

**TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS: COUNCILLORS JANE GRAY AND PETER BURT

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In January 2016 a Project Board was established to review the Green Space Management Strategy (GSMS) and make recommendations for directing future investment in NHDC's own green space.
- 1.2 The Project Board identified that the most important element of green space for our local communities was the green space itself i.e. the grass and trees in our urban environments.
- 1.3 The Project Board recognised that the current level of capital investment of circ. £390,000 pa, was not sufficient to maintain the current infrastructure i.e. all the built environment within our green space such as equipped play areas, football pavilions, skate parks etc.
- 1.4 The Board acknowledged that green space investment proposals that comprise the GSMS for 2014-2019 were developed prior to the adoption of the Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It was noted that many of the proposals within the existing GSMS would not hold up to the scrutiny required by the current MTFS.
- 1.5 This report identifies a suggested strategic approach to managing the Council's green space infrastructure, and proposes a reduced green space capital programme that focuses investment on the key elements of green space most valued and used by our communities such as town centre parks and large equipped play areas. This will therefore align the GSMS to the principles of the Council's current MTFS.
- 1.6 The report recommends that a new GSMS is produced for the period 2017 – 2021 which aligns with the principles of the Council's current Corporate Plan and MTFS.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the findings of the Green Space Project Board and based on their recommendations agree to the production of a draft new Green Space Management Strategy for the period 2017 – 2021, which aligns with the principles of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.2 That the draft new Green Space Management Strategy undergoes a period of consultation and following any consequential amendments a final draft is brought back to Cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017 for formal adoption.

- 2.3 Once approved the work programme in the new Green Space Management Strategy be incorporated into the 2017/18 budget setting process.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To reflect one of the principal aims of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which is to "optimise income generation and efficiency savings wherever possible and keep down costs in order to minimise the impact on essential services".
- 3.2 The recommendations enable the Green Space Management Strategy to align with the principles of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, whilst maintaining an adequate and sustainable green space infrastructure.

### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 To retain the current GSMS with increased capital and revenue investment.

### **5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 5.1 The Green Space Project Board consists of the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Leisure, Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment and the Executive Member for Policy, Transport and Green issues.
- 5.2 In order to ensure the consultation represents the local demographics of North Hertfordshire a Citizens' panel exercise is taking place which will involve holding three focus groups to capture residents' views and perceptions on the proposals for a new Green Space Management Strategy.

### **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This item was first identified in the forward plan in Nov 2016.

### **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 In January 2016 a Project Board was established to review the GSMS.
- 7.2 It was identified at the first project board meeting that the current 2014-2019 GSMS has an average yearly investment value of circ. £390,000 for improvements/ renovation of green space. The previous strategy had an average annual value of £948,000. The investment in the current strategy is approximately 59% lower than the previous five year strategy and is not sufficient to refurbish all our existing green space components.

#### **7.6 Funding Sources**

- 7.6.1 Historically the Council managed to secure approximately 70% of its green space investment from external sources with the remaining 30% funded from NHDC capital resource.
- 7.6.2 Currently due to increased competition for external grants and reducing developer contributions the Council only secures approximately 30% from external sources and 70% is funded from NHDC capital.

7.6.3 Since April 2015 local authorities are no longer able to pool more than five Section 106 contributions to pay for a single infrastructure project. The Council is yet to take a corporate decision as to whether to take forward the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Changes in external grant criteria also reduce future opportunities for councils to secure grants. It is therefore anticipated that any future investment in green space will have to be funded almost entirely from NHDC capital resources alone.

7.6.4 With the evident decline in external funding for Green Space investment, the options are to either increase the use of NHDC Capital Funds to maintain the current level of investment or reduce investment in Green Space infrastructure.

## 7.7 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

7.7.1 The MTFS, the Council's key financial planning document, (<http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/budgets-and-spending/medium-term-financial-strategy>) is an integral part of the Council's Corporate Business Planning process. The Council operates a system of priority led budgeting, with those priorities set out in the "Priorities for the District" policy document.

7.7.2 The strategy states that all investment priority bids for both Revenue and Capital are subject to robust scrutiny from the Corporate Board and Councillors, where they are subject to four basic questions:

- Is the expenditure fundamental to delivery of the Council's priorities?
- Is there an absolute priority that the expenditure is incurred in the next 12months?
- What are the risks involved in not spending the money?
- Will the growth result in quantifiable savings in future years?

7.7.3 It is recognised that significant savings in revenue expenditure are required over the coming years. The capital resource balance is also reducing and if the planned level of spend continues, the Council will relatively soon be in a position where borrowing will be required to fund capital investment, with associated cost implications for the General Fund.

7.7.4 The green space investment proposals that comprise the existing GSMS (2014-2019) were developed prior to the adoption of the current MTFS. It should be noted that many of the proposals within the existing strategy would not hold up to the scrutiny required by the current MTFS as described above.

7.7.5 In light of the financial outlook described within the MTFS and the financial pressures facing the authority, it is no longer considered prudent to continue with the existing, relatively high level of capital and revenue expenditure devoted to our green space.

## 7.8 Strategic Approach

7.8.1 If current investment levels continue there will be insufficient funds to maintain the current infrastructure and this will lead to a gradual decline in the entire green space. Those areas which are well used and valued most by the community however will be the first to wear out and require decommissioning, while other areas that are little used and have limited value will survive and continue to command ongoing revenue expenditure for maintenance. For example Howard Park play area, which has high community value and receives high use, will wear out much quicker than a play area

located in a small housing estate serving only a few residents. Both however have an ongoing revenue direct cost.

