

REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE –
27 AUGUST 2001

LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 17 SEPTEMBER
2001

REPORT ON SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH UNIT REPORT
'RETHINKING OPEN SPACE. OPEN SPACE
PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT : A WAY FORWARD'

REPORT BY JOINT REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND
TRANSPORTATION AND DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND
PARKS

REPORT NO: 325-2001

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To highlight the main findings and recommendations of a new Research Report by the Scottish Executive concerning open space.
- 1.2 To broadly consider the extent to which the Council is meeting the challenges of the Report.
- 1.3 To highlight any significant land use policy-related issues arising from the Report that will feed into the Review of the Dundee Local Plan 1998.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.2 That the Directors of Planning & Transportation and Leisure & Parks Departments are remitted to define new standards for the provision of open space throughout the City and report back to both Committees in October 2001.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this Report.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The findings and recommendations of the research Report transcend a number of key themes of Local Agenda 21. Essentially, the shift away from nationally applied standards will help ensure that public open spaces in Dundee contribute to a high quality of life throughout the City and help deliver economic prosperity, a sustainable future and Best Value for all citizens and communities alike.
- 4.2 Locally defined standards, the promotion of sustainable green networks of accessible, high quality open spaces, the enhancement of existing open spaces, together with effective management, maintenance and community support will contribute to the following key themes of Local Agenda 21.
 - Diversity and local distinctiveness are valued and protected;
 - Settlements are human in scale and form;
 - Places, spaces and objects combine meaning and beauty with utility;
 - Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments which emphasise prevention of illness as well as care for the sick;
 - The diversity of nature is valued and protected;
 - Pollution is limited to levels with which natural systems can cope; and
 - Resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The findings and recommendations of the Research Report will be presented to the Community Planning Sustainability Sub-Group to help promote awareness and encourage integration of resources to assist the provision, maintenance and management of open space throughout the City.

6. **BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 National Planning Policy Guideline 11 (NPPG11), Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space was published by the then Scottish Office in 1996, conveying the Governments' views on a range of issues concerning the planning of open space. This advocated that open space policies should be based on local considerations and offered broad guidance on the range of factors to take account of when formulating such policies. However, many local authorities expressed concern about the absence of a practical methodology to assist delivery of a coherent policy framework.
- 6.2 In March 2000, a consortium of public, private and voluntary sector agencies led by the Scottish Executive commissioned research designed to identify a practical methodology for preparing locally based open space policies for inclusion in development plans. A secondary aim was to produce guidance on the content and form of local open space strategies designed to link open space planning policies to wider issues such as community involvement, sustainability, management and the use of resources. The Scottish Executive will be publishing a Planning Advice Note later this year based on the findings of this research.
- 6.3 Dundee City Council was the only local authority invited to participate in the research study through representation on the core Steering Group. Indeed, the Council was a major contributor to the research having already addressed many of the issues raised by NPPG11 through preparation of its visionary Public Open Space Strategy for Dundee, adopted in 1999.
- 6.4 Perhaps the most significant research finding is that the way in which most Scottish Local Authorities approach the planning of open space is fundamentally flawed due to:-
- an over-reliance on a limited range of simple quantitative standards that ignore key issues relating to quality, accessibility, resources and sustainability
 - a lack of acknowledgement of the way in which different forms of public and private open space can interact to affect the appropriate level of local provision; and
 - limited use of Section 75 Agreements via the development planning and development control processes to secure appropriate provision as part of new development.
- 6.5 The Report puts forward a number of recommendations directed towards the Scottish Executive, local planning authorities, local authority departments responsible for open space management and national agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage and **sportscotland**. These include:
- National Planning Policy should encourage the development of a network of high quality, sustainable greenspaces at both the strategic and local level;
 - Planning authorities should derive their own local standards for open space in new developments, including non-housing developments;
 - Planning policies should give a high priority to ensuring that the new greenspaces are of sustainable high quality, if necessary at the expense of quantity;

- Planning authorities should seek to optimise the use of planning conditions and Section 75 Agreements to help deliver and enhance sustainable green networks;
 - Commuted sums should be held in a ring-fenced account and used only for the maintenance of the open spaces to which they relate; and
 - If planning consent is granted for the development of publicly-owned open spaces, any proceeds should be ring-fenced and used only for replacement open space, the enhancement of important open spaces in the same area, or invested to create an additional revenue stream for the maintenance of other areas of open space.
- 6.6 While the above points represent the main recommendations of the Report it should be emphasised that this is still a consultation document and there is no obligation on the part of either the Scottish Executive or Dundee City Council to agree to or in any way comply with these..
- 6.7 Nevertheless, of the 32 detailed recommendations aimed at local authorities, the Council has already completed 5, all of which constitute major work items. Action has either already commenced or is ongoing in respect of a further 22 recommendations. Dundee City Council is leading the field in many respects having completed a comprehensive Public Open Space Strategy involving all relevant Council Departments, external partners and local communities. Many of the underlying principles of the Public Open Space Strategy have been accommodated into the Report as best practice guidance. The public open space hierarchy concept and its tiered framework of city-wide and local provision that incorporates distance/time criteria allied to size criteria is supported as a means of shaping the future planning and management of open spaces within an urban context. The Council is already pursuing sustainable green networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and, where appropriate, the enhancement of existing ones through delivery of the Strategy Action Plan and the Paths for All Initiative.
- 6.8 The City Council strongly supports the view that planning authorities should determine open space planning policies taking into account of local circumstances, rather than continuing to rely on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) Standard. The NPFA Standard for outdoor playing space was originally derived in the 1920's and fails to take account of local demographics, variations in housing density, geographical distribution of open space within towns and cities and the changing nature of sport, recreation and children's play over the decades.
- 6.9 The Directors of Planning & Transportation and Leisure and Arts Departments have already commenced preparatory work to help define local standards of open space provision, reflecting the very issues that NPFA failed to address. It is important that this process has regard to the supply-led, demand-led and standards-based approaches to civic space and greenspace set out in the Scottish Executive Report. Local open space standards will be reported back to the Committees in October 2001 in order that they can be embodied in the Review of the Dundee Local Plan 1998.
- 6.10 The Director of Planning & Transportation has recently received the Scottish Executive's review of Section 75 Agreements. This research will assist the Review of the Dundee Local Plan 1998.
- 6.11 To conclude, Dundee City Council has, and is continuing to action many of the policy and process recommendations of this Report and is further down the line than many other Scottish local authorities.
- 6.12 The long-term value and quality of open space is largely dependent upon effective management and maintenance, coupled with strong community support. The Public Open Space Strategy Implementation Group recognises the limitations of the land

use planning system in this regard and will continue to address issues relating to effective management, maintenance and community support as part of the Strategy implementation process.

7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, Director of Corporate Planning, Director of Education, Director of Housing, Director of Economic Development, Director of Neighbourhood Resources and the Legal Manager have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Item 1 of Leisure Services Committee, 24 May 1999, provides background information on Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy.

9. **SIGNATURE**

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Director of Leisure & Parks

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Date

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Director of Planning and Transportation

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Date