

Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces Policy Development Advisory Group
12 MARCH 2024

Present: Councillors: Jon Olson (Chairman), Sam Bateman, Emma Beard, Jon Campbell, Nigel Emery, Anthony Frankland, Roger Noel, Josh Potts and Jonathan Taylor

Apologies: Councillors: James Brookes
Also Present: Councillors: Colette Blackburn, Joanne Knowles, Dennis Livingstone and John Trollope

26 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

A correction to the Notes of the Previous Meeting on 17 January 2024 was made. Item 21 'Notes of Previous Meeting' should read '14 November 2023' not '2024' as recorded. The notes of 17 January were updated and received by the PDAG.

27 **DRAFT GREENSPACE STRATEGY 2024-29**

At the start of the meeting the Chairman informed the PDAG that the Capitol Theatre Project team had recently met. Part of the discussions had involved stakeholder engagement and providing regular communication to include all Members. An on-line space is proposed where Members will be able to track progress and gain updates throughout the project. Further information will be provided as soon as available.

The Parks and Countryside Manager presented the Draft Greenspace Strategy to the Group. He explained the Strategy was an update of the current 10-year-old Strategy.

He ran through the report and gave an overview of Horsham District Council owning and managing approximately 400 hectares of greenspace across the district including formal parks and recreation grounds, woodland, heathland, veteran trees, water bodies, cemeteries, allotments, and playgrounds.

The Draft Strategy covered the vision and strategic priorities which were:

- To protect, maintain, and enhance existing greenspaces to a good standard
- Greenspaces have significant value for public health and wellbeing and should provide a range of opportunities for amenity and leisure use
- Sites will be managed sustainably and seek to enhance biodiversity and climate resilience
- New greenspace and facilities should meet the principles for amenity and biodiversity value

- Volunteer groups' Input into the Council's greenspaces is valued, supported and encouraged

Each priority then included detailed information, relevant sites and actions to be taken which would be reviewed and updated annually.

It was also highlighted that three main issues were likely to impact Horsham District Council's greenspaces in the future. This was the growth of the population in the district resulting in more usage and impact on sites, Biodiversity Net Gain to ensure there is no loss of wildlife value when land is built on; and significant impacts of climate change.

The Chairman advised that feedback on the Draft Strategy was welcomed from the PDAG Members. Following the meeting, the Strategy would be circulated to a wider audience to include Parish and Neighbourhood Councils and 'Friends' groups.

Discussion included clarity on the proposed 'vision', balancing environmental factors and creating enjoyment for residents, reviews taking place on grazing and re-introducing species such as Beavers and Pine Martins. Consideration will also be given to the use of peat.

The Group noted that an Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish group was considering Open Spaces and how to best cater for teenage girls within the district.

It was agreed that ways of incorporating actions from this group into the plan would be investigated to help shape future priorities and an addition could be made to the Draft Strategy to acknowledge they are working in tandem.

The Chairman noted the points raised by the Group and they were in favour of the Draft Strategy being circulated externally for feedback. An update would be given at a future PDAG.

28 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE LEISURE, CULTURE & GREEN SPACES PORTFOLIO**

The forward plan extract was noted.

The meeting closed at 6.36 pm having commenced at 5.33 pm

CHAIRMAN