

HARROW OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Introduction

Good quality green spaces are an essential component of the urban fabric of Harrow and make a profound contribution to the quality of life of local communities. They offer a wide range of economic, social, environmental and health benefits. Adopting a strategic approach to the management of open spaces will maximise the value of capital investment and revenue expenditure.

Open space in this strategy is a generic term covering a wide spectrum of different types of spaces – from parks to small grassed areas in housing estates, play areas, woodlands and natural areas and allotments – that are available for communities to use and enjoy. Approximately a quarter of all land in the borough comprises public or private green space.

Harrow's green corridors are a key element of the emerging Green Grid which was approved by Cabinet on 21st July 2011. This aims to create a network of interlinked multi- purpose open spaces with good connections to the areas where people live and work, public transport, the green belt and the Thames.

Why do we need an Open Space Strategy?

An Open Space Strategy has to fulfil a number of needs. These include:

- demonstrating the value of open space in achieving corporate, strategic and community objectives;
- reinforcing local identity and civic pride;
- addressing any deficiencies in the quality of existing provision so that open spaces enhance the quality of life of local communities and the environment;
- achieving standards of maintenance that reflect the expectations of the local community so that people can enjoy good quality well maintained open spaces;
- identifying priorities for investment to ensure that capital and revenue funds are allocated appropriately;

- providing the basis for forming partnerships as part of the long-term management and maintenance of open spaces;
- exploring opportunities for stakeholders, including users and potential users, to become involved in decisions relating to the management of open spaces;
- supporting the preparation of the local development framework (LDF);
- protecting and enhancing levels of biodiversity and conserving various habitat types;
- contributing to the health agenda through reduction in stress levels and by providing formal and informal recreational facilities;
- contributing to mitigating the negative effects of climate change by raising air quality and moderating extremes of temperature;
- providing connected routes between places for recreation, walking, cycling, and wildlife;
- providing and contributing to the development of green infrastructure and the Green Grid;
- providing for children and young people's play, recreation and social development;
- promoting opportunities for local food production;
- identifying existing and potential sources of funding or other resources and targeting these resources where the need for green space improvements is greatest;

This Open Space Strategy sets out Harrow Council's vision for the green spaces in the borough for the future. It has been developed from the audit of the borough's open space assets and assessment of the community's current and future needs undertaken in 2010. It establishes what the Council wants to achieve in the future and explains how this will be done, how long this will take and the resources that will be needed to achieve its goals. It contributes to the wider corporate aims and objectives of the Council. The strategy examines the key issues relating to Open Space provision in Harrow and includes a detailed action plan which sets out specific

and measurable actions, provides management and maintenance guidelines and an implementation programme that includes monitoring and review procedures.

The Benefits of Open Spaces

Open spaces play a vital part in our lives. The benefits range from mitigating the effects of climate change to improving the health of the nation and making positive impacts on local economic regeneration, increased land values and inward investment.

Climate Change

Open Spaces have an important role to play in the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

Heat amelioration

In the UK, climate change is predicted to bring higher average temperatures and increasing incidents of sudden, heavy rain. In this country cities have higher temperatures than rural areas due to the urban heat island effect¹.

Research has demonstrated that providing more green space and high levels of tree cover in urban situations can ameliorate the urban heat island effect² through evaporation and transpiration, direct shading and the conversion of solar radiation to latent heat³. The green spaces in urban areas break up reflected heat from hard surfaces to bring a cooling effect. Through the shade they provide, trees can buffer buildings from excessive heat and reduce energy consumption. Trees and shrubs provide protection from both heat and ultra violet (UV) radiation by direct shading⁴.

It has been estimated that 12% of air pollution in urban areas is attributable to the urban heat island effect, due to temperature-dependent formation of pollutants and ozone.⁵

¹ The urban heat island effect occurs because heat from the sun is stored during the day by the large areas of concrete and tarmac found in cities and is released at night.

² Gill, SE., Handley, JF., Ennos, AR & Pauleit, S (2007) Adapting Cities for Climate change: the role of the green infrastructure. *Built Environment* 33 (1) pp 115-133.

³ Dimoudi, A. and Nikolopoulou, M. (2003). Vegetation in the urban environment: microclimatic analysis and benefits. *Energy and Buildings* 35, 69–76.

⁴ Potchter, O., Cohen, P. and Britan, A. (2006). Climatic behavior of various urban parks during hot and humid summer in the Mediterranean city of Tel Aviv, Israel. *International Journal of Climatology* 26 (12), 1695–1711.

⁵ Beckett, K.P., Freer-Smith, P.H. and Taylor, G. (1998). Urban woodlands: their role in reducing the effects of particulate pollution. *Environmental Pollution* 99, 347–360.

Reducing flood risk

Large amounts of surface water run-off can lead to serious flooding. With climate change, more extreme weather events are probable and these are likely to cause large amounts of run-off.

Open Spaces can contribute to flood alleviation by delaying the downstream passage of flood flows, reducing the volume of runoff through interception and by allowing rainfall to be absorbed into the soil.

Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) have been developed to improve urban drainage and reduce the volume of urban runoff. SUDS help to control water at the source through trees and vegetation, swales and basins and ponds and wetlands. Well designed and maintained SUDS are more cost effective than traditional drainage solutions, as they cost less to construct and maintain.

Improving air quality

Vegetation has a mitigating effect on air pollution. Trees in urban green spaces can influence air quality in a number of ways; for example through direct absorption of gaseous pollutants and interception of particles onto leaf surfaces, by lowering air temperatures through transpiration which can reduce the formation of ozone, and through the direct production of oxygen during photosynthesis. In London, air quality is significantly higher in areas with a high proportion of green spaces.⁶

Health & Wellbeing

It is now recognised that green infrastructure can help deliver key benefits for public health and well-being. The Department of Health's plan for improved physical activity 'Be active be healthy – a plan for getting the nation moving' and public mental health framework 'New Horizons: flourishing people, connected communities' and the Marmot report 'Fair society, healthy lives' all acknowledge the role of green space.

Increasing life expectancy and reducing health inequality

Access to open space and nature delivers a range of benefits to health and wellbeing. The Sustainable Development Commission considers that more equal access to green space could be key to reducing health inequalities between socio-

⁶ Valuing Greenness: Green spaces, house prices and Londoners' priorities GLA 2003

economic groups, and could provide a preventative approach that has social, environmental and economic benefits.⁷

Studies have found that people with access to nature nearby are generally healthier than those without. A Dutch study of 10,000 people found that it is the total amount of green space (rather than the type of green space) that is important for health.⁸ More recent Dutch research has corroborated this finding, also concluding that the percentage of green space in a person's residential area is positively associated with their perceived general health, a relationship that is strongest for lower socioeconomic groups.⁹

Improving levels of physical activity and health

Strong associations have been found between access to open space and higher levels of physical activity, which can improve people's health. A number of studies support the assertion that open spaces are a major resource for physical activity. For instance, living closer to a park or green space is generally associated with increased physical activity¹⁰. The further away residents are from open space the less likely residents are to visit it; for the under 25 years age group, the further they live from open space, the more likely they are to be obese.¹¹

It has been estimated that increasing physical activity through improved access to high quality open spaces could save the NHS £2.1 billion a year.¹² The annual value of decreased morbidity and mortality from a 1% unit reduction in the percentage of sedentary people in the UK has been estimated at £1.44bn (a mean of £2,423 per additional active person per year). Seventy percent of the benefit was related to reduced mortality from coronary heart disease.

Improving psychological health and mental well-being.

⁷ Sustainable Development Commission (2010). *Sustainable development: the key to tackling health inequalities*. Sustainable Development Commission, London.

⁸ de Vries S, Verheij R, Grenewegen P, Spreeuwenberg P (2003) Natural environments – healthy relationships? An exploratory analysis of the relationship between and health. *Environment and planning A*, 35, 1717-1731

⁹ Maas J et al. (2006). Green space, urbanity, and health: how strong is the relation? *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 60, 587-592

¹⁰ Kaczynski, A. and Henderson, K. (2007). Environmental correlates of physical activity: a review of evidence about parks and recreation. *Leisure Sciences* 29 (4), 315–354.

¹¹ Nielson, T. S. and Hanson, K. B. (2007). Do green areas affect health? Results from a Danish survey on the use of green areas and health indicators. *Health and Place* 13 (4), 839–850.

¹² Our Natural Health Service – 'The role of the natural environment in maintaining healthy lives', Natural England 2009.

Open spaces have been shown to provide a calming environment which helps alleviate stress and mental fatigue. There is also strong evidence to suggest that open spaces have a beneficial impact on mental well-being and cognitive function through both physical access and usage¹³.

Community Cohesion

Research suggests that open space can contribute to social cohesion by helping to maintain or increase a sense of community, and by strengthening social networks. Open spaces within urban areas function as a shared community resource. They help to foster the development of social networks and a feeling of community cohesion and identity. They are places where informal social interaction can take place providing opportunities for groups of people to meet. They provide important meeting and recreational places for young mothers and are suitable places for young people to 'hang out' with less chance of being asked to move on.

One study found that relationships between neighbours are strengthened by the presence of vegetation. Compared to residents living near barren spaces, those closer to green spaces enjoy more social activities, know more neighbours and have a stronger sense of belonging. These findings suggest that the use and characteristics of open spaces play an important role in the natural growth of community, and that improving these spaces is likely to foster a sense of community and belonging particularly in inner-city neighborhoods.¹⁵

It has also been shown that by involving communities in open space projects a sense of pride and ownership is engendered which also increases informal stewardship. Research shows that improvements to open space are central to community morale and are also a vital part of changing the perception of an area.¹⁶

If people are satisfied with local parks, they tend to be satisfied with their council. There is a strong link between people's satisfaction with their local parks and open

¹³ Whitelaw, S., Swift, J., Goodwin, A. and Clark, D. (2008). Physical activity and mental health: the role of physical activity in promoting mental well-being and preventing mental health problems. NHS Scotland, Edinburgh.

¹⁴ Kuo, F. E., Sullivan, W. C., Coley, R. L., & Brunson, L. (1998). Fertile Ground for Community: Inner-City Neighborhood Common Spaces. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(6), 823-851.

¹⁵ Frances E (Ming) Kuo, National Recreation and Park Association, Parks and Other Green Environments: Essential Components of a Healthy Human (2010)

¹⁶ 'Making the Links - Greenspace and the Partnership Agreement' jointly commissioned by greenspace scotland, Communities Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and NHS Health Scotland, 2004.

spaces, and their satisfaction with their neighbourhood. Satisfaction with neighbourhood is one of the key things that affects people's perceptions of their council's performance.¹⁷ This is particularly acute in the most deprived areas, where neighbourhood satisfaction is at its lowest.

Economic Value

There are a number of potential economic benefits that are derived from high quality parks. These include an enhanced local image helping to attract visitors and inward investment and to retain existing businesses; facilities for employees and opportunities to train young people and the long-term unemployed. Recent figures released by Savills Residential Research reveal that homes next to an open space can expect an uplift in value of 12% over properties in the same location with no park views. According to Savills, even the presence of a park up to two streets away will result in an average 7% uplift compared to streets with the same type of property away from open space.¹⁸

In the USA, the Millennium Park in Chicago, a 24.6 acre park, opened on the banks of Lake Michigan in 2004. An Economic Impact Study commissioned by the City of Chicago in 2005 showed that it had boosted residential development by about \$1.4 billion, and increased real estate values in the area by \$100 a square foot. Hotels and restaurants have reported an increase in customer volumes since the park was established, and many use the park as an attraction on their websites and in their sales brochures. The Economic Impact Study estimated that 70% of the spending of day-trip visitors to the area is directly attributable to Millennium Park, 25% of the spending of domestic travellers who spend an average of two days in the area is attributable and for international travellers in the area for an average of six days, 10% is attributable.¹⁹

Wildlife and habitats

Levels of biodiversity in managed spaces are influenced by the extent to which habitats and ecosystems are protected and supported. Within cities the most

¹⁷ Local Government Association's (LGA) Reputation, Reputation Index Report, The Research Unit, 2010.

¹⁸ Savills Residential Research, 2006, 'The impact of nearby open space on property prices', Savills Residential Research, London

¹⁹ The Millennium Park Effect: Edward K. Uhler 2006

valuable habitats are to be found in natural areas and woodlands, allotments, churchyards and cemeteries and parks which provide a rich variety of habitats for mammals, birds, insects, aquatic and plant life.

The ecological benefits of open spaces are largely related to the provision of habitat. The size of the population of a species is directly linked to the size of available habitat area. As the area available for habitation increases, both the population size of individual species and the total species richness of an area increase. Larger areas of green space tend to have a greater diversity of habitats.

Open spaces create opportunities for longer-distance movement for some species. This allows species to move around within, and between, urban areas.

Relationship with other Strategies

The Harrow Open Space Strategy is a corporate strategy. It supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan and complements a number of other Harrow Council strategies. It also links to and helps with local delivery of other national and London strategies.

This strategy contributes to achieving a key priority for the Corporate Plan which is to work towards greater environmental and community sustainability through the active management of the environment and support for inclusive communities.

A theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy is 'Improving Harrow's Environment' which focuses on the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. The aim is to provide open spaces which offer a range of uses and which balance the protection of wildlife with recreational use. Practical steps will be taken to mitigate the effects of climate change and adverse air quality.

