

## **APPENDIX II Swale Borough Council Open Spaces & Play Strategy 2018 - 2022**

### **Resident and Stakeholder consultation summary**

#### **SBC WEBSITE RESIDENT ONLINE SURVEY - 17<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

- 56 responses were received
- Two thirds said they were positive or neutral to 'overall how satisfied or dissatisfied with the Strategy?'
- Just under a half described their local open space as high quality, somewhat high quality or neutral. This backs up the need for the investment proposed in the report and Strategy.
- Just over a half said the open spaces meet their needs extremely and somewhat well.
- Just over a half rated their local play area, average or above.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents felt the Council's maintenance of open spaces was average, above average or excellent
- When asked how responsive the Council had been to issues relating to protection of local spaces, approximately a third had not directly experienced this so declined to answer. Of those that did, a third stated that SBC had been very extremely, very or somewhat responsive.
- Our technical report stated that there was sufficient open space in each of the types of space. However when asked if residents agreed, less than half agreed.

It is not possible to feedback on all individual items that were raised as contact details were not collected in the survey. However all specific items of feedback have been passed onto the relevant officers to action. Below is a summary of the topics we received feedback on from both residents and the Town and Parish Councils.

<b>Comments topic</b>	<b>SBC Response and action</b>
Accessible play equipment and Changing Places	<p>There were a number of comments about improving play facilities for disabled people. The Strategy refers to Flagship sites that will have a wider focus on a range of groups. All new playground developments are specified to have accessible equipment within them. Future projects are being looked at including within our bid for Heritage Lottery Funding at Faversham Recreation Ground.</p> <p>Changing Places are provided at strategic locations across the county by Kent County Council. We are working with them to look at future options within Swale. Unfortunately it was not possible to fund this as part of the Faversham recreation Ground bid but we</p>

	<p>are researching other possible funding streams that would support a project for this.</p> <p>On the basis of the feedback we have added a new target in the vision to ‘Support the development of facilities in open spaces to recognise the needs of users with disabilities’.</p>
<p>Inequality of spend across each of the towns</p>	<p>Expenditure is often linked to new housing developments and these amounts need to be spent within a certain distance of the development so we are guided by these agreements.</p> <p>However the grounds maintenance standards are the same across all areas of the Borough.</p> <p>Furthermore the rolling programme of playground improvements will be split equally over the towns.</p>
<p>Removing / Replacing trees</p>	<p>The Council has a Tree Policy that ensures the protection of existing and encourages the planting of more. We have recently assessed all of our groups of trees and will only remove them if absolutely necessary.</p> <p>Recent press articles have referred to a shortage of trees in the Sheerness and Sittingbourne town areas. The technical assessment recognises that we have sufficient forest/woodland across the Borough but we will work developers through the planning process to ensure tree planting is a priority.</p> <p>Care will be taken in selecting the right species and providing the right protection in the early growth period when we are planting new trees.</p> <p>Some individual comments referred to locations with issues on pavements/roads. Kent County Council is responsible for trees on roads and pavements.</p>
<p>Over development on green spaces</p>	<p>We assume that the respondent means development in the open countryside because we rarely allow development on existing open spaces within built up area boundaries. Land is developed in the countryside if it is allocated through the Local Plan, to meet the housing and employment targets of the borough. In those circumstances the Council allocate land in the most sustainable and least environmentally sensitive locations.</p> <p>The currently adopted Local Plan introduced Local</p>

	<p>Green Spaces designations which were nominated by members of the community. Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. The Council has designated over 410 hectares of Local Green Spaces.</p>
<p>Policy to not adopt new open spaces or play facilities will lead to reduced maintenance by other organisations</p>	<p>A number of comments were received about this change in policy both from residents and stakeholders.</p> <p>We have amended the strategy to strengthen our position and will develop a process which will consider a range of options for future management of open spaces including looking at national guidelines and reinforcing the terms of section 106 agreements for management companies.</p>
<p>More focus needed on supervision of parks</p>	<p>A whole range of Council contractors and staff visit our parks on a daily or weekly basis.</p>
<p>Outdoor gyms</p> <p>Comments received for and against these sites.</p>	<p>The provision of outdoor gyms compliments our Active Lives Framework offering free and easy to access facilities for physical activity. It is important we focus on adults as much as young people. We are looking at new technology to help measure their impact and will be 'activating' the sites through the provision of guided sessions with instructors.</p>
<p>Improved horticultural practice / planting</p>	<p>There inevitably needs to be a balance between maintaining areas to a good standard of horticulture and the budgets available for the service. We focus on areas with high footfall for enhanced planting and presentation such as the main parks, arterial routes in to the Borough and high street areas.</p> <p>We are always keen to work with local voluntary groups to help us enhance the position which is evident from our funding of the In-Bloom co-ordinator and localised groups.</p>

## SBC POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018)

Comments topic	SBC Response and action
Recommended amending Strategy date: 2018-2022 to align with local plan	Strategy amended
Welcomed decision to not have a play area on every new development	Noted
Welcomed £100,000 investment per year for five years on other existing open spaces	Noted
Queried how funding was going to be achieved	Developer contributions such as Section 106
Was the consultants technical report going to be made public?	Published on the Council's website March 2018
How open spaces that were surplus to requirements were assessed and raised concern that fewer play areas could have an impact on obesity issues.	The principle of potentially losing an open space/play area would be discussed with the Cabinet Member and Ward Member(s) based on a technical report audit criteria assessment: quality, community value, accessibility to alternative sites and usage. Strategy amended
Recommendation (F) concerns raised about the use of management companies to manage open spaces as part of a development site	Develop a process which will consider a range of options for future management of open spaces including looking at national guidelines, reinforcing the terms of section 106 agreements for management companies and consultation with ward members. Section 2 para 2.3 & para 2.5
Amendments to the strategy	Section 1 para 1.4 add 'subject to external assessment'
Flagship Play Sites	Replace Sheppey with Sheerness
Strengthen the wording in relation to facilities for disabled people, and look into facilities for adults for an emotional/holistic approach.	Para 1.6 Vision: add 5 <sup>th</sup> guiding principle.
Green Flags targets	Para 2.5c add: 'at least'
Agreed that Ward Members should be included in discussions when play areas were considered for disposal	Para 2.5 reword action D and added to 1.4 fifth bullet point
Play area assessment criteria: 20 minutes walking distance and also to add parking to the criteria.	Consider possible changes to existing assessment criteria in line with nationally agreed standard criteria. Added to Strategy appendix.