

| <b>REPORT TO</b> | <b>DATE OF MEETING</b> |
|------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Cabinet</b>   | <b>5 November 2014</b> |

Report template revised June 2008



| <b>SUBJECT</b>                 | <b>PORTFOLIO</b>                      | <b>AUTHOR</b>       | <b>ITEM</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| <b>Worden Park Vision Plan</b> | <b>Neighbourhoods and Streetscene</b> | <b>Mark Gaffney</b> |             |

## **SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

The Worden Park Vision Plan is a high level plan which sets out the long term vision for the park and its buildings. Producing a Worden Park Vision Plan is a corporate plan action. The Scrutiny Committee also carried out a review of Worden Park with one of their recommendations being to produce a vision plan for the park. This was in line with the work that had already commenced against the corporate plan action.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet agree to adopt the Worden Park Vision Plan.

## **DETAILS AND REASONING**

### **Background**

Worden Park is reputed to be one of the most visited parks in the North West Region with over 250,000 visitors per year. The park also holds the record of being the only park north of London to have been awarded the Green Flag Award, the national standard for parks and open spaces, from the first round of awards in 1997 and to have retained it every year since.

Although works are carried out year on year to maintain and improve the park, a number of elements require capital investment to conserve them for the future and provide high quality infrastructure and facilities able to cater for the number of visits the park now receives. This has been recognised by the Council and has been reflected through a key action in the Corporate Plan which states that we will “work to enhance Worden Park as a local asset and visitor attraction”. To produce a vision plan will help support this action by outlining the works required to conserve and develop the park’s built infrastructure, landscape and facilities aiming to maintain the site as one of principal public parks in the North West Region.

In the preparation of the plan Ward Members, Worden Friends Group and the Tenants Group have been consulted as well as taking on board general customer feedback with regard to the park. The Scrutiny Committee has also considered the plan and as part of the ongoing consultation and communication the plan will be taken to the December My Neighbourhood Forum. Feedback from these stakeholders has been incorporated into the plan and this will be continuous as the plan progresses over future years.

### **Purpose of the Vision Plan**

The plan seeks to build upon the park’s success and develop the potential to increase visitor numbers even further, which will bring about wider economic benefits for the wider area. Whilst this in itself is positive, it does bring about the added challenge of managing and resourcing an already busy and often under pressure facility.

The **aims** of the plan are to provide a park that is:

- Accessible, identifiable and promotes a culture of pride and belonging
- Appealing to those visiting the area
- Attractive to those considering settling in the area
- Responsive to the needs of residents and visitors

To achieve the aims the following **objectives** have been identified:

- Maintaining and restoring the park's historic features and infrastructure
- Conserve and enhance the ecological value of the park
- Meet visitor expectations and improve the facilities on offer to visitors
- Develop the central core of the park ensuring full occupation of the Hall Complex and associated buildings and provide an attractive offer to residents and visitors
- Develop a Communications Strategy for the park

The borough is entering exciting times with many potential opportunities such as the City Deal and the resultant growth in the borough. It is therefore important to put the plan in place so that should potential funding opportunities become available in the future, the Council is in a position to respond in a planned and prioritised way.

The plan is intended to set out the high level aspirations for the park over a 20 year period. It is not intended to be a detailed programme of work with costings because the funding cannot at this stage be predicted over a 20 year period. Therefore it is impossible to programme a schedule of works. Worden Park is a significant and important asset to the Council and the borough. It is important that any future improvement schemes are prioritised, complementary and developed in a joined up way that supports how the Council wants to see the park develop in the future. The best way to achieve this is through the high level vision plan that enables future improvement schemes to be implemented appropriately over a long time period that systematically achieves the vision. Without the plan there is a risk that future works could be ad-hoc and not joined up to achieve the vision.

Detailed programmes of work will be scheduled over the life of the plan and subject to funding becoming available. The current version of the plan can only be considered as the starting point as the plan must be considered as a living document which will be updated regularly over its anticipated 20 year period.

Some elements of the improvements are achievable within existing resources; however, with much of the plan being largely unfunded and also aspirational, it will be important to manage expectations at a realistic level. Communications and promotion are therefore an essential element of the plan.

### **Progress and Successes so Far**

Whilst the plan is a long term aspirational vision for the park, significant progress has already been achieved during the 4 year life of the current Corporate Plan. Whilst funding in the current climate is difficult to predict, the Council has committed capital investment of £600,000 to maintain the infrastructure and improve parks and open spaces across the borough. As a major park some of this funding is contributing towards achieving the vision for Worden Park. Also in partnership with the Brothers of Charity £100,000 of funding was secured to improve the walled garden which now opens to visitors. Recent improvements achieved during the period of the current Corporate Plan include:

- ✓ Repaired all the paths, drainage and gates around the historic formal gardens and turning circle and replanted the knot garden
- ✓ Completed the phase 1 improvements to the walled garden in partnership with the Brothers of Charity

- ✓ Restored the park's historic North Lodge entrance to the park
- ✓ Installed new equipment in the children's playground
- ✓ Installed a pedestrian bridge over Cricketer's Brook
- ✓ Installed a flood alleviation scheme at Parkgate Drive/Cricketer's Brook
- ✓ Installed a footpath/cycleway from the Cricketer's Brook bridge to the playground providing a new route around the northern side of the playground which is open to dog walkers
- ✓ Resurfaced the footpath/cycleway from the North Lodge entrance to the playground
- ✓ Resurfaced the hall courtyards in preparation for new surface dressing and landscaping
- ✓ Resurfacing of the footpath from the hall complex to the walled garden
- ✓ Re-landscaped the Arboretum Pond.
- ✓ Improved night time security, closing the park to vehicles at the published times
- ✓ Work is well underway on the overflow car park on Moon's Field

Further improvements will be progressed as funding becomes available.

## WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

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| <b>FINANCIAL</b> | There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. |
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| <b>LEGAL</b> | There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report. |
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| <b>RISK</b> | Whilst the plan is positive and represents the future vision and aspirations for the park, there is a risk to its future delivery which is subject to funding becoming available. Managing expectations and communications are therefore an important and essential element in how the plan is taken forward over future years. |
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| <b>THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY</b> | There are no immediate impacts on equality from the plan. Future schemes will be assessed for their impacts as they are developed. |
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| <b>OTHER (see below)</b> | The plan has an impact in most of the areas below which must be taken in to consideration throughout the delivery period of the plan. |
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|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Asset Management</i>                           | <i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>            | <i>Crime and Disorder</i>                 | <i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i> |
| <i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i> | <i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i> | <i>Health and Safety</i>                  | <i>Health Inequalities</i>                |
| <i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>                      | <i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>      | <i>Staffing, Training and Development</i> | <i>Sustainability</i>                     |

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None