Harrow is developing a 'Local Development Framework', within which the Core Strategy sets out the key elements of the planning framework for the borough. It comprises a vision and the strategic objectives for the borough, along with a spatial strategy, core policies and a monitoring and implementation framework. It will be kept up-to-date and, once adopted, all other development plan documents must be in conformity with it. In view of the shortfalls in the availability of accessible open space, the forecasted population increase and planned residential development there is a presumption against any net loss of open space, regardless of ownership and accessibility. The Core Strategy also points to the need to manage the open

space resource; to maximise its multifunctional use – as an amenity and recreational resource, a habitat and wildlife corridor; a transport link for cycling and walking; and to contribute to climate change adaptation. The Core Strategy seeks to improve access to, and the quality of open spaces through the development of a Green Grid which aims to create linkages between open spaces through the enhancement of green corridors and access to the Green Belt.

The Harrow Open Space Strategy focuses on the management and maintenance of green spaces and the improvement of their quality. It supports the Local Development Framework by providing a context for the planning of Harrow's open space assets.

Open Space Assets in Harrow

The existing provision of Open Spaces in Harrow has been identified through the audit undertaken as part of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (PPG17) commissioned for the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study²⁰ examines Harrow's open spaces from two points of view: an expert audit against established criteria, and a comprehensive appraisal, through consultation, of public expectation of different types of open space.

The study provides the Council with an understanding of the quantity, quality and accessibility of local open spaces available for public use, and recommends standards of provision. The quantity standard is expressed as the quantity of a particular type of space per 1,000 population. The quality standards are derived from an analysis of the total quality scores based on assessments of individual attributes such as the main entrance, paths etc. Finally, accessibility standards are based on effective catchment areas for each space. Effective catchment areas are defined as the distance travelled by around 75-80% of users.

The application of these standards indicates how well current provision meets current demand, and also compares results across different areas of the borough and thus looks at the evenness of distribution of each type of open space. Areas of quantitative deficiency are those areas where the level of provision falls below the adopted standard. For quality, benchmark sites have been identified which represent the desired minimum level of quality that lower scoring sites should attain. For this purpose the borough has been divided into five sub areas – the north east, north west, central, south east and south west parts of the borough.

The sites examined in this study include, but are not limited to, those in the ownership or care of the local authority. The criterion for inclusion is that the site must be generally accessible to the public, regardless of ownership.

²⁰The study was designed to be compliant with Government requirements, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17 and associated guidance. It was guided by the [Best Practice Guidance](#) and [Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) which supplement the London Plan, the Mayor of London's strategic planning document which provides the policy framework within which individual Boroughs must set their local planning policies.

The following types of green space have been included in this study:

Parks and gardens

Parks and gardens are largely designed spaces that aim to provide a range of opportunities; they are used for exercise, but also for quiet reflection, and for play and recreation as well as for social interaction, community events, and enjoyment of nature. Parks in Harrow are often multifunctional spaces that offer a variety of experiences to a range of participants. There are 28 parks in the borough (excluding Stanmore Country Park, which is counted as natural green space), and a majority of people are satisfied with current provision; nevertheless a substantial minority would like to see more space of this type, particularly in the central sub-area.

Park quality varies, but Canons Park, which has Green Flag status, achieves high scores on the audit. Residents' perceptions give above average scores generally, but indicate room for improvement in areas like cleanliness, planting and amenities; toilets, seating, and safety after dark attract negative perceptions.

The distribution of parks across the borough is reasonably even, but some attract more visitors than others; popular sites include Canons Park and Pinner Memorial. Most people walk to their local park, and make a journey of no more than 10-15 minutes to do so.

The quantity standard highlights lower levels of provision in the south and central parts of the borough, and is set at a level that tends to address the disparities in provision between different parts of the borough, rather than to achieve an overall increase in quantity. The quality standard sets a benchmark which would require parks to attain a level of quality similar to that of Chandos Recreation Ground. The accessibility standard aims to ensure that everyone has access to a park within reasonable reach, and indicates deficiencies in this respect in the southeastern and southwestern sub-areas in particular.

Play

Children choose a wide variety of spaces to play in, but for the study's purposes the analysis is limited to those settings provided specifically for children's play, which means primarily equipped play spaces where children can come and go as they please. This covers play spaces designed for specific age ranges, including space provided for young people as well as those aimed at children.

Harrow has 42 equipped play areas, and a further four open access multi-use games areas suitable for informal games. These focus primarily on the needs of younger children; just six play spaces are provided specifically for teenage users. Just over half of residents want to see more children's play space, while almost everyone agrees on the need for more teenage play space.

Quality scores are mixed, with some excellent sites counterbalanced by some that are poor. Resident perceptions are that spaces are well located and accessible, safe and well used; but there are doubts about seating, the age range supported at different sites, and cleanliness. Teenage spaces get very low ratings and are criticised heavily for lighting, attractiveness and maintenance, and safety.

Although half of residents never visit a play space, those who do visit tend to visit quite often; over a quarter visit at least every two weeks. Most visits are made on foot, and involve a journey of less than 10-15 minutes. Pinner Memorial Park, Canons and Centenary are the sites most frequently mentioned.

The quantity standard calls for an increase in provision which is realistic, although challenging. Application of this standard highlights a significant deficiency in all five sub-areas. The benchmark site for quality is Stanmore Recreation Ground and other sites should be brought up to this standard as a minimum. The accessibility standard sets different catchments according to the age-group of the child the site is aimed at. Many areas of the borough are deficient at all levels of play provision, but the position on teenage provision is acute.

Amenity Green Space

These spaces, characteristically found in housing areas and other developments, have several functional uses, including space for dog walking and informal play as well as providing visual relief from development. In Harrow, there is a total of over

38 hectares of space of this type, three quarters of which is in the north of the borough. Residents say this space is mostly used for dog walking and for informal play, two activities which are not necessarily compatible. Half of all residents think there is too little space of this type, a view which is more prominent in the south of the borough.

Residents tend to agree that the quality of these spaces is reasonable; the audit also found little evidence of litter or dog mess, two common problems on spaces of this type, but some spaces are being damaged by unauthorised parking. The area most commonly identified for improvement is maintenance.

The quantity standard calls for a substantial increase in the quantity of this space. On quality, the benchmark site is Berridge Green in Stanmore and bringing other spaces up to this level should address the issues raised in consultation. To ensure accessibility to spaces capable of supporting typical activity, the accessibility standard calls for a space of at least 0.1 Ha within 400m of every resident. Application of these standards highlights deficiencies in both quantity and accessibility in the south of the borough, and some accessibility issues in the north as well.

Natural and Semi-natural Green Space

These are spaces which have been naturally colonised by plants and wildlife, and can take the form of land, water and other natural features; their primary purpose is to provide biodiversity and nature conservation, but they have secondary roles in promoting health, environmental education, and recreational enjoyment of nature. For this study, our analysis is limited to those spaces that are accessible to the public.

There are 28 sites of this nature in Harrow, including some designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and three Local Nature Reserves, including Stanmore Country Park. Around 85% of the space, and two thirds of the sites, are in the northeast of the borough. There is a significant level of demand for more space of this type, with a majority of residents in all areas of the borough calling for more provision, a demand which is most marked in the south-west of the borough.

The audit results show quality to be good for most sites, in particular the SSSIs such as Bentley Priory; some smaller sites are of moderate quality. Residents' perceptions are that quality is reasonable, with above average scores for safety, biodiversity and path quality; accessibility for wheelchairs and buggies is scored more circumspectly, though.

Two thirds of residents use this type of space, and half of these do so at least once a fortnight. The most commonly visited sites include Bentley Priory and Stanmore Country Park, but also Ruislip Lido and Rickmansworth Aquadrome. Residents believe sites cater well for dog walkers, walkers and joggers but less well for equestrians, mountain bikers and cyclists. Access is primarily dependent on the use of a car.

The standard for quantity recognises the geographical unevenness of current provision with most of the borough's natural and semi-natural greenspace being located in the north-east of the borough. Whilst overall there is a relatively high level of provision, application of the standard highlights a lack of this type of space in the south of the borough. The benchmark site for quality is Stanmore Country Park, and other sites should be brought up to at least this level of quality. For accessibility, everyone should have an accessible natural green space within 1km of home. There are large areas of the borough that are deficient against this standard.

Green corridors

Access corridors such as footpaths and railway lines provide linear landscapes that also offer opportunities for natural colonisation, and provide linkages for wildlife as well as people. They provide functional spaces for travelling without encountering road traffic, but also environments suited for exercise such as walking, jogging and equestrianism. Harrow's green corridors are a key element of the Green Grid. This aims to create a network of interlinked multi- purpose open spaces with good connections to the areas where people live and work, public transport, the green belt and the Thames.

There are 18 green corridors in Harrow, mainly in the north of the borough; three of these are part of the old Belmont railway. A significant majority of residents would

like to see an increase in provision of this type of space, especially in the west and central areas of the borough.

Quality scores are low, and many corridors are in poor condition with low standards of cleanliness and maintenance and poor quality path surfaces. Consequently these spaces get little use at present.

PPG17 indicates that there is no sensible way of setting a standard for green corridors. However the Council's policy should promote the use of green corridors to link existing green spaces, and should exploit more fully the opportunities provided by existing linear features.

Outdoor sport

For the purposes of this study, outdoor sport encompasses playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities such as bowling greens and tennis courts, together with ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and showers. Participation in outdoor sports in Harrow is on a par with the national picture, but low in the context of London.

A total of nearly 160 Ha of space in Harrow is given over to sports pitches, which are distributed across the borough, but with a greater level of provision in the northwest sub-area. In addition there are 14 Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs), five synthetic turf pitches (STPs), 11 bowling greens and 114 tennis courts on 24 sites.

Residents are broadly happy with levels of provision, with a substantial minority wanting more, especially in the south of the borough.

The quality of a sports pitch is ranked on a five point scale ranging from excellent to very poor. Only 15% of Harrow's football pitches rate as good or excellent, but cricket pitches score very well, and rugby also has good quality pitches. Tennis and bowls generally have good quality facilities, and the MUGAs and STPs offer good quality as well. Changing accommodation scores vary widely, with local authority facilities scoring poorly; facilities for women are generally very poor, or limited, and would deter participation. Half of those using sports pitches travel by car; most of the rest walk.

The quantity standard indicates that there are fewer pitches and opportunities for outdoor sport available in the central and southwestern sub-areas. More

significantly, the quality standards require a significant improvement in football pitch quality, and a slight improvement in rugby; the benchmark sites are Zoom Leisure (football)²¹, Grove Field (rugby) and Harrow Recreation Ground (cricket). The benchmark for changing accommodation is the site at Saddlers Mead. The accessibility standard is a 15 minute actual walking distance, and most of the area is adequately covered for pitches; there are deficiencies in the north for bowls, and across the borough for MUGAs and STPs.

Allotments

Allotments are areas of land set aside for the cultivation of produce, and they are valuable because in addition to this functional role they support social interaction, health, and sustainability. They are particularly important in denser-populated areas where garden space is limited or absent. There are 37 allotment sites in Harrow, and over 1,350 plots; the waiting list for plots (not usually a precise indicator of demand) suggests a substantial latent demand for more provision. There are no allotment sites at all in the northeastern sub-area. A majority of people think the quantity of provision is about right, but a substantial minority want more; demand is highest in the southeast.

Quality scores are mixed, and poorer quality sites are more commonly found in the south of the borough.

Application of the quantity standard would provide a modest increase in provision. It is likely that this, together with a review of the waiting list and the potential of two currently unused sites, would meet much of the existing demand. This standard does at present generate a deficiency especially in the central and northeastern sub-areas. The benchmark site for quality is the Headstone allotment site and improvement to this level would address many concerns raised in consultation. An analysis of existing patterns of use leads to an accessibility standard based on the number of plots on each site, and applying this standard means that most of the borough outside the northeast sub-area is adequately covered.

Cemeteries and churchyards

²¹ This was correct at the time of the PPG17 Study. The Zoom Leisure site is subject to development proposals.

Cemeteries and churchyards are primarily functional spaces in which the dead are buried, but they can have significant secondary roles as places of quiet reflection, and as environmental and wildlife havens, especially in the urban context. There are 14 burial grounds in Harrow, and these are mostly full other than for specific religious requirements. Residents are broadly happy with the level of provision of burial space and there is little pressure for increased provision. Options exist for possible re-use of old grave sites but are not currently being explored and have yet to win widespread public support.

Cemetery sites vary in quality; residents comment favourably on cleanliness, and on daytime safety, but are less positive about the care of plots and headstones, and are critical of a lack of seating.

The proximity of cemetery space to residents' homes is not normally a factor in visiting; people tend to go to those places that have personal meaning for them, not necessarily the nearest one. In Harrow, relatively few people ever visit a cemetery, and those who do, do so infrequently. Clamp Hill and Pinner are the sites most visited by local people.

The standard for quantity is based on a projected need for 180-195 new grave spaces per annum, a demand which can be met for the time being at Carpenders Park. On quality, the benchmark site is Pinner New cemetery and other sites should be brought up to that level; there is no accessibility standard for cemeteries.

