

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE GREEN ESTATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND
PLAN 2013 - 2023****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval for outline proposals for the future management and operation of the green estate portfolio.

Information and Advice

2. Following the development of the Green Estate Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023, which received approval at the October 2013 Culture Committee meeting, a further report was requested setting out an updated asset/status list of sites and recommendations for their future management/operation.
3. The green estate came into being largely as a result of the programme of land reclamation undertaken by the Council from the 1960s. As the body of land increased, and with it expertise in land management, other sites were acquired from various programmes of environmental enhancement, along with “orphan” parcels of land that otherwise had no home.
4. The estate grew organically and fluctuated over the years, reflecting the changing policies of the Council. Land has been acquired for specific purposes, for example the purchase of redundant mineral lines for strategic multi-user access routes. Land has also been leased to other bodies where that has made sense in management terms. Some has been sold or disposed of to facilitate other Council developments such as road schemes, or to reduce management liabilities and maintenance costs.
5. The review of the green estate holdings proposed by the Strategy (pages 18-22), was to take a site-by-site approach, with policy GE10 setting out the rationale to explore new models of site management, acquisition and disposal.
6. As the Strategy recognised, some of the sites have minimal public recreational value and could be more appropriately managed by other agencies, organisations or adjacent landowners, e.g. extended highway verges and landscaping schemes on industrial parks. Some sites do not meet the Council’s standards or criteria, and on occasions, there have been requests made by other parties to acquire such public open space.

7. There are also Countywide and national agencies that specialise in this area that may be better placed to manage our sites and facilities, especially where sites of their own are adjacent or very close by.
8. The most appropriate form of site management may involve the disposal of the lowest ranking sites which exert an unwanted pressure on our resources, releasing time and efforts to improve and develop those sites most important for public recreation and the biodiversity they support.
9. To help review the green estate, the sites have been ranked using an objective scoring based on a number of criteria:-
 - Biodiversity value
 - Statutory designation
 - Heritage value
 - Access links
 - Public use
 - Community involvement
 - Facilities
 - Income generation
 - Potential for energy use.
10. Sites have also been grouped for management purposes according to the scores into:
 - Key Sites
 - Intermediate Sites
 - Low Priority Sites.
11. An assessment has then been made as to their future management as detailed in **Appendix 1**. The options are:
 - R** Retain: key site for Green Estate
 - FD** Future disposal potential: retain for now
 - D** Dispose: sell, lease, give away
 - UD** Unlikely ever to be disposable due to location or past use.
12. Though every attempt has been made to keep the process objective there is inevitably an element of subjectivity in how the criteria are scored. However, it is felt that the process fairly reflects professional opinion and has prompted useful debate about the value of certain sites, particularly those on the borderline of groups. It is also important to recognise that the status of 'retention' relates to site ownership but acknowledges that site management and development could be achieved via a third party agreement.
13. The assessment criteria are themselves quite fluid and the scoring can change depending on prevailing socio-economic factors. For instance a site that has traditionally had low public use may become much more popular with the development of adjacent land for housing.

14. A site's potential for alternative energy use can also change depending on Government incentives, and community involvement can fluctuate wildly depending on local leadership and initiative.
15. Any assessment of the estate must reflect the current financial pressures upon the Council, where revenue funding is not likely to improve in the foreseeable future. It should also recognise that provision of green space as a public good is not a statutory duty for the Council. As such, there is now a logical impetus towards finding appropriate alternative management regimes for the portfolio, so as to reduce as far as possible the ongoing management burden and revenue cost to the authority.
16. Preliminary discussions are taking place with external organisations that may be interested in operating some of the sites, and others may prove suitable for community management.
17. There is unlikely to be a single solution as the sites are so varied in size and location. Also, there will inevitably be a body of land that cannot be managed in any other way but 'in-house'. How best to manage these residual sites and those that have to be retained for strategic purposes will form part of the cross-departmental service reviews that are currently underway. Corporate Property officers in their role as 'corporate landlord' will continue to support the Strategy and provide advice on sites that may have strategic importance to the authority in planning and development terms.
18. As discussions progress, further reports will be brought to Committee narrowing down the range of options for the estate and its component parts, within the context of the strategic approach set out by the Redefining Your Council document, and the Green Estate Strategy itself.

Other Options Considered

19. The report is a scheduled follow-on report arising from the decision made at the October 2013 Culture Committee meeting.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. The proposals are part of the process of transforming Council services and reshaping operating models foreshadowed by Redefining Your Council.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation will be undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

22. Where appropriate when sites pass from Council control every attempt will be made to safeguard public access and biodiversity by means of covenants or contractual terms.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

23. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the wider consultation arrangements for the Development Strategy and Plan.

Financial Implications

24. There are aspects of the Strategy that require longer term capital investment and it is anticipated that external funding support will be required in order for them to be progressed. Where land is transferred from direct Council control this will be subject to the normal approval process set out in the Financial Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Culture Committee:

- 1) approves the outline proposals for the future management and operation of the green estate portfolio as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 2) agrees to receive further reports setting out progress with the delivery of the Green Estate Strategy.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 19/06/14)

25. The Culture Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (KA 18/06/14)

26. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 24 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Green Estates Strategy Document
Green Estates sites by electoral division
Nottinghamshire Green Estate Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023 – report to Culture Committee on 8 October 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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