



people spaces places

# Sandwell Green Space Strategy

## Staff and Partners Workshops Report

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# Sandwell Green Space Strategy

## Staff and Partners Workshops Report

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### Appendix A – Copy of Presentation

## 1 Introduction

As part of the development of the development of the Sandwell Green Space Strategy a workshop was held with staff and partners.

Date / time & location	29 January 2019 9.45am - 1pm Sandwell MBC staff and partners Venue: Sandwell Park Farm, Salters Lane, West Bromwich, B71 4BG
Content	Introductory presentation about works that has been carried out so far and then a series of exercises to explore the key issues, potential solutions and approaches that may be adopted through the Green Space Strategy.
Purpose	For attendees to gain an understanding of and inform the GSS.

This report is a record of the workshop event and the discussion and comments made by participants. As such the comments will inform the future strategy, but they do not necessarily reflect Sandwell Council's current and future position.

## 2 Workshop Structure

There were 16 participants in attendance as well as facilitators from the Council and CFP. Officers represented the service areas of Parks Management, Sandwell Valley / Countryside, Asset Management, Streetscene, Sports and Leisure, Urban Design, Community Partnerships, Planning Policy, Sandwell Leisure Trust and Warley Woods Community Trust.

The agenda for the session was as below.

Title	Description
Registration and coffee	Oriente participants Ask people to write 'one big thing' on a post it and place on board at the front.
Introduction	Welcome and Introduction
Audit / Strategy Update	What it is and what we'd done so far.
<u>Exercise 1</u> Vision for the GSS	Value of green spaces. How does this link with the Sandwell Vision? <a href="http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/Vision2030">http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/Vision2030</a>
<u>Exercise 2</u>	Priorities for Management
<u>Exercise 3</u>	Priorities for Maintenance
<u>Exercise 4</u>	Priorities for Development
BREAK – check refreshments available	
<u>Exercise 5</u> Issues & Solutions	Write issues and a corresponding solution on post-its.  Group by management / maintenance / development  Whole group feedback – key 5 from each group.
Resourcing the Strategy	Consider different funding models  Consider options – SoUKP Public survey factors.  Get participants to rank the order (most to least important)
Round up and Q&A  Inc feedback on the scores from Exercise 4.	Summary  Next steps  Timescales

### 3 One Big Thing

Participants we asked to write on a sticky note, one issue that the strategy should consider or address:

- To bring SMBC owned open space under one service area to improve the quality of management
- Prioritise play areas (safety)
- To be honest about what can be achieved with current resources
- Planned maintenance regimes to maintain & raise levels of satisfaction
- Income generation
- Community pride in green spaces
- A realistic approach to the management of green spaces going forward
- Clear, easy, attainable objectives
- Inform Sandwell residents what is available to use / participate in on Sandwell green spaces
- Provide an agreed strategic direction for green spaces boroughwide which is agreed and used by all parties
- Clear way forward
- Capacity for involving people
- To get more people using and enjoying green spaces in Sandwell

### 3.1 Exercise 1

Exercise 1 sought to draw out how green space contribute or could further contribute to the 10 ambitions of Sandwell Council. Attendees split into 2 groups to discuss this.

The table below shows each ambition and connections made to green spaces (combined results from 2 groups)

Number	Ambition	What Green Spaces can deliver
1	Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.	Children are given equal opportunities through access to space to play, take part in sports, learn and have fun Green space as a good setting for outreach work Community space and events lead to better community cohesion and resilience Equality of access to high quality green spaces is important (Note : the strategy could explore links between green space quality and deprivation)
2	Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.	The links between green spaces and public health benefits are well documented. Green gyms, well done and well used SLT provide bootcamps, increasingly popular Park run and health walks Mental health benefits of using green spaces Role of formal sports provision in health Mitigation of negative environmental impacts such as air pollution
3	Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.	Council graduate programme Coaching qualifications Gifted and talented programme for young athletes Internal upskilling and professional development Contractors taking on apprenticeships Work experience placements- enhance CVs Apprenticeships in the parks – probably the largest provider of work placements in the Council. The grounds maintenance team has 6 apprenticeships currently. Duke of Edinburgh Award students use parks and green spaces across the borough.

Number	Ambition	What Green Spaces can deliver
		Opportunities provided allow students to stand out / differentiate themselves.
4	Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.	<p>Visiting parks before and after school, spending time outdoors good for concentration etc</p> <p>Parks provide places for home educated families to engage in events activities, volunteering etc</p> <p>Sandwell Valley has education programme with links to national curriculum</p> <p>Parks and green spaces provide a good setting for outdoor learning (including Forest Schools, community food growing, education packages, work based learning etc).</p>
5	Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.	<p>Park events are good at attracting broad audiences which bring people together in more cohesive communities</p> <p>Well used parks are safer</p> <p>Local residents taking ownership of spaces pushes out anti-social behaviour</p> <p>We need to ensure green spaces are safe and perceived to be safe to sustain levels of use and attract more people.</p> <p>Green spaces are public spaces and provide a good way of bringing people together.</p> <p>WWCT provides an excellent example of community managed green space.</p>
6	We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.	<p>Long distance walking and cycling routes supported by the strategy</p> <p>Canal and green corridors links create networks of green space</p> <p>Safe routes (inc walking buses) to school through green spaces bring health benefits and reduce traffic congestion</p>
7	We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.	<p>Section 106 needs to be well spent</p> <p>There should be new green spaces for new developments and existing spaces should benefit</p> <p>Need active travel links to new developments</p> <p>This ambition provides both opportunities and a potential threat to green spaces.</p> <p>Residential development offers opportunities for placemaking with green space provision considered early in the planning phase</p>

Number	Ambition	What Green Spaces can deliver
		Development viability is often marginal which may mean little additional benefits / developer contributions can be realised
8	Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.	<p>Good quality green space improves quality of life</p> <p>Good quality green spaces improve environmental quality and can help attract new residents, new businesses and tourism / day visitors</p> <p>Green space can be a location for leisure and entertainment (open air leisure centres)</p> <p>Green spaces where heritage is cared for are distinctive</p>
9	Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.	<p>Green spaces will keep workforces happy and healthy</p> <p>Areas can't be attractive for people to live and work in without high quality green space</p> <p>High quality green spaces can help attract inward investment</p> <p>Leisure and land based industries could be developed to employ more people. Many are SMEs.</p>
10	Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.	<p>There have been transformation changes in green spaces e.g. lightwoods</p> <p>GSS as an example of consultation- plan-delivery</p> <p>Achievement of improvements and awards such as GFA help public to see they are delivering</p> <p>WWCT is a partner organisation successfully delivering common goals</p>



### 3.2 Exercise 2, 3 and 4

Attendees were asked in groups to carry out a prioritisation exercise for categories of service in each of the areas of Maintenance, Management and Development. These three questions cover what we believe to be the 3 essential components of a green space service. For each of the 3 components participants were asked to rank 9 individual elements on a scale of 1 to five in terms of importance (with 5 being the highest importance).

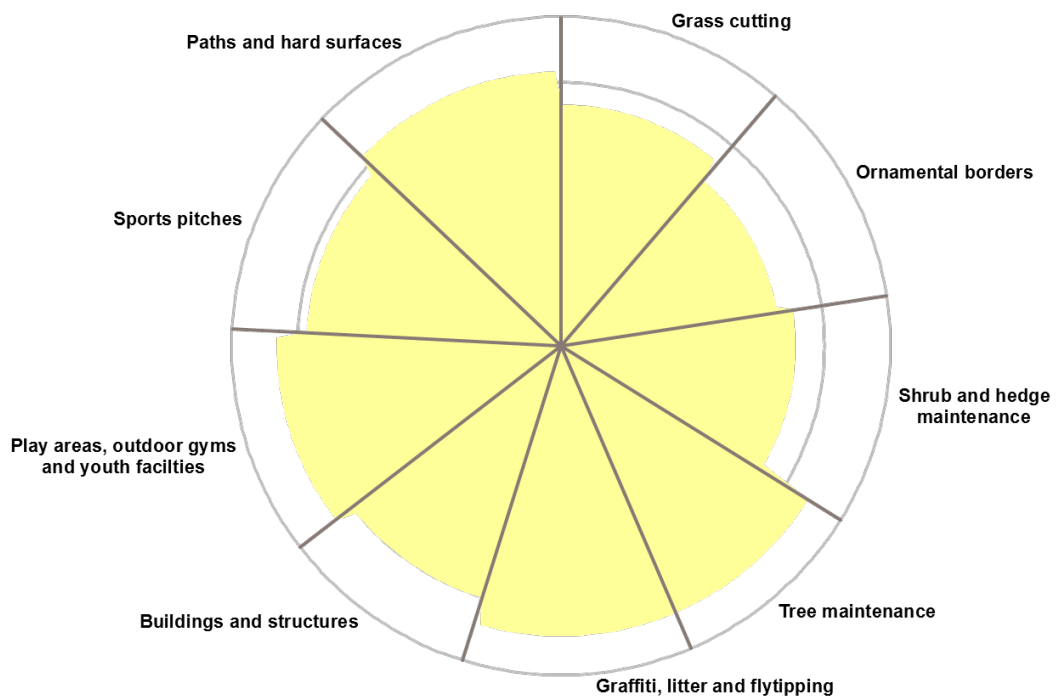
<b>Maintenance</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Development</b>
Grass cutting	Managing staff	Developing volunteering
Ornamental borders	Managing facilities	Developing activities and events
Shrub and hedge maintenance	Writing management plans	Marketing and promotion
Tree maintenance	Managing events	Education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

Individual score sheets were collected at the end of each exercise, the average score per category calculated, and the results inputted into a linked Excel and PowerPoint document, giving a visual and 'real time' summary in presentation format of the outcomes of the group exercises.

