



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET

TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 2.30 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBER - THE GUILDHALL, PORTSMOUTH

Telephone enquiries to Anna Martyn - Tel 023 9283 4870
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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

Membership

Councillor Steve Pitt (Chair)	
Councillor Suzy Horton (Vice-Chair)	
Councillor Dave Ashmore	Councillor Hugh Mason
Councillor Kimberly Barrett	Councillor Darren Sanders
Councillor Ian Holder	Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Councillor Lee Hunt	Councillor Matthew Winnington

(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: www.portsmouth.gov.uk

Deputations by members of the public may be made on any item where a decision is going to be taken. The request should be made in writing to the contact officer (above) by 12 noon of the working day before the meeting, and must include the purpose of the deputation (for example, for or against the recommendations). Email requests are accepted.

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interests**
- 3 Record of Previous Decision Meeting - 9 January 2024 (Pages 7 - 12)**
A copy of the record of the previous decisions taken at Cabinet on 9 January 2024 is attached.
- 4 Portsmouth Cemeteries Delivery Plan (Pages 13 - 52)**
Purpose

To present a framework for the future provision and management of cemeteries in Portsmouth.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet

- 1. Give approval for distribution of the cemeteries delivery plan to key user groups for consultation.**
- 2. If approval is given, agree that the delivery plan will be reviewed following receipt of any responses and brought back to Cabinet at a future date for adoption.**

5 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (Pages 53 - 206)

Purpose

To seek Cabinet approval to formally adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet formally adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

6 Community Inclusion Grants (Pages 207 - 214)

Purpose

To update on the Community Inclusion Grant scheme.

7 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Year 2 Interim Report (Pages 215 - 222)

Purpose

To identify the approved and intended spending allocations under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

8 Supporting residents with the cost of living (Pages 223 - 254)

Purpose

1. To highlight the impact if the Government decides not to extend Household Support Fund (HSF) grant to local authorities from 1 April 2024, and what this would mean for the Council's ability to support residents affected by the cost of living crisis.
2. To make recommendations for the Council to continue to provide cost of living support to residents in financial hardship during the financial year April 2024 to March 2025, subject to the Council budget-setting process and any announcement from Government on HSF or other funding for local authorities to provide cost of living support.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet

- 1. Approves the plan to deliver cost of living support to residents through the service delivery outlined in Appendix 1, subject to the Council budget-setting process and any announcement from Government on HSF or other funding for local authorities to provide cost of living support.**
- 2. Delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services, the implementation of the plan and adjustments to the plan and spend, in the event that other funding sources become available,**

in agreement with the Leader and S.151 officer.

3. Asks the Tackling Poverty Coordinator to continue to work with partner agencies and residents to ensure we have a joined up, partnership approach to cost of living support, making best use of resources across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.
4. Notes the Leader's letters sent to the Secretaries of State at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shown in Appendix 2, and agrees to continue to lobby Government for additional funding for Local Authorities, to enable us to provide more comprehensive local welfare provision and support to residents affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis.
5. Places on record their thanks for the cross-directorate working group which has supported the implementation of the delivery of the Household Support Fund in 2023/24 and produced a plan to sustain a package of cost of living support throughout 2024/25.
6. Also places on record a note of special thanks to the teams across the Council who have delivered support to residents affected by the cost of living crisis, and to the Council's Tackling Poverty Coordinator and the Household Support Fund delivery team who have administered the HSF in 2023/24. The setting up of a delivery team, designing application processes to deliver the grant to households throughout the city in the same financial year the grant was received is noted as exemplary work.

9 Council Tax Support Fund (Pages 255 - 270)

Purpose

To seek approval of the attached Council Tax Support Fund policy.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet

1. Agree that where funds remain available after making reductions as outlined in the core scheme's provisions, that Portsmouth City Council apply the discount as described within the core scheme to those chargepayers who become eligible for LCTS in respect of the 2023/24 financial year between 03 March 2023 and 31 March 2024.
2. Should it become apparent that funding will be remaining above what is required for the activity detailed in recommendation 1, the Council will use its discretion to further support vulnerable households in receipt of LCTS where hardship has been identified through the council tax recovery process.
3. Approve the proposed policy accompanying this report.

10 Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes and Empty Properties (Pages 271 - 286)

Purpose

To seek confirmation of the Council's intentions in respect of Council Tax premiums.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet

- 1. Agree to recommend that Full Council resolves to implement a 100% premium for second homes which will be effective from 01 April 2025, the earliest opportunity for the Council to introduce this change.**
- 2. Agree to further recommend that Full Council resolves to implement a 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years. This will change to current policy of charging a 100% premium where a property is empty and unfurnished for period between 2 and 5 years.**

11 PCC Budget and Council Tax 2024/2025 and Medium Term Budget Forecast 2025/2026 to 2027/2028

Report to follow

12 Integration of LEP Functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities (Pages 287 - 298)

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the integration of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs) and seek approval for Portsmouth City Council to work with the Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City Council to jointly take on these integrated LEP functions and deal with the changes that result from this new approach including the creation of a joint UTLA Board to take on these responsibilities.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet

- 1. Note that subject to meeting certain conditions (see paragraph 3.3) the Government is looking to integrate a number of existing LEP functions into UTLAs.**
- 2. Note that to meet the conditions, and to maintain a focus on the Solent area, Portsmouth City Council (PCC) will need to work with Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council to take on these functions through the creation of a new joint UTLA Board.**
- 3. Agree that, subject to the three Solent UTLA area being recognised by the Government as an area for LEP integration, with appropriate due diligence, PCC should become a Member of Solent Partners (SP), a company limited by guarantee, that is a successor body to the Solent LEP, to help drive economic growth in the sub-region. This agreement to be conditional on Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City similarly agreeing to become Members of Solent Partners.**
- 4. Agree that PCC should not appoint a Director to the Board of Solent Partners to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with the wider governance needed for the new LEP integration arrangements. PCC will seek appropriate requirements, within the articles of Solent Partners, to ensure representatives of the three Solent UTLAs are entitled to observe board meetings.**
- 5. Note the proposed draft governance structure attached as Appendix 1 that shows how PCC should work with partners to achieve our economic growth ambitions which will need to be outlined in an updated Solent 2050 Strategy.**

6. Agree that subject to the agreement of SCC and IOWC, PCC is confirmed as the Accountable Body for Solent Partners.
7. Agree that PCC, as the accountable body, agrees that any existing LEP funding, disaggregated to the three Solent UTLAs can be pooled (subject to the agreement of Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City Council), for the benefit of economic growth of the region.
8. Agree that PCC, as one of the three UTLAs, will work with partners to develop an agreement on how Solent Partners will deliver economic growth for the functional economic area.
9. Agree that delegated authority be jointly given to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and S151 officer, to agree the final details of the transfer of LEP functions to the UTLAs including future governance arrangements.
10. Agree that PCC should seek to support the creation of a Solent Economic Partnership, inviting adjacent Districts and Boroughs, Hampshire County Council, and other key public sector stakeholders, to enable Local Authorities leaders and leaders within the business community to have a regular opportunity to discuss and support economic growth in the region.
11. Note the intention to agree disaggregation of assets held by the LEP to the Accountable Body on behalf of the Upper Tier Local Authorities (subject to the agreement of the three Solent unitary UTLAs).

13 Southsea and North Portsea Island Coastal Schemes updates (Pages 299 - 330)

Purpose

1. To update Cabinet on the progress made on the Southsea and the North Portsea Coastal Schemes.
2. To note the wider benefits of the schemes and their contributions to sustainable construction with zero to waste at its core, approach to working with and support the natural habitats around Portsea and to note how the Southsea Coastal Scheme continues to surprise with historic finds and adapts to acknowledge the history of the place.

14 Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2026 (Pages 331 - 362)

Purpose

To officially launch and provide information about the Portsmouth's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2023 - 2026.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet agree that the council adopt the Strategy.

Members of the public are permitted to use both audio visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting nor records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the Council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

Whilst every effort is made to webcast this meeting, should technical or other difficulties occur, the meeting will continue without being webcast via the Council's website.

Agenda Item 3

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 2 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

Suzy Horton
Dave Ashmore
Kimberly Barrett
Ian Holder
Lee Hunt
Hugh Mason
Darren Sanders
Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Matthew Winnington

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Councillors Horton and Winnington gave apologies for arriving at 2.17 pm as they had been at launch event for health and social care apprenticeships.

2. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Record of previous decision meetings - 28 November and 4 December 2023 (AI 3)

The records of the previous decision meetings held on 28 November and 4 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Local Development Scheme (LDS) update (AI 4)

Lucy Howard, Head of Planning Policy, introduced the report

Members noted the timetable was very tight but this was a necessity as the Local Plan was being prepared against a rapidly changing set of government requirements. It was imperative the council moved fast to avoid the problems other councils had. No doubt Government policy would change again, for example, the amount of housing required, but thanks to the Planning Policy team's hard work over the last few years the council was in a robust place. It was hoped that the team's engagement with key stakeholders, including with all members of the council, had addressed any concerns and the LDS would be approved at Full Council on 19 March.

