

## Appendix 4 – Pre-Consultative Draft Strategy Consultation Report

### 1.0 Introduction

A programme of pre-consultative draft strategy consultation was undertaken as part of the Policy Development Panel process. The purpose of the consultation was to inform the preparation of the consultative draft Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan. The programme of consultation included:

- A seminar for elected members;
- A seminar for organisations with an interest in parks and open spaces
- A survey of officers involved in the management and maintenance of parks and open spaces
- A questionnaire about attitudes to and use of parks and open spaces which was distributed to the Citizens' Panel.

### 2.0 Members' Seminar

The members' seminar took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014 and, other than Council officers and members of the policy development panel, was attended by 7 elected members and 1 member of the public representing Friends of Dollar Park. The format of the seminar was as follows:

Item	Content
1. Convener's address	Welcome and introduction to the seminar.
2. Scene setting	An overview of the national picture surrounding parks and open space investment.
3. Falkirk Community Trust (FCT)	Update on the work being undertaken by FCT in relation to parks management plans and current investment programme.
4. Corporate and Neighbourhood Services (C&NS) update	Update on the work being undertaken by (C&NS) in relation to individual park masterplans and current investment programme.
5. 2013 Open Space Audit Summary	Summary of the process and findings of the 2013 open space audit and 2014 accessibility analysis.
6. Strategic Choices	An outline of the strategic choices facing the Council which the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan will have to address.
7. Visions of open space in Falkirk	Sticky dot exercise which asks members to prioritise which qualities they would like to see Falkirk's parks and open spaces having in the future. Members will be able to do this whilst having a coffee break.  This will be followed by a summary of what the results of the exercise appear to be telling us about the

8. Feedback	members' priorities and open discussions about why the members made the choices they did. Open discussion allowing members the opportunity to voice any concerns they have about parks and open spaces in the Council area which they want the review of the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan to address.
9. Convener	Close of Seminar

Analysis of the results of the Strategic Choices workshop and recommendations for Strategy drafting can be seen in annex 1. Analysis of the results of the Visions of Open Space workshop can be seen in annex 2.

Following the seminar copies of the presentations given were circulated.

### 3.0 Stakeholders' Seminar

The stakeholders' seminar took place on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and, other than Council officers and members of the policy development panel, was attended by 25 people representing the following organisations:

- 11 Community Councils;
- 4 "Friends of" groups;
- Friends of the Earth Falkirk;
- Falkirk Allotment Society;
- Scottish Natural Heritage;
- Fields in Trust;
- LEADER;
- Forestry Commission Scotland;
- NHS Forth Valley;
- Central Scotland Green Network Trust; and
- Sportscotland.

The format of the seminar was as follows:

Item	Content
1. Registration	A chance to meet fellow delegates before proceedings start and have a hot drink
2. Convener's address	Welcome and introduction to the seminar
3. Scene setting	An overview of the national picture surrounding parks and open space investment
4. Visions of open space in Falkirk	After a short introduction from David Crighton, delegates will be asked to discuss, in groups, the different features of open space which are in front of them and reach consensus as to which feature is the most important and which feature is the least important. Groups will then be asked to feed back

	justifying their choices.
5. 2013 Open Space Audit Summary	Summary of the process and findings of the 2013 open space audit and 2014 accessibility analysis
6. Strategic Choices & Refreshments	Delegates will be asked to look at a range of strategic choices facing the Council which the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan will have to address and consider the positive and negative consequences of each choice. Facilitators will feed back the results of this exercise and encourage further discussion around any of the points raised
7. Council and Community Trust Update	Update of work being undertaken by FCT in relation to parks management plans and current investment programme and by Falkirk Council in relation to park masterplans and the current investment programme
8. Questions and Answers	An opportunity for delegates to raise any questions they might have about the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan review process or anything else that has come up in discussions
9. Convener	Close of Seminar

Analysis of the results of the Strategic Choices workshop and recommendations for Strategy drafting can be seen in annex 1. Analysis of the results of the visions of open space workshop and recommendations for Strategy drafting can be seen in annex 3.

Following the seminar copies of the presentations given were circulated.

#### 4.0 Officers' Survey

A survey was circulated on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to officers representing various services of the Council and Falkirk Community Trust. The survey explored the following issues:

- How can the Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan affect the day to day business of the Council and Falkirk Community Trust;
- How the Strategy can assist with service delivery;
- What challenges lie ahead; and
- How the Strategy can help to deliver services more efficiently.

The survey was completed by 12 officers representing the following services:

- Development Services:
  - Development Planning Team
  - Environmental Planning Team
  - Development Management Unit

- Asset Management Unit
  - Development Control and Flooding Team
- Corporate and Neighbourhood Services:
  - Operational Services
- Falkirk Community Trust:
  - Physical Activity – Active Schools
  - Physical Activity - Recreation

Analysis of feedback received can be seen in annex 4.

