

Greenspaces Strategy 2025 to 2035



Reigate & Banstead
Borough Council
Banstead | Horley | Redhill | Reigate

Greenspaces Strategy: 2025 to 2035

Contents

Part 1: Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Key challenges.....	2
Our greenspaces	4
Part 2: Vision and themes.....	8
Vision:.....	8
Themes:.....	8
Priorities:.....	8
Overarching principles:.....	9
Part 3: Strategic priorities and actions	10
Theme 1: Health and wellbeing	10
Theme 2: Nature and biodiversity.....	12
Theme 3: Thriving communities.....	15
Part 4: Monitoring and review.....	18
Implementation and monitoring	18

Part 1: Introduction

This Greenspaces Strategy was developed for Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) to guide the future of its parks and open spaces over the next ten years. The work was initially led by leisure management consultants KKP (Knight Kavanagh and Page), and subsequently enhanced, refined and finalised by a cross-council officer working group. The process was also supported and overseen by a panel of elected members drawn from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, ensuring strong political input and accountability.

The strategy has been shaped through a comprehensive programme of engagement, including a community survey, a series of consultation sessions with local stakeholders, and an extensive review of council policy and information. This included alignment with the Corporate Plan (2025–2030) and the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024) to ensure that the vision, aims and objectives are consistent with the Council's wider priorities.

Its scope focuses on the parks and green spaces managed and maintained by RBBC. The term greenspaces refers collectively to parks, public gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, children's play areas, woodlands, nature reserves, allotments, linear open spaces and other forms of publicly accessible green land. This definition excludes spaces that are primarily built development, agricultural land and private residential gardens.

Purpose

The decision to produce a Greenspaces Strategy stems from the growing recognition of the pivotal role that parks and open spaces play in enhancing quality of life for our residents, contributing to and enhancing environmental sustainability, and supporting our wider corporate objectives; including those set out in the Corporate Plan (2025-2030).

The Strategy establishes the principles and objectives guiding our activities related to Greenspaces services. It will serve as a comprehensive framework to inform and direct the ongoing work of our Greenspaces team. Our team is responsible for a range of services including arboriculture management, countryside management, grounds maintenance for parks and open spaces, cemeteries and play area provision. The Strategy will underpin future action and operational decisions, ensuring that its work is aligned with and reflects our other ambitions and required outcomes. It is also a key mechanism for delivering a number of objectives set out in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024) and supporting the Local Plan objectives.

There are several statutory duties which apply to the work carried out by the Greenspaces service, relating to maintaining and supporting biodiversity within the borough. It is also important to provide spaces people to use for recreation to support their health and wellbeing, which has the potential to, on occasion, create a conflict with the need to support

biodiversity. This strategy aims to balance these two conflicting demands, ensuring that biodiversity can thrive and increase.

The synergies between this strategy and our other core strategic documents reflect the co-benefits and shared ambitions between greenspaces and wider environmental and social matters including ecology and habitat, nature recovery, health and wellbeing, water management and climate change.

Key challenges

In common with every local authority, we face a variety of significant challenges. Having high quality and accessible greenspaces can, to some extent, help address these. The challenges and opportunities include:

Improving health and wellbeing

- Several key health issues have been identified which affect the borough's residents. These include the fact that 63.5% of adult population is overweight or obese (OHID, 2023/24) and 17.8% of reception age children are identified as having excess weight (OHID, academic year 2021/22 – 2023/24)
- An increase in sedentary lifestyles is reducing the overall health of the public.
- The reported proportion of mental health disorders in the area is the third highest among young people in Surrey.
- Providing good quality greenspaces where people can visit, socialise and undertake physical activity can help address these challenges.