7.8.2 A strategic approach is therefore proposed to ensure that, with more limited resources available, future investment is directed to areas that maximise community benefit, such as the refurbishment of town centre parks and large play areas that serve an entire neighbourhood. Capital expenditure could also be used to reduce future revenue expenditure by removing items of infrastructure which have low community benefit but ongoing associated revenue costs e.g. ageing football changing rooms and small play areas that only serve a small part of a neighbourhood.

7.8.3 The GSMS should also consider how the Council will manage future green space provision associated with any new housing developments linked to the emerging Local Plan.

7.8.4 Options for play areas are discussed at appendix A in the report. Options for football pavilions are discussed at appendix B. Options for football pitches are contained in the body of the report at 8.2. In respect to wheeled sports, tennis courts, MUGA's, bowling greens etc. in general it is proposed to retain the existing infrastructure without developing further. This will require modifications to our existing Green Space Capital programme as detailed at appendix C.

## 7.9 Community benefit

7.9.1 A review of the green space capital programme focused on ensuring that only projects with a very high community value are included will best enable the council to retain future capital funds for high community valued projects and invest to save proposals.

7.9.2 In order to lessen any impact on the community, a phased approach for reductions in infrastructure could be adopted. Sites in the poorest condition would be the first to be enhanced back to green space. The disposal of any green space sites would only be considered as a last resort.

## 8. PROJECTS BOARDS FINDINGS

### 8.1 Play Areas

8.1.1 Currently NHDC have 47 equipped play areas across the district. It is anticipated that an equipped play area will need to be refurbished on average every 15 years and the average capital cost to refurbish a single play area is £71,000. Table 1. 'Current situation of Play Areas' identifies that to retain all 47 play areas would require an ongoing annual capital investment of £222,500. NHDC's current annual capital spend is £85,200. The average annual revenue spend per play area is £2,200.

#### 1. Current situation of Play Areas

| Current number | Average life | Annual Capital investment required to maintain all play areas | Current Capital annual investment | Annual Revenue spend to maintain stock of 47 play areas |
|----------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 47             | 15 years     | £222,500  | £85,200                           | £104,000  |

- 8.1.2 At the project board meeting on the 18th July 2016 officers reported on play area usage and identified sites that showed signs of limited use. Members of Project Board visited these sites on the 23<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016.
- 8.1.3 In densely urban areas play areas may form the only local green space amenity area. The removal of formal play equipment and landscaping back to green space opens up these areas for the whole community to use and benefit from. The capital cost to remove play equipment and landscape back to green space would be between £5K - £15K per site.
- 8.1.4 Appendix A lists options for the future provision of play areas. These range from retaining all 47 equipped play areas with increased total capital investment to removing equipment from 33 play areas resulting in capital savings.

### **8.1.5 Projects Board's Recommendations for Play Areas**

8.1.5.1 Project Board's preferred option is Option 3 in table 2 at appendix A:

- Maintain 14 large play areas.
- Retain 19 medium sized play areas with limited investment.
- Remove equipment from 14 play areas and landscape back to green space.

8.1.5.2 The benefits of this option are that it contains capital investment to within the levels included in the existing capital programme and could facilitate revenue savings. 14 key play area sites as identified in Appendix A table 3 would continue to be fully invested in, so preventing their decline and a further 19 sites would be retained with limited investment for repairs or replacement of items of equipment as and when required..

8.1.5.3 The landscaping of 14 small equipped play areas back to green space should have little detrimental impact on the Council's overall play provision and would open up these areas for wider community use. The retention of 33 equipped play areas should still meet the needs of the local community by providing opportunities for children's formal play at key equipped play areas along with additional opportunities for informal play at other green space sites.

8.1.5.4 A phased approach of up to four years could be adopted for the removal of equipment and landscaping back to green space, as identified at appendix A table 3a. However if Members consider this approach too lengthy the timescale could be reduced.

## **8.2 Football Pitches**

8.2.1 Nationally football played on grass pitches in parks is in decline. There is a growing trend for games to be played on artificial turf pitches or indoors in sport centres. Some Councils have already removed their football pitches.

8.2.2 To provide supporting documentation for the emerging Local Plan the Council is undertaking a playing pitch study. The study directly links to the proposed action plans in the GSMS.

8.2.3 Currently the Council has 24 football pitches. The use of pitches varies on a site by site basis with some sites receiving little use. The cost to the Council for maintaining a football pitch is £450 per year. The grounds maintenance contractor retains the income from pitch bookings. Therefore any savings from reductions in pitches which resulted in loss in income to the contractor would be subject to negotiations with the contractor.

### **8.2.3 Projects Board's recommendations for Football Pitches**

8.2.3.1 Project Boards preferred option for football pitches is to monitor level of use and if supply exceeds demand aim to reduce the number of pitches accordingly and link the level of provision with planning guidance in the emerging Local Plan.

### **8.3 Football Pavilions**

8.3.1 Football Pavilions that are only used by a small percentage of the community and are in a poor state of repair can give the whole park a feeling of neglect and disrepair. Their removal and landscaping back to green space can enhance the appearance of the whole site and adjoining neighbourhood.

8.3.5 Currently NHDC have seven football pavilions. Pavilions are normally only used for a few hours each weekend during the football season. Pavilions have an ongoing revenue cost and many of our current buildings require significant capital investment if they are to be retained. Four of the seven pavilions have been assessed as being beyond economic repair. Appendix B provides options for football pavilions.

#### **8.3.6 Projects Board's Recommendations for Football Pavilions**

8.3.6.1 If section 106 money can be secured for a new Walsworth Common Pavilion in Hitchin: Retain the Grange Recreation Ground pavilion in Letchworth & provide a new build at Walsworth Common, funded in the main from section 106 contributions. Demolish the remaining 6 pavilions.

