

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

27 January 2009

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure and the Cabinet Members for Planning & Transport and Leisure, Youth and Arts

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

This report seeks Member approval for the draft Open Space Strategy to be adopted and incorporated into the Council's budget and policy framework.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Following the January 2008 meeting of the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board, the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts resolved (Decision D080013MEM) to approve the draft Open Space Strategy and that it be circulated for public consultation, with a final copy of the Strategy brought to the October 2008 meetings of the Leisure and Arts and Planning and Transportation Advisory Boards.

1.1.2 At the October 2008 meeting of the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts resolved (Decision D080174MEM) that, subject to consideration of the draft Strategy at the meeting of the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board on 20 October 2008, the proposed amendments highlighted at Annex 1 to the report be commended for confirmation, and the amended Open Space Strategy be referred to the Policy Overview Committee for consideration.

1.1.3 Further to the above, at the October 2008 meeting of the Planning & Transportation Board the Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation resolved (Decision D080187 MEM) that the proposed amendments highlighted at Annex 1 to the report be confirmed and the amended Open Space Strategy be referred to the Policy Overview Committee for consideration, a copy of which has been circulated separately with these papers.

1.2 Open Space Strategy

1.2.1 The draft Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Government's Companion Guide to Planning Policy Guidance 17 and is a robust assessment of need and an audit of existing open spaces within the Borough. It is an overarching document that covers all open spaces, sport and recreation facilities

including playing pitches and children's and young people's play areas. It also covers in passing those facilities which require large bulky buildings intended to generate high levels of use including swimming pools, sports halls, and leisure centres.

1.2.2 The Strategy has a wide role. As well as providing evidence for open space policies in the Council's 'Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document' which will form part of the Local Development Framework when adopted, (see also sub-section 1.2.4), it will help the Council deliver its corporate priorities, particularly in relation to healthy living, crime reduction, young people and achieving a better street scene and open space environment. It will provide clear objectives and direction, through stated Key, Management and Spatial Planning Policies, to assist the Council to meet local needs and aspirations and it will enable the Council to meet Central Government's requirements and priorities. The Strategy will provide a strategic framework for the provision, management and maintenance of open space, which will enable a planned approach of targeted actions to be implemented in a prioritised order within available resources.

1.2.3 The Strategy therefore has a number of objectives which include:

- establishing local quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for future open space provision in the Borough that will be incorporated into policy as part of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document
- informing relevant projects in the Capital Plan
- providing the evidence base for bids for grant monies and other external funding
- forming the basis for calculating developer contributions for new/improved provision of open space.
- providing a valuable corporate resource to respond to general enquiries relating to open space provision

1.2.4 The Strategy has a key role in informing the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework Document, providing the evidence base for open space policies in the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document. This document is subject to a separate report within these papers.

1.3 Consultation

1.3.1 The draft Strategy was circulated/made available for comment from 18 February to 28 March 2008. A copy of the draft Strategy was sent to all key stakeholders, including all parish/town councils, Tonbridge Sports Association, Sport England, Fields in Trust, Natural England and neighbouring Local Authorities. A copy of the

draft Strategy was made available to view at the Council offices at Kings Hill and Tonbridge Castle and on the Council's website.

- 1.3.2 All comments returned were carefully considered and presented to both the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board and Planning & Transportation Advisory Board in October 2008 with a number of amendments to the draft Strategy being approved.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Open Space Strategy will form part of the evidence-base for the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document which forms part of the Council's Local Development Framework. As a Strategy, it must be considered and, if appropriate, adopted, in accordance with the budget and policy framework procedure rules contained in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution. The process by which the budget and policy framework is developed is, at least two months before the Strategy needs to be adopted, the Executive will publicise initial proposals, having first canvassed the views of local stakeholders as appropriate and in a manner suitable to the matter under consideration. Any representations made to the Executive must be taken into account in formulating the initial proposals, and shall be reflected in any report dealing with them. The Executive's initial proposals shall be referred to the Policy Overview Committee for further advice and consideration

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Taking into account the significant level of work involved in the preparation of the Open Space Strategy, an external consultant was appointed to assist the Council. This cost has been provided for in the Local Development Framework budget, and this particular project has been funded entirely from the Planning Delivery Grant.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 It is essential that the Strategy be developed and implemented in line with the formal guidance, otherwise there is a risk that the outcomes may be challenged and the Council's Development Plan Document may be found to be unsound.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Community, Crime & Disorder Reduction, Healthy Lifestyles, Young People.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the Council adopt the Open Space Strategy as part of its budget and policy framework.

Background papers:

contact: Robert Styles
Brian Gates

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Matthew Balfour
Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation
Martin Coffin
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts