

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 21 May 2013

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT First Annual Monitoring Progress Report Aberdeen Open
Space Strategy 2011-2016

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/13/092

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to show progress on the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy since its adoption in September 2011. The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy was approved by Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure committee on 13 September 2011. We made the commitment that we will report the progress on annual basis against the actions highlighted in the Strategy. This is the first report since the publication of the Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Note the progress made in delivering the Open Space Strategy against the indicators provided in chapter 7 of the Strategy.
2. Approve the first annual monitoring progress report of the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The first annual monitoring report on Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016 has no direct cost implications.

3.2 It should be noted that the delivery of the Strategy requires capital and revenue funding to deliver the future projects to implement the Strategy. Various officers are involved in the delivery of the Strategy at various levels and considerable amount of staff time has been spent to implement the action plan. Officers were involved in various projects working in partnership, involving communities and public finding innovative ways of working and exploring funding.

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 report fully takes into account the 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 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). The Strategy must take account of the mitigation measures highlighted in the SEA. The outcome of the current monitoring of the Strategy against key objectives and targets required under the environmental report shows that the Strategy has a positive impact on the environment. However no resources have been spent to further enhance those positive impacts.
- 4.3 Limited financial resources have been the key issue in delivering the Open Space Strategy as most of the actions require considerable financial resources. Under the current financial situation it is not possible to deliver all the action according to their timescale. In order to deliver the Strategy more community involvement and partnership working approaches involving various partners, business, schools and other institutions were adopted and would be continued in the future.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The Scottish Planning Policy and Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65, states that planning authorities and developers should identify opportunities to create and enhance open spaces and avoid fragmentation. 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.
- 5.2 The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy annual monitoring report shows good progress in meeting Scottish Planning Policy objectives para 154 and 155 in creating and enhancing green networks. An innovative Geographic Information System (GIS) tool has been developed by the Council to promote, enhance and create green networks across the City. The GIS tool has been developed in house by Council Officers without using external consultants making significant savings to the Council.

- 5.3 The importance of the Green Space Network and its role in connecting habitats and species and multifunctional use is promoted in the Strategy. Developers are engaged through the process of masterplanning process to consider the Green Space Network as a valuable open space.
- 5.6 Access to the open spaces have been improved where resources were available. Publicity and promotion material has been produced to encourage better access to open spaces and to promote the use of open spaces for the benefits they provide in improving healthy lifestyles.
- 5.7 New community groups have been established who have taken over the responsibility of their local open spaces. These groups have been involved in developing open space management and maintenance plans. Open spaces are promoted for out door learning and school children have been involved in various activities.
- 5.8 Major improvement work has been carried out under the Duthie Park Restoration project and various activities were held by the Housing and Environment service. Work is underway to get the Green Flag status for Duthie Park. Events were held in parks and open spaces to promote their use. Various events are organized under different projects across the city.
- 5.9 Work has been undertaken to tackle challenges of climate change and the role of open spaces in mitigating its impacts. A pilot project at Hazlehead Park has been initiated by Green Space Scotland working with the communities and the Council to design and manage the park to meet the Climate Change challenges and its adaptation.
- 5.10 Aberdeen Trees and Woodland Strategy, Aberdeen Pitch Strategy and Play Strategy are in progress which will help improve the quality of our open spaces and the natural environment.
- 5.11 The policies in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan have been promoted to protect and enhance open spaces. Developers are encouraged to use Open Space Supplementary Guidance. Poor quality open spaces have been the major issue identified in the Open Space Audit 2010. Masterplanning process has been used to improve the quality and design of the new open spaces. Officers in the Environmental Policy Team have worked on more than 6 masterplans and provided input to create new better quality open spaces and where opportunities are not available to create open new open spaces developers are encouraged to improve the quality of existing open spaces in the area.
- 5.12 Surveys have been carried out to assess the quality of open spaces across the City. Aberdeen City Voice Survey results shows that the majority of the public is satisfied with the quality of open spaces in the

City. However residents living in the North and Central part of the city are not satisfied with the quality of open spaces in their area. These results reflect the findings of the Aberdeen Open Space Audit 2010. More work is required in the future to improve the quality of open spaces in these areas.

6. IMPACT

- 6.1 The Aberdeen Open Space Strategy annual progress monitoring report demonstrates the contribution towards meeting the Five Year Business Plan and smarter city vision to provide smarter environment, clean, safe and attractive streetscape, promote biodiversity and nature conservation and encourage wider access to green space in our streets, parks and countryside. It also assisted 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. Aberdeen Open Space Strategy
2. Open Space Supplementary Guidance
3. SEA Environmental Report
4. Open Space Audit Report 2010
5. Planning Advice Note PAN 65
6. Scottish Planning Policy
7. Aberdeen City Voice report 27
8. Committee Report on 'Designated Sites Review Recommendations', 13 September 2011, EP&I, report number EPI/11/134.

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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APPENDICES

1. Aberdeen Open Space Strategy Annual Monitoring Report
September 2011- April 2013