This would provide parity in Hitchin with the current provision in Letchworth and allow the Council to maintain two hubs for football. Each pavilion would serve four or more football pitches. The original estimated cost for a new Walsworth pavilion in 2013 was £300k funded by £50K Capital and £250K from Section 106 contributions. However with increasing construction costs additional Section 106 monies may be required to fund the project.

8.3.6.2 If Section 106 money can't be secured for new Walsworth Common Pavilion: Retain pavilion at the Grange Recreation Ground in Letchworth along with providing limited investment to retain Ransoms and Swinburn Pavilions in Hitchin. Demolish remaining 4 pavilions.

This would retain a reasonable provision of football pavilions in Letchworth and Hitchin.

### **8.4 Green Space Capital Programme**

8.4.1 The Green Space Capital Programme 2014 – 2019 was endorsed by Cabinet on the 24th September 2013. However the capital programme is subject to annual approval by the Council. Since 2013 the financial pressures on the Council have greatly increased.

8.4.2 Table 6 at appendix C identifies projects in the Green Space Capital Programme 2016 – 2019 requiring approval to commence. This programme was produced prior to the Council's adoption of the current MTFs and many of the projects listed do not meet the criteria as described in the current MTFs. For example, the proposed £100k capital contribution towards a new wheeled sports facility in Baldock would increase revenue spend once the facility was operational.

### **8.4.3 Projects Board's Recommendations for Green Space Capital Programme**

- 8.4.3.1 In view of the MTFs and pressures on finance, it is recommended that the green space projects listed at table 7 in appendix C. be removed from the GSMS Capital programme.
- 8.4.3.2 The proposed projects recommended for removal from the Capital Programme should have limited adverse impact on our communities and will best enable the Council to continue to provide funds for high priority green space investments.
- 8.4.3.3 Any Section 106 money allocated to projects that are removed from the capital programme can be reallocated. Any reallocated funds would be dealt with in accordance with the relevant planning legislation and guidance.
- 8.4.3.4 This will ensure the GSMS meets with the requirements of the Council's current MTFs, whilst maintaining an adequate and sustainable green space infrastructure.
- 8.4.3.5 Table 8 in appendix C lists the proposed revised 2017 – 2019 Green Space Capital programme.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Within Cabinet's terms of reference are "*to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council*" and "*to approve those major service developments or reductions which also constitute Key Decisions.*" The Green Space Management Strategy falls within Cabinet's remit and this project has been noted on the Council's forward plan as a key decision.
- 9.2 The Council provides parks, recreation grounds and open spaces under its discretionary powers.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The proposals for the management and development of Green Space as outlined in the body of this report and detailed in the appendices conform to the requirements of the Council's current MTFs in relation to capital and revenue investment.
- 10.2 The proposal for play areas as listed at 8.1.5 in the report contains annual capital expenditure for the refurbishment of play areas within the existing average Capital budget of circa. £85,000 pa. Subject to negotiations with the grounds maintenance contractor, there is also the potential to make a revenue saving of up to £31,000 pa. A phased approach to the decommissioning of the 14 play areas will mean a total capital investment of £140,000 spread over the next four financial years in returning these areas to green space. This phased approach does however increase the timescale for the realisation of any revenue savings.
- 10.3 The proposals for pavilions assume a capital cost of £30,000 to demolish a pavilion and landscape back to green space. The recommended options would therefore require a one off capital investment of up to £180,000. The proposals would also facilitate the achievement of revenue savings of up to approximately £12,000 pa. based on the revenue expenditure incurred in maintaining the existing football pavilions in the last financial year 2015/16.
- 10.4 The proposals for a £715,000 reduction in the green space investment programme releases NHDC capital funds to be directed to areas of greatest community need and

for invest to save proposals. The impact on the current capital programme from the removal of the projects itemised in Appendix C table 7 is a reduction in planned capital expenditure of £545,000. Those projects profiled in the original GSMS to commence in 2018/19 have not yet been incorporated in the approved Capital Programme.

- 10.5 Any revisions to the GSMS will need to be incorporated into the 2017/18 budget setting process.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 If the current planned level of spend continues, the Council will relatively soon be in a position where borrowing will be required to fund capital investment, with associated cost implications for the General Fund.

- 11.2 If a strategic approach is not adopted to reduce expenditure on green space there will be insufficient funds to maintain the current infrastructure and this will lead to a gradual decline in the entire green space infrastructure. Those areas which are well used and valued most by the community however will be the first to wear out and require decommissioning, while other areas that are little used and have limited value will survive and continue to command ongoing revenue expenditure for maintenance.

- 11.3 Where equipment is installed in parks and open spaces, it is important it is regularly inspected and maintained to prevent any injuries to users. Withdrawing old play equipment will reduce the burden of ongoing maintenance costs. The provision of grassed areas still allows for play activities and allows for wider community use.

- 11.4 The risks associated with green space sustainability have been reviewed and updated on Covalent, the Council's performance and risk management software.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011. There is a General duty that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.

- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 12.3 It is recommended that a full Impact assessment is carried out on the final draft Green Space Strategy that is presented in January.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.



## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None contained within this report.

## **15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix A - Options for play areas

Appendix B - Football Pavilions

Appendix C - Green Space Capital Programme

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1 Green Space Management Strategy 2014 - 2019.
- 17.2 Green Space Project Board Reports 1 – 6.

