect to spend nearly 20 fewer years in good health compared with those in the least deprived areas."

Urban Green Nation[8] showed:

- The provision of parks in deprived areas is worse than in affluent areas
- People from minority ethnic groups tend to have less local green space and it is of a poorer quality

A key recommendation of the report was:

"Public resources need to be targeted to best possible effect and collecting and managing baseline data about urban green spaces helps to maintain a strategic view, co-ordinate provision, measure the effects of investment or policy initiatives, and respond to changing circumstances. The data can support more equitable access to public services, regardless, for instance, of income or ethnicity."

The follow-on report Community Green[9] focussed on ethnicity, health and green space and suggested a:

"virtuous circle: where people perceive green space quality to be good, they are also more satisfied with their neighborhood and have better health and wellbeing."

This report, along with others, made the clear link between quality of green space, deprivation and health.

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[7] Public Health England 2018

[8] CABE Space (2010)[1]

[9] CABE Space (2010)[2]

There is significant evidence[10] of the role that urban green space can play in improving mental health, reduced heart disease, lowering mortality rates, combatting obesity and risk of type 2 diabetes.

Public Health England produces an annual health profile with the latest published in 2017. The headline figures for Walsall from this are set out below:

Health in summary

The health of people in Walsall is varied compared with the England average. Walsall is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and about 30% (17,000) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average.

Health inequalities

Life expectancy is 10.5 years lower for men and 6.4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Walsall than in the least deprived areas.

Child health

In Year 6, 25.5% (833) of children are classified as obese, worse than the average for England. The rate of alcohol-specific hospital stays among those under 18 is 29 per 100,000 population. This represents 19 stays per year. Levels of teenage pregnancy, GCSE attainment and breastfeeding initiation are worse than the England average.

Adult health

The rate of alcohol-related harm hospital stays is 681 per 10,000 population, worse than the average for England. This represents 1,770 stays per year. The rate of self-harm hospital stays is 176, better than the average for England. This represents 489 stays per year. The rate of smoking related deaths is 323, worse than the average for England. This represents 481 deaths per year. Estimated levels of adult excess weight and physical activity are worse than the England average.

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[10] WHO 2016, CABE Space (2010)[2]

Local priorities

Walsall's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was produced in 2016 and contains a raft of data about health and wellbeing issues, employment and education and also a whole chapter devoted to creating healthy and sustainable places and communities.

Priorities in Walsall include reducing infant mortality, promoting healthy weight and tackling health inequalities, particularly in men.

There are 12 Priorities of the Health and Well Being Board of which the following relate to green spaces:

- Priority 1: Increase opportunities for, and take- up of, volunteering
- Priority 3: Enable and empower individuals to improve their physical and mental health (specific reference is made to the Green Space Strategy)
- Priority 4: Maximise emotional wellbeing and resilience of adults
- Priority 9: Develop an environment to enable healthy lifestyles (specific reference is made to the Green Space Strategy)
- Priority 10: Improve air quality

In terms of measuring progress, the Government has established the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) which contains four 'domains' of indicators around

- Improving the wider determinants of health
- Health improvement
- Health protection
- Healthcare public health and preventing premature mortality

Public Health Walsall have undertaken a PHOF and green spaces mapping exercise which identifies all of the indicators that green space has the potential to contribute to.

There are a number of key indicators where green spaces could have direct and indirect contributions to make. The key ones are

- Improving the wider determinants of health – 1.16 Utilisation of outdoor space for health/ exercise reasons
- Health improvement - 2.13i Percentage of physically active adults / 2.13ii percentage of physically inactive adults

Walsall's performance against these three indicators is shown below:

Ref	Indicator	Period	Walsall	West Mids.	England
1.16	Utilisation of outdoor space for health/ exercise reasons	2015/16	18.0%	17.7%	17.9%
2.13i	Percentage of physically active adults	2016/17	59.0%	62.6%	66.0%
2.13ii	Percentage of physically inactive adults	2016/17	28.7%	25.0%	22.2%

The data appears to show that whilst the people of Walsall use outdoor space for health and exercise reasons at around the regional / national average it appears that they are not doing so frequently enough, for a suitable length of time or at an intensity to meet the physical activity target set by the Chief Medical Officer of 150+ moderate intensity equivalent minutes per week. With physical inactivity being the 4th largest cause of disease and disability in the UK[11] this is obviously cause for concern.

In terms of the work of Public Health in Walsall the partnership working with Green Spaces started in 2016. Since the first year the funding supported some of the activities in Parks and Green Spaces In the second year funding was provided for improved signage on ten key sites, face to face surveys and non user surveys at 20 sites, and also the purchase and installation of automated people counters at three sites.

3.2.3 Physical activity

A key area where Public Health and Green Spaces have been working together is around physical activity. The section above sets out the current national measures and how the population of Walsall performs. This area of Public Health's work has seen a significant investment in the past two years of around £0.5m which is explored further at section 6.4 below.

Figure 2 shows predicted data from the Sport England Active People Survey (2010) extrapolated to ward level. This data is obviously different to the measure within the PHOF which is 2.13ii "Percentage of physically inactive adults" which is 25.9% for Walsall (national figure 22.3%). There is no current map to show ward or LSOA level data on physical activity or use of green space.

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[11] Public Health England 2014

Source: Sport England
Segementation Data 2010
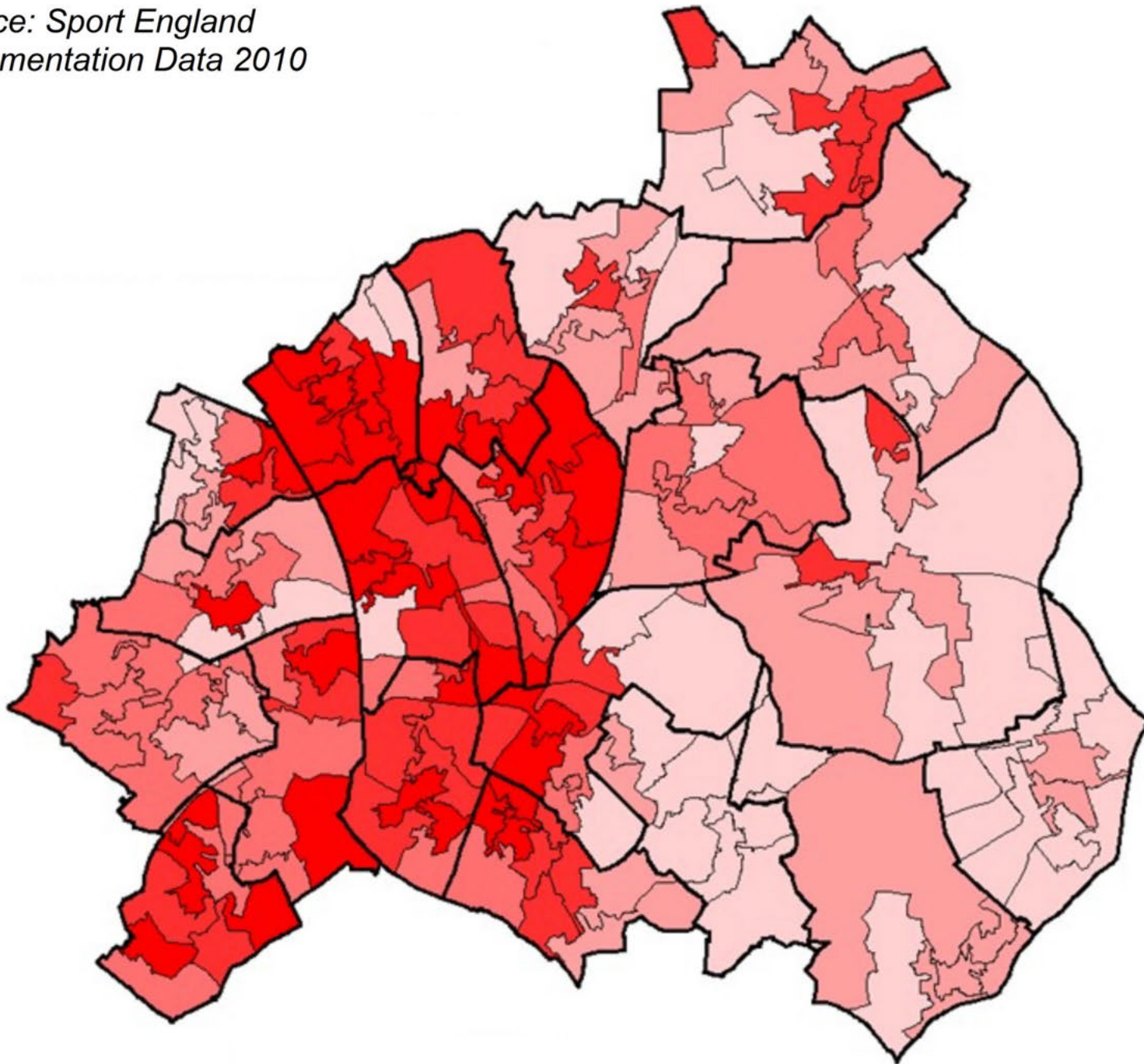
Walsall Green
Space Strategy

Figure 2
Percentage of Adults
(16+ years old) with
no sport or physical
activity in the last 28
days with wards
overlaid

% Adults
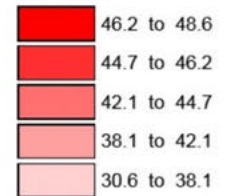
	46.2 to 48.6
	44.7 to 46.2
	42.1 to 44.7
	38.1 to 42.1
	30.6 to 38.1

Walsall Council

Mental health is a key area where green space can play a part, it has been recognized for a very long time that contact with nature can be restorative, reducing stress levels, enhancing wellbeing and relaxation. There are also mental health benefits from physical activity.

In 2016 Public Health Walsall published their Mental Health Needs Assessment[12], an early recommendation in the document to address mental health and wellbeing in the general population is that there should be:

Adequate measures to increase physical activity levels in the borough, including measures such as good quality and adequate access to green spaces.

There are three possible measures within this statement that will be explored under section 6.8 later, namely levels of physical activity, quality and accessibility of green space.

The needs assessment also sets out the evidence base for the links between physical activity and mental health in that there is a 20% to 30% lower risk for depression and dementia for adults participating in daily physical activity. Thus, a key role green space can play is providing the venue for targeted and general physical activity interventions. There are also the more passive mental health benefits of contact with the natural environment which could be explored in Walsall.

Finally, there is the social interaction element of using parks and green spaces either generally through people acknowledging each other (whereas they do not generally do this in the wider public realm) and also through volunteering reducing social isolation.

When considering the mapping work undertaken by Public Health Walsall there are two further indicators within the PHOF that are considered relevant to green spaces, namely:

Ref	Indicator
1.18	Social isolation: percentage of adult social care users / adult carers who have as much social contact as they would like
2.23	Self-reported wellbeing – people with a low happiness score

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[12] Public Health Walsall 2016

3.3 About the Parks & Green Space Service

3.3.1 Organisational structure

Walsall's Parks & Green Space Services are managed within the Clean and Green Service of the Economy and Environment Directorate. Current delivery areas include:

- Allotments and Community Gardens
- Community Liaison
- Countryside Services
- Environmental Improvement
- Infrastructure Maintenance
- Parks and Countryside Maintenance
- Strategic Development
- Walsall Arboretum

These areas are delivered by four key service areas

- Parks / countryside operations
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Environmental improvements (incorporating Community Liaison, Countryside Services and Strategic Development)
- Walsall Arboretum

The service currently has 50 staff under the following structure (see Figure 3 overleaf).

Clean and Green Services

Structure – Parks and Greenspace 2018 / 19

Under review during 2018

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                                   ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                   │ Environmental           │
                                   │ Resources Manager       │
                                   └─────────────────────────┘
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Parks / Countryside Operations Manager	Infrastructure Maintenance Manager	Environmental Improvements Manager	Arboretum Manager

Operational Team Leader	Infrastructure Maintenance Coordinator	Community Liaison Manager	Strategic Development Officers x3.5	Arboretum Team Leader

Parks / Open Spaces / Countryside x 15	Infrastructure Maintenance Technician (Mobile) x 2 Infrastructure Maintenance Technicians x5	Community Liaison Officers x7 Plus a secondment post of CLO for 12 months	Senior Countryside Officers	Marketing / Promo Coordinator and Arboretum Operatives x7

3.3.2 Environmental Improvement - Community Liaison

A team of seven Community Liaison Officers and a Community Liaison Manager was essentially created from the former ranger service to undertake community engagement duties and development support across strategic green spaces

The team are also responsible for events in parks as well as sports booking and handle all of the income from these areas. In 2017-18 the total was in the region of £97,000 with sports bookings accounting for around 33% of that total.

In 2017 a review of the family fundays run by the team revealed that they were no longer financially viable, so the number and method of delivery were changed dramatically. An annual contract for a number of small scale events is in place and also a separate tender is run bi-annually for bonfire events. The borough currently has four of these (Arboretum, Holland Park, King George V[th] Park, Willenhall Memorial Park). The commercial operator is paid a fee and the council take the ticket sales. Last year the council had to pay for additional security, suffered lost ticket sales due to a date having to be altered and also had to pay for additional materials resulting in a loss overall. Consequently, the service is now reviewing how it runs such events in the future.

3.3.4 Environmental improvement – strategic development

A team of four staff (one for each locality area of the Borough) dealing with funding and grant applications, liaison with friends groups, developing and delivering projects, management planning and Green Flag applications).

3.3.5 Environmental improvement – countryside services

Countryside Services consists of one Senior Countryside Officer posts, their remit includes:

- To conserve and enhance the quality of the countryside and other green spaces
- To develop and facilitate green space maintenance and management work for nature conservation and public benefits
- To assist in the production and implementation of site management plans, service plans, etc.
- To work with partners to develop funding packages and management projects
- To raise awareness of countryside, green space and environmental issues through community and educational activities and events

- To monitor and assess green spaces, including surveys of wildlife, management work, public rights of way and visitor usage
- To promote mental and physical wellbeing through contact with green spaces and the wider countryside

3.3.6 Walsall Arboretum

The park has its own dedicated team created during the life of the HLF funded restoration project and all within the control of the Arboretum Manager. The post was created using HLF funding and will be mainstreamed beyond the expiry of the project. The team have gone through restructuring to create a more integrated team to try to ensure there are five staff present on every day of the week. Two other posts in the team are HLF funded and post project one will be lost and the other return to their substantive post within the service.

3.3.7 Infrastructure maintenance

A separate Infrastructure Maintenance team was formed in 2014. This includes staff, which has increased from two staff in 2012 by the transfer of seven ranger posts. The team focuses on play area and infrastructure inspections and repairs.

3.3.8 Operational maintenance

An Operational Maintenance Team was established in 2017 with eight staff to look after seven green spaces.

In late 2017 their remit was expanded to include a total of 28 countryside sites and 37 parks plus they undertake cleansing duties on a further 25 sites. An additional nine staff were transferred from the main grounds maintenance service at that time.

The current approximate size of the land being managed is 790 hectares. With an annual budget (salaries only, net of NI, Pension) is £358,944, which gives a cost per hectare of £514.27/ha.

Some comparative figures at a service wide level are shown in the table below:

Source	£/ Ha
State of UK Parks 2014	6410
London Parks Benchmarking Group (2011)	6252
APSE (2012)	5957

Partnership working has long been a tradition of Walsall Parks & Green Space Services. Current partnership working encompasses a range of organisations and internal council departments such as One Walsall, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, Public Health Walsall, Planning Policy, Regeneration, Communities and Partnership, Walsall Housing Group, Sport and Leisure Development, Care First and My Time Active.

The team also work in partnership with Friends, User Groups, and Local Allotment Associations (LMAs). The numbers of Friends and User groups are thought to have stayed steady over the past five years, but the number of allotment associations has increased by around 10 groups since 2012. These have formed to manage their own allotment sites; mostly around the Darlaston, Bentley, and Willenhall areas. In total there are currently 23 parks and green spaces groups and 22 LMAs.

Healthy Spaces Steering Group

One of the Council's Transformation projects is led by Public Health called "Improving health, reducing inequalities: everyone's business" which is focussed on building a healthy environment for residents. Part of this has been the formation of the Shaping a Healthy Environment Board. Membership of this Board includes officers from Transport, Planning, Environmental Health, Resources, Clean and Green, Housing and Procurement.

The Healthy Spaces Steering Group which feeds into this project includes officers from Public Health, Parks and Green Spaces, and Sport & Leisure Services. The aim of this group is to pool expertise and develop programmes of work to ensure better use of Walsall's outdoor space and other assets, particularly in the promotion of healthy living.

The Healthy Spaces overall vision is

"Working together to maximise use of our public spaces to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all citizens to live a healthy, active lifestyle".

The vision focuses on Programme, People and Place similar to the Black Country Economic Plan and includes a broad strategic approach across a range of key settings. This includes;

- Green Spaces
- Schools
- Leisure Centres

- Community/ Home Based
- Workplace

An action plan has been developed to roll out a range of evidence based infrastructural improvements/ interventions that will have a population impact on health, particularly those living in areas of greatest deprivation. It also details an approach to further develop healthy parks and green spaces alongside a longer term plan to revise existing service/ delivery model leading to increased efficiency and impact. These include:

- Led walks, jogs and cycles
- Active travel corridors
- Individual and volunteer group led activities
- Signposted walking and cycling routes tailored to ability
- Active play areas
- Individual and corporate volunteering schemes
- School targeted programmes e.g. Forest Schools and A*Stars
- Utilisation of park based venues for the community

An output of the partnership working has been a new 'Active Outdoors in Walsall' leaflet, which highlights the borough's green spaces, allotments, outdoor fitness facilities, sports facilities in parks and also volunteering opportunities.

Also, Parks and Green Spaces and Sport & Leisure Services have developed an on line booking system for tennis courts. Court use is still free but the system provides an evidence base that can be used in future capital bids to the Lawn Tennis Association.

Active Sustainable Travel and Road Safety

The A*STARS programme is a series of walking, cycling, scooting and road safety initiatives, along with training, expertise and support that is given to schools to help them to develop and promote safer, healthier lifestyle choices for all.

The programme promotes health and wellbeing by combining and providing road safety, health and sustainable travel education, training and awareness. It targets all educational establishments and school communities; supporting children's development at every stage from birth to adulthood.

Green spaces can form a vital link as through routes in safe travel, venues for awareness raising and training and also there is potential for staff to assist in developing and delivering such programmes.

3.4 About Walsall's Green Spaces

As noted earlier the definitive data set of green space owned and managed by the Parks & Green Space Service has not been kept up to date. With the information available we have however been able to establish a picture of change since the last strategy.

3.4.1 Green space change

Figure 4 on page 35 shows the current picture of green space provision in the borough by typology and accessibility. The table below compares the 2012 and 2018 datasets, indicating that there has been a slight decrease in the total number of sites (with 22 sites lost) but an increase in total hectares (15.9 ha gained overall).

Green Space Type	No. of sites		Amount of land (Ha)		Proportion of Green Space (by Area)	
	2012	2018	2012	2018	2012	2018
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	132	115	980.6	988.5	45.4%	45.4%
Outdoor Sports facilities	51	51	368.0	368.0	17.0%	16.9%
Parks & Gardens	37	36	269.7	272.6	12.5%	12.5%
Amenity Green Space	157	154	201.1	193.4	9.3%	8.9%
Institutional Land	68	67	185.2	194.6	8.6%	8.9%
Cemeteries & Churchyards	24	24	63.3	66.8	2.9%	3.1%
Allotments	39	39	44.1	44.1	2.0%	2.0%
Green Corridor	17	17	42.7	42.7	2.0%	2.0%
PCYP	10	10	7.3	7.3	0.3%	0.3%
TOTAL	535	513	2,162.1	2,178.0	100.0%	100.0%

These changes are described by typology in the table below.