Ms Howard confirmed that the LDS would start to have weight with effect from 19 March if Full Council approved it and would continue to gain weight as it moved through the process.

Councillor Pitt thanked Ms Howard, Ian Maguire (Assistant Director for Planning & Economic Growth) and their team, and Councillors Mason and Hunt, the current and previous portfolio holders respectively.

DECISION

The Cabinet resolved as the Local Planning Authority that the updated Local Development Scheme set out in Appendix 1 of this report is approved and to have effect from 10 January 2024.

- 5. Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Review into Reducing use of pesticides on council land - Response report (AI 5)**
Colette Hill, Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods), introduced the report. On behalf of the Directorates involved she requested a note of thanks be recorded for Claire Watkins, Business Manager, Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services, who had co-ordinated the responses and drafting of the report. Members noted that in line with recommendation 6 an annual progress report would come to the Cabinet and Full Council with effect from November 2024.

Councillor Pitt said the review was an important piece of work and thanked all officers involved, including Claire Watkins who had carried out a considerable amount of work on it.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Thanked the Panel for its work in undertaking the review and the resulting report, which further supports the Council's policy to continue to work towards minimising pesticide use on council owned land;**
 - 2. Noted the recommendations as set out in Appendix B to this report, together with the officer responses to the recommendations.**
- 6. Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership - Forward Plan (AI 6)**
Peter Shelley, Transport Development Manager, introduced the report and gave a presentation.

Councillor Graham Heaney gave a deputation. Deputations are not minuted but can be viewed on the council's website

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 9th January, 2024, 2.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

In response to Councillor Heaney's deputation, Mr Shelley explained that the key words were enhanced partnership. The council had invited both bus companies (First and Stagecoach) to say which route enhancements were likely to be the most commercial. The council wanted the routes to be sustainable and to continue after the BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) funding finished. Some journeys early in the day were covering their costs but it was harder for some services to be more sustainable. It was hoped to have a critical mass so that services were sustainable overall.

Members thought the report was very positive and gave some of the best news on buses in 20 years. It ensured Portsmouth residents had better bus services so they could get into the habit of taking the bus rather than the car. It was a long-term plan to encourage people to use buses. Extra journeys would help people with early starts or late finishes. Wide provision of real-time

information was helpful as not knowing if buses would arrive was a deterrent to using them. Members noted some buses ran on Christmas Day, which was not the case in London. They congratulated the Transport team with the bus operators for securing £48m of government funding when other areas were cutting services. They hoped Stagecoach would follow what First was doing, for example, tap on tap off ticketing, and that the next government would be equally generous.

Mr Shelley would send Councillor Sanders details of the timetable for the 13, 14 and 18 services but he thought they ran up to about 10 pm. He explained the government had set the framework but ideas came from residents, members of the council and bus companies. Portsmouth was seen as a showcase for bus service improvements.

Councillor Sanders noted that major shopping and entertainment areas as well as QA Hospital were now accessible by bus for 24/7 (routes 2 and 23). Baffins residents had requested evening journeys from the area and these would now be provided. It was a true revolution and one of the biggest investments in bus services in the country and Portsmouth should be proud. He asked if the government would continue to cap fares as it was an incentive to use buses. Members welcomed the initiative as it would help facilitate a 24-hour economy.

Councillor Pitt said the Forward Plan was incredibly exciting. Portsmouth was the showcase for improved bus services and provided an opportunity to introduce modal shift. It was interconnected with other policies such as improving air quality.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Noted the progress of the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and Scheme;**
 - 2. Approved the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Forward Plan;**
 - 3. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Transport to make minor amendments to the plan.**
- 7. Bathing Water Quality update (for information only) (AI 7)**
Richard Lee, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, introduced the report. He emphasised that the Environment Agency, not the council, were responsible for quality and classification of water as they were the regulator. The council was responsible for providing signage at the start of the bathing season. The downgrading of Southsea East from Sufficient to Poor did not mean the beach would close but that people would be advised against bathing. Regulatory Services would provide an update leading into the bathing season. He confirmed that the Southsea East sampling point was between the Pyramids and South Parade Pier and the Eastney one was east of the Pier.

Councillor Graham Heaney gave a deputation. Deputations are not minuted but can be viewed on the council's website

With regard to Councillor Heaney's suggestion that the council seek advice from other organisations such as the University, Councillor Pitt emphasised that it was not in the council's gift as the Environment Agency were the lead partner who could do so though Mr Lee could pass on the suggestion. The council was already going above and beyond its responsibilities by carrying out additional testing.

In response to Councillor Heaney's queries, Mr Lee said the information in paragraph 7.3 was correct as it was based on percentiles but he would check it and amend any errors; likewise with the location of the sampling points. There were knowns and unknowns when it came to finding the sources of contamination. As part of partnership working Southern Water were proactively identifying defects and repairing them. The council were assisting them with access to buildings such as Southsea Castle which was an old building with an old drainage system; however, this had been checked and was not a problem. The council was constantly expanding its knowledge of the issue. There were no sewer outfalls here but Southern Water had mapping software to see how releases impacted Southsea beach. Obvious causes had been investigated and now less obvious ones were being investigated.

Councillor Pitt thanked Mr Lee for the update. The council was monitoring the situation extremely closely as water quality was a very important priority for residents and tourists alike.

In discussion, members noted it was a longstanding problem and there was quite a lot of speculation about possible causes. However, it was nothing to do with seagulls, work on the sea defences or the old pumping station in Burgoyne Road. It was complex and multifaceted and the council would support the Environment Agency and Southern Water to do more to find the sources of e-coli contamination. Members noted that the council did not have the resources to lead but the Environment Agency did and after years of careful budgeting the council could help them as part of a team effort. The impact of up to 17,000 new homes should be taken into account.

Members were unhappy that Southern Water were giving money to shareholders but investment in infrastructure had been piecemeal. The Eastern Road had been closed three times recently due to heavy rainfall and there was speculation that the sewer had not been replaced since it was built 85 years ago. Residents were proud of Eastney beach and did not like to see it downgraded from Excellent to Good. Money from bill payers should not be given to shareholders nor should streets be flooded or communities put at risk because of poor infrastructure.

Councillor Pitt suggested the cause of contamination was probably a pipe or an outfall of Southern or Portsmouth Water. He had had a rodent infestation in his house and although Southern Water came out three times it took an independent drainage survey to discover that uncapped drains were letting in rats. He was meeting the Chief Executive of Southern Water soon and would

raise the issues discussed today, including the payment of £30,000 to the council to place alerts on the seafront. He thanked Mr Lee and the Regulatory Services team for their work.

DECISION

The Cabinet noted the report.

8. Exclusion of Press and Public (AI 8)

Members agreed to remain in open session but not refer to the exempt information.

DECISION

The confidentiality of Appendices B and C only, relating to commercial matters, was upheld.

9. Land swap at Flathouse Road, Portsmouth (AI 9)

Anne Cains, Head of Acquisition & Disposal, introduced the report.

Members agreed the land swap was sensible in view of the long-term future of the Port.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and City Solicitor to finalise negotiations, prepare and complete all necessary documentation in order to undertake 2.2 below subject to the S151 Officer approval of the Business Justification Case.**
- 2. Agreed that the Freehold of the land (registered title HP468782) known as 42 Flathouse Road identified on the plan edged yellow at Appendix A, be acquired by the City Council for the consideration detailed in the confidential Appendix B.**
- 3. Agreed that the Freehold of the land (registered title HP385570) known as (part of) The Lorry Park, Flathouse Road, edged red at Appendix A, be transferred to the vendor of HP468782 (above) as part of the exchange.**

The meeting concluded at 3 pm.

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Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council

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Agenda Item 4



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Subject:	Portsmouth Cemeteries Delivery Plan
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To present a framework for the future provision and management of cemeteries in Portsmouth.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That approval is given for distribution of the cemeteries delivery plan to key user groups for consultation.
- 2.2. If approval is given, the delivery plan will be reviewed following receipt of any responses and brought back to Cabinet at a future date for adoption.

3. Background

- 3.1. Operational plans are in place to deliver the cemeteries service however there is not currently an overarching plan setting out the forward vision for the municipal cemeteries. The delivery plan considers key issues and opportunities presenting to the service.
- 3.2. In preparing the delivery plan, other local authorities' codes and practices with regard to cemeteries and burial space have been examined, together with up to date policy. The delivery plan is summarised via an action plan under the following objectives:
 - 3.2.1. Increase capacity of existing burial space & identify new provision
 - 3.2.2. Enhance cemetery green space
 - 3.2.3. Review management of assets (buildings)
 - 3.2.4. Memorials policy and process
 - 3.2.5. Engaging with the community
 - 3.2.6. Customer interface and marketing

- 3.3. The cemeteries plan aligns with the City Vision 2040 'Green City' and Council Plan 'Delivering for Portsmouth' which commits the Council to 'Stand Up For Portsmouth' by supporting its residents, including through the delivery of infrastructure, parks and open space. The cemeteries plan also aligns with the City Vision 2040 values of community, collaboration, equality and respect.
- 3.4. The Council is under no statutory duty to provide a cemetery, but it is required to maintain its existing cemeteries.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1. The Local Government Act 1999 sets out a general duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The discharge of that duty is based upon the initiation of focussed, relevant and meaningful consultation. This duty must involve representatives of persons who use or are likely to use the services provided by the authority.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1. An integrated impact assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. The delivery plan illustrates how the local authority will undertake to comply with the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (as amended 1986), the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 as applicable to the range of duties and objectives as related to cemeteries.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1. Proposals taken forward resulting from the action plan will be assessed and where there are financial requirements, funding will need to be identified prior to their commencement.

