

Parks Strategy



Twinnies Bridge (The Friends of the Carrs)



Queens Park Crewe (Peter Foster)

“Parks and green spaces contributing to our quality of life”

Foreword

We are fortunate to have so much open space and valuable parks in Cheshire East. Our challenge over the next ten years is to maintain and improve these wonderful assets to meet the needs of our residents and deliver the Councils strategic outcomes.

We have a diverse community of all ages and needs to serve and I know that our parks are at the heart of many of our community activities, whether local fetes or major events. We need to manage the open spaces appropriately and this strategy sets our vision for how we intend to do this and where we intend to prioritise our investment.

The aim of this Strategy is to guide the investment needed over the next ten years to bring all our key parks up to a consistently high standard and to help prioritise how we manage, fund and operate our local parks. It provides the guiding principles for the future management and development of our parks to ensure they meet the needs and aspirations for delivering quality parks and open spaces for our residents.

This strategy is written at a time of challenge, at a time when we anticipate a growing population will bring heavy demands on our park infrastructure. This will require innovation in finding alternative and possibly radical solutions for managing the parks and open spaces in Council ownership. In order to achieve positive results, the emphasis will have to be placed on working with community partners and to target resources and funding from a wide range of sources.

To achieve this we will prioritise according to usage and condition and focus on putting residents first delivering what matters most to our communities. We want all of our parks to provide a range of high quality facilities for all our residents to enjoy.

I hope you enjoy reading these pages. This is a community resource and we will welcome and consider any comments you may like to make on the contents of this strategy or any proposals you may wish to bring forward. Please forward your ideas to our Open Spaces Commissioning Manager.

Councillor Sam Gardner
Portfolio Holder for Open Spaces

Executive Summary

The park strategy will make a positive contribution towards achieving the Council's its six strategic outcomes.

1. Outcome 1 – Our local communities are strong and supportive
2. Outcome 2 – Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy
3. Outcome 3 – People have the life skills and education they need in order to thrive
4. Outcome 4 – Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place
5. Outcome 5 – People live well and for longer
6. Outcome 6 – A responsible effective and efficient organisation

In this Park Strategy, Cheshire East Council gives a strong voice to its commitment to the protection, retention and improvement of its parks as essential recreational, environmental and cultural assets.

It recognises that parks can and do make a vital contribution in promoting educational, social and health benefits. They provide a wide range of valuable facilities that are open and accessible to all sections of the community.

Setting clear objectives is a key step along the path of planning for the effective commissioning of park and other open spaces improvements. It will guide the effective allocation of resources to maximise the benefits achievable from this investment for all our residents.

Why a Parks Strategy?

1. It provides the guiding principles for managing and developing our parks in the future to ensure they meet user needs and aspirations for delivering quality parks and open spaces.
2. With today's pressures on public expenditure, innovative approaches will be needed but Cheshire East Council is prepared to think and act in different ways to ensure a secure future for our parks.
3. As stated in its Green Spaces Strategy (2013) which links to the Local Plan, the Council is committed to retain and develop the parks as essential recreational, environmental and cultural assets.
4. The aim of this Strategy is to make the case for and guide future Council investment and identify other funding streams as required to bring all our key parks up to a consistently high standard and to help prioritise how we manage, fund and operate our remaining local parks over the next ten years.



The restored bandstand at Queens Park, Crewe

Funding Future Park Development:

Cheshire East Council and its pre-LGR legacy authorities have made significant capital investment into their Heritage Parks (particularly Congleton Park and Queens Park, Crewe) and into Country Parks. However, other parks require significant investment to protect or enhance their infrastructure to ensure they can continue to deliver the community health and wellbeing benefits associated with good quality parks. Cheshire East Council aims to develop creative funding mechanisms to support delivery of all their strategic objectives and action programmes associated with this Parks Development Strategy.

- The Council will make **Capital investments** into park projects subject to meeting corporate priorities with a strong robust business case being made to justify the investment.
- An Annual **Park Development Fund** has been approved by Council to fund some works, and pump prime bids for external grant funds.
- **External Funding mechanisms include:**
 - **Developer Contributions:** Over the years, the Council has been able to attract additional funding from a wide range of external partners and successfully negotiated contributions from developers in order to mitigate the impact of their developments.
 - **External Grants:** The restoration of Congleton Park and Queens Park in Crewe were partially funded by the Council successfully leveraging out grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other grant aiding bodies.