The collated group scores are shown below;

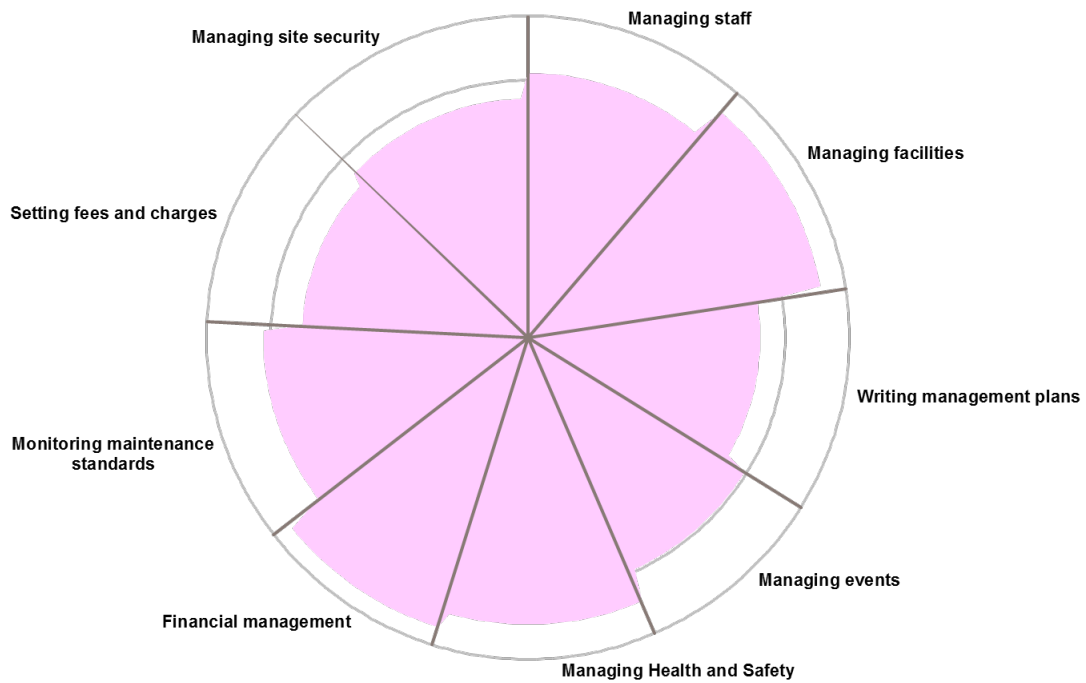
Maintenance

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Graffiti, litter and fly tipping	4.3	4.5	4.4	=1
Tree maintenance	4.3	4.5	4.4	=1
Play areas, gyms youth facilities	4.3	4.3	4.3	3
Paths and hard surfaces	4.5	3.8	4.2	4
Buildings and structures	4	4	4.0	5
Sports pitches	3.7	4	3.9	6
Grass cutting	3.8	3.5	3.7	7
Shrub and hedge maintenance	3.3	3.8	3.6	8
Ornamental borders	2.8	3.8	3.3	9



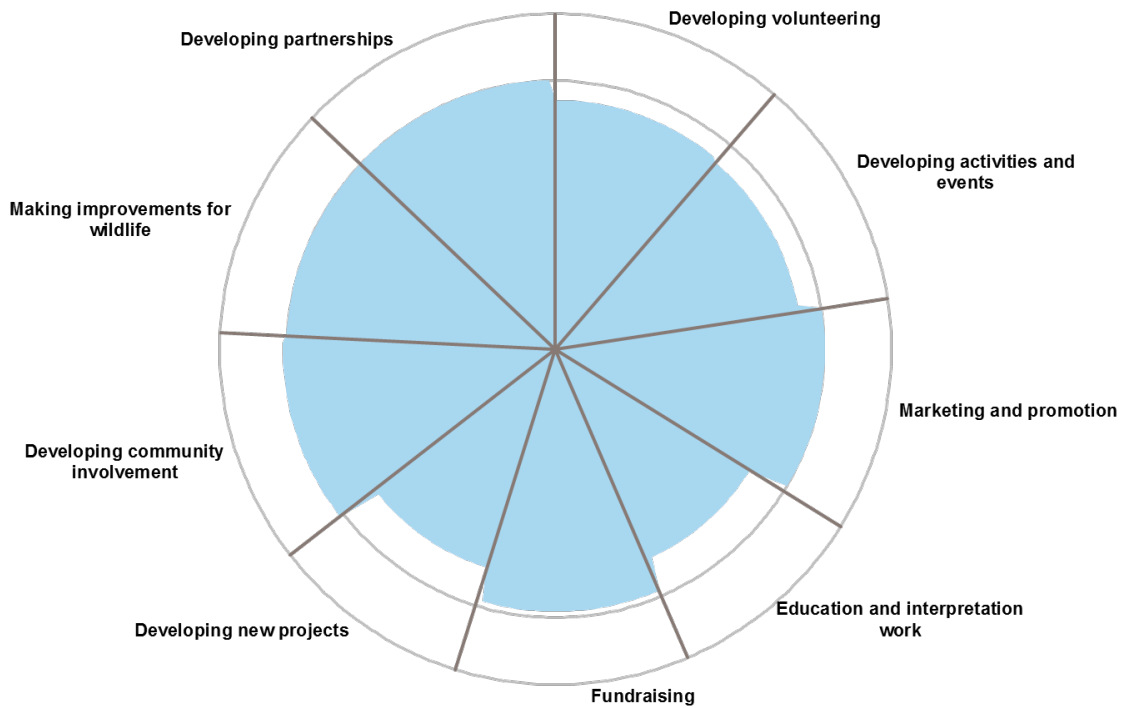
Management

	Group 1	Group 2	Average	Rank
Financial management	5.3	4.1	4.7	1
Managing facilities	4.7	4.5	4.6	2
Managing Health and Safety	4.4	4.5	4.5	3
Managing staff	4.1	4.1	4.1	=4
Monitoring maintenance standards	4.1	4.1	4.1	=4
Managing events	3.9	4	4.0	6
Managing site security	4.1	3.3	3.7	7
Writing management plans	3.6	3.6	3.6	8
Setting fees and charges	3.7	3.3	3.5	9



Development

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Developing community involvement	4	4.1	4.1	1
Developing partnerships	3.9	4.1	4.0	=2
Making improvements for wildlife	3.9	4.1	4.0	=2
Marketing and promotion	4.1	3.9	4.0	=2
Fundraising	4	3.8	3.9	5
Developing activities and events	3.7	3.6	3.7	=6
Developing volunteering	3.6	3.8	3.7	=6
Developing new projects	3.3	3.5	3.4	=8
Education and interpretation work	3.3	3.5	3.4	=8



## Overall

Across the three areas of management, maintenance and development the most significant or important functions were considered to be:

<b>Function</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Score</b>
Financial management	Management	4.7
Managing facilities	Management	4.6
Managing Health and Safety	Management	4.5
Graffiti, litter and fly tipping	Maintenance	4.4
Tree maintenance	Maintenance	4.4
Play areas, gyms youth facilities	Maintenance	4.3
Paths and hard surfaces	Maintenance	4.2
Developing community involvement	Development	4.1
Managing staff	Management	4.1
Monitoring maintenance standards	Management	4.1
Developing partnerships	Development	4.0
Making improvements for wildlife	Development	4.0
Marketing and promotion	Development	4.0
Buildings and structures	Maintenance	4.0
Managing events	Management	4.0

The table shows 15 of the functions scored 4.0 or higher out of a total of 27. Of which 6 functions were classified as management, 5 as maintenance and four as development

Financial management scored the highest of the 27 functions, reflecting the comments made in earlier exercises about the need for adequate revenue resources to maintain sites, facilities and ensure public safety. Other comments echoed the lack of revenue to maintain the capital invest that the authority had delivered to create new play spaces, outdoor gyms and to sustain site wide investment programmes, often through HLF or other external funding and to sustain the Green Flag Award winning spaces. Emphasis was also placed on generating greater income through green space assets.

