

# Report to Cabinet

**22 June 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 2022-25
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism, Cllr Laura Rollins
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Borough Economy, Alice Davey
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Interim Service Manager, Green Spaces Matthew Huggins <a href="mailto:Matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk">Matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 To approve the Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 2022-25 as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 That approval be given to the planned programme of works for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.3 That approval be given to pilot income generation initiatives in green spaces, as specified within the Green Spaces Strategy.
- 1.4 That approval be given to the Governance Arrangements, as set out within the Green Spaces Strategy.
- 1.5 That approval be given to the proposed new ways of working with Friends Groups, and the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism be authorised to approve the final agreement with Friends Groups following consultation.



- 1.6 That the Director of Borough Economy be authorised to develop additional programme of works for green spaces in-year (2022/23), if funding becomes available for additional works, in consultation with the Cabinet Member.
- 1.7 That the Director of Borough Economy authorise – through the Service Manager – emergency works for green spaces, as required for health and safety reasons.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan sets out a clear programme of activity and direction for the service for the next 3 years. Specifically, the completion of the following objectives (detailed outputs within the Green Spaces Strategy (Appendix A):

### 2.2 Three Year Strategy – Approach

- a. Focus on priority works only for 2022/2023 to resolve current health and safety / significant community impacts in parks and playgrounds.
- b. Implement actions from the Green Spaces Strategy recommendations that can be achieved in the following 3 financial years. Prioritise those actions that allow a transition to a Green Spaces Strategy that works towards the vision addressed in the forward to this document.
- c. Continue to maintain the Green Flag Awards currently held; but prioritise further improvements to neighbourhood and local level green spaces (green corridors, play areas, smaller parks, and amenity green spaces) in wards with the highest levels of deprivation.
- d. Learn from best practice approaches in green spaces strategy and build internal capacity to work towards this. Embed this process of learning, so that we consistently learn from the best in this field and develop our own set of best practice learning and examples.
- e. Modernise ways of working: more efficient, transparent, and data driven.



- f. Reconfigure the service to empower community and stakeholder engagement in the development, management, and maintenance of green spaces, and achieve synergy with other services to deliver on the corporate plan and 2030 ambitions.
- g. Lay the foundations to secure the financial future of our green spaces as a cost effective and high performing service integrated across the council.

### 2.3 Three Year Strategy – Objectives (detailed outputs and measures from P36)

- a. Increase average quality score for Sandwell Green Space by 15 points, with a clear strategy to achieve a ‘good’ average score by 2030.
- b. Improve accessibility and use of green spaces for sport and physical activity.
- c. Improve accessibility and use of green spaces to reduce health inequalities, loneliness, dementia, disability, and improve physical, mental health, and wellbeing.
- d. Improve stakeholder engagement in the development, management, and maintenance, and funding of green spaces with Friends Groups, community groups, residents and others.
- e. Continue to improve the security and safety of green spaces.
- f. Increase funding for green spaces through income generation, fundraising and external grants, and efficiencies in processes, systems and ways of working.
- g. Increase educational activity for children and young people in green spaces, conservation, wildlife management, and access to nature.
- h. Improve the accessibility and use of green spaces buildings and facilities – achieving maximum utilisation of spaces.
- i. Improve the management and development of nature reserves, urban forestry, and wildlife, and link to the Climate Change Action Plan for Sandwell.



- j. Achieve excellent governance, oversight, and management of green spaces.
- k. Improve the provision of allotments and community food production.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b></p> <p>The development of education and outreach within the green spaces service, starting with Sandwell Valley and Forge Mill Farm, will provide opportunities for children and young people to learn and engage with conservation, animal welfare, forestry education, and horticulture.</p> <p>The investment into play areas and green spaces built facilities provides space to play and be healthy for children and young people.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b></p> <p>The development of green spaces – with a focus on green spaces that currently score low on quality and value – provides improved quality and value to local level and neighbourhood level green spaces.</p> <p>The pilot projects and approaches in the use of green spaces to increase formal volunteering, access to facilities, and promotion of healthy initiatives in green spaces will improve the lives of residents that use the green spaces.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b></p> <p>The development of Green Spaces Built Facilities provides communities with a base for meetings, sporting activities, and events in green spaces.</p>
	<p><b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</b></p> <p>The development and improvement of local level green spaces – smaller spaces and those spaces within 5 – 10</p>



	minutes of homes – improves the neighbourhoods in which those green spaces reside.
	<b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b> The development of income generation initiatives in green spaces contributes towards the local economy.
	<b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b> The development objectives for Green Corridors improve the connections between spaces for walking, running, and cycling.

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 2022–25 sets out the context and key issues (appendix A).

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 To not approve the Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 2022-25, which would, however, be detrimental in terms of lack of improvement programme for green spaces in Sandwell for the next 3 years.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	No implications – planned increase in resources through base budget and income generation.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	New governance arrangements for Green Spaces implementation, audit, and monitoring through KPIs. Proposed new agreements with Friends groups to align relationship management and friends group activity to the strategy – consultation to take place July – August.
<b>Risk:</b>	Planned programme of works required based on currently known health and safety risks. Transition to digital ways of working and monitoring means a clearer knowledge and management of risks with green spaces. Financial risk is mitigated by the funding plan and income generation plan.



<b>Equality:</b>	Green spaces groups are underrepresented in ethnic minority groups – the Green Spaces Strategy seeks to address this through more public comms and direct engagement with residents. The Green Spaces Accessibility Audit will scope the barriers to green spaces for disabled people, with recommendations and plans to address this in 23/24.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Green Spaces Strategy seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, with a number of pilot initiatives, learnings from best practice, and increase access and engagement with green spaces at local and neighbourhood level, including green corridors.
<b>Social Value</b>	The targeted approach to improvement in green spaces will improve the value of green spaces and built facilities to residents and communities.

## 7. Appendices

Appendix A: Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 2022–25.

## 8. Background Papers

None.