Congleton Park (Post restoration)

Why invest in our parks?

It is estimated that each year well over half the UK population – some 33 million people – make more than 2.5 billion visits to urban green spaces alone. Not surprisingly, people become attached to these parks, gardens and other open places, and appreciate them for what they offer culturally, socially and personally. In research carried out for CABI, 85 per cent of people surveyed felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and on the way they feel.

Parks have a major part to play in our community and family life. Many of our residents take their children to play in our parks and most likely they will have played in them themselves when they were younger too. This tradition is a key in our cultural heritage and it is essential to ensure that future generations of young people can enjoy the same opportunities we have or had.

Whilst they are important to our families and residents the parks also provides tangible benefits such as:

- They provide a home to many sports clubs and organisations, helping residents to live healthy lives
- they have an important role in the environment for wildlife and nature,
- they are a place where we can go to meet, relax and enjoy the peace, benefiting our mental wellbeing
- they reflect our modern multi-cultural society and can promote community cohesion
- they forge a strong link with our past reflecting our local heritage and culture
- they make a contribution to the local economy through the associated visitor spend
- they make an indirect contribution to the local economy by adding value to local property

Strategic Context

National policy in relation to parks: is primarily set down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17): The Open Spaces white paper (2011) states: *We have set down the government commitment to issues such as sustainable development by ensuring that parks are easily accessible by means of walking, public transport and cycling. In addition, there is recognition that parks should be made available and provide a range of facilities for all sections of the community. The government also recognises the educational, social and health benefits that parks can provide and is supporting improving the liveability of English towns through encouraging the provision of networks of well designed, clean and safe open spaces.*

Cheshire East Council's "Ambition for All - Sustainable Community Strategy (2010 – 2025)", states; *Cheshire East is a prosperous place where all people can achieve their potential, regardless of where they live. We have beautiful productive countryside, unique towns with individual character and a wealth of history and culture. The people of Cheshire East live active and healthy lives and can get involved in making their communities safe and sustainable places to live.*

Local Plan Core Strategy: The Local Plan includes a summary of local infrastructure aspirations which include new public parks and open space facilities identified through local consultations. These aspirational objectives must be recognised and facilitated through this Park Strategy.

Our **Green Space Strategy (2013)** considers the provision of new good quality green space and the proactive management of existing green space to conserve an important legacy for Cheshire East's communities. Our larger parks contribute significantly towards making our towns unique with individual character and their wealth of history and culture. They form a vital component of the essential infrastructure for supporting the requirements of the local and wider community. Parks will need to constantly improve to reflect changing needs as safe, clean, healthy and sustainable, places where the local community can meet, exercise and enjoy themselves, accessible places for all including the disabled and the disadvantaged.

Other key health related strategies include:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/linkingpeople/health/default.aspx

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/linkingpeople/outdoorsforall/outdoorsforallfeature2.aspx>

<http://www.nwph.net/nwpho/publications/ReturningUrbanParks.pdf>

Some Basic Facts about Cheshire East Parks:

Located on the edge of the Peak District National Park and adjoining the Cheshire Plain, the Borough of Cheshire East is the third largest unitary authority in the North West after Manchester and Liverpool.

- Cheshire East has an area of 1,116 km².
- Cheshire East has a population of 370,700
- Cheshire East has 165,000 dwellings

Within the Borough, there are a number of town parks that are owned and managed by the Council;

Victorian Heritage Parks

Queens Park, Crewe

Congleton Park

West Park, Macclesfield

South Park, Macclesfield

Smaller Town Parks

Alderley Edge Park

Bollington Recreation Ground

The Carrs, Wilmslow

Lacey Green Park, Wilmslow

Meriton Road Park, Handforth

The Moor, Knutsford

Victoria Park, Macclesfield

Milton Park, Alsager

Sandbach Park

Elworth Park

Fountain Fields, Middlewich

Brookfield Park, Nantwich

In many of the parks much of the original layout remains, including a number of the original features such as structured planting and bandstands although over the years some features may have been lost. The parks now reflect the changing demands placed upon them over the intervening years with some additional features and adaptations being made that enhance or detract from the original visionary design concepts.

