

Title of Report	Parks and Green Spaces Strategy - 1 Year Update
For Consideration By	Health and Wellbeing Board
Meeting Date	22 September 2022
Classification	Open
<u>Ward(s) Affected</u>	All
Report Author	Sam Parry - Parks Development Manager

Is this report for:

Information

- Discussion
- Decision

Why is the report being brought to the board?

Hackney's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy was adopted in May 2021, introducing 30 commitments that guide the delivery of the Parks and Green Spaces Service (the "Service") over the next ten years. This report provides an update on the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, and what has been delivered in its first year.

Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council or other stakeholders?

No.

1. Summary

- 1.1. Work to deliver Hackney's new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy has got off to a good start, with progress being made on 11 of the 30 commitments in the Strategy's first year. Extensive engagement with young people has been undertaken as part of our commitment to work closer with communities. Improvement projects are underway at Abney Park and Shoreditch Park, a new splash pad has been installed in Clissold Park and play areas are about to be delivered in Butterfield Green, Clapton Square, Haggerston Park and Stoke Newington Common as part of our commitment to making parks more welcoming. And there has been a real emphasis on sustainability within the

Service, with a review into the carbon footprint of the Service and the installation of 158 new recycling bins. This report provides detail on the progress made towards delivering each of the commitments.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Board is asked to note the contents of the report.

3. Background

Introduction

- 3.1. Hackney has one of the largest expanses of parks and green space in inner-London, with 58 sites across the borough totalling some 282 hectares - ranging from major parks and green spaces such as Hackney Marshes, Clissold Park and Abney Park to small gardens such as Hoxton Square and Church Street Gardens.
- 3.2. The Council has long recognised the impact that quality parks and green spaces can have on the achievement of its vision and objectives and has therefore placed a high priority on improving them, with over £25m of investment in parks and green spaces since 2010.
- 3.3. The Council is committed to continuing to deliver improvements to its parks and green spaces and a new Parks & Green Spaces Strategy, that guides the delivery of the Service, was adopted by Cabinet in May 2021.
- 3.4. The Strategy outlines a number of initiatives to improve the way the Service works with the community, to make more welcoming parks and green spaces, and to respond to the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
- 3.5. The Strategy covers the work of the Service over the period 2021 - 2031, and this report primarily focuses on the progress made in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 to date.

Working With Communities

- 3.6. The first theme of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy relates to improving the way in which the Service works with the people that use the borough's parks and green spaces. We committed to engaging with local people, volunteers and staff to improve our parks and green spaces, provide more opportunities for people to learn and develop skills and to establish a comprehensive volunteering programme. In 2021/2022, we delivered the following:
- 3.7. *Commitment 1: Engage local communities, residents and tenants in improvements that affect their local parks and housing green spaces, with continued engagement from outset to delivery, with a special effort made to reach underrepresented groups.* In 2021/2022 we undertook extensive consultation with local people to inform a large scale programme of

improvements in our play areas. Using a range of techniques, we spoke to a wide range of local people to inform the designs of the new spaces. We spoke to people about the name change of Kit Crowley Gardens as part of the Council's Review, Rename and Reclaim project. We also consulted people on a brand new splash pad in Clissold Park, and on a project to return a corner of Haggerston Park currently occupied by temporary school buildings back to parkland.

- 3.8. *Commitment 4: Develop a work experience and apprenticeship programme and explore supported opportunities for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.* In 2021/2022 we welcomed two members of staff as part of the Council's 'Kickstart' scheme. They gained significant experience and confidence, as well as skills that they can take with them into future roles. We also hosted a number of supported interns at Springfield Park. They joined the team as part of the Council's 'Project Search' initiative through Hackney's supported employment team. The interns gained work experience with both Park Keepers and Gardeners to develop their skills to help find employment in the future.
- 3.9. *Commitment 5: Involve young and older people in designing and improving our parks and green spaces to reflect the recommendations of the Hackney Young Futures Commission and Ageing Well Strategy.* In 2021/2022 we engaged school children from Jubilee and William Patten Primary Schools and people from Boiler House Community Centre to codesign four new stained glass windows in Abney Park, and engaged children and young people to co-design signage, the MUGA and a piece of community art as part of the Shoreditch Park Improvement Project.
- 3.10. *Commitment 9: Continue to support local groups to improve their parks and green spaces, and the Tree Musketeers to plan future tree planting in the year ahead.* In 2021/2022 we planted 780 trees in an area of Millfields Park previously leased to National Grid. Pupils from Jubilee Primary School, The Millfields Park User Group and the Tree Musketeers joined the Parks and Green Spaces and Arboricultural Teams to help reinstate this area back to parkland.
- 3.11. *Commitment 10: Set up regular volunteer 'clean up days' in our parks and launch a campaign to reduce littering.* In 2021/2022 we held an online workshop and set up a new online resource for anyone wanting to organise their own litter pick. A number of new litter picks were arranged as a result, with regular sessions now taking place at Abney Park, Clapton Common, Clissold Park, Hackney Marshes, Hackney Downs, Haggerston Park and London Fields. Volunteering has also started to resume, with dedicated volunteering days delivered in Butterfield Green, Clissold Park, East Bank, West Bank Nature Reserve, Haggerston Park, Millfields, Springfield Park, Stoke Newington Common and Ufton Gardens.

