

GREENSPACE - QUALITY MONITORING

Report of the Director of Place Management

1 PURPOSE

1.1 At the Scrutiny Review Panel meeting of the 8th December 2021 it was determined that the review into Stockport's public greenspaces would focus on:

1. Quality Monitoring
2. Accessibility standards

1.2 This report provides the panel with a suggested method of quality monitoring.

2 SITES IN SCOPE

2.1 Our public greenspaces provide a range of benefits, arising from their capability to support a very broad range of people, place and economic activities in ways that impact on our everyday lives. Greenspace supports community health and well being, enhances environmental capacity, helps conserve natural systems, provides for flood relief, supports quality of place and enterprise and importantly provides for diverse opportunities for play, leisure and recreational use.

2.2 The positive benefits derived from greenspaces differ dependent on type and function of the space. Sites may be better placed to deliver one of the above benefits over another. At times a sites primary function may partially impact on other potential benefits. As an example an area that can capture and store flood water will likely be quite wet and as such less able to be used for formal sport.

2.3 The differing functions of greenspaces require different methods to measure the extent to which they meet their primary purpose. The success of a site such as a nature reserve should perhaps be best evaluated by the extent to which a range of species, or even a particular animal or plant, thrives. To apply a single quality monitoring methodology to all types of site would result in conflicts of interest.

2.4 This paper suggests a quality monitoring methodology that would apply to sites that have as their primary purpose the provision of a range of facilities for people. This will ensure the value and benefits of greenspace are evaluated strategically and to ensure our greenspace assets are addressing the needs of communities and stakeholders

2.5 Quality is a key issue for greenspace. The value and benefits of greenspace are only realisable if greenspace is in a condition that can support its purpose and function.

The key measures of greenspace value are:

- Quality in terms of how well a greenspace or wider network of greenspace assets address the varied functions, needs and aspirations of its users and other stakeholders.
- Quantity in terms of the overall quantity of greenspace, its distribution spatially and in terms of differing types of greenspace functions.

- Accessibility in terms of how well connected, accessible and inclusive greenspace is to communities.

- 2.5 Determining which sites should be included within a greenspace quality monitoring scheme requires a number of variables to be agreed upon first. It is suggested that these variables are Purpose, Capacity (size), Connectivity and range of Facilities.
- 2.6 PURPOSE - The Council's has an extensive greenspace estate. It is an unrealistic ambition to bring all sites to a standard of high quality. What is more realistic and of more relevance to resident's health and wellbeing would be to aim to provide access to a good quality greenspaces for all residents.
- 2.7 SIZE – Sites to be monitored should have sufficient size to be able to accommodate the number of people that the greenspace serves.
- 2.8 FACILITIES – Sites should have current provision, or the capacity to provide a range of asset types. The number and range of which to be determined.
- 2.9 CONNECTIVITY – Multiple sites could be considered as inter dependent, ie inspected as one greenspace Reddish Vale, Brinnington Park, Moat Walk, Brindale Road Play Area.

3 INSPECTION CRITERIA

- 3.1 There is an existing, nationally recognised set of criteria that is used to assess the quality of greenspaces. This is the Green Flag Award which is managed by Keep Britain Tidy, on behalf of Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC)
- 3.2 The Green Flag Award consists of twenty-seven criteria. These relate to what is found on site (e.g. cleanliness), management principles (e.g. peat use) and the availability of a management plan. Further information regarding the GFA's criteria can be found at Appendix one.
- 3.3 It is proposed that these criteria, with some revision, form the basis of Stockport's quality monitoring system.

4 DELIVERY

- 4.1 Inspection
- 4.11 A quality monitoring systems needs to be deliverable with the resources available. In investigating this a review has been undertaken of the likely number of sites, availability of individuals with the appropriate skill set and consideration of the required frequency given the likely realistic pace of change.
- 4.12 An initial desk top assessment has been undertaken of the number of suitable sites that the borough would require to be of good quality to ensure that all residents have equitable access. Although further work is required, this number was around thirty sites.
- 4.13 To assess our greenspaces against the full range of potential criteria requires individuals with a degree of underpinning knowledge. There are relatively low numbers of existing staff with a suitable skill set. However, this is not thought to be detrimental. Fewer assessors would help improve the consistency of monitoring regimes.

4.14 It is suggested that a phased approach to the gathering of baseline data and subsequent re-inspections is adopted. A three-yearly re-inspection of sites would allow for any agreed interventions to be undertaken and embedded.

4.2 Additional data

4.21 It is envisaged that the results of the quality monitoring of key sites is overlaid with a range of background data. This data would include the population number, demographics and indices of deprivation, Section 106 commuted sums and future residential development sites of those within the sphere of each site.

4.22 The combination of site-based quality assessments and knowledge of the potential users will allow for the prioritisation of interventions. This would be on the basis that the Council would know which sites, if brought up to an accepted quality standard, would benefit the greatest number of people who are in the most need.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That the panel comments on the proposed methodology

5.2 That the panel next investigate and recommends accessibility standards for good quality greenspace and, where practical the facilities within them.

APPENDIX ONE

Acquired 24th January 2022 from:

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/how-it-works/judging-criteria/green-flag-award/>

1: A WELCOMING PLACE

1. Welcome
2. Good and Safe Access
3. Signage
4. Equal Access for All

2: HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

5. Appropriate Provision of Quality Facilities and Activities
6. Safe Equipment and Facilities
7. Personal Security
8. Control of Dogs/Dog Fouling

3: WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN

9. Litter and Waste Management
10. Horticultural Maintenance
11. Arboricultural Maintenance
12. Building and Infrastructure Maintenance
13. Equipment Maintenance

4: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

14. Managing Environmental Impact
15. Waste Minimisation
16. Chemical Use
17. Peat Use
18. Climate Change Adaption Strategies

5: BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE

19. Management of Natural Features, Wild Fauna and Flora
20. Conservation of Landscape Features
21. Conservation of Buildings and Structures

6: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

22. Community Involvement in Management and Development
23. Appropriate Provision for Community

7: MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

24. Marketing and Promotion
25. Appropriate Information Channels
26. Appropriate Educational and Interpretational Information

8: MANAGEMENT

27. Implementation of Management Plan