Increasing biodiversity

- Recent national legislation including the Environment Act 2021 and changes to section 40 of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity alongside conservation by way of creating "*the general biodiversity objective*".
- We have already identified a local need to maximise ecological habitats and opportunities. The emerging Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy will also reflect this priority. These include adding trees, hedgerows and wildflower meadows to existing greenspaces. This also has important crossover with helping to achieve carbon reduction targets via the offsetting benefits that greenspaces provide.
- Enhancing biodiversity supports and improves local wildlife whilst vegetation also absorbs carbon and other pollutants, helping to achieve carbon reduction targets.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

- Ensuring our parks and greenspaces are helping to adapt and develop resilience to the predicted future climate and extreme weather events.
- For example, using nature-based solutions (e.g. restoring woodlands, hedgerows and wetlands) to help mitigate the future costs of climate adaptation, and exploring funding for future greenspaces maintenance and improvement activities.
- Opportunities for urban greening, such as tree planting or green roofs which can provide shade and cooling.

Net zero target

- In line with national and local targets, aiming to achieve net zero emissions as set out in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2024).

Current and future financial pressures

- In financial year 2024-25, the net cost of maintaining parks and greenspaces was £1.4 million.
- We maintain a large amount and variety of green spaces which places significant pressure on council budgets.
- A decline in the natural environment has potential negative impacts on the local economy (for example., income generated by recreational visits, air pollution, and so on).
- Reflecting this, and to ensure efficiency, there are opportunities we can explore, such as maximising the scale of, and optimising, available grants and collaboration with third sector partners.

Population growth

- Over the next 10 years, the borough's population is expected to grow by 7.3% (ONS), particularly amongst older age groups.
- Growth will increase usage of, and place additional pressure on, our green spaces

Housing growth

- While much of the population growth may be in older age groups, planning policies often require new play areas within new housing developments.

- It is important that we continue to seek developer contributions (Section 106¹ and Community Infrastructure Levy²) and other funding sources to fund such provision and future maintenance, thus improving the financial pressures being faced.

Our greenspaces

Reigate & Banstead borough sits either side of the M25 motorway in Surrey. The four main population centres are Reigate, Horley, Redhill and Banstead Village. Parts of the borough are located within the Surrey Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)).

As a council, we own approximately 3,200 acres (1,300 hectares) of rich and diverse greenspace comprising a variety of countryside, including large areas of open space such as Reigate Heath, and the Redhill, Earlswood and Banstead Commons; along with some very rare and important habitats.

This map on the following page highlights the greenspaces which are managed by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

We work with many partners across the borough to support the management of our land. Whilst the principles of this strategy apply across all the greenspace land that we own, the implementation plans, and their relative priority, sit with the organisation which manages the land.