## **5.0 Citizens' Panel Questionnaire**

The Citizens' panel questionnaire was circulated on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to members of the Council's Citizens' Panel. The questionnaire was completed by 467 members of the Citizens' panel.

The questionnaire asked questions about peoples attitudes towards and use of:

- The Council area's 5 large parks (The Helix, Falkirk Wheel, Callendar Park, Muiravonside Park and Kinneil Estate)
- Other smaller, more local parks; and
- Other outdoor spaces such as nature reserves, the canal or woodland areas

It also asked respondents who rarely or never use parks or open spaces, what the main reasons for this were.

Finally the questionnaire asked which of the following five options should be the Council's top priority for spending on parks and open spaces:

- The five big parks which are used by tourists and people from the whole of Falkirk; or
- Local parks and open spaces that are used mainly by local people; or
- Parks and open spaces in areas of social disadvantage; or
- The towns or villages which have poorer quality parks and open spaces; or
- Creating new parks and open spaces in areas which do not have them.

Analysis of feedback can be seen in annex 5.

## **6.0 Summary of Issues to be addressed by the consultative draft Strategy**

The following paragraphs draw together the issues raised during the pre-consultative draft engagement exercise which the consultative draft Strategy should aim to address:

### Modernising our parks and open spaces to deliver multiple benefits

The quality of our large parks and open spaces should be retained as they are highly valued by residents and visitors alike. In the past, capital investment by the council has been focussed on improving the 7 Core Parks and the creation of the Helix. This has had the effect of improving the quality of the Core Parks from an average of 2.87 in 2007 to 3.44 in 2013. The strategy should now refocus spend on improving:

- poorer quality parks and open spaces in areas where there is no better quality alternative provision; and
- parks and open spaces which are particularly valued by the local community.

The Strategy should support the development of standardised corporate signage, information points and park furniture, and recognise the value of traditional sports and playspace offering within the Council area whilst also supporting exploring opportunities to extend the provision of less traditional sports facilities such as bmx, pump and skate parks and introduce areas of natural play.

The Strategy should aim to increase the amount of people who walk, run or cycle to open space as the results of the Citizens Panel survey appear to indicate poor performance in this area.

Dog fouling appears to be a significant barrier to people's use of parks and open spaces with approximately 1 in 10 people choosing to rarely or never visit parks and open spaces because of it. The Strategy should endorse a drive towards eradicating the problem.

The Strategy should support the enhancement of the biodiversity value of parks and open spaces.

The Strategy should establish the principle of using parks and open spaces to deal with flood risk issues where feasible.

### Addressing inequality and fostering community through open space investment

The Strategy should give investment priority to areas and open spaces which need improved rather than trying to spread investment equally across all

communities. The Strategy will need to articulate a compelling rationale for this, as some communities may perceive that they are missing out.

The Strategy should promote the ring fencing of a proportion of open space investment resources to open space projects where local communities are prepared to get involved in the management of the open space and raise funds or volunteer their time productively.

#### Working and investing more efficiently

The Strategy should promote a change of maintenance regimes in open spaces of lower level importance to save money and enhance biodiversity. Examples of the benefits this can provide should be given to reassure the public.

The strategy should prioritise opportunities for shortening the walking distances to parks and open spaces through creation of new entrance points and improving permeability throughout the surrounding paths network above creating new open spaces or new functions within existing open spaces.

The Strategy should promote the prioritisation of investment priorities to address needs and demand. If some of these priorities are able to attract partnership funding, then these should be pursued in advance of those which are not able to attract partnership funding.

The Strategy should support a change of play area accessibility standards, to allow a rationalisation of the Council's current portfolio and a refocusing on a smaller number of better quality facilities.

The Strategy should aim to align its goals with those of other related Council Strategies, most notably Falkirk Greenspace, A Strategy for our Green Network.

#### Generating capital for investment in open space

In order to generate capital for investment in open space improvements and achieve revenue budget savings, the Strategy should: endorse the principle of disposing of open spaces which are surplus to requirements; set out the rules that will be used to determine which open spaces can be disposed of and how revenues should be re-invested; and illustrate how this would work through providing examples across a range of settlements.

The Strategy should promote the establishment of a scheme of charging for the commercial use of parks and open spaces. Care will be needed to ensure that the scheme of charging does not have any unwanted negative effects such as discouraging people to take outdoor exercise.

The Strategy should support the principle of commercialising parts of the parks and open space resource to generate revenues for future open space investment. It should recommend that a study is undertaken to identify what

opportunities there are to commercialise the resource and develop a business case for this.