Green Space Type	Change in no. of site	Change in amount of land (Ha)	Reasons
Natural and semi natural	-17	+8.5	12 sites combined into Goscote Valley Sites combined (-5) Size increase due to an AGS and a P+G site being re-designated
Outdoor Sports Facilities	0	0	N/A
Parks and Gardens	-1	+2.9	One site re-designated NSN Size increase due to boundary changes
Amenity Green Space (AGS)	-3	-7.7	2 sites combined with other AGS 1 site moved to NSN
Institutional land	-1	+9.4	1 site removed from GIS data Increase in size due to combining sites from other typologies and revised boundaries
Cemeteries and Churchyards	0	+3.5	Size increase due to increase in size of Streetly Crematorium new boundary
Allotments	0	0	N/A
Green Corridor	0	0	N/A
PCYP	0	0	N/A

The current provision of unrestricted green space per 1000 population is 4.72 ha overall. While this is a slight decrease compared with the previous strategy, when provision was 4.96 ha per 1000 population, it is important to note that the population of Walsall Borough has increased by 25,500 persons (approximately 10%).

Green Space Type	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha)	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha) per 1000 population
Amenity Green Space	185.48	0.66
Cemeteries & Churchyards	63.77	0.23
Green Corridor	30.58	0.11
Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	738.18	2.64
Outdoor Sports Facilities	28.89	0.10
Parks & Gardens	272.57	0.97
PCYP	2.87	0.01
TOTAL	**1322.34**	**4.72**

Walsall's green spaces contain a wealth of designated nature conservation sites, including:

- part of the Cannock Extension Canal Special Area of Conservation
- six other Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Clayhanger, Daw End Railway Cutting, Hay Head Quarry, Jockey Fields, Stubber's Green Bog and Swan Pool & The Swag)
- 36 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- 63 Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
- 12 Local Nature Reserves – Barr Beacon and Pinfold Lane Quarry, Black Country Wyrley and Essington Canal, Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle, Fibbersley, Hay Head Wood, Mill Lane, Merrions Wood, Moorcroft Wood, Park Lime Pits, Pelsall North Common, Rough Wood Chase and Shire Oak Park

In 2008, the council had achieved a national standard for the provision of LNRs of 1 hectare of LNR land for every 1,000 people living in the borough. The council was the first in the sub-region to achieve this standard. However, by 2012, due to a rise in population, Walsall fell slightly short of this standard. The declaration of Black Country Wyrley and Essington Canal LNR in partnership with the Canal and River Trust and City of Wolverhampton Council sees Walsall achieve the standard again.

The Birmingham and the Black Country Nature Improvement Area was one of 12 NIAs established and funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England in 2012 to create joined up and resilient ecological networks at a landscape scale. NIAs are run by a partnership of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations.

Since 2012, the Birmingham and the Black Country NIA partnership has developed an Ecological Strategy, built on analysis of data and evidence collected over 17 years. This includes mapping the ecological network, with all parts of the landscape assigned to one of three broad categories:

- Core Ecological Areas – four areas of the conurbation that are richest in wildlife, which include parts of the landscape least affected by urban development and areas where wildlife has reclaimed sites that were once at the heart of the industrial Black Country.
- Ecological Linking Areas – eleven areas joining the Core Ecological Areas and the wider landscape together. These include the majority of the remaining 'natural' open spaces where many of the more frequently encountered species and habitats exist. Much of this part of the network is concentrated around key wildlife corridors including the extensive system of rivers, streams and canals.

- Ecological Opportunity Areas - outside of the Core Ecological Areas and Ecological Linking Areas, these are the most intensively used parts of the landscape where the green space is dominated by formal parks, public open spaces, gardens, road verges and the most productive farmland.

Walsall Borough contains the Walsall Countryside Core Ecological Area and the Wyrley & Essington Canal and Walsall & Sutton Park Ecological Linking Areas as priorities landscapes.

The NIA project has resulted in 37.115ha of BAP habitats improved / created and 2,173m of linear habitat improved / created in Walsall Borough from 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2017 (see table below).

The amounts of target habitats in Walsall Borough enhanced or created through the NIA project from 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2017

NIA Habitat Theme	BAP Priority Habitat	LBAP 2010 Habitat Target	NIA Action Type Description	Value	Unit
Geology			Area of geological feature enhanced/improved for geology	0.383	ha
Grassland	Lowland meadows	Lowland Meadows	Area of grassland enhanced (other)	2.933	ha
Grassland	Lowland meadows	Lowland Meadows	Area of meadow created (haystrewing)	1.15	ha
Grassland	Lowland meadows	Lowland Meadows	Area of meadow created (seeding)	0.015	ha
Heathland	Lowland Heathland	Lowland Heathland	Area of heathland restored	0.199	ha
Hedgerow	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Length of hedgerows planted	545.51	m
Hedgerow	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Length of hedgerows restored	962.15	m
Wetland			Area of wetland restored	0.434	ha
Wetland	Ponds	Eutrophic Standing Waters	Area of pond restored	0.037	ha
Woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Native Woodland	Area of woodland enhanced	21.146	ha
Woodland			Length of linear woodland enhanced	665.35	m
Woodland	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Native Woodland	Area of woodland planted	10.818	ha
Total			Area of habitat improved / protected	37.115	ha
Total			Length of linear habitat improved / protected	2173	m

Woodland is a priority habitat in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan and a delivery theme of the NIA. Woodland tends to be the most complex of terrestrial habitats,

providing valuable resources for more species than other e.g. more bird species breed in woodland than in any other major habitat type. Woodland structure, size and isolation, tree and habitat variety and amount of dead wood are all factors in determining species diversity – each of these can be managed to increase biodiversity.

Ancient woodland (sites that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600) is an irreplaceable habitat. Due to their longevity, they are important for the conservation of genetic material (especially native trees that were growing within the region prior to the Industrial Revolution), preservation of soils and as repositories of local species that can re-colonise other woodland.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, large-scale planting of new woodland was undertaken in many parts of the conurbation, not least through the Black Country Urban Forest millennium programme. Many of these new woodlands are structurally and ecologically poor, and do not support the variety and abundance of flora and fauna found in the older woodlands, but some management work and ground flora planting and seeding has been undertaken through the NIA.

The majority of Walsall's trees are in parks and green spaces, and most are semi-mature to mature. Less than 1% of our trees are veteran, but these are perhaps the most interesting biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition. At the time of the latest national survey of urban trees in 2004, the West Midlands region has a mean canopy cover of 7.1-8.2%, compared to the national average of 12%. Through the Urban Forestry Strategy for Walsall, the aim is to increase the canopy cover of the Borough by 5% by 2024.

Much of the timber harvested from various operations e.g. park and street tree risk management works, forestry operations and heathland restoration / management is used positively. Since 2012, the Council has been processing and selling hardwood as firewood, currently at a rate of about 135m^3 per year. About 1,000 tonnes of softwood and arboriculture arisings are chipped for the supply of biomass for electricity generation. Four hectares of coppice are grown by the Council, for biodiversity benefits as well as for harvesting traditional country craft products.

Trees and woodland provide other benefits e.g. mitigating against climate change, improving air quality, environmental performance of buildings and people's health and well being, increasing property values and reducing storm water events.

The Black Country is one of the world's classic areas of geology. Its past ancient environments of shallow tropical limestone seas, vast steaming swamp forests, scorching deserts and frozen icy wastelands created the very varied patchwork of rock types and geological structures present today. Spanning more than 428 million years of the Earth's history and containing some of the most beautiful and rare fossils and richest deposits of industrial minerals to be found anywhere, these precious resources helped shape the industrial revolution and the world.

In 2015, a partnership led by the four Black Country authorities submitted an application to UNESCO for the Black Country to become a Global Geopark. Following an inspection in 2016, UNESCO identified several recommendations to strengthen the application. These are currently being addressed and responses will be submitted in 2018. The final outcome of the application is anticipated by spring 2019.

The Black Country Geopark Project identifies 45 geosites (sites of geological significance) across the Black Country, nine of which are in Walsall Borough, namely:

- Barr Beacon and Pinfold Lane Quarry LNR
- Brownhills Mining Heritage Monuments
- Daw End Railway Cutting and Linley Wood
- Hay Head Quarry
- Moorcroft Wood LNR
- Park Lime Pits LNR
- Shire Oak Park LNR
- Walsall Arboretum
- Walsall Geotrail, Museums and Art Gallery

3.4.3 Play provision

Currently the Parks & Green Space Service manages and maintains 62 sites with provision for children and young people (Figure 5). This includes 58 play areas for children and 34 areas for teenagers (including skateparks).

3.4.4 Allotment change

The current picture has not changed in terms of the number of sites over the last five years, there are now 33 allotments including a former unused site being regenerated at Trees Road (Figure 6). A further two sites are currently unused, these sites are Alexandra Road and West Bromwich Road both of which sit in an area noted for over provision of allotments and a deficiency of green space provision.

3.4.5 Sports Facilities

A tennis court condition survey was carried out by the LTA in summer 2017 which has produced a 'shopping list' of suggested improvements and Sport & Leisure Services have already identified some funding opportunities.

Bowling greens are currently under review. The Council is looking into an alternative management process.

The Playing Pitch Strategy (2018) conducted an analysis of football, rugby and cricket pitches throughout the Borough. It concluded that the demand for pitches was being met or there was a small shortfall but anticipated shortfalls to develop where demand is currently being met or for them to be exacerbated where there are shortfalls currently based on future projections.

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 4
Green Space Sites
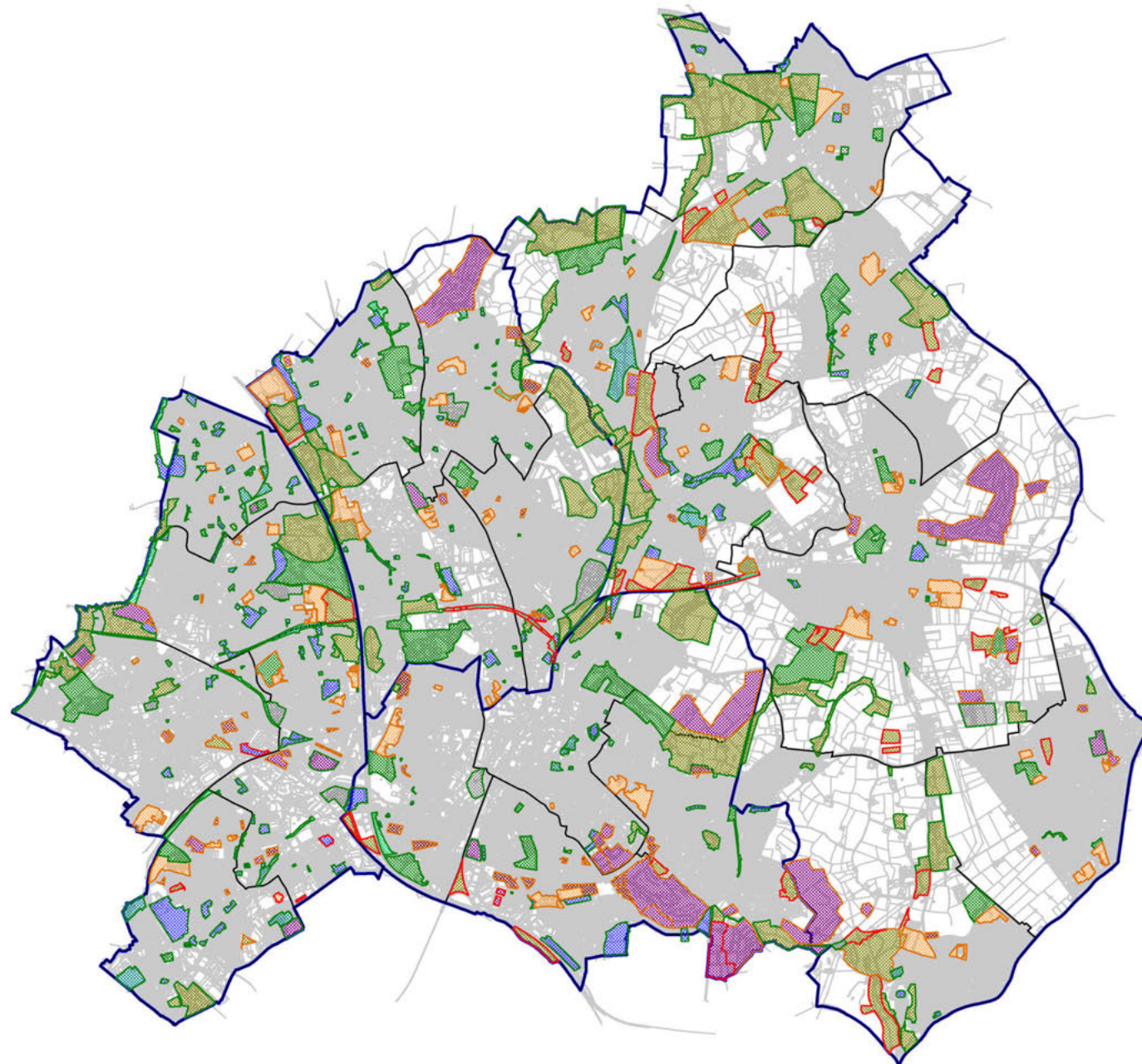
LEGEND

- Natural & Semi-natural Green Space
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Allotments
- Parks & Gardens
- Cemeteries & Churchyards
- Amenity Green Space
- Green Corridor
- Institutional Land
- Provision for Children & Young People

Accessibility

- Unrestricted
- Restricted
- Not Accessible

Boundaries

- Ward Boundaries
- Walsall Localities

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Cherwell Drive / Tyne Close Play Area
Whitehorse Road Open Space
Holland Park
Bradbury Park
Pelsall Nest Common
Ryders Hayes Open Space
Clayhanger Playing Fields
Mallory Crescent Open Space
Oak Park
Shire Oak Park
King George Vth Playing Fields
Pelsall Common
High Heath Park
Druids Walk Amenity Greenspace
Coppice Farm Way
Bloxwich Park
Vigo Common
Greenwood Road Play Area
Brereton Road
Shelfield Recreation Ground
Leamore Park
Leigh's Wood
Hawthorne Road
Westgate
Anchor Meadow Playing Fields
Bentley Haye
Rushall Playing Fields
Pool Hayes Children's Play Area
The Radleys Play Area
The Croft
Harlech Road OS
Essex Street / Coal Pool Lane
Redhouse Play Area
Willenhall Memorial Park
Reedswood Park
Poplar Avenue
The Airport Playing Fields
Western Avenue
Bath Street Gardens
Arboretum
Blackwood Park
Primley Avenue Park
Tyler Road
Selbourne Street / Walsingham Street Play Area
Goodwood Drive
Anson Road Play Area
Rutter Street Play Area
George Rose Park
Doe Bank Park
Victoria Park Play Area
Pleck Park
Highgate Drive Play Area
Queen Street
Bescot Crescent Play Area
Silverdale Park
Newquay Road Play Area
Broadwaters Road
Kings Hill Park
Palfrey Park
Wood End Road Play Area

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 5
Current Provision for Children and Young People

LEGEND

Provision for Children and Young People

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Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 6
Current Allotment
Provision

LEGEND

Allotment Site
Derelict Site

Grenfell Road Allotments

Clayhanger Allotments

Broad Lane Allotments

Field Road Allotments

Goscote Lane Allotments

Beechtree Road Allotments

Dudleys Fields Allotments

Greenfields Road Allotments

Huntington Road Allotments

Blakenall Lane Allotments

Winterley Lane Allotments

Queens Lea Allotments

Forest Avenue Allotments

Cartbridge Lane Allotments

Dovedale Avenue Allotments

Borneo Street Allotments

Clarkes Lane Allotments

Lane Avenue Allotments

Sutton Road Allotments

Wrexham Avenue Allotments

Bentley Mill Way

Ince Road Allotments

Slaters Lane Allotments

Delves Green Road No. 1 Allotments

Trees Road Allotments

Delves Green Road No. 2 Allotments

Addenbrooke Street Allotments

Pheasey Allotments

Alfred Street Allotments

Lord Street Allotments

Hucker Road Allotments

Broadway Allotments

Victoria Road Allotments

Alexandra Road Allotments

West Bromwich Road Allotments

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people spaces places

4. Walsall green spaces since 2012

Funding reductions since 2012 made a significant impact on how Walsall's parks and green spaces are managed, maintained and developed.

4.1 Resources change

The Parks & Green Space Service has seen a 25% loss of management and development staff since the 2012 strategy. There have been some staff moved into the service to perform operational and infrastructure maintenance roles.

The State of UK Parks research (2016) showed that development staff had been reduced the most. This was most marked at a national level as shown in the table below. The figures are the average percentage change and 'n' represents the number of respondents to the survey.

Area	National (n=193)	West Midlands (n=24)	Walsall
Operational	13%	14%	12%
Management	15%	14%	3%
Development	19%	15%	3%

Walsall have lost

- Three Senior Countryside Officers
- Two Assistant Park Managers
- 12 Park Rangers
- One Head Ranger / Team Leader

In Walsall the impact has been on areas such as management planning, strategic planning, countryside management support to friends and allotment groups and developing a fourth large scale park restoration project.

4.2 Funding change

Overall the service has lost about £1m revenue over the past five years due to funding reductions.

However, the service has been successful in securing the following sources of external funding since 2012:

Source	Amount
Council	617,411
S106	1,005,403
Lottery	650,900
Landfill Tax Credit Scheme	77,000
Other	223,643
TOTAL	**2,574,357**

In addition to the above, the team at Walsall Arboretum have also secured significant external funding as part of a major restoration programme. The main lottery project totalled £7,592,389, which was a mix of HLF (60%), Council capital and revenue (30%) and Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, S106 and Growth Point (10%). Outside of the restoration programme, a further 4 grants have been secured totalling £395,000.

This is broken down as follows:

Source	Amount	%
Council	617,411	21
S106	1,005,403	34
Lottery	700,900	24
Landfill Tax Credit Scheme	177,000	6
Other	468,643	16
TOTAL	**2,969,358**	**100**

What the above figures show is that the council contribution to projects is around 20% or put another way the leverage achieved by the Green Spaces Team is around five times the council match.

The table shows that the biggest external source of funding over recent years has been Section 106 funds through planning obligations. This is closely followed by Lottery funds. If we exclude the council funding s106 accounts for 43% of external funding and lottery 35%.

In terms of revenue income, the Community Liaison team are in charge of sports pitch bookings, income from events and also from facilities within green spaces. The team bring in around £100k per year with sports fees making up around one third of that income. Rent makes up around a quarter followed by circuses and fairs at one fifth. A detailed breakdown of the last two financial years is shown below. This excludes any revenue funding via the Transformation Fund / Public Health.

	2016/17	2017/18
Fun day income	8%	2%
Circus/Fairs	14%	20%
Franchise	1%	4%
Administration fee	0%	1%
Permits	2%	2%
Countryside Income	2%	6%
Sports fees	36%	33%
Hire of room/pavilion	4%	4%
Misc. property rent (Estates)	25%	28%
Internal income	7%	0%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**

Sports charges have increased steadily over the last three years as show on the table below.

Year	Change
2015/16	+10%
2016/17	+5%
2017/18	+1.8%

4.3 Asset change

Part of the remit of the strategy was to assess the net change in the actual green space asset that the Parks & Green Space Service is responsible for. Unfortunately, the staffing reductions have meant that the 2012 Green Space Strategy mapping data set has not been kept up to date. In 2017 the planning department produced a Site Allocation Document data set that had some overlaps with the Green Space Strategy but also looked at institutional land (e.g. school playing fields) and other types of space which were outside of the scope of the Green Space Strategy since they are not classed as having unlimited access. Despite everyone's best efforts during the development of the strategy it has not been possible to produce a definitive data set suitable for the service. This needs to be addressed and is carried forward as a recommendation later at section 6.5.

4.4 Progress against the 2012 strategy

The above changes have had a significant effect on the ability of the Parks & Green Space Service to deliver against objectives that were set out five years ago. The text below is a summary of key achievements and areas that need to be carried forward into the new strategy.

4.4.1 Aim: green spaces that make the borough an attractive place to live, work and socialise

Key Achievements

- Based on quality audits produced across selection of sites repeated for each Green Space Strategy, the overall average score has increased
- Significant funding has been secured through planning obligations, which has contributed to the increase in overall quality
- The accessibility standards for play provision have been adopted.
- The hierarchy of green space was adopted.
- New signage has been installed across ten sites in partnership with Public Health

Areas to be carried forward

- The Supplementary Planning Guidance for green spaces was not addressed and this is picked up later in sections 6.5 and 6.6.
- The hierarchy of green space was adopted but now needs to be revised to reflect current resources. This is addressed at section 6.1.
- Whilst the overall average quality score has increased some sites still do not meet the minimum quality thresholds set. This is addressed at section 6.1.4

4.4.2 Aim: safer and more secure green spaces

Key Achievements

- Work has been carried out to improve signage using Public Health funding
- Responsible dog ownership has been promoted and the quality audits noted a change in this area
- Staff have been trained in environmental enforcement
- Clean and Green awarded borough wide contract for Environmental Enforcement

Areas to be carried forward

- Continue to promote responsible dog ownership, this is covered in Section 5.5 below.