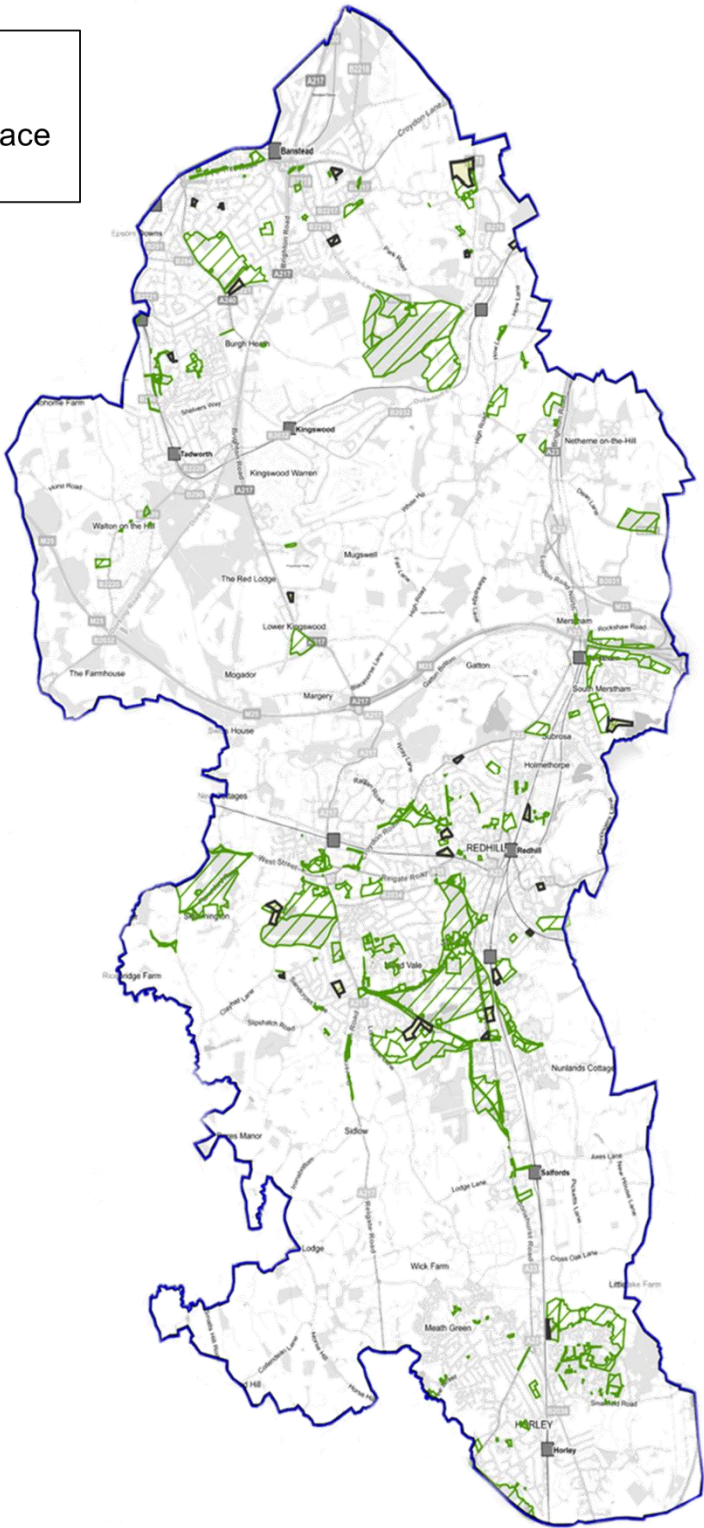
¹ Section 106 is a legal agreement in the UK between a local authority and a developer or landowner to mitigate the impact of a new development on the local area which requires developers to contribute to infrastructure upgrades to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

² This is a charge which local authorities in England and Wales place on qualifying new developments to raise funds for local infrastructure and facilities, such as schools, roads, health services, and parks, that support and mitigate the impact of the development.

Map

Borough boundary

RBBC managed greenspace



© Bluesky International Ltd. / Getmapping PLC © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (AC0000816807) 2025

