

Report to Cabinet

12 July 2023

Subject:	Green Spaces Annual Report 22/23 and Programme of Works 23/24
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism Councillor Charn Singh Padda
Director:	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Assistant Director (Borough Economy): Green Spaces, Green Services, Visitor Services, Events; matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations



- 1.1 That the annual report for the programme of green spaces works in 2022/23 be noted and that approval be given to carry over any outstanding works to 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A and A1.
- 1.2 That approval be given to the planned programme of works for green spaces for the financial year 2023/24, as set out in Appendix B, C, and D.
- 1.3 That the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism, be authorised to approve further works for green spaces, if additional funding becomes available, to spend during the financial year, based on the priority works identified in the green space improvement plans.
- 1.4 That the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to approve additional works, when required, to rectify immediate health and safety issues.



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Green Spaces Strategy 2022 – 25 set out an approach for Cabinet to approve and publish an annual report and an annual programme of planned works for green spaces.
- 2.2 The planned programme of works includes all funding sources, whether Council funded or externally funded.
- 2.3 The programme of works are organised by priorities (1 – 3), with a focus on completing priority 1 works as approved in the Green Spaces Strategy 2022 – 25. The recommendations for the programme of works are based on these priorities, with those most impactful on the health and safety of green space users being the focus.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People Play areas and outdoor sports provision is improved.
	Strong Resilient Communities People have access to quality green space.

4 Context and key Issues

- 4.1 The overall quality score for Sandwell, taken from the Green Spaces Audit in 2018, is 34/100 – which is mostly consistent with the previous two Green Spaces Audits. The Green Spaces Strategy 22 – 25 set out a plan to focus on improving green spaces with poor or very poor status.

	Very poor		Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Smethwick	1	4%	12	44%	11	41%	3	11%	0	0%
West Bromwich	1	2%	30	53%	17	20%	7	12%	2	3%
Wednesbury	0	0%	23	77%	6	20%	1	3%	0	0%
Rowley Regis	2	5%	26	68%	9	24%	0	0%	1	3%
Tipton	1	3%	26	79%	4	12%	2	6%	0	0%
Oldbury	2	8%	8	79%	2	8%	1	4%	0	0%
Total	7	3%	125	60%	49	23%	14	7%	3	1%



- 4.2 The Council have commissioned improvement plans for 202 green spaces, 189 of which are now completed. These list all works in the three priority groups, as well as aspirational improvements for the green space. Work is now taking place to review these plans in detail, and to develop a five-year programme of works based on these with options for consideration by Cabinet in Autumn 2023.
- 4.3 The Green Spaces Strategy 22 – 25 also committed to complete an annual report, showing the progress against the published programme of annual works and the objectives set out within the strategy. The annual report for the municipal year 22/23 is attached in appendix A.
- 4.4 The Green Spaces Annual Report 22/23 shows that 90% of planned works were completed within the municipal year. Where works have not yet been completed, this is because of contractor delays or seasonal based work requirements and will be completed in 23/24. These works are listed in Appendix A1.
- 4.5 As well as the programme of works, progress has also been made against Green Spaces Strategy Objectives. These include:
- Opening a new Cabin Snack Shack at the Adventure Playground, Sandwell Valley.
 - Opening a new Wagon Coffee Bar at the Forge Mill Farm Play Area entrance, at Forge Mill Lake.
 - Opening a new Café at Dartmouth Park Pavilion.
 - Opening a new Café at West Smethwick Park Pavilion
 - Completing works on £5.2m of National Lottery Heritage Fund and SMBC funded improvement works at West Smethwick Park, including opening a brand-new Pavilion for community use.
 - Securing £85,000 of levelling up funding for Black Patch Park improvements, to take place in 23/24.
 - Securing £1.37m of UKSPF funding for green space improvements at Forge Mill Farm and The Railer, linked to education and outreach.
 - The appointment of an education and outreach team and a volunteer development officer, to support green space improvements.
 - The launch of an education and outreach offer and classroom visits, starting with Forge Mill Farm and countryside education.



- A new Trees Strategy, with a commitment and funding to inspect and complete remedial works in red risk areas – which includes all our green spaces.
- A review of allotments provision commissioned and completed, due for Cabinet decision making process in 23/24.
- £156,000 funding secured from English Cricket Board for the improvement of 12 sites.
- Work began on the Sandwell Valley Urban Bike Track, a £630,000 project jointly funded between Sport England, Sandwell Council, and Birmingham Council.
- Completion of a pilot for the Environment Response Team with over 160 green space sites cleared to date. Hot Spot Solutions Team permanently established to continue this work.
- Consultation on Friends Groups Ways of Working and new agreements in place between groups and the Council, with quarterly meetings and additional supports.
- Built facilities review started on green spaces-built facilities, due for completion in 23/24.

