

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

9 OCTOBER 2014

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WIRRAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2014-2024</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>KEVIN ADDERLEY, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, REGENERATION &amp; ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>CLLR CHRIS MEADEN, LEISURE SPORT AND CULTURE</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a Strategy to guide future parks and open space service planning and delivery and partnership working over the period 2014-2024.
- 1.2 The Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy contains policies and actions to support the local economy and population's health, provide a network of good quality parks and open spaces, increase volunteer input and partnership working, support biodiversity, improve environmental sustainability, increase innovation and achieve a sustainable business model. Key policies include a Wirral Quality Standard and increasing involvement of Friends Groups.
- 1.3 Cabinet is requested to approve the proposed Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. This is a key Decision included in the Council's Forward Plan.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Strategy has been informed by findings of the Wirral Parks User Survey, Visitor Research Study and consultation with a wide range of partners and stakeholders.
- 2.2 The aim of the Parks and Open Space Strategy is to provide direction during an anticipated period of financial challenge and change and provide support for appropriate funding bids, investment and partnership agreements.
- 2.3 Key issues which this engagement has identified are as follows: green and open spaces are important infrastructure to support local economic growth; there is a need for an accessible network of safe green and open spaces; parks and open spaces are important for health, education, biodiversity and engaging different generations.

## 3.0 PROPOSED STRATEGY

### 3.1 Vision

Based on feedback from partners, communities and Friends groups, the strategy provides a 10 year vision for Wirral's parks and open spaces:

*While recognising and responding to financial pressures, Wirral is proud of its diverse range of historic parks, open spaces, coast and countryside sites which provide an accessible network of good quality parks and open spaces. With input from staff, volunteers, Friends groups and other partners, Wirral's parks and open spaces will be well managed and provide a wide range of positive activities, supporting good health, improved life changes and an excellent quality of life, within reach of everyone who lives in or visits Wirral.*

### 3.2 Aims

The strategy also includes key aims to achieve the vision:

1. Attract and retain investment in the borough through provision of attractive, well managed parks and open spaces;
2. Be accessible, safe and well-used places for local people, communities and visitors to enjoy;
3. Help to bring different generations together through providing positive healthy activities for local people and communities;
4. Contribute to the environmental sustainability and biodiversity of Wirral, achieving a good balance by protecting habitats while supporting economic growth;
5. Be funded, delivered and managed through a new, viable business model.

### 3.3 Actions

Actions to achieve the five aims are set out including:

- a) Wirral Standard  
Introduce and deliver a Wirral Standard for all parks and open spaces.
- b) Green Flag Awards for Parks  
Retain existing Green Flag awards and increase the number of new Green Flag award parks by at least one per year whenever reasonably practicable, in consultation with the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board.
- c) Park Management Plans  
Annually review and update site management plans for a) all candidate Green Flag sites plus b) 4 other sites (e.g. 1 per constituency area per year in addition to Green Flag candidate sites).
- d) Blue Flag Awards for Beaches  
Achieve Blue Flag status for one beach by December 2016 and a second beach by December 2019.

- e) Friends Groups  
Achieve one new Friends Group per year through a 'Buddy' scheme whereby existing groups mentor and help establish new groups.

#### **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 4.1 Adequate people resources will be needed to achieve the necessary service transition while achieving quality. If officer resources are reduced this would put at risk capacity to put in place necessary agreements and engage with partners and the community.

#### **5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Not having a Strategy would reduce opportunities to improve people's health, increase volunteer input and partnership working, support biodiversity and improve environmental sustainability

#### **6.0 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The following consultation and engagement has informed the development of the Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy:

- a workshop on key issues in April 2013, attended by more than 100 partners, user group representatives, Friends groups, Parks and Countryside staff and other Council officers;
- dialogue with a range of partner, user group and key stakeholder representatives through Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board meetings in 2013 and 2014;
- public consultation on the draft Strategy from 3<sup>rd</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014. 845 people responded, the majority completing the online questionnaire with some paper questionnaires also returned. 3/4 of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the objectives and policies and 2/3 agreed with the Action Plan. In addition respondents provided more than 400 additional comments. Detailed responses were also received from the Environment Agency and Wirral Wildlife Trust;
- discussion about the emerging Strategy at meetings of Wirral Parks Friends Forum, Wirral Older Peoples Parliament Executive Committee, Advocacy in Wirral and Wirral Mental Health Forum.
- the Strategy also draws on the findings of the Wirral Parks Survey 2012 which was responded to by 1,269 people. The Survey provided comprehensive evidence of what local people think about their parks and beaches, how they use these places and what they feel works well and could be improved.

#### **7.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

- 7.1 Not applicable.

#### **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

8.1 The Parks and Open Space Strategy will mean increased partnership working opportunities with voluntary and community groups, for example Parks Friends groups, nature conservation volunteers and health partners.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

9.1 Adequate Council Officer and partner input will be required to deliver the Strategy - for example to develop partnership working, improve parks and generate additional income.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Adoption and delivery of the Strategy will assist the Council and partners to meet obligations in respect of the statutory Biodiversity Duty as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and other relevant environmental legislation.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached –  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/technical-services-0>

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The Strategy includes policy to increase the environmental friendliness of Wirral's parks and open spaces.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The Strategy complements and supports the Local Plan. The Strategy includes policies to achieve safe parks and open spaces.

## **14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

14.1 Cabinet is requested to approve the Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024.

## **15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

15.1 To provide strategic direction for future parks and open space service planning and partnership working.

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## **APPENDICES**

Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Wirral Council Parks and Countryside User Survey 2012

**BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY**

Briefing Note	Date
-	

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

Council Meeting	Date
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