Key Achievements

- The joint working with Public Health Walsall and Sport & Leisure Services has developed a significant focus around green spaces and their role in combating health and wellbeing issues
- Working with partners in Public Health has improved data collection within green spaces
- Active outdoors booklet produced to promote organised scheme of activities in parks
- Installation of outdoor gym equipment and trim trails in King George Vth Playing Fields, George Rose Park, and Kings Hill Park
- Green pathways created a new healthy walking and exercise route
- Staff undertook 'activator' training and delivered sessions for gym inductions and sports activities

Areas to be carried forward

- Health work has focused on physical activity, Weight Management, Volentering, Monitoring and Evaluation but there is now a need to also look at mental health issues. This is picked up in section 6.4.2
- Monitoring and evaluation needs to be improved across the service. This is picked up in section 6.8
- Implement the recommendations of the 2018 Playing Pitch Strategy to address deficiencies in pitch provision and improve quality of key sites

Key Achievements

- Capital funding has continued to be invested in Walsall's green spaces and allotments
- Commuted sums to cover site maintenance have been secured
- Management plans have been developed for a number of strategic sites

- Creating infrastructure maintenance and operational maintenance teams has resulted in significant improvements contributing to increased site quality
- An additional two Green Flag Awards have been secured increasing the borough's total to five, as well as two Community Green Flag Awards for the two Pocket Parks, attained in 2017.
- Grounds maintenance responsibilities and budgets have been delegated to existing Parks and Green Spaces Service
- Alternative arrangements for litter collection and control have been trialled across three sites

Areas to be carried forward

- A revised programme of management plan production is needed. This is set out at section 6.1.1
- There is potential for more sites to secure the Green Flag Award. This is addressed at section 6.12
- Maintenance schedules are needed for all strategic spaces. This is addressed at 6.1.3

4.4.5 Aim: conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity

Key Achievements

- Completion of the Raising the Barr HLF project including developing a new use for Beacon Lodge as a training centre for adult learners
- New Walsall Country Park created and managed by existing Arboretum team
- The Nature Improvement Area initiative within Birmingham and the Black Country has continued to be developed
- Countryside Stewardships and Woodland Grant scheme have been secured
- One Local Nature Reserve has been created, the Wyrley and Essington Canal, in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, and City of Wolverhampton Council
- Percentage of Local Nature Conservation sites in positive management has been increased
- Volunteers have participated in the management and maintenance of natural and semi-natural green spaces, assisting in biological recording
- Developed programmes of environmental and outdoor education
- National target of one ha per 1,000 people for Local Nature Reserves has been met

- Securing European Regional Development Fund to support the Black Country Blue Network, in partnership with City of Wolverhampton Council, Birmingham Black Country Wildlife Trust, Canal and River Trust, and the Environment Agency.

Areas to be carried forward

- Continue to support volunteer and adult learning
- Continue to produce and implement management plans
- Continue to maintain an up to date record of the biodiversity value of the borough's green spaces
- Continue to help create a landscape scale biodiversity network in line with the Nature Improvement Area Strategy.

4.4.6 Aim: more engaged communities and neighbourhoods

Key Achievements

- The Walsall Green Spaces Forum has been developed to help community based organisations to network and share ideas and learning, which includes our allotment associations
- Self management of allotments has continued and most sites are now under community control
- Reviewed volunteer opportunities, worked with partners and new organisations to develop volunteer roles, including Corporate Volunteer opportunities
- Information on Council website has been reviewed and updated, as has the use of social media to promote green spaces has been developed
- Public Health funded a user / non-user survey to residents regarding their use of green space, as part of the consultation for this Strategy

Areas to be carried forward

- There is still a need to gather and analyse consultation data as part of an overall approach to measuring success and delivering community led change. This is addressed at section 6.8
- Develop opportunities for social enterprises to deliver services within green spaces
- Identify green spaces where volunteer opportunities can be developed and offered
- Develop Marketing Plan for green spaces

Key Achievements

- Some asset transfer is taking place around bowls provision
- The partnership with Public Health has levered in funding and is also helping to build the evidence base
- Software for site inspections has been implemented
- Fees and charges have been reviewed, and a benchmarking exercise for West Midlands Local Authorities has been undertaken
- Sale of firewood and woodchip established to increase income
- Partnership with One Walsall Volunteering Centre to develop and promote volunteering within Parks and Green Spaces
- Partnerships developed with the Tree Council, the Woodland Trust, and the National Federation of City Farms and Community
- The Birmingham and Black Country Local Nature Partnership and Nature Improvement Area have become key strategic partners for green space management.

Areas to be carried forward

- There is an ongoing need to review all income opportunities. This is addressed at section 6.7
- Adopt the Sustainable Events Policy for the Arboretum and use to inform a wider policy for all strategic sites
- Opportunities to increase the skills and responsibilities of those who work in, volunteer, and visit open space should be created
- Engagement with Canal and River Trust in order to improve connectivity between otherwise fragmented habitats

5.0 Findings

The development of the strategy has been informed by

- Secondary research of existing Walsall council data / information
- Primary research by CFP focusing on consultation, service delivery and quality audits
- Secondary research on national data / information – largely using the State of UK Parks data set as a reference point

Please see Figure 7 overleaf for the evidence base diagram, demonstrating the research and work which has fed into this Strategy.

5.1 Alternative models of service delivery / Future Parks

Two key pieces of research were undertaken in 2017 to look at what options the authority might have in terms of diversifying service delivery

- A discussion paper presenting alternative models based on a national policy review, exploration of the types of model available and best practice case studies
- Following on from the above a financial modelling exercise was carried out using the 'Future Parks' model developed by the National Trust and Social Finance

The research presented numerous possible future management models for parks and green spaces. It showed that there is no single answer to funding parks in the future and that a blended model could fit the local authority - such a blended model could include local authority funding, commercial income, developer contributions, endowments, grants, fundraising, community involvement and changes to parks management and maintenance systems. A lot however, depends on the portfolio of spaces that the authority manages as some parks and green spaces do not have facilities in which to generate income or active local volunteer groups.

Consultation Workshop Reports (Feb 18)

MEL F2F Research 2017

People Counter Data (2017-18)

Section 106 Review (ongoing)

Allotment Associations Survey (Jan 18)

External Funding Records

Alternative Models Report (Aug 17)

Review of achievements since last strategy

Walsall Green Space Strategy

National Trust Future Parks Report (Dec 17)

Volunteer Records

Friends Group Survey (March 18)

National Policy and Research

Household Survey (March 18)

Health Data

State of UK Parks

IMD Data

Quality Audit (July 17)

Green Space Mapping

Policy Review (Aug 17)

Some options included

- Status quo - Local authority continues to run public parks whilst trying to reduce costs and/or increase income from e.g. increased commercial activities.
- Shared services / joint working - These are joint collaborations between two or more local authorities in which some (or all) functions related to service delivery are shared.
- Multi-agency public sector funding - Funding can be accessed from a range of government departments and agencies for the delivery of projects that meet cross-cutting targets.
- Taxation initiatives - Funding from local taxes can be directed specifically towards the management and provision of green space.
- Planning and development opportunities - Planning obligations / developer contributions might fund the provision of green space in new residential and commercial developments.
- Increase council tax - Local authority to raise and ring-fence funds required for park management through increase in council tax.
- Income generating opportunities - Diversity income including commercial approaches to generate income to sustain parks and green spaces through rents, events, fees and charges, concessions, taxation, ecosystem development and commercial developments.
- Outsource management (Private Sector) - Local authority continues to own parks but outsources maintenance and operations.
- Trusts - Community trusts acquire and manage land and other assets in order to provide a benefit to the local community and ensuring that the assets are not sold or developed.
- Parks Trust with / without endowment - Establish independent charitable trust which park assets are transferred into e.g. under long lease. However, it should be noted that, irrespective of the management model, income and revenue remains essential.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
5.1	Test and rethink new business models for individual parks and wider park services
5.2	Grow commercial activities e.g. work with businesses through direct sponsorship and corporate volunteering and test various approaches to fundraising, crowd sourcing and subscriptions.
5.3	Seek to diversify funding streams for parks and open spaces including greater income from external funding, partnerships, commercial activities, fees and charges, and through planning obligations / developer contributions.
5.4	Seek to form new organisational structure partnerships i.e. deliver shared services with more integrated management systems across council departments.
3.1	Change approaches to maintaining parks and green spaces, including rationalising and naturalising some management activities e.g. the maintenance of grasslands to increase urban biodiversity.
2.2	Look to develop partnerships with other organisations and seek asset transfer options for assets / facilities within parks e.g. football pitches/pavilions.
1.1	Continue to support voluntary groups in order to make the most out of their contribution and seek external funding opportunities with these groups.
1.2	Increase volunteer training across Walsall through Friends Groups and ensure they are well equipped to assist with maintenance and organising events.

The 'Future Parks' work followed on from the above work.

The National Trust (NT) has developed a Future Parks Trust model designed for local authority consideration. The National Trust believe that their Parks Trust model provides a potential solution to the threat to parks and green spaces. In the Parks Trust model, parks and green spaces would be transferred from the local authority to a borough-wide charitable Trust who could manage the parks and be financed through a model of endowment and enterprise. The endowment would provide a safe, sustainable income stream and the remainder of the funding could come from enterprising parks management and other income sources such as social finance.

The National Trust state that, compared to the alternatives, the Parks Trust model has the potential to secure long-term financial sustainability while retaining public accountability.

It is important to note that the Parks Trust model needs volunteers in order to ensure its long-term sustainability and to establish community links. The chart below shows how the model could work.
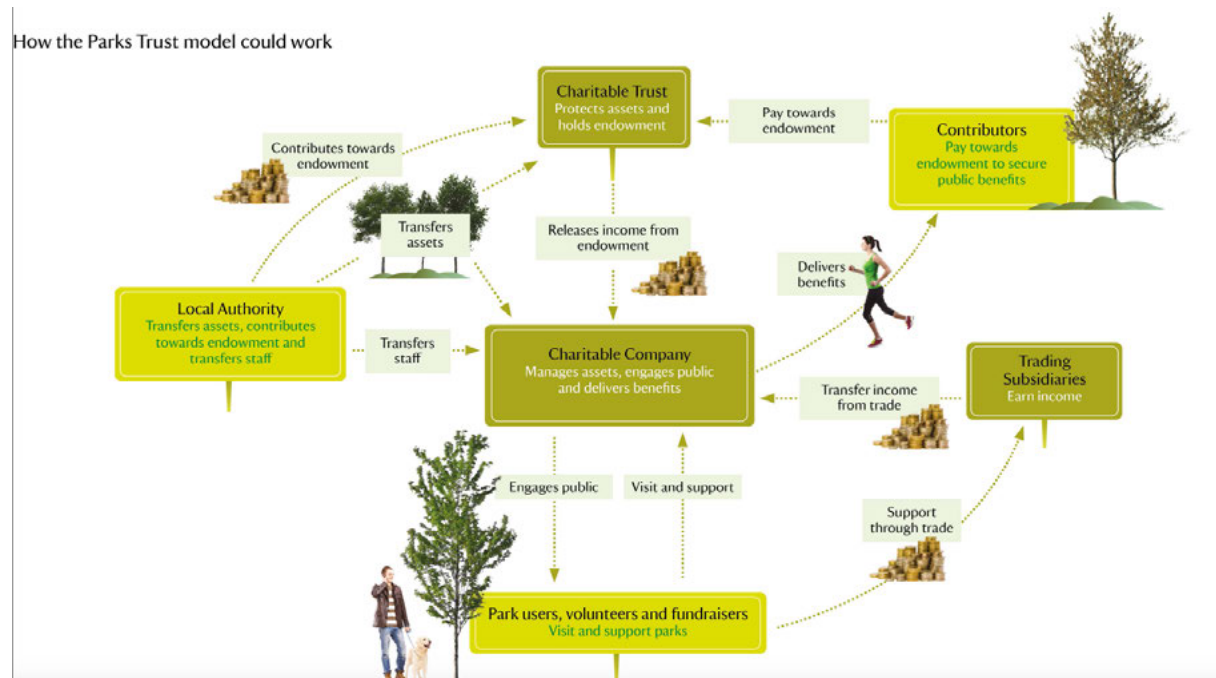
Image source: National Trust Future Parks

Financial modelling work was carried out in order to test initial viability of a Trust delivery model. It showed that the endowment required to support the model is between £34.9m and

£62.9m and to fund the transition process to a Trust, between £15.5m and £16.4m is required. It is suggested that to support new business opportunities in order to increase revenue levels, the trust would need to secure capital investment of £12.5m. Trust models are being pursued by other local authorities but currently there is no forum to share the learning across the sector.

Case Study – The Newcastle Parks Trust

The Newcastle model is being shared as this has received significant investment from HLF, the National Trust and the city council to set up the new Trust. Here the City Council's parks budget was reduced by 91% since 2010-11 so the council managed to secure a Resilient Heritage Grant from HLF of almost £250k to explore how it could set up a Trust. The Council has committed a further £9.5m for the Trust over the first ten years of its operation but the Trust will not take on all of the City's green spaces. It will take on 33 parks and allotments, which is about 15.5% of the city's total open space.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
5.5	Look to increase revenue generation per hectare.
5.6	Explore in further detail, the financial implications of transitioning ownership and operations / management responsibilities of the new Strategic Green Spaces to an independent charitable trust, supported by an endowment.
5.7	Seek contacts in other Council's who are exploring / developing Trust models and share the learning across the sector via the Midlands Parks Forum.

5.2 Policy review

The Policy Review considers the links between the review of the GSS and 74 related planning, regeneration, service, environment and health policies, plans, strategies, statements and research documents. Key implications for the strategy are set out below.

5.2.1 Planning, regeneration and the economy

Strategic provision for open space, the ability to use planning obligations to enhance green spaces and the requirement for a needs-based assessment to be used by Local Planning Authorities in strategic provision of green space is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The role of green space in place making and economic growth is set out in the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Black Country LEP's Strategic Economic Plans and this is reinforced by the planning policies set out in the Black Country Core Strategy and Walsall's saved Unitary Development Plan Policies and emerging Site Allocation Document. Specific planning policies relating to provision and protection of open space and a framework for securing planning obligations are set out in the Council's Urban Open Space SPD.

5.2.2 Green space management

In addition to a number of documents reviewed, The State of UK Public Parks 2016 sets out the benefits that parks and green spaces bring to individuals, communities, local economies and the environment, and demonstrates how effective alternative management and funding models can be in the face of resource pressures. This is reinforced by the findings of the House of Commons Public Parks Inquiry 2016-17 and the Communities and Local Government Committee's Public Parks Inquiry.

5.2.3 Health and wellbeing

A consistent theme in the review is the proposition from a wide spread of documents that urban green space is a necessary component for delivering healthy, sustainable and liveable places. Interventions using urban green space can deliver positive health (active lifestyles and mental well-being), social (interaction and community cohesion) and environmental outcomes for all population groups, particularly among lower socio-economic status groups. The GSS will support the Council in promoting green spaces and their benefits across all sectors and ensure integration of green space interventions within local development strategies and frameworks.

5.2.4 Transportation

The potential for green spaces to offer opportunities for more active forms of transport, with resultant health, congestion and air quality benefits are recognised in a range of documents including Physical activity and the environment Public health guideline PH8 (NICE) Building connected communities (LGIU/Ramblers) and the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan.

There are also opportunities to link green space to other potential transport corridors such as canal towpaths to provide safer traffic free connected routes, which are well signed and maintained.

5.2.5 Environment

The Birmingham and the Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan sets out a series of Key Priorities with direct relevance for the implementation of the GSS, as do the spatial priorities and priorities for targeting biodiversity action in the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area Ecological Strategy. These priorities have direct relevance for the implementation of the GSS. The Urban Forest Strategy for Walsall Council sets out the importance of urban trees for climate change mitigation, highway management, planning, financial benefits and biodiversity and has a number of implications relating to tree management to be considered in the GSS.

Walsall's emerging SAD identifies sites designated for their nature conservation value (a Special Area of Conservation, SSSIs, SINCs, SLINCs and ancient woodland as well as Local Nature Reserves). It also identifies where linkages between open spaces mean they can function as wildlife corridors. It is important to remember that protected species might be found on any open space site, whether they are designated for nature conservation or not."

5.2.6 Children's play and sport

The Walsall Playing Pitch Strategy, as updated in February 2018, sets out the current playing pitch provision in the borough and compares it to demand. The Walsall Play Strategy action plan sets accessibility standards for future play provision and seeks to raise the quality of play provision across the Borough.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
6.1	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to ensure that future updates of the Green Space Strategy respond to local, regional and national policy changes
1.10	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to contribute to the implementation of Walsall's Playing Pitch Strategy
7.23	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to continue to help deliver the Urban Forestry Strategy

5.3 Planning and green space

5.3.1 Section 106 funding

During the process of producing the strategy the authority commissioned an additional piece of work to review its position with developer contributions secured through planning obligations and design a process for the allocation of funding. This review has not concluded at the time of writing the draft strategy.

The review considers the national and local planning policy framework under which the Council may seek planning obligations, with reference to the changing policy landscape around the Community Infrastructure Levy.

It contains an assessment of developer contributions remaining unspent, and as a result of reviewing all the Section 106 agreements and Unilateral Undertakings which generated them, sets out the current position with an assessment of the financial exposure to the Council from unspent contributions.

It is intended that the review will go on to make recommendations on how:

- The Council may minimise risk of claw back of developer receipts with a 'short shelf life'
- The Council may reduce risks associated with its management of planning obligations

- Contributions may be allocated to revenue and capital activity in line with national and local policy, and seek to change local policy where appropriate
- Contributions may be allocated to the Council's hierarchy of green spaces
- The Council may create a democratic and transparent methodology for the allocation of developer contributions in line with good governance
- The Council may consider rolling out this approach to other service areas benefitting from developer contributions

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
5.8	The authority should complete and implement the review of open space s106 allocations

5.3.2 Future housing development

Policy HOU1 of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) states that sufficient land will be provided across the Black Country to deliver at least 63,000 net new homes over the plan period 2006-2026. Of these, the BCCS indicates that 11,973 can be accommodated in Walsall.

As at April 2015, 5,238 of these homes had already been completed and 669 were under construction. A further 4,034 homes had planning permission but had not yet commenced construction.

This means that sites to accommodate at least 2,032 homes still need to be found in the Borough in addition to those that have already been granted planning permission. The Site Allocation Document seeks to allocate land to accommodate many of these additional homes. The SAD lists sites for 3,147 dwellings, which with other sites, should provide land for 6,876 dwellings, which is in excess of the 5365 required to meet the BCCS target set out above.

The implications for the Green Space Strategy (accepting that that there is no certainty over when or if these sites will come forward for development) are set out below.

5.3.3 Potential loss of open space

Open space sites proposed for housing which are in both the 2012 Green Space Strategy and the Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) are shown in the table below. (A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a technical exercise to determine the quantity and suitability of land potentially available for housing development).

Site	Accessibility	GSS status	No. dwellings	Status	Implications for GSS	Change (ha) -/+
Land at Heathfield Lane West, Darlaston	Limited Contains SINC, SLINC and PROW	Not listed in GSS data	304 approved under current full PP	207 homes proposed under application 18/0072 currently being determined.	Site is 8 ha OS but 1.98 ha of onsite POS is being provided and maintained by a management company set up by the developer. No commuted sum is proposed in addition to the open space due to viability	-6.02
Cricket Close Allotments and Tennis Courts	Limited	Sites 7004 and 7006	54	Potential surplus open space.	Loss of limited accessibility open space	-1.82
Festival Avenue (2 development sites on one space)	Unrestricted	4018	24	Surplus Open Space. Formerly playing field for now demolished school.	Loss of unrestricted accessibility open space	-1.01
Mill Street (railway cutting and rear of North Street industrial units)	Unrestricted	Part of Brewer St Site 2006	0	Site is in "Green Lane Cutting" SLINC, to be considered by local sites partnership	Loss of unrestricted accessibility open space	-0.9
Mill Street (road frontage)	Unrestricted	Part of Brewer St Site 2006	8	Disposal 2016-19. Site is in "Green Lane Cutting" SLINC, to be considered by local sites partnership	Loss of unrestricted accessibility open space	-0.2

Notes:

OS – Open Space

POS – Public Open Space

PROW – Public Right of Way

SINC - Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

SLINC – Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation

As a result of the above, there will be a net loss of 7.84 ha of limited accessibility open space and 2.11 ha of unrestricted accessibility open space.

