



**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT COVER SHEET**

<b>Title of Report:</b>	Year 2 review Parks Development Plan	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
<b>Meeting of:</b>	Corporate Management Team:	X
	Leader and Deputy Leaders: 19/12/22	X
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group: 4/5 Jan 2023	x
	Cabinet 17 Jan 2023	



Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	YES	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	N/A		

**Essential Signatories:**

**ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE**

Monitoring Officer: **John Teasdale**

Date ..... Signature .....

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date ..... Signature .....

**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report to Cabinet**

**Date: January 17<sup>th</sup> 2023**

**REPORT TITLE:** Year 2 review (Parks Development Plan)  
**PORTFOLIO:** Cllr Ray Faulkner  
**HEAD OF SERVICE:** Mark Rizk  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** Michael Hovers Ext. No. x1776  
**WARD(S) AFFECTED:** All

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. This report sets out a second year review of the Parks Development Plan (PDP), a strategic plan for the Borough's parks. Created in December 2020 the plan set out a series of objectives for the development and enhancement of parks across East Staffordshire for the next 10 years.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Since the adoption of the Parks Development Plan in 2020, the path of progress has been encouraging. Volunteering in 2022 has featured strongly and the plethora of awards speak volumes. This year saw Burton enter the "In Bloom" nationals for the first time, reaching a silver gilt level and rubbing shoulders with famous places such as Canterbury and Bath. Of special note is the recognition that the Council has received for the innovative partnership working that has led to the development of the Potting Shed with Fountains School. This pioneering project, not only won the best young person's project award in the West Midlands, but was one of only four to be honoured with a judge's award in the UK.
- 2.2 Delivery of social prescribing continues apace, with "Feel Good Fridays" yielding some positive health improvements for attendees. Community work-through its various guises- plays an important role through working with 'Friends Of' groups, Parish Council's or local businesses. The visual

appearance of parks is also vital for engendering feelings of safety and encouraging physical activity. To this end, 2022 saw an audit of play equipment conducted to help establish priorities for investment. Dog fouling continues to be a blight on communities, to combat this a number of dog bag dispensers have been erected at hotspot locations identified by the Community & Civil Enforcement team. Other investment will see the toilets at Branston Water Park replaced with a new modular building complete with modern facilities and new hanging baskets purchased that require up to 50% less water.

- 2.3 Tree planting is one of the cornerstones of the Council's efforts to combat climate change. Working with local partners a number of carbon capture areas have been identified. Whereas previous years has seen enumerate small tree whips planted, 2022 and beyond sees the Council adopt a shift in approach with less but larger mature trees being planted. November 1<sup>st</sup> marked the end of year one of the grounds maintenance contract. Across that period of time ID Verde have converted to handheld electric equipment and have kept the Council informed regarding national trials of electric mowers.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. East Staffordshire Borough Council has responsibility for over 350 open spaces of various shapes and sizes. The PDP set out to provide a pathway for the improvement and enhancement of open spaces across the next 10 years. As well as setting out the strategic direction, the PDP sought to achieve these improvements through a series of actions divided into five distinct categories. These are:
- Volunteering & Community
  - Visual Amenity
  - Climate Change & Biodiversity
  - Operations
  - Market & Promotions
- 3.2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of actions have been postponed or have not been able to be carried out to their full extent. However, the ten year life span of the plan continues to ensure these objectives remain relevant.

### **4. Contribution to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1. Community Regeneration- Volunteering and other associated actions enable people to come together from a variety of backgrounds
- 4.2. Environment and Health & Wellbeing- Planting of trees, wildflowers and other sustainable planting will make East Staffordshire visually more appealing and also increase biodiversity and contribute positively to the Council's ambitions around Climate change and carbon footprint reduction. Volunteer gardening can yield both mental and physical health benefits for individuals.
- 4.3 Value for Money- the activities set out in this report aim to either reduce costs, provide sustainable alternatives, or make better use of existing assets.