4.4 Planned Programme of Works 23/24

4.4.1 The planned programme of works is intended to focus Council staff time and resources to those green spaces with the highest priority. The priority is decided in the following ways:

- a. Is it a health and safety issue, or a significant impact on the use of the green space?
- b. What is the quality score from the 2018 audit for the green space (the lowest scores will be prioritised, unless sites have specific ring-fenced funding for that space)?
- c. Is there specific funding available for the site?

4.4.2 Although the Green Space Improvement Plans are currently being reviewed fully towards a five-year programme of works, the priority 3 and priority 2 works on green space assets (i.e. green space furniture, cleansing, signage, benches, graffiti) have been included in the programme of works for 23/24. These works will be completed through:

- £309,250 projected direct spend in 23/24.
- Volunteer time and community pay back hours.
- Grounds maintenance and other service resources.



The full programme of works based on the green space improvement plans for 23/24 is in appendix B.

4.4.3 The total projected value of investment into green space improvements in 23/24 is as follows:

Improvement	Projected Spend
Play Areas	£ 701,554.00
BMX and Skate Parks	£ 20,000.00
Outdoor Gyms	£ 5,000.00
Britannia Park Towns Fund	£ 1,436,900.00
Hateley Cross Big Local Project	£ 113,750.00
Green Space Projects	£ 1,751,237.00
West Smethwick Park NLHF Project	£ 30,000.00
Green Space Improvement Plan Prior	£ 309,250.00
Allotments	£ 75,000.00
Nature Reserves	£ 83,000.00
TOTAL	£ 4,525,691.00

4.4.4 The funding for this investment is made up as follows:

Type	Funding
External Funding	£ 3,219,400.00
Capital Reserve Funds	£ 281,754.00
Covid Funds	£ 252,800.00
Housing Revenue Account	£ 378,000.00
S106	£ 277,500.00
SMBC Base Budget	£ 61,237.00
Public Health Grant	£ 55,000.00
TOTAL	£ 4,525,691.00

The full planned programme of works for 23/24 is in appendix C.

4.4.5 In addition to the planned programme of works, sites that score below 50 on their quality from the 2018 green spaces audit will be targeted with action from the Hot Spot Solutions Team. This is a team of multi-skilled grounds maintenance operatives, supported by public enforcement, volunteers, and other services, to tackle sites with long standing issues. A total of 179 sites have been identified using current quality scores, and will be worked through by the teams with the lowest scoring sites, and those having the most impact on the community first. This is the full list, and the completion times depend on the level of clean ups required and the available volunteers and resources.



Town	General Clean Up / Grounds Works
Rowley Regis	34 Green Spaces
Oldbury	23 Green Spaces
Smethwick	19 Green Spaces
West Bromwich	45 Green Spaces
Tipton	30 Green Spaces
Wednesbury	28 Green Spaces
TOTAL	179

The full list of sites on the priority list for attention from the Hot Spot Solutions Team is attached Appendix D.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1** To not approve the programme of works for 23/24. This would then require a new set of works to be drafted, with a new criterion for selecting these works determined.

6 Implications

Resources:	The resources are those available within the budgets set by the council, S106 for relevant sites, capital reserve funds for relevant sites, and other external funding.
Legal and Governance:	The Council has a legal obligation and under the Health and Safety Act (1974), along with other Acts, to keep assets and property owned by the Council safe. This includes play areas and green space facilities. The programme of works are prioritised based on their potential impact on the health and safety of users.
Risk:	Risks include not being able to complete the full programme of works because of weather, contract delays, or resource issues. In this case, the programme of works will be continued to the following year.
Equality:	The targeting of green spaces with the lowest quality scores are in some of the most deprived areas of Sandwell. This gives access to green space for Sandwell residents who need it most.
Health and Wellbeing:	The improvement of gym equipment, biking equipment, and other green space improvements significantly impacts health and wellbeing.



Social Value:	We will increase the use of local traders where possible for work that is contracted out for the programme of works.
Climate Change:	The maintenance of our green spaces contributes to biodiversity in the Borough and the maintenance of our conservation.
Corporate Parenting	Activities and events in Green Spaces will be targeted to children looked after by the Council, including the provision of free tickets to children looked after and care leavers.

7. Appendices

- The Green Spaces Annual Report for 22/23 is attached appendix A.
- The full programme of works based on the green space improvement plans for 23/24 is in appendix B.
- The full planned programme of works for 23/24 is in appendix C.
- The full list of sites on the priority list for attention from the Hot Spot Solutions Team is attached Appendix D.

8. Background Papers

No background Papers