5.3.4 Acquisition of open space – housing space

This will take two forms; (a) direct provision of new open space by developers to mitigate for the extra pressure caused by occupants of new development and (b) commuted sums for offsite provision. The Urban Open Space SPD (2006) sets a threshold of ten or more dwellings as a trigger for open space contributions to be sought. It would be sensible to enhance, improve and develop existing green space sites rather than (always / necessarily) taking on new and additional sites and liabilities that lead to additional pressure and constraints on the existing staff, grounds maintenance resources and the service's revenue budget.

Whereas the SPD notes that in certain circumstances there will be the need for on site provision rather than the presumed financial contribution, there is no stated threshold at which on site provision is to be made and this decision is carried out on a site by site basis.

Within the SHLAA there are 406 potential housing sites listed of which 128 sites are predicted to deliver ten or more dwellings and are therefore over the threshold which, subject to final development density, layout and viability tests, is likely to generate open space financial contributions. Consequently, it can be predicted that some 31% of developments will generate developer contributions toward open space enhancements.

The Council's 2010 Housing Needs Assessment sets out predicted demand for house types and tenure in the Borough. From this, an estimated breakdown of house types by bedroom size may be combined with the proportion of developments which are likely to generate developer contributions and predicted housing completions in order to generate a projection of the likely receipts from planning obligations over the life of the strategy.

This equates to a maximum potential developer contribution over the life of the GSS of £509,370 per annum, however this figure is likely to be reduced as a consequence of site based constraints reducing the capacity for unit numbers, viability challenges by developers, and on site provision of open space in part or full by developers. A review of the Black Country Core Strategy has begun.

There is a shortage of information on the potential quantum of new open space that might be provided as part of new housing developments, and the Council will need to clarify its position on the maintenance responsibility for these to avoid additional revenue pressures.

There is also limited information on the potential amount of developer contributions coming in over the life of the Green Space Strategy and on priorities for an investment programme to use these receipts in accordance with the planning obligations that generated them.

At present it is not possible to say exactly how much development there might be and where any pressures are likely to fall geographically within the borough.

5.3.5 Acquisition of open space - non-housing space

The Council's SAD sets out proposals for additional, non-housing related open space on five sites, only one of which is estimated to be transferring during the life of the strategy. That site is the former VIGO Utopia landfill site, a decommissioned mineral site due to become open space once restoration works are completed.

There is no reference in the SAD as to the future responsibility for the maintenance of these open spaces. Where opportunities exist to maximise the value of new green space for nature conservation, the NIA Ecological Strategy 2017-2022 identifies areas of the landscape of particular importance and for linking existing sites.

The population of the Borough is predicted to rise to 287,000 by the end of the Green Space Strategy in 2022 and 313,000 by 2039[13]. According to these projections, this population increase is not predicted to occur equally across all age groups. The main driver of Walsall's population growth will be a rise in the number of people in the older age group: two out of every three additional people in Walsall by 2037 will be aged 65 or above.[14]

The total predicted growth in population is shown in the chart below;

Predicted Borough Population Growth

(Chart showing population in 100,000s on the y-axis ranging from 250 to 320, and Year on the x-axis from 2014 to 2039. The line rises steadily from approximately 274 in 2014 to approximately 313 in 2039.)

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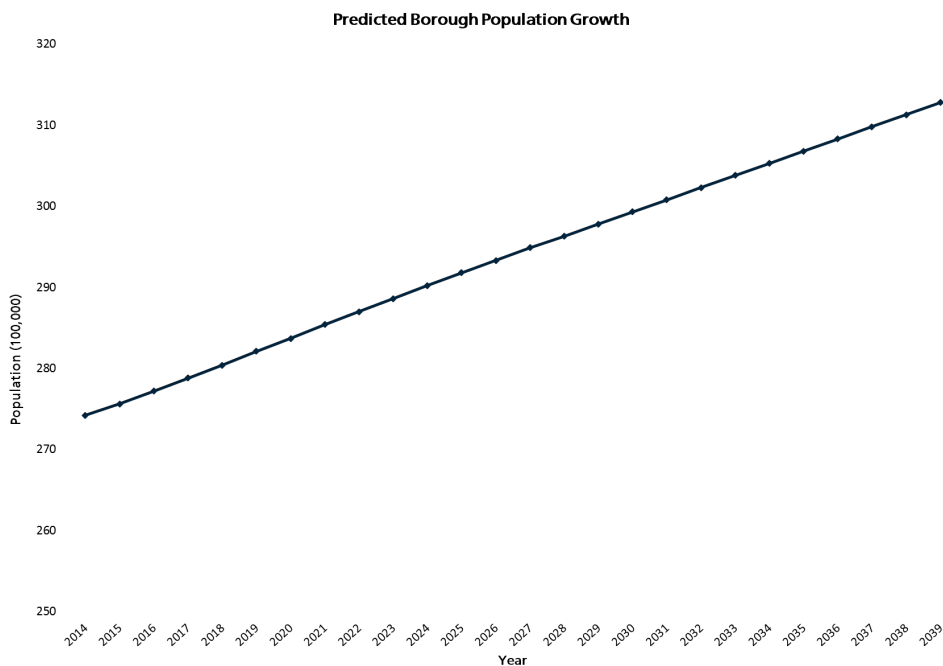
[13] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates)
[14] www.walsallintelligence.org.uk/WI/navigation/current_datasets.asp?A=P

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
5.16	The Council should: ○ Assess the likely amounts of open space needed as a result of future housing development and compare this with existing provision to identify what shortfalls there might be. ○ Estimate the likely scale of developer contributions there might be for the provision and improvement of open spaces. ○ Identify the likely needs for the future maintenance of open spaces and the potential sources of funding to support this.
6.3	The Council should seek to quantify the level of developer contributions anticipated over the Green Space Strategy and prepare an investment strategy
5.17	Identify whether the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (or any other possible funding mechanism) might be used to secure additional funding and to provide more flexibility in the spending of that funding
6.8	Review (future) developer contributions
6.9	Explore population growth and impacts on green space
6.10	Contribute towards the Black Country Core Strategy and the West Midland Combined Authority, to support the adoption and implementation alongside the Site Allocation Document

5.4 Visitor numbers

In 2017 Public Health funded the purchase and installation of a number of automated people counters and these were installed in Reedswood Park, Palfrey Park, and Willenhall Memorial Park, with others being funded by Heritage Lottery funding at Walsall Arboretum. There have been technical issues with a number of the counters meaning that data has been sporadic at some sites but there is sufficient data to be able to pull together an accurate overall picture of use for Walsall Arboretum plus estimates for the other three spaces.

Walsall Arboretum

There are nine counters installed in the historic core of the Arboretum covering all entrances. In the period February 2017 to February 2018 these recorded **913,409**-person visits.

Other parks

There have been technical and analysis problems but it is felt that the data for January to February 2018 is accurate. In order to arrive at an annual figure, we have used a model based on other people counter data or visitor counts held by CFP, which is shown below.

| January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December |
| 6% | 5% | 7% | 8% | 9% | 10% | 14% | 12% | 9% | 8% | 6% | 7% |
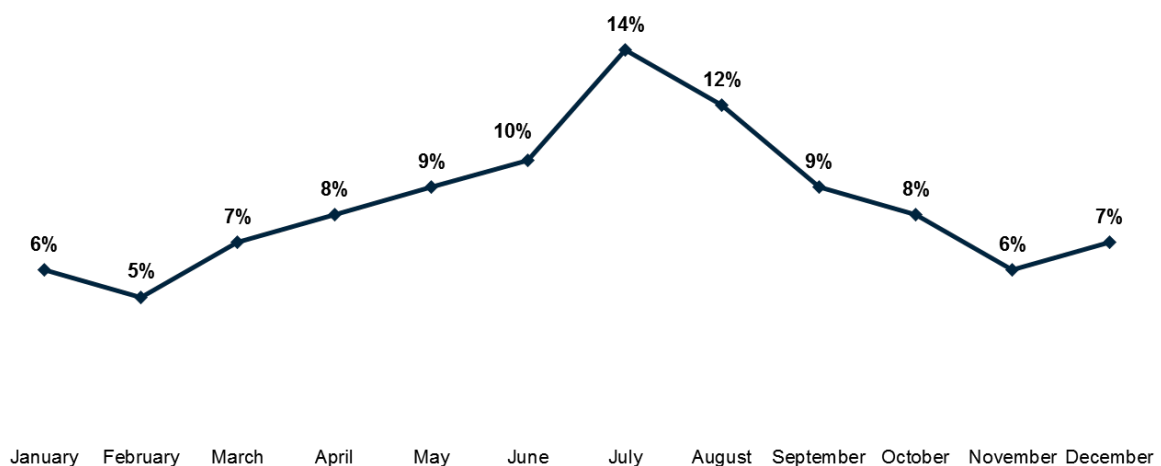
The chart shows that the January figure is around 6% of the annual visitor numbers so we have used that to arrive at the following figures.

Park	Jan	Annual
Willenhall Memorial	29,449	490,817
Palfrey	24,784	413,067
Reedswood	13,253	220,883

This shows that the two HLF funded parks now have visitor numbers over four hundred thousand per year. There were no accurate base line figures for these parks so it is difficult assess the impact of the restoration projects.

5.4.2. MEL research 2017

In June 2017 MEL research carried out face to face surveys at 20 parks across the borough. As part of this research they undertook head counts at each park which were done on one weekday and one day at a weekend and the breakdown by day was not available. It is therefore not possible to extract an annual person visit calculation from this work, instead it can only be used as a comparative exercise of the 20 sites visited. The data would suggest that King George V[th] in Bloxwich would be a good site to extend the visitor counter data gathering to.

We can compare these results with those generated in the household survey. The table below demonstrates the most popular parks and green spaces visited by respondents to the household survey.

Rank	Site name	2018 Household Survey	
		n	%
1	Walsall Arboretum (inc. Extension)	325	21.4
2	Doe Bank Park	172	11.3
3	Barr Beacon	148	9.7
4	King George V[th] Memorial Park	76	5.0
4	Blackwood Park	76	5.0
5	Pelsall Common (inc. North)	67	4.4
6	Reedswood Park	57	3.7
7	Aldridge Croft	42	2.8
8	Aldridge Airport	41	2.7
9	Clayhanger Common	33	2.2
10	Palfrey Park	29	1.9

As noted in the household survey section (see 5.9) the above table is heavily influenced by the geographical spread of respondents to the survey which appears to have artificially elevated Doe Bank Park and the lack of respondents from Willenhall has had the reverse effect on Willenhall Memorial Park.

5.4.3. Comparison with other sites

Since we only have reliable data for Walsall Arboretum we have taken the figures and compared them with other attractions regionally and also other green spaces. We have selected attractions that might be known to readers of the strategy such as regional parks or museums.

Attraction	District	Category	2016 visitors
MAC Birmingham	Birmingham	Other	1,130,030
Walsall Arboretum	Walsall	Green Space	913,409 (2017)
Beacon Park	Lichfield	Country Parks	850,000
Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery	Birmingham	Museums & Art Galleries	750,779
Willenhall Memorial Park	Walsall	Green Space	490,000e
Palfrey Park	Walsall	Green Space	413,000e
Coventry Transport Museum	Coventry	Museums & Art Galleries	390,342
Cannock Chase		Country Parks	379,729
Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum Cosford	Shropshire	Museums & Art Galleries	373,455
Kingsbury Water Park & Nature Reserve	North Warwickshire	Country Parks	357,347
National Memorial Arboretum	Lichfield	Visitor Centres	236,120
Ryton Pools Country Parks	Warwick	Country Parks	202,930
Reedswood Park	Walsall	Green Space	220,000e
New Art Gallery	Walsall	Museums & Art Galleries	161,262

The Table above shows the four Walsall parks in comparison to other regional attractions, demonstrating that the Arboretum is the second most popular attraction within the West Midlands, behind the MAC in Birmingham. Data has been taken from Visit England's Annual Survey of Visits to Visitor Attractions. Obviously, there are other attractions in the region, including many parks and green spaces, which do not subscribe to Visit England and are therefore not recorded in the above table.

CFP hold data for over 150 parks across the UK and the table below gives some further comparisons.

Attraction	Region	Visitors	Year
Markeaton Park	East Midlands	1,363,939	2017
Ferry Meadows	East of England	1,211,441	2016
Mary Stevens Park	West Midlands	1,303,675	2017
Walpole Park	London	1,020,000	2017
Hanley Park	West Midlands	949,056	2017
Walsall Arboretum	West Midlands	913,409	2017
Beacon Park	West Midlands	850,000	2016
Grosvenor and Hilbert Park	South East	845,072	2017
Cassiobury Park	London	800,000	2017
Moors Valley Country Park	South West	735,651	2016
Sherwood Pines Forest Park	East Midlands	672,885	2016
Clumber Park	East Midlands	648,352	2016
Willenhall Memorial Park	West Midlands	490,000e	2018
Pump Room Gardens	West Midlands	407,625	2017
Runcorn Hill Park	North East	273,616	2017
Lightwoods Park and House	West Midlands	270,000	2017
West Smethwick Park	West Midlands	256,840	2016
Reedswood Park	West Midlands	220,000e	2018
Headstone Manor	London	214,609	2017

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
1.3	All counters need to be calibrated to establish the number of people using the parks. A clear methodology then needs to be established to produce an accurate annual person count figure. Counters need to be checked monthly.
1.4	Counters could subsequently be rationalised and moved around other key spaces to build an overall picture of green space use across the borough
1.5	Combining the visitor numbers and site spend will give invaluable cost per visit information
1.6	Combining the visitor numbers and site spend will give invaluable cost per visit information
1.7	The Council needs to obtain and analyse the vehicle counter data for Barr Beacon
1.15	Seek to address the barrier s to green space access discovered in consultation, and to ensure a greater number of people with disabilities, older people and those of difference ethnicities use green spaces

5.5 Quality audit

A quality assessment was carried out by the consultant team across 53 green space sites. Sites identified were assessed against the criteria derived from the national standard for parks and green space quality, the Green Flag Award. The same assessment was used in the 2005 and 2011 quality assessments. Whilst the Green Flag Award contains both desk and field research, this audit was limited to site-based assessments; therefore, the final scores should not be read as the site's score against the Green Flag Award but will give an indication of the relative quality of the green spaces assessed.

The criteria used in the field assessment were as follows:

A Welcoming Park
- Welcoming
- Good and safe access
- Signage
- Equal access for all

Healthy, Safe and Secure
- Safe equipment facilities
- Personal security in park
- Dog fouling
- Appropriate provision of facilities
- Quality of facilities

Clean and Well Maintained
- Litter and waste management
- Grounds maintenance and horticulture
- Buildings and infrastructure maintenance
- Equipment maintenance

Sustainability
- Arboriculture and woodland management

Conservation and Heritage
- Conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora
- Conservation of landscape features
- Conservation of buildings and structures

Marketing

- Provision of appropriate information
- Provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information

When the scores are examined by type of space;

Typology	No. of sites	Quality Range 2017	Average Quality Score 2017
Parks & Gardens	26	30 - 77	49
Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	13	29 - 59	41
Amenity Green Space	8	11 - 48	32
Outdoor Sports Facilities	3	31 - 38	30
Provision for Children and Young People	3	16 - 38	32
TOTAL	**53**	**1 - 77**	**42**

Whilst there are overall trends by green space type there is considerable variation in the quality of all open space types at an individual site level. Figure 8, overleaf, shows the distribution of audited green space throughout the Borough by quality score.

The top ten sites overall are mostly parks with one natural and semi natural green space (Merrions Wood) included. The top three ranked sites are also the three sites where the authority has secured major restoration grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Rank	Site Name	Quality Score
1	Palfrey Park	77
2	Arboretum	74
3	Willenhall Memorial Park	66
3	Kings Hill Park	66
5	Leamore Park	65
6	Merrions Wood	59
7	Bloxwich Park	55
8	Pleck Park	54
8	Arboretum Extension & Golf Course	54
8	King George V[th] Playing Fields	54

The quality audit has highlighted a number of changes since the 2011 assessment was carried out. Changes have been noted on both a site basis and a quality criteria basis. Across all sites the following changes were noted;

- The average quality score has increased for all sites from 39 in 2011 to 42 in 2017;
- 75% of sites (40) improved upon their quality score since 2011, two remained the same and 23% (12) sites were seen to have declined;
- Sites that had improved have received significant investment in improvements since 2011 and/or seen beneficial changes in user behaviour and site management

The greatest variances in quality scores by site since 2011 are shown below;

The five sites with the greatest increases in quality scores:

Rank	Site ID	Site Name	2017 Quality Score	2011 Quality Score	Variance 2011 - 2017 (+ve / -ve)
1	4015	Kings Hill Park	66	39	27
2	8048	Arboretum	74	48	26
3	2061	Ross Farm	46	27	19
4	7031	Arboretum Extension & Golf Course	54	39	15
5	9006	Hawthorne Road	41	29	12

Brownhills Common
Holland Park
Narrow Lane Redgra
Bradbury Park
Pelsall North Common NR
King George Vth Playing Fields
Oak Park
Shire Oak Park
Pelsall Common
Mallory Crescent Open Space
Bloxwich Park
High Heath Park
Sandland Road
Shelfield Recreation Ground
Leigh's Wood
Brereton Road
Leamore Park
Hawthorne Road
Ross Farm
Anchor Meadow Playing Fields
Hawthorne Road
Rough Wood
Harlech Road OS
Odell Road Playing Fields
Rushall Playing Fields
Fibbersley LNR
Bentley Haye
Park Lime Pits
The Airport Playing Fields
Western Avenue
Hay Head Wood
Arboretum
Blackwood Park
Reedswood Park
Primley Avenue Park
Tyler Road
Bath Street Gardens
Willenhall Memorial Park
Owen Park
Pleck Park
Palfrey Park
Arboretum Extension
Barr Beacon
Goodwood Drive
George Rose Park
Delves Common
Doe Bank Park
Whitton Street Play Area
Lower Bradely Playing Fields
Kings Hill Park
Merrions Wood
Queen Street

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 8
Quality Audited Sites
- Thematic Map

LEGEND

Above average (24)

Below average (29)

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Kings Hill Park recorded the largest increase to its quality score of all the green spaces assessed since the 2011 Quality Audit, which may be largely attributed to the package of improvements associated with the Fields in Trust initiative that were completed in 2013.

The five sites with the greatest decreases in quality scores are set out in the table below:

Rank	Site ID	Site Name	2017 Quality Score	2011 Quality Score	Variance 2011 - 2017 (+ve / -ve)
49	4011	Owen Park	26	31	-5
50	8006	Odell Road Playing Fields	20	27	-7
51	8014	Park Lime Pits	34	44	-10
51	1034	Cuckoos Nook & The Dingle	31	41	-10
53	8041	Bath Street Gardens	36	47	-11

The greatest decline in sites is due to reduced maintenance levels and lack of investment, which has had an adverse effect on the quality of maintenance of hard and soft landscape elements; on litter and fly tipping and quality of welcome.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.1	Establish a system of annual quality inspections targeted at the revised strategic sites
7.2	Use the quality audit findings to inform site specific management plans and action plans
7.3	Use the quality audit to help inform site specific management plans and action plans to improve the quality of the new strategic sites to a minimum score of 45

| 7.4 | Use the quality audit scores to inform a planned approach to securing additional Green Flag Awards |

5.6 Green Flag Award

The Authority currently holds five Green Flag Awards for the following sites

Name of site	Award held since
Blackwood Park	2015
Merrions Wood	2010
Palfrey Park	2007
Rough Wood and Bentley Haye	2014
Willenhall Memorial Park	2008

The previous strategy set out an ambitious plan to support groups to secure the Community Green Flag Awards but this was not delivered indeed the number of sites with the award has increased by 2. The authority has also secured Green Flag Community Awards for Chuckery Pocket Park and Old Hall People Partnership

As part of the strategic sites review (see section 6.1 below) an outline plan has been developed to increase the number of sites with the award.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.5	Adopt the suggested revision of strategic sites and the action plan to secure additional Green Flag Awards.
7.6	Carry out a full Green Flag assessment on those sites identified as being potential future applications and develop detailed action plans to secure the award

5.7 Allotment associations survey

In 2017 a survey was distributed to all of the current Local Management Associations (n=21) and 15 organisations submitted a response (71%). N.B> since the survey was issued a further LMA has been formed so the new total of groups is 22.

