

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 13 September 2011

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT Aberdeen Open Space Strategy

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/11/193

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to adopt the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy. The Draft Aberdeen Open Space Strategy was approved by Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure committee for eight week public consultation on 15 March 2011. The Strategy will replace the Parks and Green Space Strategy 2005 and Aberdeen's Strategy for Access to the Outdoors 2004. The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy has been prepared in line with Scottish Planning Policy and national best practice guidelines.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Approve proposed changes to the Draft Open Space Strategy.
2. Adopt the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy based on Draft Open Space Strategy with proposed changes.
3. Approve the changes made to the Environmental Report as a result of the public consultation.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016 has been prepared within existing budgets. This Strategy considers the Council's five year business plan for delivering best value for its citizens and improving the quality of life in Aberdeen.

- 3.2 It should be noted that this Strategy may have capital and revenue implications as a result of future projects required to implement the Strategy. This will be mainly staff time in implementing the action plan. However, the current financial situation has been regarded as a core consideration throughout the Strategy's development, and it aims to reduce internal expenses through partnership working, involving communities and finding innovative ways of working. Any additional

costs will be required to be met from current budgets will be referred to Committee for approval.

- 3.3 Resources to deliver the Strategy and key actions are listed in the Open Space Strategy chapter 5 and chapter 7 action plan.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Strategy itself includes consideration of all legal and environmental sustainability issues. It meets the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy and supports the Aberdeen Local Development Plan. An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the Draft Open Space Strategy. There were no implications resulting from the EHRIA and no changes were proposed. An updated EHRIA for the Open Space Strategy is available in the Members' Library and at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>

- 4.2 Aberdeen Open Space Strategy was subject to full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In response to the comments received on the scoping report from the consultation authorities, the Environmental Report was prepared in line with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The SEA Environmental Report was consulted on at the same time as the Open Space Strategy. The report was sent to SEA gateway for consultation. Comments received from the Consultation Authorities have been incorporated in the Environmental Report. The comments available to view at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/SustainableDevelopment/14587/SEAG>
The Open Space Strategy must take account of the mitigation measures highlighted in the SEA.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 Scottish Planning Policy and Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65, states that local authorities should carry out an audit of open spaces and use this to prepare an open space Strategy.

- 5.2 The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy sets out a vision for new and improved open spaces in the City and aims to benefit people, health, the economy and the environment. The Strategy addresses the deficiencies identified in the 2010 open space audit. Details are provided in the open space audit report at: <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>

- 5.3 The Strategy was out for consultation for eight weeks from 20 May to 15 July 2011. A copy of the consultative draft is available to view at the Members' Library and at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>
Members of the public were informed by issuing a press release in the local news paper. Individual invitations were also sent to the partners and Community Councils.

- 5.4 Twenty responses were received. A summary of the each consultation response along with a reply from officers and any proposed changes to the Strategy is available in the Members' Library and at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace> Responses were generally positive and supportive of the Strategy. Some responses were concerned about the protection, enhancement and improvement of open spaces in the city. Respondents were also concerned about the loss of open spaces due to pressures from development and would like to see open spaces protected and enhanced.
- 5.5 The public is aware of the role open spaces play in our society, economy and the environment. The importance of green space network and its role in connecting habitats and species and multifunctional use is welcomed in the Strategy.
- 5.6 People are concerned about the delivery of the Open Space Strategy and its action plan under the current financial situation and wonder how best it can be delivered in the proposed time scale. This has been addressed in the Strategy under chapter 5 delivery and chapter 7 action plan. The Strategy takes a partnership working approach towards its delivery involving various partners, communities, business, youth and all the parties interested in improving open spaces and the environment in the city.
- 5.7 The Strategy considers different types of open space, including public parks and gardens, informal amenity space, woodland, natural and semi-natural areas, play space, sports areas, green corridors and civic space. The Strategy covers the whole of Aberdeen, excluding private gardens, farmland and land outwith 500 metres of built up areas, in line with PAN 65.
- 5.8 The Adopted Aberdeen Local Plan and proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan require an Open Space Strategy to be prepared in order to provide a strategic framework for protecting, creating, connecting and improving the city's open spaces. The Strategy supports the Aberdeen Local Development Plan and natural heritage policies.
- 5.9 The Open Space Strategy has been prepared using the Open Space Audit results and thorough community and stakeholder consultations carried out from March to December 2010. This included six community consultation events throughout the city, several workshops with a wide range of stakeholders, meeting with the Aberdeen Youth Council and providing a drop-in session for Elected Members.
- 5.10 The events focused on the open space audit findings and invited communities and other stakeholders to comment on their local open spaces.

- 5.11 Further details are provided in the Draft Aberdeen Open Space Strategy, which is available in the Members' Library and at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>. As these are large documents, and in the interest of efficient use of resources, copies of the Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA Environmental Report and proposed changes are available in the Members' Library at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>.

6. IMPACT

- 6.1 The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy will help meet the Five Year Business Plan and will link with the Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking commitment to "adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges". It will also assist the Council in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement's National Outcome 12 - "We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations" and contributes to several other outcomes such as No. 6 - "We live longer, healthier lives", No. 7 - "Tackling inequalities", No. 10 - "We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need" and No. 11 - "Strong, resilient and supportive communities".

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Proposed changes to the Open Space Strategy
2. Draft Aberdeen Open Space Strategy
3. SEA Environmental Report with proposed changes
(The above three documents are available in the Members Library and at <http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace>).
4. SEA Consultation Authorities Response on Environmental Report.
(The above document is available in the Members Library and at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/SustainableDevelopment/14587/SEAG>
5. Aberdeen Greenspace Mapping October 2007
6. Aberdeen Greenspace Audit Draft Report August 2007
7. Greenspace Quality- A guide to assessment, planning and strategic development
8. Open Space Audit Report 2010
9. Planning Advice Note PAN 65
10. Proposed Draft Open Space Supplementary Guidance March 2011
11. Scottish Planning Policy

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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