.....
Signed by:

Stephen Baily

Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:



Appendix 1 - Portsmouth Cemeteries: Delivery Plan for the future provision of burial services in the city, 2023-2033.

Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

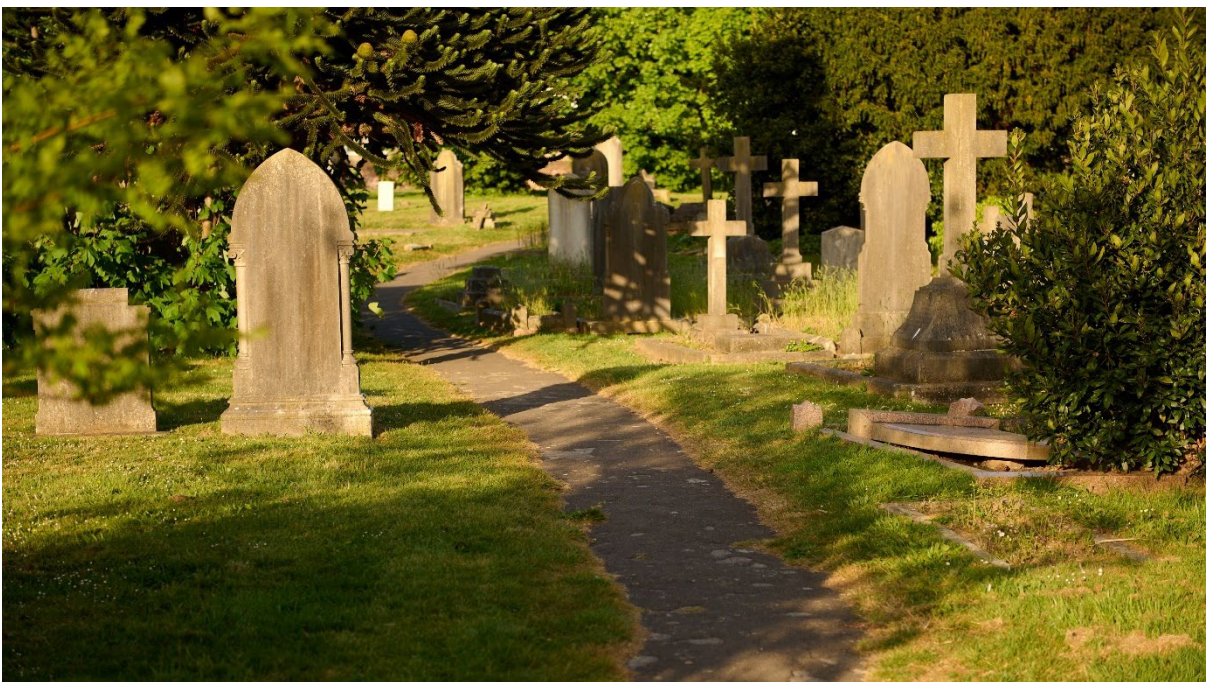
The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development

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Portsmouth Cemeteries Delivery Plan for the future provision of burial services in the city, 2023- 2033



Contents

Section 1: Introduction	3
History.....	3
Legislative background.....	3
Pressures & priorities.....	4
Section 2: Current provision	4
Kingston Cemetery.....	6
Highland Road Cemetery	10
Milton Cemetery	12
Provision of Graves	13
Cremated Remains.....	13
Remembrance.....	14
Section 3: Current Demand	15
Diversity	17
Pandemics	17
Community Funerals (National Assistance Burials)	18
Section 4: Service Delivery	18
Staffing and Management	18
Record keeping	18
Financial picture.....	18
Section 5: Key future focus areas	20
1. Address capacity of existing burial space	20
2. Identify new cemetery provision	22
3. Enhance cemetery green space	23
4. Review management of assets (buildings)	24
5. Memorials management and review.....	24
6. Engaging with the community	25
7. Customer interface and marketing.....	25
Section 6: Action Plan	26
Action Plan	27

Section 1: Introduction

The Council Plan 2022-2023 'Delivering for Portsmouth' commits the Council to 'stand up for Portsmouth' by supporting its residents including through the delivery of infrastructure, parks, open space and buildings.¹ This work will help achieve the city's vision for 2040, which includes values of community, collaboration, equality and respect.²

The cemeteries delivery plan embodies the Council Plan by protecting our existing cemetery spaces and looking towards future provision for the community.

History

In England and Wales, burials took place principally in churchyards until the 19th century, when growing awareness about hygiene and disease transmission resulted in many churchyards being closed. The cholera epidemics in the mid-19th century led to the development of larger municipal cemeteries, which took on the larger proportion of burials.³

Demand for burials declined nationally during the second half of the twentieth century as cremation became more commonplace. The UK has one of the highest cremation rates in the world, with people expressing this as their own wish in several cases, and with cremation being the most usual choice in families where the deceased had not expressed a clear preference before their death.

However, burial is still the funeral choice for a large proportion of residents, for a range of reasons, including religious conviction. In some faiths, the practice of cremation is not encouraged and in others, forbidden in religious texts.⁴

Cultural and religious practices need to be considered in the development of bereavement services, to ensure that burial rituals and practices can be accommodated sensitively. Increasingly, there is consideration about the need for other requirements to be taken into account - for example, non-religious commemoration and ritual (including celebration) and preference for what is known as "natural burial".

Legislative background

Portsmouth City Council provides and manages cemeteries under the provisions of the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 as amended in 1986 ("LACO 1977"). The city council is under no statutory duty to provide a cemetery, but it is required to maintain its existing cemeteries. The LACO 1977 gives authorities flexibility in their management of cemeteries and discharge of responsibilities:

" Subject to the provisions of this order, a burial authority may do all such things as they consider necessary for the proper management, regulation and control of a cemetery."

In addition to its powers and duties as a burial authority, the council is also required to make funeral arrangements under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984:

¹ [FOR CABINET - Draft 202223 Corporate Plan.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

² [The Vision - Imagine Portsmouth](#)

³ [Cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds \(historicengland.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ [History of Cremation in the United Kingdom](#)

" It shall be the duty of a local authority to cause to be buried or cremated the body of any person who has died or been found dead in their area, in any case where it appears to the authority that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of the body have been or are being made otherwise than by the authority."

Pressures & priorities

If current trends and practices in relation to burial in Portsmouth continue, it is projected that there is sufficient burial space to accommodate wishes in the medium term, but this space is finite and given the pressures on land space in the city, it will be prudent to consider options as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the challenge for the service is how to manage the existing burial space to meet current demand, maximise future availability and ensure that the service is providing good value to the city. The scope of the delivery plan is the council-owned cemeteries, but reference is made to those facilities that also serve the bereaved, including Portchester Crematorium and the Sustainability Centre.⁵

It is also important to remember that cemeteries provide wider social, cultural and environmental benefits, and that these are particularly important in the context of an urban environment such as Portsmouth. The cemeteries encompass significant areas of green space, so as well as providing space for quiet contemplation they provide space for walking, for wildlife, and as spaces of importance for local history and heritage.⁶ The cemeteries offer a sense of place and community to the city's residents. They are accessible spaces (particularly Milton and Kingston) and local people can travel to them from within the city boundary. The cemeteries, even when at capacity, will continue to offer a sense of continuity, connection and reflective space to the city.

Section 2: Current provision



Portsmouth City Council currently owns and operates three cemeteries within the city of Portsmouth. These are Milton Cemetery, Kingston Cemetery and Highland Road Cemetery.

⁵ [Sustainability Centre \(sustainability-centre.org\)](https://www.sustainability-centre.org/)

⁶ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st February, 2023, 12.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#) - see Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

Portsmouth cemeteries generally have a lawn-style layout which means the grave space around the memorial is kept turfed and mowed. In contrast with other urban cemeteries, particularly in London, none of the sites have been abandoned, and all three are kept open and accessible to the public, as part of the city's open space offer. Planting and landscaping is managed and maintained by the local authority. All three contain structures, buildings and landscapes of heritage interest and value.

The city is also served by the Portchester Crematorium, which was opened in 1958 and is situated on the lower slopes of Portsdown Hill. The crematorium is controlled by a Joint Committee of councillors representing the city of Portsmouth, and Boroughs of Fareham, Havant and Gosport. There is also a historic private cemetery in Fawcett Road, established in 1749 and subsequently extended, which specifically serves the Jewish community (the Fawcett cemetery is now full).⁷

Oaks Crematorium in Havant is a private facility run by Southern Co-operative society. It is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Since its construction, this crematorium has offered a local alternative to Portchester and has relieved the capacity pressure that had previously existed at Portchester.