5.7.1 Current site issues

Groups were asked to rank the issue that they might currently be facing in areas such as maintaining boundaries and security, maintaining huts, maintaining communal areas, infrastructure maintenance (e.g. paths, roads, water supply), dealing with fly tipping and waste disposal. Out of all of these issues dealing with infrastructure was the most serious issue.

5.7.2 Tenants and members

Around nine sites had vacant plots. Over a quarter of groups rated trying to attract new tenants as an issue or serious issue for them. Only four sites currently had waiting lists with the maximum number being 15 people on such a list.

The biggest issue about running the LMA was recruiting new members to the committee with over half of the groups taking part prioritising this. The second issue was around preparing, submitting and securing funding bids with almost a half of the groups concerned about this. The third ranked issue was having the skills or resource to be able to write a management plan for the site and to be able to prioritise maintenance or development tasks, a service that was traditionally supported by the council.

5.7.3 Future support

The top three areas where groups felt they need the most support in the future were

- Funding (86.7%)
- Guidance on legal and lease concerns (73.3%)
- Guidance on land management issues (46.7%)

Only two groups felt that their work would decrease in the future which is good news but that still will have a resource implication for the authority in terms of how it helps those groups.

Some groups were very positive about their work and the future

"as a society we have been very grateful for past financial assistance. It would be difficult for us to enhance develop our Allotment site without future funding".

Whilst the principle of local management is sound it is not an opportunity for a council to absolve itself of the statutory responsibly to provide allotments and it must always retain a resource to support groups either with finance to match fund bids or with staff expertise.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
2.3	Ensure that funding is retained to support allotments associations and provide a council contingency fund.
2.4	Retain a resource to support allotment groups either with finance or to match fund bids, or with staff expertise

5.8 Friends group survey

There are 23 friends groups within Walsall (Figure 9 on page 66). A survey was sent to the 23 friends groups across the borough, with responses received from ten (43%) groups.

5.8.1 Membership

All groups reported that membership was increasing and that current membership ranged up to 130 in one group with average size being 28 people.

5.8.2 Finances

Only one group reported that they thought their site budget had increased, most had stayed the same and two reported decreases of between 10% and 20%. The amount of funding raised by the groups also varied from £0 to £15,000. The average for parks is around £2700 per year.

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 9
Locations of Friends Groups and User Groups

LEGEND

Location of site with Friends Group or User Group

Brownhills Common

Clayhanger Playing Fields

Sefton Park Pool

Wallington Heath Pool

Pelsall Common

King George Vth Playing Fields

High Heath Park

Bloxwich Park

Rushall Playing Fields

Leamore Park

Fibbersley

Reedswood Park

Park Lime Pits

Arboretum

Blackwood Park

Poplar Avenue / Bentley Lane

Chuckery Green

Treyamon Road Linear Open Space

Willenhall Memorial Park

Wood End Road Play Area

Barr Beacon

George Rose Park

Doe Bank Park

Pleck Park

Moorcroft Wood

Palfrey Park

Kings Hill Park

Merrions Wood

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All groups reported their site quality as fair or good but the trend in quality over the last five years and the predictions for the next five years was more telling.

Status	change 2012-2017	change 2018-2022
Improving	40%	33.3%
Stable	30%	25%
Declining	30%	41.7%

When we compare this to the Friends group survey carried out as part of the State of UK Parks in 2016 we can see some very similar trends both looking backwards and concerns over the future.

Status	change 2013-2016	change 2017-2022
Improving	42.2%	32.9%
Stable	26.9%	29.2%
Declining	30.8%	37.9%

5.8.4 Support

Friends groups receive a range of support from the Parks & Green Space Service and this is highly valued. The groups support needs for the future focus on staff time to provide general advice and funding advice. Outside of the direct support from the authority groups do network through the Walsall Green Spaces Forum and also seek advice from wider networks or organisations.

5.8.5 The work of the group

The main focus for Friends groups has been helping with maintenance, securing funding and promoting and encouraging use of the spaces they are involved in. This is followed by improvement tasks and organising events.

Currently an overall system for capturing volunteer contributions is still in development but the data from the parks groups that responded suggests that around 1054 days were contributed by ten groups that provided information. That would be an average of around 105 days per group and, since there are 23 such groups across the borough that would give 2,415 volunteer hours per annum which even at a day rate of £50 per day gives **£120,750** as an annual in-kind contribution.

5.8.6 The future

Groups predict that they will have to do more particularly in the areas of recruiting new members (67%), fundraising (56%), networking with other groups (50%) and practical activities such as nature conservation (50%), gardening (40%) and events (44%).

In terms of support, the groups appear to have good levels of support from the Council, and do not expect a significant higher level of support, however, more help is desired in the areas including identifying funding, more staff time on site, and generally better communication with groups and the Council should consider prioritising these areas.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
2.5	Continue to provide dedicated support staff for community engagement
2.6	Continue to support the development of the Walsall Green Spaces Forum
2.7	Look at how information is shared and communicated between the Council and Friends groups and other partners
1.8	Find ways to help groups to recruit new members and look at alternative approaches to joint working between groups

2.8	Establish a system to record and collate volunteer in kind contributions
1.17	Work with One Walsall to recruit volunteers and obtain funding support

5.9 Household survey

In early 2018 a household survey was distributed to 9886 households across the borough and also hosted online. At the closing date we had received 1505 responses with the paper versions representing a return rate of 13%. At the outset it is important to note that the sample of respondents is skewed in terms of gender, age and geography with more women, more older people and more people from the east of the borough taking part (See Figure 10 overleaf).

5.9.1 Frequency of use and method of travel

Respondents were regular users of green spaces with almost two thirds (62.8%) using them weekly or more often which is an increase on the 2011 survey.

As in previous surveys and research Walsall Arboretum is the most visited green space in the borough.

The majority of people (64%) walk to green spaces, with around 29% driving. Cycling has slightly increased from the previous survey at 4%.

5.9.2 Quality

Respondents were asked about the quality of their most used space and of their view of green space across the borough has a whole. For their most frequently used space the overall quality average is 7.3. When quality is examined at a site-specific level the top performing spaces are shown in the table below

Rank	Site name	Number of users	Average overall quality (out of ten)
1	Walsall Arboretum (inc. Extension)	325	8.3
2	Cuckoo's Nook and The Dingle	12	8.1
2	Park Lime Pits	13	8.1
3	Aldridge Croft	42	7.9
4	Pelsall Common (inc. North)	67	7.8
4	Doe Bank Park	172	7.8
4	Blackwood Park	76	7.8
5	Willenhall Memorial Park	19	7.5

5.9 Household survey

Figure 10
Location of
Household Survey
Respondents

LEGEND

◆ Respondent
  Location

Boundaries

☐ Ward
  boundary
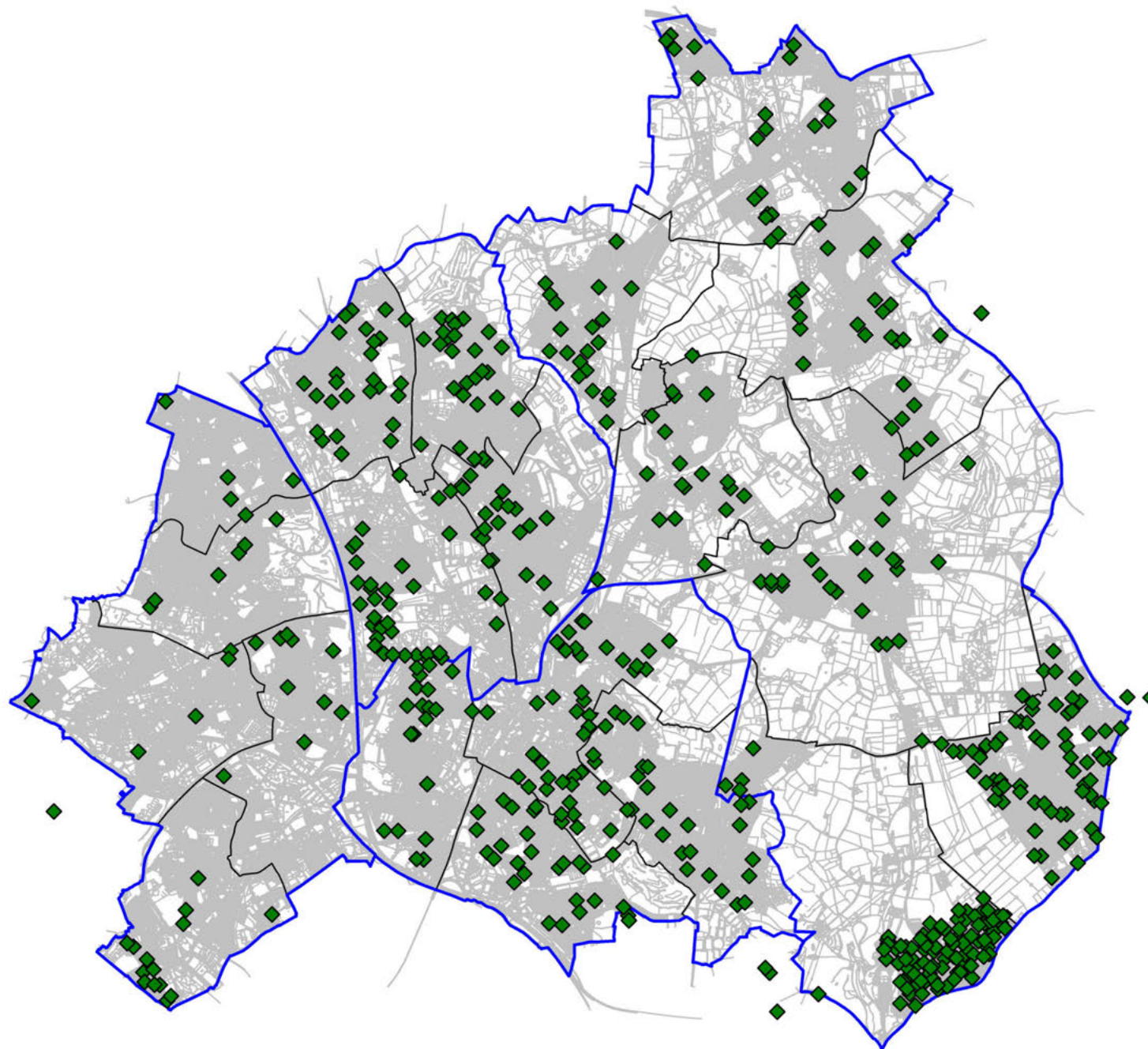
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Respondents were also asked to comment on their view as to the change in quality of their most used space over the last three years

Change	2018 Household Survey		2011 Household Survey (%)	2005 Household Survey (%)
	n	%		
Got better	470	36.0	33.5	29.4
Stayed the same	505	38.7	45.5	49.5
Got worse	331	25.4	18.9	21.1

There is a strong trend that people think that the quality of green space that they use most frequently has improved which is excellent news.

There is however cause for concern around the shift from 'stayed the same' to 'got worse' since the last survey was carried out.

The table below, show that Walsall Arboretum had the greatest proportion of respondents who felt that their most frequently used green space had improved over the past three years. These improvements have been recorded through the quality assessment.

Perceived Improvement			
Site name	Number of respondents	Respondents feeling the park has improved (%)	Quality Audit change
Walsall Arboretum (inc. Extension)	219	67.8	+26
Blackwood Park	40	52.6	+11
Willenhall Memorial Park	10	52.6	+2
Doe Bank Park	72	42.4	+10

On the other hand, the table overleaf, shows that around half of those who use Shire Oak Nature Reserve most frequently felt that the quality had declined. The quality audit revealed that all five of the sites, with the exception of Leamore (which scored above average) and Aldridge Airport (which was not audited) were considered to be low quality.

Perceived Decline		
Site name	Number of respondents	Respondents feeling the park has declined (%)
Shire Oak Nature Reserve	15	53.6
Leamore Park	9	52.9
Aldridge Airport	19	46.3
Brownhills Common	10	43.5
Barr Beacon	48	33.6

5.9.3 Satisfaction levels

Table 11 below shows respondents' levels of satisfaction with their most used green space. Overall, levels of satisfaction are high, with a 75.3% satisfaction rate. Only around one in eight respondents (13.0%) reported dissatisfaction with their most used space.

Change	2018 Household Survey	
	n	%
Very satisfied	371	27.2
Fairly satisfied	659	48.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	160	11.7
Fairly dissatisfied	120	8.8
Very dissatisfied	57	4.2

The table above shows the five green spaces that had the highest satisfaction rating from frequent users. Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle had the highest proportion of visitors who were satisfied of very satisfied with the green space.

Site name	Number of users	% of satisfied respondents
Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle	11	91.7
Walsall Arboretum	291	89.8
Blackwood Park	66	86.8
Park Lime Pits	11	84.6
Doe Bank Park	145	84.3

The top five reasons for using green spaces all have positive health benefits

Reason	2018 Household Survey	
	n	%
Fresh air	969	64.4
For walking / jogging	956	63.5
For health or exercise	712	47.3
To relax / peace and quiet	650	43.2
For wildlife / nature	503	33.4
To walk the dog	494	32.8
To visit the children's play area	481	32.0
As a through route	347	23.1
Events	334	22.2
As a place to meet friends	266	17.7

Respondents were asked how important different types of green space maintenance work were on a scale on one to five, where one was not important at all and five was very important. **Chart 2** below shows the average scores for each of the maintenance categories. Although there was very little variation in the average score given, the removal of graffiti, litter and fly tipping was considered the most important maintenance work, with an average score of 4.5 out of five. The least important was the maintenance of bowling greens, with 3.5 out of five.

This is similar to the 2011 household survey, when improved litter control / clearance was considered the most important maintenance task. Similarly, improved pathways and improvements to children's play were also considered priorities, while flower beds and maintenance of bowling greens were considered amongst the least important.

Category	Score
Removal of graffiti, litter and fly tipping	4.5
Maintenance of paths and hard surfaces	4.4
Maintenance of trees	4.3
Grass cutting	4.3
Maintenance of play areas, outdoor gyms and youth facilities	4.3
Maintenance of shrubs and hedges	4.3
Maintenance of signage and visitor information	4.2
Maintenance of buildings and structures	4.2
Maintenance of sports pitches	4.1
Maintenance of formal flower borders / beds	4.0
Maintenance of bowling greens	3.5

5.9.6 Development priorities

Respondents were also asked to rate development work on a scale of one to five. As shown in **Chart 3** below, the most important development work was considered to be making improvements to support and encourage wildlife, as well as developing partnerships to help improve sites. Marketing and promotion was considered the least important development work, with an average of 3.6 out of five.

Similar to the 2011 household survey, improving wildlife habitats was considered as important, however, more respondents considered community events and activities as important development work.

Respondents were asked about ways to supplement funding for green space. They were asked to rate six different options for future funding in a scale of one to five, once being do not support and five being full support. The results are shown in **Chart 4** below, with ratings one and two classified as oppose, and four and five as support.

Generally, respondents supported the future funding options, with the most support for greater funding from sources like the National Lottery, with over four fifths of respondents (82.3%) supporting this. However, over half (52.8%) of the total respondents opposed the suggestion of increasing charges for using green space facilities.

This is very similar to the 2016 State of UK Parks Public Opinion Poll, which found that 53% of respondents were opposed to increased charges. Similarly, around four fifths of respondents (79%) supported greater funding from sources like the National Lottery.
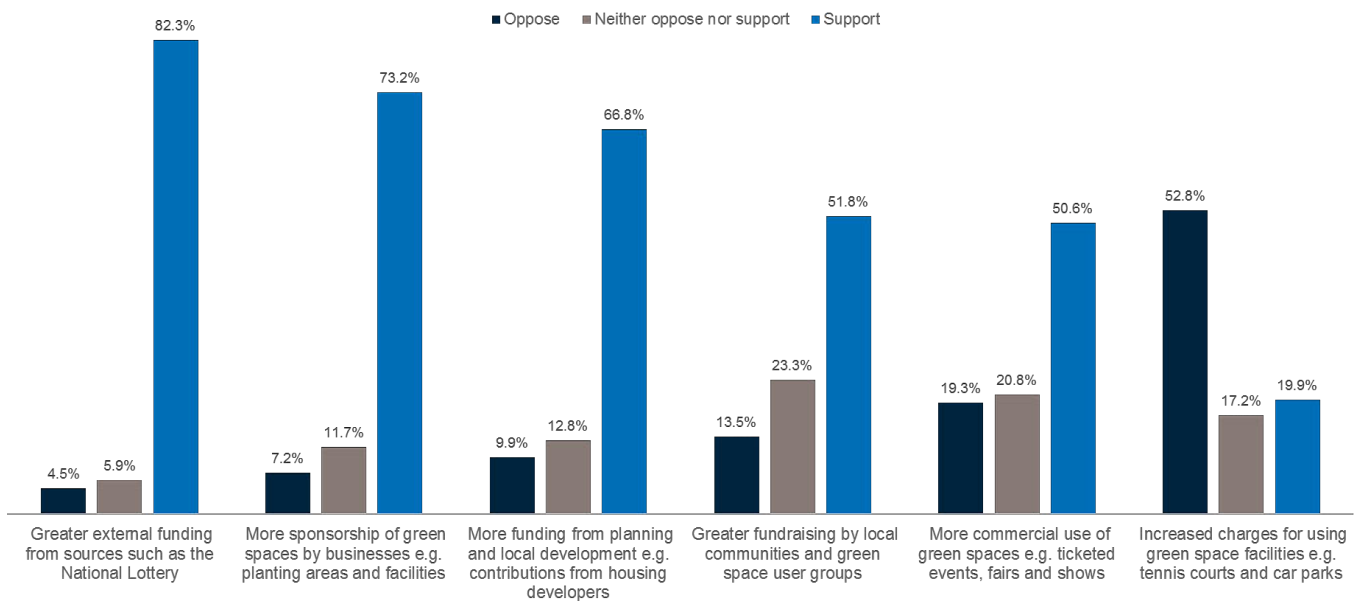
5.10 Consultation workshops

As part of the development of the strategy a series of workshops were run to explore service priorities. Three identical workshops were delivered

- Staff
- Friends and community groups
- Stakeholders

The workshops were designed to explore the three key components of green space service delivery

- Management
- Maintenance
- Development

Within each area nine different elements were ranked by participants to try to establish overall priorities.

Maintenance	Management	Development
Grass cutting	Managing staff	Developing volunteering
Ornamental borders	Managing facilities	Developing activities and events
Shrub and hedge maintenance	Writing management plans	Marketing and promotion
Tree maintenance	Managing events	Education and interpretation work
Graffiti, litter and fly tipping	Managing Health and Safety	Fundraising
Buildings and structures	Financial management	Developing new projects
Play areas, gyms youth facilities	Monitoring maintenance standards	Developing community involvement
Sports pitches	Setting fees and charges	Making improvements for wildlife
Paths and hard surfaces	Managing site security	Developing partnerships

Similar questions were asked within the household survey for maintenance and development, which allowed some degree of comparison.

5.10.1 Maintenance priorities

Graffiti, litter and fly tipping is clearly considered to be the most important element of maintenance activities. It is estimated that Walsall Council spends between £400k and £500k per year on this area of work.

At the other end of the scale there are very differing views between the three cohorts when it comes to **ornamental borders**.

Finally, there was significant discussion at the staff workshop about the maintenance of **sports pitches**. It was felt that the council was essentially subsidising sports clubs, which had a limited audience.