Standards

| Typology | Quantity standard | Quality standard | Accessibility standard (Walking distance) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parks and gardens | 0.66 Hectares per 1000 population Emphasis to be given to increasing provision in the southeast, southwest and central sub-areas Benchmark site Chandos Recreation Ground | Quality Value 81.5% 80% | District Park 1200 metres Local Park 800 metres Small Open Space 400 metres Pocket Park 400 metres Linear Park wherever achievable |
| Natural and semi-natural greenspace | 0.4 hectares per 1000 population apart from North-East sub-area - existing provision should be retained. A minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population. | Quality Value 72.5%. 80%. Benchmark site Stanmore Country Park. | One kilometre actual walking distance from home. |
| Amenity Greenspace | 0.31 hectares per 1000 people | Quality Value 83.8% 80% | At least one amenity greenspace of at least 0.1 Ha in size within 400m of where they live. |
| Play | 4 square metres of dedicated playable space per child At least three youth spaces specifically designed to accommodate the needs of teenagers, within each sub-area | Location 89% Play Value 85% Care and Maintenance 73% Overall 79% Benchmark site Stanmore Recreation Ground. | Doorstep Playable Space 100m Local Playable Space 400m Neighbourhood Playable Space 400m Youth Space 800m |
| Churchyards and Cemeteries | | Quality Value 87% 90% | |
| Allotments | 0.18 hectares per 1000 people | Quality 77.1% Benchmark site Headstone Allotments. | 50 or more plots: 1200m 21 to 50 plots: 900m 20 or fewer plots: 600m |
| Outdoor sports facilities | 0.78 Hectares per 1000 population. | Quality standards:- Football 71% Cricket 84% Rugby 71% Bowling greens 81.5%. Tennis courts 87.5%. Changing facilities 63% | Outdoor Sport 1,200 metres Synthetic Turf Pitches 20 minute drive time |

Consultation

Consultation with local people has taken the form of three individual surveys two of which were undertaken in connection with other events and surveys in the borough and one specific to the Open Space Strategy.

Let's Talk- A New Conversation for Harrow

Harrow Council's community engagement programme "Let's Talk" was launched in November 2010. The first phase took place through the winter and gave residents the opportunity to help set the council's vision and priorities for the next three years. A pop-up living room toured the borough inviting residents to get take a seat on the sofa and talk to a councillor or senior officer. More than 2,000 took part.

The second phase of Let's Talk took place in the summer of 2011 and focussed on finding out residents' views on the most popular services. A questionnaire survey was undertaken asking people what they thought about the most popular services – parks, libraries, sports and cultural facilities.

A total of 1,903 people completed questionnaires; 1,702 residents filled out the paper questionnaires and 78 residents filled it in online. The overall response shows that services such as parks and libraries are the most popular in the borough and most used.

Pinner Memorial Park, Pinner Library, Harrow Arts Centre and Harrow Leisure Centre are the most popular in their respective services.

Parks are the most popular service; eighty-three percent of residents use parks in the borough. The reason for their popularity is because residents said they were clean, had good facilities for children and provided open green space. However, what would encourage them to use them more would be to have less anti-social behaviour in the parks and for them to be maintained better.

A third (34%) of residents had visited Pinner Memorial Park in the previous three months; also popular are Harrow Recreation Ground and Bentley Priory (both 19%), Headstone Manor and West Harrow Recreation Ground (both 16%).

What is good about the parks?

Thirty-five percent of residents consider that what is good about parks in Harrow is that they are well maintained and looked after.

A quarter (23%) of residents feel that the children's facilities are good. A fifth (19%) say that the open space is good and one in ten said it is good for walking and exercise.

What would encourage you to use parks more?

A fifth (22%) of residents said that less anti-social behaviour/more security would encourage them to use the parks more.

Better maintenance/upkeep of the general parks and sports facilities would encourage thirteen percent of residents to use them more.

One in ten said that having better cafe, toilet facilities and improved play areas for children would encourage them to use the parks in the borough more often.

Under One Sky Consultation on Parks and Greenspaces in Harrow

Harrow Council held a festival – Under One Sky - on Sunday June 26th 2011 at the Kodak Sports Ground in Harrow View. The festival was mainly aimed at young people and families. The event was attended by 8,000 people and included music, dance, children's activities, sporting activities and information stalls. Harrow's Parks and Greenspaces Department took the opportunity of holding a consultation during which people were asked for their opinions on their local parks and greenspaces. They were asked about their favourite park or greenspace, what they like about it and what they like to do there; also what is their least favourite park or greenspace and what they do not like about it. Respondents were asked to visualise the perfect greenspace and describe what this would be like. One hundred and seventeen people responded to the questionnaire survey.

In terms of the demographic breakdown of respondents three fifths are female and two fifths are male. Half the respondents are aged 18 to 45 years (compared with 44% for the borough as a whole); the numbers of under 18 year olds and those aged 46 to 64 are broadly similar to proportions in Harrow as a whole. However there are significantly fewer older respondents – with only 6.3% aged 65 and over compared with 13.3% in the borough as a whole. (see **Table 1** below). While these differences are not surprising given the nature of the event, it does mean that the results need to be treated with caution and are unlikely to be representative of the borough as a whole.

Table 1 Age Categories

| Age Group | Number | % | Borough Age Breakdown % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Under 18 | 22 | 19.6% | 21.6% |
| 18 to 45 | 57 | 50.9% | 43.6% |
| 46 to 64 | 26 | 23.2% | 21.6% |
| 65+ | 7 | 6.3% | 13.3% |
| Total responses | 112 | | |

In terms of the postcodes of respondents the greatest numbers came from HA5 (Pinner) and HA3 (Harrow Weald, Kenton, Wealdstone and Belmont) (24 and 22% respectively). Significant numbers also came from HA1 (15%) and HA2 (11%). A small number came from the UB and WD postcodes outside the borough. The majority of respondents therefore live in the central and western parts of the borough which is the area closest to the location of the event. This is likely to cause bias in terms of the parks which were selected.

When respondents were asked about their favourite park or greenspace the most frequently mentioned space by far is Pinner Memorial Park with 34 or 29% naming this as their favourite park. Other parks mentioned as favourites are Harrow Recreation Ground (13%), Canons Park (11%) and Alexandra Park (9%). Other parks were mentioned by smaller numbers of respondents. (see **Table 2** below)

Table 2 - Favourite Parks

| Park | Number | % |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Pinner Memorial | 34 | 29.1% |
| Harrow Recreation Ground | 15 | 12.8% |
| Canons Park | 13 | 11.1% |
| Alexandra Park | 11 | 9.4% |
| Total All Responses | 117 | 100.0% |

Only 54 respondents named a least favourite park and numbers for each space mentioned are small. No park was cited by more than 5 people; Byron Recreation Ground and Queensbury Recreation Ground were each mentioned by 5 respondents and Chandos Recreation Ground, Headstone Manor and Alexandra Park were mentioned by 4. Fewer than 4 respondents cited any other park or greenspace.

Respondents were asked what it was they like about their favourite park and what they like to do there. Results for the four most popular parks are analysed below.

Pinner Memorial Park Results

Table 3 - What do you like about the park?

| Attribute | Number | % |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Lake/ Ducks | 23 | 67.7% |
| Café | 20 | 58.8% |
| Play | 17 | 50.0% |
| Vegetation (trees/ grass/ planting) | 11 | 32.3% |
| Large Open Space | 10 | 29.4% |
| Total responses | 34 | |

N.B. Multiple responses

Table 4 -What do you like to do in the park?

| Activity | Number | % |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Relax/ sit/ socialise / picnic | 24 | 70.6% |
| Play with children | 18 | 52.9% |
| Go to the café | 9 | 26.5% |
| Walk | 9 | 26.5% |
| Other | 5 | 14.7% |
| Total responses | 34 | |

N.B. Multiple responses

Three quarters of those for whom Pinner Memorial Park was their favourite like the fact that it has a lake; also very important is the café (mentioned by 59%) and the play area (50%). One third of respondents appreciate the planting (including the trees and grass areas) and similar numbers like the fact that it is a large open space. (See **Table 3**)

In terms of what people like to do in the park three quarters like to relax (including picnicking and socialising) and half mention playing with children. One quarter like to go to the café and similar numbers like to walk. Other activities mentioned are feeding the ducks, playing football, walking the dog and listening to bands. (See **Table 4**)

Harrow Recreation Ground Results

15 respondents named Harrow Recreation Ground as their favourite space.

There is no clear picture of what respondents like about the park. One quarter mentioned its cleanliness and liking the vegetation (trees, grass and planting) (4 respondents each). 3 people mentioned the sports facilities; 2 mentioned the large open space, the play facilities and the fact that the park is local.

A clearer picture emerged about what people like to do in the park with two thirds enjoying walking or exercising. One quarter like to play or to relax and picnic (4 responses each). Others like to walk the dog or play sports (3 responses each.)

Canons Park Results

13 people cited Canons Park as their favourite park. It is possible that this number would have been higher if the consultation had taken place in a different part of the borough as this is a large destination type park.

Of the 13 respondents 5 mentioned liking the play area and the fact that the park is clean and well maintained. 4 like the secret garden and 3 like the café and the fact that the park is a large open space. One person mentioned the park keeper.

Over half report they like to play with children in the park (7 responses) and 5 said they like to walk or jog. One third enjoy relaxing or picnicking. Other responses included walking the dog and going to the café.

Alexandra Park Results

Alexandra Park is the favourite for 11 respondents.

Over half reported liking the large open space (6 respondents). Other responses included the play area and the fact that the park is quiet and peaceful.

In terms of what people like to do in the park, over half like to walk, exercise or play sport. Other responses were to relax or picnic and to play.

Least Favourite Parks and Greenspaces

Fifty four respondents gave information about the park or greenspace which they like least and why they do not like it. The range of spaces was large with no more than 5 respondents naming one space. The results for the reasons for disliking the

space have therefore been aggregated to include all parks and greenspaces.(see **Table 5** below).

Table 5 -Least favourite park – what do you not like about it – all parks and greenspaces

| Attribute | Number | % |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Poor maintenance / needs investment | 15 | 27.8% |
| Lack of safety | 14 | 25.9% |
| Dirty / dog mess | 14 | 25.9% |
| Boring – nothing to do | 11 | 20.4% |
| Dogs | 7 | 13.0% |
| Play area inadequate | 5 | 9.3% |
| Total | 54 | |

N.B. Multiple responses

The reasons for disliking an open space most frequently reported are poor maintenance or lack of investment (28%) and a perception that the space is unsafe (26%). In addition one fifth reported lack of cleanliness and 6% cited dog mess as a problem. One fifth reported the space to be boring or that there was nothing to do there. Dogs are felt to be a problem by 13% and 9% feel that the play area is inadequate.

The Perfect Greenspace

Respondents were asked to imagine the perfect greenspace and visualise what that would be like. Results are shown in **Table 6** below.

One third of respondents see the perfect greenspace as having a good play area. Other important features are a pond or water feature, a café and some sort of sports provision – all cited by one quarter of respondents. Other forms of infrastructure which are important to people include seating (11%), toilets (8%) and a green gym (7%). General requirements are that the space should be clean (13%) and safe (9%). 7% would like a separate area for dogs. The same number would like “something for everyone” and a “large open space”. Smaller numbers wished for community events, walking or nature trails and animals. (all mentioned by 5%).

Table 6 -What would the perfect greenspace be like?

| Attribute | Number | % |
|------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Good play area | 34 | 34% |
| Pond / water feature | 26 | 26% |
| Sports provision | 26 | 26% |
| Café | 23 | 23% |
| Clean | 13 | 13% |
| Seating | 11 | 11% |
| Safe | 9 | 9% |
| Toilets | 8 | 8% |
| Separate area for dogs | 7 | 7% |
| Green Gym | 7 | 7% |
| Large open space | 7 | 7% |
| Something for everyone | 7 | 7% |
| Walking/ nature trails | 5 | 5% |
| Community events | 5 | 5% |
| Animals | 5 | 5% |
| Total responses | 100 | |

N.B. Multiple responses

Conclusion

The results of the consultation exercise show the most popular space by far to be Pinner Memorial Park. However, most of those taking part live in the central and western parts of the borough and the results are unlikely to be applicable to the borough as a whole. Pinner Memorial Park is particularly appreciated for its lake, café and play area. Other parks mentioned by significant numbers are Harrow Recreation Ground, Canons Park and Alexandra Park.

When asked about their least favourite park or greenspace, respondents gave a wide variety of spaces, none of which was mentioned by more than 5 people. The main reasons given were lack of maintenance, investment and cleanliness and a perception that the space is unsafe.

When asked to visualize the perfect greenspace the most important attributes of such a space are a safe play area, a pond or water feature, a café and sports provision of some sort.

The results are interesting in terms of what people most value about their spaces and what causes them be dissatisfied. However they represent a snapshot in time in one area of the borough and cannot be assumed to represent the views of people of all ages in the borough as a whole.

Consultation on Harrow’s Parks and Green Spaces

A consultation exercise specifically about Harrow’s Parks and Green Spaces was undertaken during the summer of 2011. This took place in various open space locations across the borough.

Respondents were asked what matters to them most when they think of green spaces, including parks, play space, grassed areas, natural areas and woodlands, allotments and outdoor sports. They were asked about the themes for the strategy and how important each of these are to them. One hundred and thirty eight responses were achieved, 109 from locations in parks across the borough and Harrow town centre and 29 from allotment holders.

Demographic profile

In terms of the sex of respondents, fewer than three quarters answered the question; of those who did there was a predominance of females (60%) compared with males (40%).