## 5. Developing and Enhancing East Staffordshire's Open Spaces

### 5.1 Strategic Direction

5.1.1 The strategic aim of the PDP is to utilise open spaces to encourage people to exercise, offer places to relax (mentally and physically), be mentally stimulating and accessible. Alongside this objective are targets relating to sustainability and environmental impact which has come into sharper focus as the council aims to be carbon neutral by 2050.

### 5.2. Volunteering & Community

5.2.1 Volunteering and Community work continues to be a strength of the Open Spaces service. Despite the disruption of the COVID pandemic the In Bloom Federation has continued to function with partners sharing best practice and their experiences for the benefit of the wider group. Clear evidence of this is demonstrated in the silver gilt award achieved at a national level by Burton- which was the first time ever Burton had reached the national stage. Without input from Winshill and Uttoxeter (who have been in the nationals in 2016, 2019 and 2020 respectively), Burton would not have been so well positioned to succeed.

5.2.2 The benefits of the federation continue to be felt at a West Midlands level with Burton, Uttoxeter and Winshill all scooping gold yet again. Whereas gold has become something of the norm, this does not allow for complacency and every year it is a challenge to ensure that the high standard is maintained. Scores for the Royal Horticultural Society's "It's Your Neighbourhood Park" and "In Bloom" demonstrate the strength of the community offer and horticultural excellence. Aside from judge's score, another tangible demonstration of the strong community offer is the number of awards achieved in 2022. Most notably the Potting Shed project in partnership with Fountains school, which won a special award at the West Midlands regional finals, but was one of just four projects to be recognised nationally for the innovative work with young people. Our 2022 results are shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 Results and awards 2022**

National		
Burton in Bloom	Not provided	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Working with Young people	Judges special recognition award	
Regional		
Burton in Bloom	94%	<b>GOLD</b>
Uttoxeter In Bloom	92%	<b>GOLD</b>
Winshill In Bloom	92%	<b>GOLD</b>
Working with Young People	Judges special recognition award	
Parks Entries		
Stapenhill Gardens	28 /30	<b>GOLD</b>
Stapenhill Cemetery	27/30	<b>GOLD</b>

Mill Hill Lane	28/30	<b>GOLD</b>
Bramshall Rd Park	27/30	<b>GOLD</b>
Uttoxeter Cemetery	27/30	<b>GOLD</b>
Shobnall Playing Fields	24/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Branston Water Park	24/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Anglesey Community Park	22/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Eton Community Park	22/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Pennycroft Community Park	23/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Newton Rd Park	25/30	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Horninglow Community Park	20/30	<b>Silver</b>
<b>IYN Entries</b>		
Community well Being Garden	98%	<b>GOLD</b>
Go Garden	96%	<b>GOLD</b>
Uttoxeter Train Station	93%	<b>GOLD</b>
Uttoxeter Library	89%	<b>GOLD</b>
Heath Rd Community garden (UTX)	93%	<b>GOLD</b>
Winshill Resource Centre	94%	<b>GOLD</b>
Winshill Allotments	86%	<b>GOLD</b>
Winshill wildlife wood	84%	<b>Silver Gilt</b>
Redferns Cottage	78%	<b>Silver Gilt</b>

5.2.3 ESBC has been at the vanguard of the social prescribing movement for many years and were one of the original local pioneers. In addition to working with Fountains school, a series of social prescribing sessions called “Feel good Fridays” have been operated in conjunction with the NHS. These sessions introduce people with a variety of mental and physical health needs to gardening and the therapeutic benefits this can yield. Furthermore, the nature of the volunteering helps to reduce feelings of isolation.

5.2.4 Volunteering is not just limited to the Horticulture Centre in Burton. Go Garden in Uttoxeter goes from strength to strength and plays an active role in plant production and the education of young people. Through the forging of links with local schools, the team have been able to host sessions that teach the benefits of gardening, growing your own and the positive impact on nature and sustainability. Further afield “Friends of” groups at Scalpecliffe Woods, Bramshall Park, Rolleston Brook Hollows and Newton Park (Winshill) all add to the Council offer by improving their local spaces. Local businesses have also contributed with Wellings Funeral Directors and Alstom- to name but two- having volunteered staff time to plant trees.