Managing facilities was the second highest and there was discussion about the need to provide good quality facilities to attract residents and visitors and to ensure that spaces are well used and well valued. Works to ensure health and safety of visitors (and staff) and delivering basic standards of maintenance (dealing with graffiti, litter and fly tipping) and dealing with tree safety were all high priorities. Similarly, maintenance of play areas and infrastructure also featured highly.

The people side, through managing staff, community involvement and developing partnerships was also highlighted as a priority albeit slightly lower than the functions discussed above.

### 3.3 Exercise 5

#### Group 1

Issues	Solutions
Lack of funding for maintenance	
Budgets are based on 1980s rates and even with some allowance for inflation are outdated.	More sustainable / stable funding
Any income generated is not invested back into the service. A statement was made that that the service is penalised for generating income by having the target incomes increased in line with what is generated for the following years and there is no option to reduce this target even if the income stream dries up.	
No ring fencing of budgets	There are greater opportunities for income generation but there needs to be an incentive / benefit for the service.
Reduced staffing levels	
Management functions relating to green spaces is spread across too many services areas	Green Flag is a priority for the Council – target to achieve 9 which has been achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barnford Park</li> <li>• Brunswick Park</li> <li>• Dartmouth Park</li> <li>• Haden Hill</li> <li>• Sandwell Valley</li> <li>• Sandwell Valley Crematorium</li> <li>• Tipton Cemetery</li> <li>• Victoria Park Tipton</li> <li>• Victoria Park Smethwick</li> </ul>
Fractured service delivery leads to poor quality spaces (some spaces held by Strategic Assets and are not maintained)	
3 Cabinet Members have responsibility for green space services	Appoint a green space champion
Bin and waste contract with Serco covers a relatively small number of parks and green spaces but not countryside sites	
A 'green budget' was created to pool financial resources but this only covered grounds maintenance not infrastructure. This budget	

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
has been subjected to cuts over any years but the workload expected hasn't reduced (i.e. they are still trying to maintain the same number of sites to the same criteria)	
There are surplus facilities / buildings but disposing of them is difficult and time consuming. Means savings are not realised.	
There is no planned maintenance for buildings and infrastructure and services offered by others are perceived to be expensive and not responsive.	
Low staff morale	Good levels of local knowledge
Political involvement in decision making (often at micro level) leads to instability and difficulty in setting a strategic direction	Friends groups can be effective at raising the profile of green spaces and lobbying but this is often in competition with one another.
Frequent change in leadership at elected member and senior management level leads to a lack of strategic direction	
Lack of decision making on key issues	
Lack of understanding about green spaces among senior management	
Tree inspections now need to be increased to every 2 year in order to comply with recent ruling in High Courts. No additional resources to achieve this.	
Play equipment and infrastructure is coming to an end of its life, there is no money to replace and resistance from communities and politicians to accept removal (needed to ensure safety).	
Loss of park warden service means parks and no longer locked / unlocked, increase in vandalism and lower safety standards. Play inspections still need to be carried out.	
Increased vandalism and a perception of falling levels of visitor satisfaction.	

## Group 2

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Council is at risk of real reputation damage regarding green spaces- issues at Londonderry Playing Fields and Lion Farm Playing Fields	Need a GSS which is honest about current level of resource and only has actions that are attributed clearly and agreed upon



<b>Issues</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Biodiversity loss- allowing development with mitigation measures that are not of equivalent value	The strategy should map everyone who has a stake in green spaces across the council
Structure of department and place within the council makes it hard to promote parks, previously in leisure services grouping now under commercial services.	Discover Sandwell website engaging more with what parks have to offer
Poor marketing and promotion of parks and hard to access support in council- park events not on discover Sandwell website	Need strategy to have a strong shopping list element which can attract CIL which has green space as a possible area for spend, especially where green space is lost to development
Political/ strategic focus is not on green space or on environment poor broadly and this is reflected in 10 ambitions and in decision making	The strategy should recommend guidance is developed around mitigation measures e.g. tree loss, where trees are felled what is a suitable replacement
Need to engage with people about parks but they don't have resources in communications	Strategy must be fed upwards to influence head of service, councillors and other decision makers and grow political will
Public don't engage with importance of parks on strategic level to give them political clout just complain/ object when they see negative consequences	GSS should outline the requirement for new development to have ecological features, landscaping and green infrastructure so can be referenced by planning.
Giving park buildings over to trusts, community groups, concessions is the only way to go given budgetary constraints but this means it is hard ensure they have the desired outcomes for the community and can't manage things like events promotion.	
Should be considering the environmental impacts of park projects- surfaces and materials used	
The strategy should plan for increases in extreme weather events	
Difficulty of forming and delivering a strategy in times with uncertain resources and changing political priorities	

### **3.4 Exercise 6 - Options for Additional Funding**

#### Group 1

Group one sorted the options into the following order (most important first)

1. More Commercial Use of Parks
2. Greater external funding form sources such as the national lottery
3. More funding form planning and local development e.g. contributions form new housing
4. More sponsorship of parks by businesses e.g. planting areas and facilities
5. Greater fundraising by local communities and park user groups
6. Increased charges for using park facilities e.g. tennis courts / car parks

Generally, it was felt that there was considerable opportunity to use parks and green spaces to generate more income. However, during the earlier exercises it was noted that income was not ring fenced within the service area(s). It was noted that SMBC had been successful with external funding particularly through the Heritage Lottery Fund (Haden Hill Park, Dartmouth Park, Lightwoods House, West Smethwick Park). Warley Woods Community Trust has also been successful accessing HLF funding. However, in earlier exercises it was noted that the Council had been successful with capital funding and has been able to sustain the sites in line with the funding requirements. However, due to the severe austerity cuts these resources are now limited.

There was a view that CiL funding had not delivered significant income for green spaces and the earlier s106 arrangements were considered to be more successful. It was suggested that forthcoming changes to planning legislation may allow greater pooling of developer contributions.

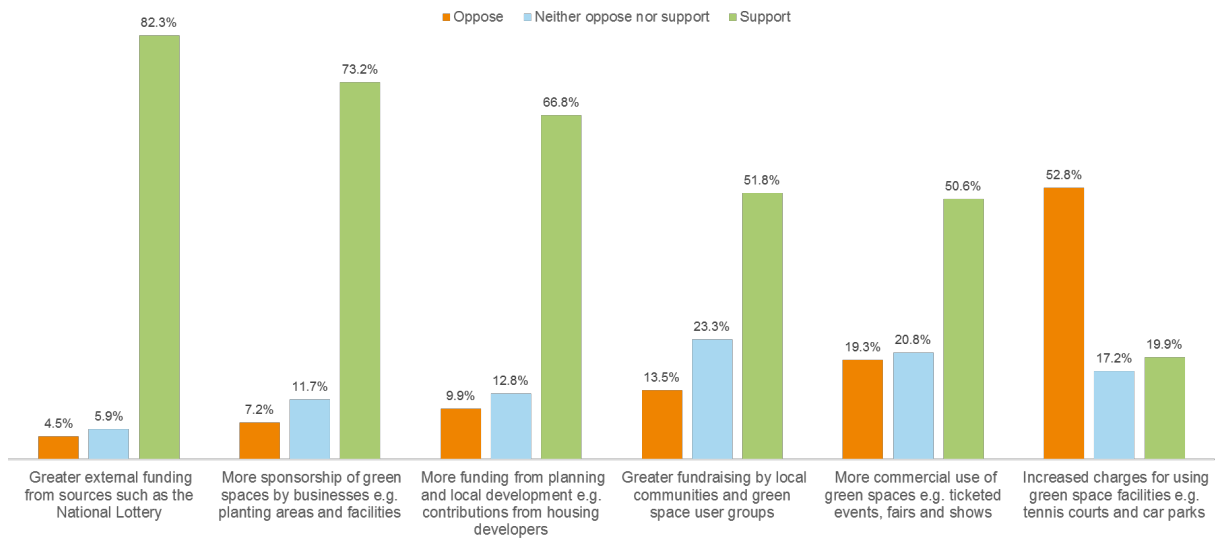
Fundraising by local community groups and friends group was considered to be important in that it helped generate a sense of ownership and allowed community group to run their own projects and the secure additional resources but in terms of the bigger picture, the amounts involved were relatively minor. Increasing fees and charges was considered to be an option of last resort since this approach tended to elicit protests form user groups and potentially alienate an existing audience whilst not generating significant amounts of income.

Group 2 did not prioritise the options in a specific order, but classified them as being of higher / lower importance.

Higher : Planning funding and External Funding popular

Lower : Charges unpopular, fundraising from local groups difficult.

The findings from the State of UK Parks (2016) research was included in the presentation at the start of the session and the slide image is shown below.