5.10.2 Management priorities

Questions relating to this component were not included in the household survey and therefore analysis is restricted to the officers, stakeholders and Friends Groups attending the workshops.
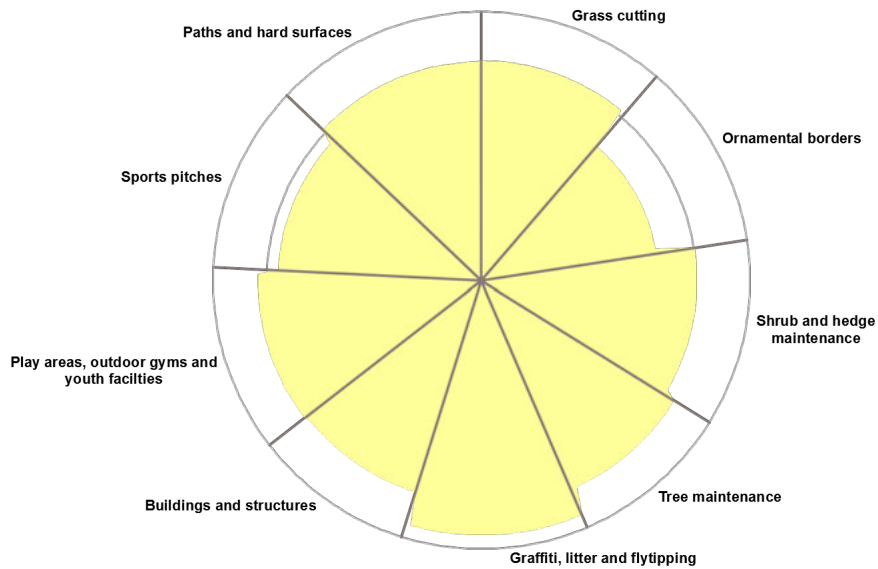
Health and Safety was seen by all groups as the highest priority. High priority was also given by all groups to managing facilities, managing staff, monitoring maintenance standards and financial management.
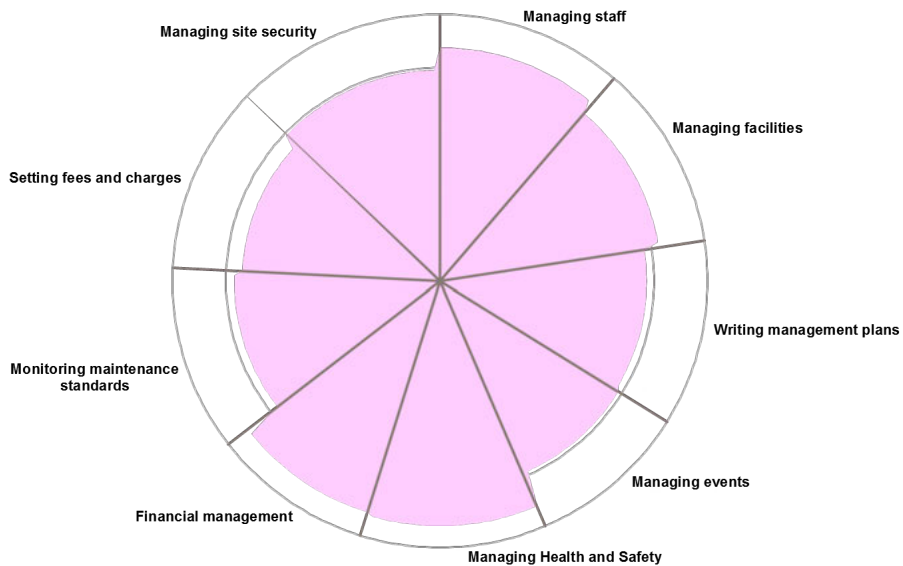
5.10.3 Analysis - development priorities

Again, the results from all workshops showed broadly comparable priorities. All groups shared the highest priority of developing community involvement, which would reflect the Officers', members and stakeholders understanding of the need to develop alternative ways of delivering services and the value that the Friends place on their own activity. All groups placed similar priority on making improvements for wildlife, marketing and promotion, education and interpretation and developing new projects.

However, the Officers and stakeholders groups placed a greater priority on developing partnerships and the Friends Groups placed a higher priority on developing volunteering, developing activities and events and fundraising.

To provide an overall set of priorities all scores from the workshops and the household consultation have been collated to provide aggregated scores as below;

All Scores - Maintenance

All Scores – Management (not asked in Household survey)

Developing partnerships

Developing volunteering

Making improvements for wildlife

Developing activities and events

Developing community involvement

Marketing and promotion

Developing new projects

Education and interpretation work

Fundraising
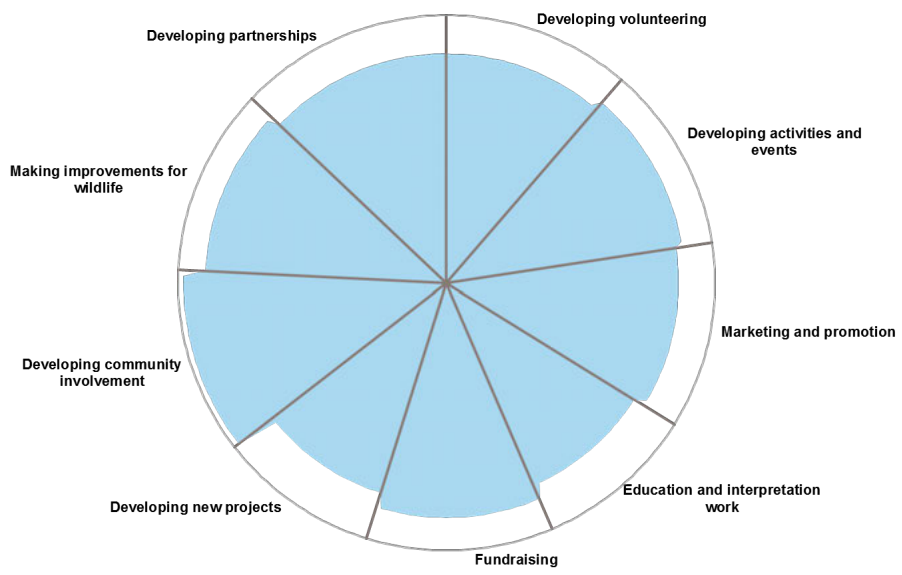
All Scores – Development

6.0 Analysis

6.1 Review of Strategic Sites

Through the development of this strategy it became clear that the number of sites assigned to be of 'strategic significance' in the 2012 Green Space Strategy was too many. The full hierarchy is shown below.

Strategic	43 sites comprising 83 smaller sites
District	86 sites
Community	126 sites
Incidental	67 sites

Figure 11 shows the distribution of the former strategic sites.

The reason for the statement that there are too many sites is that the aspirations for that number of sites in terms of maintenance, management and development cannot now be achieved with the significant decreases in resources that have been experienced over the five years since the last strategy was written. In the five years only around one third of spaces had had a management plan produced for them and only five sites had secured Green Flag Award, both of which were an aspiration for a majority of strategic sites.

The three levels of the hierarchy were defined as follows:

Category	Description	Indicative Walking Distance (metres)
Strategic	Typically high quality and high value spaces often over 10 hectares. Travel time may be up to 15-20 minutes via public transport links & on foot. Car parking may also be available. Sites offer a range of facilities or experiences or for semi-natural sites may included way marked routes. May be suitable venues for medium scale or larger events. More formal spaces are likely to include play provision at a community hub level (play strategy) Strategic spaces are the most significant in the wider area. There may be a number of strategic green spaces in any given area for key green space types (e.g parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space outdoor sports facilities).	1200m
District	Typically moderate quality and value spaces usually greater than 5 hectares or more in size	600m

	District level spaces serve residents across the local neighbourhood and most visitors travel on foot for 10-15 minutes Sites may offer a range of facilities to serve the local district but more limited in scale and range than Strategic spaces. More formal spaces may include play provision.	
Community	Typically spaces of fair quality and value appropriate to the local community often under 2 hectares in size. Local level use with most users travelling for no more than 5 minutes, usually on foot. Typically very limited facilities, access points may not be formalised and path networks may be limited. May include play provision but typically this is not present. May be important local level spaces for information recreation, dog walking and for young people.	400m

A method was devised to review the spaces using the following criteria from the previous strategy (2012):

- Size
- Quality and Value
- Access
- Facilities
- Proximity

In addition to the above criteria we have also used the following measures:

- Popularity
- Community engagement
- Management plan
- Face to face surveys
- Part of the operational teams' remit

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 11
2006 Strategic Green
Space Sites

LEGEND

Strategic Site

Boundaries

Ward Boundary

Walsall Localities

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When the various factors are used a short list of sites can be established that give a reasonable distribution across the borough, as shown in Figure 12.

It is also suggested that the significance of Walsall Arboretum sets it apart from other parks in the Borough and that it needs to sit at the top of the hierarchy as a Destination Park. It has visitors from across the region totalling almost one million, a dedicated team of staff, a range of high quality facilities and has seen the biggest restoration project in the borough in the past 20 years.

Hierarchy	Site
Destination Site	Walsall Arboretum
Strategic Site	Aldridge Airport
	Barr Beacon
	Blackwood Park
	Brownhills Common / Holland Park
	Doe Bank Park
	Fibbersley
	Goscote Valley
	King George Vth Playing Fields
	Kings Hill Park
	Leamore Park
	Merrions Wood
	Palfrey Park
	Pelsall Commons (inc. Pelsall North Common)
	Pleck Park
	Reedswood Park
	Rough Wood Chase
	Shire Oak Park
	Willenhall Memorial Park

During 2015 an initial review was undertaken of provision for children and young people across the Borough. Part of this work included the production a draft of hierarchy of play provision (see table below). As set out at Section 4.4.2 each of the Parks & Green Space Service manages and maintains 62 sites with provision for children and young people. Combining data held by the Infrastructure Maintenance Team with the GIS mapping data will enable the draft hierarchy to be revisited in line with the revised list of strategic sites. This will enable the service to see if the draft hierarchy is deliverable and if any revisions are needed before it can be adopted. Also, the geographical mapping will allow the authority to look at the catchments for different levels of provision to look if there are any areas of under of over provision around the Borough.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
1.14	Revisit the play hierarchy in line with the revised list of strategic green space sites
7.24	To ensure that play facility data is better integrated with the GIS data set

Walsall Play Strategy – draft hierarchy of provision

Category	Definition	Accessibility Standard		Type of provision	
		Component	Distance (walk)	Component	Minimum requirements
Play Hub	Destination sites located on Strategic Green Spaces which will include all of the following Children's play Teenage provision Adult equipment	Play	1000m	Play	5 types of play
		Teenage	tbc	Teenage	Wheeled sport – standard needed Ball courts – minimum of two goal ends
		Adult	tbc	Adult	12 items of equipment
Neighborhood Play Site	Will include both of the following Children's play Teenage provision	Play	600m	Play	5 types of play
		Teenage	800m	Teenage	Wheeled sport – standard needed Ball courts – minimum of two goal ends
Local play site	Will include either of the following Children's play Teenage provision	Play	600m	Play	(tbc) types of play
		Teenage	800m	Teenage	Wheeled sport – standard needed Ball courts – minimum of two goal ends

Brownhills Common /
Holland Park

Pelsall Common

King George Vth Playing Fields

Shire Oak Park

Rough Wood Chase

Goscote Valley

Leamore Park

Fibbersley

Aldridge Airport

Blackwood Park

Reedswood Park

Walsall Arboretum

Willenhall Memorial Park

Barr Beacon

Kings Hill Park

Pleck Park

Palfrey Park

Merrions Wood

Doe Bank Park

**Walsall Green
Space Strategy**

Figure 12
Proposed Strategic
Sites 2018

LEGEND

Strategic Site

Boundaries

Ward Boundaries

Walsall Localities

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Only seven of the selected sites have existing management plans. Whilst management planning has not formed part of the review process, there have been comments at the stakeholder workshops from individuals who felt that too much resource is spent writing plans that are not actively implemented or regularly reviewed.

The table below sets out a suggested programme for developing simplified management plans for higher quality sites that have the potential to go for future Green Flag Award applications. The second staff workshop developed a simple basis for plans using the management, maintenance and development headings.

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2021/22
Kings Hill Park	Reedswood Park	Brownhills Commons / Holland Park	Pleck Park	Aldridge Airport
Walsall Arboretum	Barr Beacon	Doe Bank Park	Pelsall Commons	Shire Oak Park
Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve		King George Vth	Goscote Valley	Leamore Park

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.7	Develop a simplified house style of management plans that meets Green Flag Award requirements
7.8	Develop the suggested management plans as per the timetable

The table below is a suggested programme to extend the current five awards to around 15 over the next five years. These are shown in figure 13, overleaf with green spaces, which have already obtained a Green Flag Award. There is a possibility of Aldridge Airport and Shire Oak Park being added to the programme subject to resources.

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Walsall Arboretum	Reedswood Park	Barr Beacon	Brownhills Commons / Holland Park	Pelsall Commons
Kings Hill Park	Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve	Doe Bank Park	Pleck Park	Shire Oak Park
		King George Vth		Leamore Park
				Goscote Valley

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 13
Proposed Green Flag
Award Sites by 2023

LEGEND

Site currently with GFA

Potential future GFA applications

King George Vth Playing Fields

Leamore Park

Rough Wood

Fibbersley

Willenhall Memorial Park

George Rose Park

Pleck Park

Palfrey Park

Arboretum

Blackwood Park

Barr Beacon

Doe Bank Park

Merrions Wood

Kings Hill Park

Walsall Council

cfp
people spaces places

The refocusing of operational activity that has taken place in recent years whilst a positive move, has been done without the benefit of any maintenance plans, which would define what tasks need to be undertaken, at what frequency and to what standard. From such plans a more accurate picture of the necessary resources needed to achieve the agreed standards could be produced.

Strategic sites should form the priority for the development of operational maintenance schedules, standards and costs. Currently it is felt that these sites are underfunded and more accurate costs need to be determined.

The section 106 review needs to look for opportunities to use the maintenance allocations within available budgets to create a resource to develop maintenance schedules.

It is known that there will be clear differences in basic costs per hectare of different types of space but establishing indicative costs for different levels of the hierarchy will ensure a more effective targeting of resources. Senior managers have suggested a 'gold, silver, bronze' type approach but without accurate information no criteria or measurements can be added to these levels.

The review processes have to be expedited quickly and the table below suggests a compressed timetable across the strategic sites.

April to December 2018	January to July 2019
Arboretum Blackwood Park Kings Hill Park King George Vth Merrions Wood Palfrey Park Rough Wood Chase Willenhall Memorial Park	Aldridge Airport Barr Beacon Brownhills Common / Holland Park Doe Bank Park Fibbersley LNR Pelsall Commons Pleck Park Reedswood Park Shire Oak Park

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.9	Develop maintenance schedules and associated resource / cost plans for all strategic sites by summer 2019
3.2	Review grounds maintenance standards / specifications to allow more ecological & low maintenance approaches which mitigate against climate change and bring benefits for biodiversity

6.1.5 Quality standards

The 2012 strategy set minimum quality thresholds for the three levels of sites in the hierarchy as shown in the table below.

Classification	Minimum quality standard
Strategic	45
District	35
Community	25

The table below shows how the revised list of strategic sites performed in 2017 against this standard.

Strategic site name	QA score 2017
Palfrey Park	77
Walsall Arboretum	74
Kings Hill Park	66
Willenhall Memorial Park	66
Leamore Park	65
Merrions Wood	59
King George V[th] Playing Fields	54
Pleck Park	54
Blackwood Park	53
Doe Bank Park	53
Pelsall Common	52
Holland Park	52
Rough Wood Chase	51
Shire Oak Park	48
Quality threshold	45
Barr Beacon	44
Reedswood Park	42
Fibbersley LNR	41
Pelsall North Common	36
Aldridge Airport	36
Brownhills Common	32

As can be clearly seen there are six sites that fall short of the minimum quality threshold. N.B. there are 19 sites in the above table as opposed to 17 in the main list as 2 sites were assessed on their own rather than as part of a group (Holland Park and Pelsall North Common).

It would be a relatively simple exercise to train staff in undertaking quality assessments and to develop and annual programme of auditing sites on a rolling programme.

When looking at district level sites there are five sites that do not meet the standard.

District site name	QA score 2017
Leamore Park	65
Bloxwich Park	55
Ross Farm	54
Holland Park	52
Shelfield Recreation Ground	49
Mallory Crescent Open Space	48
Bradbury Park	45
Delves Common	42

Rushall Playing Fields	42
Anchor Meadow Playing Fields	41
High Heath Park	41
Hawthorne Road	41
George Rose Park	39
Queen Street	39
Western Avenue	38
Primley Avenue Park	38
Leigh's Wood	36
Lower Bradely Playing Fields	36
Pelsall North Common NR	36
Quality threshold	35
Park Lime Pits	34
Cuckoos Nook & The Dingle	31
Oak Park	30
Hay Head Wood	29
Owen Park	26

Finally, when looking at the community level spaces, sites failing the standard are**;**

Narrow Lane Redgra	11
Whitton Street Play Area	16
Odell Road Playing Fields	20

It is clear that not all sites will receive equal inputs of maintenance, management and development activity and some tough decisions will have to be taken in the future about which sites will just receive one or two elements of service delivery and indeed how even those areas may need to be reduced in scope.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.10	Seek to increase the quality score of the failing strategic sites to meet the minimum standard within three years
7.11	Seek to increase the quality score of the failing district and community sites to meet the minimum standard within five years

7.12	Adopt the minimum quality thresholds by hierarchy (Strategic = 45, District / Neighbourhood = 35, Community = 25)
7.13	Develop a pool of staff trained to undertake quality assessments
7.14	Develop an annual quality assessment process for all strategic sites
7.27	Develop clear standards of management, maintenance and development for non-strategic sites
1.14	Review of the barriers that members of the public face in accessing green spaces to identify if transport is indeed a factor

6.2 Allotments

As highlighted earlier this is an area of the service that has seen dramatic changes over the past five years and presents some critical issues to the authority. In 2011 it was recognised that although associations were at that time provided with a grant, leases had not been renewed for many years and some sites directly managed by the authority had previously declined because of the lack of a dedicated officer and limited volunteers to deal with day to day issues. The resulting issue was some council sites having considerable numbers of unused plots.

At that time the idea of Community Gardens was also conceived as spaces where people could grow food but without the statutory designation associated with allotments. The council invested staff time and funding both from Public Health and Social Care, and achieved some success to promote the concept and support projects. At that point in time there were two staff dedicated to allotments and community gardens with an annual revenue budget for allotments of £44,000.

Gardens were created by Walsall Council Goscote Greenacres and at Darlaston within an existing allotment site at Victoria Road. Other gardens such as Caldmore Community Garden were

created through community led projects on derelict land which had previously experienced some serious anti-social behaviour issues. Initially supported by Clean and Green, the garden very soon was led and managed by the local community, this garden has gone from strength to strength. Reedswood Community Garden, based at Lane Avenue Allotment site was also opened in 2017, through initiatives from West Walsall Leisure Gardeners.

Community gardens continued to be supported, but officers spent the next two years focussed on supporting the regeneration of sites as well as supporting associations on self managed and council led sites. Following consultation, a new lease was developed which has been highlighted as good practice by The National Allotment Association.

Currently (2018) there is no post dedicated to allotments and community gardens, and instead the development workload is spread across the Strategic Development Officers and Community Liaison Officers.

All Allotment Associations now have an Association and the majority have agreed lease terms. The survey of the associations set out at section 5.7 above showed that they are concerned about how they deal with infrastructure works in the future and this is a situation being worsened by the 75% revenue budget reduction to the Parks & Green Space Service budget for allotments that now sits at £11,000 per year.

A further issue relates to how the council supports the groups themselves and builds their capacity. Both officers and volunteers recognise that this is an issue and has only become a serious one since the authority deleted the dedicated posts to do this work. Associations need help with recruiting new members to their committee to spread the workload and provide continuity in the future, they need help to write funding bids and also the management plans for the sites that will help them prioritise work and support funding applications.

The speed at which the council acts in resolving leases for the groups has been a major concern, it is not unusual for this to take two years.

