

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

18 May 2010

### Report of the Chief Leisure Officer

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Information

### 1 CABE SPACE: URBAN GREEN NATION REPORT

#### Summary

This report advises Members of recent research on the impact of urban green spaces undertaken by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE Space).

#### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Urban Green Nation: Building an Evidence Base, is the first of two pieces of research commissioned by CABE that gauge the state of England's urban green space and its impact on people's health and well being.
- 1.1.2 CABE investigated over 70 major data sources and assembled an inventory of more than 16,000 individual green spaces. This data was then analysed by CABE to discover what it says about publicly owned and managed urban green space.

#### 1.2 Research Report

- 1.2.1 CABE's report states that parks and green spaces are the backbone of sustainable and high-quality urban environments. CABE identify that a growing body of robust research demonstrates that high quality green spaces bring considerable benefits to local economies, to people's physical and mental health, and to the environment. It notes that the historic decline in green spaces has been arrested and is now being reversed with people using their parks and green spaces more and valuing them more.
- 1.2.2 A copy of the Research Summary Report can be found at **[Annex 1]** and a full copy of the report can be downloaded from the CABE spaces website at [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk) . A summary of the key findings has been highlighted below:
- Almost 9 out of 10 people use parks and green spaces, and value them.
  - If people are satisfied with local parks, they tend to be satisfied with their Council.

- The provision of parks in deprived areas is worse than in affluent areas.
- People from minority ethnic groups tend to have less local green space and it is of a poorer quality.
- The higher the quality of the green space, the more likely it is to be used.

### **1.3 Place Survey**

1.3.1 This national survey, most recently undertaken in 2008/09, recorded people's overall satisfaction levels with parks and open spaces and placed Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council in the top quartile of local authorities in the country. With a satisfaction rating of 77.6%, this Borough was ranked second highest in Kent and third within its CIPFA group.

### **1.4 Improvements/Investment in Parks and Open Spaces**

1.4.1 The results of the Place Survey are supported by excellent overall satisfaction levels recorded within recent User Surveys undertaken at key Outdoor Leisure facilities provided by the Borough Council. These include Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground (93%), Tonbridge Farm Sportsground (81%), Tonbridge Castle Grounds (86%), Haysden Country Park (99%) and Leybourne Lakes Country Park (92%). The Council has seen an ongoing increase in satisfaction levels through recent surveys, which is reflective of the resources invested in parks and open spaces by the Borough Council and through developer contributions/external grants. Significant improvements over recent years have included:

- The development of a new Country Park, Leybourne Lakes.
- The provision of a new play area at Leybourne Lakes Country Park.
- The enhancement of play facilities at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground.
- The development of an Open Space Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and Local Play Strategy.
- Investing in the development of volunteers with over 1,600 volunteer hours being recorded in parks and green spaces year on year.
- The provision of a new regional cycle-route from Tonbridge to Penshurst Place.
- The provision of a new skate park at Tonbridge Farm Sportsground.
- The achievement and retention of Green Flag Awards at the Council's two Country Parks.

1.4.2 The improvements undertaken and positive public feedback, acknowledges the priority that the Council affords to maintaining and developing its parks and green

spaces, which is also reflected in one of the Council's Key Priorities 'Achieve a cleaner, smarter and better maintained street scene and open space environment'.

- 1.4.3 Further improvements to the Council's parks and open spaces are planned for 2010/11 with the refurbishment of Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground, and the provision of new play facilities at Priory Wood, Tonbridge.

## **1.5 Legal Implications**

- 1.5.1 None.

## **1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.6.1 The ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the Council's parks and open spaces is met through revenue budgets. Improvements are brought forward through the Capital Plan, with the majority of funding in recent years secured by developer contributions and grants from the National Lottery.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

- 1.7.1 The research report from CABE highlights that the use of green space is directly related to the quality of provision. There is, therefore, clearly a risk that if the Council does not continue to invest in its parks and open spaces usage will fall.

## **1.8 Policy Considerations**

- 1.8.1 Asset Management, Community, Healthy Lifestyles, Equalities/Diversity

Background papers:

contact: Darren Lanes

Urban Green Nation: Building the evidence base  
(Full Report)

Robert Styles  
Chief Leisure Officer