## **Appendix A**

### **Copy of Presentation**

(NB the data presented in the presentation is for information purposes only and represents early draft analysis and is subject to review and further change in the final strategy)

# Sandwell Green Space Audit & Strategy

## Steering Group

10 January 2019



# Agenda

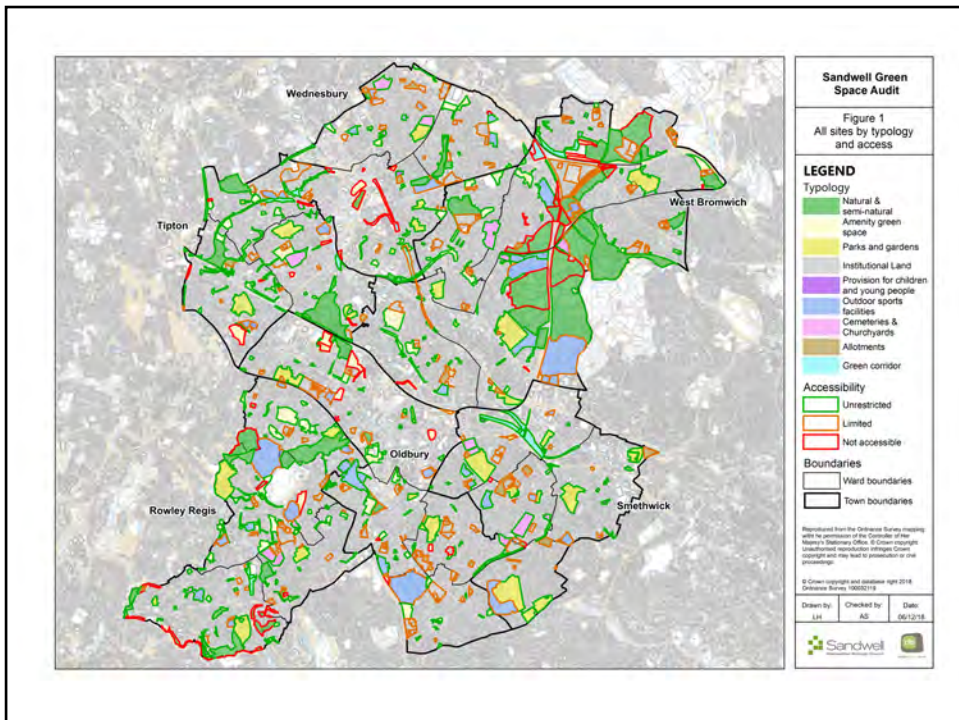
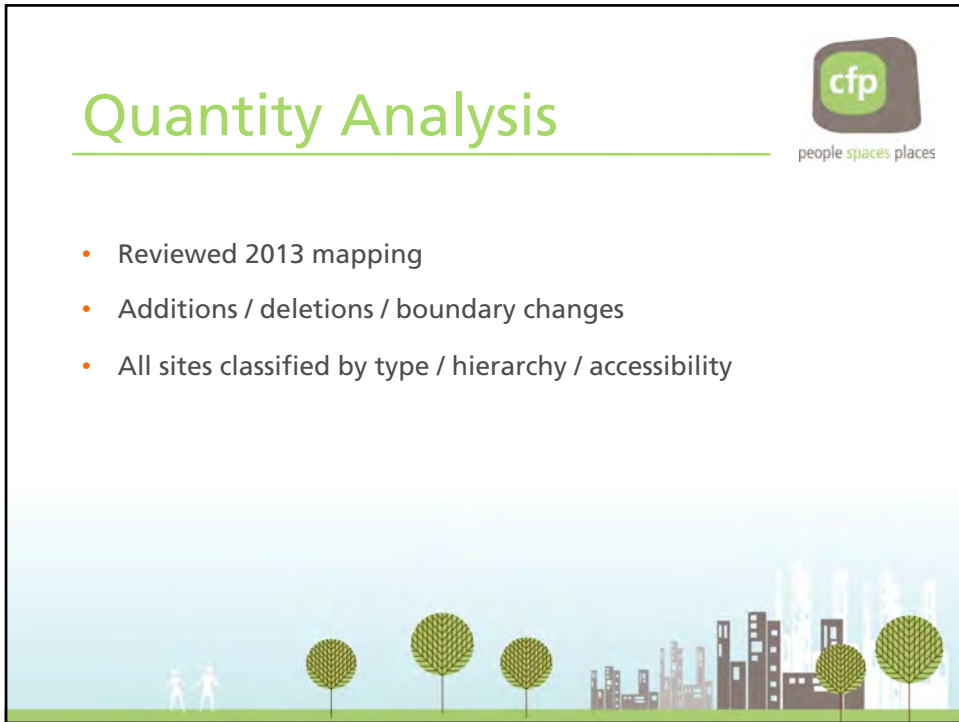
- Update on work to date
- Sandwell Vision 2030
- Priorities for Management
- Priorities for Maintenance
- Priorities for Development
- Issues & Solutions
- Resourcing the Strategy
- Summary & close

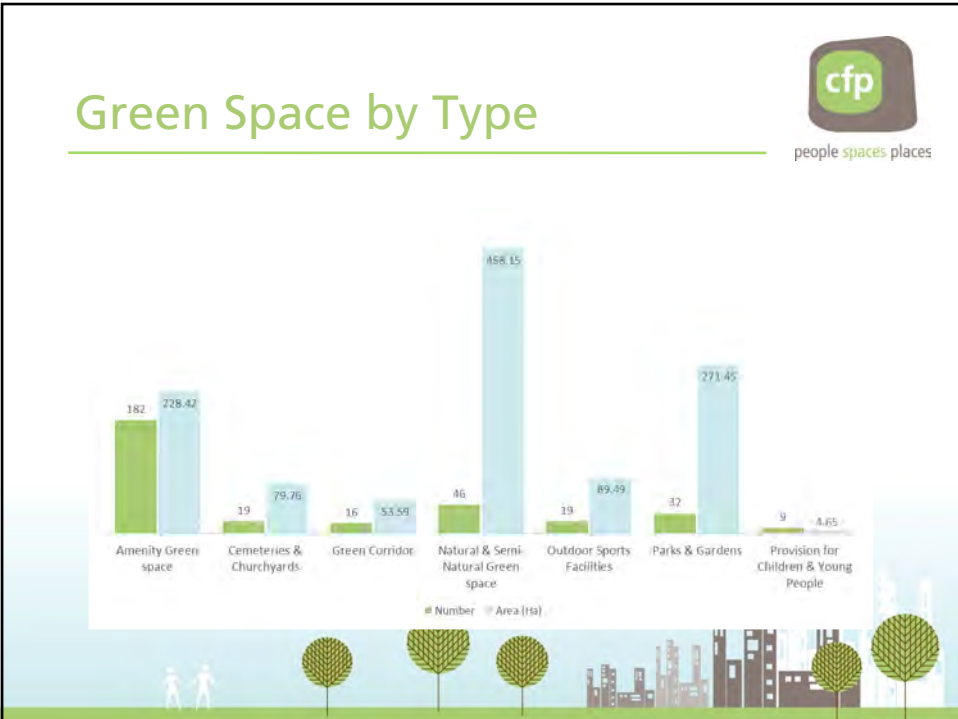
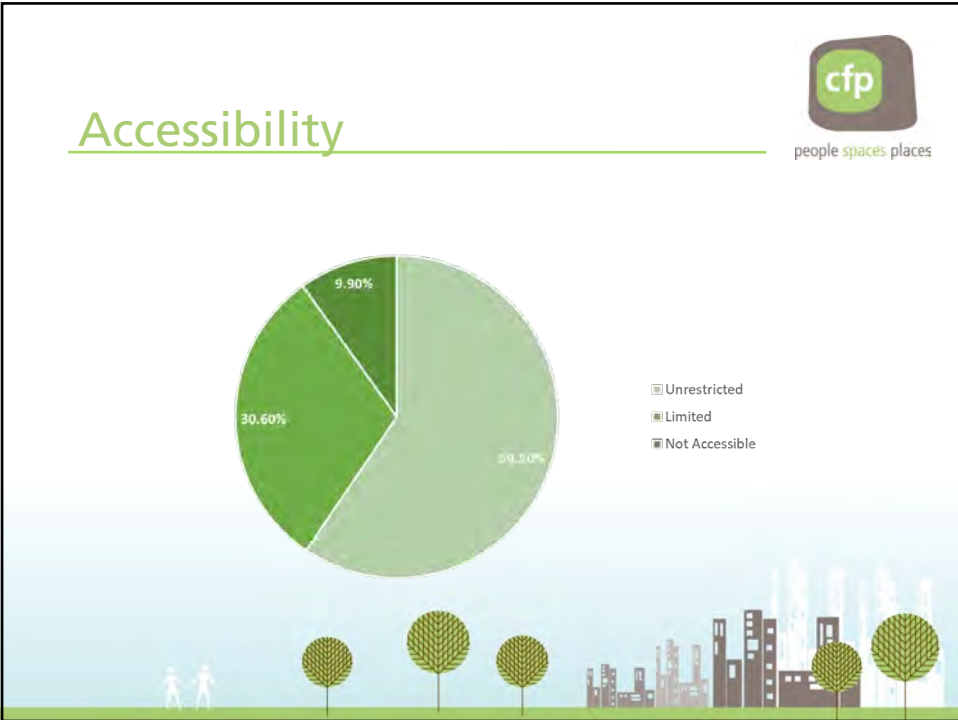


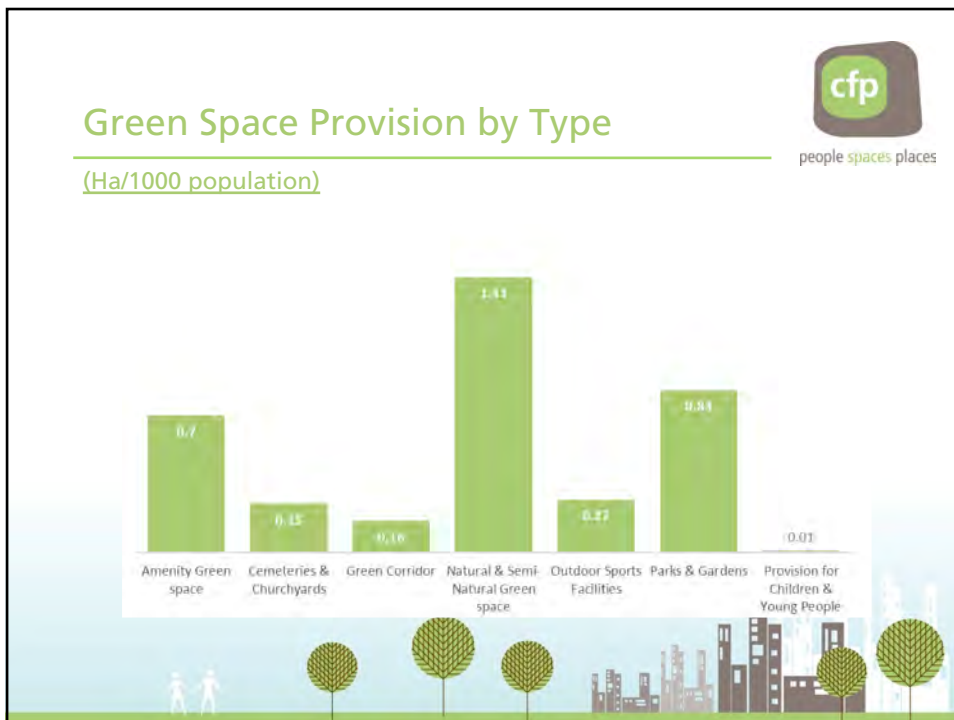
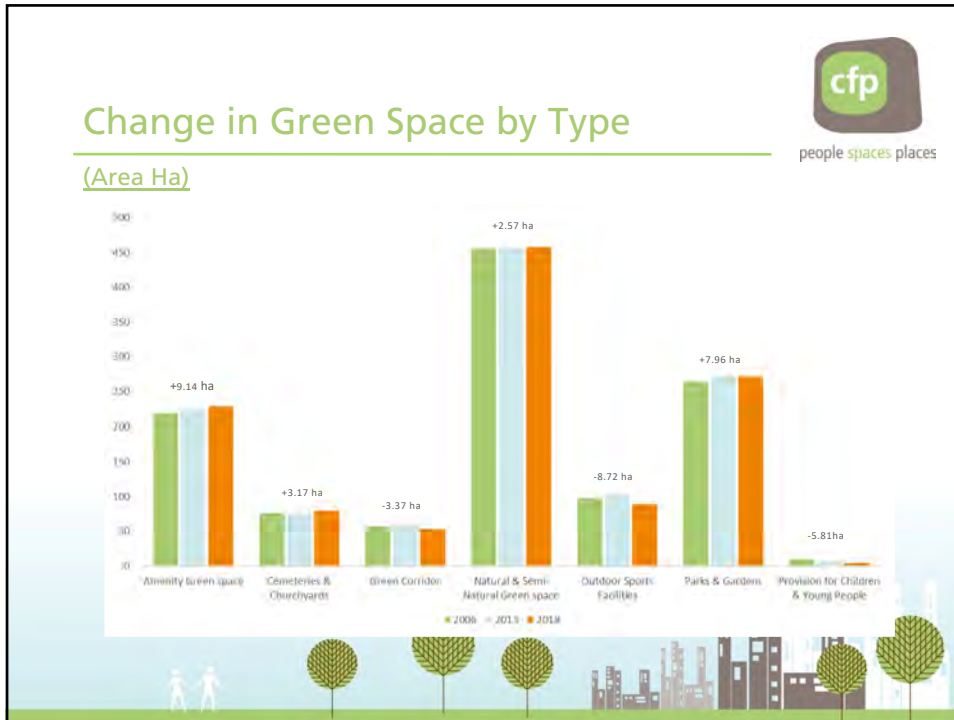
# Quantity Analysis



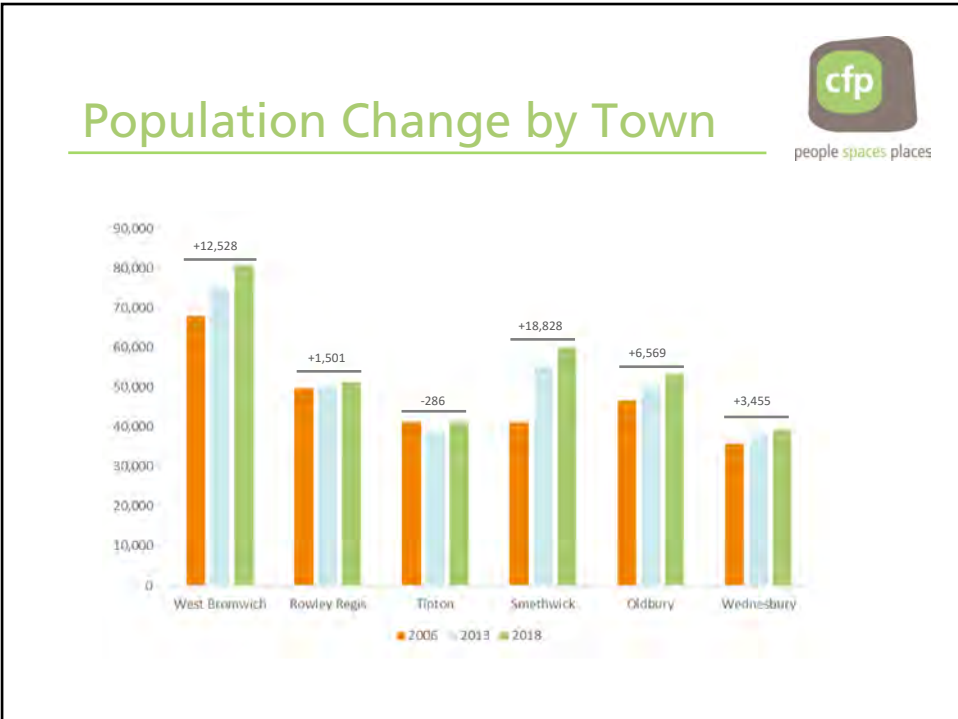
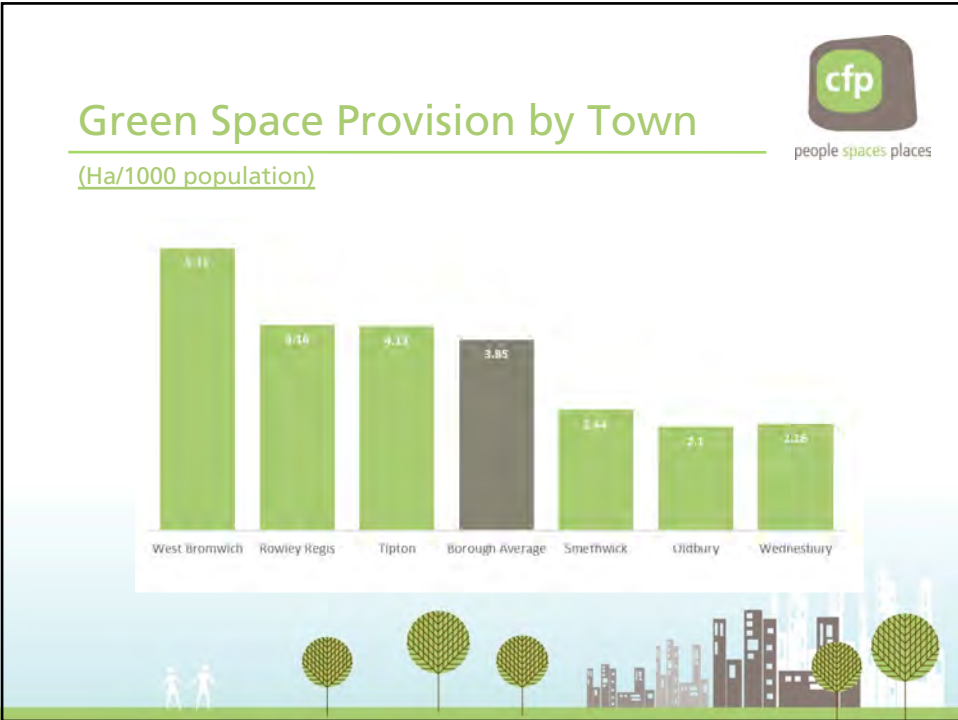
- Reviewed 2013 mapping
- Additions / deletions / boundary changes
- All sites classified by type / hierarchy / accessibility













