

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2013**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND THE DIRECTOR
OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **GREENSPACE STRATEGY**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To seek Cabinet's approval to adopt the Flintshire Greenspace Strategy (see Appendix 1).

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 In October 2011 an Executive Report was presented seeking approval to commence work in developing a Greenspace Strategy. Cabinet resolved to approve this report and since that time Officers from Community Services, Lifelong Learning and Environment Directorates have been working collaboratively to produce the attached Greenspace Strategy.

2.02 The benefits of a Greenspace Strategy will be to contribute to improving the quality and accessibility of Greenspaces to the immediate and direct benefit of the local community. Greenspaces be they playing fields, sports pitches, woodlands, river corridors, country parks, common land, allotments etc. are often multi-functional and provide a variety of benefits including opportunities for play and sport; space to relax and socialise; and natural habitat for wildlife. There are key management themes for all these spaces be they in relation to grassland, trees, water-bodies, hedging, shrubs and/or floral beds.

2.03 The provision of well managed, accessible Greenspace will be a positive contribution to a number of priorities within "Creating an Active Flintshire 2011-2014", as the local response to the National Plan to increase levels of physical activity. Within this Plan, there are a number of priorities for action, reflecting the known benefits of increasing access to the natural environment for recreation, play and sport in order to support a physically active lifestyle. Furthermore, evidence exists and continues to emerge relating to the broader impacts on both physical and mental health and well being that can be achieved through accessing the natural environment.

- 2.04 The key challenge in developing a Flintshire Greenspace Strategy has been in securing the support and involvement of key stakeholders, both internal and external to the Local Authority. To overcome this challenge a project team was assembled which has successfully driven the Strategy through a process of stakeholder engagement and consultation in 2012. This process has helped in raising the profile of the Strategy as a local authority-wide Strategy to ensure “awareness” and “buy-in” from the numerous service areas involved with the maintenance and management of Greenspace.
- 2.05 In summary the benefits of the Strategy are listed below:
- a. increases opportunities for collaborative working both within the Authority and with external partners;
 - b. targeting public resources more effectively;
 - c. maximising the impact of staff time through collaborative working;
 - d. identifying the role of Flintshire County Council Service Providers to improve service transparency and accountability;
 - e. enabling the Authority and the Community to gain access to key funding opportunities to enhance Greenspaces.
- 2.06 This strategy links into many current initiatives and Council plans and are listed in the Greenspace strategy.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 This Report is presented as a Joint Report by the Director of Lifelong Learning and the Director of Environment because of the need for an integrated approach across the Local Authority in implementing the Strategy. This approach has been developed over the course of 2012 in co-ordination with many local authority service areas currently involved in the management, maintenance and enhancement of Greenspace across the County.
- 3.02 To successfully engage with key partners a Stakeholder Visioning Event was held in June 2012 prior to the development of the Strategy. The purpose of the day was to provide the opportunity for stakeholders to identify what they felt were the key aims and objectives and key issues for the Greenspace Strategy to address. The day involved Councillors, representatives of key organisations such as Countryside Council for Wales and representatives of FCC Service Areas including Transportation, Countryside, Rights of Way, Streetscene, Leisure, Economic Development, Property etc. A report containing a summary of the day’s comments is in the Members library. The findings from this day of engagement with key stakeholders have set the context for the vision and priorities set out in the Greenspace Strategy.

- 3.03 Following the Greenspace Visioning Day a draft Greenspace Strategy was produced and circulated to all key internal and external stakeholders. A summary of the responses from this consultation are in the Members Library, together with the proposed responses to these comments. The Greenspace Strategy has been amended following this consultation and is attached in Appendix 1 for consideration.
- 3.04 The Greenspace's Strategy, should it be approved, will be used to guide the development and implementation of an Action Plan which can be regularly updated to reflect wider Service needs. This approach will increase Service Collaboration which will ultimately improve the management of Greenspace's to the benefit of the health of local communities (both human and natural) served by these spaces.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Cabinet approves the Greenspace Strategy contained in Appendix 1 and refers it for comment to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee for comment.
- 4.02 That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Members for Environment and for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure to make appropriate changes following Scrutiny's comments and to review the document periodically and amend accordingly.
- 4.03 That a review of service delivery across the Council in the management of Greenspaces is undertaken and its conclusions brought to Cabinet for further consideration.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The Strategy will be developed by existing officers within existing budgets. Should the need for additional resources be identified, this will be progressed for consideration through the Council's budget process.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 There are no direct anti-poverty impacts of approving this report however the Greenspaces Strategy when completed and in place will contribute to the improvement of community health, particularly the health of communities in deprived locations.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 There are no direct environmental impacts of approving this report however the Greenspaces Strategy when complete and in place will

lead to positive beneficial gains for Flintshire's openspaces and natural environment.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 There are no direct equalities impacts of approving this report however the Greenspaces Strategy when complete and in place will positively promote the need for access points to Greenspaces to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. This will extend greater opportunities for disabled individuals to enjoy the use of Greenspaces.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 The Strategy will be developed by existing officers using resources and facilities already available at no additional costs.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 No further consultation required although there is a need to continue to work with identified stakeholders and key partners in taking forward the Action Plan.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The Greenspace Strategy has been developed following a Visioning Day involving key stakeholders where Vision and the key objectives of the document were identified. This process led to the production of the Greenspace Strategy which was issued for comment by internal services of FCC and identified key partners and stakeholders. The comments from these consultations are contained in the appendix to the Greenspace Strategy within Appendix 1 to this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 – The Greenspace Strategy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Countryside Strategy 2000

Creating an Active Flintshire 2011

Leisure Service Plan 2011

Leisure Strategy 2009-14

Planning Service Plan 2011 (Year 2)

Unitary Development Plan 2000-2015

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