Country Parks: Cheshire East Council has a number of Country Parks and other Countryside sites. These parks offering a similar range of benefits, also act as gateways for the community to access natural places and the wider countryside.

The two major Country parks are:

Tegg's Nose Country Park, Macclesfield
Brereton Heath Local Nature Reserve, near Congleton.

Other Council owned countryside facilities include:

Biddulph Valley Way
Dane-In-Shaw Pasture SSSI
Jacksons' Brickworks LNR
Lindow Common - Wilmslow
Merelake Way
Middlewood Way
Nelson Pit Visitor Centre
Poynton Coppice Local Nature Reserve
Poynton Park
Riverside Park
Rode Heath Rise
Salt Line & Borrow Pit Meadows
Timbersbrook Picnic Area
Wheelock Rail Trail
Wilmslow Park

The key issues: Having access to public space is not all that matters – just as important are the planning, design and management of that space. In general our residents feel the key things we need to focus on in maintaining our parks revolve around cutting the grass, removing the litter,

collecting the dogs mess and providing safe and secure areas for them to enjoy. Whilst our performance has generally improved in these areas we know there is room for further improvement.

Access to Quality Facilities: Whilst there has been considerable investment at Queens Park, Crewe and at Congleton Park, the other larger parks have significant infrastructure problems to address. Resources will need to be targeted to address these issues. There will inevitably be additional unplanned work required to deal with health and safety issues. Investment in play areas has been maintained over the last 5 years; however, investment needs to be found for our Playing Fields, to improve other Public Open Space close to our residents' homes and for the green paths and ways that allow them to be visited in safety, effectively creating a safe green network of quality open space for all to enjoy.

Managing Conflicting Demands: There are always conflicting demands made upon public open space. We permanently face conflicts between dog walkers and parents, between sports clubs and residents to neighbours who just want to enjoy the view for themselves. These conflicts will be different for each park and the issues that are identified will need to be addressed in the individual management plans for each park and by adopting reasonable policies to deal with the recurring common issues.

Addressing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour: Evidence shows that anxiety over their personal safety is the main reason given for people choosing not to visit parks and green spaces. This negative perception of personal safety is not just found in the older population but is also more frequently cited as the reason preventing teenagers from using parks and open spaces. We know from the number of reported incidents in our parks where the higher levels of crimes or anti-social behaviour occur. Such problems can be addressed through finding better design solutions and by working more closely with both neighbourhood safety teams and the local police service to target problem areas. Vandalism to the buildings, cultural artifacts and playground equipment is an avoidable drain on our budgets but the evidence demonstrates that providing good quality facilities that are well used will deter vandalism.

Green Flag Parks: The Green Flag award is a nationally recognised benchmark upon which all parks should be judged. We currently have seven Green Flag parks in the Borough and by the end of this Strategy we aim to have Green Flag awards in place at all of our Key Parks.

Our Vision

1. Principally, we want to protect our parks and plan with a view to their long-term sustainability so that they will continue to play a vital community role for future generations.
2. Ideally we would want all of our parks to provide a range of high quality facilities for all our residents to enjoy.
3. Our Local Communities want parks that are
 - Well maintained and well managed
 - A community resource
 - A place for nature
 - A place for health and well being
 - Well designed places that reflect their cultural heritage
 - Places that help to drive and support the local economy
4. Our Country parks are special places where the aim is to help maintain their naturalness and ensure a sustainable future for these diverse environments.
5. We will look to develop park specific management plans for our larger parks to reflect their importance. Taking the long term view is so important for parks and these management plans will help to guide where the future investment should be made. Our ambition will be to attain Green Flag status for all strategically significant parks during the life of this Strategy.
6. We recognise that improvements will also be required to local smaller parks and open spaces and we will aim to renew and replace infrastructure equipment in a considered and prioritised way. The key priority will always be to ensure visitor safety.
7. To make our parks fit for the future.