In 1995, the Sustainability Centre (55 acres) opened in the South Downs Way, Petersfield to cater for natural burials, particularly for those with no religious faith, permitting memorialisation with trees. This has proved to be a successful alternative, providing a specific offer for those bereaved and a different way of honouring the wishes of the deceased.⁸

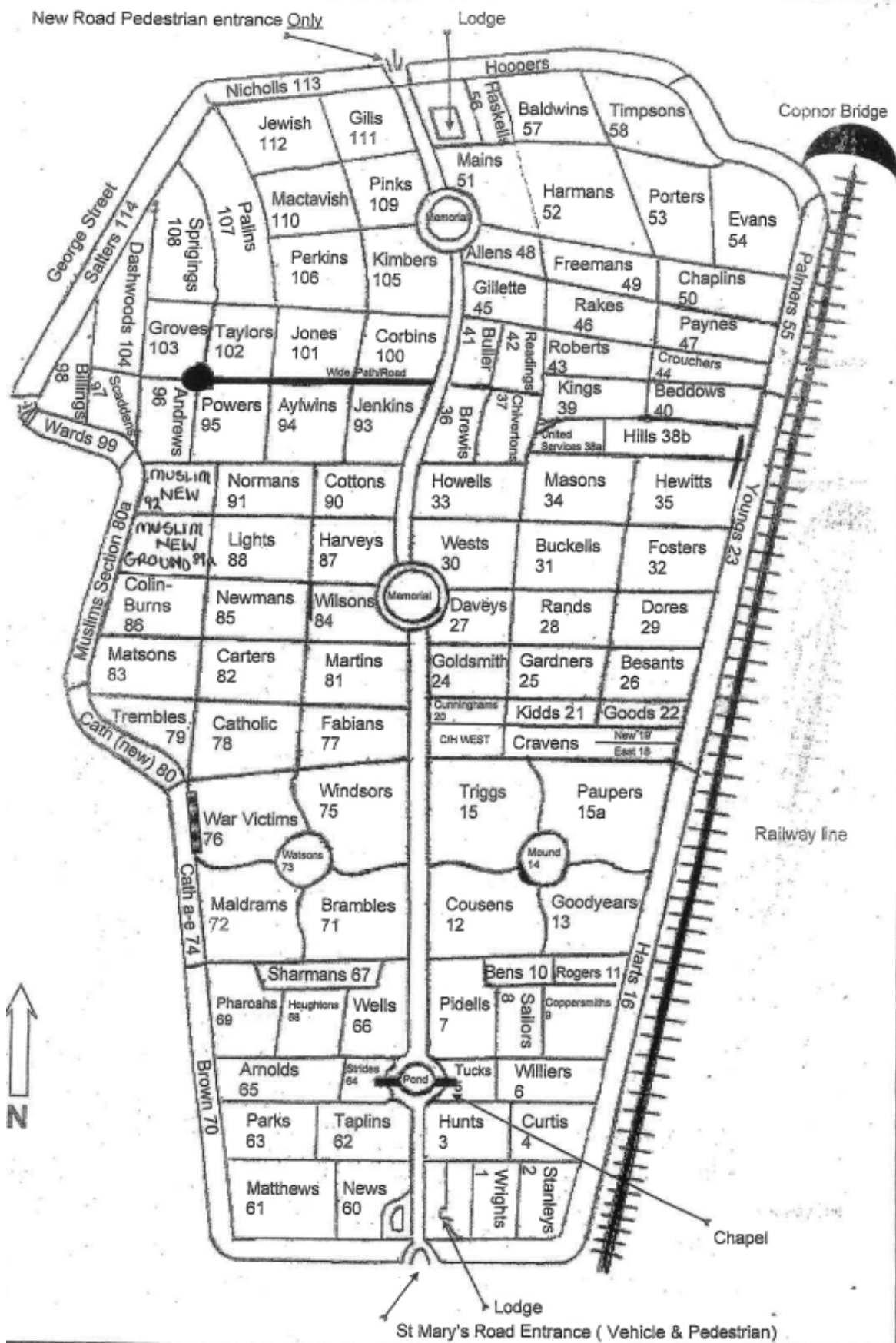
Many changes have been made over time to maintain the city cemeteries. In 1959, a Portsmouth Corporation Act stated that no more kerbs or surrounds were permitted.⁹ All three cemeteries therefore now comprise a less formal layout, with many kerbs having been cleared in the 1970s from all sites that allowed for the reclaim of thousands of graves and secured the city's burial space requirement at that point in time. This provides easy access for grounds maintenance and minimises trip hazard risks.

⁷ [Documents: History - Portsmouth Old Jews Burial Ground: CemeteryScribes Jewish tombstone inscriptions, Find a grave Genealogy, Family History](#)

⁸ [Burial Site \(sustainability-centre.org\)](#)

⁹ [ukla_19590045_en.pdf \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Kingston Cemetery



Kingston Cemetery Plot Map

Kingston Cemetery was opened in January 1856, and at 52 acres is the largest and most visually impressive of Portsmouth's cemeteries, as well as the only Grade II listed cemetery (listing applies to the southern portion of the site). Since it opened, around 192,000 interments have taken place, and the cemetery currently provides for 220 burials a year on average.¹⁰

There are several assets of heritage value in the cemetery, including the gateways in St Mary's Road and New Road, and the East and West Chapels. Designed by George Rake, a Victorian architect of significance to Portsmouth, these structures give the cemetery a particular character.



Kingston Cemetery St. Mary's Road Gateway

¹⁰ Average annual burials for Kingston Cemetery, for the years 2015 - 2022 (including coffin burials and cremated remains).



Kingston Cemetery New Road Gateway



Kingston Cemetery East & West Chapels

A section of Kingston Cemetery was allocated in 1893 to the Jewish community. The most recent Jewish interment at Kingston took place in 2019. As the Jewish community section has almost reached capacity, the Jewish community purchased some land at Catherington Cemetery¹¹, Waterlooville, where most local Jewish burials now take place.

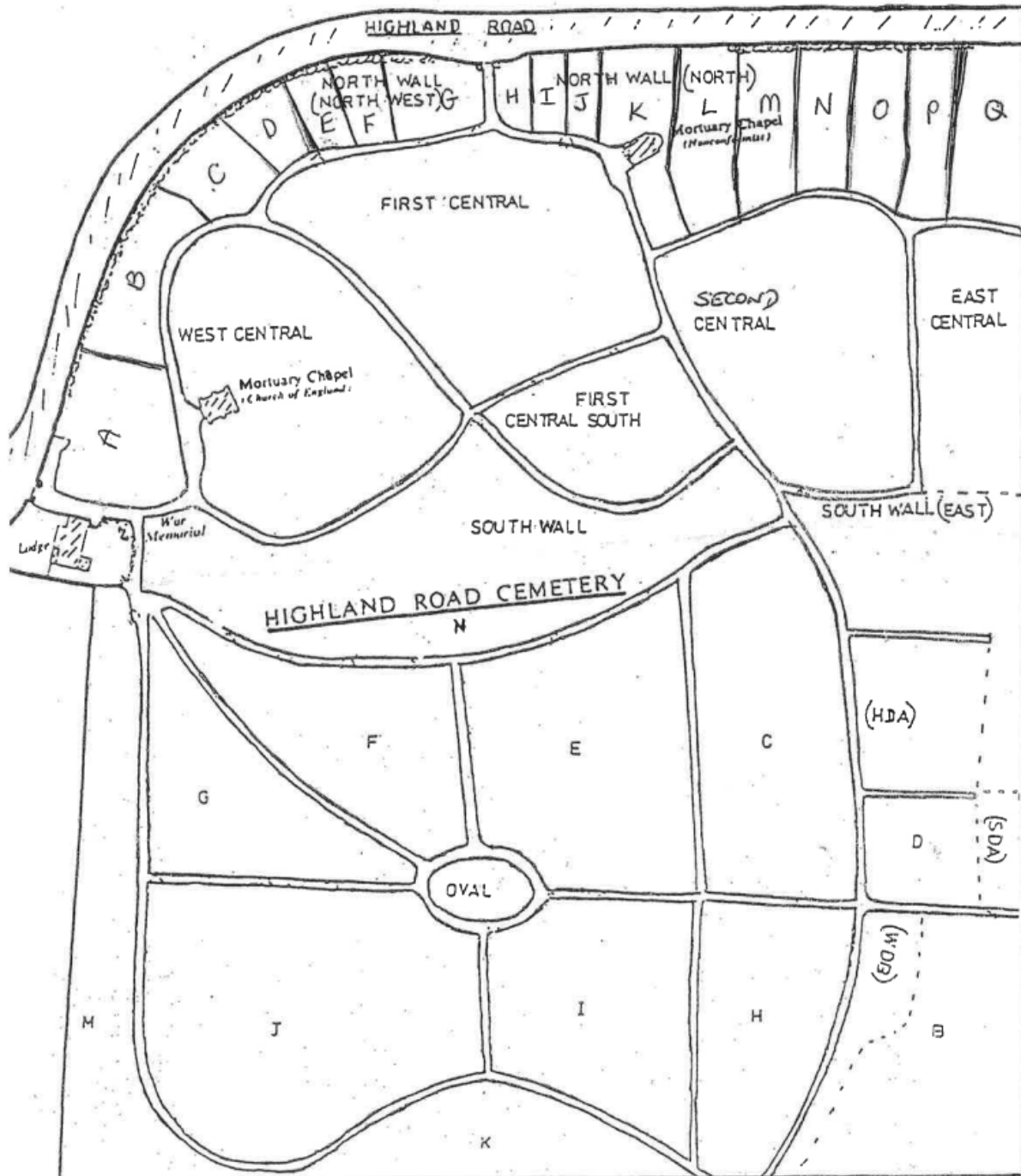
A section has also been set aside specifically for Muslim burials and although this can be extended slightly (e.g. by realigning adjacent hedges) this will become full within the next three to four years. A new area in Milton Cemetery has been identified for this purpose, utilising an area which is currently unused.

The 2021 census demographics for Portsmouth¹² show that 5% of residents are of the Muslim faith, while one in a thousand are from the Jewish community.

¹¹ Operated by East Hampshire District Council

¹² Office for National Statistics

Highland Road Cemetery



Highland Cemetery Plot Map

Highland Road Cemetery is the oldest municipal cemetery and was opened in November 1854. It is the smallest of our current provision at 17 acres and home to graves of historical interest with many decorated servicemen and women, associates of Dickens and royalty buried there. The last available plot has been used so the cemetery is generally considered closed to new burials, although existing family plots are still used. The average burials are therefore much lower at 3- 4 a year.¹³

¹³ Average annual burials for Highland Cemetery, for the years 2015 - 2022 (including coffin burials and cremated remains).

The cemetery was planned by Thomas Ellis Owen, and the absence of planting makes it less secluded than the other city cemeteries, with a less formal layout. The cemetery has a high number of attractive and mature trees. The site is supported by a volunteer organisation, [Friends of Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth](#).¹⁴ This group currently run tours of the cemetery.

Some of the Thomas Ellis Owen structures in the site are Grade II listed, including the Anglican Chapel and the Dissenters Chapel.



Anglican Chapel, Highland Road Cemetery

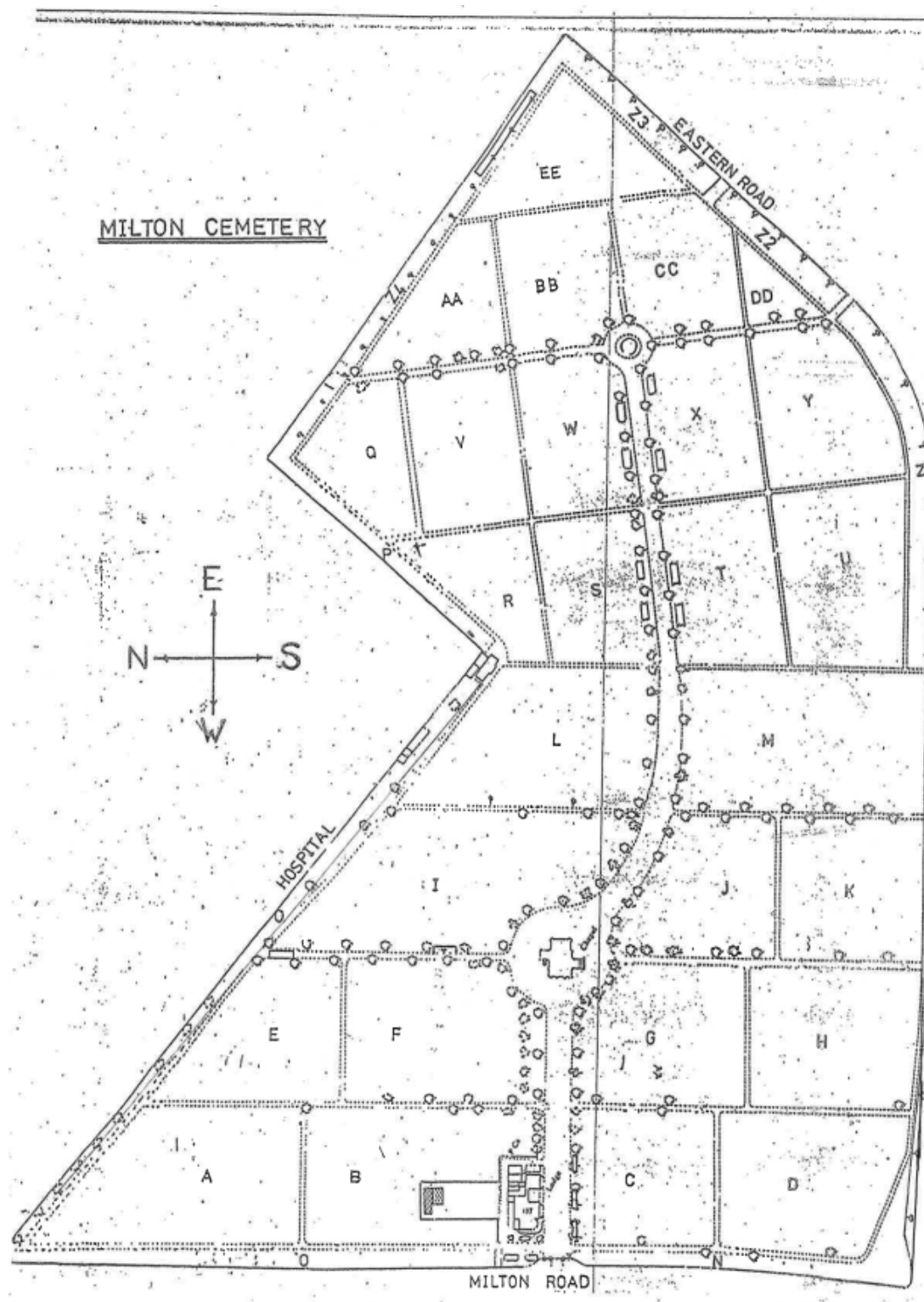


Dissenters Chapel, Highland Road Cemetery

¹⁴ [Friends of Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth](#)

Milton Cemetery

Milton Cemetery opened in April 1912. At 29 acres, it has undertaken 157 burials a year on average in recent years and has a significant Commonwealth War Graves presence.¹⁵



¹⁵ Average annual burials for Milton Cemetery, for the years 2015 - 2022 (including coffin burials and cremated remains).

Milton Cemetery Plot Map

Again, the site includes work by an architect of historic significance in Portsmouth, G E Smith, and examples of work include the main entrance gates and the chapel (both Grade II listed).

Green spaces of the interest, size and quality of the cemeteries are rare in Portsmouth. They are not just burial sites, but provide similar benefits as public parks, in terms of ecological and biodiversity value and benefits to physical and emotional wellbeing through walking, for example. The Local Plan policy approach tries to ensure that open spaces are designed and enhanced so that they can be high quality and able to perform multiple functions to the population (e.g. health and recreation, biodiversity, climate adaptation), whilst recognising that certain spaces have more specific primary functions (so in the case of cemeteries, burial). This means that we should consider the opportunities to optimise the green space available in the cemeteries.

Provision of Graves

Graves may be considered under two categories:

- **Purchased, or private, grave** - in this case, someone will have purchased the exclusive right of burial ("ERB") for a fixed time and may decide who is buried in the grave. The purchaser has automatic right to be buried in the grave. This does not constitute land ownership, but for the period of the rights the grave owner must approve all matters relating to the grave, including whether a memorial is permitted. Legislation (Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977) prevents rights being issued for longer than 100 years.
- **Unpurchased, or common, grave** - where no-one has purchased any rights the council may decide who is buried, and no memorial may be placed without the consent of the burial authority.

Rights are, in effect, a lease on the grave and ownership remains with the council. In Portsmouth, rights are granted for 99 or 50 years. Prior to 2014, Portsmouth offered 25 year or 75 year ERB periods, however customer feedback received suggested that the 25 year period ran out too quickly. Therefore there was minimal appetite for 25 year ERB periods.

Current system for grave provision: unpurchased graves without headstones

In Portsmouth, there is limited virgin land (at Milton and Kingston) for burials. The service are currently reclaiming graves where they have been previously used in part, are unpurchased and have no headstones. Ownership rests with the local authority. For example, this could be the case concerning an unpurchased grave of four spaces, where only two spaces have been used. Concurrent to this practice a system review is underway to establish exactly how many grave spaces this applies to.

Cremated Remains

Portsmouth's cemeteries previously had designated cremated remains areas, but these are now full. Cremated remains are accommodated in all cemeteries by using old grave plots that do not have memorials and have not been purchased via an ERB. Feedback has suggested that this is preferable as an area can be requested near existing family graves. Up to 6 caskets of cremated remains can be interred and there is an option of a memorial. Using old graves for this purpose means that there is considerable space and no foreseeable pressure on this area of demand.

In Catholic tradition it is important that the ashes are laid to rest integrally at a sacred place (e.g. church or cemetery or other place purposefully set aside). Cremated remains caskets provide an alternative to scattering of ashes which is prohibited by Catholic tradition.¹⁶

Remembrance

Memorials are a lasting symbol of remembrance and can take the form of a memorial on the grave itself, or an entry in a Book of Remembrance.