There is also a concern about the economic viability of the associations as the council resource dwindles and more pressure may be placed on volunteers to balance the books, through increased rents. However, the National Allotments suggest that this may be the most economically viable way, as volunteering can keep rents at a modest level of around £35 per year, whereas local authorities realistic cost is around £75.00 to cover officer costs, (even if resources to manage sites exist)

Finally, at a strategic level there are three sites which have been unused for some time. One site is currently being regenerated by the local community with support from the CLO and SDO teams plus some initial funding from the service and some help from grounds maintenance to clear the site.

The two further unused sites have been the subject of initial options appraisals but currently there is no staff time or funding to take these sites forward.

Although active and unused allotments vary in size and levels of cultivation, they are of value to nature conservation. They have been open land for a number of years and some contain remnants of semi-natural habitats that were present before urbanisation e.g. hedgerows, veteran trees, ponds and streams. Allotment flora is similar to that of arable margins, whilst the combination of cultivation techniques, structures, crop varieties and composting areas provides habitats for a variety of species.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
3.3	Take forward the options appraisals for the two unused allotment sites should the resource become available
2.9	Look at how the recently created volunteer coordination and support role within the Strategic Development Officers can help support Local Management Associations
7.15	Explore how allotment sites could access any additional funding

6.3 Community engagement

Walsall Parks and Green Space Service probably has the longest track record of working with the community of any local authority in the UK, it was cited as an example of good practice by central government as long ago as 1996[15] and some groups from that time are still going today.

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[15] People Parks and Cities

Even before the advent of the Local Involvement Programme (LIP) at that time the authority had already been running its 'Metro Parks' initiative targeting capital funding at community led change. LIP became the Green Space Improvement Service which has then morphed into the Environmental Improvement Team which still retains a community engagement and project development focus.

The support provided by the team is valued by the members of the community who give up their time to work in partnership to try to improve green spaces across the borough.

Volunteering opportunities outside of friends groups are advertised through One Walsall, these include community liaison, strategic development, countryside management & infrastructure. These opportunities tend to be more placement related.

The council has recently produced a corporate volunteering booklet to promote projects looking for funding or for corporate social responsibility type volunteering but it is too soon yet to assess the impact of this.

A service wide database of volunteering has also been created and from this the service can begin to make estimates of the total in kind contribution. The Friends group survey also asked respondents to estimate annual volunteer days and from the ten that responded an overall estimate for all 23 has been calculated to be in the region of £120,000.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
1.9	Develop a system to accurately captures the total in kind volunteer contribution, volunteer profile and types of activity
2.6	Continue to support the development of the Green Spaces Forum

6.4 Green Space and Public Health

As set out earlier Public Health Walsall have been working in partnership with the Parks & Green Space Service for the past two years and have funded activities, people counters, face to face research and signage.

The Healthy Spaces Vision (May 2017), which formed the basis of the partnership approach, set out five key principles;

1. Increased throughput with robust systems for monitoring and evaluating outcomes
2. Increase sustainability through increased use of volunteers and up skilling existing internal and external staff
3. Focus on activation rather than direct delivery
4. Development across a range of settings
5. Streamlined through single team

Some key performance indicators were suggested in the vision document, which included;

- Numbers of target participants,
- Changes in health status (e.g. WEMWBS),
- Income
- Numbers of Volunteers,
- Target groups such as Looked After Children,
- Numbers of staff trained (role specific, wider competencies)
- Public Health Outcomes Framework such as utilisation of green spaces, inactive residents, emotional health and wellbeing.

In terms of developing an evidence base there are two areas that are acknowledged to need more work. Firstly, the targeting of resources based on research and evidence and secondly gathering data and information to begin to assess the impact of interventions.

6.4.1 Developing the evidence base

To date little work has been done within Walsall to look at the links between green space quantity, quality and accessibility to wider factors such as deprivation and health. Data is often out of date or is not able to be broken down to be able to be analysed at a small enough scale.

The WHO piloted indicators in 2016 as part of a European focussed research project and it would be relatively straight forward to replicate this work, indeed the 2006 green space strategy used similar techniques.

The following data sets could be used

- 2015 Sport England Active lives data
- 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data
- 2018 Walsall green space quantity data
- 2017 Walsall green space quality data
- 2017 Walsall face to face market research
- 2018 Walsall green space household survey data
- Additional site quality audits in the future

One area that we have been able to examine is a potential relationship between green space quality and deprivation.

Figure 14 on page 88 shows deprivation expressed at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) and quality derived from the 53 sites that were audited as part of this strategy. It should be noted that 53 sites is a small sample of the 300 sites across the borough with unrestricted access however it is a useful starting point.

Walsall Green Space Strategy

Figure 14
Health, Deprivation
and Quality
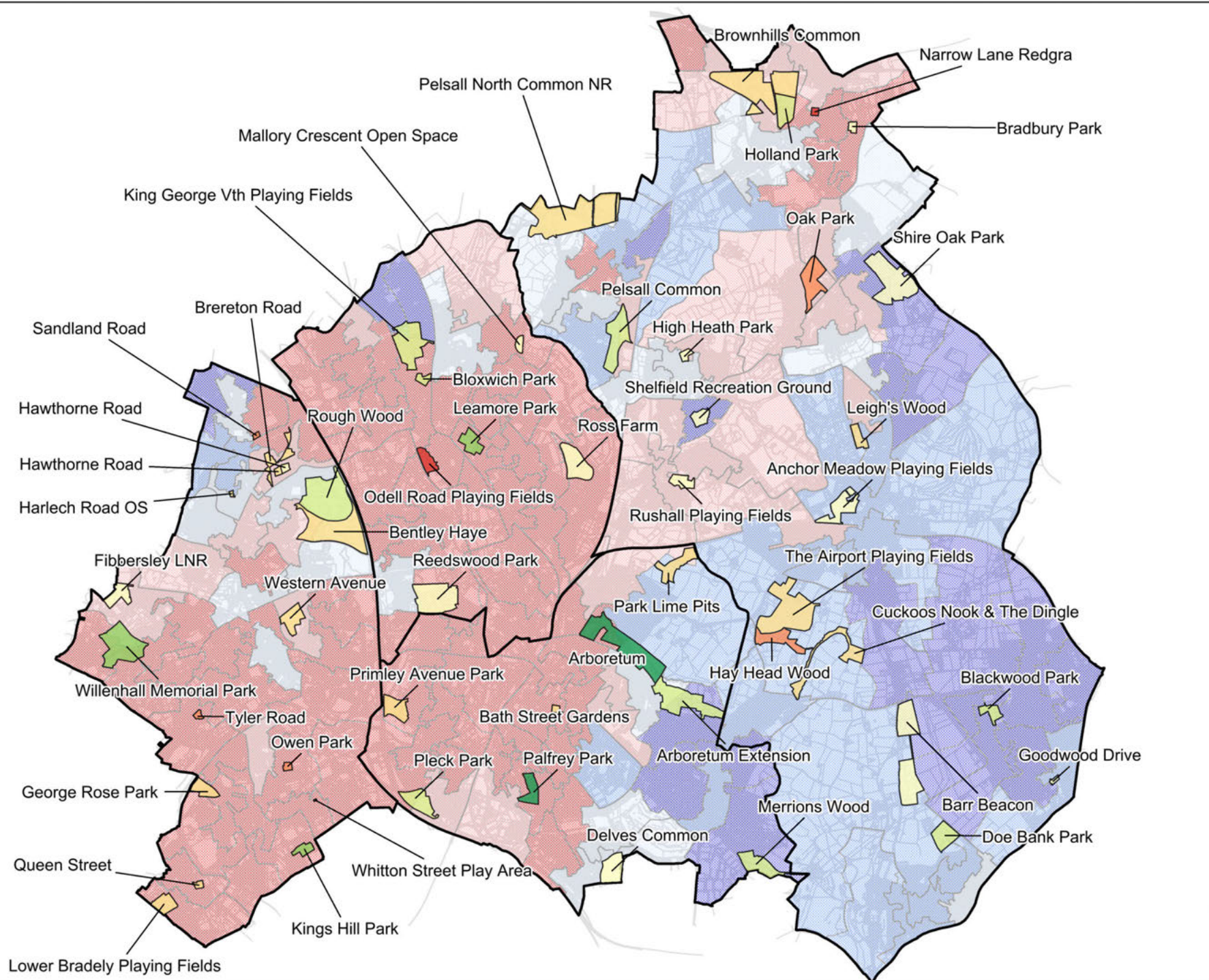
LEGEND

IMD, 2015 (%)
Least deprived

	80 - 100
	60 - 80
	40 - 60
	20 - 40
	0 - 20

Most deprived

Walsall Localities

Quality Scores (2017)

	71 to 81 (2)
	61 to 71 (3)
	51 to 61 (10)
	41 to 51 (14)
	31 to 41 (16)
	21 to 31 (5)
	11 to 21 (3)

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Drawn by:	Checked by:	Date:
LH	IB	14/03/18

Walsall
Council

cfp
people spaces places

Map labels:
Brownhills Common
Narrow Lane Redgra
Pelsall North Common NR
Bradbury Park
Mallory Crescent Open Space
Holland Park
Oak Park
Shire Oak Park
King George Vth Playing Fields
Pelsall Common
High Heath Park
Brereton Road
Shelfield Recreation Ground
Sandland Road
Bloxwich Park
Leamore Park
Leigh's Wood
Hawthorne Road
Rough Wood
Ross Farm
Hawthorne Road
Odell Road Playing Fields
Anchor Meadow Playing Fields
Harlech Road OS
Rushall Playing Fields
Bentley Haye
Fibbersley LNR
Reedswood Park
The Airport Playing Fields
Western Avenue
Cuckoos Nook & The Dingle
Park Lime Pits
Willenhall Memorial Park
Primley Avenue Park
Arboretum
Hay Head Wood
Blackwood Park
Tyler Road
Bath Street Gardens
Owen Park
Arboretum Extension
Goodwood Drive
George Rose Park
Pleck Park
Palfrey Park
Merrions Wood
Barr Beacon
Queen Street
Delves Common
Doe Bank Park
Whitton Street Play Area
Lower Bradely Playing Fields
Kings Hill Park

What it does show is that Walsall has focussed its investment over the past 20 years in the most the most deprived parts of the Borough around Willenhall Memorial Park, Palfrey Park, Walsall Arboretum and Kings Hill Park.

In section 6.8 below we suggest that an overall monitoring and evaluation framework is developed for the service which includes inputs, outputs, outcome and impacts and that this is linked to PHOF and wider frameworks. This needs to include a pilot programme of 12 months of gathering participant data for health interventions in parks and green spaces.

The council could consider developing an understanding of how people's use of green space contributes to addressing mental health issues and emotional wellbeing. We know from the household survey that the top five reasons for using green space all could have mental health benefits but there is no current research to explore this in more detail at a local level.

Joint working has been a key focus of Public Health's involvement in green spaces. As set out earlier the Healthy Spaces Steering Group forms a focus for this work.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
4.1	Mapping – use all existing data sets to explore the links between green space, health and deprivation
4.2	Link all external funding data and site improvement data to GIS to show spend in more deprived areas of the borough

4.3	Develop a more robust monitoring and evaluation system across the service and link to health, deprivation and wider outcomes
4.4	Develop research around mental health and green space use particularly looking at links to PHOF indicators (such as 1.18 and 2.23)
4.6	To develop clear actions from the mental health needs assessment and the relationship to green space
4.7	To explore using health and well being as a measure for reviewing green spaces
1.13	Review data to show increased and decreases in trend analysis for physical activity
2.1	The service needs to continue to contribute to the Health and Well Being Strategy

6.5 Understanding the asset (quantity)

6.5.1 The current position

As noted earlier in the strategy a definitive map based register of all green space provision does not exist. The GIS data set of 2012 has been partially updated and needs a thorough audit to ensure that all information is completed.

This will form the basis for future assessments such as where section 106 funds should be spent, detailed work on costs per hectare and developing a process to look at any future land disposal.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.16	The GIS data set should be updated and reviewed annually (review the scope to include canal network)
7.17	Site ownership and Trust status / restrictive covenants needs to be established and reviewed urgently
7.24	The Green Spaces Service needs to ensure that play facility data is better integrated with the GIS data set

6.5.2 Future changes

Section 5.3 earlier showed how the amount of green space is likely to change in the future both through disposal of land for housing and the creation of new space within other developments.

In terms of strategically assessing whether any other green space is surplus to requirements a suggested approach is to extend the quality audit process and then combined this with a value assessment. Bringing together both assessments into an overall quality: value matrix (see example below) will quickly identify sites that are of low quality and low value. Assuming the GIS data set is updated to include ownership and any restrictions such as Trust status or any restrictive covenants this would help ensure that the Council is actually free to dispose of the site. This could then be followed up with local consultation to make an informed decision about possible disposal sites.

What is currently unclear is the mechanism for dealing with any capital receipt for any land sale or how much of the receipt would go to the service area.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
6.4	Current disposal sites - review these and check provision locally
6.5	Future green space acquisitions – develop a policy on their adoption and income generated
6.6	Future disposal sites – carry out a quality value assessment as required
6.7	Future capital receipts - develop a process to ensure funding is re-invested within green spaces
7.26	The Council should look at opportunities to extend green spaces where opportunities arise

6.7 Green Space and Business Planning

The Green Space Strategy had made a number of changes around income and expenditure in recent years mostly driven by the need to make savings on revenue budgets. This has been the approach of many authorities and is often seen as "the low hanging fruit" or the easier changes to make.

Walsall Parks & Green Space Service is not alone in facing an uncertain future. Officers and managers are already planning for more revenue budget reductions for 2019/20. Beyond this there is no clear picture of revenue budgets which makes medium term planning very difficult but not impossible.

The service has had significant investment in recent years and there are still reasonable levels of funding coming in from Public Health and s106 and the team have been successful in matching this with external funds. These two areas are crucial in understanding future income streams.

The alternative service delivery models and Future Parks work has set out some clear recommendations about how the service needs to look at its 'blended' funding model. It is widely accepted that blended funding models are more sustainable in the longer term and reduce reliance on 'core funding' from the authority. Many of these recommendations need to be taken forward in the first 12 months as part of the strategic approach to planning the future of the service.

This approach has to be inextricably linked with the development of an overall monitoring and evaluation framework as this will help to provide the business case for investment in the service.

Some individual areas that have been highlighted for review are;

6.7.1 Facilities - bowls

Moving facilities across to the community to manage has been happening for the last 20 years in respect of allotments and now it is the turn of bowls facilities to go the same way. Seen as a high cost facility for a small sector of society the council is looking to save £30k per year by encouraging clubs to enter into a relationship with the Staffordshire County Bowls Association who will take on the maintenance of five or six greens across the borough.

6.7.2 Facilities – tennis

An innovative approach to bookings has been developed by the Sport & Leisure Services which could pave the way for investment in tennis facilities. The system is used for seven parks at present and the evidence base could form not only part of the overall monitoring system for the Parks & Green Space Service but also the base line for a possible bid for capital investment.

6.7.3 Services – forest schools

The service has tried to generate income through the Forest Schools initiative but has not met the income targets set (£17,000). In 2017/18 more staff are being trained up to gear up for summer 2018 and the service will have to be reviewed in 2019 to consider whether it is viable.

6.7.4 Services – events

The Service is looking to review its arrangements for the more commercial events in parks and has been liaising with other authorities within the West Midlands with a view to expanding the number of these events. The data from the automated people counters could be used in

showing the 'background' usage and 'event' usage to help demonstrate the footfall at commercial events.

The service has recognised the need to look more critically at all of its potential income generating facilities such as lodges and other buildings in parks. Combining this with issues such as car parking charges, events and activity costs into a wider commercial review would enable the service to focus its limited resources where they could have the most impact.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
5.9	Review the success of transferring bowls provision and evaluate the level of savings made
5.10	Investigate developing a capital bid for tennis provision with Sport & Leisure Services
5.11	To undertake a review of income generating opportunities as part of a commercial strategy for green spaces
5.12	Undertake a review of the commercial events in green spaces
5.13	Review the outdoor education and activities programme in 2018 to look at its viability as a traded service from 2019 onwards
5.15	Develop a marketing plan for green spaces

6.8 Walsall Arboretum / Walsall Country Park

There is no doubt that the restoration of Walsall Arboretum has been a success. Evidence gathered during the production of this strategy show that not only has it maintained its status as the most popular green space in the borough but its visitor numbers are over 900,000 per year for the historic core alone, which is around the figures that used to be cited when the Walsall Illuminations were running. These figures place the park as one of the top free visitor attractions in the region. These figures also do not account for the total number of users of the entire site since this also include the Arboretum Extension and Walsall Country Park, so the total will easily be in excess of 1,000,000.

The HLF funded restoration project has around 12 months left to run and the team are already extending and re-modelling the new visitor centre to provide more covered outdoor space and much improved meeting rooms that can be let commercially.

The remaining 12 months is very much a time for the team to evaluate what has happened and to start planning for life post HLF. There are some key actions that will need to be taken as follows:

6.8.1 Evaluation report

HLF require all parks projects to submit annual monitoring data and a final evaluation report. Now is the time to undertake an interim / formative evaluation to stand back and look at what information has been gathered and what new information is required in order to be able to meaningfully measure the success of the project. It is time to look aback at the base lines and targets set several years ago and see what has actually been delivered. There will be gaps in the data and new research will have to be commissioned to fill these as well as gathering the stories of change from those involved and from users of the space. The opportunity should not be missed to celebrate what has been achieved but also to share the learning with others across the service, the authority and the wider green space sector.

6.8.2 Management planning

As part of the HLF bid the authority will have written a ten year Management and Maintenance Plan which will now need revising following the implementation of the capital works and the restructuring of the staffing in the park. Also, the authority is contractually obliged to apply for and secure the Green Flag Award, which also has a requirement of a management plan for the

site. The team need to start planning early to look at how best to revise the plan and also develop an action plan to ensure that they achieve a high score when the park is assessed by the Green Flag judges in 2019.

The Arboretum is unique in that it has its own dedicated budget, defined income streams, visitor numbers and commercial operators on site. The team could use the evaluation work and the management planning work to help inform business planning for life post HLF funding. Existing leases and financial arrangements should be interrogated and benchmarked against other such provision. The team are already successful at deriving an income from use of the visitor centre, which can now increase with the recent investment. The Sustainable Events Policy being developed is an excellent counter measure to protect the site from over exploitation which it definitely suffered form in the past. Its historic environment, carrying capacity, neighbours, impact on staffing and the site's importance for biodiversity are all being considered. Such a policy needs to be adopted and a service wide approach ought to be developed along these lines.