Table 7 – Age Categories

| Age Group | Number | % | Borough Age Breakdown % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Under 18 | 2 | 1.5% | 21.6% |
| 18 to 45 | 41 | 30.8% | 43.6% |
| 46 to 64 | 54 | 40.6% | 21.6% |
| 65+ | 36 | 27.1% | 13.3% |
| Total responses | 133 | | |

In terms of the ages of respondents, there is a preponderance of older people when compared with the composition of the borough as a whole. Only 2 responses were achieved from the under 18 age group which makes up one fifth of the population and only 31% from respondents between the age of 18 and 45 as compared with 44% for the borough. Conversely the proportions in the upper age groups are twice that of the borough as a whole with 41% between the age of 46 and 64 and 27%

over 65 (compared with 22% and 13% respectively for the borough). (see **Table 7** above)

Table 8 -Ethnicity

| Group | Number | % | Borough ethnic breakdown ²² |
|-----------------|--------|-------|----------------------------------------|
| White | 98 | 76.0% | 59.8% |
| Black | 7 | 5.4% | 8.2% |
| Asian | 19 | 14.7% | 25.6% |
| Mixed / Other | 5 | 3.9% | 6.5% |
| Total responses | 129 | | |

In terms of the ethnicity of respondents, three quarters are white, 15% are asian, 5% are black and 4% are “mixed” or “other”. When compared with the proportions in the borough as a whole, there is an over representation of white people in the survey and fewer people from black, asian and other groups as shown in **Table 8** above.

Post Codes of respondents

Respondents’ postcodes indicate a reasonably even spread across the borough; One quarter live in the HA1 postcode area (Harrow, Harrow on the Hill, North Harrow) and one quarter in HA3 (Harrow Weald, Kenton, Wealdstone, Belmont). Just under one fifth live in the HA5 postcode area (Pinner, Eastcote, Hatch End, Rayners Lane) and just under 15% in postcodes HA2 and HA7 (North Harrow, South Harrow, Stanmore and Belmont). Fewer than 5% of respondents live outside the borough.

Cleanliness

Table 9 – Making our green spaces cleaner and more attractive to use

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don’t know | Total |
|------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Number | 117 | 21 | | | | 138 |
| Percentage | 84.8% | 15.2% | | | | |

When asked to how important it is that green spaces are kept in a clean state all respondents felt this was important with the vast majority declaring this to be very

²²Estimated resident population by ethnic group and sex, mid-2009, ONS.

important (85%). A number of comments were made relating to cleanliness and the necessity of having sufficient bins and dog bins.

Maintenance and improvement of infrastructure

Table 10 – Maintaining and improving things like paths, seats and bins

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know²³ | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Number | 115 | 21 | 1 | | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 83.3% | 15.2% | 0.7% | | 0.7% | |

Like cleanliness, maintenance was given a very high order of priority with all except 2 respondents considering this to be either very or fairly important. The proportion rating this as very important is 83%.

Safety

Table 11 – Making our green spaces feel safer

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Number | 123 | 11 | 4 | | | 138 |
| Percentage | 89.0% | 8.0% | 2.9% | | | |

Almost 90% consider making green spaces feel safer to be very important; this is the highest ranking of any of the themes to be considered very important. A further 8% consider this is fairly important so that the total believing this theme to be important is 98%. A number of comments were made on this topic with several respondents requesting more park keepers and greater police presence

Climate change

Table 12 – Using our green spaces to reduce the effects of climate change

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Number | 60 | 44 | 20 | 9 | 5 | 138 |
| Percentage | 43.5% | 31.9% | 14.5% | 6.5% | 3.6% | |

The importance of using green spaces to mitigate against climate change is considered to be the least important of all the possible themes. Less than half view

²³ Includes those who did not answer this question

this as very important and over one fifth consider this to be not very or not at all important.

Linkages

Table 13- Making links between green spaces to provide safe routes for walking and cycling

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Number | 79 | 47 | 11 | | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 57.3% | 34.1% | 8.0% | | 0.7% | |

Just over half considered making linkages between green spaces to be very important with a further one third viewing this as fairly important, so that over 90% consider this to be important.

Welcoming to everyone

Table 14 – Making green spaces welcoming to everyone regardless of age, disability or ethnic origin

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Number | 107 | 24 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 77.5% | 15.4% | 1.5% | 2.9% | 0.7% | |

Over 90% consider that it is important to make open spaces welcoming to all. Three quarters think that this is very important. However one person commented, “There should be some green spaces for everyone, but not every green space needs to be accessible to everyone. If you make all the wild, natural spaces accessible for wheelchairs then you spoil the natural environment/ wildlife habitats.”

Consulting local people

Table 15 – Consulting people about local green spaces and changes that might affect them

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|-------|
| Number | 92 | 37 | 8 | | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 66.7% | 26.8% | 5.8% | | 0.7% | |

Two thirds think it is very important to consult local people about their local green spaces and a further quarter consider this to be fairly important, so that over 90% view this theme as important.

Opportunities for involvement

Table 16 – Providing opportunities for people to be more involved in looking after our green spaces.

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Number | 69 | 47 | 16 | 5 | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 50.0% | 34.1% | 11.6% | 3.6% | 0.7% | |

Exactly half of those responding consider this theme to be very important, but a further one third think it is quite important, giving a total of over four-fifths who rate this as important. Several comments related to opportunities for greater involvement such as, “Involve locals in a volunteer capacity to litter pick, help plant and maintain flower beds, shrubs and play areas. We are here, we just need to be asked and organised.” and “Children (need) to be involved, they may then appreciate and enjoy the facilities we love”.

Funding

Table 17 – Finding new ways of raising money to improve green spaces

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Number | 74 | 46 | 12 | 2 | 4 | 138 |
| Percentage | 53.6% | 33.3% | 8.7% | 1.5% | 2.9% | |

Just over half think it is very important to find new ways of raising finance for improvements and a further third consider this to be fairly important.

Improving health

Table 18 – Using green spaces more to improve people's physical and mental health

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't know | Total |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Number | 102 | 26 | 9 | | 1 | 138 |
| Percentage | 73.9% | 18.8% | 6.5% | | 0.7% | |

Almost three quarters consider it very important to use green spaces more to improve resident's health making this an important theme. Together with those who think it fairly important, this accounts for over 90% of respondents. One person requested, "Installing gym equipment in all the parks as (the cost of) gym membership is astronomical in the borough".

Importance of different themes

Table 19– Relative importance of different themes

| Theme | Ranking | % considering very important |
|-----------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| Safety | 1 | 89.0% |
| Cleanliness | 2 | 84.8% |
| Maintenance | 3 | 83.3% |
| Welcoming | 4 | 77.5% |
| Health | 5 | 73.9% |
| Consultation | 6 | 67.1% |
| Linkages | 7 | 57.3% |
| Funding | 8 | 53.6% |
| Community involvement | 9 | 50.0% |
| Climate change | 10 | 43.5% |

In comparing the relative importance of the strategy's themes as measured by the proportion giving the rating of very important, the most important theme is safety, followed by cleanliness and maintenance. The next most important themes measured in this way are health and welcoming to all. (see **Table 19** above)

Developing the Strategy

A consistent and long-term direction is required if the issues and priorities identified for open space are to be addressed. The strategic priorities have been grouped under five key themes. These are reflected in the Vision statement.

The Vision for Harrow's Open Spaces

Harrow aims to protect and manage its open spaces for the benefit of all sections of the local community to increase opportunities for enjoyment whilst contributing to the improvement of health and the quality of people's lives.

The key themes are:-

Quality Spaces (Maintaining and improving the condition of open spaces)

Sustainable open spaces

Places for people

Resources

Promoting increased activity

Theme One: Quality Spaces (Maintaining and improving the condition of open spaces)

What is quality green space?

Quality green space has been defined²⁴ as:

‘Green space which is ‘fit for purpose’ - meaning it is in the right place, readily accessible, safe, inclusive, welcoming, well maintained, well managed and performing an identified function.’

The Place survey²⁵ included a question about how satisfied or dissatisfied people are with parks and open spaces. The results from the last survey in 2008 are shown in **Table 20** below indicated that people in Harrow are less satisfied with parks and open spaces than people in London as a whole and in England overall.

Table 20: Place Survey 2008

| Location | Satisfaction with parks and open spaces (%) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------|
| London | 72.3% |
| England | 68.5% |
| Harrow | 58.8% |

In England and Wales the recognised benchmark is the Green Flag Award for well-managed open spaces which has helped to drive up standards in the quality of spaces.

A park or open space which achieves the Green Flag Award will be a welcoming place, with good, safe access, effective signage and offering something to everyone. In addition, it will be a healthy, safe and secure space. The park or open space should be well maintained and clean with litter removed and the grounds, buildings and equipment being well maintained.

The equipment and facilities must be safe to use, the site must be secure for all members of the community and the issue of dog fouling must be addressed. If the space is a park, it should have toilets, drinking water, first aid, telephones and access to emergency equipment.

²⁴ Greenspace Quality - a guide to assessment, planning and strategic development, greenspace scotland and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership, 2008.

²⁵ The Place survey has been cancelled by the Coalition Government.

There are four parks in Harrow that have achieved Green Flag status; these are Harrow Recreation Ground, Roxeth Recreation Ground, Pinner Memorial Park and Canons Park.

Three of Harrow's parks have achieved the Gold Standard in the Mayors Safer Park Award. This represents 25% of the awards achieved by all London Boroughs.

Research has been undertaken²⁶ into what the ideal park, play area or green space would be like. People's aspirations for their ideal green space were grouped into three broad themes – the overall design of the space, meeting people's needs and the nature of management.

The overall design of open spaces reflects the view that good quality open spaces do not just happen but need to be designed. An important element is a variety of spaces within the ideal open space offering a variety of activities and experiences. Open areas and a good network of paths added to people's concept of an ideal space.

Diversity of vegetation is vitally important to people and the presence of water is the second most frequently mentioned element after vegetation that people wanted in their 'ideal' space.

Meeting people's needs requires improvement in the nature and condition of facilities to encourage people who do not use or infrequently use open spaces to make greater use of them. It is important for open spaces to offer a high quality and varied experience for the whole range of different groups in the community. For example, provision of opportunities for play helps children to develop social skills, creativity and confidence and is therefore an important part of early life.

Consultation with people in Harrow found that there is a widely held view that open spaces would benefit from better provision for young people.²⁷

People want to feel that their basic need for comfort will be met in open spaces and provision of suitable seating together with toilets and shelters feature highly in peoples' expectations.

²⁶ Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces, Nigel Dunnett, Carys Swanwick and Helen Woolley, Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield. Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions: London, May 2002.

²⁷ Harrow Open Space Sport and Recreation Study, 2010 p122.

Finally, the management of open spaces is about both the long term and day to day management of resources and operations to deliver quality places for people to use. Good maintenance is a key element of the ideal open space and it is the quality of maintenance and upkeep that people respond to. Good quality maintenance creates a feeling of care and security, which encourages use. Providing a quality service requires a workforce that has the range of skills to meet the changing needs of users.

Key Principles

- Service standards
- Open space Infrastructure
- Open space buildings
- Monitor and review

Key Principles and Objectives

Key Principle 1 - Service Standards

It is necessary to establish a baseline measurement for the quality of open spaces. Certain measures have already been established during the audit process but more work will need to be undertaken in consultation with park users and non-users to ensure that there is an agreed set of baseline data. Once the baseline quality standard has been established, goals will be set for improvement in the future.

The quality standards can be applied to all types of space irrespective of management and ownership. The specific quality criteria established for certain types of space such as sports pitches and wildlife areas may require specialist expertise to monitor them.

Management Plans for key open spaces will form part of the process for evaluating performance against the agreed quality standards. They are an important aid to the efficient and effective management of a site. Individual plans will be specific to each park and will deliver aims and objectives which relate to the needs of the local community who will be directly consulted and involved in its formulation.

Management plans for all key sites will be essential for maintaining fitness for purpose and sustaining quality in the long term.

The London Parks Benchmarking Group seeks to identify, share, and promote best practice through process benchmarking. It collects and shares comparative data with regard to the grounds maintenance of open spaces in order to benchmark comparative costs and thereby determine whether value for money is being achieved. Performance indicators include:

- Net expenditure for parks and open spaces per 1,000 people
- Net cost per hectare
- Cost of client function
- Cost of parks ground maintenance
- Cost of parks per head

These indicators are mainly input based, i.e. they measure the amount of resources being used but they do also provide valuable information as to how the service is performing. Further work will be needed to develop more outcome-based indicators.

Service Standards

To ensure that open spaces are clean, well maintained, accessible and provide good quality facilities for people to enjoy.

Objectives

- 1.1 To agree quality standards that reflect customer expectations for:
 - District Parks
 - Local Parks
 - Small Open Spaces
 - Pocket Parks
 - Linear Parks
- 1.2 To report on the management information data from the 'Collective' system on operational performance.
 - 1.2.1 To undertake annual quality assessments and publish the qualitative parks data for key parks (District and Local parks) on the council's web site.
- 1.3 To benchmark with other London Boroughs using the London Parks Benchmarking 'cost framework.'
- 1.4 To ensure that grounds maintenance staff have the necessary level of skills.

Targets

- 1.5 To maintain open spaces to the relevant quality standards.
- 1.6 To progressively improve all parks to a variable baseline quality level by 2020 (70% quality score for key parks, 60% quality score for other parks).
- 1.7 To achieve an additional Green Flag Award for one park during the five year plan to ensure adequate geographic coverage across the borough.
- 1.8 To complete management plans for different types of open space as resources allow.

Aspirations

1.9 To develop a common management plan framework to support planning across different types of open space.

Key Principle 2 - Parks and Open Space Infrastructure

Park and green space infrastructure, which includes, paths, seating, signage and bins is maintained to a safe and acceptable standard throughout the year.