What do we want from our Parks? Our objectives...

Objective 1: A Community Resource:

Cheshire East Council strongly believes that every person, of whatever age or background, must feel they can become fully involved in the management and development of their local parks, so that they can then be justifiably proud of helping to keep their park attractive and welcoming, an essential ingredient of their daily lives. Parks are important to our residents. Our survey showed the parks are visited by over 40% of our respondents on a monthly basis. How they look and feel affects the way this Council's services are perceived.

Communities use a main park, or where no main park exists, a network of smaller parks / play areas to meet some of their needs. Each of the parks has a catchment area from which its visitors are taken. For instance Queens Park is of national importance and has visitors from all over the world to add to the local base of regular users from the local catchment area. This is different to Sandbach Park which is more likely to attract users from a discrete local catchment area around Sandbach. The mechanisms to deliver what local residents see as priorities will be different for each park.

Our experience shows that the most successful parks are those where the community plays an active role as a part of a strong partnership driving all aspects of management. We recognise the value of the contribution Friends Groups make to helping maintaining our parks and open spaces and this was reflected in our consultation with over 80% of responses advocating support for Friends Groups.

There are currently 12 Friends Groups across the Borough and the Council will work with these Groups to help develop management plans for the parks. We will also look to develop new groups where they don't currently exist. Whilst Friends Groups will be enthusiastically consulted as part of the process of park improvements all local people deserve to have a voice and our consultations will try to reflect this. There are some notable and positive examples of this across Cheshire East Parks, parks where an active local Friends Group, the local Town or Parish Council, Local Enterprise Partnership and others all work together for the benefit of the parks. The great work achieved at Sandbach Park demonstrates this very clearly but is not the only example. This is the model that Cheshire East Council wants to develop and support for all our main parks.

Objective 1a: We will seek to develop and support the formation of fully constituted and independent local park Friends Groups.

Objective 1b: We will develop local steering Groups for each Park to manage and coordinate all development and day to day activity in the parks.

Objective 1c: We will consult locally when planning projects in parks, consulting with Local Councilors, individuals and local community groups.

Objective 2: Volunteers:

Volunteers already make a massive contribution to our parks and volunteer participation will continue to be important to the sustainability of our parks moving forwards. We will need to expand and develop our efforts to support and facilitate volunteering in our parks and open spaces, to help minimize the impact of the cuts to services, building on the success of volunteering at parks such as Queens Park in Crewe, Sandbach Park and other notable examples across the Borough.

Objective 2: We will seek to develop volunteering opportunities in all our parks.

Objective 3: Children and Young People:

Play is acknowledged as a vital component in the development of children and young people. It helps them to learn many of the life skills they will need as they grow into balanced members of society. It also offers a way to counteract the increased pressures of modern lifestyles by encouraging fun and enjoyment. However, the provision of play is not just about fun as 24.1% of our children aged 4-5 years old are overweight or obese. Good play provision gets children and families more active building community health as well as family / social cohesion.

Whilst there is provision for younger children in many of our parks, for some communities there are still only limited facilities available for local teenagers to enjoy. This is often the result of negative perceptions of teenage activities and the impact they have on communities. Our traditional play facilities tend to cater for 0-13 year olds so we will also need to consider how we can provide areas for teenagers to “hang out” and actively use the parks in harmony with the rest of the community.

Objective 3: We will aim to provide facilities that meet the needs of the different age groups using our parks but also to ensure that social cohesion building, inter-generational activity is facilitated.



Park play at sunset

Objective 4: How Green spaces can help tackle health inequality and support an aging population:

The evidence shows that inequalities in mortality are higher for those who have less exposure to green space and that children living near green spaces are less likely to experience an increase in body mass index over time. Living in a neighbourhood with less green space is associated with greater risk of anxiety and depression, feelings of loneliness and perceived shortage of social support. Conversely, living in a neighbourhood with more green space and visiting natural environments is associated with lower levels of stress and anxiety and has been known to improve concentration and mood. Evidence is increasingly suggesting that initiatives to engage more people with the natural environment and green spaces can have a positive impact on health, reducing obesity rates, long term health conditions, mental ill-health and premature death, reducing the risk factors that lead to poor health. Access to green spaces is proven to contribute to mental health. There is an increasing recognition that improving access to the natural environment can be a cost effective part of the solution.

