

Greenspace Strategy 2021 – 2026

Scoping Document

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1. Introduction

This document has been produced to guide the process and to support the production of the Greenspace Management Strategy (GSMS) for the District of North Herts District Council (NHDC). The plan will cover a period of 2021 to 2031 with regards principals and future vision. However the action plan associated with this GSMS will cover a period of 2021 – 2026 so as to enable an opportunity of review pending future economic circumstances.

The GSMS is intended to give focus and direction towards the future management of development and maintenance of the Parks and Public Open Spaces owned by North Herts District Council. Initially the GSMS will provide clear logical processes for the future management of our Parks and Open Spaces while identifying longer term principals that will underpin NHDC's future approach to this service area.

It is intended to undertake a structured engagement process with stakeholders to ensure that they are fully aware of this process. Engagement will be encouraged and there will be opportunities to feed into the new GSMS in a constructive and timely manner. Therefore this document is intended to initiate this process.

This document has been broken down into numbered sections. Sections 2, 3 provide background information, context and a review of current issues. Section 4 outlines the aims and objectives of the final GSMS and how it is intended that this document will be used. Section 5 is a summary of the project timeline.

Consideration will be given to recognising the key influences upon the existing service. This will include the impact and implications of the following documents

- The Local Plan
- Greenspace Infrastructure Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Tree Strategy
- Site specific Greenspace Action Plans

2. Background

The Greenspace associated with the GSMS for North Herts District Council is located primarily within the four urban areas of Royston, Letchworth, Baldock and Hitchin.

Key partners we provide a service to, as part of the Greenspace provision, are Settle and Herts Highways.

The service is delivered under a single contract with John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance Ltd

The contract with John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance Ltd was renewed in 2017 for a term of 10 years with the option of a mutual break clause at year five in 2022 if either party wishes at that time to invoke the option

The contract covers an area of 2,950,000 square metres, which is maintained under the terms of the existing contract.

Development and projects are supported via partnerships with Countryside Management Services at Herts County Council for the rural and environmental areas and Groundwork for assistance in the urban locations. Both are critical partners without whom, significant elements of the service area, we would be unable to provide.

Functions of the Greenspace Service

Statutory Services: Burials and Burial Grounds Litter Collection Allotment management Management of Land Licenses Rivers – management of ordinary water courses, ditches and culverts	
As well as these non statutory services: Planning and development of the Greenspace Management Strategy (GSMS) Floral Displays Seating and Benches Management of splash pads Maintenance of formal equipped playgrounds Outdoor sports provision Delivery of the SLA with Settle Delivery of the agency agreement with Herts Highways Tree Maintenance (NHDC & HCC)	Maintenance of Closed Churchyards Maintenance of Parks and Open Spaces Development and maintenance of Woodlands Development and maintenance of Local Nature Reserves Multi Use games areas

Key tasks are –

- Grass cutting
- Shrub border maintenance
- Maintenance of litter bins
- Hard Surfaces
- Cemeteries including burials
- Hedges
- Paddling Pools and Splash Pads
- Play Grounds
- Rivers and Culverts
- Outdoor sports provision – football, rugby, cricket, tennis, bowls
- Allotments
- Maintenance of Trees & woodlands
- Management of local nature reserves

3. Review of Progress

Customer Satisfaction

Over the past 10 years the customer satisfaction of the Greenspace has decreased from 93% in 2013 to 92% in 2017.

Our resident's expectations regarding the quality of service are high. The GSMS need to deliver the Greenspace needs within the financial constraints of the Council.

Finance

The previous GSMS provided £755,000.00 of capital investment to maintain and improve our Greenspace infrastructure. The proposed future capital program has identified a further £1,615,000.00 over the next 10 years and this strategy will reaffirm our approach for the future.

In addition the GSMS has supported numerous developments and secured significant levels of S106 contributions for specific projects such as the Muga at Bancroft Recreation Ground, the skate park at Norton Common and play ground improvements at Priory Memorial Gardens in Royston. The future GSMS intends to meet this purpose in future and therefore supports the Local Plan accordingly.

4. Greenspace Strategy 2021 – 2026 Outline Approach

Objective

The objective of the GSMS will be to provide support and direction to Members of the Council, Officers, External Organisations and residents regarding the future direction of the Greenspace both in the short and medium terms.

