

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - GREENSPACE

Meeting: 3 February 2022

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Lisa Walker (Chair) in the chair; Councillors Malcolm Allan, Mark Roberts and Kerry Waters.

Also in attendance

Ian Walmsley

- Head of Neighbourhoods, Stockport Council

Damian Eaton

- Service Manager, Democratic Services, Stockport Council

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 8 December 2021 were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interest which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

3. GREENSPACE - QUALITY MONITORING

A representative of the Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) suggesting a quality monitoring methodology that would apply to sites that have as their primary purpose the provision of a range of facilities for people. The proposed methodology would ensure the value and benefits of greenspace were evaluated strategically and to ensure greenspace assets were addressing the needs of communities and stakeholders.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was important to ensure that greenspace was accessible equitably across the borough.
- It was suggested that woodlands should be excluded from the scope of the methodology as while they had inherent value, their primary purpose was not for recreation.
- It was suggested that in some circumstances, clusters of greenspace in close proximity to each other should be considered a single site for the purposes of assessing access to facilities.
- The criteria used for the green flag award scheme was a useful benchmark against which the quality of greenspaces could be judged.
- It was suggested that formal assessments could be taken every three years, with further lower-level inspections being undertaken on a more regular basis in-between.

- While it may be unrealistic to expect change in the first year, it was hoped that improvements could be measured against a two to three year timescale.
- Consideration needed to be given not just the parks themselves, but those who accessed them and whether factors such as indices of deprivation should be used to assist with the targeting of resources.
- Volunteers could be used to assist with the assessments of greenspaces.
- Investment needed to be prioritised as the availability of resources meant that if this was shared equally across the borough, it would not be possible to make a tangible impact on the quality of open spaces.
- It was important that the public were involved in this process.

The Panel was further asked to consider and comment on proposals that it investigates accessibility standards for good quality greenspace and, where practical the facilities within them, at its next meeting.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Consideration needed to be given to any additional work that could be done to support the creation and sustainability of 'friends of' parks groups and how the council engaged with other volunteer groups in parks.
- Further work needed to be done to support the Greenspace Forum.
- The Panel requested that a list of parks within the scope of this review be included for consideration, including categorisation of these spaces and the assets within them.
- The accessibility of parks needed to be considered in the light of the transportation routes to them and any barriers that may prevent local access.

RESOLVED – (1) That it be recommended that the quality monitoring methodology detailed at Appendix 1 to the report adopted.

(2) That accessibility standards for good quality greenspace and, where practical the facilities within them, be considered as the topic for consideration at the next meeting of the Review Panel.

4. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Panel was invited to consider the date for the next meeting of the review.

RESOLVED – That the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) be authorised to determine the date for the next meeting of the Review Panel in consultation with the Chair.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm