# Parks and Open Spaces improvement priorities – 2017 to 2020

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<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Action Plan</th>
<th>Delivery update</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL OUTCOMES</strong></td>
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| 1 | Set up charitable trust to support development of friends’ groups and volunteering activity across the Borough’s parks. | There has been no action to date to establish a new charitable trust; however, discussions are ongoing with the Renew charity about the potential to undertake fundraising activity with them to support activity programmes and capital schemes in parks.  
There has been considerable success from working in partnership with community and charitable organisations to raise funds for parks’ schemes: c£1.5 million has been raised so far this year from the likes of the London Marathon Charitable Trust, Veolia Trust, the GLA, the Football Foundation, and Sport England.  
The role of the Council Ranger service has been re-aligned to specifically focus on community education and outreach activities, including environmental education and nature conservation, community engagement and volunteering, health improvement, community food growing and play.  
The vacant Ranger posts have recently been filled and a programme to establish new friends’ groups and wider volunteering activity in the Borough’s parks will be launched in 2019, starting at Eastbrookend Country Park. |
| 2 | Install more measured routes for walking, running and cycling in parks. | In July 2018 a major programme of works commenced across the Dagenham Corridor sites to improve public access by opening-up all the major footpath networks (1m either side of the paths) and reinstate firebreaks (2m wide) to address concerns about the risk of fire due to the prolonged hot weather.  
The Ranger Service is in discussion with key partners including Sustrans, Thames Chase Trust, Land of the Fanns etc to develop a programme of related schemes and projects to remove access barriers and create a network of walking, running and cycling routes throughout the borough’s country parks. It is anticipated that a programme will be launched in 2019/20.  
The Council’s capital budget for Park Infrastructure Enhancements and CIL funding for delivery of the POSS 2017 Action Plan will be use as ‘match/seed money’ to support related initiatives and fund appropriate works. |
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<th>Clearly signed walking and cycling routes between and through parks.</th>
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| 4 | Prioritise measures to promote perception of safety | The ending of funding for the Met Police parks’ team of five police officers has had an adverse impact on perceptions of safety in the borough’s parks and has removed the capacity and ability to undertake enforcement activity to challenge anti-social and criminal behaviour. As part of the current process of reviewing existing parks revenue budgets, it will be a priority to try to re-align existing resources to enable enforcement activity in the parks. Health, Safe and Secure is one of the eight Green Flag Award assessment criteria used to demonstrate that a site is well managed and maintained. The following sites currently hold the Green Flag Award, which is the green spaces quality standard: Barking Park, Beam Parklands, Greatfields Park, Mayesbrook Park, and St. Chad’s Park. The target is for ten Green Flag Awards to be secured by 2020, new Green Flags are proposed for:  
  - 2019 - Eastbrookend Country Park and Valence House  
  - 2020 – Valence Park, Tantony Green and Central Park |
| 5 | Provide better information on events through the web and social media. | A review of the Parks’ pages on the Council web site has been initiated and will be progressed throughout 2018/19 to ensure that the information provided is up to date and the content proactively promotes the boroughs parks and open spaces to residents. |
| 6 | Expand the current health walks programme and explore opportunities to align the programme with local surgeries and public health programmes. | This is a priority for 2019/20 but early initiatives in the current year include:  
  - Ecotherapy activities – sessions for people living with dementia and their carers will be introduced at Eastbrookend Country Park.  
  - Alzheimers Walk event (09.09.18, Barking Park) – organised by LBBD Ranger Service in partnership with NHS (Occupational Therapist, B&D Memory Service, North East London Foundation Trust). Target attendance 100 people. |
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<th>ECONOMIC OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Initiate ‘quick wins’ programme of park improvements through direct consultation with local communities that will deliver a broad range of benefits and outcomes.</strong></td>
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<td>An element of the CIL funding (outlined at action point 9 below) will be utilised to undertake a programme of improvements that have been identified by residents as part of the consultation exercise that informed the development of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. Delivery will start in January 2019.</td>
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<td><strong>Initiate programme of playground upgrades and repairs focussing on those areas that have the highest demand and are currently in the poorest condition.</strong></td>
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<td>The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy tells us that:</td>
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<td>- There is a deficit of accessible play provision in almost all of Becontree Ward, most of Whalebone Ward, and parts of Alibon, Eastbury, Heath Longbridge, Parsloes, Valence and Village Wards</td>
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<td>- There are also deficiencies in parts of Chadwell Heath, Eastbrook and River Wards, although here the population densities are lower</td>
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<td>- For children aged 5-11 the pattern is similar</td>
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<td>- For children aged 0-5 almost all of LBBD is deficient</td>
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<td>- The exceptions include parts of Gascoigne Ward, which has a high number of play areas within housing estates. So, potentially there is an opportunity to rationalise the number of facilities in this area</td>
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<td>Future funding will be used to address the above priorities and aim to achieve the following objectives:</td>
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<td>- In every residential area, there is a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge.</td>
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<td>- Local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play.</td>
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<td>- Routes to children’s play spaces are safe and accessible for all children and young people.</td>
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<td>- Parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people and are well maintained and well used.</td>
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<td>- Children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours.</td>
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<td>- Children and young people behave in a way that respects other people and property.</td>
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<td>- Children and young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces.</td>
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- Play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, children of both genders, disabled children, and children from ethnic minority groups in the community.