Analysing visitor counter data, user and non-user surveys and financial information will enable the team to produce useful benchmarking data such as cost per visit. Initial estimates suggest that this is less than 50p per person visit, which is around 12% of the cost of an adult swim and 10% of a fitness class at a leisure centre but the beauty is that the Arboretum is free.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
7.18	Undertake an interim evaluation of the Arboretum restoration project
7.19	Identify any gaps in data gathering for implementation in 2018 in the Arboretum project
7.20	Plan for a final evaluation of the Arboretum restoration project in late 2018

7.21	Start preparation of a new ten year management plan for the Arboretum
7.22	Adopt the Sustainable Events Policy for the Arboretum and use to inform a wider policy for all strategic sites

6.9 Measuring success

A recurring theme through all of the research and consultation carried out to inform this strategy has been the lack of a consistent evidence base and that is a clear priority to be addressed.
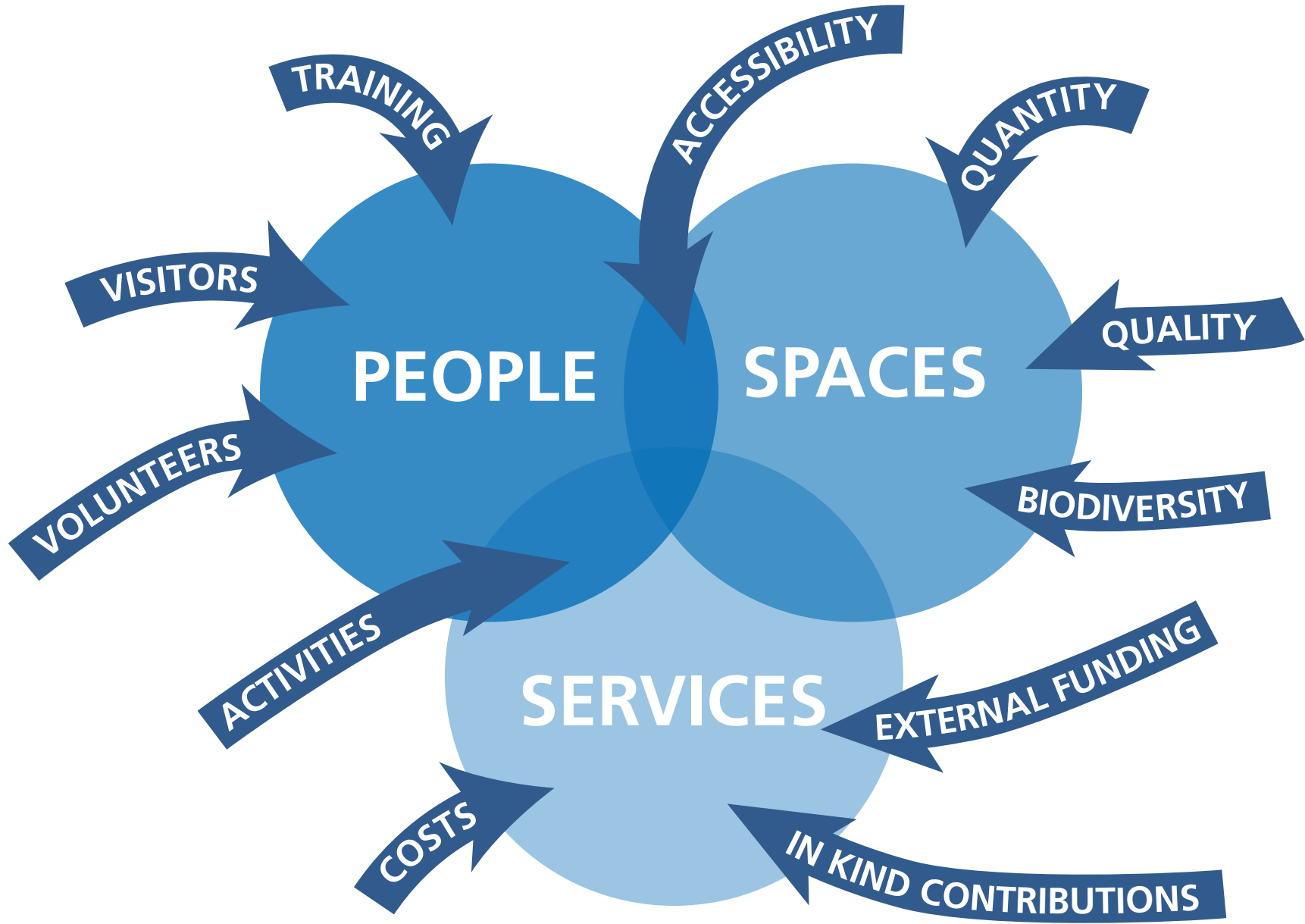
There are some clear areas that will benefit the service in the future in terms of being able to set out the business case for investment or the wider contribution green spaces make to the council and public health agendas. The table below is simply some initial ideas that the service, partners and stakeholders could work up further to become an overall monitoring and evaluation framework with a target for the first year of the strategy to set up systems and methods with an annual interim evaluation. Figure 15 demonstrates these areas in relation to people, spaces and services.

In term of measuring progress staff felt that the workshops held to develop the strategy were useful and it is proposed that these are repeated every six months including an annual workshop to measure progress, review the action plan and celebrate success.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
1.11	Develop and overall evaluation framework along the lines of the model suggested
1.12	Deliver six monthly staff workshops to evaluate the delivery of the Green Space Strategy

1.16   The Green Space Strategy action plan and the Quality Impact Assessment will be reviewed annually

TRAINING

ACCESSIBILITY

QUANTITY

VISITORS

QUALITY

PEOPLE

SPACES

VOLUNTEERS

BIODIVERSITY

ACTIVITIES

SERVICES

EXTERNAL FUNDING

COSTS

IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Area	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Volunteering	Staff time Resources	Number of volunteer hours Volunteer profile Volunteer activities In kind contribution	Volunteer case studies	Behavioural change Progression to employment*1.08iv Combatting social isolation* Physical activity*2.13i
External funding	Council match	Amount of external funding secured Project specific outputs Leverage ratio	tbc	tbc
Activities in parks	Staff time Resources	Number of participants Participant profile Participant satisfaction Target audiences New audiences	Participant case studies	Behavioural and attitudinal change Combatting social isolation*1.18 Physical activity*2.13i Increased use of green space*1.16
Usage	Staff time Resources	Number of annual person visits to key spaces Visitor profile Dwell time Secondary spend	tbc	Increased use of green space*1.16
Amount of green space	N/A	Quantity of green space per 1000 population 1Ha/ 1000 population of LNRs	tbc	tbc
Accessibility	N/A	% of residents living within defined catchment of green space % of residents living within defined catchment of strategic green space % of residents living within defined catchment of natural green space	tbc	WHO indicator Natural England ANGsT indicator
Quality	N/A	Hierarchy specific minimum quality thresholds % of residents living within defined catchment of high quality space	tbc	tbc
Costs	N/A	Cost per hectare of different types of space	tbc	tbc

		Cost per visit service wide Cost per visit to key sites Cost per hectare of different quality thresholds		
Biodiversity value		% of local conservation sites in positive management Number of LNRs Number of Sites Surveyed" Area of habitat improved/created within Core Ecological Areas / Ecological Linking Areas and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	tbc	Natural England ANGsT
Geodiversity value	Staff time Resources	% of local conservation sites in positive management	tbc	tbc
User perceptions		Satisfaction borough wide Satisfaction strategic sites Reasons for use (health and exercise)	tbc	tbc

Notes * indicates a link to PHOF indicator

6.10 Partnership working and innovation

As set out earlier Parks & Green Space Services with 'blended' funding models are the most sustainable and the same applies to service development and delivery. Walsall parks service has a long track record of partnership working but it must constantly invest in this area of work to ensure that resources are being targeted effectively and shared objectives and targets are being met.

The service's relationships with Public Health and Planning are probably the two most vital ones to invest in at a high level since they not only account for almost half of the external funding but also are not reliant on large amounts of council match and therefore should be more of a partnership than a funder and grantee relationship. That does not however excuse the authority from the need to monitor and evaluate progress.

The work with Public Health has shown that other partners can bring new ideas around evidence-based approaches and measuring success and that joint working can develop a shared vision, clearer standards and joint measurement of wider impacts.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
2.10	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to invest in the key strategic partnerships with Public Health and Planning

6.11 Green Space and Nature Conservation

As set out in the review of achievements since the last strategy whilst the Countryside Service has been vastly reduced, there have still been some key successes relating to countryside sites. Aside from the earlier recommendations around developing maintenance schedules, improving quality and producing management plans for countryside sites the focus for this strategy is to continue to make wider contributions to regional / sub regional initiatives and continue to track standards.

A further area for the service to examine is the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) which were developed in the 1990s and were based on research into minimum distances people would travel to the natural environment. Reviewed by Natural England in 2008, ANGSt recommends that everyone should have accessible natural green space:

- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;

- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometre of home;

- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and

- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus

- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population of the borough.

Action Plan Reference	Recommendations
3.4	Continue to be a partner in the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Project and to manage the borough's geosites
3.5	Continue to be a partner in the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area and to help deliver the NIA Ecological Strategy
3.6	Ensure that ANGST targets for proximity to green spaces are met
3.7	Ensure that the target of 1ha/1,000 for Local Nature Reserves continues to be met
3.8	To manage the Black Country, Wyrley and Essington Canal LNR in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, and City of Wolverhampton Council
3.9	To continue to monitor and record biodiversity and geodiversity across Walsall's Green Spaces and to share information with relevant stakeholders
3.10	To maintain and enhance the network of local nature conservation sites and information pertaining to them

3.11	Secure and deliver Countryside Stewardship and Wood Grant Schemes
3.12	Enhance and protect target habitats and species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan
3.13	Increase the proportion of local nature conservation sites (SINCs and SLINCs) in positive management
3.14	All green spaces should be protected and managed so as to conserve, maintain and improve their value for nature conservation

7. Delivering the strategy

The table below takes the recommendations made through Sections 5 and 6 above and aligns them under the aims of the strategy.

7.1 Action plan

Aim 1 To provide opportunities for people and communities to actively participate in green spaces

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
1.1	Continue to support voluntary groups in order to make the most out of their contribution and seek external funding opportunities with these groups.	Friends Groups, Walsall Green Spaces Forum, One Walsall	All years
1.2	Increase volunteer training across Walsall through Friends Groups and ensure they are well equipped to assist with maintenance and organising events.	Friends Groups, Walsall Green Spaces Forum, One Walsall	All years
1.3	All counters need to be calibrated to establish the number of people using the parks. A clear methodology then needs to be established to produce an accurate annual person count figure. Counters need to be checked monthly.	Public Health	Year 1
1.4	Counters could subsequently be rationalised and moved around other key spaces to build an overall picture of green space use across the borough	Public Health	Year 2
1.5	An overall picture needs to be built of all of the borough's most important spaces to better inform the targeting of resources	Public Health	Year 1
1.6	Combining the visitor numbers and site spend will give invaluable cost per visit information	Public Health	Year 2
1.7	The Council needs to obtain and analyse the vehicle counter data for Barr Beacon	Public Health	Year 1
1.8	Find ways to help groups to recruit new members and look at alternative approaches to joint working between groups	Friends Groups	Year 2
1.9	Develop a system to accurately captures the total in kind volunteer contribution, volunteer profile and types of activity	-	Year 1
1.10	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to contribute to the implementation of Walsall's Playing Pitch Strategy	Sport and Leisure	All years

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
1.11	Develop and overall evaluation framework along the lines of the model suggested	Public Health	Year 1
1.12	Deliver six monthly staff workshops to evaluate the delivery of the Green Space Strategy	-	Year 1
1.13	Review data to show increases and decreases in trend analysis for physical activity	Public Health	Year 1
1.14	Revisit the play hierarchy, in line with the revised list of Strategic green space sites	-	Year 1
1.15	Seek to address the barriers to green space access discovered in consultation, and to ensure a greater number of people with disabilities, older people, and those of different ethnicities use green spaces	-	All years
1.16	The Green Space Strategy Action Plan and the Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed annually	-	All years
1.17	Work with One Walsall to recruit volunteers and obtain funding support	One Walsall	All years

Aim 2 To develop and strengthen existing partnerships to bring added value to green spaces

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
2.1	The service needs to continue to contribute to the Health and Well Being Strategy	Public Health	All years
2.2	Look to develop partnerships with other organisations and seek asset transfer options for assets / facilities within parks e.g. football pitches/pavilions	Public Health, Local Management Associations, Friends Groups	All years
2.3	Ensure that funding is retained to support allotments associations and provide a council contingency fund	-	All years
2.4	Retain a resource to support allotment groups either with finance or to match fund bids, or with staff expertise	-	All years
2.5	Continue to provide dedicated support staff for community engagement	-	All years

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
2.6	Continue to support the development of the Walsall Green Spaces Forum	Walsall Green Spaces Forum	All years
2.7	Look at how information is shared and communicated between the Council and Friends groups and other partners	Friends Groups	Year 1
2.8	Establish a system to record and collate volunteer in kind contributions	Friends Groups	Year 1
2.9	Look at how the recently created volunteer coordination and support role within the Strategic Development Officers can help support allotment Local Management Associations	Local Management Associations,	Year 1
2.10	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to invest in the key strategic partnerships with Public Health and Planning	Public Health, Planning	Year 1

Aim 3 To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across green spaces

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
3.1	Change approaches to maintaining parks and green spaces, including rationalising and naturalising some management activities e.g. the maintenance of grasslands to increase urban biodiversity	-	Year 3 onwards
3.2	Review grounds maintenance standards / specifications to allow more ecological & low maintenance approaches which mitigate against climate change and bring benefits for biodiversity	-	Year 3 onwards
3.3	Take forward the options appraisals for the two unused allotment sites should the resource become available	-	Year 3 onwards
3.4	Continue to be a partner in the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Project and to manage the borough's geosites	3 Black Country Boroughs	All years

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
3.5	Continue to be a partner in the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area and to help deliver the NIA Ecological Strategy	3 Black Country Boroughs, Birmingham City Council	All years
3.6	Ensure that ANGST targets for proximity to green spaces are met	-	All years
3.7	Ensure that the target of 1ha/1,000 for Local Nature Reserves continues to be met	-	All years
3.8	To manage the Black Country, Wyrley and Essington Canal LNR in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, and City of Wolverhampton Council	Canal and River Trust, City of Wolverhampton Council	All years
3.9	To continue to monitor and record biodiversity and geodiversity across Walsall's Green Spaces and to share information with relevant stakeholders	-	All years
3.10	To maintain and enhance the network of local nature conservation sites and information pertaining to them	-	All years
3.11	Secure and deliver Countryside Stewardship and Wood Grant Schemes	-	All years
3.12	Enhance and protect target habitats and species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan	-	All years
3.13	Increase the proportion of local nature conservation sites (SINCs and SLINCs) in positive management	-	All years
3.14	All green spaces should be protected and managed so as to conserve, maintain and improve their value for nature conservation	-	All years

Aim 4 To realise the potential that green spaces can play in addressing health inequalities

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
4.1	Mapping – use all existing data sets to explore the links between green space, health and deprivation	Public Health	Year 1
4.2	Link all external funding data and site improvement data to GIS to show spend in more deprived areas of the borough	Public Health	Year 1
4.3	Develop a more robust monitoring and evaluation system across the Parks & Green Space Service and link to health, deprivation and wider outcomes	Public Health	Year 1
4.4	Develop research around mental health and green space use particularly looking at links to PHOF indicators (such as 1.18 and 2.23)	Public Health, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Walsall Health Care NHS Trust	Year 2
4.5	The service needs to continue to contribute to the Health and Well Being Strategy	Public Health	All years
4.6	To develop clear actions from the mental health needs assessment and the relationship to green spaces	Public Health, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Walsall Health Care NHS Trust	Year 2

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
4.7	To explore using Health and Wellbeing as a measure for reviewing green spaces	Public Health	Year 1

Aim 5 To develop an economically viable Parks & Green Space Service

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
5.1	Test and rethink new business models for individual parks and wider park services	-	Years 1-3
5.2	Grow commercial activities e.g. work with businesses through direct sponsorship and corporate volunteering and test various approaches to fundraising, crowd sourcing and subscriptions	-	Years 1-3
5.3	Seek to diversify funding streams for parks and open spaces including greater income from external funding, partnerships, commercial activities, fees and charges, and through planning obligations / developer contributions	PH, Planning	Years 1-3
5.4	Seek to form new organisational structure partnerships i.e. deliver shared services with more integrated management systems across council departments	Other council services	All years
5.5	Look to increase revenue generation per hectare	-	Year 3 onwards
5.6	Explore in further detail, the financial implications of transitioning ownership and operations management responsibilities of the new Strategic Green Spaces to an independent charitable trust, supported by an endowment	-	Year 3 onwards
5.7	Seek contacts in other Councils who are exploring / developing Trust models and share the learning across the sector via the Midlands Parks Forum	West Midlands Parks Forum, other local authorities and Trusts	year 1-3
5.8	The authority should complete and implement the review of open space s106 allocations	Planning	Year 1
5.9	Review the success of transferring bowls provision and evaluate the level of savings made	-	Year 2

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
5.10	Investigate developing a capital bid for tennis provision with Sport & Leisure Services	Sport & Leisure Services, Lawn Tennis Association	Year 1 onwards
5.11	To undertake a review of income generating opportunities as part of a commercial strategy for green spaces	-	Year 1
5.12	Undertake a review of the commercial events in green spaces	-	Year 1
5.13	Review the Forest Schools programme in 2018 to look at its viability as a traded service from 2019 onwards	-	Year 2
5.14	Contribute towards the Black Country Core Strategy and the West Midland Combined Authority, to support the adoption and implementation alongside the Site Allocation Document	Planning	Year 2
5.15	Develop a marketing plan for green spaces	-	Year 1
5.16	The Council should: o Assess the likely amounts of open space needed as a result of future housing development and compare this with existing provision to identify what shortfalls there might be. o Estimate the likely scale of developer contributions there might be for the provision and improvement of open spaces. o Identify the likely needs for the future maintenance of open spaces and the potential sources of funding to support this.	Planning	Year 1
5.17	Identify whether the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (or any other possible funding mechanism) might be used to secure additional funding and to provide more flexibility in the spending of that funding	Planning	Year 1

Aim 6 To ensure green spaces play their part in the economic growth of the borough

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
6.1	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to ensure that future updates of the green space strategy respond to local, regional and national policy changes	-	All years
6.2	The Council should undertake an assessment of future open space likely to be provided by housing developers, and the options for its maintenance	Planning	Year 2
6.3	The Council should seek to quantify the level of developer contributions anticipated over the Green Space Strategy and prepare an investment strategy	Planning	Year 1
6.4	Current disposal sites - review these and check provision locally	-	Year 1
6.5	Future green space acquisitions – develop a policy on their adoption and income generated	Planning	Year 1
6.6	Future disposal sites - carry out a quality / value assessment	Planning	Year 2
6.7	Future capital receipts - develop a process to ensure funding is reinvested within green spaces	Planning	Year 1
6.8	Review (future) developer contributions	Planning	Year 2
6.9	Explore population growth and impacts on green space	Planning	Year 2
6.10	Contribute towards the Black Country Core Strategy and the West Midland Combined Authority, to support the adoption and implementation alongside the Site Allocation Document	Planning	Year 1

Aim 7 To provide safe, accessible, clean and well-maintained green spaces and facilities

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
7.1	Establish a system of annual quality inspections targeted at the revised strategic sites	-	Year 2
7.2	Use the quality audit findings to inform site specific management plans and action plans	-	All years
7.3	Use the quality audit to produce site action plans to improve the quality of the new strategic sites to a minimum score of 45	-	All years
7.4	Use the quality audit scores to inform a planned approach to securing additional Green Flag Awards	-	Year 1 onwards
7.5	Adopt the suggested revision of strategic sites and the action plan to secure additional Green Flag Awards	-	Year 1
7.6	Carry out a full Green Flag assessment on those sites identified as being potential future applications and develop detailed action plans to secure the award	-	Year 1 onwards
7.7	Develop a simplified house style of management plans that meets Green Flag Award requirements	-	Year 1
7.8	Develop the suggested management plans as per the timetable	-	All years
7.9	Develop maintenance schedules and associated resource / cost plans for all strategic sites by summer 2019	-	Years 1 - 2
7.10	Seek to increase the quality score of the failing strategic sites to meet the minimum standard within three years	-	Years 1-3
7.11	Seek to increase the quality score of the failing district and community sites to meet the minimum standard within five years	-	Years 3-5
7.12	Adopt the minimum quality thresholds by hierarchy (Strategic = 45, District / Neighbourhood = 35, Community = 25)	-	Year 1
7.13	Develop a pool of staff trained to undertake quality assessments	-	Year 2
7.14	Develop an annual quality assessment process for all strategic sites	-	Year 2
7.15	Explore how allotment sites could access any additional funding	Planning	Year 1
7.16	The GIS data set should be updated and reviewed annually (review the scope to include canal network)	Planning	All years
7.17	Site ownership and Trust status / restrictive covenants needs to be established and reviewed urgently	Legal / Assets	Year 1

Ref	Strategic Objective	Partners	Timescale
7.18	Undertake an interim evaluation of the Arboretum restoration project	Arboretum User Group / Stakeholders	Year 1
7.19	Identify any gaps in data gathering for implementation in 2018 in the Arboretum project	-	Year 1
7.20	Plan for a final evaluation of the Arboretum restoration project in late 2018	-	Year 1
7.21	Start preparation of a new ten year management plan for the Arboretum	-	Year 1
7.22	Adopt the Sustainable Events Policy for the Arboretum and use to inform a wider policy for all strategic sites	-	Year 1
7.23	The Parks & Green Space Service needs to continue to help deliver the Urban Forestry Strategy	-	All years
7.24	To ensure that play facility data is better integrated with the GIS data set	-	Year 1
7.25	Review of the barriers that members of the public face in accessing green spaces to identify if transport is indeed a factor		Year 2
7.26	The Council should look at opportunities to extend green spaces where opportunities arise	-	All years
7.27	Develop clear standards of management, maintenance and development for non-strategic sites		Year 2