Key elements of a high quality park or open space, which make it attractive to users, are numerous seats for the size of the site which are in good condition; paths which are surfaced with suitable materials and level for safe use, with edges well defined, good signage and numerous bins in good condition.

Parks and Open Space Infrastructure

To develop agreed standards of maintenance for all parks and open spaces infrastructure.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 2.1 To inspect, maintain in a clean condition and keep free from graffiti all parks and open space furniture.
- 2.2 To report vandalised, unsafe, damaged or defective items immediately upon discovery.
- 2.3 To ensure that reported defects requiring action are given a priority time period for completion

Aspirations

- 2.4 To improve park infrastructure including seating, play equipment, bins, seats, railings, car parks, pathways and other fixtures within parks and green spaces.
- 2.5 To develop a planned preventative maintenance programme.

Key Principle 3 - Parks and Open Space Buildings

Existing buildings within parks and other open spaces are in many cases no longer fit for purpose. It will be necessary to undertake a review of the need for and condition of the existing stock in order to identify those buildings which are no longer viable. The buildings in parks and open spaces, which are retained following this review, should be maintained to a 'fit for purpose' standard.

Parks and Open Space Buildings

To develop agreed standards of maintenance for all parks and open spaces buildings.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 3.1 To undertake a review of existing park buildings to inform a programme of rationalisation.
- 3.2 To develop a planned preventative maintenance programme.
- 3.3 To ensure that reported defects requiring action are given a priority time period for completion.

Targets

- 3.4 To ensure that retained parks buildings are maintained to a 'Fair' standard.
- 3.5 To secure improvements in the condition of showers and changing facilities particularly for women.

Key Principle 4 - Monitor and Review

Strategies need to be monitored and reviewed to ensure they remain relevant and are achieving the relevant strategic aims and objectives. It will therefore be necessary to establish what will be measured to provide an indication of progress.

Key Performance Objectives

Targets

- 4.1 To monitor and review progress on implementation of the Open Space Strategy.

Theme Two: Sustainable Green Spaces

Sustainability is the practice of using resources to provide for the needs of today's citizens while preserving the use of those same resources for the needs of future generations. Sustainable development is concerned with ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

Open spaces serve many functions and contribute in a number of ways to the principle of sustainable development. Open spaces contribute to the mitigation of the effects of climate change. They act as carbon sinks, removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it away. Within urban areas, a 10% increase in green cover could potentially eliminate the effects of climate change on increasing surface temperatures.

The maintenance and management of open spaces and their facilities will need to be environmentally sound. Energy conservation measures and pollution reduction are a high priority as is the need to offset carbon emissions through increased tree planting.

In future maintenance regimes will need to ensure that open spaces are sustainable and resilient to the diverse challenges of climate change. Future planting programmes will need to focus on the need for drought tolerant species to further decrease reliance on water and increase resilience to climate change. There will need to be a focus on species that are resistant to the new pests and diseases. The number of bedding plants may be reduced because these are high maintenance and require frequent watering. Changing mowing maintenance regimes in selected areas where the grass is allowed to grow longer will allow for increased biodiversity and resilience.

More sustainable practices will also need to focus on water resources through the collection of rainwater and the recycling of 'grey' water. Water efficient fixtures and fittings attached to the buildings in open spaces can significantly reduce the demand for water. At the same time there is a need to make these buildings more energy efficient.

Key Principles

- Sustainability

- Adapting to climate change
- Increasing biodiversity
- Linkages between and through open spaces

Key Principles and Objectives

Key Principle 5 - Sustainability

The management of environmentally sustainable open spaces is likely to focus on eliminating the use of pesticides, fertilizers and horticultural peat, greater use of recycled material, composting, recycled water and giving priority to low maintenance planting.

Opportunities to introduce renewable energy into open spaces could include fixing solar panels to south facing roofs of facilities and using wind turbines. This could make these facilities self-sustaining in terms of energy and helps with carbon reduction commitments. Similarly, biomass boilers can be used to heat premises and the fuel for these can be sourced internally. The renewable heat incentive could provide funding for this.

In Donaghmede, north Dublin, Father Collins Park has been revamped and is now an excellent example of sustainable urban design. Five wind turbines line the central promenade and power the electrical needs of the park area (lights, water aeration system, service buildings), while the pond water is filtered by reed beds.

Sustainability

To develop a more sustainable approach to the maintenance of open spaces. This will include:-

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 5.1 Minimising the use of pesticides and fertilizers in open spaces.
- 5.2 Maximising green waste composting from arisings..

Aspirations

- 5.3 Increasing the use of organic mulch to increase soil fertility, improve soil structure, increase soil fauna and improve water retention.
- 5.4 Increasing the use of ground cover planting to reduce weeds and water loss and create habitats for wildlife.
- 5.5 To examine opportunities to use renewable energy in open spaces.

Key Principle 6 - Adapting to Climate Change

There is clear evidence that in the future temperatures will rise significantly; there will be an increase in flooding and storms, summers will be warmer and drier, winters will be warmer and wetter and sea levels will rise. There will also be changes to the hydrological regime leading to a greater risk of flooding from rivers and the surface water drainage system. **Table 21** shows a summary of the expected changes.

| Table 21 - Summary of expected climate change in the UK | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Temperature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual warming by the end of the century of between 1°C and 5°C depending on emission scenario • Greater summer warming in the southeast than elsewhere • Increase in the number of very hot days • Decrease in the number of very cold days |
| Precipitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally wetter winters for the whole of the UK (by up to 30 per cent), and increases in winter precipitation intensity • The risk of flooding from rivers and the sea will at least double by the 2080s, and could increase by up to 20 times²⁸ • Substantially drier summers |
| Soil moisture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreases in summer and autumn, especially in the southeast |

Source: Climate Change & Urban Green Spaces DCLG

Open spaces can play a valuable role in reducing the effect that climate change has on people’s lives. For example, the problem of flooding is in part a result of the increasing frequency of extreme rainfall events combined with hard surfacing resulting in increased run off. Open spaces can help to reduce these effects by absorbing rainwater thus reducing sudden peaks in the flow of water into drains and rivers. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (or ‘SUDS’) involve the use of specially designed green areas to provide temporary storage of rainwater flowing from hard

²⁸ Foresight (2004) 'Future Flooding'

surfaces. In some cases, open spaces can also act as overflows, helping to prevent flooding of more vulnerable areas. For example, Centenary Park and Whitchurch Playing Fields provide bunded water storage.

Buildings and roads 'soak up' heat in the daytime and store it. The energy is then released during the night time. This creates the urban heat island effect which can make cities several degrees warmer than surrounding areas and this will be exacerbated by climate change. Green spaces can help to reduce these effects because they heat up more slowly. Trees serve to moderate the urban heat island effect through a combination of reflecting sunlight, providing shade and evaporating water through transpiration.

Adapting to Climate Change

To utilise the contribution of open spaces in mitigating the effects of climate change

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 6.1 To ensure that water efficient fixtures and fittings are used in buildings situated in open spaces.

Aspirations

- 6.2 To increase and promote opportunities for the collection of rainwater and the recycling of 'grey' water.
- 6.3 To maximise the volume of hard surface water run-off which is retained within the park so that water can drain naturally into the ground.
- 6.4 To introduce more drought tolerant planting schemes such as using particular species of herbaceous perennials which need minimal watering when established.
- 6.5 To examine opportunities for the recycling and on-site treatment of surface water in the water features and wetlands

Key Principle 7 - Increasing biodiversity

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 contains a new duty for Local Authorities. It requires every public authority to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

All local authorities have a statutory obligation to conserve biodiversity:

“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”²⁹

Biodiversity (or biological diversity) is the variety of life. It encompasses all life forms from bacteria and fungi to grasses, ferns, trees, insects and mammals. It also covers the full range of processes, such as nutrient cycling, carbon and nitrogen fixation, pollination and beneficial predation. Increasing biodiversity is concerned with managing, maintaining and enhancing the capacity of the land to sustain a variety of native species and functioning ecosystems that support wildlife.

The most valuable habitats are invariably found within the diverse range of green space in urban areas;³⁰ the parks and gardens, allotments, cemeteries and woodlands in Harrow provide a rich variety of habitats for mammals, birds, insect, aquatic and plant life. Maintaining this diversity of green space is essential to meeting biodiversity conservation objectives, as each space will offer different habitats for species.

In managing open space it is of increasing importance to achieve a balance between the recreational use of green space and its valuable contribution to biodiversity. Working practices will need to be reviewed to identify those that help to conserve and enhance biodiversity and reduce or eliminate potentially harmful practices.

In urban areas it is the access to open spaces which provides people with the opportunity to experience the benefits of biodiversity. Contact with the natural world enhances the quality of life and significantly improves people’s health and well-

²⁹ Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 s.40

³⁰ The Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management. (2001). Nature Conservation Policy Statement

being. Where a site is managed to take account of and enhance biodiversity and encourage wildlife, it will significantly enhance a person's experience in that space.

Increasing biodiversity

To manage all open spaces, where appropriate, to protect and enhance their potential value for wildlife and biodiversity

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

7.1 To ensure that grounds maintenance specifications incorporate the need to increase biodiversity by using native species and by providing food and nesting sites for wildlife.

Targets

7.2 To develop biodiversity management prescriptions on key Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sites.

Key Principle 8 - Enhance Linkages between and through Open Spaces, the Green Grid and the Cycle Network

Open spaces should not be considered as isolated sites; the connections between them are also important.

Encouraging people to use Harrow's open spaces will be facilitated by providing easy and attractive routes to get to them. Wildlife also needs green corridors and waterways to be able to move between spaces.

At present, Harrow's open spaces do not form part of a network. Suburban street patterns disrupt linkages and many open spaces are hidden from view. There are few linking walks or routes. Proposals exist to create a network of interlinked, multi functional and high quality open spaces that connect with town centres, public transport, open countryside and locations where people live and work. Open spaces and the connections between them will form part of a network of 'Green Infrastructure' called the Green Grid.

The spatial vision for Harrow, set out in the Draft Core Strategy provides that by 2026: -

“The Borough's network of open spaces will have been successfully linked up as part of a grid of green infrastructure providing opportunities for residents, thriving biodiversity, natural drainage, a counter to the urban heat island effect and partial mitigation of local light and air pollution. There will have been a net increase in the Borough's green infrastructure as opportunities to add to the grid will have been identified and implemented.”

This reflects the aspirations of the Greater London Authority to create an All London Green Grid.

The Green Grid will provide and promote connected green routes to the green belt, parks and green spaces for walkers and cyclists. It will seek to address severance caused by transport corridors in key locations and provide continuous cycling and walking routes to and through open spaces.

Enhance Linkages between and through Open Spaces, the Green Grid and the Cycle Network

To enhance accessibility through the development of continuous and connected networks of open space within the framework of the Harrow Green Grid.

Key Performance Objectives

Targets

- 8.1 To connect people with places of work, recreation, and other service centres along green corridors, shared use walking and cycling routes, public rights of way and other paths.

Aspirations

- 8.2 To promote sustainable transport through the development of a safe and accessible network of routes.

Theme Three: Places For People

Open spaces are freely available to all members of the community, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender. Good quality open spaces bring communities together. They help to shape the cultural identity of an area and provide a sense of place for local communities.

It has been estimated that in the UK some 33 million people make over 2.5 billion visits each year to urban green spaces³¹. In Harrow, the most popular type of green space is the park. In a recent consultation exercise undertaken in Harrow³² it was found that, overall, 87% of local residents make some use of parks, with just one in eight people (13%) saying they never visit a borough park. Some people visit a park once a day, however the general pattern is less intense. Over half of all local residents (54%) stated that they use parks at least once a fortnight, and two thirds (63%) stated that they visit at least once a month, suggesting that borough parks are a very important facility for local people and one they use regularly.

Levels of use are high in all areas of the borough but especially so in the north west and the south west of the borough, where over two thirds of residents (69% and 68% respectively) use parks at least once a month. People in the south east of the borough visit parks less often although well over half (59%) of residents visit a park at least once a month.

Younger people make more use of parks than older people, but levels of use are high in all age-groups and, even in the over 65s, where levels of use are lowest, well over half (55%) of residents use parks at least monthly and the proportion who never visit a park is just one in five (20%).

Park visiting is high for all ethnic groups, but parks are more popular with Black residents (76% visit at least monthly) and are visited less by Asian residents (59% visit at least monthly). People with disabilities are much less frequent visitors with just over a third of people with disabilities (37%) visiting at least once a month, whilst a similar proportion (35%) never visit a park.

³¹ A telephone survey undertaken for the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce reported in *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces*, Nigel Dunnett, Carys Swanwick and Helen Woolley Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield. Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions: London 2002.

³² Harrow Open Space Sport and Recreation Study, 2010.

Parks are by no means exclusively the preserve of families, but it is noticeable that adults with children at home visit more often than those with no children. Over half of adults with no children (52%) visit at least monthly, but well over three quarters (78%) of people with children do so; in contrast, only 3% of families with children at home never visit a park.

There are a number of barriers to encouraging more people to use open spaces which this strategy will need to address. Open spaces should be welcoming and inclusive and, where staff are present, they should be helpful and also representative of the wider community. It should be easy for all members of the community to find out how to get to open spaces including travel by public transport.