## APPENDIX A:- OPTIONS FOR PLAY AREAS

### Options for play areas

If all 47 play areas were to be retained an ongoing annual capital investment of £222,500 would be required. Table 2. below identifies options for play areas. Options 1 & 2 increase annual capital spend, Option 3 maintains the current level of capital expenditure while option 4 reduces the capital required.

Officers have surveyed all 47 play areas and have identified 14 play areas that potentially have limited use. These were included in the project board tour in August 2016 and are identified below at table 3. 'Proposals for play areas'. The decommissioning of these sites would reduce ongoing capital investment and have the potential to reduce future revenue spend. There would however be a one off capital expense estimated between £5K- 15K per site to remove the equipment and return the areas to green space.

### 2. Options for Play Areas

|   | Option  | Annual capital required to maintain stock | Annual Capital increase / decrease | Est. one off Capital expenditure to decommission | Annual revenue required | Revenue increase / decrease |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Retain all 47 play areas  | £222,500                                  | + £137,300                         | £0   | £104,000                | £0                          |
| 2 | Retain 33 play areas (remove equipment from 14 play areas)  | £156,200                                  | + £71,000                          | £140,000   | £73,000*                | -£31,000*                   |
| 3 | Maintain 14 large play areas. Retain 19 medium sized play areas with limited investment. Remove equipment from 14 play areas. | £85,200                                   | £0                                 | £140,000   | £73,000*                | -£31,000*                   |
| 4 | Retain 14 large play areas. Remove equipment from 33 play areas   | £66,300                                   | -£18,900                           | £330,000   | £31,000*                | -£73,000*                   |

\* Subject to contract negotiations as saving would only be achieved when activity level is such that the contractor can reduce the semi-fixed level of inputs required e.g. in staff or vehicles.

## **Recommendations for play areas**

Option 3:- Maintain 14 large play areas. Retain 19 medium sized play areas with limited investment, remove equipment from 14 play areas and landscape back to green space. Proposals for individual play areas are identified at table 3 & 3a. below.

This option contains capital investment to within the levels included in the existing capital programme and could facilitate revenue savings. 14 key play area sites would continue to be invested in preventing their decline and a further 19 sites would be retained with limited investment.

The landscaping of 14 small equipped play areas back to green space would have little detriment for the Council's overall play provision and open up these areas for wider community use. The retention of 33 play areas would continue to meet the needs of the community.

### 3. Proposals for play areas

| Town      | Site           | Type | Usage  | Notes  | Recommendation                                    |
|-----------|----------------|------|--------|--|---|
| Royston   | Betjeman Road  | LAP  | Low    | Limited wear around equipment showing limited use. Close to larger Serby Avenue play area.   | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Royston   | Meridian       | LEAP | Medium | Play area serving new housing estate but on fringe of town so has limited catchment area.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Royston   | Newmarket Rd   | NEAP | High   | Toddler and senior play areas serving large housing estates. Currently located on fringe of town but adjacent land shortly to be developed for new large housing estate. | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Royston   | Priory Gardens | NEAP | High   | Large town centre play area. Main play area for all Royston residents.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Royston   | Serby Avenue   | NEAP | Medium | Centrally located play area serving large housing estates.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Royston   | Studlands Rise | LEAP | Medium | Small play area serving local residents.   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Royston   | York Way       | LEAP | Medium | Play area serving housing estate but located on fringe of town with limited catchment area.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Royston   | Farriar Court  | LAP  | Low    | Little or no wear to surfacing around equipment. Very limited catchment area only for very local residents.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Royston   | *Ivy Farm      | LEAP | Medium | Play area serving new housing estate   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Gt. Ashby | Chilterns      | LAP  | Low    | Very small play with little sign of use. Within catchment area of larger play area.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Gt. Ashby | Cleveland Way  | LAP  | Low    | Small play area with limited signs of use. Within catchment area of larger play area.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Gt. Ashby | Fairfield Cres | LAP  | Low    | Small play area with limited signs of use. Within catchment area of larger play area.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |

### 3. Proposals for play areas

| Town      | Site                       | Type       | Usage  | Notes   | Recommendation                                    |
|-----------|----------------------------|------------|--------|---|---|
| Gt. Ashby | Foyle Close                | LEAP       | Medium | Medium sized play area used by local residents.   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Gt. Ashby | Mendip Way                 | LEAP       | Low    | Medium sized play area used by local residents. Low usage possibly due to poor selection of equipment. Retain if Chilterns play area has equipment removed. | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Gt. Ashby | Merrick Close              | LAP        | Low    | Very small play with limited signs of use. Within catchment area of larger play area.   | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Gt. Ashby | Quantock Close             | LEAP       | Medium | Medium sized play area with good range of equipment.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Gt. Ashby | District Park              | LEAP/ NEAP | High   | Main play area for GT. Ashby.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Gt. Ashby | Snowdon Way                | LEAP       | Medium | Medium sized play area serving local residents.   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Baldock   | Avenue Park                | NEAP       | High   | Main town centre park serving all residents.  | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Baldock   | Bush Springs               | NEAP       | High   | Only play area centrally located for large housing development away from main town.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Baldock   | Chiltern Road              | LEAP       | Medium | Medium sized play area serving local residents.   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Baldock   | Holroyd Cres               | LEAP       | Medium | Large play area serving large housing development.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Baldock   | Ivel Road                  | LEAP       | Low    | Limited access and catchment area for site. Old equipment with little sign of use.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Hitchin   | Bancroft Recreation Ground | LEAP/ NEAP | High   | Main town centre play area currently under refurbishment.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Hitchin   | Broadmead                  | LEAP       | Medium | Good catchment area for housing estate  | Retain with limited investment.                   |