Collaborative working with community groups and residents has enabled funding to be secured to build two new state of the art play facilities to replace poor quality and life expired facilities at Tantony Green and Valence Park.

Both new facilities will be installed during 2018/19 and c£440,000 external funding has been secured to enable the schemes to be delivered.

The Council committed capital funding of £200,000 (£50,000 a year for four years, 2017-2020) for Fixed Play Facility Enhancements. Schemes already or near to completion include:

- St. Chads - £20,000 (completed)
- Mayesbrook Park - £40,000 (near completion)

Section 106 funding has also been secured: £42,000 for the following projects:

- Scrattons Farm - £30k (completed)
- Newlands Park - £12k (planned)

9 Develop and implement a strategy for s106 and CIL investment in parks across the borough.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities can levy on new housing developments. The proceeds can be spent on infrastructure to support the needs of development anywhere in the borough.

Cabinet agreed (19/06/18) to Community Infrastructure Levy funding being allocated to the following strategic projects:

- Parsloes Park ‘Parklife’ project - £600,000
- Children’s Play Spaces and Facilities - £275,000 over five years
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2017 Implementation - £500,000 over five years

This funding will be used as Council match funding to support external funding bids for park capital schemes as well as to enable the delivery of a ‘quick wins’ programme of park improvements.

A s106 developer contribution of £350,000 has been earmarked from the Beam Park housing scheme for new sports facilities in Parsloes Park.
Implement capital improvement projects for Abbey Green and Abbey Ruins and for a regional football and cricket hub at Parsloes Park.

**Abbey Green and Abbey Ruins**

In December 2017 a Stage 1 application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with the Council as the lead partner, for a £4.462 million improvement project with a £3,592,200 grant request from the HLF. The HLF rejected the application in March 2018 due to insufficient funds.

A feedback meeting has been held with the HLF and the improvement programme is now being re-worked into a series of distinct projects that can be delivered in a phased approach. The first such bid will be made in early 2019. It is not feasible to do this any sooner because the HLF is currently reviewing its grants framework, which will be re-launched in 2019.

The improvement programme comprises the following elements:

**St Margaret’s Churchyard**

This work will deliver activities on site in a safe, welcoming environment. The Church Tower repairs will be undertaken urgently to make it safe for visitors, after which will follow:

- Renovation and improvements to St Margaret’s Church Centre to host both visitors and an extensive heritage outreach and activities programme.
- Re-designation and reorganisation of space under and adjacent to the Tower to further facilitate activities.
- Repair of the Tower, and installation of a camera on the Tower with controls at ground level.
- Corrective works to the churchyard boundary wall and railings, repairs to the stone rubble walls, graves and the rescue of broken monument.
- Improvement of public access, and paths through the church yard to the adjacent Abbey ruins.
- Removal of modern low wall and railings along Church boundary.
- Provision of additional orientation and interpretation in the Church Yard.

**Abbey Ruins**

The focus will be on improving access, and creating spaces to give people a reason to visit, engage with the heritage and learn through:
• Sensitive repairs to the ruin walls
• Sensitive enhancements to create an outdoor learning and events space
• Improved access through high quality replacement of the unattractive steep steps connecting the churchyard to the Abbey ruins, and repairs to other steps
• Repaving footpaths with stone to match historic practice
• Sensitive, minimal additions to reveal the likely medieval appearance of the area, such as low-level stone markers of the original church pillars
• Creation of a new cloister garden with herbal and decorative plants
• Access to the archaeological collection in partnership with Valence House Museum, and using digital methods to maximise access.
• Interpretation both on-site and at other locations in the community.

