



BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Update report for Community Organisation, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel 5 April 2006

DATE: 3 April 2006

RE: Walsall Green Space Strategy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Green Spaces Working Group / Scrutiny Panel about progress on developing the Walsall Green Space Strategy.

2. Audit and Assessment Report

The Audit and Assessment stages of the Green Space Strategy have been completed. The Final Audit and Assessment Report was supplied to Walsall Council on 20 February 2006. Copies of the LNP and New Deal Reports have been supplied to each LNP and New Deal for comment.

3. Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

A draft SPD for Open Space, Sport and Recreation has been produced by the Council's Planning Policy Team based on the findings of the Audit and Assessment stages of the Green Space Strategy and with guidance from the consultants about the content and suitable framework for such a document.

The Draft SPD was put out to public consultation for a three week period and 65 comments were received.

The SPD on Open Space Sport and Recreation will be considered by Cabinet on 12 April 2006.

4. Strategy Consultation

A number of consultation events and exercises have been held to gain the views of various stakeholders. The consultation has included

- Members Workshop
- LNP Workshops

- Staff Consultation
- User and specialist groups
- Household Survey

5.0 Strategy Development

The Green Space Strategy is currently being developed by the Consultants with the close involvement of Walsall Council Officers.

However, before the draft Strategy can be produced for presentation to the Green Spaces Working Groups and Scrutiny Committee some further work is required to resolve the following issues;

- Supply of detailed information regarding the historical levels of funding by the Council for Green Spaces
- Supply of detailed information regarding the historical staffing structures within the authority with regard to Green Spaces
- Limited response from the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and New Deal regarding the findings of the Audit and Assessment

Difficulties have been encountered by Council Officers in sourcing the information relating to budgets and staffing levels in order to undertake some trend analysis of these areas affecting service delivery. This has been due to the service not having an established procedure for maintaining such historical records and the current vacancy for the head of service with responsibility for Green Spaces.

There has been only one response from Blakenall and Bloxwich LNP with regard to the Green Space Audit and Assessment. A reminder was sent to the remaining LNPs and New Deal but no further comments have not been received to date. This is currently being followed up to ensure that the necessary steps are undertaken to gain the views of the LNPs so that they may be incorporated into the draft Green Space Strategy.

6.0 Next Steps

The Consultants will continue to draft the Strategy which will be presented to a future meeting of the Green Spaces Working Group / Scrutiny Committee. A summary of the Strategy will also go out to public consultation prior to presentation to Cabinet in July 2006.