Memorials can only be placed on graves upon which rights of ownership are held, such as purchased graves. In Portsmouth cemeteries, current policy is that memorials must be constructed of natural stone, and that memorials made of wood, soft or artificial stone, plastic or other material likely to perish or become unsightly will be removed. This is to maintain the respectful character of the cemeteries as well as to ensure safety.

The three cemeteries also include 1,300 commonwealth war graves (individual graves) from World War 1 and World War 2. They include many soldiers, sailors and airmen who were killed in the wars, together with:

- Australian soldiers who died in hospital in Portsmouth in World War 1 (commemorated by an annual ANZAC day service);
- South African labourers who died when SS Mendi sank in 1917 (commemorated annually and usually attended by the South African High Commissioner);
- Casualties from D-Day who died in the city in 1944.

In Kingston Cemetery, there is a Polish memorial dedicated to Polish soldiers who arrived in Portsmouth in 1834 and formed part of the first Polish community in the UK. This provides a reflective commemoration for the Polish community in the city.

Fratton Parish, working together with the Lord Mayor, invite local schools to each of the cemeteries, the week before Remembrance, to hold reflection before the Cross of Sacrifice (Commonwealth War Memorial erected in the 1920s).

Each springtime, Pompey Pals, together with the Lord Mayor and Fratton Parish commemorate the anniversary of the Blitz as a community event.

Books of remembrance are displayed to the public in cabinets at Milton and Kingston Cemeteries, and inscriptions can be commissioned to incorporate emblems and insignia of significance to the deceased. Pages with inscriptions are opened on the first anniversary of the date of death and on the same day each year thereafter. The books are also available on the internet.¹⁷

There are several benches in the cemeteries with dedicated memorial plaques. There is currently no further capacity for additional benches in our cemeteries (as referred in the memorials strategy, referenced below). The Council reserves the right to remove any memorial benches that pose a health and safety risk or are in a state of despair. Where new memorial benches are installed, they are only agreed for a maximum lease period of 10 years. The policy in relation to memorials in cemeteries complements the wider city policy on memorialisation (which excludes cemeteries), agreed in March 2018 by the then Cabinet Member for Resources.¹⁸

¹⁶ [Catholics and Cremation.pdf](#) The Cremation Society of Great Britain, February 2022.

¹⁷ <https://www.remembrance-books.com/portsmouth/kbor/book-of-remembrance.html#page/1>

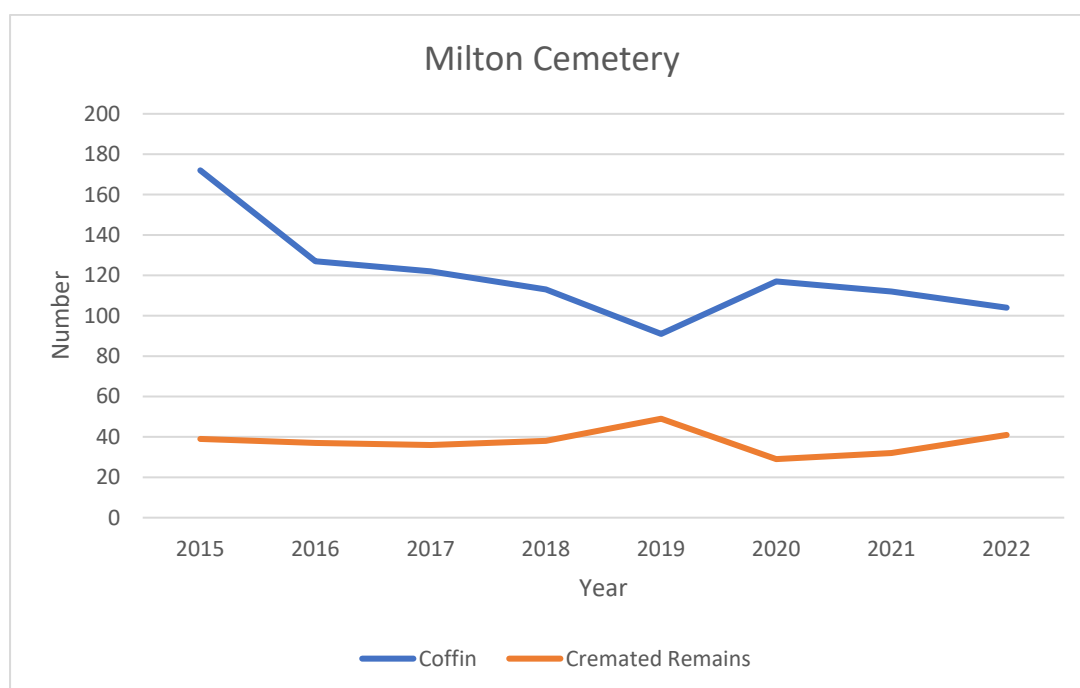
¹⁸ [Agenda for Cabinet Member for Resources on Thursday, 8th March, 2018, 10.00 am Portsmouth City Council](#)

Section 3: Current Demand

The following tables and charts illustrate the demand experienced for the Cemetery Service over the past 8 years:

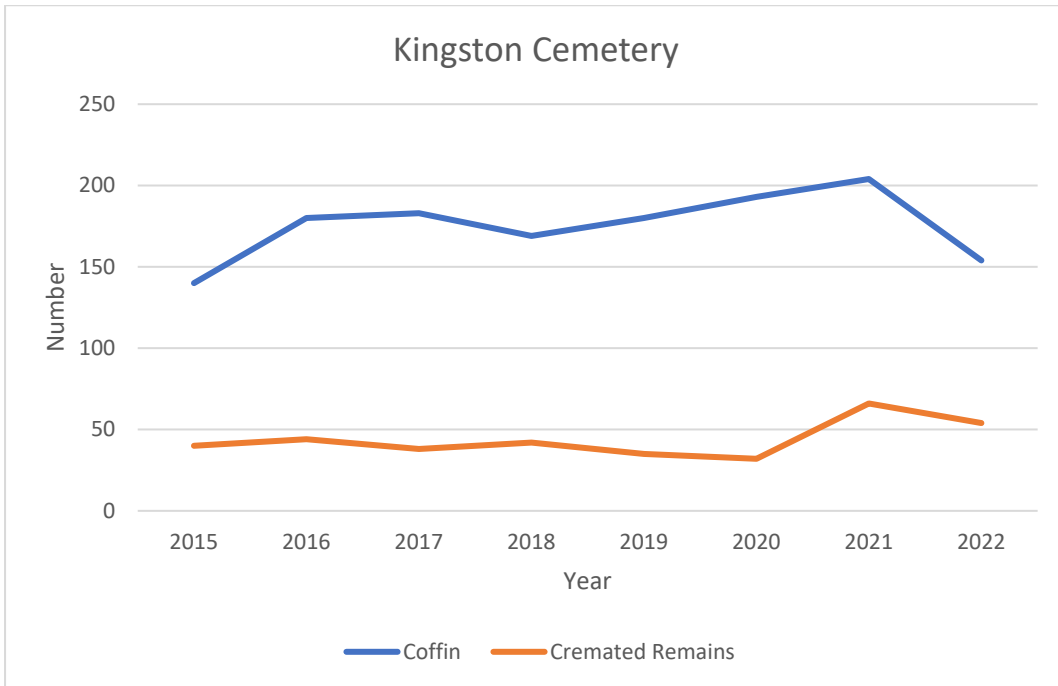
Milton Cemetery

Year	Coffin	Cremated Remains	Total
2015	172	39	211
2016	127	37	164
2017	122	36	158
2018	113	38	151
2019	91	49	140
2020	117	29	146
2021	112	32	144
2022	104	41	145