Banstead Commons Conservators

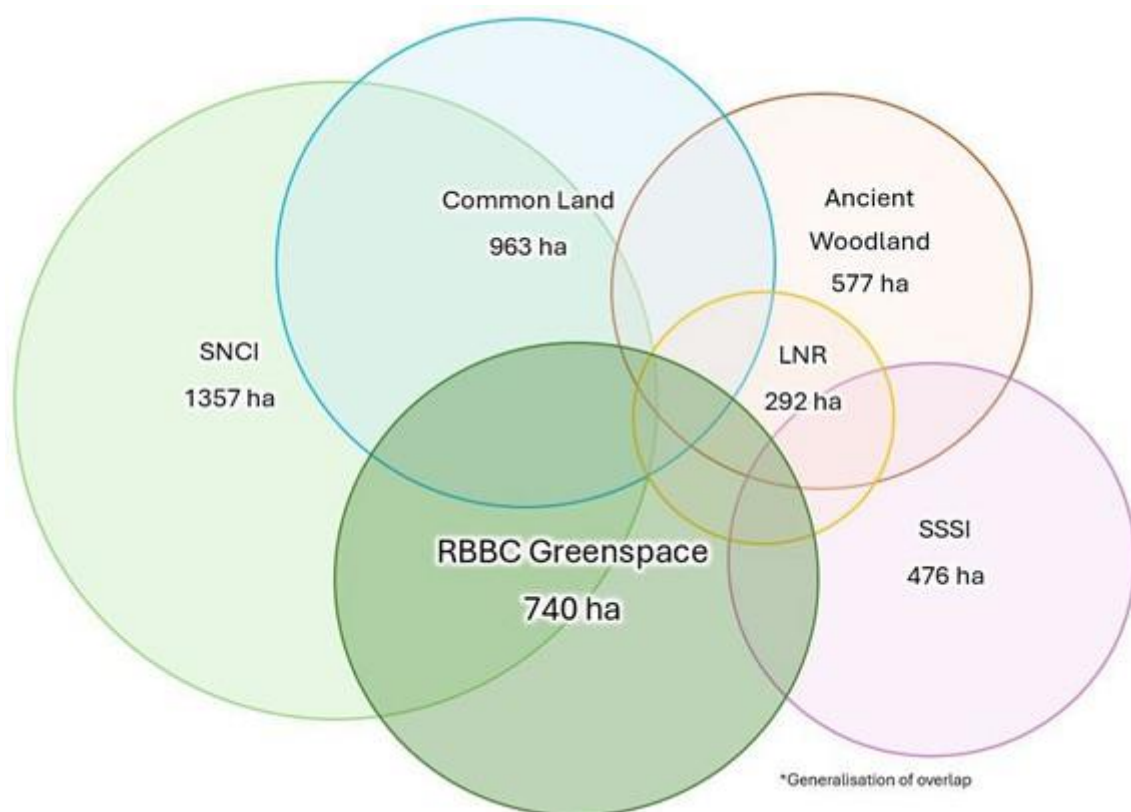
As a result of the Metropolitan Commons (Banstead) Supplemental Act of 1893, the Banstead Commons are managed by the Banstead Commons Conservators (BCC). The BCC exists to “protect and enhance Banstead Commons, ensuring the continuation of free and legal access for all”. The Act conferred upon the Conservators a statutory duty to ensure safe and free access for the public to the commons and to protect the commons from damage and trespass.

The BCC manages four separate areas of Council owned land, covering 1,350 acres (550 hectares): Banstead Heath, Banstead Downs, Park Downs and Burgh Heath – all in the north of the borough.

Land designations

Large parts of our greenspaces hold national and local designations. Many hold more than one designation, recognising the unique role and importance of such land. Some of the most recognised designations found across our greenspaces include:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - A national formal conservation designation for an area of particular interest to science due to rare fauna or flora species and/or geological or physiological features
- Ancient woodland - Area of woodland that has persisted since 1600 in England
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR) - Places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally
- Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) - Sites identified at a local level for their conservation value (non- statutory)



This diagram identifies the total areas of various key land designations within the borough, part of which are owned and managed by alternative landowners. Their relationship between the land designations is indicated by the overlapping portions which show where land has multiple designations. The "RBBC Greenspace" circle represents the 740 hectares of the borough that are managed and maintained by the council's Greenspaces team – this circle overlaps all the key designations to some degree. It also illustrates how a proportion of the RBBC-managed greenspace is not subject to any of these designations.

Part 2: Vision and themes

Vision:

Our vision is for our greenspaces to enable local communities and the natural environment to thrive.

Our fabulous greenspaces, which include parks, play areas, commons, cemeteries and allotments, are one of the reasons why people love Reigate & Banstead. We are proud of this. Not only do we have a stewardship role to protect what is great about the borough, we also have opportunities to make our greenspaces even better.