### 3. Proposals for play areas

| Town       | Site                        | Type | Usage  | Notes  | Recommendation                                    |
|------------|-----------------------------|------|--------|--|---|
| Hitchin    | Brook View                  | LEAP | Medium | Limited catchment area close to Broadmead. Old equipment. Scope to increase natural play features. | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Hitchin    | Dacre Road                  | LAP  | Low    | Small site with limited catchment. Old equipment with little sign of use.                          | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Hitchin    | King George V               | NEAP | High   | Large play area with good catchment area.  | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Hitchin    | Purwell Recreation Ground   | NEAP | High   | Large play area with good range of equipment serving large housing development.                    | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Hitchin    | Ransoms Recreation Ground   | NEAP | High   | Large play area recently refurbished in one of the towns main recreation grounds.                  | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Hitchin    | Rosehill                    | LEAP | Low    | Limited access to the site little sign of use of equipment.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Hitchin    | Smithsons Recreation Ground | LEAP | High   | Play area for west side of Hitchin. Equipment mainly for younger children.                         | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Hitchin    | St Johns Recreation Ground  | LEAP | High   | Well used play area by local residents.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Hitchin    | Symons Rd                   | LAP  | Low    | Aging equipment with little signs of use. Very limited catchment area.                             | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Hitchin    | Walsworth Common            | NEAP | High   | Large play area recently refurbished in one of the towns main recreation grounds.                  | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Letchworth | Baldock Road Recreation     | NEAP | Medium | Good range of equipment for all ages but limited catchment area.                                   | Retain with limited investment.                   |

### 3. Proposals for play areas

| Town       | Site                       | Type | Usage  | Notes  | Recommendation                                    |
|------------|----------------------------|------|--------|--|---|
|            | Ground                     |      |        |  |   |
| Letchworth | Grange Central             | LEAP | Medium | Equipment for younger children. Good catchment area in centre of housing estate.   | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Letchworth | Grange Rec Ground          | NEAP | High   | Main play area for Grange Estate.  | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Letchworth | Hillbrow Rec               | LEAP | Medium | Poor catchment area located on edge of housing estate. Consider possible relocation to more central location.                    | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Letchworth | Howard Park                | LEAP | High   | Town centre location with very high use.   | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Letchworth | Jackmans Central           | NEAP | Medium | Main play area for large housing estate. Lower than expected use may be caused by poor equipment. Due for refurbishment in 2017. | Retain with full investment.                      |
| Letchworth | Jackmans Recreation Ground | LEAP | Low    | Not centrally located with equipment for younger children. Little signs of much use. Within catchment area of larger play area.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Letchworth | Linnet Close               | LEAP | Low    | Very limited catchment area. Equipment only for younger children.  | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Letchworth | Norton Common              | NEAP | Medium | Range of equipment for all ages. Scope to increase natural play features on site.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Letchworth | Oaktree Close              | LAP  | Low    | Very limited catchment area. Equipment only for younger children in small private development.                                   | Remove equipment & landscape back to green space. |
| Letchworth | Temple Rec                 | LEAP | Medium | Good catchment area. Range of equipment for all ages.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |
| Letchworth | Wilbury Recreation Ground  | LEAP | Medium | Good catchment area with range of equipment for all ages.  | Retain with limited investment.                   |

\* Recently adopted maintenance funded by section 106 contributions



**3a. Proposed phasing of 14 play areas back to green space.**

| <b>Town</b> | <b>Site</b>    | <b>Notes</b>                                    | <b>Year</b> |
|-------------|----------------|---|-------------|
| Baldock     | Ivel Road      | Very old equipment some already removed in 2016 | 2017/18     |
| Hitchin     | Dacre Road     | Old wooden equipment starting to rot            | 2017/18     |
| Hitchin     | Symonds Road   | Old wooden equipment starting to wear           | 2017/18     |
| Hitchin     | Brook View     | Old wooden equipment starting to wear           | 2018/19     |
| Gt. Ashby   | Chilterns      | Very small site only three spring animals       | 2018/19     |
| Gt. AShby   | Fairfield Cres | Small play area very limited play equipment     | 2018/19     |
| Gt. Ashby   | Merrick Close  | Only one item of play equipment                 | 2018/19     |
| Letchworth  | Linnet Close   | Aging equipment                                 | 2019/20     |
| Royston     | Farrier Court  | Limited equipment                               | 2019/20     |
| Letchworth  | Jackmans Rec   | Limited equipment                               | 2019/20     |
| Gt. Ashby   | Cleveland Way  | Small play area                                 | 2019/20     |
| Royston     | Betjeman Road  | Limited equipment                               | 2020/21     |
| Letchworth  | Oaktree Close  | Limited equipment                               | 2020/21     |
| Hitchin     | Rosehill       | Aging equipment                                 | 2020/21     |

## Appendix B Football Pavilions

Table 4 below identifies the current status including the number of pitches each pavilion serves and their condition.

### 4. Current status

| Site                  | Number pitches served | Annual revenue cost (based on 2015/16 actual) | Condition              | Capital investment identified to bring building to acceptable standard |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| Cadwell Lane, Hitchin | 1                     | £2,300  | Beyond economic repair | £58,500  |
| Swinburn, Hitchin     | 2                     | £2,200  | Fair                   | £34,300  |
| St. Johns, Hitchin    | 1                     | £2,300  | Beyond economic repair | £60,500  |
| Walsworth, Hitchin    | 2*                    | £2,400  | Beyond economic repair | £29,500  |
| Ransoms, Hitchin      | 1                     | £4,700  | Good                   | -  |
| **Grange, Letchworth  | 4                     | £10,100                                       | Very Good              | -  |
| Bakers Close, Baldock | 1                     | £900  | Beyond economic repair | £165,000   |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>12</b>             | <b>£24,900</b>                                |                        | <b>£347,800</b>  |

\* Pitch number to be increased to 4

\*\*Grange revenue high in 2015/16 due to one off repairs. Anticipate future revenue costs may be lower.