Abbey Green (North and South)

The park setting is fundamental to the heritage of Barking Abbey, and important in its own right, as a family friendly open space and site for biodiversity. The proposed improvements include:

• Rationalisation of footpaths to improve access
• Replacement and renewal of landscape plantings
• Protection and improvement of wildlife and biodiversity in line with SINC designation
• Restoration of the historic triple lamppost on the old courthouse site.
• Improved site furniture
• New play facility

Parsloes Park

Parsloes Park is a critically important part of the Borough’s urban infrastructure due to its size, location and catchment area and has regional significance for its football pitch provision; however, the quality of the grass pitches is poor, and the associated changing facilities are life expired.

The Council has been working for the past two years with the Football Foundation, Sport England and the Essex County Football Association to develop a new football hub in the park as part of the Parklife programme, which is a national scheme that provides capital investment at sites of strategic importance.
The Parsloes Park facility will be the first Parklife scheme delivered in London.

The development of the proposed new facilities has been informed by extensive consultation with local football clubs and leagues, residents and Members and through a rigorous demand and needs analysis and robust business planning process. In brief the proposed facility mix will comprise:

- New changing facilities incorporating 8 team changing rooms (suitable for use by children and adult teams) and changing rooms for officials;
- 55 station gym, dance studio and gym change;
- Bar and café and social space
- Public toilets and disabled toilets (to changing places standard)
- 3 artificial grass pitches with floodlighting that can be used for 11-a-side football matches and compartmentalised to accommodate multiple mini, junior and five-a-side games being played simultaneously.

If funding allows, one of the pitches will be to stadia standard (National Ground Grading Category F criteria), which allows for football to be played up to step 5 level.

The total construction cost of the new facilities is estimated to be c£7 million. £1 million of this total is being funded by the Council and the balance is expected to be secured from a variety of external funding sources.

It is expected that the planning application for the scheme will be considered in January 2019 and work will start on site in March 2019 with the new facilities operational in time to be used during 2019/20 football season.

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<th>11</th>
<th>Seek new partnerships to develop new facilities and entrepreneurial management model for Central Park.</th>
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**Central park masterplan**

A feasibility study has been undertaken to investigate how it might be possible to implement some elements of the Central Park masterplan proposals at no cost to the Council.

It outlines an innovative proposal to generate income from the importation of inert material from building sites across London and the South East and which will be utilised to create a new landscape in the park.

It is estimated that the income generated will be £1.7 million, which is based on a 'gate price' (the price that the transport company will pay for dumping the soil). However, income and cost certainty will only be confirmed when the design scheme for the new landscape has been finalised (RIBA...
stage 4), planning approval has been given and the necessary licence from the Environment Agency has been granted.

The total cost to implement the master plan would be £2.3 million so it is necessary to prioritise the available budget on where it will have the most impact on informal and formal recreational opportunities for residents.
It is proposed that £1.2 million will be spent on the park improvements, which will include:

- Adventure play area
- Pump track (for BMX bikes)
- Toddler BMX facility
- Mountain bike loop
- Circular seat
- New pathways
- New trees
- Wild flower meadows

In addition, if additional fundraising from the charitable sector is successful it is proposed that there will also be investment in the Dagenham Rugby Club pavilion and the provision of public toilet facilities and a café in the park.

Public consultation about the proposal will start in September 2018 and a report about the scheme will be presented to Cabinet in October 2018. It is expected that the planning application will be submitted by December 2018, which would enable a licence from the Environment Agency to be awarded by July 2019, and for works to start on site in August 2019 and to be completed in 2021.

| 12 | Excluding fun fairs, there will be 21 council, community and commercial events held in the Borough’s parks during 2018.

The existing terms of hire for fun fair and commercial event providers will be renegotiated during 2019.

Discussions have been held with five promoters about the opportunity to host major events in the borough’s parks but to date these have either been unsuccessful or inconclusive. |
### The Ranger Service

The Ranger Service runs an educational curriculum-based programme delivering outdoor scientific based subjects, including Habitats and Adaptations, Plants and Flowers, animals and insects. This generates an income throughout the whole of spring and into summer. Children who may not have the opportunity to explore the outdoors can do so with the classmates and receive practical, hands on experience through learning.

The Ranger Service also promotes and manages room hires at Barking Park and the Millennium Centre for parties, meetings and educational studies and these hires generate a modest income.

A series of summer events generate additional income including the Eastbrookend Country Fair, which charges stall holders to attend the fair and promote their services.

The Play in the Park Road Shows are a series of play events for families at a different park each week. A small income is made from the stall holders, e.g. bouncy castles and food vendors.