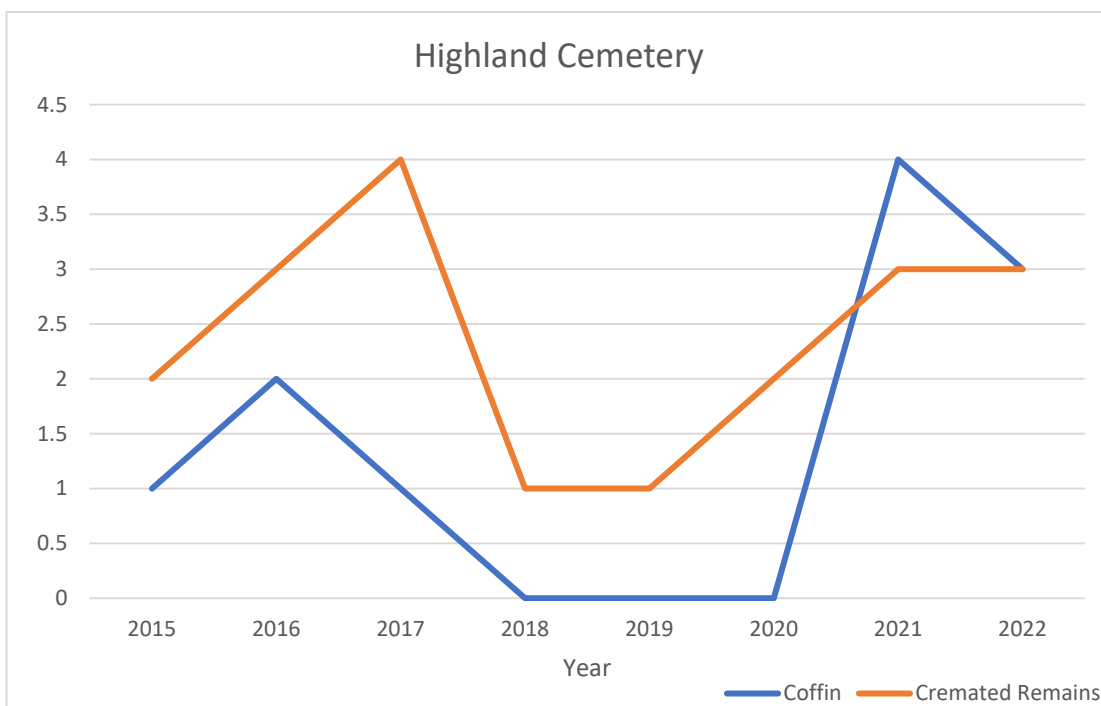
Kingston Cemetery

Year	Coffin	Cremated Remains	Total
2015	140	40	180
2016	180	44	224
2017	183	38	221
2018	169	42	211
2019	180	35	215
2020	193	32	225
2021	204	66	270
2022	154	54	208



Highland Road Cemetery

Year	Coffin	Cremated Remains	Total
2015	1	2	3
2016	2	3	5
2017	1	4	5
2018	0	1	1
2019	0	1	1
2020	0	2	2
2021	4	3	7
2022	3	3	6



Demand for coffin burial is going down but there is demand for the burial of cremated remains.

Previous calculations predict that Kingston Cemetery and Milton Cemetery should be able to continue accommodating burials for the medium term. The service is currently carrying out an updated review to establish exactly what burial space is left in each cemetery.

Diversity

It is recognised by the Council that the city has a diverse community and this is one of its strengths. The Council seeks to meet the needs of all in the community, including the religious and cultural needs.

Cemeteries offer both consecrated and unconsecrated ground (consecrated means that the area has been blessed in accordance with the rites of the Church of England).

The cemeteries also have some significant areas of memorialisation, such as for war dead. Kingston has a dedicated Jewish section. The census demographics for Portsmouth show that one in a thousand Portsmouth residents are from the Jewish community.¹⁹

Regarding the diversity in population growth, the most particular significance for the city's cemeteries is the growth in the Muslim population who require the burial to take place as soon after the death as possible. In the 2001 census data, the Muslim population of Portsmouth comprised 2%. Latest figures from the 2021 census record the Muslim population of the city to comprise 5%. For the period 2018 - 2022 inclusive, the average annual number of Muslim burials was 20. This equates to 1.6 burials per month. Current Council engagement with the Muslim community is considering the number of burials which would be acceptable in any single grave. As the Muslim age profile increases, demand is likely to increase. A review of options to meet this demand is currently being undertaken.

The range of options offered by the cemeteries service should include processes to allow same day burial of deceased Muslims where possible.

Flexibility is currently offered around an enhanced weekend (Saturday) burial service which would meet the needs of the Muslim community. Provision of this service is subject to the required statutory paperwork being provided, qualified staff and grave diggers being available and requests being made in a timely manner.

Roman Catholics are not listed separately in the census data. Burial is a preference for Roman Catholics, although in 1963 a Papal edict opened up the choice of cremation.

Cremation is permitted by the Hindu and Sikh faiths.²⁰

Pandemics

Demand increases in the event of a pandemic. Based on ONS data for deaths, during the Covid pandemic there were 192 more deaths in Portsmouth from 1 January 2020 to 10 February 2023. The cemeteries department has a Critical Service Business Continuity Plan to address excess deaths, in accordance with the experience of the Covid pandemic and in alignment with the UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 (last reviewed in November 2020).²¹ This document provides (paragraph 7.20) that:

¹⁹ Office for National Statistics

²⁰ [History of Cremation in the United Kingdom](#)

²¹ [UK pandemic preparedness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

"Local authorities, in conjunction with service providers, should ensure that they have plans in place to surge their capacity to cope with an increase in burials and cremations during a pandemic."²²

A pandemic causes a significant surge in burials which has a lasting impact on capacity in burial sites due to the length of time grave space then becomes unusable.

Community Funerals (National Assistance Burials)

The Council has the legal responsibility to provide a funeral and protect the estate of any person who dies within the City of Portsmouth where it appears to the authority that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of the body have been or are being made otherwise than by the authority. This includes those persons who have died following admission to Queen Alexandra hospital and for whom no suitable arrangements have been made. This is an increasing area of demand for the authority. The local parish dignify community funerals by consistently offering a recognised minister to attend and officiate. There is the option for both burial and cremation.

Section 4: Service Delivery

Staffing and Management

Portsmouth cemeteries are managed in-house and the core team comprises a cemeteries manager, an assistant cemeteries manager and an administration assistant. The team adhere to the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) operational guidance, which provides training opportunities specific to their duties.

A review of the staffing needs is required to ensure that lessons are learnt from the Covid pandemic to ensure there always suitably qualified and experienced staff to ensure the service can be delivered.

Grounds maintenance for the cemeteries was previously delivered under contract but brought in house from 1 April 2020 as this provided cost efficiencies. The delivery of grounds maintenance is managed by the in house team in liaison with the Cemeteries Manager.

Record keeping

There is a statutory obligation to update records each time an interment takes place. The service has an IT system, known as Burial And Cremation Administration System ("BACAS"). The system stores records of all graves and memorials, the funeral booking diary and financial transactions. Currently the majority of Milton records are digital, Kingston records have been digitised back to 1933 and Highland Road back to 1996.

Prior to these dates, records are paper based. Paper plot books and registers are stored in fireproof cabinets.

Financial picture

As at the most recent financial year, the service operates at a net operational income to the authority of £26,900 (not including central costs).

This masks variation across the sites, with Kingston generating significant income and Highland Road as a net cost to the authority due to its inability to generate income through capacity.

²² [Microsoft Word - 20111103 Influenza Pandemic Strategy - Final.doc \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

In the long term, it is important to note that cemeteries that no longer attract fees become a significant financial liability.

Paragraph 15 of the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 provides authorities with the power to charge such fees as they think are proper:

"(a) for or in connection with burials in a cemetery;

(b) for any grant of a right to place and maintain a tombstone or other memorial in a cemetery...

(c) for any grant of a right to put an additional inscription on such tombstone or other memorials."

In addition, under section 11A a burial authority may charge such fees as they think proper for the making by them of searches, and the provision of certified copies of entries in the register of burials or the record of disinterment.

Recent benchmarking of fees levied in other authorities in the immediate region demonstrates that Portsmouth's fees are slightly below average, except for the Rights of Burial. Portsmouth's Rights of Burial are for 50 years and the neighbouring authorities' Rights of Burial fees are for 30 years. The significance of this decision is discussed elsewhere in this document. Fee reviews for Portsmouth take into account the socio-economic profile of the city. Portsmouth charges twice the standard fee rate for non -resident interments.

Authority	Grave for Two	Rights of Burial	Re-open/ grave for one	Burial of Cremated Remains	Memorial application	Inscribed Vase
Eastleigh	£1315.00	£898 = 30 years £29.93 per year	£1033.00	£356.00	£390.00	£100.00
Southampton	£860.00	£945 = 30 years £31.50 per year	£680.00	£255.00	£170.00	£55.00
Fareham	£910.00	£970 = 30 years £32 per year	£695.00	£220.00	£190	£56.00
Gosport	£565.00	£330 = 30 years £11 per year	£565.00	£18.00	£155.00	n/a
East Hampshire	£1200.00	£1244 = 30 years £41.46 per year	£1020.00	£326.40	£153.00	n/a
Havant	£931.00	£833.00 = 50 years £16.66 per year	£668.00	£274.00	£164.00	£54.00
Portsmouth	£862.00	£922 = 50 years £18.44 per year	£729.00	£233.00	£136.00	£30.00
Average	<i>£949.00</i>	<i>£877.00</i>	<i>£769.00</i>	<i>£240.00</i>	<i>£193.00</i>	<i>£59.00</i>
Natural Burial Centre	£2916.00	n/a	£2133.00	n/a	n/a	n/a

Section 5: Key future focus areas

The management of cemeteries in the city presents several development opportunities. Site management plans for each of the cemetery sites should include consideration of the following where applicable:

- Increasing the capacity of existing burial space & requirement for new cemetery provision;
- Enhancement of cemetery green space
- Review of assets (buildings)
- Review of memorials management
- Community engagement
- Customer interface and marketing

Each of these focus areas is considered in turn below. Options are considered in accordance with current regulations.

1. Address capacity of existing burial space

Demand shows that whilst there is sufficient burial space in the medium term, in the longer term, in consideration of the limited amount of available space in Portsmouth and the time it will take to identify and confirm new cemetery ground, steps should be taken to maximise space in existing cemeteries.