# Quality Assessment



people spaces places

Quality assessment based upon the Green Flag Award criteria

- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy, Safe and Secure
- Clean and Well Maintained
- Environmental Management
- Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing
- Management

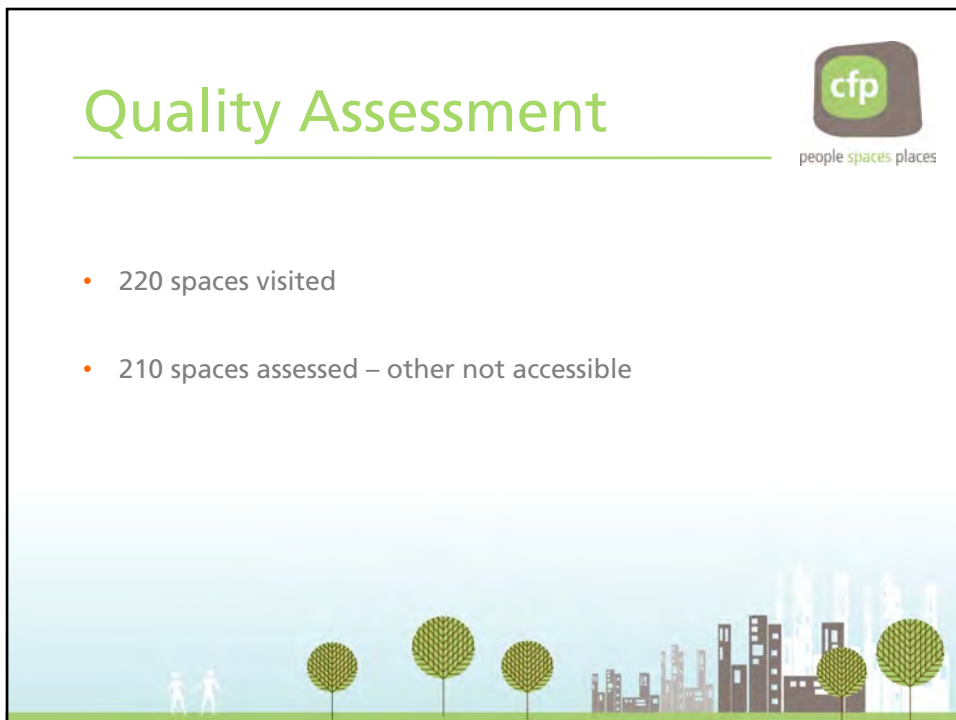


# Quality Assessment



people spaces places

- 220 spaces visited
- 210 spaces assessed – other not accessible

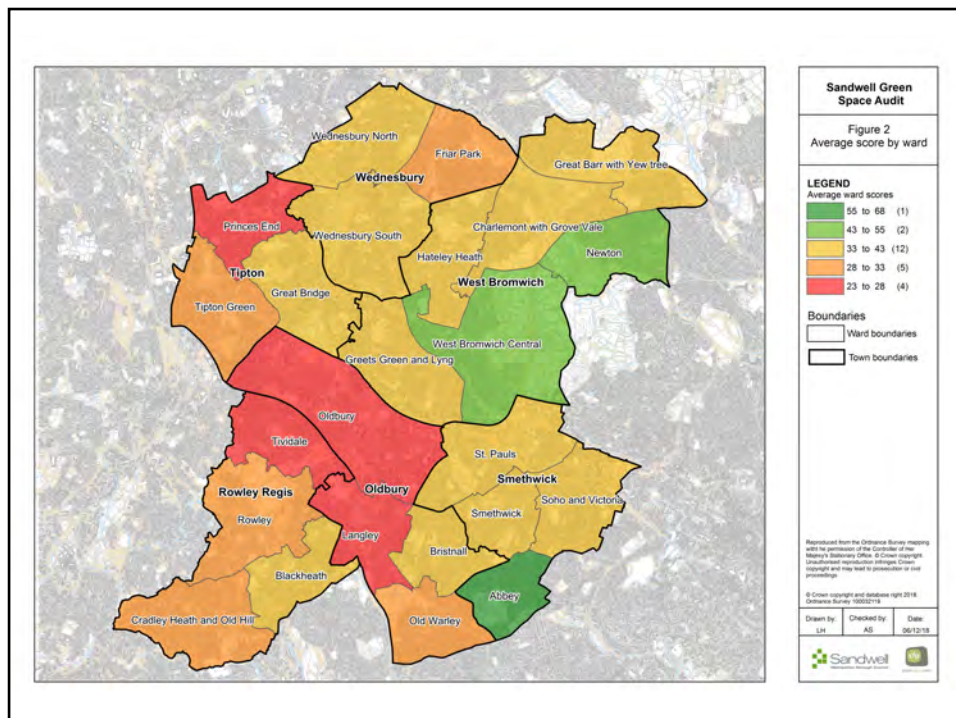
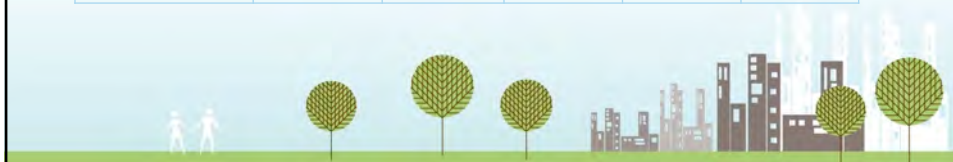


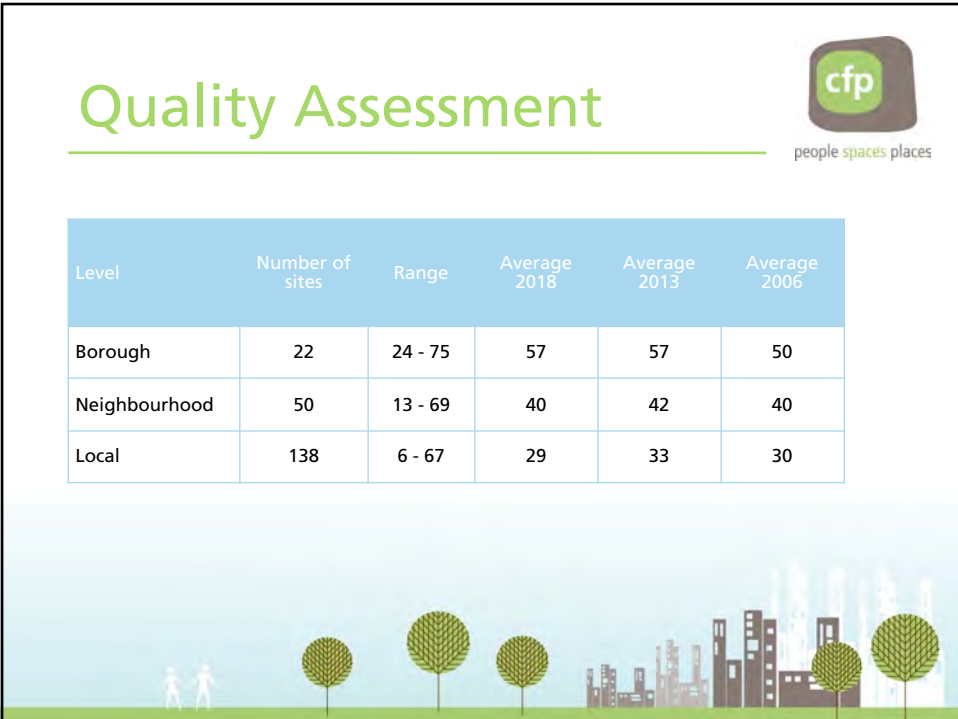
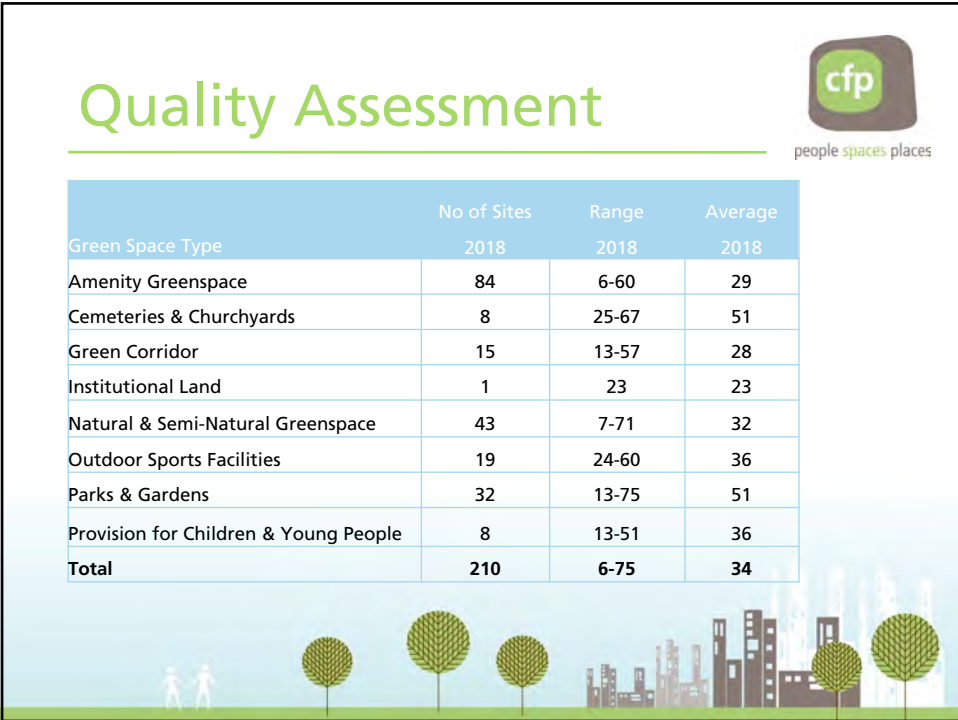
# Quality Assessment



people spaces places

Town	No. of Sites	Range	Average 2018	Average 2013	Average 2006
Smethwick	27	8 – 69	42	42	40
West Bromwich	58	8 - 75	40	40	38
Wednesbury	30	19 – 61	33	38	32
Rowley Regis	38	6 - 71	31	37	36
Tipton	33	9 - 67	30	33	27
Oldbury	24	8 - 61	27	34	29
<b>Sandwell Average</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>6 -75</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>

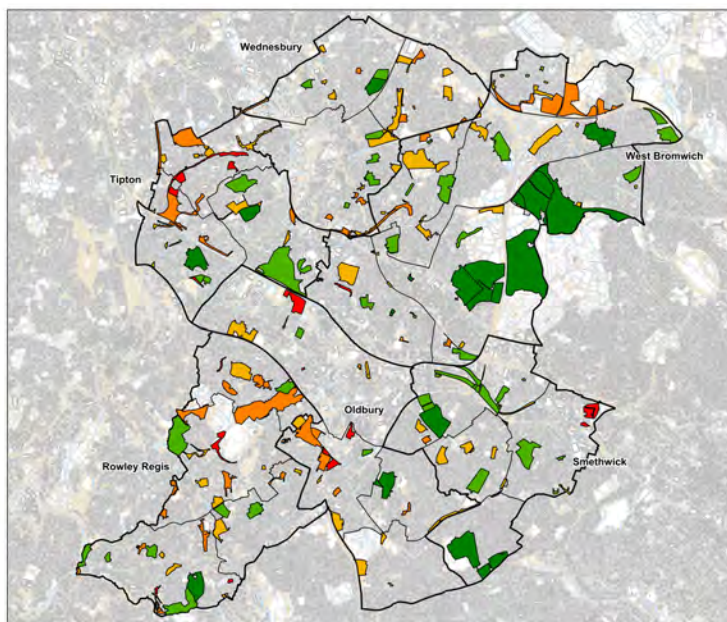
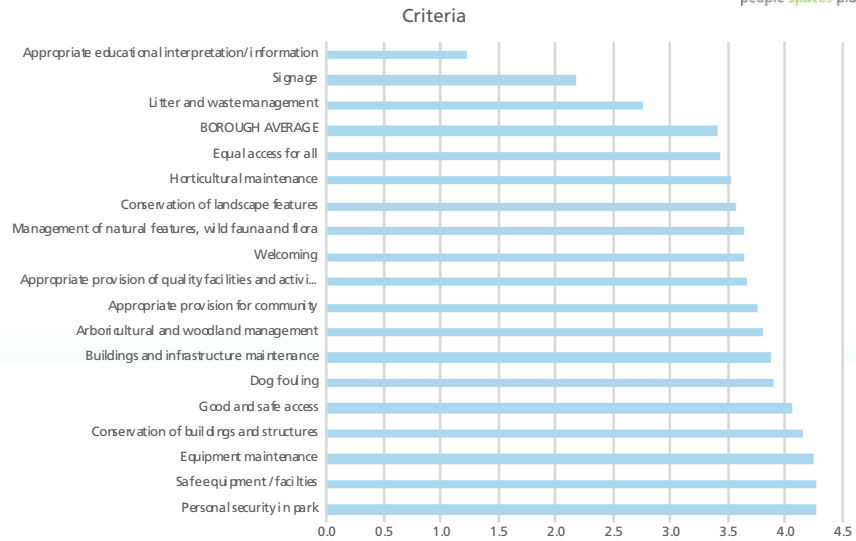




# Quality Assessment



people spaces places



**Sandwell Green Space Audit**

Figure 1  
Quality Scores

**LEGEND**

Quality Score

- 58 to 75 (19)
- 41 to 58 (45)
- 28 to 41 (75)
- 17 to 28 (53)
- 6 to 17 (18)

**Boundaries**

- Ward boundaries
- Town boundaries

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Drawn by	Checked by	Date
LH	AS	06/12/18

# Consultation Strategy



- Household Survey
- Community Group / User Group Survey
- Stakeholder Workshops
- Consultation with CYP
- Consultation on Draft Strategy



# Consultation Strategy



Stakeholder Workshops (Feb – Mar 19)

- Staff & Partner Organisations
- Biodiversity & Countryside
- Income generation and funding
- Friends Forum & Community Groups (Drop-in)
- Health & Wellbeing





people spaces places

## 1 – Sandwell Vision 2030

### Our vision for Sandwell



### VISION 2030 SANDWELL












**In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.**

It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

- 10 Ambitions – Identify Links and opportunities



people spaces places

## 2/3/4 - Priorities

Strategy Priorities

- Management
- Maintenance
- Development



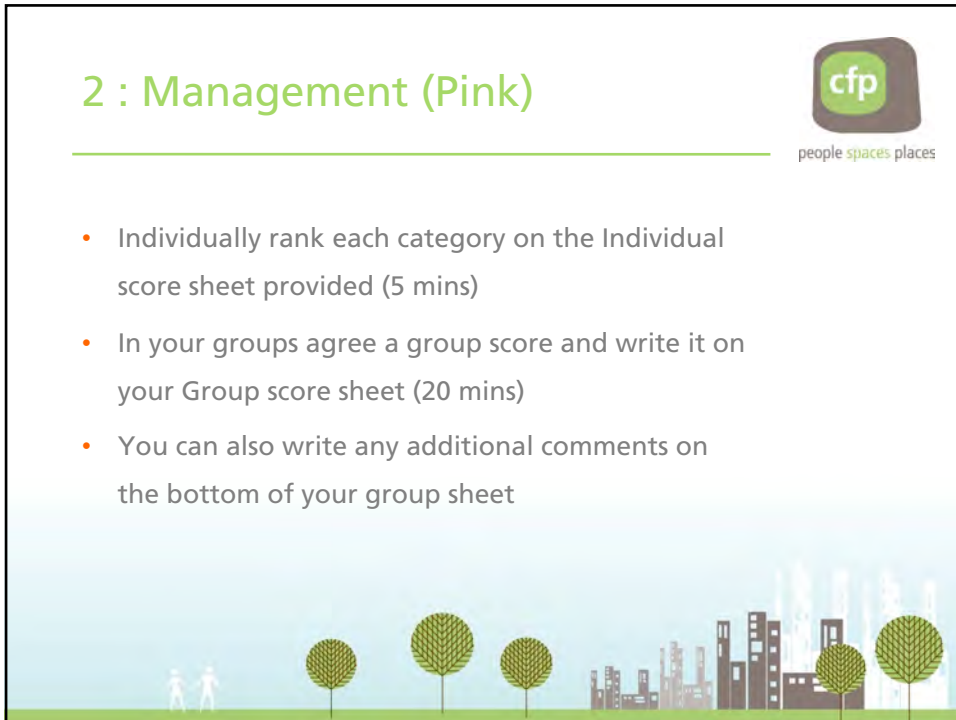


## 2 : Management (Pink)



people spaces places

- Individually rank each category on the Individual score sheet provided (5 mins)
- In your groups agree a group score and write it on your Group score sheet (20 mins)
- You can also write any additional comments on the bottom of your group sheet



## 3 : Maintenance (Yellow)



people spaces places

- Individually rank each category on the Individual score sheet provided (5 mins)
- In your groups agree a group score and write it on your Group score sheet (20 mins)
- You can also write any additional comments on the bottom of your group sheet



## 4 : Development (Blue)



people spaces places

- Individually rank each category on the Individual score sheet provided (5 mins)
- In your groups agree a group score and write it on your Group score sheet (20 mins)
- You can also write any additional comments on the bottom of your group sheet