People will only use Harrow's open spaces if they are accessible. This means identifying and removing the barriers to use and making sure people all ages and abilities are able to use the park or green space. People will only use an open space if it is within easy reach of where they live or work. Routes to open spaces need to be safe and attractive and also suitable for people who are disabled. Good access means providing a range of routes for different users with good signage and attractive entrances. People will be more likely to visit open spaces in Harrow if they find it easy to move freely around the space. Paths need to be wheelchair accessible and seats should be provided for elderly people to rest.

A more recent contribution to understanding the general public's use of green space, and to identify their needs and attitudes has been undertaken to help the Green Flag Plus Partnership³³. This identified four green space user segments³⁴. The largest segment overall with 40% of the population is termed the 'Great Outdoors' whose primary reason for visiting green spaces is to enjoy the fresh air and exercise; this segment visits green space simply because they tend to feel happier and healthier after a visit. The 'Sanctuary' segment represents 25% of the population. They tend to romanticise green space and seek peace and tranquillity above all. The needs and activities described by individuals in the 'Playground' segment are often driven by externally moulded motivations and needs, rather than personal desires. The 'Playground' segment, at 19% of the population, utilises green

³³ People, Places and their Green Spaces, A segmentation of people who use green spaces, Keep Britain Tidy, 2010

³⁴ Market segments are a sub group of people sharing one or more characteristics that cause them to have similar product need. Segments are distinct from each other.

spaces simply to share experiences with, and to entertain, their children or grandchildren. The 'Team Spirit' is the smallest segment making up 15% of the population. They see visits to green spaces as a chance to socialise with friends and family and they are the most likely to actively seek the hustle and bustle of an actively attended green space. For some, participation in team sports meant needs were fairly pragmatic and facilities driven. Finally, there are those who choose not to visit open spaces. 'Resistors' did not feel they had a reason to utilise the green spaces available to them and, although they were keen to stress they could see the benefits of using green space, Resistors frequently cited fear of crime, litter and the potential for boredom as reasons for not using green spaces in their area. 10% of the respondents in the survey stated they had not used a park or green space in the last 12 months.

Key Principles

- Encourage Diversity and Inclusion
- Consultation
- Park User Groups
- Safety and Security
- Needs of Young People
- Using Current Data to Analyse Needs And Deficiencies

Key Principles and Objectives

Key Principle 9 - Encourage Diversity and Inclusion

Harrow's population is one of the most diverse in London with 50.1%³⁵ of the people living in Harrow being from minority ethnic communities. Harrow also has the highest level of religious diversity of any local authority in England and Wales. The wide range of cultures in Harrow provides challenges around communication and cohesion.

Open spaces offer the opportunity to bring people from many different sections of society together, on an equal platform.

Open spaces in a locality provide a valuable place for people to socialise. Allotments, for example, can provide a community focus and an opportunity for people from different communities to develop cross-cultural ties.

Events and cultural projects are ways to develop and enhance community and social identities. Such activities may involve people who might otherwise not visit their local open space. This can allow open spaces to become more accessible to people and a real focus for community activity.

The encouragement of diversity and inclusion will require a better understanding of whether there are individuals and communities identified by race, gender, disability or age who have needs that are not being met. Positive measures could improve the promotion of good relations with these individuals and communities.

For older people and women many particular needs can be met through measures proposed to improve the perception of safety in parks and by raising their quality and that of their management and maintenance.

Providing more things for young people to do was an important finding from the earlier consultation³⁶ with four out of five residents (80%) saying the borough has too few teenage spaces. This indicates that specific, positive actions and measures are needed to meet the needs of young people.

Encourage Diversity and Inclusion

To increase the use of parks and green spaces by under-represented groups

³⁵ ONS Revised Mid 2006 Population Figures – August 2007

³⁶ Harrow Open Space Sport and Recreation Study, 2010, p122.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 9.1 To develop initiatives that engage all communities in their open spaces.
- 9.2 To ensure that the development plans for parks and open spaces make them significantly more inclusive and accessible to all.

Targets

- 9.3 To carry out a programme of engagement with ethnic groups and disabled groups to enhance these communities' use of parks;
- 9.4 To work with the local disability forum to find ways to help disabled people make greater use of parks and green spaces.

Aspirations

- 9.5 To promote the use of local open spaces to those groups who are not currently using them.

Key Principle 10 - Consultation

There are a number of methods of community engagement, ranging from simple consultation about changes to service provision to more complex forms of community involvement.

There are two stages to consultation. Information is the starting point for any work with people. If it is carried out well, it will help people to feel valued and informed.

Where there are limited options for action, informing people is an appropriate way of involving them. Providing information helps to gain general support and provides an understanding of exactly what is planned in an open space. It can also be used as an introduction to consultation and more active participation.

Consultation is concerned with giving people choices about what happens in a park or open space and provides a chance to shape it. Community involvement in parks and open spaces can lead to increased use, enhancement of quality and, in particular, to ensuring that facilities are suited to local needs.

Consultation gives open space users the chance to have their say about what is happening with the local space and a feeling that their views have been heard. It is

also a two way process, which can often result in new ideas or information, which can improve the project. Consultation can also attract new people interested in opportunities for more active participation.

In Harrow, securing the involvement of people from ethnic minorities is particularly important and may require more creative consultation approaches. It may be possible to promote inclusion through more community events. Similarly, engaging with children and young people can be challenging and will require a less adult-centred approach. Young people could be encouraged to become actively involved in making decisions about improvements and this will help to develop a sense of ownership in their local open spaces. It is important to remember that by 2026, 69% of under 15 year olds are likely to be from BME groups³⁷.

Consultation

To ensure that the needs and aspirations of the elderly, children, ethnic minorities and the disabled are taken into account

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

10.1 To undertake regular consultation and participation exercises to ensure that customer needs and expectations are being met.

Aspirations

10.2 To undertake pre consultation surveys to establish that consultation exercises are focused on priority issues.

³⁷ Harrow's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Produced by Harrow Local Authority & Harrow Primary Care Trust, (November 2008)

Key Principle 11 - Park User Groups

The park user group takes consultation a step forward into active community involvement in decision-making, design, planning and management³⁸.

In Harrow, the establishment of user groups for parks and open spaces is encouraged. Harrow Council already actively works to support and facilitate community involvement and participation. There are already a number of groups in the borough including the Harrow Recreation Ground Users' Association, the Friends of Canons Park, the Friends of Bentley Priory and Harrow Nature Conservation Forum. The council regularly engages with them on issues of park and open space management and development.

A commitment is needed from all owners and managers to work together co-operatively with community groups and strive to improve local parks and open spaces.

Parks User Groups

To promote the establishment of new steering groups for parks and open spaces to guide changes to a space and/or management plan.

Key Performance Objectives

Targets

- 11.1 To undertake a steering group setup 'programme'
- 11.2 To endorse the role of existing user groups as the principal forum for discussing views about open spaces and promoting more effective, beneficial usage to the wider community.

³⁸ This continuum of community engagement was first described Arnstein's widely recognised 'ladder' of participation. see A Ladder of Citizen Involvement. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. 35, 216–224. Arnstein, S.R. (1969).

Key Principle 12 - Safety and Security

Consultation undertaken for the Harrow Open Space Sport and Recreation Study found that the most important reason given for not using a park in Harrow is fear for safety while in the park and three quarters of non-users cite this as a factor in their decision not to visit a park. This suggests that there is a degree of fear associated with parks which does not apply nearly as strongly to the streets that would be used to get there. This is not confined to any one age group, but is a much greater factor for women among non-users.

Where responsible use is the norm and anti-social behaviour is discouraged parks and open spaces are likely to be well frequented. On the other hand, if there is a perception that a space is likely to be unsafe, it will be actively avoided by residents and will feel empty and unvalued and is likely to deteriorate further.

Safety and Security

To increase the sense of safety and security in Harrow's open spaces

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 12.1 To work with Metropolitan Police and Crime Prevention Design Officer to incorporate Secured by Design principles in main parks.

Targets

- 12.2 To increase the number of parks achieving Mayor's Safer Parks Award
- 12.3 To maintain the existing low level of crime and anti social behaviour in parks and open spaces.

Key Principle 13 - Using Current Data to Identify Customer Needs

Residents' profiles, based on Experian's Mosaic Public Sector classification are a way of trying to understand preferences of the residents of Harrow. Eight segments have been developed to provide a detailed picture of the residents of Harrow, which will help to improve service delivery.

Experian were commissioned by Harrow Council in 2008 to develop a bespoke customer segmentation model which would provide a view of Harrow's households. This is based on key characteristics drawn from commercial, government and council sources. Each of the eight segments has its own "pen portrait" of characteristics. Characteristics included in the descriptions are: ethnic composition, health, education, income and levels of crime in the area.

The potential value of this tool to the open spaces strategy is the ability to plot and map household types living in the catchments of specific parks and open spaces. The ability to identify household types within a catchment area facilitates the identification of potential target groups, which may be given priority in the strategy.

Experian data on "Middle Britain"

A more recent study by Experian, based on Experian's 2009 national analysis, defines a "new" picture of "middle Britain" based on key statistical measures such as income, age, car ownership, type of house, attitudes and behaviours. 49.7% of Harrow's households fall into this category (the fifth highest area in the country). Experian's analysis of this multi-ethnic group gives some indication of this group's attitudes and likely behaviour.

The Experian "middle Britain" report suggests that a high proportion of Harrow's residents favour local leisure activities including local gym and cinema, running, cycling and using parks.

Deprivation indices

Harrow's most deprived wards remain Wealdstone, Roxbourne and Greenhill. Segments F and G are predominant in these wards, as well as Segment H in Roxbourne.

Segment G - Ethnic minorities in Urban areas - is typically young second generation black British and other minorities, mixed with young professionals in rented flats and

poor tenants in council flats. Unemployment is common in these neighbourhoods. Segment G is very diverse, with a significant black African and Caribbean population, and a similar proportion of adults with a Pakistani background. Standard of health is poor compared with the rest of Harrow; few take regular exercise and there is a significant amount of mental illness . This is the second lowest earning segment in Harrow, with only Segment H having a lower income; people in this group are often reliant on state benefits.

Segment F –Suburban Asian families on moderate incomes - includes middle class families in semi-detached suburban housing, The state of health of Segment F is fairly poor as a result of an un-balanced diet and an in-active lifestyle

Segment H - Low income families - often have several children. They are normally renting or have exercised their right to buy their public housing. People in this group are generally not in good health probably as a result of their lifestyle. Diet tends to be poor, heavy smoking is common in these areas, and people are unlikely to lead active lives.

Harrow has 3 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the top 20% most deprived in the country and 23 LSOAs in the top 20% least deprived in the country. The most deprived areas in Harrow appear to correlate to the areas of greatest social housing and/or local authority estates. With the exception of this factor the areas of greatest deprivation are unrelated and are distributed throughout the borough.

Using Current Data to Identify Customer Needs and Deficiencies

To employ existing data and information held by various council departments, notable the Experian Mosaic data, to provide a robust evidence base for establishing future priorities and priority areas.

Key Performance Objectives

Objective

13.1 To include Mosaic profiles together with data on health and multiple deprivation in establishing priorities.

Key Principle 14 – The Needs of Young People

Children and young people need spaces where they can socialise and spend time with their peers. When children are asked about what they think is important in their lives, playing and friends is usually at the top of the list.

Open spaces provide space for children and young people to meet and play, to establish a world for themselves independent of their parents and to explore the environment around them. Access to open spaces can help children to stay healthy and tackle problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercise and getting fresh air.

Children and young people have similar concerns to adults about open spaces. They are concerned about the quality of spaces and particularly about maintenance issues. Teenagers often feel that there is not enough for them to do. Some younger children feel unsafe and are afraid that they might be bullied. The Tellus 3 Survey found that children's and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas in Harrow was 52.4%³⁹, which means that just under one in two children were not satisfied with the parks and play spaces. In response, with the help of the Playbuilder programme, eleven sites were improved and now provide good quality, accessible playgrounds.

Effective children's and young people's participation initiatives can have lasting and significant benefits for children, young people and the community. It helps open spaces to meet changing needs, interests and preferences as defined by the users. Being consulted and participating in decision-making helps children and young people gain a better understanding of their own needs.

Engaging children and young people in the design and development of play spaces provides a better understanding of how children and young people use spaces and facilitates more informed decisions about improvements in the design of play spaces. It also fosters a greater sense of ownership and care for play spaces by children and young people and the wider community.

³⁹ Tellus3 Survey 2008/9 carried out by the Department for Children Schools and Families found that Children's and Young People's Satisfaction with Parks and Play Areas in London is 53.2% and in England 44.7%.

Needs of Young People

To ensure that parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 14.1 To ensure that community consultations reflect the needs of young people.
- 14.2 To deliver spaces for children to play and young people to 'hang out' that are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, regardless of gender, disability and ethnic origin.

Aspirations

- 14.3 To work towards making parks and open spaces places where the needs of every child matter.

Theme Four: Resources

Pressure on public sector finances combined with the economic recession is forcing local authorities to re-assess spending priorities. A key priority for the Coalition Government is to decentralise power. As a consequence, there is an increased need to engage local people and give people in the community power over the decisions that affect them.

The Coalition government agenda has three main themes:

- The public sector will be reduced.
- Localism and decentralisation will result in a reduction in the size of the state.
- A need to empower local people.

This agenda involves plans for increased involvement in the running of public services by voluntary and private sector organisations and a fundamental redefinition of the role of the state as the provider of public services.