Table 5. below identifies options for pavilions. These range from retaining and investing in all current provision to only retaining the Grange pavilion in Letchworth.

### 5. Options for Football Pavilions

|    | Option   | Capital investment required.                                       | Capital increase / decrease on existing programme | Annual revenue budget required | Revenue increase / decrease |
|----|--|--|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Retain all 7 pavilions   | £347,800 short term  | +£347,800   | £24,900                        | £0                          |
| 2. | Retain pavilions at Grange, Ransoms, Swinburn<br>Demolish 4 pavilions                          | Est. £120,000 to demolish 4 pavilions                              | +£120,000   | £17,000                        | -£7,900                     |
| 3. | Retain pavilions at Grange, Ransoms, Swinburn & new build at Walworth.<br>Demolish 4 pavilions | £300,000 for new build (Funded by £50K existing capital remainder) | +£120,000   | £19,400                        | -£5,500                     |

|    | Option  | Capital investment required.  | Capital increase / decrease on existing programme | Annual revenue budget required | Revenue increase / decrease |
|----|---|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|    |   | section 106)<br>Est. £120,000 to demolish 4 pavilions   |   |                                |                             |
| 4. | Retain pavilion at Grange & new build at Walsworth. Demolish remaining 6 pavilions. | £300,000 for new build (Funded by £50K existing capital remainder section 106)Est. £180,000 to demolish 6 pavilions | +£180,000   | £12,500                        | -£12,400                    |
| 5. | Retain pavilion at Grange. Demolish remaining 6 pavilions                           | Est. £180,000 to demolish 6 pavilions   | +£180,000   | £10,100                        | -£14,800                    |

### Recommendations for pavilions

#### If section 106 money can be secured for a new Walsworth Common Pavilion:

Retain the Grange Recreation Ground pavilion in Letchworth & provide a new build at Walsworth Common in Hitchin , funded in the main from section 106 contributions. Demolish remaining 6 pavilions.

This would provide parity with the current provision in Letchworth and allow the Council to maintain two hubs for football. Each pavilion would serve four or more football pitches. The original est. for a new pavilion in 2013 was £300k funded by £50K Capital and £250K from Section 106 contributions. However with increasing construction costs additional Section 106 monies may be required to fund the project.

#### If Section 106 money can't be secured for new Walsworth Common Pavilion:

Retain pavilion at the Grange Recreation Ground in Letchworth along with providing limited investment to retain Ransoms and Swinburn Pavilions in Hitchin.

Demolish remaining 4 pavilions.

This would retain a provision of football pavilions in Letchworth and Hitchin.

## Appendix C. Green Space Capital Programme

The Green Space Capital Programme 2014 – 2019 was endorsed by cabinet on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013. However the capital programme is subject to annual approval by the Council. Since 2013 the financial pressures on the Council have greatly increased.

Table 6 below identifies all the green space capital projects within the existing Green Space Strategy that have not yet commenced. This programme was produced prior to the Councils adoption of the current MTFS and many of the projects listed do not meet the criteria as described in the current MTFS. For example the proposed £100k capital contribution towards a new wheeled sports facility in Baldock would increase revenue spend once the facility was operational.

### 6. Green Space Strategy Programme 2016 – 2019 Projects requiring approval to commence

| Town                  | Location          | Project  | Year     | Value           |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|----------|-----------------|
| <b>Cemeteries</b>     |                   |  |          |                 |
| Letchworth            | Icknield Way Cem  | Reconstruction of pathway and roadway  | 2016/17* | £40,000         |
| Hitchin               | Hitchin Cem       | Reconstruction of pathway and roadway  | 2017/18  | £40,000         |
| Letchworth            | Wilbury Hills Cem | Reconstruction of pathway and roadway  | 2018/19  | £35,000         |
| Sub Total             |                   |  |          | £115,000        |
| <b>Green Space</b>    |                   |  |          |                 |
| Baldock               | Clothall Road     | Replace boundary fence & gate  | 2016/17* | £15,000         |
| Hitchin               | Swinburne         | Pathway, gates, biodiversity   | 2016/17* | £30,000         |
| Hitchin               | King George V     | Repairs to car park, signage, entrance   | 2016/17* | £60,000         |
| Hitchin               | Walsworth Common  | Tarmac car park, enhance biodiversity  |          | £30,000         |
| Hitchin               | Ransoms Rec       | Renew Nightingale Road railings  | 2017/18  | £10,000         |
| Hitchin               | Windmill Hill     | Replace Hermitage Rd wall  | 2018/19  | £70,000         |
| Letchworth            | Wilbury Rec       | Biodiversity   | 2017/18  | £3,000          |
| Letchworth            | Temple Gardens    | Improve access   | 2017/18  | £7,000          |
| Letchworth            | Hillbrow          | Entrance improvements, boundary fencing  | 2018/19  | £30,000         |
| Royston               | Newmarket Rd      | Entrance improvements  | 2017/18  | £5,000          |
| Gt. Ashby             | District Park     | Pathways, improve entrance, planting   | 2017/18  | £45,000         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>      |                   |  |          | <b>£305,000</b> |
| <b>Play Areas</b>     |                   |  |          |                 |
| Letchworth            | Jackmans Central  | Renovate Play Area   | 2017/18  | £75,000         |
| Gt. Ashby             | District Park     | Renovate Play Area   | 2018/19  | £75,000         |
| <b>Sub Total</b>      |                   |  |          | <b>£150,000</b> |
| <b>Outdoor Sports</b> |                   |  |          |                 |
| Baldock               | Bakers Rd Rec     | £50K capital contribution to third party towards £160,000 renovation of building | 2016/17* | £50,000         |
| Baldock               | Development belt  | New wheeled sports facility  | 2016/17* | £100,000        |
| Hitchin               | Bancroft          | Capital contribution of £24k towards £170K Multi use games area. Remainder to be | 2016/17  | £24,000         |