Themes:

To achieve our vision, we will focus on supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities. We will balance local people's needs and aspirations while enhancing biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

We will align our work in the key themes:

- 1) Health and wellbeing
- 2) Nature and biodiversity
- 3) Thriving communities

Priorities:

These themes are supported by the following priorities:

Health and wellbeing	Nature and biodiversity	Thriving communities
Encourage more active lifestyles within our greenspaces. Provide and develop appropriate facilities and opportunities for activities. Facilitate the role of parks and open spaces in hosting diverse and sustainable community events and fostering cultural engagement, enhancing the borough's social fabric. Continue to support allotment holders to effectively and sustainably manage their allocated plot.	Strengthen measures to protect and enhance local biodiversity, contributing to the broader ecological network. Enhance adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change. Implement and support delivery of key objectives within existing and emerging strategies; and incorporate policies to inform best practice. Increase the use of educational tools to inform and engage. Effectively and safely manage our tree stock.	Enable access to our greenspaces, balancing recreational and biodiversity considerations. Actively participate with communities and partners to enhance local spaces. Work collaboratively to support community safety in our greenspaces and encourage appropriate behaviours that support everyone's enjoyment. Create calm and peaceful memorial spaces.

Overarching principles:

The work we do will be guided by the following principles. We will:

- Employ efficient, effective, adaptable and high-quality management practices and processes.
- Ensure finite resources are appropriately prioritised and pursue external funding and income generating opportunities which enhance impact.
- Review and adapt maintenance regimes to support nature rich places.
- Continue to incorporate environmental sustainability practices that help us achieve our net zero targets, benefit biodiversity, and strengthen local climate adaptation and resilience.
- Carefully balance recreational and biodiversity priorities across our greenspaces.

Part 3: Strategic priorities and actions

Theme 1: Health and wellbeing

Many of the priorities and actions under this theme reflect Objective 1.2.2 (Leisure, sports and cultural services that support wellbeing) and Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) of our Corporate Plan. These highlight the need to provide facilities and activities that meet the needs and match the interests of residents. They also recognise the significant benefit greenspaces provide to the health and wellbeing of residents. You can read our corporate plan here:

reigate-banstead.gov.uk/RBBC2030



The proportion of people with sedentary lifestyles who are inactive, and/or who are struggling with their mental wellbeing, is a major health concern. Furthermore, the importance of site quality/features, connectivity, and the role of greenspaces in providing healthy lifestyles is highlighted throughout the community engagement. For example, in the community survey, exercise is cited as the most common reason for someone to visit a greenspace.

Priorities	Actions
1.1 Encouraging more active lifestyles within our greenspaces	1.1.1 Work with key partners, private operators, and communities to nurture a joined-up events/activities programme at suitable sites, such as a social prescribing programme which utilises greenspaces and the opportunities they provide. 1.1.2 Promote greenspaces and playgrounds as places to be active. 1.1.3 Support ‘activity’ focused events to encourage active lifestyles. 1.1.4 Encourage more active lifestyles via provision of appropriate features (e.g. waymarking, bike storage, etc) and promote active travel networks.

1.2 Provide and develop appropriate facilities and opportunities for activities.	1.2.1 Ensure that recreation sites are well presented and accessible, providing an environment to encourage physical activity. 1.2.2 Utilise existing evidence base studies, including the borough's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facilities Study and Open Space Study to inform deficiencies and future needs. 1.2.3 Develop and/or enhance sites identified for informal or formal sports, or recreational needs of different users.
1.3 Continue to support allotment holders to effectively and sustainably manage their allocated plot.	1.3.1 Work with allotment stewards to regularly review demand for allotments and to better understand levels of plot availability. 1.3.2 Improve the application and waiting list system. 1.3.3 Encourage allotment holders to adopt sustainable practices such as rainwater harvesting and peat free compost use. 1.3.4 Undertake regular inspections of allotments to ensure plot holders are maintaining their plots in line with agreements. 1.3.5 Introduce regular training and information sessions for allotment site stewards

Theme 2: Nature and biodiversity

This theme supports the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including creating nature rich habitats.

The significant benefits that greenspaces provide in supporting nature/biodiversity, absorbing carbon and helping to mitigate the impact of a changing climate are at the core of Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) of our Corporate Plan. This also highlights that offering a range of different types of greenspaces which support different activities and habitats can maximise the positive community impact of greenspaces.