## Priorities - Scoring



people spaces places

### Management

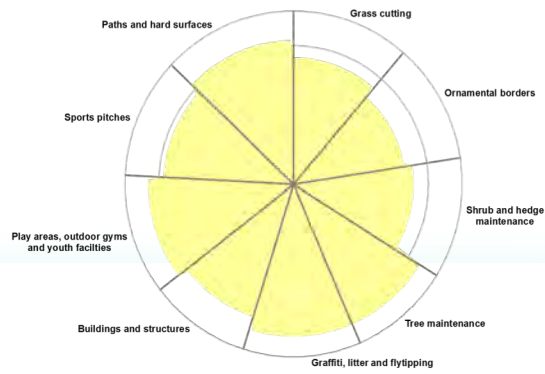


## Priorities - Scoring



people spaces places

### Maintenance

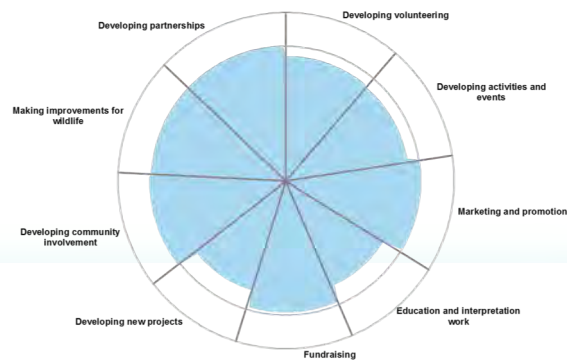


## Priorities - Scoring



people spaces places

### Development

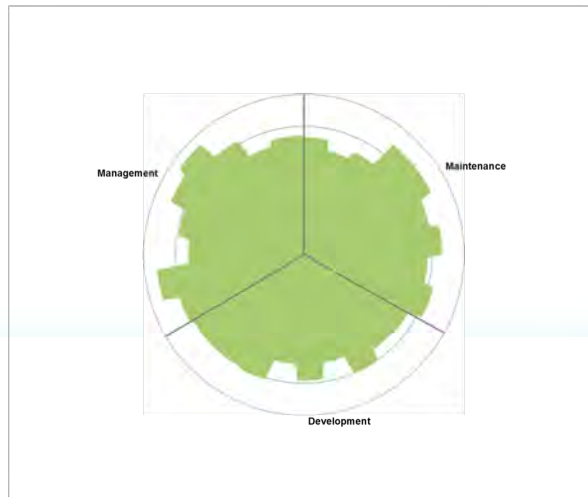


## Priorities - Scoring



people spaces places

Overall



## 5 : Issues & Solutions



people spaces places

- In your groups identify key issues that the strategy should include / address
- 1 issue per sticky note
- Identify any potential solutions – 1 per stick note
- Group under heading Management / Maintenance / Development

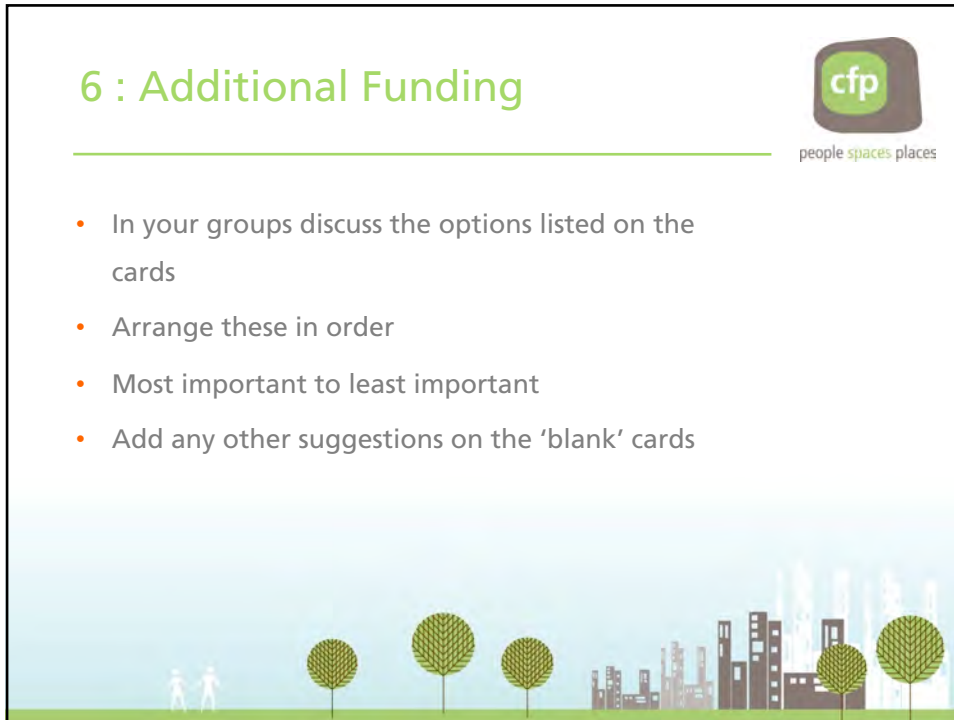


## 6 : Additional Funding



people spaces places

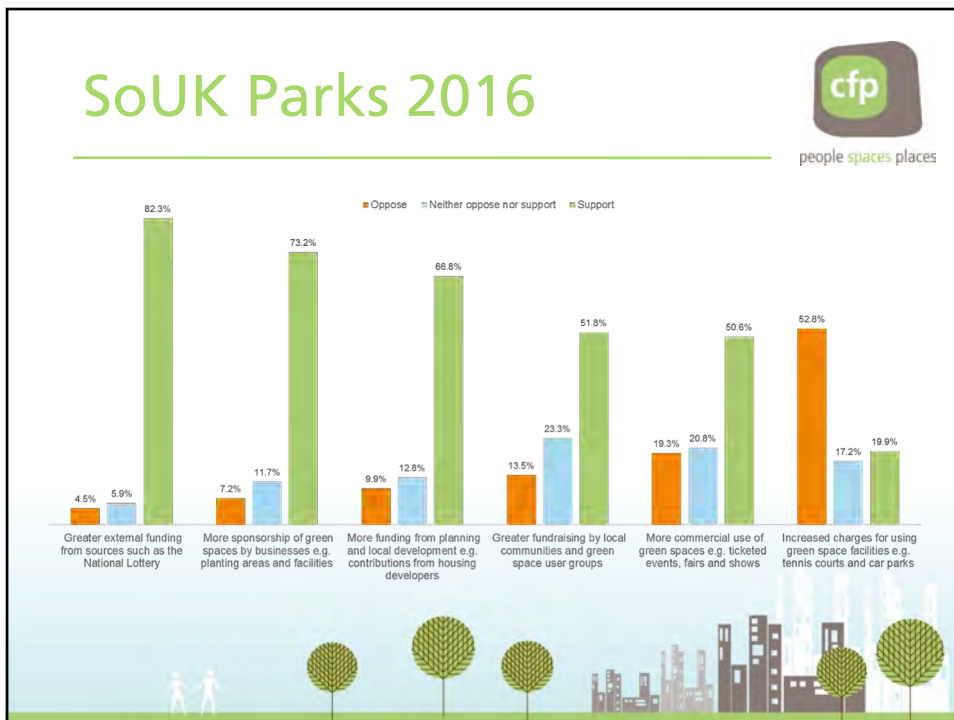
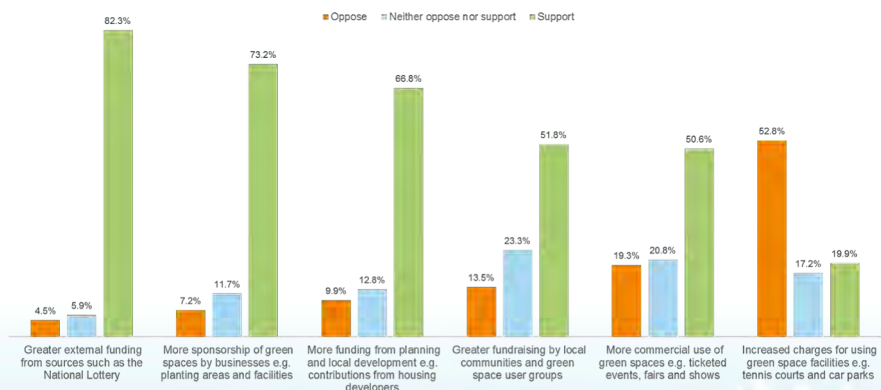
- In your groups discuss the options listed on the cards
- Arrange these in order
- Most important to least important
- Add any other suggestions on the 'blank' cards



## SoUK Parks 2016



people spaces places



## Summary



- Summary of work to date
- Sandwell Vision 2030
- Priorities for M / M / D
- Issues & Solutions
- Additional Funding



## Next Steps



- Further workshops
- Community Drop-in session – 28/02/19
- Green Space Audit – April 2019
- Green Space Strategy (draft) - May 2019