5.2.5 Parish Council’s continue to be an invaluable partner in the Council’s efforts to enhance local green spaces. Collaboration with Rolleston, Brizlincote and Horninglow & Eton Parish Council’s has seen three distinct projects come into fruition for the benefit of residents. Conversely, dialogue has taken place with Shobnall Parish Council regarding Unity Park and what can be done to reduce levels of ASB on the park and the surrounding streets. An exercise that also included Burton Albion Community Trust, Police, ward councillors and the representatives from the nearby Mosque

## 5.3 Visual Amenity

- 5.3.1 Whilst volunteering remains a strength there is still a requirement to make sure that parks and open spaces remain visually attractive and have a diverse offer that appeals to all residents. Equally, the parks need to feel safe and secure. One particular element that blights open spaces is dog fouling. In an effort to combat this, a number of dog bag dispensers have been situated at “hotspot” parks; as identified by the Community & Civil Enforcement team. Parish Councils have also had the opportunity to site these dispensers. Presently, it is too early to tell what impact this scheme has had.

**Figure 2 Dog bag dispenser locations**

Location	Ward	Number of dispensers
Branston Water Park	Branston	4
Eton Park	Eton	2
Carver Road Horninglow	Horninglow	1
Horninglow Park	Horninglow	3
Anglesey Community Park	Anglesey	1
Shobnall Playing Fields	Shobnall	3
Oak Road dog walk	Barton	1
Bramshall Park - Uttoxeter	Uttoxeter	3
Oldfields Park	Uttoxeter	3
The Hollows	Brizlincote	1
Nature Trail	Brizlincote	2
Wetmore Recreational Ground	Burton	1
Former Railway line	Denstone	1
Tafflands play area	Rolleston	1
Kingfisher Trail ENTIRE	Eton, Horninglow	3
Edgehill Community Park	Stapenhill	1
Heath Road Community Park	Stapenhill	2
Churchbank	Stapenhill	1
Stapenhill Cemetery	Stapenhill	1
Stapenhill Gardens	Stapenhill	4
Hillfield Playing Area	Stretton	1
Tutbury Mill	Tutbury	1
Pennycroft Park, Uttoxeter	Town	2
Newton Road Park	Winshill	1
Ferrers Field	Yoxall	1
Washlands, Burton	Burton	3
Hazelwood park	Uttoxeter	1

Bargates land on edge of car park	Burton	1
Total number		49

5.3.2 Play areas remain an important feature of parks and are often regarded with warm nostalgia and fond childhood memories. Items enjoyed by grandparents (and older!) are still popular to this day with the smallest of children. Consequently, ESBC has developed a strong track record in maintaining play equipment and only replace pieces that are broken and/or beyond repair. Annual inspection results are testament to this approach with only 1% of play equipment identified as presenting a medium or high risk in each of the last 5 years. However, in 2022 the team undertook an audit of all play areas in East Staffordshire. This audit looked at the age of the equipment and also assessed the visual appearance. Using a simple red, amber and green rating method, the majority of play areas were considered to be green or amber. However, the audit did highlight that 70% of play areas rated red could be found in both Uttoxeter and Stapenhill. This data can now be utilised to prioritise any future investment in parks through capital expenditure, S106 funds or other possible financial sources.

5.3.3 Finally, three sites have attracted specific funds for 2022/23. The toilets at Branston Water Park have for some time been recognised as being in need of modernisation. This is Corporate Plan target EHW 37 and collaboration between Open Spaces, Waste Management, Procurement, Legal and Finance has seen a specification created for a new fresh modular toilet building with facilities for disabled users and amenities for baby changing. This new building is expected to be procured in quarter 4 with the existing structure demolished to make way for the install.

