

ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 - 2021



Prepared by

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary enables readers to understand the main ideas of the management plan. The summary follows the guidance provided by the Green Flag Award desktop assessment. The aims and objectives of the management plan follow the Green Flag Award judging criteria. The executive summary, together with the main plan and the appendices provide details of the management of the park.

The Alexandra Recreation Ground Management Plan covers a five year period from 2017 – 2021.

Parts 2 – 4 explain the purpose of the plan, an overview of how we manage and maintain the park, and records the key features of the past and present.

Part 5 addresses the key criteria set by the Green Flag Award

5.1 – A Welcoming Place, states information relating to access, signs and facilities.

5.2 – Healthy, Safe and Secure, gives details of our Health & Safety Policies, the Ranger Service, emergency procedures and contacts, park security including CCTV. This section also discusses the steps we take to curtail irresponsible dog ownership. We discuss how we work with the Police and outlines the byelaws that apply to Alexandra Recreation Ground.

5.3 – Clean and Well Maintained, in this section we look at how the maintenance work is scheduled and carried out by the Streetcare department and how the quality of work is monitored. There is particular reference to litter, graffiti, and grounds maintenance. This section also focuses on the maintenance of the pavilion and arboriculture maintenance, both of which are provided by other departments of the Council.

5.4 - Sustainability relates to environmental sustainability and details our aims in relation to use of organic material and recycling. In this section, we detail how we use pesticides and our policy not to use peat. In general, we take our guidance from the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Environmental Policy.

5.5 – Conservation and Heritage, looks at Agenda 21 and Epsom & Ewell’s Biodiversity/Sustainability Plans. We also reference the Council’s Green Spaces Strategy and the Green Infrastructure. This section also explains the steps we take to protect and encourage ecology and wildlife in Alexandra Recreation Ground.

5.6 – Community Involvement is an area in which we are exceptionally lucky to have the support of a long established Friends Group. Alexandra Recreation Ground Friends provide an additional resource that helps maintain and enhance the park for the enjoyment of the entire community. This section also discusses our relationships with our external partners such as the Martial Arts Centre and the Bowling Club.

5.7 – Marketing, although we do not ‘market’ the park in the commercial sense, we do find out what people want from this space by canvassing their opinions via a Visitor Survey. The point of the survey is to find out what people think about the current state of park and what they would like to see in the future. This important piece of consultation is vital in helping us plan for the next five years and the results feed into Action Plan, found in Appendix A.

Appendix A – The Auriol Park Action Plan is possibly the most important part of the plan as it details how we would like to manage the park over the next five years. Although some of the items detailed in the Action Plan are aspirational and will require specific funding to achieve, we feel it is important to include all items so that we can investigate suitable funding options as they become available.

Appendix B – Provides a copy of the Green Spaces Strategy.

2. INTRODUCTION

Alexandra Recreation Ground is situated in the southern half of the Borough about a quarter of a mile from Epsom Town Centre. It was purchased on 16 December 1898 and is owned by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and managed by the Operational Services department of the Council.

This management plan will identify how Alexandra Recreation Ground is managed using the green flag assessment criteria. The management plan addresses the good practices and recommendations suggested by the Green Flag judges along with further opportunities.

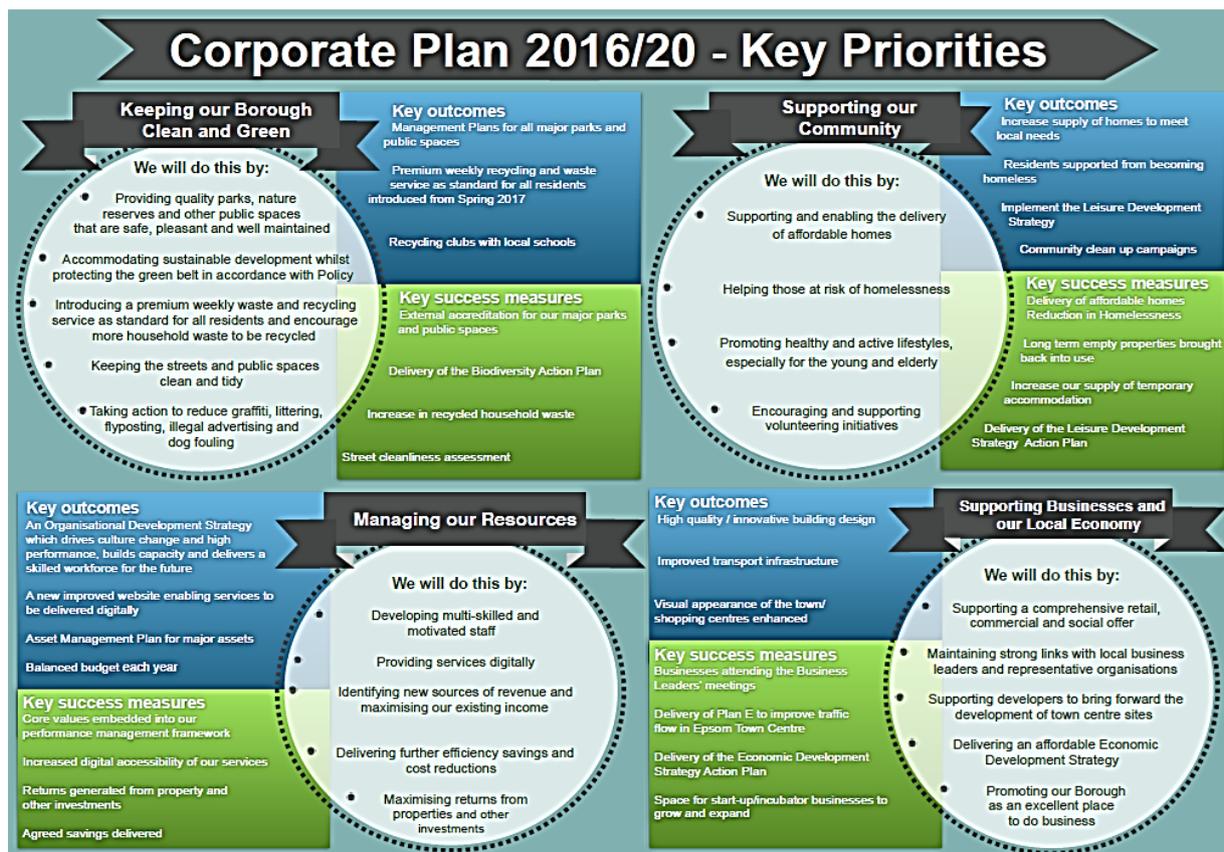
1.1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the management plan is to:

- Ensure that the objectives of management and maintenance are documented
- To identify the resources required to manage and maintain the park
- To assess priorities and challenges for future action
- To encourage and support community involvement
- To promote and market the park
- To monitor and review changes that occur in the park

The management plan has been written to cover a 5-year period. It is a working document that brings together all information relating to Alexandra Recreation Ground. The action plan that works alongside the management plan will be updated and revised on an annual basis as part of the Green Flag award scheme process. The management plan will serve as a benchmark against which delivery and performance objectives can be measured.

1.2. EPSOM & EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES



1.3. THE VISION FOR ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND

Our long-term vision for the park is to:

‘Provide a safe, attractive and sustainable environment for the benefit of all park users now and in the future’

To achieve this vision we have incorporated the key criteria set out in the Green Flag award scheme as a national benchmark for quality standards for public parks.

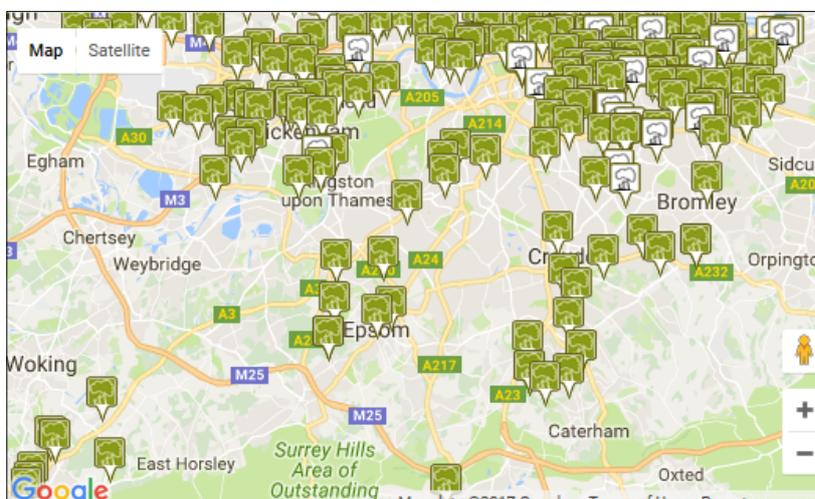


Figure 1 Distribution of Green Flag parks in the South East region

1.4. KEY OBJECTIVES

- To ensure the effective implementation of both financial and staffing resources to deliver a high level of quality management.
- Positively welcome people into the park, in terms of both physical and social access.
- Ensure a healthy, safe and secure experience for park users.
- Provide a well maintained and clean park.
- Improve the environmental quality and sustainability of practices carried out in the park.
- Maintain the restored historic landscape character, whilst ensuring provision for contemporary users.
- Provide opportunities to increase community use and involvement, particularly through events, education and interpretation.
- Ensure effective promotion of the park as a community resource.

1.5. OBJECTIVES OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council work to an annual maintenance schedule involving the Grounds Maintenance team, Street Cleansing team and the Ranger Service. These three teams work in unison to provide a safe, clean and enjoyable environment for all who wish to use Alexandra Recreation Ground.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have strived to ensure its parks and facilities are open to all who wish to use them and you can find good disabled access throughout. To ensure work is completed to Council specification there are policies in place for any issues that arise. When working on public areas such as parks and open spaces these issues tend to be litter (including drug paraphernalia), dog fouling, graffiti and vandalism of equipment. These policies ensure that the Council can continue to keep its parks and open spaces as clean and safe as possible for its users. Regular meetings with the Friends of Alexandra Recreation Ground ensure open communication channels are maintained, allowing the Council to respond to any problems that may arise but more importantly to try and prevent these problems arising in the future.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.6. SITE OVERVIEW

Address

Alexandra Recreation Ground
Alexandra Road
Epsom
Surrey
KT17 4BX

Size

6.11 Hectares

Access

Alexandra Road
Bridge Road
Norman Avenue
Wallace Fields
Windmill Lane

Ownership

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Management & Maintenance

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

Facilities

Under 12's Playground
Basketball courts
Bowling green
Over 12's play area
Cricket pitch
Football Pitches
Football changing facilities
Tennis courts
Multi-use games area (MUGA)
Epsom Martial Arts Centre
Pavilion

1.7. LOCATION OF ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND

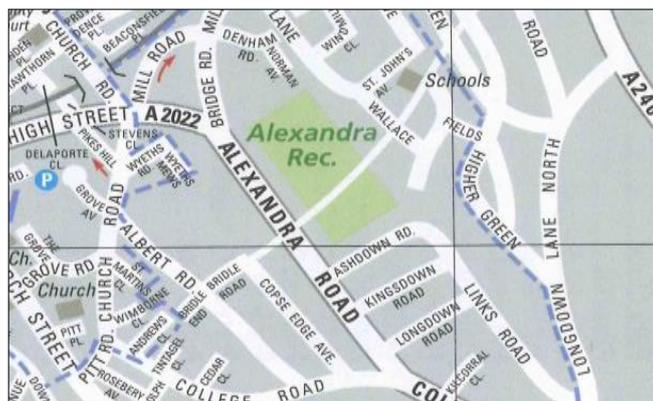


Figure 2: Location of Alexandra Recreation Ground in relation to surrounding roads

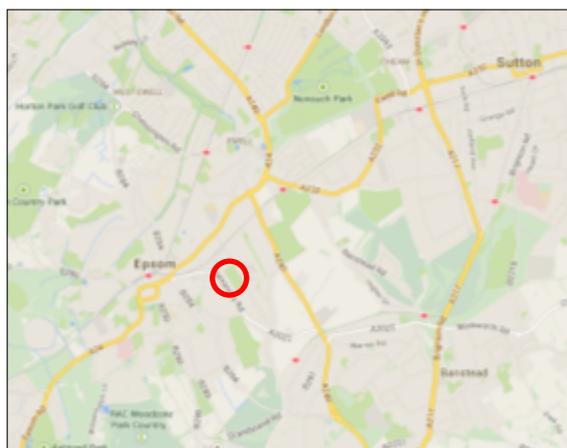


Figure 3: Location of Alexandra Recreation Ground in relation to Epsom town centre



Figure 4: Location of Epsom in relation to London

1.8. HISTORIC CONTEXT

In March 1887, one hundred and ten young men signed a petition for a Recreation Ground. Councillor Beams said that some twelve years ago, there had been one but now lost, but was needed 'with the intention to give young men an opportunity of wholesome and innocent recreation (EUDC Mins). In December, a new ground was proposed, 'a ground where youths may indulge in those games which have done so much for Great Britain, and where those who were part of it, could walk on the turf and breathe fresh air without trespassing (EUDC Mins). A site in Waterloo Road was proposed but the railway bridge would need to be widened and the railway would only pay an eighth of the cost, but later in the month purchase of land somewhere was recommended.

The only land available at the time was away from the centre of the town, but in March 1898 the Misses Butcher offered 15 Acres in Alexandra Road at a cost of £200 per acre. It was thought that the land should be built on but it was not suitable. The land was finally bought by the Council on the 16 December 1898 for £3,197 (roughly £350,000 in today's money) and the park is now Epsom's oldest public park.

"In 1898 the newly formed Council bought it with a Central Government loan, after fierce debate in which expense to ratepayers was justified by recognising the unsuitability of the Downs and Common for organised games, and the need to keep the local youths occupied".

They considered that the park should not be ornamental but 'a place where children could disport themselves as if they were in the country', 'the children of Epsom should always be grateful to the memory of the late Mr G J Beams who was mainly responsible for persuading the Council to buy this lovely stretch of level ground' (Incorporation of E & E 1937). The estimate for the permanent buildings necessary for the Recreation Ground were approximately £1500.

The park was officially opened on 27 June 1901, with a procession which included Fire Engines, both manual and steamer, from Epsom, Sutton, Malden and Coombe and Leatherhead, followed by representatives of local organisations carrying banners, accompanied by the Royal Artillery and Epsom Town Bands. After the opening ceremony performed by Mrs Aston, the local MP's wife, there were races and games for both children and youths, followed by band concerts and dancing (The Herald, Saturday June 29 1901).

Alexandra Recreation Ground was selected for the public celebration of King George V's Coronation on 22 June 1911 and a three feet diameter dial clock for pavilion was provided by the Coronation Committee.

Apart from the religious service at the Congregational church, the inhabitants of the town requested to assemble in the high street at 12 noon and sing 'God save the King'. At 2:30 the children of the parish will march to the Recreation Ground (it was the only one) led by the bands for tea, followed later by children's sports which included 100 yards, three-legged, wheelbarrow and sack races for the big boys, and 100 yards, skipping, egg and spoon and hoop races for the big girls. Here similar events for younger children, there were six prizes for each event. The pavilion was erected and opened by Mr A W Aston, JP on 30 March 1912 and is shown together with the bowling and putting greens, two tennis courts and the public conveniences on the 1915 ordnance survey map.

At the beginning of World War I only two football pitches were in use and during World War I convalescent soldiers were given free use of greens and bowls, but complaints were made to the Brigadier, UPS Brigade about the unnecessary damage to grass from men exercising. In 1916 a promenade dance concert in the park was arranged by the committee of the convalescent hospital at Woodcote Park.

Later in the year, the football pitches were ploughed for potato growing as with most other empty grounds. With the war over, the allotments were levelled and returned to football pitches and in July 1919, another civic event 'European war, 1914-1919, Peace Celebrations' took place in the high street and in the Recreation Ground, with a program very similar to that of the coronation.

During the 1920s and 1930s, contributions came from a variety of sources: boys from Dr Barnardos home in East Street put in considerable work on local cricket pitches and the putting green was laid out by unemployed labour. In 1933, again unemployed men were to be engaged over Christmas on marking out parking spaces. In 1927 a Weathervane was donated for the pavilion. In 1933, the chalk quarry was partially filled in following a letter from Mr Beaumont suggesting that it was a problem to the cricketers.

At the time of the George V's jubilee in 1935 and for the 1937 coronation of George VI, Rosebery Park and the Court Recreation Ground and Gibraltar Recreation Ground in Ewell were in existence and so Alexandra Park only played a small part. In March 1939, Epsom cottage hospital had been designated as one of three fixed first aid posts, but as this meant losing too many beds, the Park pavilion was later named instead. During 1942 programmes for sports and entertainment were arranged for children in the summer. February 1945- Two wrought iron seats were given to the Council by a resident in Windmill Lane.

By 1945 much reconstruction was required in most parks and Recreation Grounds, with allotments to be filled in. It was suggested that in general, Recreation Grounds should have rough natural terrain.

In September 1946, there was a suggestion by a local resident that the bottom of the pit should be levelled and planted with shrubs for children to play in, but it was turned down. Five years later the Council were presented with a petition by school children for a children's playground with suitable swings, an erected slide, two roundabouts; one just above the ground and one which revolves at different levels, a flatboard swing to take a number of children at one time, a rocking horse for the little tots and a seesaw.

This was again rejected as being too expensive but in the mid 1960s, the children at last got their playground, built in the hollow that was left by the filled in Pitt. It was rumoured that it was built where a flying bomb had landed; so did the bomb land in the same site of the old pit/quarry? In the late 1940s, Alexandra Recreation Ground became the home of the Epsom and Ewell Harriers and a running track was laid out and the jump pit was built. They remained until Poole Road Recreation Ground was laid out (*Parks in the past, Carol Hill*).

2.3.1. FIELDS IN TRUST



Figure 5 Fields in trust plaque

Fields in Trust was founded back in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association by King George V. Their mission is the same now and as it was then: to ensure that everyone – young or old, able or disabled and wherever they live – should have access to free, local outdoor space for sport, play and recreation. These spaces are vital to building happy and healthy communities and sadly continue to be threatened by all kinds of development.

They are a national charity and operate throughout the UK to safeguard recreational spaces and campaign for better statutory protection for all kinds of outdoor sites. Alexandra Recreation Ground is one of their sites in Epsom and Ewell and in 2015 Fields in Trust celebrated their 90th anniversary. 90 years of protecting parks and playing fields across the UK for current and future generations to enjoy.

Since it was founded by King George V in 1925, Fields in

Trust has been privileged to have the support of the Royal Family. The Duke of Edinburgh was President of Fields in Trust for 64 years - without his help and contribution the organisation could not have achieved what it has done if, indeed, it still existed as an independent charity.

In 2013 his grandson The Duke of Cambridge stepped into the role of President following this patronage of the successful Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge (*Fields In Trust.org*).

In 2012 Alexandra Recreation Ground was one of seven recreational spaces in Epsom & Ewell given QEII status. Known as the Queen Elizabeth Fields Challenge in Scotland, where it is still ongoing, this is the most successful engagement and land protection programme ever run by Fields in Trust. They created a grassroots legacy across the UK from 2012's big events, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympic & Paralympic Games. They worked with 873 landowners from parish councils to sports clubs, local authorities to charitable groups. Over 20,000 acres have been nominated for protection through the Challenge, on 1585 sites. Fields in Trust were committed to producing a strong and enduring legacy from the Olympics, in the name of Her Majesty, which shows in the numbers. Operating since 1925, in the years before the Challenge, Fields in Trust protected 1,180 sites covering 7,377 acres (*qe2fields.com*).

2.3.2. ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND TODAY

Very little has changed in the layout of the park and the facilities offered. The children's play area in the shallow pit has now been moved to the area covered by the putting green and adjacent to this is a teenage play area, this change can be seen in figure 6 which shows the park in 1998 and in 2014 as a comparison. As well as three tennis courts, there is a multi-use games area and a basketball court and a purpose-built martial arts centre has been built next to the refurbished/rebuilt pavilion.

Shrubs have in the most part replaced the more ornamental flower beds but the Friends of Alexandra Park have cleared a site by the pavilion in the upper field and have established an exciting collection of wildflowers, some chosen to attract butterflies. This has extended to the site of the old playground where the Friends Of have created a spring bulb garden. The park is home to a variety of wildlife including many different species of birds, foxes and grey squirrels. Pipistrelle bats are also thought to frequent the park in the summer (*EEBC website*).



Figure 6 Layout comparison of the park between 1998 and 2014

4. MANAGEMENT

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is responsible for the maintenance of all public grounds in the Borough. The In-house Operational Services Streetcare department provides grounds maintenance, public realm maintenance, graffiti removal and cleansing operations to all public parks and open spaces. Whilst the Ranger Service are responsible for patrolling and managing these sites.

The work included within Alexandra Recreation Ground covers grass cutting, pruning and planting and also clearance of litter, building and infrastructure maintenance, security, events and other aspects of park management. Maintenance functions are output based as far as possible – this means that work is carried out to a specified standard, rather than the way in which the service is to be provided.

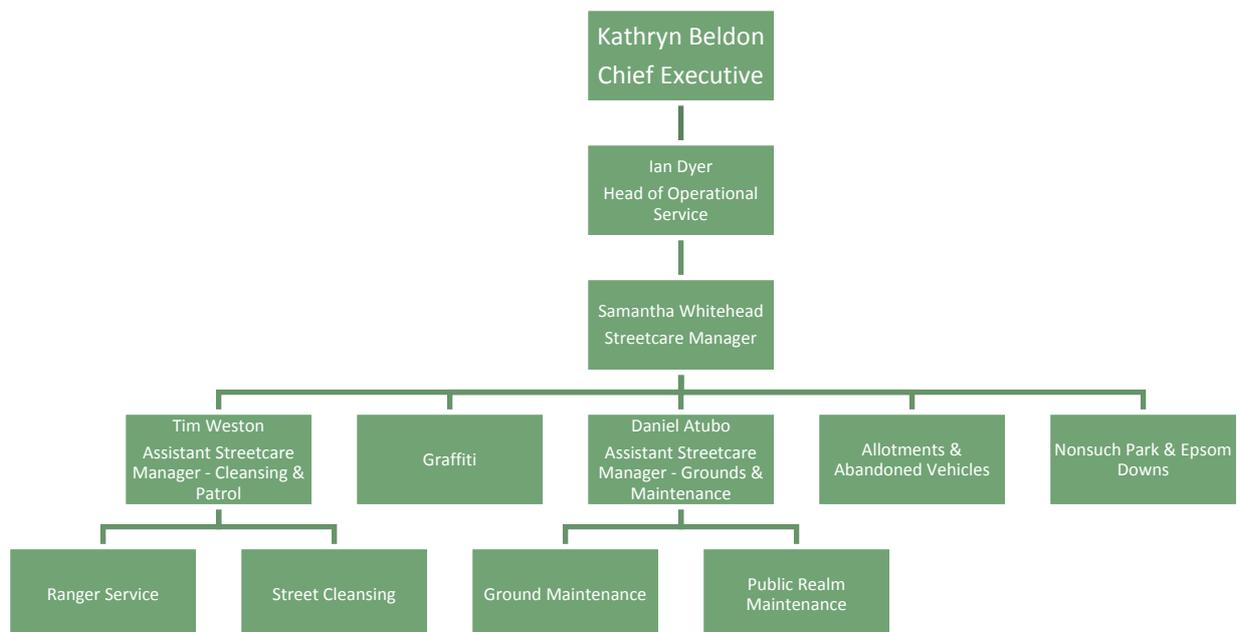


Figure 8 Streetcare Organisational Chart

5. ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND IN RELATION TO GREEN FLAG CRITERIA

1.9. A WELCOMING PLACE

1.9.1. ACCESS

Alexandra Recreation Ground is located within an urban area and is served by a number of local bus routes and the nearby Epsom, Epsom Downs and Ewell East railway stations. There are four entrances to Alexandra Recreation Ground. Two of these are vehicle friendly; one of these is specifically for disabled parking insuring the closest access possible to the new pavilion. The other vehicle friendly entrance leads to a small carpark which again has disabled parking. These entrances are both on Alexandra Road, located South and South-West in the park and can be seen in figures 8 and 9. Once in the park both these entrances provide authorised vehicle access in to the rest of the park should Council staff or emergency services need access. The two pedestrian entrances are located North and North-East in the park. As a result of Alexandra Recreation Ground being enclosed so closely on all sides by housing there is little the Council is able to do with the entrances. The vehicle friendly entrances provide an open and welcoming feeling when entering the park. As expected the pedestrian entrances are more enclosed, but any shrubbery that may be growing in the vicinity, whether it is on the Council ground or growing over walls from houses bordering entrances, has been cut back. The Council understands that shrubbery provides excellent cover for people who wish to do harm to park users so it is vital that continual maintenance around the entrances is carried out to minimise the risk presented to park uses when entering the park.

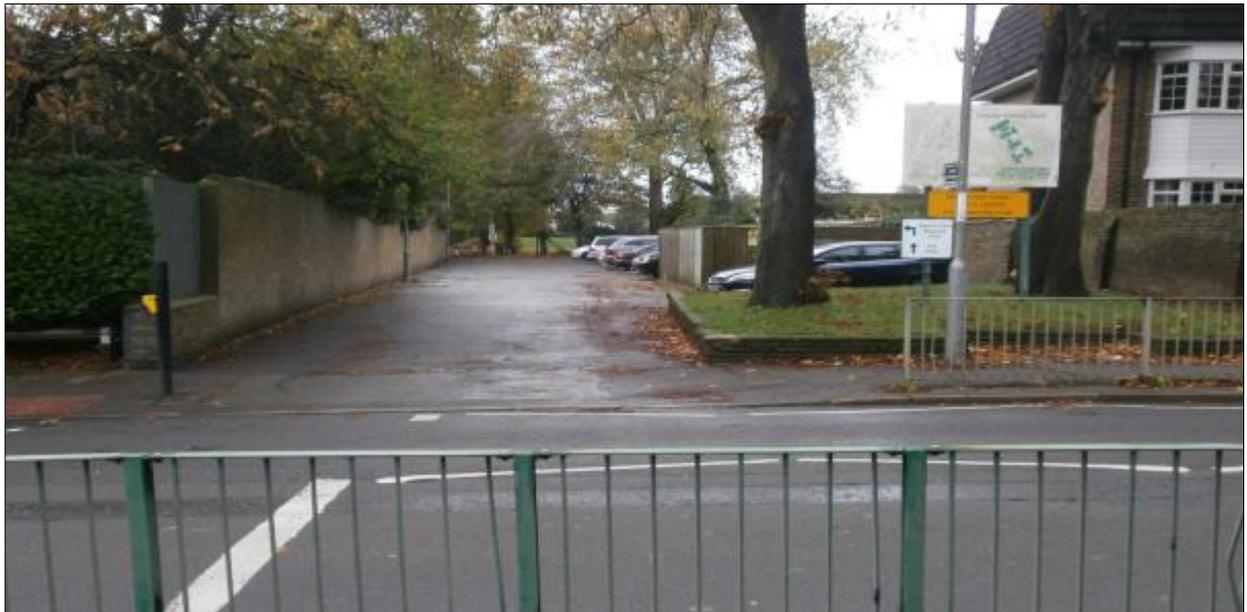


Figure 8: Main entrance to Alexandra Recreation Ground



Figure 9 Entrance to the disabled only car park

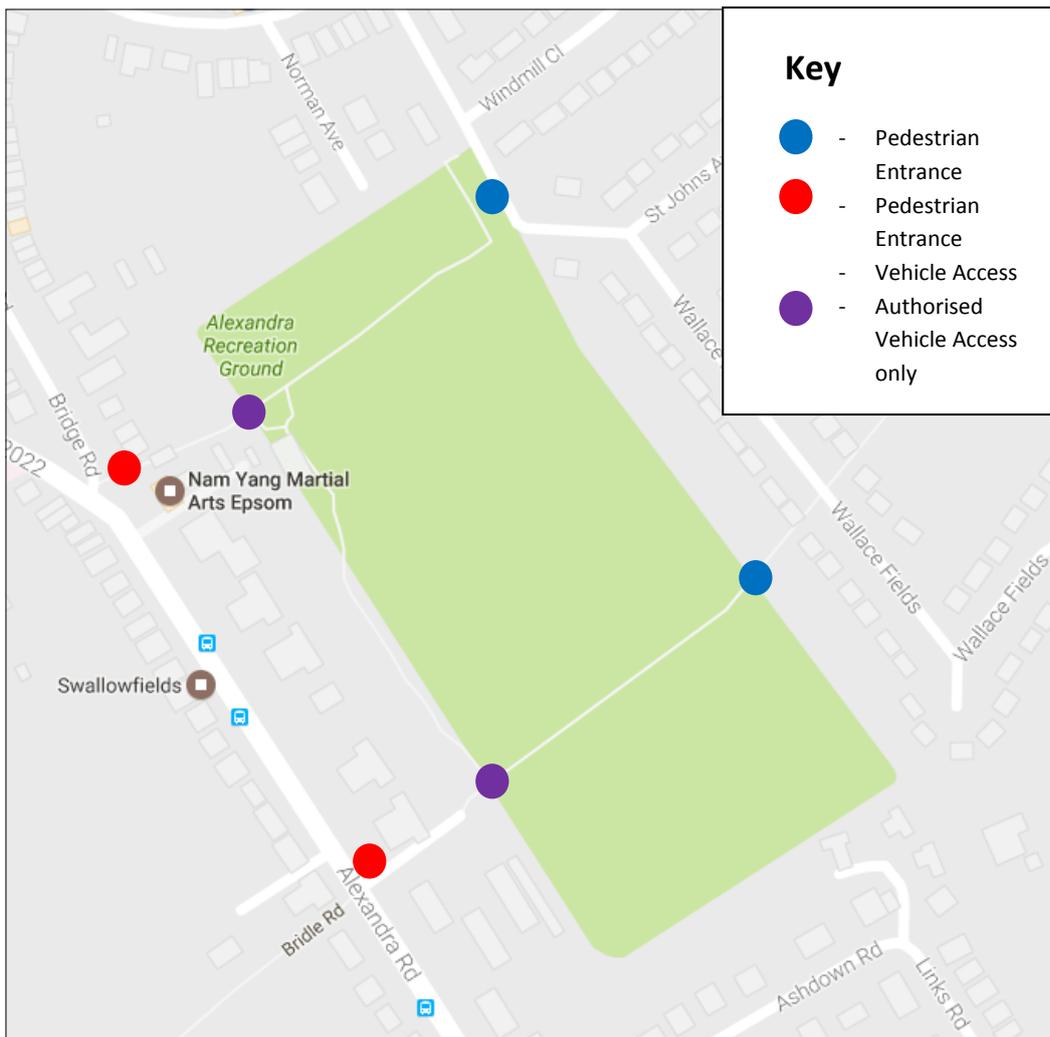


Figure 10 Map showing points of access to Alexandra Recreation Ground

1.9.2. SIGNAGE

Throughout the Borough, extensive work is carried out to keep all signs clean and legible. The most common problems faced by the maintenance team is graffiti. There is a team dedicated solely to working on the graffiti in the Borough. It has been found that it was more beneficial to use signs with Perspex fronts. By using Perspex fronts on signs and noticeboards it is easier to clean away graffiti.

The most common sign that it is seen in Alexandra Recreation Ground is the dog fouling sign asking all dog walkers to pick up after their dog. These signs are found on nearly all of the lamp posts. At both vehicle entrances there are information boards showing the name of the park and contact numbers. The information board situated where Alexandra Road meets Bridge Road, is a newer sign with clear and legible writing directing people to the car park and can be seen in figure 11. It also has clear information on contacting the Council for assistance or any other enquiries. It is part of the action plan to replace both these signs at the main vehicle entrances and also at the pedestrian entrance off Windmill Lane with one that is similar to the new maps that were installed in the park in 2016.

Figure 12 shows a road sign on the pavement opposite the entrance (where Alexandra Road meets Bridge Road) which directs people to the main entrance of the park and car park. Due to the nature of the disabled car park the Council felt it was important to direct traffic to the main car park to avoid traffic all descending on the smaller car park which has limited turning space.



Figure 11: The information board at the entrance leading to the pavilion and disabled parking



Figure 12: The road sign (where Bridge Road meets Alexandra Road) directing people to the main entrance of the park from the road

In 2015 budget was secured to design new informative signs to go in the park. The boards consist of a map showing the layout of the park and key features such as the playground, pavilion, tennis courts and bowling green. It also has 'you are here' points to help people new to the park orientate themselves to get around. The map has been done in a cartoon style using bright colours and stylised images and was designed by Mary Gorton, an external graphic designer. As well as the map, there is a brief history of the park and the Councils 'Do's and Don'ts' whilst in the park which covers etiquettes around cycling and dog walking. Alongside the map is a locking pin board for Council use and if the 'Friends Of' wish to advertise their group or events. Two boards were installed in early 2016 by the two main entrances and are a welcome addition to the park. Figure 13 shows one of the boards in situ by the main pavilion.



Figure 13 Alexandra Recreation Ground noticeboard and map in situ by the main pavilion.

1.9.3. FACILITIES

As the list of facilities below would suggest, Alexandra Recreation Ground prides itself on the extensive facilities it provides to the community. The Council is continually working on 'providing something for everyone'.

Alexandra Recreation Ground is home to:

- 1 Multiuse games area (MUGA)
- 2 Basketball courts
- 1 Bowling green
- Under 12's children's playground
- Teenage play area
- 1 Cricket pitch
- 3 Full-sized and 2 mini football pitches
- Sports changing facilities
- Pavilion with room for hire
- 3 Tennis courts (hard surfaced)
- Epsom Martial Arts Centre

Sports

The park is home to Epsom Park Bowling club who use the main pavilion and bowling green (figure 16) and Epsom Cricket Club during the summer months. During the winter months Alexandra United football club have the home ground agreement and use the pitches. Although it would be financially beneficial to try to get more teams using the pitches mid-week, it would compromise the quality of the pitches for those already contracted to use them. It is important that the grounds maintenance team continually provide a safe and enjoyable playing surface. There used to only one adult cricket pitch which was also used by Juniors, however it was not a long-term option as there was a lot of damage getting done to the square. To ensure both age groups could continue to play, the grounds maintenance team began constructing a junior cricket square opposite the top pavilion and was completed in 2012.

Next to the main pavilion is the Epsom Martial Arts Centre, here people can come to learn Traditional Shaolin Temple Martial Arts - Kung Fu, Lion Dance & Chi Kung, and although it is a private business, they have an agreement with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council for the use of the porta cabin and changing rooms in the pavilion and it attracts more people to the park. The tennis (figure 14) and basketball courts (figure 15) are open all year round, are free to use and do not require hiring so the public are free to turn up and play whenever they wish. In 2015 two outdoor table tennis tables were installed in the MUGA and funded through Fields in Trust, providing more sporting facilities to the public. For a ground with limited size it hosts a remarkable amount of sporting and recreational facilities for the whole family which are accessible all year round. The Council uses in-house surveys as a valuable learning tool helping them to identify the needs for the community.



Figure 14: Hard Surfaced Tennis Courts



Figure 15: One of the basketball courts/5-a-side hard surface



Figure 16 Bowling Green

Pavilion

Access to the pavilion is compliant with the disability discrimination act 1995 and is mainly used by sports teams. There are changing rooms, shower facilities, toilets, a telephone, first aid kit, a function room and fire safety equipment. The pavilion has several toilets which are accessible to the public if a Ranger is in the park and also a disabled toilet which is accessible during the pavilion opening times. Due to graffiti and vandalism problems with public toilets, it is not possible to leave them open full-time. During the summer months when the park is at its busiest, the Ranger service regularly patrols the park. When they are in the park, any member of the public can request they open a toilet for them.

The pavilion is opened every morning at 9am and closes half an hour before sunset and is often used as a polling station during government elections.



Figure 17: The main pavilion and the adjoining Martial Arts Centre.

Playgrounds

The Under 12's playground in figure 18 has a large variety of equipment including swings, climbing apparatus, slides and balancing beams and is a well-used playground. The MUGA has a small over 12's play area providing equipment including a basket swing and spring roundabout for those who have outgrown the playground.



Figure 18: Under 12's children's playground



Figure 19 MUGA with over 12's play equipment

1.10. HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

1.10.1. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Training is issued when using new machinery and to new members of staff (in conjunction with the health and safety at work act 1974). This applies to the Ranger team and the Grounds Maintenance team. Training is always available throughout the year for anyone who feels it will benefit them. Risk assessments are carried out on all tools and tasks conducted by the services. Risk assessments are encouraged even if it is felt the risk is manageable. Situated in the council depot there are three fire officers, two health and safety officers and there is a health and safety committee. The health and safety committee meets to discuss the Council health and safety policies to ensure they are up-to-date and relevant to the staff they are placed upon. The system that was used to report accidents in the workplace was updated in 2012. It was originally a paper based reporting system but it was felt the paper trail was too long, leading to a longer time frame from when the accident was reported to it being logged. A new database has been put in place to reduce the amount of time and the paper being used in reporting accidents. By computerising all reports on a spreadsheet, everyone has access to them at all times. This enables results to be analysed at ease. Analysis allows the council to identify patterns and accidents which aids the development of new policies and suitable training for specific areas where accidents occur.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have a playground safety check system in place called 'Playsafe'. These playground safety checks are carried out using a mobile phone application that links directly with an online 'Playsafe' database. All ranger staff members who carry out these checks are RoSPA (The Royal Society for the prevention of accidents) trained to level 1 – Routine Inspections. Visual checks are carried out by Ranger team members on a weekly basis, however other teams that are in there daily, carry out visual inspections and any problems are reported.

By logging any faults found on the 'Playsafe' handheld devices, it firstly eliminates the need for paper which can get lost or the information written down fails to get passed on to the relevant people, and secondly it provides the maintenance ranger with direct access to the findings and they can see photos, the risk and then prioritise repairs accordingly.

Quarterly checks are carried out by the maintenance ranger who is trained to RoSPA level 2 as an Operational Inspector. This is a thorough check of all fixtures, nuts, bolts etc and findings are also logged on to the 'Playsafe' computerised checklist. Annually an independent company who are recognised by RoSPA carry out an inspection and report back to the council with their findings and with improvements that need to be made.

The football pitches get a lot of use and as a result weekly checks are made on the goalposts when the rangers check the other facilities in the park, therefore any problems can be rectified swiftly.

1.10.2. RANGER SERVICE

The Ranger service not only patrol the parks and open spaces, they also carry out minor maintenance work on amenity infrastructures such as the park signs, benches, bins and playground equipment. The park rangers and a dedicated street care team operate with a 'find a fault and fix it' approach and a separate graffiti team are also on constant call out to solve any issues immediately. Repairs are carried out as soon as possible, if the amusement in question is considered a risk to health it will be cordoned off with an appropriate sign put in place warning of its danger. If the fix is out of the capabilities of the ranger service it is passed on to the dedicated maintenance ranger who patrols in a vehicle already stocked with tools. By carrying tools in the vehicle it allows a number of repairs to be carried out immediately when the problem is identified.

The ranger service are a team of 8, working on a 7 day rota and the shifts are worked out so there are rangers on duty from 8am to 11pm. Once the rangers have finished their shift at 11pm their duty phone is diverted so any issues that arise in the night will be dealt with by the duty officer. So effectively if someone has a problem in a park they can reach someone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Due to the Ranger services job profile it is important to provide a wide spectrum of training, this may include:

- Handling conflict
- Awareness and enforcement of bye-laws
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Emergency first aid
- Playground inspections
- Carrying out patrolling and inspection duties
- Knowledge of green flag, what work is being carried out to achieve green flag status and the overall management plan

3.2.2 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All facilities at Alexandra Recreation Ground comply with the statutory fire and safety regulations. In addition to this all staff are advised and trained on a regular basis. All Ranger vans carry a First Aid Kit and are First Aid at Work trained.

1.10.3. EMERGENCY CONTACT

When the Ranger service is on shift they respond to emergency calls placed to the council. Rangers carry at all times the duty phone so they can respond quickly to requests, thus eliminating the need to return to the office. When the Rangers are not on shift, the ranger duty phone is diverted to a duty officer who takes all out of office hours calls. When Rangers are called out to an emergency all correct paperwork procedures are completed in compliance with council policy. All parks and recreation grounds in the borough have signage with the relevant information for contacting the Ranger service or the out of office call out service.

If the emergency services are needed the Ranger service do not hesitate to get in contact and also encourage the public to contact the emergency services if the rangers are not on site. The rangers are familiar with working with the emergency services, assisting them on any incidents that occur on council land. There are times when the Ranger service will be contacted by the emergency services when they are not familiar with certain parts of council land.

1.10.4. CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION

It was felt that CCTV was not necessary in Alexandra Recreation Ground as vandalism and anti-social behaviour was not a significant problem. When the evening Ranger shift finishes, all buildings, including the pavilion at Alexandra Recreation Ground are locked up with shutters and are alarmed. When the shutters are down, physical damage to the building is limited, the main concern is graffiti. In 2017 the rangers will be supplied with new vehicles which will come equipped with CCTV. Should rangers be on site and witness any criminal behaviour, it can be recorded and used as evidence if needed.

1.10.5.DOG ENFORCEMENT

All of the parks in the borough are extremely popular with dog walkers which in turn lead to the problem of dog fouling. It is an issue that is a high priority for the council. If a dog walker finds themselves in a need of a bag, Rangers carry bags on them at all times. There are notices up all over the park instructing people to pick up after their dog. These include stickers and bin posters, a type of which can be seen in figure 25, stencilling on the ground as can be seen in figure 26 and good dog ownership posters displayed in the bins. It is important to encourage the public to pick up after their dog as the health impacts of dog mess when making contact with eyes is well documented. Toxocariasis occurs when toxocara worm eggs in dog mess come into contact with the eyes. This can lead to partial and/or complete blindness.



Figure 21 Bag it bin it pavement stencil

Over the course of the last few years there has been an increase in the concern over multiple dog walkers. This ranges from members of the public who own more than two dogs to people who run dog walking businesses and have been seen to have in excess of ten dogs. The concern is that as commercial dog walking is a fairly new concept, the legislation on what is acceptable is not clear. The issues range from: should there be a limit to the amount of dogs per person? Should they be on a lead? Does the walker have the necessary insurances? etc.

The Council understand that this is an issue that needs to be addressed but are also aware that this this is a controversial topic that generates strong opinions from both sides. We recognise that measures put in place to control this activity will need to be fair and appropriate.



Figure 20 Type of dog poo sticker and poster that can be found in the park

1.10.6.BYELAWS

Byelaws apply to all pleasure grounds and open spaces in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell. The Byelaws For Alexandra Recreation Ground are made under Section 164 of the Public Health Act, 1875, and Section 15 of the Open Spaces Act, 1906.

Particular byelaws have been chosen from Section 12 and 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 and section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875. These byelaws are consistent across all areas designated as pleasure grounds and open spaces except for byelaws pertaining to dog prohibition, canine faeces and dogs on leads, which are allocated to individual named areas. Alexandra Recreation Ground has several dog prohibited areas including the Playground, Bowling Green, Tennis Courts, Top Field (Schedule 1, Part 1, Under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875). Part of Alexandra Recreation Ground excluding the dog ban areas are covered by the canine faeces removal byelaw (Schedule 2, Part 1, Under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875). The byelaw requiring that dogs must be kept on a lead (Schedule 3, Part 1, Section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875) does not apply to Alexandra Recreation Ground.

1.10.7.POLICING IN ALEXANDRA PARK

Alexandra Recreation Ground falls under the 'Epsom and Ewell North' section of the Surrey Police safer Neighbourhood Team. Regular foot patrols of the park are carried out by the Police Community Support Officers, dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour and other community concerns. The Safer Neighbourhood Team also works in partnership with the Ranger Service to tackle these relevant issues. The current dedicated Neighbourhood Specialist Officer for the particular area is PC 3701 Elena BOAFO.

An arrangement existed with Rangers and PCSO's whereby joint patrols of Alexandra Recreation Ground and other borough Parks were carried out, however due to lack of resource and the park not being considered a crime hot spot these joint patrols are no longer carried out. However the Ranger service and all departments that may be in the parks, including the 'Friends Of' are encouraged to report any damage or crime to the police, as the distribution of police resources is dependent on the volume of calls/reports relating to a particular area or issue

1.11. CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

1.11.1.WORK SCHEDULING

Epsom and Ewell's work program is designed to ensure that each team is allocated a program of works that is defined prior to the start of each period by the management team.

To reach the required standard in our parks, the program of works is based on a schedule of need for example grass and hedge cutting, emptying of bins etc. which is on a specific frequency or rotation but is responsive to seasonal changes and sporadic events which could have an impact like flooding or a large public celebration, as well as user feedback which could come in the form of a letter, telephone call or CRM case from a member of the public, Councillor or Council staff members

1.11.2.MONITORING

Monitoring of the services is undertaken at a number of levels and on an ongoing basis. The Council monitors the performance of the staff out in the field but also through an appraisal system, so operational issues are identified and responded to in a sufficient timescale. Without monitoring, problems could be ongoing for long periods of time unbeknownst to managers which could contribute to long term issues.

1.11.3.LITTER

Alexandra Recreation Ground has litter bins placed in a number of locations along the pathways. The litter bins were replaced in 2013 to a new style which also could be used to dispose of dog waste. This meant the red dog waste bins could be removed from the park.

The bins are emptied 3 times a week by the street cleansing team. The Ranger service also provides a litter picking service when they are on patrol and will empty any bins that need it. In the summer when there is more activity in the park, additional patrols are made to combat the increased activity which leads to a sharp rise in litter.

1.11.4.CLINICAL WASTE

Any litter such as clinical waste, syringes etc are collected by the street cleansers who are 'sharps' trained. Using special tools the item is inserted into a lockable 'sharps' box. The location of the 'sharps' will be recorded and when full, the box will be transported to the designated clinical waste disposal point.

1.11.5.GRAFFITI

There is a graffiti team working all year round who respond to call outs from the public and from staff members who have found graffiti while on their day to day inspections. Timescale for removal is 4-6 weeks unless the graffiti is racist or offensive in which case it is removed within 1 working day and reported to the police.

1.11.6.GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

All grounds maintenance work is carried out (to correct horticultural practices) to a schedule to ensure particular sites do not get forgotten about or overlooked which can happen when working from memory. After each site is complete it is logged on the grounds maintenance database with the appropriate times, dates and names of the staff who were on site. The grounds maintenance team also respond to CRM (customer relationship management) notices. These may have been served via a call from a member of the public or from a staff member after visual inspections of the sites. The work carried out is varied throughout the year. In the height of summer, the grass and shrub beds get far more attention than in the winter months as growth is at its fastest. During the autumn and winter months, leaf clearance is carried out regularly as well as preparing beds for selected bedding plans. All organic waste accumulated from grounds maintenance work is taken to a composting site until it is suitable for using on the shrub beds. All hard surface sports facilities (playgrounds, five-a-side pitches, tennis courts and basketball courts) are all spray cleaned when it is felt necessary. A build-up of dust and dirt on these hard services make them increasingly slippery underfoot. Spray cleaning using a jet power washer plate that glides along the surface removes all dust and dirt from in between the tiny crevices in the tarmac surface. All dust and dirt that has been excavated is then removed with either a hard brush or a backpack blower before it has the chance to work its way back into the tarmac.

- **Weed control** - This is carried out in the parks by staff that are certified with PA1 and PA6 certificates. It is important that only trained staff use these chemicals, not only for their personal safety but when working in parks as there are animals and park users to consider. The certificate PA1 is the theory behind pesticide application. It covers legislation regarding environmental, public and personal safety and all procedures regarding health and safety. PA6 is the certificate for manual handling and application of pesticides. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council do not have a schedule for spraying in the parks. It is felt that scheduled spraying may lead to excessive spraying. When parks are inspected by the Ranger services and the Grounds Maintenance, they will determine as and when spraying may need to be carried out.
- **Litter** - Litter is collected as and when it is necessary. The Ranger service carries out litter picking when on patrol. The grounds maintenance teams also carry out litter picking as part of their duties when working in the park.
- **Dog fouling** - When carrying out daily inspections, the Ranger service collect any dog mess found on public walkways in the parks.

Job	Carried Out By	Frequency	Additional Information
Grass	Grounds Maintenance	Summer –Weekly Winter – Dormant Spring – Monthly	Spring and Autumn are done when deemed necessary. No definitive rota
Shrubs (Mature)	Grounds Maintenance	Dependent on results of monthly inspections	Usually 1-2 cut backs during summer, one more in winter
Weeding (in beds)	Grounds Maintenance	Dependent on results of monthly inspections	Usually monthly, possible addition of pesticide application
Line Marking on Pitches	Grounds Maintenance	During football season it is done bi-weekly	During periods of rain, application will increase
Playground Inspections	Rangers	Weekly visual, monthly physical, plus an annual independent inspection	All results are logged on 'Playsafe' online database
Repairs (playground, benches, bins and sports equipment)	Ranger maintenance service	All faults are logged after inspection and will be repaired or removed immediately	Maintenance team also responds to complaints from the public
Arboriculture	Tree Team/Ranger Service	Annual Inspection	During adverse weather conditions, Rangers inspect parks for tree damage and report to tree team

Table 1 Grounds maintenance scheduling

1.11.7.EQUIPMENT

All grounds maintenance equipment is purchased centrally with great consideration for staff safety in regards to emissions and vibration. All staff are inducted either internally or externally if the piece of equipment requires a certificate i.e. Chainsaw, before using all machinery and equipment to ensure the equipment is used efficiently and effectively. Annual service programs are in place for all equipment and daily safety checks are carried out and recorded.

1.11.8.PAVILION MAINTENANCE

The Ranger service is in charge of keeping the pavilions locked at the required times. An external company called Kier are in charge of all internal maintenance (cleaning, fire extinguishers, fire alarm and electrical equipment inspections). In the pavilion there are changing rooms, toilets, shower facilities and a kitchen/meeting room with complete cooking facilities.

1.11.9.ARBORICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Increasing public concerns about environmental and sustainability issues are focusing our attention on the importance of trees in our towns and countryside. The Borough Council manages and maintains thousands of publicly owned trees; these include 8000 street trees and over 50,000 trees distributed across our 2500 acres of public open space. Trees make a major contribution to the quality of the local environment but they also need careful management and we have a duty of care in respect of tree management to take reasonable steps to ensure that trees do not constitute a danger or a legal nuisance.

To comply with our duty of care and legal responsibility, the Council follow a tree risk management policy. It is important that the Council keep these programmes intact and adequately funded. This will help to ensure we comply with duties over public safety and nuisance as well as promoting environmental care.

As part of this policy the Council operate a comprehensive tree inspection programme every 3 years. Tree care is the responsibility of the council tree officer Jeremy Young. Jeremy oversees all inspections and work carried out and when he is not in the office the deputy tree officer takes over. The professional tree inspections are undertaken by Council officers and qualified tree inspectors. Sites are zoned in accordance with risk. The inspections involve visual tree assessments to evaluate whether there are any observable defects that constitute a danger or actionable nuisance. When defects are identified they are scheduled for work under the defect management programme. The time scales for these works are undertaken in accordance with the assessed priorities as agreed in table 2.

Priority	Target Response
Emergency	Within 24 hours
High	Within 12 weeks
Medium	Within 1 year
Low	Within 3 years or reassessed within this time frame.

Table 2 Agreed timescales for defect tree work

In addition to defect management, the Council operate programmes of routine tree pruning to help control tree growth. Routine tree pruning involves pruning to raise the canopy above the road, clearing phone wires and lamps etc. Access work is the removal of suckers and low branches for pedestrian footway clearance. The work is done as appropriate for subsidence management. One of our main Council priorities is to protect and enhance the environment. Therefore we will not undertake tree works which could be detrimental to natural biodiversity or the aesthetic quality of the landscape, unless absolutely necessary. Where possible trees will be allowed to

grow naturally and maintenance tends to focus on higher priority public safety and nuisance factors, such as storm damage, dealing with decayed or dead trees, removing branch obstruction to the highway or pruning branches encroaching onto buildings.

The Council has awarded the tree maintenance contract to a locally based and well equipped arboricultural company called Advanced Tree Services LTD (ATS). ATS undertake the vast majority of Council tree maintenance, including emergency call out, routine pruning, tree felling, stump grinding and planting. They also assist the Council tree officers with tree inspections. There is at least one team of tree surgeons from ATS that work in the Borough full time.

During spells of adverse weather, the Ranger service will inspect the park to check for falling trees or limbs that may be a hazard to park users. This is not as big a problem on some sites like Epsom Common where many of the trees can be left where they fell, but in Alexandra Recreation Ground it is vital to keep the green space clear from tree debris.

1.12. SUSTAINABILITY

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council strives to maintain and improve its green spaces using sustainable methods. All service departments involved in the maintenance of Alexandra Recreation Ground are encouraged to carry out their duties using methods that are environmentally friendly. As Sustainability in definition, is the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance (*Dictionary.com*), the Council understand the importance of maintaining these standards wherever possible for the long term ecological benefits to its parks and open spaces.

1.12.1.ORGANIC MATERIAL/RECYCLING

Throughout the year, the grounds maintenance teams remove all organic waste produced from pruning and grass cutting. This green waste is taken off site to a large composting facility in the nearby Horton Country Park. When enough green waste has been collected, trained staff members use mulching equipment to compost all the green waste. The process involves shredding the waste but burning it sufficiently to kill the weed seeds. This compost is piled and left to continue decomposing. When it is sufficiently composted it can be returned to the beds in the form of mulch. This mulch provides nutrients to the beds but it can also serve another purpose. The Christmases' of 2009 and 2010 left all of Epsom and Ewell covered in snow, dealing with sub-zero temperatures. Mulch can be used to insulate the beds. Newly planted shrubs will struggle to cope with such low temperatures in comparison to established shrubs. By insulating the beds it gives the root systems a little extra help in resisting frost damage. Mulching also helps keep weed growth under control. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council work hard to ensure they do not use peat. They also try to buy their plant stock from responsible nurseries that do not use peat.

1.12.2.PESTICIDES

The use of pesticides is kept to a minimum, and where they are used, the most eco-friendly products are selected. All staff must be trained to PA1 or PA6 standard. The purchase, storage, usage and disposal of chemicals is carefully controlled under COSHH. A basic glyphosate is the chemical utilised within the park.

1.12.3.PEAT

Peat is **not** used in Alexandra Recreation Ground and the council uses its own recycled waste as mulch for the shrub beds.

1.12.4.POLLUTION REDUCTION

All chemicals are stored in secure containers that meet Health and Safety regulations. The distribution of keys is regulated to ensure chemicals are not stolen or mislaid through negligence. Pesticide spraying in the parks is only carried out when absolutely necessary. It is felt that a schedule of regular spraying may lead to excessive spraying. It is always the prerogative to weed the beds manually, in summer months when weed growth is at its fastest, spraying is carried out more regularly. When any of the teams are working in the parks they are encouraged to park the vehicle and walk to the specific site reducing engine emissions from the vehicles.

1.12.5.WASTE MINIMISATION

Waste is not only expensive to get rid of, it also has an environmental cost due to the pollution caused by the disposal of such waste. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council identifies two ways of tackling this problem 1) reducing actual production of green waste and 2) re-using green waste after composting, with the emphasis being on the former of these. Green Waste can be reduced by avoiding unnecessary pruning, using herbicides correctly and allowing leaves to decompose naturally amongst shrubs and hedge bottoms. As much green waste as possible is recycled, however loads with a high percentage of weed content are not recycled minimising the risk of seeds spreading. Any materials that cannot be recycled are disposed of by the Council street care team.

1.12.6.ARBORICULTURE AND WOODLAND

Newly planted trees are staked, watered well and checked on a regular basis. Dead wood should be left standing if possible, to provide an important habitat for invertebrates and other habitats. Clippings and cuttings should be composted where possible and re-used within the park environment.

1.12.7.WATER AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Epsom & Ewell Environmental Policy aims to reduce the amount of energy used through good management, training, and informed purchasing practices and decisions. Vehicles and machinery are maintained regularly. The operational services team also tries to reduce dependence on mains water supplies for irrigation. Watering of plants is kept to a minimum and watering points are located away from public access. Effective training of staff, including health and safety, and following all environmental legislation relevant to the council, prevents incidents of pollution.

1.12.8.ASSET MANAGEMENT

A centralised asset management plan exists to account for and manage all Council assets. This plan includes all assets in the Borough's parks and open spaces.

1.13. CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

Biodiversity, a contraction of "biological diversity," generally refers to the variety and variability of life on Earth. One of the most widely used definitions defines it in terms of the variability within species, between species and between ecosystems. It is a measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems (*United Nations Environment Programme, World Conservation Monitoring Centre*). However during the last century, decreases in biodiversity have been increasingly observed. In 2007, German Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel cited estimates that up to 30% of all species will be extinct by 2050 (*BBC News*). As biodiversity contributes to

our very existence on this planet, we must adopt the "Think Globally, Act Locally" concept which originally began at the grassroots level, however, it is now a global concept with high importance (*Warren Heaps, International Forum*), and adopting sustainable ways of living will ensure the protection of biodiversity and our future.

1.13.1.AGENDA 21- LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

The need for biodiversity was recognised at the United Nation's 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. Leaders recognised that a diverse environment is essential to maintain air quality, to provide valuable species for food and medicine, and to provide a varied and interesting environment for future generations. As a result the Government were asked to produce national and regional biodiversity Action Plans, which filtered down at Local Authority level through the Local Agenda 21 initiative.

1.13.2.EPSOM AND EWELL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2010

A 'Local Biodiversity Action Plan' has been produced for Epsom & Ewell to help ensure both the long term protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the Borough. The complete Epsom & Ewell Local Biodiversity Action Plan can be found at:

<http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Environment/Biodiversity.htm>

This strategy provides an over-arching review of open space in the borough and has been developed in line with current national, regional and local policy context and initiatives. The following objectives from the biodiversity action plan for Epsom & Ewell 2010 are of particular relevance in informing the Management Plan.

Objective 1: Develop partnerships to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell is maintained in the long term.

Objective 2: Ensure the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species, as specified nationally and in the Surrey Habitat Action Plans.

Objective 3: Ensure opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the whole biodiversity resource in Epsom and Ewell are identified considered and acted upon.

Objective 4: Raise awareness, appreciation and involvement in the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell

Objective 5: Provide on-going monitoring of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell.

Objective 6: Seek to increase the funding available for the long-term conservation, enhancement and monitoring of biodiversity in Epsom and Ewell.

Objective 7: Seek to identify the wider benefits to the community of improving biodiversity

1.13.3.EPSOM AND EWELL'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2011 – 2022

'A Brighter Future'

A Brighter future is Epsom and Ewell's Sustainable Community Strategy. The Strategy looks at the future for Epsom and Ewell, It sets out how the Borough's many positive aspects will be developed and how the issues and challenges faced by the Borough will be met through partnership working.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's ambition is:

"To maintain and develop those distinctive characteristics that make living and working in Epsom and Ewell a matter of conscious choice and, in conjunction with others, provide quality and innovative services that are based on the identified priorities of our residents"

The Local Strategic Partnership has identified the following topics as areas for future focus and partnership working:

- The visual appearance of the surroundings, both in terms of the natural and the built environment

- The impact of organisations and individuals in securing a sustainable future (recognising the need for economic health and more housing)
- The ability to get around (including the use of the existing transport and traffic infrastructure, car movements and alternative means of travel)
- The promotion of community safety and the enhancing of public confidence, recognising the formal position and responsibilities of the Borough's Community Safety Partnership
- The support for particular communities (children & young people, older people and the disabled, the disadvantaged and pockets of relative deprivation)
- Social change and the achievement of a balanced demography
- Economic prosperity
- Improving Epsom Town Centre and maintaining other local centres

1.13.4. GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

Epsom and Ewell Borough council also have a Green Spaces Strategy. The development of a green spaces strategy for the whole of the borough provides the context in which land managers, planners and recreation providers can work to provide this borough with open spaces for the use of the residents and visitors alike. The Green Spaces Strategy can be found in the appendix. With a simple strategy in place, achievable strides can be made towards improving all Green Space in the borough. With the Green Spaces Strategy in mind, the Action Plan will identify what improvements will be implemented at Alexandra Recreation Ground.

1.13.5. EPSOM & EWELL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY

A Green Infrastructure Policy for the Borough was written in 2013 by the Countryside team and Head of Planning Policy. Green infrastructure (GI) is a term used to refer to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to cover benefits provided by wildlife, trees, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands. The report highlights the important role parks can play in conserving and enhancing biodiversity across the Borough. It was noted that parks and formal gardens provide a valuable community resource and are important open spaces in urban areas. For example, Rosebery Park and Mounthill Gardens provide essential green spaces within Epsom Town Centre which are heavily frequented by residents and those employed there, as well as students from the UCA.

The main objectives of the study are to:

- Bring together existing green infrastructure evidence in Epsom & Ewell
- Identify gaps in the local plan evidence base
- Map the Borough's existing GI assets.

The study's main recommendation is to create a landscape scale Green Infrastructure Strategy that seeks to protect and enhance a Borough-wide network of green infrastructure that delivers a wide range of benefits including improvements to biodiversity, public access, health and well-being, sports provision, allotments, flood protection and air quality.

The full document can be found at:

<http://dev-epsom-ewell.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/documents/residents/planning/planning-policy/Green%20Infrastructure%20Study.pdf>

1.13.6.ECOLOGY/WILDLIFE AND HABITATS

Within Epsom and Ewell there are sites designated for their biodiversity value. There are four Local Nature Reserves (LNR) in the Borough including Epsom Common which is Surrey's largest LNR. The other LNR's are Horton Country Park LNR, Howell Hill LNR, and running parallel with Ewell Court Park, the Hogsmill LNR.

Along with national legislation protecting wildlife, for example the 'Wildlife and Countryside Act, the 'Greenbelt', 'Ancient Woodland', 'Protected Hedgerows, 'Tree Preservation Orders' and areas identified as 'Strategic Open Space' in Epsom and Ewell also afford biodiversity some protection by limiting and controlling development. In addition some land in the borough is owned by trusts which aim to protect and enhance biodiversity.

1.13.7.FLORA AND FAUNA

The general layout of the park is large swathes of open grass (figure 22) which are predominantly used for sport, therefore most of the flora in the park is kept to the edges of the parks, but the flower beds host as many shrubs and seasonal bedding plants as possible considering the environment. With so many shrub beds in close proximity to the football or cricket pitches, it is difficult to maintain a full and vibrant bedding scheme with the damage done by stray footballs being kicked into the beds throughout the sporting seasons. It was felt that while it was important for the beds to be stocked, plant choice was vital as broken branches were going to be regularly removed. Some plants do not respond well to regular and heavy pruning which is why hardy plants must be in place. These shrubs are robust plants, not only in relation to extreme weather conditions but also to continued pruning.



Figure 22 View across the park

An opportunity arose when a playground in the north corner of the park was relocated after it was deemed to be on an unsafe site in the ground as there were so many trees around the playground. Instead of removing the trees which is something the Council will always try and avoid, the playground was relocated to a more suitable site in Alexander Recreation Ground. After all the equipment and foundations were removed the site was taken over by the 'Friends of Alexandra Recreation Ground' who have been regularly planting saplings and bulbs and they can be seen in full bloom in figure 23. It is an ideal site for planting as it is fenced off with no access except to those with the necessary keys. It is felt that with a larger selection and number of trees it will increase wildlife diversity which already boasts a variety of birds, foxes, grey squirrels and there have also been sightings of Pipistrelle bats.



Alexandra Recreation Ground is home to many varieties of trees, with their layout mainly concentrated around the edge of the park leaving the grass areas open. The layout of the trees can be seen on the map in figure 24.

There are no ancient/veteran trees in the park but there are many well established mature trees. Some trees that stand out in the park are the corridor of common limes (*Tilia Europaea*) that line the pathway that runs straight across the park from Alexandra Road to the alleyway leading to Wallace Fields. And the Winter Flowering Pink Cherry's (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis') that stand in the raised bed in the car park of the main pavilion and have lavenders growing at their base.



Figure 23 Spring bulbs in bloom in the old playground

Other trees that can be found in Alexandra Recreation Ground include but are not limited to:

Common Name	Genus
Austrian Pine	<i>Pinus nigra</i>
Black Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Golden Irish Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i> 'Fastigiata'
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Horse Chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i> unidentified species
Lawsons Cypress	<i>Cupressus Lawsoniana</i>
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Pandora Cherry	<i>Prunus</i> 'Pandora'
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Sweet Chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Western Red Cedar	<i>Thuja plicata</i>
Wych Elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>

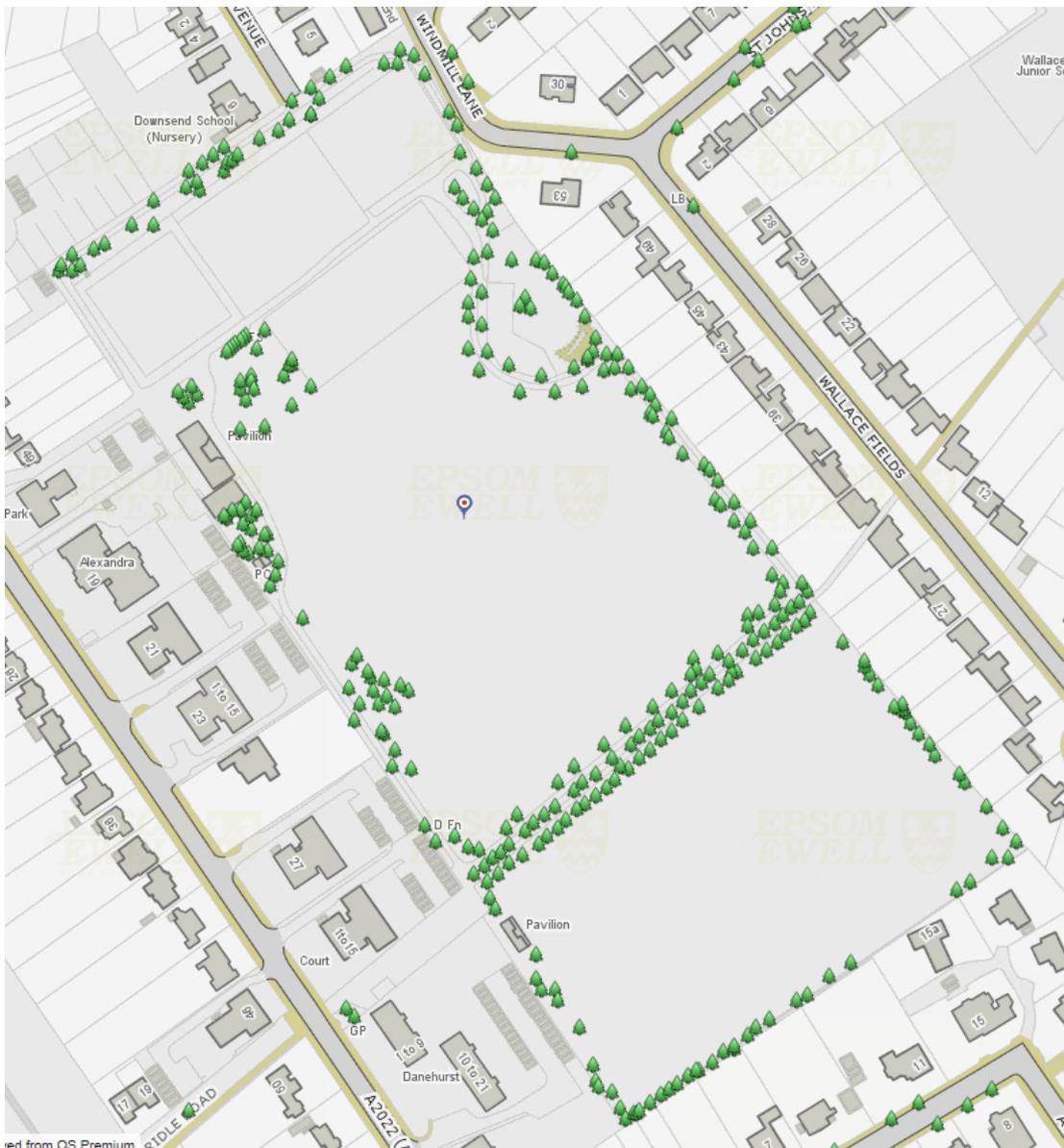


Figure 24 Tree Layout Map of Alexandra Recreation Ground

1.13.8. BIODIVERSITY SPECIFIC TO ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND

Finding ways to create spaces that are sensitive to and encourage biodiversity can be a challenge, especially in an urban park like Alexandra which has many user groups and Stakeholders. Ways in which we have addressed this is by:

- **Dead Wood**
Any dead wood that is suitable for insects is left behind in the wild areas of Alexandra. It can create shelter or a place for breeding or feeding and can also play host to lichen and fungi.
- **The Introduction of Wild Flower Beds**
The space between the pavilion in the top field and the wildflower area was planted with wild flower seeds in 2012. This increased diversity in plants attracts insects and other invertebrates (including but not limited to butterflies, bees, spiders), birds and mammals.
- **Wild Areas**
There are two areas of Alexandra that have been left as 'wild areas'. One is situated in the old playground and the other in the dog free section of the park behind the pavilion. This means they are excluded from the frequent mowing and grounds maintenance practices that are carried out in the rest of the park. By leaving areas undisturbed we reduce the disruption to habitats, thereby reducing the repeated removal of preferred nesting or feeding grounds and the direct injury and death rate to small insects and invertebrates. As mentioned previously the site of the old playground that is regularly planted with spring bulbs, this increased diversity in plants attracts insects and other invertebrates (including but not limited to butterflies, bees, spiders), birds and mammals.
- **Hedges**
Hedges that are not over-pruned provide nesting and feeding grounds for birds, insects and small mammals. In an urban park it also provides a safe hiding place from dogs, cats and humans. The hedges in Alexandra are only maintained at certain times of the year when the nesting season is over.

1.14. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1.14.1. FRIENDS OF EPSOM & EWELL PARKS (FEEP)

Many of the Boroughs larger more well used parks have a 'Friends of' user group. These 'Friends Of' groups are also part of the larger group 'Friends of Epsom and Ewell Parks' (FEEP). The 'FEEP' group are in place to ensure all parks are looked after as some are so small that they do not attract enough people to form their own individual 'Friends Group'. The 'Friends of Epsom and Ewell Parks' meet every three months along with members of the Council to discuss current issues, projects and progress.

1.14.2. FRIENDS OF ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND

Alexandra Recreation Ground is one of the parks in Epsom & Ewell that benefit from having its own 'Friends of Alexandra Recreation Ground' group. The 'Friends of Alex Park' group meet every three months with a Ranger representative to put forward their feelings on the park management.

In March the Herald of Spring floral display takes place at the local Bourne Hall Park. Once the display has finished, all of the local 'friends of' groups are invited to come and take some of the left over plants and bulbs to plant in their parks.

1.15. MARKETING

All parks are advertised on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council website. All of the parks facilities are advertised as well as the 'Friends of' groups. This website is a great form of advertisement as all the information can be found in one accessible place.

What we have to remember is that it is only accessible to those who have internet access. In the Action Plan we aim to maximise the usage of the two new notice boards in Alexandra Recreation Ground to promote all events and facilities to those who may be new to the park or who cannot view the information online. Notice boards also provide a fantastic platform for 'Friends of' groups to advertise themselves and their activities to attract new members.

1.15.1. IN HOUSE USER SURVEY

The Council used to use an external program called GreenSTAT to conduct surveys of their parks but this is no longer running. However the council wanted to find a way to keep the public involved in the future of our parks and open spaces so trialled their own in-house survey for Nonsuch Park, a well-used and loved park that is shared with the London Borough of Sutton. 1200 postal votes were sent out and 635 returned and was deemed a success. Due to this success the ranger service carried out surveys for Alexandra Recreation Ground in 2015 and Auriol Park in 2016 and both although on a smaller scale have proved very successful.

1.15.2. IN HOUSE SURVEY RESULTS

The survey ran for a period of three weeks (12 to 30 October 2015). A total of 880 paper surveys were distributed via the following methods:

- 660 were mail-dropped to residents who lived in close proximity to the grounds
- 140 were left at local schools and at Bourne Hall
- 80 given out in the park.

Links to the electronic version of the survey were promoted via:

- Council website (www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)
- e-Borough Insight (Issue 21: October 2015) (<http://insight.epsom-ewell.gov.uk>)
- Twitter (www.twitter.com/@EpsomEwellBC)
- Facebook (www.Facebook.com/EpsomEwellBC).

The questions were developed in liaison with the Head of Operational Services and the Patrol Ranger. Subject areas included:

- Frequency of visiting the grounds
- Method of travel to the grounds
- Reasons for visiting the grounds
- Opinions on various aspects of the grounds
- Improving visitor experience and encouraging more use of the grounds, or staying for longer
- Volunteering opportunities.

A total of 340 survey responses were received. Responses to the electronic questionnaires were automatically imported into the survey design and analysis package (SNAP v11). The paper returns were sent to an outside agency for data inputting, then merged with the online version. The results were analysed by the Council's Consultation and Communication Team.

The majority of respondents were female (67%) and 33% were male. Almost two thirds of respondents (62%) were under 55 years old. When asked about ethnicity, the majority of respondents 88% described themselves as British white or English white. The majority of respondents (59%) said they were Christian.