You can read our corporate plan here: reigate-banstead.gov.uk/RBBC2030

It is also important to link and reflect the suite of associated strategies which relate to these topics. For example, ecological enhancement, minimising environmental impact and pollution prevention are key priorities as part of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Emerging documents and requirements such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will also influence and shape our greenspaces moving forwards. As part of the community engagement sessions and survey, enhancing and placing more emphasis on biodiversity were highlighted as key themes.

You can read our Environmental Sustainability Strategy here: reigate-banstead.gov.uk/ES-strategy

Priorities	Actions
2.1 Strengthen measures to protect and enhance local biodiversity, develop the size of wildlife populations, and contribute to the broader ecological network.	2.1.1 Work with stakeholders to access, promote and encourage opportunities to enhance biodiversity and nature. This will include joining up areas by using corridors, linkages and biodiversity opportunity areas, and work to limit the presence of invasive plant species 2.1.2 Ensure individual management plans reflecting the need to conserve and enhance areas of high ecological value are available for designated sites.

Priorities	Actions
	2.1.3 Explore options for, and where appropriate deliver, alternative grass cutting schemes/wilding, promotion of pollinators, planting of climate resilient species, as well as nectar producing plants and other wildlife measures such as bat boxes, bug hotels and swift boxes. 2.1.4 Incorporate sustainable practices in maintenance regimes such as the avoidance of using peat; minimising the use and environmental impact of pesticides, and the electrification of tools and vehicles in line with net zero targets 2.1.5 Actively avoid causing a negative impact on the wider environment (i.e. pollution and habitat loss resulting from activities) and introduce areas for wildlife sanctuary. 2.1.6 Establish a biodiversity baseline and targets (alongside key partners) to inform benchmarking and ensure we maximise biodiversity benefits. 2.1.7 Pilot trial areas for rewilding projects before committing to costly, larger improvements that may have a detrimental impact on existing areas.
2.2 Enhance adaptation and resilience of our greenspaces to the impacts of a changing climate.	2.2.1 Regularly review operations in light of climate change risks and impacts. 2.2.2 Support our Environmental Sustainability Strategy by implementing the actions towards its stated objectives, summarised as: • Supporting nature-based carbon offsetting measures on our land • Reviewing measures to incorporate opportunities for tree planting, water retention, climate resilient species, shading.

Priorities	Actions
2.3 Implement and support delivery of key objectives within existing and emerging strategies and incorporate policies to inform best practice.	2.3.1 Work with partners to help address and deliver the relevant duties of the Council, currently including Green Infrastructure Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, and Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy. 2.3.2 Support the delivery of ‘Surrey Adapt: The Surrey Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy’.
2.4 Increase the use of educational tools to inform and engage.	2.4.1 Identify opportunities to provide further educational material and insight. 2.4.2 Support the Council’s school holiday programme activities. 2.4.3 Explore options for educational biodiversity projects and initiatives to include schools, churches, community and voluntary groups
2.5 Effectively and safely manage the tree stock.	2.5.1 Develop a Tree Strategy. 2.5.2 Review tree stock to ensure we understand existing provision and identify planting opportunities. 2.5.3 Finalise and maintain an ash die back management plan. 2.5.4 Set a target for planting additional trees. This should support carbon capture and enhance local biodiversity (whilst being mindful of ‘right tree, right place’ principles).

Theme 3: Thriving communities

This theme reflects the importance of taking a joined-up approach, working across council departments and with stakeholders to deliver effective greenspaces.

Community engagement and communication are two of the common themes highlighted through the engagement exercises as part of this strategy. Participants emphasised the desire for opportunities to get more involved with greenspaces; whether through volunteering or understanding more the role/work of the Council. Linked to this are topics such as enforcement and the introduction of different grass management practices for example.



The priorities and actions also link to many of our Corporate Plan objectives relating to safety and anti-social behaviour (Objective 1.1.2), strong and inclusive communities (Objective 1.2.1), supporting wellbeing (Objective 1.2.2) and the opportunity to shape and influence our services (Objective 3.4.2). This also relates to Objective 1.2.3 (Greenspaces that deliver health, recreation and nature benefits) which recognises that maximising the positive impact of greenspaces can be achieved through offering a range of different types of provision which supports different activities. Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy also identifies community engagement as a key element.

