

## Communities and Environment Scrutiny Select Committee

16 July 2025

### Part 1 - Public

#### Matters for Cabinet - Non-key Decision



Cabinet Member	Cllr Des Keers, Cabinet Member for Community Services
Responsible Officer	Robert Styles, Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services
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#### Haysden Country Park Management Plan 2025-2029 – Consultation

### 1 Summary and Purpose of Report

This report brings forward comments received as part of the public consultation exercise on the draft Haysden Country Park Management Plan. The Committee is invited to consider the responses and recommend approval of the final Plan to Cabinet.

### 2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment.
- 2.2 The importance of parks as a green lung in an increasing urbanised world has long been acknowledged. Through appropriate management, the site offers the opportunities for the public to engage with the countryside in both formal and informal activities such as angling, sailing, and walking. The site also provides volunteering opportunities to support healthy lifestyles. Projects within the Plan also enhance opportunities to create more diverse flora and fauna at the site.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 With a minor amendment proposed to the Access Audit (12.3.3), and subject to comments by the Committee it be recommended to Cabinet that the Haysden Country Park Management Plan 2025-29, as shown at **Annex 3**, be adopted.

## 4 Introduction and Background

4.1 In advance of the public consultation, the draft Management Plan for Haysden Country Park was considered by the Communities and Environmental Scrutiny Select Committee on 5 February 2025 and subsequently approved by Cabinet (**Decision Notice D250006MEM**).

### 4.2 Consultation process

4.2.1 The draft Management Plan was circulated/made available for comment between 21 February and 11 April 2025. An email was circulated to key stakeholders, as listed at **Annex 1**, advising that copies of the Plan were available on the Council's website and hard copies were available to view at Tonbridge Castle and at the Council Offices, Kings Hill. The most recent regular country park newsletter was published towards the end of the consultation period and included details on the consultation.

4.2.2 In addition, posters were displayed around the site advising visitors where the Plan could be viewed and how feedback could be provided during the consultation process. Posts were also made on social media to promote the consultation.

### 4.3 Consultation Response

4.3.1 Social Media posts were made, reaching 2245 people. The website page holding links to the documents had 1400 visits with four people (2 nearby residents and 2 visitors) and 1 stakeholder providing feedback.

4.3.2 From the 6 responses, there was an average rating of 4.2 out of 5 for ease of understanding the document. Overall, most comments received were supportive of the Plan. All comments received have been carefully considered. A summary of the comments received (27 separate comments in total) and Officer responses can be found at **Annex 2** for Members consideration. There are no proposed amendments to the Plan following consultation.

4.3.3 Members will note that the comments received cover a wide variety of topics including the format and content of the Plan, a path along Brook Street, and projects in the Plan. The Plan is divided into logical sections but by its nature is a detailed document with the primary aim of meeting the operational needs of the site. It also needs to cover the detailed criteria for the Green Flag Award, Country Park Accreditation and Local Nature Reserve designation. It is therefore always going to be a challenge to provide a comprehensive Plan that meets these needs and make it an accessible and short document for the public. We have provided an executive summary in this the latest version of the Plan.

## **5 Proposal**

- 5.1 Following consultation, it is proposed that the Haysden Country Park Management Plan 2025-29 be adopted as shown at **Annex 3**.

## **6 Other Options**

- 6.1 If a Management Plan was not developed for the site, that Council would be unable to retain and apply for the international Green Flag Award, the national Country Park Accreditation, or the Local Nature Reserve status. It may also be unable to draw in the external funding to support the site maintenance and development.

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

- 7.1 The Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
- 7.2 It should be noted that the delivery of many projects will be subject to sourcing additional or external funding such as developer contributions.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 The Council's Health and Safety Officer has been consulted on the draft Plan.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The plan has been prepared using the guidance produced by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Space – A guide to producing Park and Green Space Management Plans.
- 9.2 There are several legal provisions and statutory obligations that affect delivery of services in open spaces and this need to be duly reflected in the management plan.
- 9.3 These statutory provisions enable local authorities to hold land, provide services, enforce orders and in some cases impose fines.
- 9.4 Consultation is vital to the process of producing a robust management plan and the council has engaged with stakeholders as appropriate.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

- 10.1 Consultation is vital to the process of producing a robust management plan and the council has engaged with stakeholders as appropriate. There are, however, no changes proposed following the consultation process.

## **11 Implementation**

- 11.1 Once adopted the Management Plan will be implemented in accordance with timeframes set out within the document itself.

## **12 Cross Cutting Issues**

### **12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 12.1.1 Adaptation and resilience to climate change have been considered within this Plan and will continue to be foremost in Officers mind when considering projects at this site and forms part of the judging criteria for the Green Flag Award.

- 12.1.2 Climate change advice has been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

- 12.2 Extensive species recording has been undertaken at the site and importance/rarity of species found on the site has been assessed at a species level. The sites importance in the borough for biodiversity is already acknowledged by the sites status as both a Local Nature Reserve and Site of Nature Conservation Importance; Species recording will continue.

### **12.3 Equalities and Diversity**

- 12.3.1 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and varies between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

- 12.3.2 Local disability groups (12) were contacted and given the opportunity to comment on the draft plan.

- 12.3.3 The proposals aim to extend and provide additional/improved facilities with free public access for all. A site Access Audit has been undertaken which forms part of the Plan. It is proposed to remove the reference in the audit to the removal of the RADAR lock on the disabled toilet door, as this would infringe on the availability of these toilets by disabled people.

### **12.4 Other If Relevant**

- Human Resources
- Procurement
- Business Continuity / Resilience
- Health and Safety

- Data Protection
- Healthy Lifestyles

12.4.1 The park offers a broad range of facilities and services to the public which meet community needs. We outsource some services to local businesses and offer local organisations and volunteer opportunities as appropriate to use the park.

Background Papers	Record of Decision Notice <b>D250006MEM</b> Market survey of Haysden Country Park Access audit of Haysden Country Park (the executive summary can be found at Appendix 4 in the Plan)
Annexes	<b>ANNEX 1</b> – List of Key Stakeholders <b>ANNEX 2</b> – HCP Management Plan – Public Consultation feedback and responses <b>ANNEX 3</b> - Haysden Country Park Management Plan 2025-2029