Of those that responded, 3% indicated they had a disability according to the Equalities Act of 2010.

Nearly seven in ten respondents (67%) visit the grounds a number of times per week. This comprises: 29% visiting on a daily basis and 38% visiting two or three times per week. 24% visit the grounds two or three times per month and 8% visit two or three times a year.

Over three quarters of respondents indicated that they travel to the grounds on foot (76%), whilst 13% travel by car, and 11% by bicycle.

The most popular reason for visiting the grounds was to 'Use the playground' (13%). This was followed by 'Go for a walk' (12%) and 'Children/family outing' (11%). Looking at the age profile of respondents; most respondents between 35-44yrs said they 'Use the playground' and use the grounds for a 'Children/family outing'. Younger respondents aged between 16-24yrs tend to use the grounds to 'Play other sports', whilst a broad age group of respondents between 45yrs and 84yrs use the grounds to 'Go for a walk'.

The ground's top three positively rated aspects were:

1. 'Accessibility' (86%, n=273)
2. 'Grass areas' (83%, n=271)
3. 'Facilities for 12's and under' (81%, n=232).

The ground's top three negatively rated aspects were:

1. 'Toilets' (85%, n=189)
2. 'Range of visitor facilities' (29%, n=83)
3. 'Park security' (25%, n=127).

Regarding 'the park in general'; the majority of respondents (74%) rated the grounds positively, 22% rated the grounds fair, and 3% rated the grounds negatively.

The three most prevalent reasons amongst respondents who ticked 'Poor' or 'Very poor' include:

- o 'Toilets needed' (36%, n=143)
- o 'Security/ Anti-social behaviour' (8%, n=33)
- o 'Pathway improvements' (8%, n=30) and 'Flowerbed/ shrubbery improvements' (8%, n=30).

When considering improving the visitor experience, the three most prevalent suggestions for using the recreational grounds more often or staying for longer include:

- o Café needed (30%, n=107)
- o Toilets needed (19%, n=69)
- o Better range of facilities (16%, n=57).

Of the respondents that took part in this survey, 51 people kindly provided their names and contact information for volunteering activities. This information will be passed onto the management team for future volunteering opportunities.

The full results will be used to shape our action plan for Alexandra Recreation Ground so any future opportunities and funding can be directed towards what the public want to see in their open spaces.

1.16. MANAGEMENT PLAN

It has already been established that Alexandra Recreation Ground was managed under a relaxed plan. The thought process behind this was that it was better to carry out the work when it was needed rather than spending time there unnecessarily. In completing his application for Green Flag we now understand the importance of a structured management plan. An improved management plan is not just for the day-to-day running of the facility but also for its long-term future. Our management plan will be a work in progress with the help of the parks user groups.

APPENDIX A

ALEXANDRA RECREATION GROUND ACTION PLAN

Green Flag Criteria	Objective	Implementation/ Task	Target Date	Achieved	Progress					Project Managed By
					2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
A Welcoming Place	New Notice Boards	Remove dated and uninformative signs	Summer 2016		Two notice boards were completed and installed in early 2016. These will be monitored for vandalism and the Friends Of were provided a key to the noticeboard so up to date information could be displayed.					Ranger Service & Operational Services Management
	Signage	It was highlighted by the green flag judge that there are too many signs at the entrances	Winter 2017		The Council are fully aware that the many signs at the entrances can be confusing. We have trialled a new information sign at Ewell Court which we will look to getting in at Alexandra. Also as part of the rangers 2017 targets we will explore the alternatives to communicating information to the public.					Ranger Service

	Street Sign	Place a sign post on the road, directing people to the park			Originally it was discussed that any funding left over from the new notice boards may stretch to a road sign outside of the park. It has since been decided that the left over budget will be spent on Name Plates to go on all the park entrances.					Managers / Outside Contractor
	Name Plaques	To install name plaques on the main entrances and smaller entrances of the park	Summer 2017		The leftover budget has been allocated to getting name plaques on most of the main entrances of the park so the public know which park they are entering even from the smaller less obvious entrances. They will match the header board of the new noticeboards and will create a uniform look across all the parks in the borough. Quotes are being obtained.					Ranger Service
	Facilities	It was highlighted in the 2015 survey that the park lacked equipment for over 12's	New Equipment		The MUGA is designed to be used for over 12's with basketball courts, seating area and 3 play items. Two all-weather table tennis tables were installed in 2015 through Fields in Trust funding.					Leisure

				Any future funding can be directed to facilities for the Over 12's					
	It was highlighted in the 2015 survey that the park required toilets	Make toilets accessible to the public		Due to the cost associated with public toilets the majority of them were closed across the whole borough. If Rangers are in the park they can allow the public access to them and there is a disabled toilet accessible at all times when the pavilion is open					
	It was highlighted in the 2015 survey that the park users would like to see a café or refreshment facility in the park	Open a café		If an external company proposed a café in the park to the Council, the Venues department would consider the application.					External company and Venues
	Improve the basketball courts	Replace the back boards and repaint the court lines		The replacement of the backboards and the repainting of the lines on the court has been proposed to Procurement.					Procurement
Healthy, Safe & Secure	Police Patrol	Liaise with local police and PCSO's to include Alex Rec in their patrols	Monthly		Alexandra Rec is not considered a crime hot spot, and due to police resources, monthly police				Ranger Service / Local Police

					patrols are no longer carried out. Rangers continue to maintain close contact with PCSO's should the need of their assistance arises.					
	Anti-Social Behaviour	Alexandra Park is not a park that is locked at night so is accessible at all hours. Public highlighted from the 2015 survey that antisocial behaviour was prevalent at night.	On-Going		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In September 2016 the benches were removed from the top pavilion to reduce its appeal as a hangout. • The rangers log any incidents they encounter on their own internal spreadsheet and to the police. • If rangers receive intel from the public they encourage them to report to the police. 					Ranger Service
	Encourage Responsible dog ownership and good practice in the park	Educational tools. Posters and stencilling.	2 – 3 Months		Posters & Stencilling on the pavement is listed as a priority park for Alex Rec. Stencilling is done as and when needed (weather permitting) and recorded on a database. Dog owners are requested to pick up by the rangers If seen not doing so					Ranger Service

		Use the new noticeboards to highlight the dangers of not clearing up after your dog	Summer 2016		There is a section allocated on the new information boards highlighting good dog ownership.					Ranger Service
		It was highlighted in the 2015 survey that dogs are off lead	On-Going		There is no stipulation for dogs to be kept on leads in Alexandra, however if dogs are seen to be out of control by the rangers they will be spoken to. There are dog free areas of the park.					Ranger Service
	Car Parks	It was highlighted in the 2015 survey that there was not enough car parking			The majority of respondents came to the park by foot. Due to the existing infrastructure around the park it would be very difficult to increase the size of the existing car parks.					
Clean & Well Maintained	Bins	Emptying and maintenance	Schedule (increased in busier months)		New multiuse bins installed in 2012. Bins are emptied to a weekly schedule. All bins inspected during weekly checks for damage and are replaced/repaired as and when required.					Operational Services / Ranger Service

	Litter	Removal of rubbish in the park	Daily		Any litter found is removed by the team that empties the bins on a daily basis. When the ranger team inspect the park on a weekly basis any litter found is removed.					Ranger Service / Street Cleansing
	Dog Mess	Removal	Weekly		Rangers patrol park to check for dog mess. If found it is collected. The dog free area is checked and anyone walking dogs there are asked to leave.					Ranger Service
	Tennis Court Cleaning	Repair damaged tennis court surface	Weekly /Yearly		Repairs to tennis court completed in 2013. Weekly inspections to be carried out to monitor for damage. Annual cleaning is carried out by a contractor when detritus builds up. Tennis Courts recently been sprayed for moss.					Ranger Service & Specialist Contractor
	Repairs to playground/Muga/Tennis Courts/Park Furniture	Inspections	Weekly		All are inspected on a weekly basis and any damage found reported to the maintenance ranger. Timescales for repairs depends on severity of damage. Rangers now carry a stocked tool kit					Ranger Service / Maintenance Ranger

Sustainability	Maintenance of pathways	The 2015 survey highlighted that the pathway between Alexandra Road and Wallace Fields that runs through the park is not buggy friendly	On-Going		<p>which allows for basic on site repairs.</p> <p>The issue with the path is the common limes as their roots have lifted the pathway in places. The condition of the path is monitored and a recent collapse of part of the pathway due to removal of a tree has been repaired.</p> <p>Procurement are aware that the pathways are in need of some repair work but it is down to funding and prioritise of work.</p>					Procurement
	Electricity and Water Efficiency	Ensure all taps and showers in pavilion are functioning properly. Check all light bulbs in pavilion and lamp posts are energy efficient and are timed to come on at the correct times.	Monthly		Lamp posts are owned by Surrey County Council, any faults are reported directly to them. Kier (maintenance contractor) carries out monthly planned preventative maintenance (PPM) where the water temperatures and emergency lights are checked. There are other PPM tasks that come up quarterly, half yearly and					Ranger Service & Kier

					annually that also get attended to.					
Conservation & Heritage	Promote Wildlife	Install 3 bat boxes & 3 bird boxes			There are currently no set targets or plans for bird and bat boxes to be installed at Alex Rec. The installation relies on funding and staff with the necessary experience to install and maintain.					Ranger Service
		Insect hotels	Summer 2017		Will research the viability and budget of installing insect hotels in wildlife area					Ranger Service
	Wildlife area	Maintenance	Annually		Area at the top of Alex Rec is left as a wildlife garden and is not cultivated. Small scale maintenance carried out Monthly Inspections					Grounds Maintenance / Ranger Service / Friends of Alex

	Maximise opportunities for ecological enhancement	Identify areas where mowing regimes can be relaxed and bulbs introduced	Annually		Wildlife area at top of Alex Rec is never mown. Area known as the old playground has a variety of shrubs which are not overly managed. Herald of Spring bulbs to be collected in March 2107 and planted in the park.					Grounds Maintenance
Community Involvement	Assess the number and profile of users, the pattern of use and users perception of safety and enjoyment	An in house survey will allow the local community to voice their opinion on how they feel the park can be improved	Autumn 2021		The in house survey was carried out in October 2015 to coincide with the re-write of the management plan. An in house survey will be carried out in Autumn 2021 to coincide with the re-write and a comparison of responses can be carried out.					Ranger Service and Leisure Team
	Increase the number of Friend Of members	Encourage the public to join the Friend Of group	On-Going		He friend of can advertise their group in the new noticeboards and the in house survey allowed those who filled in the survey to provide their details for future volunteering opportunities. These were passed on to Sandra Laxton who oversees the Friends Of groups					Ranger Service and Friends Of Alex

Marketing	<p>Make information and interperative material available about the history, landscape and ecological value of the park – and also environmental management in the park</p> <p>Ensure information and interpretation is available and kept up to date</p>	Internet (the Council website) and leaflets.	Spring 2017		The Council launched a new external site to the public in late 2016. The parks pages will be updated with useful and up to date information					Ranger Service, Friends of Alex and Leisure Team
		Use the new noticeboard to advertise future events and up to date information about the park	On Going		Checked during weekly inspections and updated as and when required					Samantha Whitehead/ Emma Brown/ Sandra Laxton
		Bins	Monthly		Advertisement of events in litter bins as and when needed updates. The bins will also become available in 2017 to hire to advertise external companies					Street Cleansing

	Promote the Green Flag award scheme across the Borough	Green Flag posters and flag poles to be renewed each year on receiving the award	Annually		Flag replaced and certificates replaced as and when successful in our application Green Flag					Ranger Service, Friends of Alex
Management	Write an up to date management plan available to staff at all levels and by different park user groups	Copy to be made available to all concerned members	Winter 2016		Completed in January 2017					Ranger Service
	Ensure effective monitoring of the management plan	Implement monitoring process by meetings between the Council and user groups thereby continually reviewing and updating the management plan	Weekly & Quarterly		Weekly checks of the park carried out by the Ranger service and bi-annual walkabouts arranged with the 'Friends Of' group					Ranger Service & Relevant Parties

GREEN	Projects are on track and in control
YELLOW	The project has been postponed to explore alternatives or is not required to be active at this time
RED	The project has been stopped and will not meet its commitments for cost, schedule or scope. Projects in the red will need their budget and schedule increased, or their scope of work increased, to get back on track

APPENDIX B

A GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

Borough of Epsom and Ewell

A Green Spaces Strategy



Skylark



Juniper



Orchid



Great Crested Newt

Green Spaces Strategy

Policy Statement

To protect, conserve, enhance and promote our green spaces recognising the importance of them to the identity of the Borough. To work in consultation with residents, users and other interested groups to conserve the natural diversity, visual amenity and historical interest and to promote public access and recreational opportunities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 COUNTRYSIDE

3.0 TREES AND WOODLAND

4.0 PARKS

5.0 OPEN SPACES

6.0 CONSERVATION

7.0 ALLOTMENTS

8.0 PUBLIC ACCESS

9.0 OTHER INSTITUTIONAL OR PRIVATE LAND

10.0 STRATEGIC POLICIES

11.0 EDUCATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The development of a green spaces strategy for the whole of the Borough provides the context in which land managers, planners and recreation providers can work to provide this Borough with open spaces for the use of the residents and visitors alike. Emphasis in the past has been placed strategically on countryside areas on a regional basis because of the pressures on these areas and particularly the urban fringe. In Surrey over the last few years, a countrywide countryside strategy has been in place, identifying issues and action points. However in the area of parks and other open spaces there has not been the impetus to adopt the strategic and long-term approach this strategy seeks to start the process of addressing the long-term future of all the varied sites within the Borough.