With the many advances in medicine people are living longer and more active lives. However, health care is very expensive particularly when dealing with long-term chronic conditions particularly linked to an aging population so investment in preventative initiatives can be seen as a very attractive alternative. From the perspective of those planning future health care, an all-inclusive approach to public health is emerging. It values the prevention of disease and the promotion of long-term health and mental well-being as highly as treating the symptoms of illnesses. Maintaining health involves encouraging regular physical activity and finding mechanisms to maintain mental wellbeing. Encouragement to gentle physical activity being the best way to prevent skeletal and muscular degeneration as well as stimulating mental faculties both individually and collectively as a society. There's a realisation that enabling healthy lifestyles can mean long-term savings in health treatment costs.

The decision to place Health & Wellbeing Boards within Local Authorities offers real opportunity for a joined up and collective approach. Parks provide wonderful places that can support and encourage healthy activity at all levels across the whole community. It is important that Health & Wellbeing Boards and Local Authorities work more closely together in the future to ensure that open space developments deliver maximum impacts for community health.

Objective 4: We will aim to achieve more collaborative working with the Health & Wellbeing Board and by doing so target investments to ensure that maximum health; well-being and sustainability benefits accrue from our public parks and open spaces.



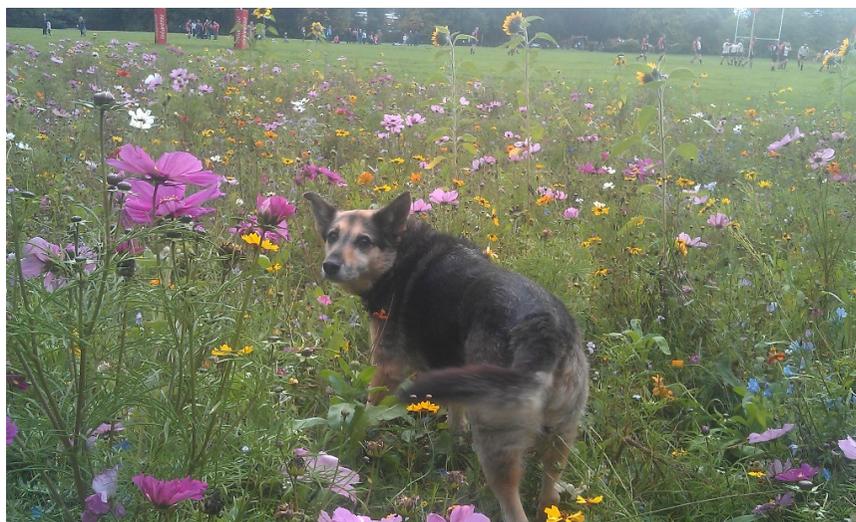
The Coronation Valley at Queens Park, Crewe in the spring

Objective 5: Recreation and Exercise:

Evidence currently shows high levels of obesity in our adult population. Good parks that meet user needs encourage greater active participation thus support healthier lifestyles. The majority of visitors currently use the parks to walk, play or take part in some form of physical activity. Over recent years, adult gym equipment and fitness trails have been installed into parks in Cheshire East. Cheshire East Council also provides playing fields for the community to encourage participation in competitive sports for a wide range of ability levels.

We need to ensure that there are sufficient facilities available to match current and future needs for quantity and quality. (Cheshire East Council will publish its Playing Pitch Strategy in 2015)

Objective 5: We will aim to find new ways of encouraging physical activity in the general population, forging strong partnership with sports clubs, associations and other stakeholder groups to ensure parks fulfill their potential of fostering healthy physical activity.



Congleton Park: Suzie caught watching the rugby

Objective 6: A Place to Meet, Socialise and Celebrate:

Parks play a vital part in sustaining and developing social cohesion in the local population. They encourage the community by providing places for them to relax, enjoy and mingle. Not everyone wants to play or take part in an activity or sport and we recognise that many of our users come for a walk or just to relax in a quiet way. Our parks are also home to numerous community events. Not all our parks are capable of or suitable for hosting events.

Objective 6a: We will aim to look at how we design places and manage the verdant landscape with seating and quiet areas to ensure that there is space for quiet contemplation of the environment.

Objective 6b: We will distinguish areas appropriate for large scale events and those that are more suitable to smaller community events and local celebrations.

Objective 7: A Place for Nature:

The Borough's parks and open spaces play a fundamental part for conserving, enhancing and promoting local biodiversity. This is a particularly vital function within an urban environment. For example, the trees help to cool summer temperatures, reduce air pollutants, absorb noise and the green areas absorb rainfall preventing flooding. Whilst providing green oases and refuges for wildlife, in parks there are often significant opportunities to enhance biodiversity in line with our legislative responsibilities. This is especially so in our Country Parks and Countryside sites. Initiatives such as, establishing wildflower meadows, supporting bat roosts, restoring ponds and wetlands contribute significantly to wildlife diversity. When combined with more sensitive development and maintenance operations and with greater local engagement, through volunteering and friends of parks groups, these measures will bring residents closer to nature increasing their overall enjoyment and physical and mental wellbeing.

We will aim to develop initiatives that will bring residents closer to nature increasing their overall enjoyment of parks to enhance their physical and mental wellbeing.

Objective 8: Well designed places that reflect their cultural heritage:

Ideally all parks should be attractive, have excellent facilities and be physically accessible to all residents. They should also be well designed, well maintained and feel safe. How we design the spaces and how we plant and furnish them changes how local residents respond to them when they visit. Good design enriching the experience for all. Our parks are not all the same either in origin, context or their features. Understanding the unique character and indeed the reasons for each individual park's existence is the key to finding the way in which each should be managed. We must develop management plans for our parks which consider these factors, ensuring that any changes to the design, planting or features is actually appropriate for the park.

Objective 8a:

We will seek to develop and manage the parks, reflecting their cultural and heritage importance, in line with the aspirations of the local communities.

Objective 8b:

We will aim to develop individual management plans for each of our key and secondary parks, based on local needs in the lifetime of this Strategy.

Objective 8c:

As our overarching design philosophy, we will aim to treat each park as a unique design, judged on its own merits. The type of landscape, equipment and furniture we use will also need to reflect the area and nature of the provision.

Our Consultation: Are these objectives supported by our communities?

In preparing this strategy a public consultation on the above objectives produced a resounding endorsement. Cheshire East Council undertook a survey during late November to early December 2014 to gain views from Cheshire East residents and users of the parks on its draft strategy. The survey was available online and the questions mainly asked about views on the twelve objectives. 557 responses were received. The results have helped refine this strategy.

Key findings: Usage of Cheshire East parks and open spaces

Respondents were first asked how often, they had visited a Cheshire East park within the last 12 months. In summary:-

- 29% had visited most days/ every day or at least once a week,
- 31% had visited at least once a month
- 40% visiting less often or not at all.

Respondents who had visited a Cheshire East park (within the last 12 months?) were then asked to select up to three main reasons as to why. The top five overall reasons were as follows:-

1. For leisure, spend time with family and friends, 45%
2. Walking, 41%
3. To enjoy the natural environment, 31%
4. To visit the playgrounds/ recreational areas, 31%
5. Dog walking, 24%.

Views on the proposed objectives

Over 90% of respondents agreed that Cheshire East Council should:-

- Consult with individuals and local community groups when planning a project within the parks, 93% (61% strongly agree, 32% tend to agree)
- Aim to provide facilities that meet the needs of different age groups, 93% (61% strongly agree, 32% agree)
- Treat each park as unique, designing landscape, equipment and furniture in line with the area and nature of provision, 91% (61% strongly agree, 32% agree)
- Design places and manage landscape so that seating and quiet areas are available for quiet contemplation, 91% (57% strongly agree, 34% agree).