This means that in the future there will be fewer resources available for open spaces. The public sector could be 25% smaller in financial terms by 2014⁴⁰. There will be an emphasis on reducing costs and increasing productivity. Attracting more people to use parks could provide opportunities to increase income.

Fewer resources could result in new ways of delivering services in the future, possibly by sharing overheads including service operation and administration across boundaries. There is likely to be a greater focus on priority outcomes.

A key proposal is to introduce place based budgeting; local government would have the responsibility for making decisions about how best to deploy taxpayers' money and public resources. Local government would be accountable to local electors for local funds and outcomes and be accountable directly to Parliament for national funding received. Local government will need to demonstrate good governance so taxpayers know that public resources are being used properly.

In future local government may decide to delegate some or all commissioning decisions to subsidiary bodies, both new and existing. They would then delegate 'must-do' requirements for all providers and new subsidiary commissioning bodies in

⁴⁰ A return to mid 1990 levels.

the area. One 'must-do' requirement would be good governance and accountability. Commissioning opportunities could include management of open spaces.

Localism⁴¹ is likely to lead to a reduction in national policy and an increased focus on local need and aspiration. There will be more devolution to local councils and more opportunities for the third sector provided they have the capacity.

The third likely change is sector led improvement. This involves local authorities having a greater role in owning and sharing the responsibility for their own improvement. This would involve Harrow Council in monitoring its performance continually, undertaking a self-evaluation every year and acting to address performance issues. For open spaces, the Culture & Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT) was originally developed for (and by) the culture, sport, green space and tourism sectors to help them continually improve their performance based on a concept of self assessment and external challenge through validation and peer supported improvement.

Sector led improvement will lead to Harrow Council being more accountable to local communities rather than central government. The emphasis will be on developing strategic partnerships and employing place based budgeting to deliver better outcomes more efficiently. For the open space sector this is likely to require a willingness to work differently, to pool budgets and work across boundaries.

Open spaces are a discretionary service and are therefore more vulnerable to budget cuts. However, open spaces are highly visible, used by all sections of the community and enormously valued. When residents were asked to identify which services were most important to them "*parks and open spaces*" were considered to be a priority of significant importance⁴². There will therefore be a greater need to evidence the contribution that open spaces make to local social and economic outcomes and to wider corporate objectives. To achieve this there will be a need for improved data and evidence of impact, improved knowledge, sharing and learning.

Key Principles

- Resources

⁴¹ The Decentralisation and Localism Bill

⁴² Harrow Budget Consultation Residents' Survey. Research Study Conducted for The London Borough of Harrow by MORI January 2005

- Working with Private/Third Sector to Enhance Green Spaces

Key Principles and Objectives

Key Principle 15 - Resources

It has been estimated that eighty five per cent of funding for urban green space in 2004-05 came from the public sector⁴³. The majority of central government funding is channeled through the local authority revenue support grant to local authorities. In the same year the national lottery distribution bodies contributed 8.4% of all funding. Most of the private funding came from planning gain contributions from private developers but this only amounted to 4.3% of the total funding.

With fewer resources available in the future it will be necessary to examine all opportunities to raise funds from alternative sources. Funding opportunities are constantly changing and will need to be monitored.

There are a number of funding bodies that fund park related projects. For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 'Parks for People' programme provides grants of between £250,000 and £5 million.

Potentially, there are some opportunities in open space sites for generating revenue income, such as franchises for cafés, festivals and events. There are some examples of private companies having developed sponsorship arrangements with local authorities to finance open spaces in return for wider publicity.

More broadly, the government's Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act makes provision for local authority enforcement officers to issue fixed penalty notices to anyone responsible for nuisance parking, dog fouling, litter and defacement. Revenue from these penalty notices could, in principle, be reinvested back into the community and used to improve the local environment and maintain areas of green space.⁴⁴

⁴³ Enhancing Urban Green Space, National Audit Office, February 2006

⁴⁴ The government is clear that fines should not be seen as revenue-raising mechanisms. Nevertheless, the ability to offset the high cost of cleaning up environmental crime, for instance unauthorized dumping of rubbish, could increase the total funds available to local authorities for looking after the environment, including green spaces.

Resources

To address the issue of diminished access to external funding by finding different ways of working and focusing on key priorities.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 15.1 To deliver value for money through the systematic review of operations or processes to ensure the best possible use of the human and material resources available. The prime aim is to improve productivity.
- 15.2 To work with other organisations in the parks and open space industry to develop and share best practice.

Aspirations

- 15.3 To increase productivity and efficiency in the delivery of the parks and open space service.
- 15.4 To become a more flexible and adaptable service

Key Principle 16 - Working with Private/Third Sector

Raising money to support open space from the private sector is normally achieved through Section 106 levies from developer contributions to benefit the area in which a development occurs.

Money from developers is often used to improve existing open spaces in the same neighbourhood as the development, rather than creating new spaces which would become a maintenance liability in future years. Capital contributions to off-site provision are required per new build dwelling, whilst ongoing revenue requirements presented by the new capital are captured through a commuted sum for each new dwelling. Contributions normally increase each year against the retail price index.

Harrow Council's Section 106 officer ensures that any receipts are spent on projects that are geographically related to the development, in line with the government's guidance.

Partnerships between the public and private sector also provide opportunities to develop alternative ways of financing open space. Local authorities and the private

sector can enter into special purpose funding vehicles (SPVs). The local authority typically contributes land to the SPV, which in turn is developed for composite uses, potentially incorporating high-quality open space. Recurrent revenue requirements associated with the space could also be met under the SPV by the bonding of commuted payments drawn from private developers in planning agreements.

Corporate volunteer opportunities for local businesses are a potential source of income. Businesses are increasingly keen to demonstrate commitment to corporate social responsibility and show how they are making a difference to their local environment with programmes called 'volunteering for the community'. Companies use volunteer projects for team-building and are prepared to pay for team-building sessions.⁴⁵

Not-for-profit organisations and voluntary and community groups can contribute time and labour, raise funds and encourage community development and local ownership of urban green space. Their charitable status brings tax-relief benefits and can attract investment from sources that local authorities cannot. Partnership agreements between local authorities and not-for-profit organisations can increase opportunities for accessing lottery and other external funding agencies. However, fundraising by voluntary and community groups is usually more suitable for capital projects rather than longer term revenue funding.

The Coalition Government's agenda is seeking to increase the diversity of provision in public services by removing barriers to greater independent provision and supporting communities, citizens and volunteers to play a bigger role in shaping and providing services. This points to the potential for more partnership working to secure a better use of resources. Whilst Harrow Council is a 'key player', there may be opportunities to work with other land owners and managers of open space and to develop mutually beneficial partnerships, based on jointly agreed objectives and priorities. Partnerships with organisations such as Groundwork, Wildlife Trusts and BTCV, who are able to work with community groups, local voluntary organisations, public bodies and private businesses, could bring mutual benefits and deliver wider social, environmental and economic benefits.

⁴⁵ Examples include Mile End Park and Kew Gardens.

Working with Private/Third Sector

To examine innovative ways to fund parks and other open spaces possibly through a public-private partnership where the general partners would be the council and a not-for-profit organisation which supports parks and open spaces.

We will work with volunteers, statutory and non-statutory stake holders which cover the larger open spaces to see if we can identify ways in which we can better maintain and develop these open spaces together.

Key Performance Objectives

Targets

- 16.1 To work with organisations and constituencies that use or support parks and open spaces such as sports clubs, environmental groups, youth organisations and community groups.
- 16.2 We will work with volunteers, statutory and non-statutory stake holders which cover the larger open spaces to see if we can identify ways in which we can better maintain and develop the facilities and use of these open spaces together.

Aspirations

- 16.3 To promote and support the development of community partnerships.

Theme Five: Promoting Increased Activity

People in Harrow are less active than people in London and England as a whole. The estimates of adult participation in sport and active recreation (formerly NI8) are obtained from Sport England’s Active People Survey (APS). This shows the percentage of the adult (age 16 and over) population who participate in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks (equivalent to 30 minutes on 3 or more days a week). **Table 22** shows data for APS1, APS2 and APS2/3.

Table 22: Adult Participation in Sport and Active Recreation (formerly NI8)

| | APS1 | APS2 | APS2/3 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| At least 3 days x 30 minutes, moderate intensity participation (sport and recreational walking and cycling and for those aged 65+ includes light intensity participation in yoga, pilates, bowls, archery, croquet) | % | % | % |
| Harrow | 18.9% | 13.6% | 15.3% |
| London | 21.5% | 20.4% | 21.5% |
| National overall | 21.3% | 21.6% | 22.0% |

Table 22 shows that participation levels in Harrow are consistently lower than both the national and London results. The ‘gap’ between the APS2/3 result for Harrow and the national result is 6.7%. In London, only the London Borough of Newham has a lower level of participation (14.7%).

The Active People Survey shows the top five sports for Harrow residents, in order, are Cycling, Gym, Swimming, Football and Badminton. Sport England provides a market segmentation breakdown based on gender, age and lifestyle which can be analysed to identify those segments that are more or less active when compared with similar segments in London and nationally.

People in Harrow also make less use of parks than in London and England as a whole. Published figures for the 2008 Place survey (**Table 23**) include data about use of parks and open spaces in the last six months and the previous year. The results for Harrow indicate a lower level of use than is the case both nationally and for London.

Table 23: Place Survey 2008⁴⁶

| Location | % people who in the last 6 months have used parks and open spaces | % people who in the last year have used parks and open spaces |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| England | 80.9% | 88.4% |
| London | 84.6% | 90.6% |
| Harrow | 75.8% | 83.8% |

Good quality open spaces in a neighbourhood are likely to encourage people to make short journeys on foot or by bike. Regular physical activity contributes to the prevention and management of a range of conditions including coronary heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer and obesity. Physical activity reduces the risk of having a stroke by a third.

Access to open space has a positive impact on mental health. Responses to nature include feelings of pleasure and a reduction in anxiety. Moderate activity is as successful at treating depression as medication.

Children with access to safe open space are more likely to be physically active and less likely to be overweight. Outdoor play encourages healthy brain development and the promotion of healthy well being.

Key principle 17 - Promoting health and activity

On average men in Harrow can expect to live for 78.7 years and women for 81.6 years. However, this pattern of high life expectancy is an average and it hides some unacceptable inequalities across Harrow. Women in Pinner South can expect to live more than 10 years longer than women in Wealdstone. Men in West Harrow can expect to live for five and a half years longer than men in Greenhill.⁴⁷

Harrow children are less active than their counterparts across London and the rest of England. Although the prevalence of childhood obesity at age 5 is, at 9%, similar to the national average, this increases to 17.9% by the time children are in year 6, aged 10-11 (2007-8 data). This is a major concern as overweight and obese children have a tendency to grow up to become obese adults. Even though Harrow is within the national average for childhood obesity levels, the local child

⁴⁶ Question 9 Please indicate how frequently you have used the following public services.

⁴⁷ NHS Harrow Annual Public Health Report 2009-10

measurement programme identified over 600 obese Harrow children. In Harrow, 19.1% of adults are estimated to be obese compared to the national rate of 23.6% and London rate of 18.4%. Obesity rates are higher in the more deprived parts of Harrow.⁴⁸

It is estimated that 3,075 children in Harrow have some kind of mental health problem. Children most affected are 'looked after' and asylum seeker children.

Deaths from cardiovascular disease are decreasing across Harrow as well as the rest of the country. Death rates in the under 75 population for both men and women have halved over the past 15 years. Premature cardiovascular mortality in Harrow is lower than the national rate and the London rate for both men and women. There are differences in the mortality rates from cardiovascular disease across Harrow. In Wealdstone, the all ages death rate is 21% higher than the England average and in Pinner South it is 32.5% lower than the England average.

Access to good-quality and well maintained open spaces promotes physical activity, positive mental wellbeing and healthy childhood development. Open spaces have the potential to contribute to the improvement of people's health through improving the physical, mental and social well-being of users.

Obesity is the main sign of physical inactivity and parks provide opportunities for exercise from walking and cycling to informal and formal organised sporting activities such as football, tennis and bowls. In addition to obesity, lack of activity is known to contribute to coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

A study, reported in *The Lancet*, matched data on hundreds of thousands of deaths with availability of local green spaces. Health inequalities related to income and social deprivation mean that in general, people living in poorer areas are more likely to be unhealthy, and die earlier. However, it was found that living near parks, woodland or other open spaces helped reduce these inequalities, regardless of social class.⁴⁹

Green Gyms are an effective approach to providing opportunities for exercise and developing social networks⁵⁰. Each session typically lasts three hours and usually

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study, Richard Mitchell, Frank Popham. *Lancet* Vol 372 November 8, 2008

⁵⁰ The Department of Health. 2004. *Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier*. HMSO, London.

takes place in a park. Two independent evaluations have shown that using a Green Gym can have the following benefits to participants⁵¹:

- the moderate physical activity during a Green Gym session can reduce the risk of heart disease and strokes by up to 50%;
- the range of activities available on a Green Gym session allows participants to be active at a level that suits their individual capabilities;
- muscular strength can be increased which can lead to improved balance, fewer falls and increased independence;
- participants all agreed that it benefited their mental health and boosted their self-esteem through learning new skills;
- working with others encourages participation in the local community;
- working out in the fresh air, in contact with nature, can relieve stress, anxiety, and help with depression;
- participants also increased their 'general' level of physical activity outside the Green Gym; and
- those participants on a Green Gym session had higher heart rates while exercising when compared to the step aerobics participants especially later on in the session.