Green spaces in the Borough are extremely varied in character ranging from the formal gardens at Bourne Hall, through informal green spaces such as that found at Royal Avenue to the wilder areas of Epsom Common. It is clearly very difficult to formulate a policy that is applicable to all of the sites and this strategy does not intend to do so. In addition all of the sites cannot be considered in isolation as residents and other uses are highly mobile and use sites for different purposes. It is clear that the use of the sites is interlinked as many of the sites are also physically linked.

In the past, land use policy was dictated by the local plan policies and these policies, although material in the development of land, were not the primary source of policy. This has recently changed such that the local plan is now given greater strength but has also had to recognise the primary role of the local plan as a land-use strategy. Closer scrutiny is now given to local plans and many of the policies which would have formally given no concerns as non-land use policies now raise issues given the primacy of the plan. Non-land use policies will be rejected. The local plan process timetable has resulted in the present plan needing now to consider the non-land use policies in a different light as a result of a clarification of central government policy. We need to establish these policies in association with the planning system backed by research and evidence as opposed to intuition. This strategic approach starts that process.

It is proposed in the first instance to identify a number of areas for policy development. In essence there are two major areas in the development of the green spaces strategy. There are those policies which refer to features on the ground, for example: land management plans, and then there are those policies which refer to the use of green space such as the play policy. These policies are not mutually exclusive and need to be referenced and considered in the development of the green spaces strategy.

The following strategy should not be considered as being set in tablets of stone. Needs and circumstances change with time and what is relevant now may not be relevant in two years time. This long-term view of the development and management of the green spaces in the Borough will help in long-term objective setting for the Council and will allow activity to be directed in the most effective way. It should also bring to the fore, issues about the management of the open spaces in the Borough which need to be investigated and then resolved. The following strategy is divided into a number of subject areas for convenience, though it should be remembered that in practice many of the areas merge together and issues raised are rarely as simple as they seem.

2.0 COUNTRYSIDE

A large part of Epsom and Ewell is countryside green space and is part of the larger resource of Surrey. The land is not all in the ownership of this Council and this has had an impact on the integrated management of the site. Countryside issues and policies have been well developed nationally through the work of the Countryside Commission and English Nature. As a result a good body of research is available which can be used in the local context of Epsom and Ewell. Improvements have been made in the past years with site-specific management plan and policies for sites in the ownership of the Council, but there is a need for an overall policy context in which to fit the management of the countryside irrespective of ownership. There is also a need to identify the links between sites both physically and in the overall contribution to the green spaces of the Borough.

Issues

- Areas and development pressure for housing and go facilities.
- Inappropriate management either by management as parkland or no management to retain the countryside appeal and value.
- No long-term view of the management of the countryside into the future, recognising each site has a different value.
- No consideration of the relationships between the site and how they contribute to the whole and what physical links are necessary between the sites.
- No priorities for action for the management of the sites.

Action

To identify the different types of countryside in the Borough, identifying policies for their overall and site-specific management where appropriate. To prioritise the sites in terms of their value as green spaces in the Borough as a whole and to identify potentially damaging activities which would be detrimental to their value. To seek to identify where links and improvements can be made in the countryside of the Borough.

3.0 TREES AND WOODLAND

Trees and woodlands, of all the soft landscape features in the Borough, play one of the most important roles. The visibility of trees and woodlands and their contribution to the landscape should not be underestimated. Fortunately the Borough is in a good position with regard to its tree stocks both in parks, open spaces and highways. Past planting policy has produced a wide range of tree species though there is scope for improvement and development as inappropriate tree planting has taken place. Any policy for trees and woodlands should cover all aspects of the trees and woodland in the Borough and show how they relate to our other policies on all areas of land within the Borough, whether owned by this Council or not.

Issues

- Loss of trees through a variety of means which includes development and natural processes such as storms and drought.
- Planting inappropriate trees in inappropriate places.
- Poor management of the existing trees resulting in increased cost and liability potential.
- Little recognition of the role of trees in the urban landscape.
- No overall tree planting or landscaping strategy.

Action

To quantify the tree resources of the Borough and to draw on this to produce an urban forestry strategy to secure the long-term future and development of the Borough's tree stock.

4.0 PARKS

There is a wide range of parks in the Borough which range from formal gardens to sports oriented Recreation Grounds. Most residents of the Borough use the parks on a regular basis for a number of different reasons. In the past the tendency has been to manage parks in isolation without a long term view of their role, the needs of users and their detailed management. In addition it was also felt that the priorities for the development of the parks were unclear. It is now the Council's policy to consider the use of the parks in consultation with the users, to develop long term policies for each park and also to plan for their long term development integrating them with other green spaces as a unit.

- Problems of security and abuse of facilities
- The need to generate income with limited investment in the facilities

Action

To develop an overall policy for the future development of the parks and then to produce individual site management plans. To identify the current provision in parks and the scope for future improvements. To address the problems of youth involvement and provision.

5.0 OPEN SPACES

Open spaces are those areas recognised within the Borough, both public and private, which are in addition to our recognised parks, countryside and allotments. They currently play or have the potential to play, an important role in our green space provision. An example of this would be the contribution made by the Longmead Contours to the link between the green areas of Epsom and Ewell. These areas range from informal play space within housing areas to large areas of close mown grass. These are to be considered in this green spaces strategy for the Borough as they form an integral part of our green spaces network and are often some of the most frequently used sites.

Issues

- Consideration of the role of the open spaces in part of the overall network of green spaces.
- No long-term management plans for the management of the sites taking restricted account of the needs of users and local residents.
- No overall policy for management of the open spaces as a whole and as part of our green spaces network.
- Problems of security and abuse of the facilities.
- Varied ownership restricting the overview of the open spaces.
- Areas and development pressure for housing and golf facilities.

Action

To establish the role of each of our open spaces for the future development of the green spaces in the Borough and develop a long-term management plan working with the local residents, users and the landowner where appropriate.

6.0 CONSERVATION

The need to conserve features within our environment is increasingly recognised by our residents and the users of our green spaces. There has been a dramatic increase in environmental awareness for all parts of our environment over the past few years. As a Council we have started to address a number of the issues involved through the Borough local plan and through a number of other strategies and policies. We still need to clearly identify conservation policies, place them in context and to implement those that are in place.

Issues

- Loss of some of the natural features of our environment by a variety of different means.
- No policies for the management of anything other than the wildlife features of our green spaces.
- Limited awareness of the conservation interest of many of our sites which includes historical value.
- Limited resources to implement conservation initiatives.
- No plan for environmental improvements to OUI green spaces.

Action

To define policies for the conservation of features within all of our green spaces in consultation with interested groups. To implement those policies with specific actions that will produce results.

7.0 ALLOTMENTS

Allotments serve the need for local residents to grow their own produce whilst at the same time having health and social benefits. The use of allotments has changed over the past years. There were high levels of occupancy after the Second World War and areas which are now Green space were then used as allotments. Usage declined in the 1960's and 1970's, however with a change in people's attitudes and with the adoption of healthier lifestyles the last few years have seen an increase in the demand for plots. The demand for allotments then clearly fluctuates with time and this changing need has to be recognised in the long-term management of allotments. Recently emphasis has been placed on the management of the site by the allotment holders themselves. This is providing real benefits and will continue into the future.

Issues

- Fluctuating levels of occupancy and changing demand for allotments.
- Pressure of the sites for development: as housing.
- Limited past expenditure producing long-term problems such as the accumulation of rubbish.
- No long-term plans for the management of the allotment as a unit and for the future development of each of the allotment.

Action

To devise a policy for the allotments service to form a long-term strategy for their development and to identify management priorities for each of the individual allotment sites.

8.0 PUBLIC ACCESS

For any green spaces strategy to have value to the residents of the Borough it is important to recognise that access is particularly important. This may not mean direct access to the site but may involve being able to see the site from roads and public rights of way and so providing visual amenity. The site may contribute to the overall green space provision of the Borough without necessarily being accessible though we should strive to gain access where appropriate. The opportunities for the further development of the rights of way network should be emphasised. Access for the disabled and other groups should not be thought of as an addition to access to our sites but should be automatically considered in new and existing developments.

Issues

- No plan for the development of access to our green spaces.
- Lost opportunities for the enhancement of access to green spaces.
- Opportunities for the promotion of access to green spaces are not fully utilised.
- Increased future potential for improvement in the light of proposed developments.
- The need to provide access to our green spaces for all sectors of the community.

Action

To identify the rights of ways and other forms of access within the Borough and to show how they link our various green spaces, facilitate the use of our green spaces and identify areas where we would seek to extend access to our green spaces to form an overall network. To consider access to our green spaces by the disabled and other groups.

9.0 OTHER INSTITUTIONAL OR PRIVATE LAND

in this Borough the land owned by this Council plays a significant role in the overall development of our green spaces. However this is not the whole picture. If all land which is not owned by the Council is ignored then there is little justification for any overall policy context in which to work. This is vital when considering standards for green space provision. There is a need to consider non-Council owned sites in this policy but not necessarily on an individual site basis as the response from the landowner may vary.

Issues

- Impending recent changes in the use of large green spaces such as the hospitals Cluster
- Opportunities for the extension or enhancement of our accessible green space may be lost
- Development pressure on this type of green space for housing or other usages.
- The need to identify standards for facilities in green space as a result of the Borough local plan enquiry.

Action

To identify all non-Council owned sites and to produce a register identifying features of the green space. To seek to negotiate management of the site that conforms to our overall objectives for the management of green space and, where necessary consider the long-term management of the site.

10.0 STRATEGIC POLICIES

Any strategic policy cannot work in total isolation. We need to consider the effects of national policy for the various activities and features of our green spaces. This is particularly important where we are to consider local standards. The way forward is to look very clearly at our local standards and policies and identify where they differ from those agreed nationally whether formally or informally. Evidence must be provided to justify the local conditions. This has been clearly seen in the inspector's response to the Borough Local Plan Deposit Draft. The play policy is a good example.

Issues

- Lack of policies which can be applied to green space without each issue having to be dealt with on an individual basis
- Management of our green spaces with a wider perspective
- The need to identify policies and standards which will be material in the determination of planning proposals
- The need to work with adjacent landowners, authorities and interested parties.

Action

To carry out an investigation and analysis of all policies and standards which effect the green spaces in the Borough and to clearly identify the implications for our own policies. To identify where appropriate further policies as necessary and to consult with interested parties.

11.0 EDUCATION

Green space within the Borough is a resource which needs the support and understanding of the local residents if it is to survive. The promotion and interpretation of our green space heritage through educational programmes vital to the continued appropriate use of that green space. Informed debate and an understanding of how green spaces can only be supported by relevant information. We need not only to collect that information but also to inform people of the consequences of their actions and how to act on the result. It is through appreciating what green space resources we have that we will be able to protect those green spaces.

Issues

- Limited educational programme at present
- The need to make the resident and user alike aware of the constraints on the management of green spaces
- The need to respond to the changing needs of our users and to keep them informed of proposed changes

Action

To develop an interpretive plan for all green spaces, both as a unit and individually to identify how we will educate everyone on the importance of green spaces and their management. To implement the plan using the Ranger Service, other officers and outside agencies as appropriate.