Welcoming Parks and Green Spaces

- 3.12. Welcoming parks and green spaces are well maintained, feel safe to visit and are well used by all communities. The ongoing pandemic continued to demonstrate how important and vital our parks and green spaces are for both physical health and mental wellbeing of our residents. We continued to maintain and improve our high quality parks and green spaces.
- 3.13. *Green Flag:* We recently secured a record 28 Green Flags for the second year in a row (the third highest in London). We were also ranked fifth out of thirty boroughs in the Good Parks for London Report 2021.
- 3.14. *Play Areas:* The play area in Clapton Pond was reopened following an extensive refurbishment. We also opened a brand new play area in Millfields. Working with the Clapton Park TMO and Housing Services, we reinstated the play area on Millfields Estate so that it can be used by estate residents and Millfields Park users alike. New play areas are due to be installed in Butterfield Green, Clapton Square, Haggerston Park and Stoke Newington Common this autumn.
- 3.15. *Abney Park Cemetery:* The £5m Abney Park Restoration Project started in November 2021 with the official groundbreaking ceremony. Work is currently underway to fully restore the chapel so that it can be used for weddings and events, to build a new café and community room at the main entrance, and to make the entrance at Stoke Newington Church Street more accessible.
- 3.16. *Friends Bridge:* Works to refurbish Friends Bridge on Hackney Marshes were completed quickly by the Projects Team following safety issues being identified.
- 3.17. *Commitment 12 Refurbish all of our park toilets, and explore opportunities for additional toilets linked to new cafe facilities.* In 2021/2022 we opened brand new toilet facilities in Britannia Leisure Centre that serve Shoreditch Park and delivered a full refurbishment of the toilet block in Haggerston Park, including a Changing Places toilet for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities or with physical disabilities. The upgraded facilities will ensure they continue to be accessible, welcoming and pleasant green spaces for everyone living in the borough to enjoy.
- 3.18. *Commitment 16 Introduce three new food growing projects on housing estates each year.* In 2021/2022 residents living in Milton Gardens Estate, Portland Rise Estate and Lakeside Court participated in garden design workshops, and residents are currently being supported by the Housing Service to begin aspects of garden development.

- 3.19. *Commitment 17 Expand the provision of affordable and healthy food and drink in parks and green spaces:* In 2021 the new Britannia Leisure Centre opened, which includes a cafe for all the community to benefit from. In 2022, the refurbished café at Springfield Park reopened as part of the Springfield Park Improvement Project. As well as this, work has started to progress the opportunities for catering concessions in some of the underused buildings in our parks. Work is underway to prepare Haggerston Park Kiosk and the Clissold Park Pump House for new operators to operate from them later in 2022.

Being More Environmentally Sustainable

- 3.20. We are proud of the proactive steps our staff, partners and volunteers are already taking to reduce our carbon footprint and tackle climate change across our parks and green spaces. Over the next ten years we will make an even bigger commitment to becoming more environmentally friendly, engaging people with nature, making our parks and green spaces more connected, increasing natural areas and supporting a healthy ecosystem.
- 3.21. *Commitment 21: Work towards becoming a Zero Carbon service by 2031.* In 2021/2022 Buro Happold Engineers Ltd. were appointed to calculate the carbon footprint of the Service. This involved analysing how park buildings are heated, how waste is processed and how staff move around the borough. Once the existing carbon footprint is defined, work will start on an action plan to reduce it.
- 3.22. *Commitment 24 Replace all single use bins with dual use recycling bins by 2031.* People should have more opportunities to recycle their waste on the go, including in all of Hackney's parks and green spaces. In 2021/2022 this replacement programme started with the replacement of all 158 bins in Clapton Common, Springfield Park, St Johns, St Thomas' and Clapton Square with new dual use ones. Some of the new bins have litter pickers in them, which will make it easier for Park User Groups and other volunteers to organise clean up days in their local parks.
- 3.23. *Commitment 25: Introduce new sustainable drainage solutions in parks and green spaces.* Because of climate change, parks are experiencing more regular extreme weather events, including some very heavy rainfall. The Service has started exploring alternative ways of managing large volumes of rainfall to avoid parks and green spaces from flooding. In 2021/2022 a brand new Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) was designed to combat the flooding in Clissold Park after heavy rain. The scheme will create a large shallow bowl in the north west corner to take water away from the paths. The SuDS is due to be installed in the park in 2022/2023.
- 3.24. *Commitment 26: Increase biodiversity across Hackney in line with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Plan, creating more wild areas across all parks and green spaces.* During the pandemic, huge numbers of people took

to swimming in the polluted River Lea next to Hackney Marshes. The large influx of people caused significant compaction of the ground, and damaged vegetation and wildlife habitats. In 2021/2022 the Council supported the Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston to start a major river restoration project along the River Lea – building protected log piles, planting new reed beds and creating new river habitats. This will help to restore some of the damaged banks and protect habitats. The project is being funded by the GLA's 'Grow Back Greener' fund, the Council and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

4. Policy Context

4.1. Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities this report relates to?

Improving mental health

Increasing social connection and

- Supporting greater financial security
- All of the above

4.2 Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Ways of Working this report relates to?

- Strengthening our communities
- Creating, supporting and working with volunteer and peer roles
- Collaborations and partnerships: including at a neighbourhood level
- Making the best of community resources

All of the above

5. Equality Impact Assessment

5.1 An [EIA](#) was produced alongside the published Strategy.

6. Consultation

6.1 An extensive [consultation report](#) was produced alongside the published Strategy.

7. Risk Assessment

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Sustainability

8.1 Not applicable.

Appendices

None.

Background documents

[Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy](#)

[Consultation Report](#)

[Cabinet Report May 2021](#)

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