



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	9 th February 2016
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Service Area	Planning and Countryside
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	24 th February 2016

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

MERTHYR TYDFIL OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Council's approval of a draft Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy and associated Action Plans, and to subject the draft documents to a 6 week period of public consultation.
- 1.2 The Open Space Strategy is essential to secure the provision of well-designed and cared for open spaces within the County Borough. It will inform and help interpret the Council's local development plan policies, inform the site management of open spaces and act as a mechanism for directing funding to appropriate sites where improvements can be made.
- 1.3 The Open Space Strategy is complemented by 11 Action Plans, which have been prepared for each ward within the County Borough.
- 1.4 The Open Space Strategy will be implemented through a variety of means, including both directly by the Council and through external organisations and their funding sources. Planning obligations secured through Section 106 Agreements and funding secured via the Community Infrastructure Levy will also contribute to the delivery of the Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

- 2.1 The draft Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy and associated Action Plans be approved for consultation.

- 2.2 Six weeks of public consultation on the draft Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy and associated Action Plans commences during March 2016.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Councillors will recall that in December 2010, Council gave approval for the Town Planning Division to begin preparation of an Open Space Strategy for the County Borough. A summary of the approval given in December 2010 is follows:
- The Town Planning Division will develop an Open Space Strategy (OSS) for the County Borough, which will be used to inform the Local Development Plan.
 - The Strategy will fulfil requirements and guidance in national policy, set out by the Welsh Government, which aims to ensure that adequate land is allocated for formal and informal sport and recreation.
 - Its goals will relate to, and complement, principles, policies and action plans in a number of statutory MTCBC documents.
 - The Strategy will aim to understand the supply and demand for open space within the County Borough, identifying deficiencies, secure new provision and improve the quality of open space.
 - The appointment of an Open Space Champion from among Elected Members.
- 3.2 Councillors will also recall that an update report was presented to Council in February 2013, which set out the work undertaken up to that point in time and the next tasks to be completed.
- 3.3 All background work has now been completed and a draft Open Space Strategy and associated Actions Plans have been produced in order to undertake public consultation.
- 3.4 The Open Space Strategy is essential to secure the provision of well-designed and cared for open spaces within the County Borough. These valued spaces can contribute to the health, economy and environment of our communities.
- 3.5 The Open Space Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (Edition 8, 2016) and Technical Advice Note 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009). The key themes and objectives of the Strategy relate to, and complement, plans and strategies produced by the Welsh Government and other regional and national organisations. In particular, they align with a number of the well-being goals set out by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). They also complement *priority outcomes 3 and 4* of Merthyr Tydfil's Single Integrated Plan (Reviewed 2015/16) and *priority area 4* of Merthyr Tydfil's Corporate Plan (2013 – 2017).

4.0 PURPOSE OF THE OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The purpose of the Open Space Strategy is to inform and help interpret the Council's local development plan policies relating to the provision of open space in new developments and the protection of existing open space. It will also be used to inform the site-management of open spaces, and as a mechanism for directing funding to appropriate sites where improvements to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces can be made.

5.0 HOW TO USE THE OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

- 5.1 The Open Space Strategy is complemented by 11 Action Plans, which have been prepared for each ward within the County Borough. Together they provide a framework that will ensure a co-ordinated approach is taken to meeting the County Borough's open space needs and protecting and developing the County Borough's network of open spaces.
- 5.2 The Strategy provides an overview of the background work undertaken, identifies locally important open spaces, highlights the baseline position for the provision of open space and sets the key objectives and the standards to be met. Alongside this, the Action Plans provide a more detailed analysis of each of the 11 wards within the County Borough and make recommendations for improvements to priority sites that have the most potential to address identified shortfalls. The Strategy and Action Plans have been produced with the intention that the two documents will be used in conjunction with each other.

6.0 WHO SHOULD USE THE OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

- 6.1 The Open Space Strategy will be used by the Planning Division to assist with the application of local development plan policies relating to the provision and protection of open spaces, and to inform the preparation of future local development plans. Other Council Departments, such as Parks and Estates, can also use the Strategy to inform decisions on the most appropriate management and use of open spaces in the future. Additionally, the Regeneration Department, the Local Service Board Partnership, and voluntary and community organisations can use the Strategy as an evidence base and framework for securing funding and prioritising projects that will benefit local communities.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The draft Open Space Strategy and associated Action Plans are being placed before Council with a view to securing approval of its contents and commencing a 6 week period of public consultation. Comments received as part of the consultation process will be taken into account before a final version of the document is placed before Committee for approval in Spring/Summer 2016.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The financial implications arising from the preparation of the Open Spaces Strategy are met through the relevant budget of the Planning and Countryside Division.
- 8.2 The financial implications relating to the implementation of the Open Space Strategy will depend on which recommendations are taken forward and which organisation or source of funding is used to deliver the improvements. The Strategy is clear in that implementation will occur through a variety of means, including external organisations and their funding sources, planning obligations secured through Section 106 Agreements and funding secured via the Community Infrastructure Levy. Any direct funding from Council departments will depend on departmental priorities and budget commitments.
- 8.3 It should also be noted that certain benefits can be realised through actions involving simple changes to management practices which have the potential to be cost neutral or even help realise cost savings.
- 8.4 The Open Space Strategy does not commit the Council to meeting the objectives and standards, or delivering all of the recommended actions, within a specified timescale; rather, it provides a framework for directing funding towards identified areas of need where the greatest benefits can be realised. In recognition of this, it is considered a medium to long term strategy where many recommended actions will only be undertaken when sources of funding become available.

9.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

- 9.1 The Single Integrated Plan and Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and the Open Space Strategy has been found to have a number of positive impacts, including priority outcomes 3 and 4 of Merthyr Tydfil's Single Integrated Plan and priority area 4 of Merthyr Tydfil's Corporate Plan. No negative impacts have been identified.

10.1 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is not required at this time. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

ELLIS COOPER
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COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARRY
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy	February 2016	Background Papers Link
Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy – Action Plans	February 2016	Background Papers Link
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.