It Aims:-

- 1 To identify sustainable and affordable principals for the short and medium term
- 2 To identify current influences upon Greenspace and make proposals to manage them
- 3 To identify previous achievements and propose new projects and aspirations
- 4 To contribute and provide input into solutions in response to the pressures of development as identified within the Council's Local Plan. To enable the Council to have clear policies on adoption of any new residential developments
- 5 To suggest alternatives that could have a beneficial environmental impact
- 6 To encourage positive use of our Parks and Open Spaces by everyone

Therefore the GSMS will be contained within the following framework of headings and sub headings:-

- What is the Vision and Aim of the Greenspace Management Strategy from 2021 – 2026
- What does the GSMS include and exclude
- What is the current situation? (Where have we come from?)
- What are the key principals that are adopted currently?
- What are the current key influences within our Greenspaces?
 - Public Satisfaction – District Wide Survey – Citizens Panel
 - Awards for quality - Greenflag
 - Collaboration – CMS & Groundwork
 - Events – Fairs and Circuses, Land Licences
 - Health, fitness and well being – Outdoor sports, football, exercise equipment, outdoor gym
 - Supporting Nature – Environment – LNR's, grazing, mowing regimes
 - Community Involvement - Volunteers
 - Skills Development – Apprentice opportunities, Princess Trust
 - Sustainability – LNR's, affordability, public perception
 - Strategic Planning – Local Plan, Luton Airport Expansion, S106 opportunities, maintaining provision to meet changing demands

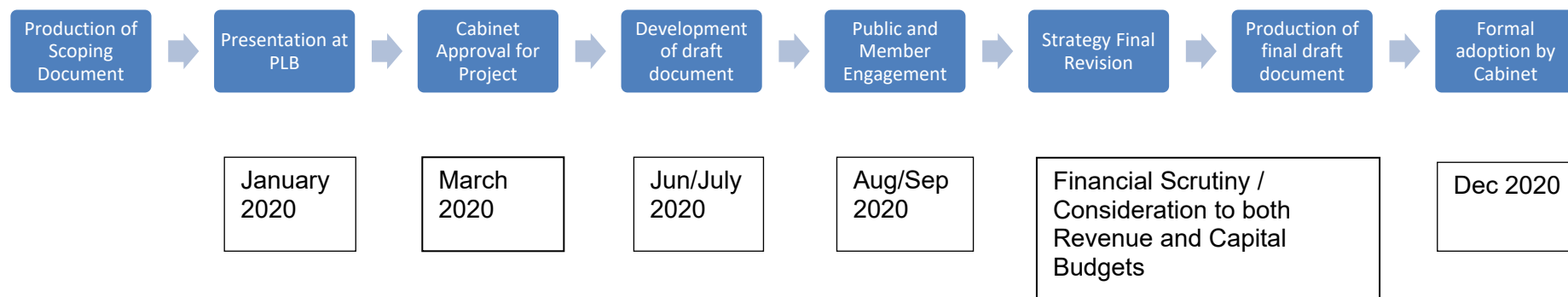
What new key principals do we want to adopt for the future? (Where are we going, what is our direction of travel?) The key elements for consideration are:-

- Local Plan - Planning – S106 – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) land managed by third parties, housing associations and potential income generation
- Play Ground provision
- Wet play provision – ongoing maintenance costs (Splash pads/Paddling pools)
- Allotments – Letchworth site leases have expired

- Cemeteries – future of District Wide provision
- Rivers and Culverts – Pixbrook, Norton Common, St Mary's Balancing Tanks
- Trees – Replacement of lost trees, new locations
- Drinking Fountains – review of success of existing including costs, do we want/need more
- Environmental Sustainability – LNR's – future Greenspace Action Plans, mowing regimes

Conclusions and outcomes including action plan

5. Greenspace Management Strategy Project Timeline



Stakeholders

Members	Police
Colleagues	Heritage Foundation
Residents	Town Centre Managers
Contractors - John O'Conner's	Royston Town Council
Herts Highways	Parish and Community Councils
Settle	Friends of Groups
Groundwork and Countryside Management Services	

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