Physical activity has both preventative and therapeutic effects on mental health, as well as on the mental wellbeing in the general population. Physical activity is effective in the treatment of clinical depression and it may also help people with generalised anxiety disorder, phobias, panic attacks and stress disorders, and can have a positive effect for the well-being in people with schizophrenia⁵². Physical activity helps people feel better, as reflected in improved mood and reduced anxiety.

⁵¹Reynolds V. 2002. Well-being comes naturally: an evaluation of the BTCV green gym at Portslade, East Sussex. Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. Reynolds V. 1999. The green gym: an evaluation of a pilot project in Sonning Common, Oxfordshire. Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. Reported in 'Returning urban parks to their public health roots', C. Philip Wheeler Elizabeth Potts Emma M. Shaw Clare Perkins Hannah Smith Helen Casstles Penny A. Cook Mark A. Bellis. Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences Manchester Metropolitan University Centre for Public Health Liverpool John Moores University, September 2007.

⁵²The Department of Health. 2004. At least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its' relationship to health. A report from the Chief Medical Officer. HMSO, London.

Promoting open spaces to encourage more use by people in Harrow requires a marketing strategy. It is becoming increasingly important to have an understanding of the various groups of visitors to parks to help understand people's attitudes to open spaces and their motivations for visiting them (or not). Market segmentation⁵³ can help to refine understanding of the various groups of visitors to open spaces

Knowing what motivates a particular group makes it possible to overcome any barriers to using an open space and to identify what actions can be taken to influence the group and persuade them to visit. This approach can provide valuable information in targeting promotional material.

Promoting health and activity

To promote the importance of parks and green spaces as places to increase activity to maintain physical fitness and to improve psychological and social health.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 17.1 To work in partnership with Primary care organisations to develop programmes which encourage use of open spaces for those with physical and mental health problems.

Targets

- 17.2 To develop a marketing strategy to attract more visitors to open spaces.
- 17.3 To promote schemes such as *Walking for Health*, which encourage physical activity in green spaces and natural environments.

Aspirations

- 17.4 To explore ways of maximising the use of available open space for promoting health and wellbeing among all groups and communities

⁵³ Segmentation is essentially the identification of subsets of buyers within a market that share similar needs and demonstrate similar buyer behavior. Segmentation aims to match groups of purchasers with the same set of needs and buyer behavior. Such a group is known as a 'segment'.

Key principle 18 - Sports provision

Outdoor sports provision is a wide-ranging category of open space, including both natural and artificial surfaces for sport and recreation which are either publicly or privately owned. Examples include playing pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks and golf courses with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports.

The quality of outdoor sports provision in Harrow is highly variable with a significant number of facilities being rated as poor. There is a marked difference between the quality of public sector facilities and those owned and managed by private sports clubs, particularly in the case of tennis facilities. Many football pitches have playing surfaces of poor quality that are uneven and become waterlogged and unplayable in the winter months. Tennis courts in parks are, in many cases, now derelict. Some bowling greens have closed because membership of clubs is declining.

The quality of changing rooms is also variable with some facilities in public parks being not fit for purpose. Facilities for women are notably very poor and probably contribute to the low levels of participation in some outdoor sports.

Customer expectations have risen and people are increasingly not prepared to accept substandard sports facilities. Quality is important, and facilities judged as inferior are likely to have a negative impact on participation in sport

Many sports buildings will need to be replaced rather than refurbished, and the new facilities could differ in scale and specification from those they replace if they are to meet National Governing Body standards. The levels and pattern of facility provision will need to be assessed in terms of current and future demand, taking account of demographic trends. This will require a strategic approach to facility planning. All these factors will influence future investment.

There is a need to establish a balance between the quantity and quality of facilities. A number of key questions need to be addressed.

- Will it be better to have fewer facilities of larger scale and higher quality or provide facilities more accessible to local communities which are likely to be of poorer quality?

- Can the needs of all outdoor sports be catered for or should resources be concentrated on particular sports?
- If participation levels are to increase, what standard and number of facilities are required in the future?
- How can the need to attain financial targets whilst promoting participation, social inclusion and sports development be achieved?

At present it is clear that the cost to the council of maintaining some outdoor sports facilities far exceeds the income derived from users. There is therefore a need to review the arrangements with various sports and clubs using its facilities. In future, it is likely that the council will seek to encourage sports clubs to accept a range of self management options which would vary in scope depending on the specific circumstances of each club, the costs involved and the human and financial resources available to each club.

There are a number of advantages to the council taking more of an enabler than provider role for outdoor sports facilities. These advantages include the potential operational savings and reduction in exposure to risk.

Similarly there are many advantages to community sports clubs in self-management that include their ability to provide facilities to a standard of their own choosing and the ability to bid for funding that would not be available to the council.

Due to the varying size, nature and complexity of each community sports club and facility, each self management proposal would need to be assessed on an individual basis. A policy would be required which sets out the framework and rationale for establishing leases and licenses with community sports clubs based within Harrow.

Sports provision

To work with sports clubs and other users of sports facilities to safeguard and where possible to improve the standard of existing sports provision.

Key Performance Objectives

Objectives

- 18.1 To undertake a review of the arrangements with various sports and clubs using council facilities.

Targets

18.2 To work towards providing better quality sports pitches to encourage higher levels of participation in pitch sports.

18.3 To develop a strategic approach to outdoor sport provision.

Key principle 19 - Improve and extend opportunities for informal recreation

There has also been a growth in the demand for, and an increasing awareness of the need to provide for informal recreation in recent years. The demand for informal recreation is likely to continue in the future, and it is therefore important to ensure that improved opportunities for residents to participate in informal recreation are provided.

Jogging is one of the most popular forms of exercise. Sport England's Active People Survey has identified that recreational cycling and jogging have delivered the majority of the increase in participation in sport and active recreation since 2007.

The park or open space offers a cheaper, easy-access option to become more active compared to the expense or commitment needed to join a gym or sports club. Walking once or twice a week can make a significant difference to a person's health. There is potential to develop informal running clubs based in open spaces or even Tai Chi groups.

Improve and extend opportunities for informal recreation

To promote the use of parks and open spaces as places for informal recreation particularly walking and running

Key Performance Objectives

Targets

19.1 To make exercise and improved fitness accessible to a wider audience through the continued development of green gyms.

Priorities

The audit of open spaces has provided a sound platform for the development of this open space strategy. The assessment of current and future open space needs underpins the identification of priorities for future action. A priority matrix has been developed as a tool for ranking the borough's open space provision.

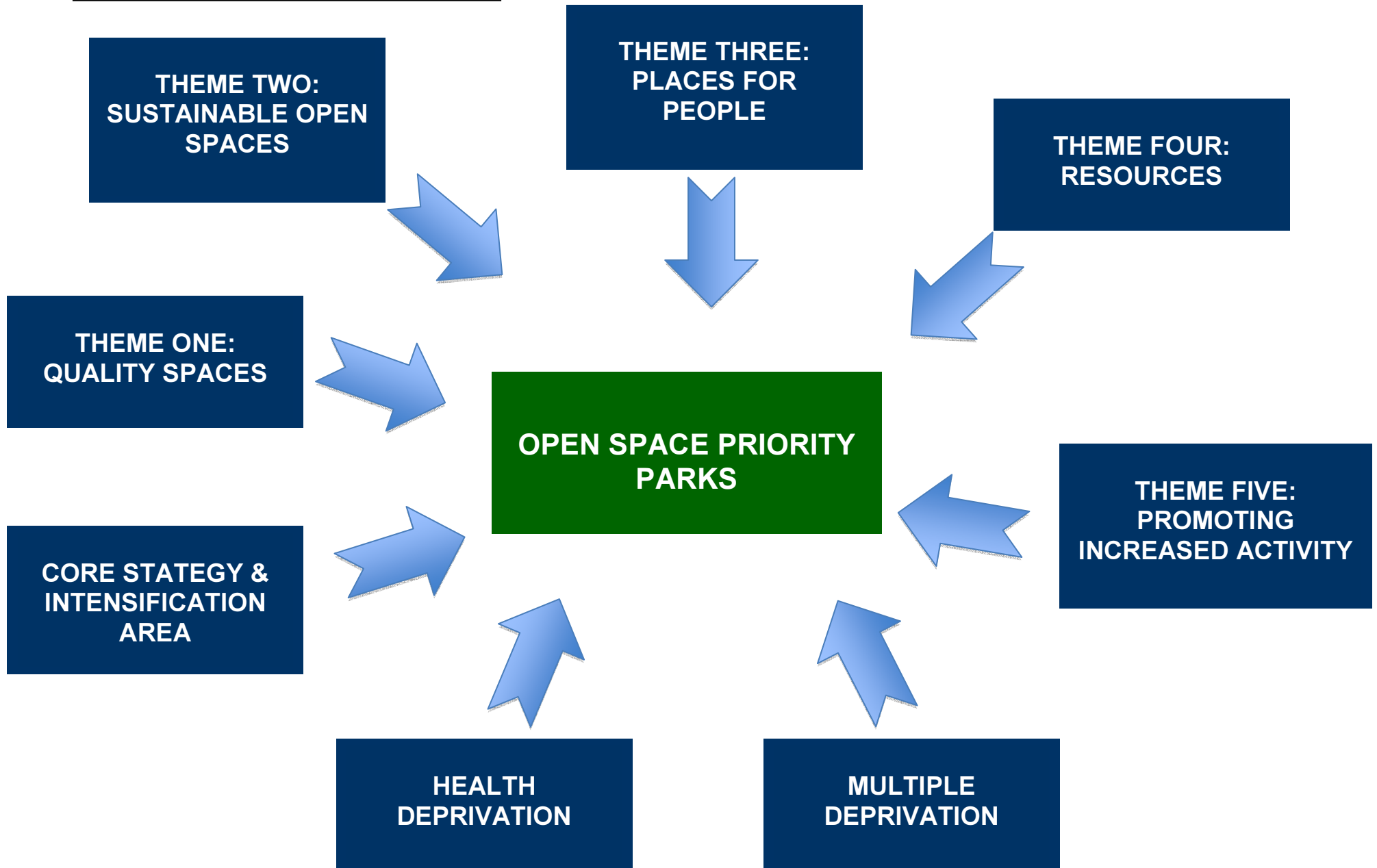
The process of establishing priorities has been limited to the consideration of parks in the first instance. The matrix consists of eight factors, which are shown in **Diagram 1** below. A hierarchy has been established by assessing parks against the eight factors to produce an overall priority score.

Individual parks have been assessed on the basis of their potential contribution to achieving the aims and objectives of the five themes. In addition their potential contribution to addressing key corporate priorities of health and multiple deprivation are assessed. Finally, their contribution to achieving the main priorities of the Core Strategy has been incorporated.

The priority matrix has been applied to all the twenty eight parks in Harrow. The outcome of this analysis is shown in **Table 24** below. Nine District and Local parks have been identified as having a high priority where improvements in management and maintenance will be focused over the five year period of this strategy.

A similar process will be adopted for other types of open space during the life of the strategy and the outcome will be reported in the annual monitoring report.

Diagram 1: Criteria for Priority Matrix



257

Table 24: Priority Matrix for Open Space - Parks

| Site Name | Type | Theme One: Quality Spaces | Theme Two: Sustainable Green Spaces | Theme Three: Places For People | Theme Four: Resources | Theme Five: Promoting Increased Activity | Deprivation | Health | Core Strategy Objectives | Score | Priority |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------------------------|-------|----------|
| Harrow Recreation Ground | District Park | 10 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 70 | High |
| Chandos Park | Local Park | 9 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 67 | High |
| Headstone Manor Recreation Ground | District Park | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 62 | High |
| Byron Recreation Ground | District Park | 7 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 61 | High |
| Kenton Recreation Ground | District Park | 8 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 60 | High |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|----|--------|
| Roxeth Recreation Ground | District Park | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 59 | High |
| Canons Park | District Park | 8 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 56 | High |
| Harrow Weald Recreation Ground | Local Park | 7 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 55 | High |
| The Cedars | Local Park | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 53 | Medium |
| Newton Park | Local Park | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 51 | Medium |
| Alexandra Park | District Park | 9 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 48 | Medium |
| Lowlands Recreation Ground | Small Open Space | 7 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 48 | Medium |
| West Harrow Recreation Ground | District Park | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 48 | Medium |
| Centenary Park | Local Park | 8 | 4 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 47 | Medium |
| Pinner Memorial Park | Local Park | 10 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 46 | Medium |
| Roxbourne Park | District Park | 8 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 45 | Medium |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|--------|
| Queensbury Recreation Ground | Local Park | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 44 | Medium |
| The Grove Open Space | Local Park | 5 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 41 | Medium |
| Stanmore Recreation Ground | Local Park | 7 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 37 | Medium |
| Pinner Village Gardens | Local Park | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 30 | Low |
| The Croft | Local Park | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 30 | Low |
| Yeading Walk Green Corridor | Linear Park | 5 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 30 | Low |
| Priestmead Recreation Ground | Small Open Space | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 29 | Low |
| Park Drive Recreation Ground | Small Open Space | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 28 | Low |
| Bernays Gardens | Pocket Park | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 27 | Low |
| Bridge Street | Pocket Park | 7 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 26 | Low |
| Little Common | Small Open | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 25 | Low |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----|
| | Space | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pinner Recreation Ground | Small Open Space | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 24 | Low |

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