Additional seasonal events such as the Halloween Spooky Trail generate a modest income, as well as the Festive Events (Christmas and Easter) which charge the public a small fee for participation in arts and craft activities.

### Seeking Partnership with Capel Manor

Unfortunately, the early positive discussions with Capel Manor did not bear fruit and it was not feasible to develop a formal partnership with Capel Manor.

However, a partnership is now in place with Barking and Dagenham College for the operation of the café in the Millennium Centre and for the delivery of educational programmes. The Thames Chase Trust are also now delivering maintenance and activity programmes in the country park.

### Investigating Social Enterprises

A review of leases, licences and other arrangements has identified 63 distinct usage agreements between the Council and third parties in the Borough’s parks and open spaces (including allotments). Alongside this piece of work, opportunities for social enterprises to take on the operation of redundant facilities or to make better use of them have been investigated.

The immediate outcome of this work is that long term leases will be offered to Barking Football Club and Barking Cricket Club in Mayesbrook Park and to Dagenham Rugby Club in Central Park (pending Cabinet approval).

Cabinet has approved in principle to lease the new football facilities planned for Parsloes Park to the London Football Trust.
Also licences to occupy premises are under negotiation with: Growing Communities for the former-bowls pavilion at Central Park; Company Drinks for the former-bowls pavilion at Barking Park; and Box Up Crime for the Leys Pavilion.

### ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Outcome Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Introduce a 'peat free' policy for plant stock and the sustainable sourcing of timber.</td>
<td>The Council has ceased using peat. In addition, when buying bedding plants every effort is made to source plants from suppliers that use limited or zero-based peat-based compost.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Implement a programme of installing habitat enhancements, such as bird and bat boxes, across all parks.</td>
<td>The Ranger Service continues to improve and enhance wildlife habitats through conservation volunteering and this year will increase habitats and install more bat and bird boxes within the country park sites following the appointment in August of two new Community Rangers. In Beam Parklands extra bird and bat boxes have already been installed using some of the £12,000 Tesco Bags of Help Funding which the Ranger Service secured. The remainder of this funding was spent on improvements to the natural play area, interpretation signage and finger posts.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Explore the potential for developing nature trails and providing nature walks across parks with high ecological and natural capital assets.</td>
<td>See social outcome no. 2 above.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Undertake a programme of air quality monitoring across district and local parks, targeting investment where air quality is poorest.</td>
<td>Scheduled for 2020.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Promote generation of renewable energy through identifying opportunities for wind turbine installation.</td>
<td>A feasibility study has been undertaken that indicates it is not financially advantageous to introduce traditional wind turbines into the parks due to the long payback period of c15 years to cover the cost of purchase, installation and maintenance and assuming planning approval could be secured. However, the wind turbine industry is evolving rapidly, and new smaller wind turbines are coming onto the market which are more efficient and lower in cost. Further investigation of the market is being undertaken.</td>
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<td>Develop partnerships with external organisations to develop a tree planting programme across the borough to improve air quality, biodiversity and community food growing opportunities.</td>
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<td>Current initiatives include:</td>
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<td>Community Orchard Project – with financial support from Public Health community orchards have been planted at three sites: Barking park, Pondfield Park and Central Park (two plots). Associated interpretive signage will be installed and a programme of community engagement during 2018.</td>
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<td>St Chads Park – a scheme delivered in partnership with Trees for Cities at no cost to the Council. Over 200 local volunteers attended the tree planting day and helped plant 5,000 whips, fruit trees and shrubs in zones across the park.</td>
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<td>Mayesbrook Park – with grant funding from the GLA (£6,000), 26 standards (large trees) will be planted in 2018/19 as well as 520 whips (small trees) planted by volunteers as a new woodland.</td>
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<td>Central Park and Barking Park - Public health funding (£113,000) has been allocated in 2018/19 to enable the delivery of the Growing Food and Communities programme. The project will improve the physical and mental health and well-being of residents through increased participation in food growing and healthy eating activities. It focuses on intergenerational engagement activity with residents and training and development of volunteers to deliver a sustainable activity programme.</td>
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<td>Growing Food and Communities is being delivered by a partnership comprising the Council's Ranger team and two local community organisations: Growing Communities and Company Drinks. The programme will include fruit tree and shrub planting workshops, skills training sessions, exploration walks across the parks, hands-on planting and environmental workshops and informal social activities.</td>
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<td>As well as the development of the former-bowls pavilion Central Park as a training and teaching kitchen, the former-bowling green will be planted as an orchard with local apple and plum varieties and herb garden.</td>
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