Over 80% of respondents agreed that Cheshire East Council should:

- Develop individual management plans for each of our key and secondary parks based on local needs, 89% (50% strongly agree, 39% agree)
Develop and support local park friends groups, 82% (45% strongly agree, 37% agree)
- Work in collaboration with the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure our parks and open spaces provide maximum health, well being and sustainability benefits, 82% (49% strongly agree, 33% agree)
- Develop and manage parks while reflecting their cultural and heritage importance in-line with aspirations of local communities to achieve Green Flag Standard, 82% (41% strongly agree, 41% agree)
- Develop initiatives that will bring residents closer to nature increasing their overall enjoyment of the parks and their physical and mental well-being, 86% (47% strongly agree, 39% agree).

Our thanks to all who responded to the survey and contributed their photographs for this document

The Current Situation: (See appendix for a full list of parks and public open spaces)

Achieving the Green Flag standard is held as a clear indication of a well managed park and for demonstrating a long term commitment to excellent parks. For measuring the quality of Country Parks, it is an option to seek Country Park Accreditation; however, the criteria of the Green Flag scheme are very relevant for all park types and ensure a consistency that is easily benchmarked as the parks achieving Green Flag Accreditation are published annually.

Parks at Green Flag Standard: In 2015, the following Parks had attained and retained Green Flag Status:

- Congleton Park,
- The Moor, Knutsford
- Bollington Recreation Ground.
- Tegg's Nose Country park
- Brereton Heath Local Nature Reserve
- Sandbach Park
- Tatton Park

Parks Close to Green Flag Standard: A number of parks are close to achieving the standard having had significant infrastructure investments over recent years. These parks benefit from the involvement of the community through strong Friends Groups. Whilst some further investment is required to deal with outstanding infrastructure issues, the key outstanding issue is the lack of a Management and Maintenance Plan. At:

- Elworth Park
- Milton Park
- The Carrs, Wilmslow
- Queens Park, Crewe (Following completion of the Pathways Network)

Parks still requiring investment: Before the following parks will be in a condition appropriate for an application for “Green Flag Status” more extensive programmes of investment will be required.

At:

- Alderley Edge Park
- Lacey Green Park, Wilmslow
- Meriton Road Park, Handforth
- South Park, Macclesfield
- Victoria Park, Macclesfield
- West Park, Macclesfield
- Fountain Fields, Middlewich
- Brookfield Park, Nantwich

In 2014, Cheshire East Council created a Park Development Fund to support investment in parks across the Borough. This is currently a three year investment programme aimed at repairing infrastructure problems and leveraging out more substantial funding from external grants aiding bodies and supporting local community initiatives in parks. Significant investments required for a project will be scheduled in the Council’s Capital Programme.

The evidence base:

We have a wealth of parks and open spaces that are greatly valued by all our local communities as demonstrated by the response to the consultation on this strategy.

The key to attracting investment into our parks is the gathering of the evidence of need. Data must be collected on the level of usage, customer satisfaction and the benefits gained from usage. Gathering this data has to be a major priority for the Council as it holds the key to making the real case for significant future investment.

Delivery and Implementation: Action Plan

Timetable for delivery and review:

This Cheshire East Council Park Development Strategy will have a shelf-life of ten years (2024). With so much to be achieved, it will take at least this ten-year period to deliver the improvements we all want to see in our parks.

Action 1: As good data is the bedrock of well managed parks. We need to improve our data collection to understand the value of our investment in green spaces to our residents. In addition we must develop a system to monitor the use made of Cheshire East parks by the Borough's local population including evaluation of visitor numbers, qualitative data on visitor experience and its relationship to community health and wellbeing indices.

Action 2: Managing successful parks requires a longer term vision and the proposed programmes and projects will take several years to succeed. Each of our larger parks will require a full Management and Maintenance Plan. These plans will include a full risk assessment and an Implementation / Action Plan setting out the main projects to be developed and implemented over an estimated ten-year period.

Action 3: Develop a prioritised rolling programme of park improvement projects to target expenditure to reflect the objectives of this strategy. The programme for delivery will be considered annually through consultation with Local Councillors and approved by the Portfolio Member for Strategic Commissioning to enable works to be commissioned to reflect need and corporate priorities.

Action 4: Look to demonstrate the quality of our parks through a carefully considered plan to raise standards and to achieve Green Flag status in 5 more parks by 2024.