

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 24 JULY 2012
title: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: CHRIS HUGHES, HEAD OF CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To ask members to comment upon, and endorse, an assessment of current open space provision owned by the Council, with a view to identifying future investment needs, funding sources and, given the likely funding constraints, those of a greater or lesser priority.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- **Community Objectives**

Places – conserve and enhance the environmental quality of the area

- **Corporate Priorities**

- To be a well-managed Council, providing efficient services, based on identified customer needs
- To make peoples' lives safer and healthier
- To protect and enhance the environmental quality of our area

- **Corporate Objectives**

- to finalise the core strategy
- to improve the health of people living and working in our area
- to improve the opportunity for young people to participate in recreation and sporting activity
- to structure the Council to provide efficient and effective services within the current financial constraints

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At previous meetings, Committee had discussed the future of public open space provision in relation to the development of the core strategy.

2.2 The conclusions of such discussions were:

- There needs to be a more strategic approach to future open space provision in order to ensure a better geographic spread of facilities
- There may be the need to focus on fewer, better facilities, along with other satellite facilities, rather than the system we currently have, which tends to react to individual opportunities, primarily through Section 106 agreements on new housing developments

- There should be adequate provision in larger scale developments, and any ongoing revenue liabilities should remain with the developer, rather than being passed to the Council.
- Smaller scale developments should make a contribution to the nearest appropriate provision, and not necessarily restricted to play areas but recreational provision in general.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 In order to better understand future facility needs and balance them with investment needs and opportunities, we need to carry out a detailed analysis of current provision and its ability to provide for the projected population growth.

3.2 In order to do this, we propose to split the work into two areas:

- **Formal facilities** – Lancashire Sport have offered to carry out an analysis of facilities, including Council, private and voluntary sector provision, based on facility type, quality, access/travel time. This will then be matched against current and future population estimates, to identify where gaps may emerge, and identify strategic sites.
- **Parks and Open Spaces** – we will carry out a detailed analysis of our main parks and play areas, using the same format to help us better understand ongoing resource issues and move towards a more strategic approach. We will also include parish provision to ensure any gap analysis is comprehensive.

4 ISSUES

4.1 The two pieces of work will, understandably, raise issues on the current condition of facilities and where funding may come from, in order to provide quality provision in the future, hence the original conclusion that we may need to concentrate resources in fewer, more strategic, locations in the future.

4.2 We would propose to bring some recommendations to Committee in November, seeking support from the previously formed member working group, in the meantime.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

Approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – There are no direct implications, but the outcome of the various audits will identify financial implications.
- **Technical, Environmental and Legal** – The work carried out will provide valuable evidence to support the core Strategy
- **Political** – The findings will identify key issues that will need important decisions in the future
- **Reputation** – Recreation/open space provision has a high profile across the Borough, and so any changes could affect people's perceptions of the Council

- **Equality & Diversity** – none at this stage, but issues are likely to emerge as plans develop.

6 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

6.1 Notes the contents of the report and endorses the two elements of work

6.2 Agrees to the involvement of the member working group.

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