You can read our corporate plan here: reigate-banstead.gov.uk/RBBC2030

Priorities	Actions
3.1 Enable access to our greenspaces, balancing recreational and biodiversity considerations.	3.1.1 Deliver a maintenance programme – including plans for how we manage specific areas (for example grasslands, wetlands and ponds) - to ensure high standards of maintenance across all greenspaces (including waterways). 3.1.2 Benchmark existing processes against recognised industry and national best practices to inform improvement plans (e.g., explore utilising the Green Flag Award and other award schemes).

Priorities	Actions
	3.1.3 Communicate and raise awareness about reasons for different practices adopted in relation to maintenance regimes (e.g. grass cutting, wild flowering, etc.) and the benefits derived from this. 3.1.4 Promote sites including their accessibility and inclusivity features through appropriate websites, social media, signage and interpretation boards. 3.1.5 Regularly review parking at sites, especially in respect of supporting and encouraging sustainable travel.
3.2 Actively participate with communities and partners to enhance local spaces.	3.2.1 Support, encourage and actively pursue existing and new community participation to design and maintain local greenspaces and greenspace projects (such as tree planting and pond maintenance). 3.2.2 Signpost to outdoor volunteering opportunities. 3.2.3 Work with stakeholder organisations to support bids for investment in greenspace related activities and projects. 3.2.4 Promote successes in the shared delivery, management and enhancement of the borough's greenspaces. 3.2.5 Work closely with elected members to improve knowledge of greenspaces practice, management of issues and community participation.
3.3 Work collaboratively to support community safety in our greenspaces to encourage appropriate behaviours that support everyone's enjoyment.	3.3.1 Regularly review measures, alongside our partners, to address community concerns such as litter bin and bench provisions, fly tipping, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour across our greenspaces. 3.3.2 Promote existing methods of reporting anti-social behaviour and fly tipping, to ensure ease of use and community confidence.

Priorities	Actions
3.4 Create calm and peaceful memorial spaces.	3.4.1 Provide dedicated areas to promote wellness and time for reflection. 3.4.2 Introduce management plans for cemeteries and The Garden of Remembrance which promote sensitivity and calmness. 3.4.3 Explore potential sites to increase capacity.
3.5 Facilitate the role of parks and open spaces in hosting diverse and sustainable community events and fostering cultural engagement, enhancing the borough's social fabric.	3.5.1 Work with community groups to understand the breadth of events/activities that could be delivered to enrich the community social fabric. 3.5.2 Balance opportunities for commercial activities, whilst recognising the potential impact on other users. 3.5.3 Promote events through appropriate websites, social media and signage. 3.5.4 Ensure third-party events on Council- owned land embrace environmentally sustainable principles.

Part 4: Monitoring and review

Delivering the vision for our greenspaces is a long-term objective. For example, the collective enhancement of our sites for climate change mitigation or environmental improvement, requires a range of coordinated approaches. Although action is required immediately, the realisation of many outcomes will remain a much longer-term objective.

Our staff and volunteers are already thinking about how our services can be delivered in the future. While there are significant challenges, we remain ambitious about achieving our vision and exploring opportunities to support health and wellbeing, balancing different needs and enhancing nature and biodiversity across our greenspaces.

Implementation and monitoring

Turning aspiration into reality is a normal part of the process of strategy review and development. This is why regular reviews are important. Although this strategy is our 10-year plan, we will review it annually to ensure that it is still relevant, that our priorities haven't changed and that the impact we anticipated is being achieved.

To ensure that we are effectively implementing the strategy, and in line with our usual reporting processes, we will:

- Set and monitor service level performance indicators
- Discuss and review implementation as part of our monthly meetings with the elected Executive Member overseeing the work of the Greenspaces team
- Provide an annual presentation (as part of the Greenspaces Team update) of the performance to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Alongside this, we will ensure that any existing management plans are included in this review process.