5.3.4 The aforementioned Unity Park has attracted Levelling Up Parks funding, which is available to re-imagine and redesign the space so that more greenery is introduced and sustainability promoted. Design plans have therefore focused on removing fencing and replacing with shrubs and hedges, condensing the ball sports offer into a MUGA, the introduction of raised bed planters for a community garden and the expansion of the play equipment offer to incorporate inclusive pieces.

5.3.5 Finally, the Viking boat play area is to be replaced and upgraded as part of the Washlands enhancement project. This new play area will provide youngsters and families with a unique outdoor experience that is in keeping with the wider ambitions for the Washlands and regeneration of Burton town.

## **5.4 Climate Change & Biodiversity**

5.4.1 Since the demise of the County Council led I-trees project (aka Burton-upon-Trent Urban Forest Tree Management Plan), ESBC have continued to utilise the 8 aims set out in the strategy as a guide for tree planting. Previous years have seen the Council plant smaller but numerous tree whips. However, moving forward, a tactical shift is to occur, with larger standard trees being planted but in less quantity. Such a move should see the attrition rate reduced



and lead to more trees reaching maturity. Standard trees, as well as sequestering more carbon are more resilient to vandalism and other potential damage. To measure the impact of this planting, each location is to be designated a “Carbon Capture Area” with scientific methodology used to calculate the carbon offset achieved as a result.

- 5.4.2 Council owned land that is available and suitable for tree planting is finite. Therefore, other key land owners such as Trent & Dove housing and Staffordshire County Council will need to be engaged to maximise the tree planting opportunities. Schools are another potentially invaluable stakeholder and links have already been forged with a few, thanks to the assistance of local Councillors. Moving into 2023/24 the formation of a “land owner” forum should help to identify opportunities for joint working and explore synergies between different organisation’s objectives.
- 5.4.3 Tree planting has risen to prominence across the UK in recent years, and East Staffordshire is no exception. This uplift has generated unprecedented demand and anecdotal evidence suggests tree supplies are becoming strained and high demand is pushing up prices of some individual specimens.
- 5.4.4 Biodiversity, like tree planting, will be a key component in addressing the climate change emergency. ESBC have continued to introduce relaxed mowing regimes along with wildflower planting to encourage pollinators. Moving into 23/24 a specialist consultant is to be commissioned to examine all ESBC open spaces and to identify potential opportunities for biodiversity improvements. One note of caution, relaxed mowing regimes in East Staffs and other parts of the country have met with some concern from Fire & Rescue services due to the possibility of grass fires. If temperatures from the summer of 2021 are to be repeated in future years, this will become more of a consideration and an increasingly tricky balancing act.
- 5.4.5 Within 2022/23 ID Verde have honoured their commitments to convert to all electric hand held tools. At a national level the company are testing a number of electric lawnmowers, but the quality of cut and battery life is still somewhat short of that offered by traditional mowers. Like ESBC, ID Verde have a commitment to become carbon neutral and are to be a key partner in efforts to reduce carbon and enhance biodiversity. Furthermore, at the recent annual review, the Deputy Leader was able to speak directly with ID Verde senior managers to understand what progress the industry is making towards using more environmental friendly chemicals. ID Verde are currently piloting a new project with two London council’s. Although it should be noted that these substitutes- at present- are more expensive and considered not to be as effective.
- 5.4.6 Other planned positive moves are a transition from traditional open-bottomed wire hanging baskets to a version that contains a reservoir to retain water. These newer baskets are considered to be industry best practice and can reduce watering by 50% and require a third less plants.

## 5.5 Operations

5.5 Many of the operational changes have been addressed in previous paragraphs and contractual performance in year 1 is illustrated in Grounds Maintenance report presented to Cabinet on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2022.