| Town               | Location         | Project   | Year     | Value             |
|--------------------|------------------|---|----------|-------------------|
|                    |                  | funded by section 106 & external grant.   |          |                   |
| Hitchin            | Walsworth Common | £50k capital contribution towards £300K new changing rooms. Remainder to be funded by section 106 | 2016/17  | £50,000           |
| Hitchin            | Walsworth Common | £20k capital contribution towards £102,760 pitch improvements. Remainder funded by section 106.   | 2016/17  | £20,000           |
| Hitchin            | Walsworth Common | Enhance wheeled sports facility   | 2016/17* | £20,000           |
| Hitchin            | King George V    | Capital Contribution to Rugby Club towards new pavilion complex                                   | 2017/18  | £50,000           |
| Letchworth         | Baldock Rd Rec   | Enhance wheeled sports facility   | 2018/19  | £20,000           |
| Letchworth         | Baldock Rd Rec   | Capital Contribution to third party to build new pavilion   | 2016/17* | £50,000           |
| Letchworth         | Norton Common    | Capital contribution to Bowls club to Improve pavilion  | 2018/19  | £50,000           |
| Royston            | Newmarket Rd     | Enhance wheeled sports facility   | 2017/18  | £20,000           |
| Sub Total          |                  |   |          | £454,000          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> |                  |   |          | <b>£1,024,000</b> |

\* Commencement of project deferred by Project Board awaiting outcome of Green Space Strategy review.

## 7. PROJECTS TO BE REMOVED FROM GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

| Town               | Location                 | Project   | Value   | Reason for Removal   |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---|---------|--|
| <b>Cemeteries</b>  |                          |   |         |  |
| Letchworth         | Icknield Way Cemetery    | Reconstruction of pathway and roadway                                   | £40,000 | Cemetery has reached capacity so has limited use. Suggest minimal future works only if required to maintain safety.            |
| Hitchin            | Hitchin Cemetery         | Reconstruction of pathway and roadway                                   | £40,000 | Cemetery is nearing capacity so will have limited future use. Suggest minimal future work only if required to maintain safety. |
| <b>Green Space</b> |                          |   |         |  |
| Hitchin            | Swinburne Playing Fields | New Pathway to link with common, gates and improvements to biodiversity | £30,000 | Non essential work as other disability compliant access routes exist to the common. Would also                                 |

| Town       | Location                        | Project  | Value   | Reason for Removal  |
|------------|---------------------------------|--|---------|---|
|            |                                 |  |         | increase future revenue maintenance cost. Adjacent common already has good range of biodiversity.   |
| Hitchin    | King George V Recreation Ground | Repairs to car park, new signage, improve main entrance. Restore electricity to garages. | £60,000 | Works to car park undertaken by Property Services under car park budget. Remaining works non essential and would have limited community benefit.  |
| Hitchin    | Ransoms Recreation Ground       | Renew Nightingale Road railings  | £10,000 | Railings were removed approximately 75 years ago. Proposal would only enhance cosmetic appearance of entrance and not improve safety. Would have limited community benefit and increase future revenue cost to maintain them. |
| Hitchin    | Windmill Hill                   | Replace Hermitage Rd wall.   | £70,000 | Proposal would only enhance cosmetic appearance of wall and not improve access to the site. Would have limited community benefit. Suggest minimal future works if required to maintain safety of wall.                        |
| Letchworth | Wilbury Recreation Ground       | Biodiversity   | £3,000  | Site already has a good covering of scrub for wildlife. Additional scrub and wild flower planting is non essential and would only enhance the visual appearance of site with limited community or biodiversity benefit.       |

| Town       | Location                          | Project                                 | Value   | Reason for Removal   |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------|--|
| Letchworth | Temple Gardens Recreation Ground  | Improve access                          | £7,000  | Proposal is for cosmetic reasons to enhance entrance to site. Would have limited community benefit as fully accessible access to the site already exists.  |
| Letchworth | Hillbrow Recreation Ground        | Entrance improvements, boundary fencing | £30,000 | Reduction of boundary trees already undertaken as routine tree works. Proposal for new entrances and boundary fencing was only for cosmetic reasons and would increase future revenue expenditure. |
| Baldock    | Clothall Road, Recreation Ground, | Replace boundary fence & gate           | £15,000 | New boundary fencing and gate would only enhance visual appearance of site and would have limited community benefit.   |
| Royston    | Newmarket Rd Recreation Ground    | Entrance improvements                   | £5,000  | Existing entrance is fit for purpose and enhancement would have limited community benefit. May also increase future revenue if additional features were provided.                                  |
| Gt. Ashby  | District Park                     | Pathways, improve entrance, planting    | £45,000 | Pathways works and planting already programmed and funded by external sources as separate project by CMS using volunteers.   |