## 5.6 Marketing & Promotions

5.6.1 The list of achievements and awards won in 2022 demonstrates the impactful nature of marketing and promotions. In Bloom partners are assisted through the Council's Marketing Officer who hosts a standing item on the agenda of the In Bloom federation meetings. Other marketing aspects include the preparation of management plans and portfolios for RHS and Green Flag judges respectively. Members will have also seen the multi-page spread in the Burton Mail that illustrated the breadth and quality of the work delivered through the Horticulture Centre. Below is a link to the In Bloom campaign report.

[https://issuu.com/eaststaffordshirebc/docs/quarter\\_1\\_marketing\\_report\\_20223?fr=sOWJjNjUyNzExMzU](https://issuu.com/eaststaffordshirebc/docs/quarter_1_marketing_report_20223?fr=sOWJjNjUyNzExMzU)

5.6.2 In response to the RHS "In Bloom" national awards nomination for Burton a sponsorship working group was formed to seek external funding to support the bid. After much negotiation, both Molson Coors and Trent & Dove were signed as corporate sponsors. The intention is to replicate this working group in 2023/24 to build upon these sponsorship opportunities.

## 5.7 Finance

Many of the actions and activities set out in the PDP are to be delivered through the use of existing budgets across the span of the plan. The plan was set out to be flexible to allow for financial and staffing pressures but also to ensure a consistent trajectory of parks enhancement. Consequently, section 106 monies when available, provide an opportunity to accelerate some of these schemes. Previous paragraphs have highlighted other funding streams and partner resource that has been utilised on open spaces.

## 6. Financial Considerations

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Anya Murray*

6.1 There are no short term financial issues arising from this Report as the funding will be provided through existing budgets, Section 106 monies and contributions from external partners.

## **7. Risk Assessment and Management**

7.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:

7.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):

7.2.1. Supports the Council's ambitions around climate change

7.2.2. Creates opportunities for volunteering and encourages physical activity amongst residents.

7.2.3. Provides a framework for the physical enhancement of parks and open spaces.

7.3. **Negative** (Threats):

7.3.1. Budgetary restraints may delay or prevent some of the objectives in the plan from being achieved.

7.3.2. Reduced grass cutting regimes to encourage biodiversity can be subject to complaints about being unsightly and are also seen, in some quarters, as a fire risk.

7.3.3. Wildflowers, whilst spectacular at their peak, need time to establish and can look tired towards the end of season.

7.3.4. S106 monies available may not be sufficient to upgrade the parks / playground equipment in a timely fashion in particular given its current average age and functionality.

7.4. The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register. Any financial implications to mitigate against these risks are considered above.

## **8. Legal Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team:  
Glen McCusker – Locum Solicitor*

8.1. The terms of any s106 Agreement relied upon for the funding will need to be carefully checked to ensure the Authority is entitled to use the s106 funding for the required purpose.

## **9. Equalities and Health**

9.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact

assessment is attached not required.

9.2 **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed.

**10. Human Rights**

10.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

**11. Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) Yes

11.2. Positive (Opportunities/Benefits)

11.2.1 Wildflower and tree planting along with relaxed mowing regimes can make a positive contribution to climate change.

11.2.2 Increased recycling rates for waste from parks will reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

11.2.3 Procurement measures and contractual commitments set out a pathway for suppliers to become carbon neutral, in line with the aspirations of ESBC.

11.3 Negative (threats)

11.3.1 Some changes that are beneficial to the environment and make a contribution to climate change are not aesthetically pleasing to some residents.

11.3.2 Use of alternatives to red diesel and other fuels/chemicals may increase operating costs which in turn will reduce the scope for investment in other parts of the plan.

11.3.3 Certain changes are viewed by the Fire Service as a potential fire risk.

**12. Recommendation(s)**

12.1. Members note the year two progress on the plan

**13. Background Papers**

13.1 Parks Development Plan 2020-2030

13.2 Grounds Maintenance Year 1 performance report

14. **Appendices**

14.1 Parks Development Plan

14.2 Play Area audit