| Town                  | Location                       | Project  | Value    | Reason for Removal   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------|--|
| <b>Outdoor Sports</b> |                                |  |          |  |
| Letchworth            | Baldock Road Recreation Ground | Contribution to a third party to assist them construct a new changing pavilion at Baldock Road Recreation Ground.      | £50,000  | No scheme yet developed by a third party. Changing rooms now available at the adjacent Herts FA football ground.   |
| Letchworth            | Baldock Rd Recreation Ground   | Enhance wheeled sports facility  | £20,000  | Existing facility is fit for its intended purpose. It is of steel construction with a long life expectancy. Enhancements would only benefit small number of local community. In addition Section 106 contributions are funding new large district wide skate park in Letchworth. |
| Letchworth            | Norton Common                  | Capital contribution to Bowls club to Improve pavilion   | £50,000  | Item was included in programme prior to the Councils adoption of its current MTFS. May no longer be affordable. Funding a single bowls club for improvement to their pavilion may set a precedent for other bowls clubs in the district.   |
| Baldock               | Land adjacent Clothall Common  | New mountain bike track at Clothall Common, on land owned by HCC.  | £100,000 | Will require future revenue contributions for ongoing maintenance. NHDC do not own the land. New district wide wheeled sports facility being constructed in Letchworth from developer contributions.   |
| Baldock               | Bakers Close Recreation Ground | Contribution to a third party to assist them with a £160K refurbishment of pavilion at Bakers Close Recreation Ground. | £50,000  | No scheme ever developed by a third party. Building is now in an extremely poor condition and is an eye sore. In addition only one football pitch exists   |



| Town  | Location                        | Project   | Value           | Reason for Removal  |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------|---|
|   |                                 |   |                 | <p>at this site so limited benefit in having changing rooms.</p> <p>Recommend separate capital bid to demolish building.</p>  |
| Hitchin   | Walsworth Common                | Enhance wheeled sports facility.                                | £20,000         | Non essential work as other disability compliant access routes exist to the common. Would also increase future revenue maintenance cost. Adjacent common already has good range of biodiversity.  |
| Hitchin   | King George V Recreation Ground | Capital Contribution to Rugby Club towards new pavilion complex | £50,000         | Item was included in programme prior to the Councils adoption of its current MTFs. May no longer be affordable. Also funding a single Rugby Club for improvements to their pavilion may set a precedent for other sporting clubs in the district. |
| Royston   | Newmarket Rd Recreation Ground  | Enhance wheeled sports facility.                                | £20,000         | Existing facility is fit for its intended purpose. It has concrete construction and has a long life expectancy. Could increase revenue cost to maintain additional equipment. Enhancements would only benefit small number of local community.    |
| <b>Total Value recommended removed projects</b> |                                 |   | <b>£715,000</b> |   |

## Officers recommendations

In view of the MTFs and pressures on finance, Project Board recommend that the following revised green space improvement programme is adopted

### 8. Recommended revised 2017 – 2019 Capital programme

| Description  | Project Detail  | Year    | Project Value   |
|--|---|---------|-----------------|
| Tarmac car park, Walsworth Common, Hitchin                         | Existing car park in very poor condition. Additional parking will be required when pitch number increases and site becomes the Hitchin hub for football.                                | 2017/18 | £30,000         |
| *Pitch improvements, Walsworth Common, Hitchin                     | Main football site in Hitchin. Intention to level ground and provide two additional pitches. £20K is capital contribution towards £102,760 project funded by section 106 contributions. | 2017/18 | £20,000         |
| Renovate Play Area, Jackmans Central, Letchworth                   | One of the main neighbourhood play areas in Letchworth serving large housing estate. In need of refurbishment.  | 2017/18 | £75,000         |
| *Multi Use games area, Bancroft Rec, Hitchin                       | Capital contribution of £24k towards £170K Multi use games area. Remainder to be funded by section 106 & external grant.  | 2017/18 | £24,000         |
| Construction of pathway and roadway, Wilbury Hills Cem, Letchworth | Required as cemetery expands into new sections. Meets a district wide need.   | 2018/19 | £35,000         |
| Renovate Play Area, District Park, Gt. Ashby                       | Main play area for Gt. Ashby in need of refurbishment.  | 2018/19 | £75,000         |
| *New changing rooms, Walsworth Common, Hitchin                     | Main football site in Hitchin. £50k is capital contribution towards £300,000 scheme funded by section 106 contributions.  | 2019/20 | £50,000         |
| <b>Total investment in Green Space</b>                             |   |         | <b>£309,000</b> |

\* Dependant on section 106 contributions and or external grants

The revised programme is a saving of £715,000 on current programme.

If it is agreed to reduce the number of play areas and pavilions the following one off capital investment would be required as detailed in tables 2 & 5 in the report, to landscape sites back to green space.

| <b>Description</b>                 | <b>Project Detail</b>   | <b>Year</b> | <b>Project Value</b> |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------|----------------------|
| Decommission pavilions             | Decommission 4 pavilions identified as beyond economic repair and return to green space                                       | 2017/18     | £120,000             |
| Decommission play areas            | Decommission 3 low use play areas and return to green space   | 2017/18     | £30,000              |
| Decommission play areas            | Decommission 4 low use play areas and return to green space   | 2018/19     | £40,000              |
| Decommission play areas            | Decommission 4 low use play areas and return to green space   | 2019/20     | £40,000              |
| Decommission pavilions             | Following construction of new Walsworth Common pavilion, decommission Swinburn & Ransoms pavilions and return to green space. | 2020/21     | £60,000              |
| Decommission play areas            | Decommission 3 low use play areas and return to green space   | 2020/21     | £30,000              |
| <b>Total additional Investment</b> |   |             | <b>£320,000</b>      |