There are various options available to meet this objective:

Reviewing the ERB period

The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 limits the period for which rights may be granted to a maximum of 100 years with effect from that date. This is to avoid any grant of rights being made in perpetuity.

Fees for extending the ERB period should be clearly set out and differentiated from the original grant of rights. The Council might also consider reducing the ERB period to bring it into alignment with other authorities, by reducing it from 50 years to 30 years (subject to market and customer review). After the fixed period of time has elapsed, correspondence should be issued to the grave owners to offer to extend the ERB period for a further short period for a fixed fee. During the ERB period, the rights regarding the grave (who is buried there, whether a memorial is placed) belong to the person who holds those rights.

Using grave spaces

As already referred to in this document (see Current Provision) there is limited virgin land in Portsmouth for burials. Future options around grave spaces are as follows:

Utilise unpurchased graves with headstones

Where graves are unpurchased, but have previously been used in part, in some instances they have headstones.

Where graves are unpurchased, the responsibility for them falls to the Council. Therefore, where there is remaining capacity in these grave spaces, there could be opportunity for the Council to utilise these spaces. This could be done provided that:

- There is no existing legal agreement concerning the grave or headstone;
- Notice (of 3-6 months) was published of the Council's intention to utilise the remaining grave space;
- The notice given included an option for the family concerned to purchase the grave;
- By way of good practice, 75 years has elapsed since the last burial in the unpurchased plot.

If the above criteria were met, then this is a good option for the Council. As the unpurchased grave responsibility falls to the Council, the Council would have the choice in these instances (after a new burial) to reinstate, remove (possibly to a new location or store) or lay down the headstone, as they saw fit.

Reclaim purchased graves - where no burials have taken place

This option concerns circumstances where 75 years have elapsed since the purchase of exclusive rights of burial, but no burials have taken place, so the grave space has not been used at all.

As the exclusive right has not been exercised, the Council can exercise its right to reclaim the grave, by extinguishing the existing rights by taking all reasonable endeavours to contact the owner and by publishing a notice. This is done in two different ways, depending whether the ground is consecrated:

- Consecrated ground - the service applies for a faculty from the Diocese
- Unconsecrated ground - the service applies for a licence from the Ministry of Justice

This option is action that Portsmouth can currently take. The first step will be to establish how many potential spaces this criteria applies to.

Reclaim purchased graves - where burials have taken place

Local authorities in London are permitted to use the remaining space in a purchased grave where previous burials have taken place, provided the last burial was over 75 years ago and notice of intention has been published, including taking all reasonable endeavours to contact the owner.

With grave space in demand, the government is under increasing pressure to allow this principle to extend to local authorities outside the London boroughs. At the time of writing, East Hertfordshire District Council have put a private bill before parliament to request this power.²³ If this bill is enacted, it will put pressure on the government to extend this power, so it may be an option available to Portsmouth in the future.

Currently a Law Commission project is at pre-consultation stage to also look at this issue and in time may also bring pressure on the government to extend the above powers only currently available in London.²⁴

²³ [Bishop's Stortford Cemetery Bill \[HL\] - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

²⁴ [Burial and Cremation - Law Commission](#)

Reuse graves - lift and deepen existing graves

The general principle applies that human remains should not be disturbed without the requisite authority.

Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 (as amended by section 2 of the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014)²⁵ provides that grave re-use can take place via a 'lift and deepen' method, concerning remains in consecrated ground, without a requirement for reinterment in consecrated ground. This would not need a Ministry of Justice licence, but would require a faculty from the Diocese.

In principle, Portsmouth could therefore apply for a blanket faculty permission for all such graves and follow a 75 year since last burial principle, as a matter of good practice. However, pursuit of this option is not recommended, as disturbance of remains is a sensitive issue and land in Portsmouth is subject to a high water table.

Raising and mounding ground level

Raising and mounding the ground level can be undertaken above areas of old (unpurchased) graves. This requires sufficient numbers of graves where this is appropriate in a particular area, as it is not practicable to raise the ground level above a small number of graves. There are not sufficient numbers of graves grouped together in Portsmouth where this would apply, therefore this is not a feasible option.

Installing burial vaults

As with raising and mounding, burial vaults or chambers may be installed above areas of old (unpurchased) graves, without disturbing existing burials, to provide new graves. The installation of burial vaults incurs higher cost than mounding and this would need to be reflected in the fees and charges - This would raise affordability concerns and therefore is not considered a feasible option for Portsmouth.

In summary, the options open to Portsmouth to address issues of capacity within current regulations are:

- To utilise unpurchased graves with headstones
- To reclaim purchased graves, where no burials have taken place

Both these options are included in the action plan.

2. Identify new cemetery provision

Some local authorities are considering whether, regarding amenity sites, where these have scored low on quality assessment, they may be re-purposed for alternative use. This could include potential provision as cemetery space. The quantity assessment of green space undertaken as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2038²⁶ identified that there was a quantity shortfall of amenity greenspace therefore this option is not considered for Portsmouth.

²⁵ [Reuse of graves - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/library/research-and-briefing-papers/lp0628)

²⁶ [Parks Strategy draft 2022.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/media/1000000/parks-strategy-draft-2022.pdf)

Once feasibility has been undertaken for a new cemetery site, planning consent is required to consider landscape impact, accessibility and highways safety. This can take several years to establish due to the need to satisfy the Environment Agency and obtain planning consent.

The Environment Agency has particular guidance which must be followed.²⁷ This recommends that consultation with the Environment Agency and other relevant statutory bodies is undertaken at an early stage, to identify issues and constraints relevant to design, since cemetery development involves a change in land use. The planning permission is likely to require an environmental impact assessment and may also require certain permissions from the Environment Agency. This is because cemeteries have potential to affect the environment, through issues relating to surface water hydrology, soil erosion, sediment loading and seepage contamination into surface waters. Grave digging and land readjustment may also cause noise and vibration which may disturb local ecology.

Investigations by the Council's Planning department in 2019 considered several sites at Portsdown Hill for use as a future cemetery. An initial review of potential sites was undertaken by a specialist consultant, however this concluded that agreement in principle from the Environment Agency was unlikely, given that the sites lay in an area of high groundwater vulnerability, are proximate to a Groundwater Source Protection Zone and lie over a principal aquifer. It is therefore likely that any new site will need to be outside the city boundary and discussions are required with neighbouring authorities. Once a preferred site is agreed upon, detailed feasibility testing and promotion to the Environment Agency will need to be undertaken (at significant cost). This excludes actual construction time and cost.

3. Enhance cemetery green space

The draft Parks Strategy 2022-2038 references that aside from their primary function as burial sites, cemeteries provide much needed green space in the city, as opportunities for exercise, quiet reflection, historic interest and biodiversity and wildlife.²⁸

Whilst in the past, grounds maintenance regimes have included chemical control, the Council committed in July 2022 to phase out the use of all pesticides as part of its commitment to environmental objectives.²⁹

Green practices in cemeteries might also include:

- Recycling topsoil excavated from graves
- Actively managing trees to encourage healthy growth
- Planting new trees (where capacity within cemetery design)
- Allocating wildlife zones

Whilst wildlife and biodiversity are actively encouraged in our cemetery grounds, health and safety considerations must take priority where there is conflict.

²⁷ Scoping the Environmental Impacts of Cemeteries - Environment Agency [4507 EAI H1 AW \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁸ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st February, 2023, 12.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

²⁹ [Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022, 2.10 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

4. Review management of assets (buildings)

Both Milton Cemetery and Kingston Cemetery have disused buildings. Milton Cemetery Lodge is currently vacant and in need of repair. At Kingston Cemetery, the Chapel Store West, Mortuary and St Mary's Road Lodge are vacant and in need of repair. Whilst buildings are vacant there is a risk of incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

There may be options for ensuring that cemeteries are sustainable in the longer term, for example, through the sensitive and appropriate use of disused cemetery buildings by businesses (for example, florists, artisans, local history centres, funeral directors, memorial masons or other purposes including social enterprise). It is suggested that this is an area that is explored in partnership with heritage officers and property services officers, which would include undertaking updated condition surveys of all the buildings. The buildings could also be used to accommodate the requirements of particular faith groups.

It is also possible that there may be opportunities to deliver the enhancement of spaces through attracting external funding to the sites, for example, Heritage Lottery Fund.

5. Memorials management and review

The Council continues to ensure that the management of memorials is undertaken safely and in line with professional practice. Whilst the cemeteries provide a valuable wildlife environment, health and safety concerns are paramount. The service is developing a memorial inspection programme and training is available to staff through the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM).

The ICCM have a practice guide on the testing of memorials.³⁰ This defines a dangerous memorial as *'one that will move and continue to fall to the ground with the exertion of a force of 25kg or less'*. The burial authority has a responsibility to keep memorials safe under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957. All memorials should be risk assessed, documented and inspected on a minimum 5 year cycle. Risk assessment should consider (i) proximity to footway or road (ii) historic significance or fame of the memorial (iii) likelihood of area to attract anti-social behaviour.

Where memorials are found to be dangerous or unstable, the service will attempt to contact the owner and ask for the memorial to be made safe. If no attempt is made to contact the memorial owner the service could be accused of maladministration and reported to the Local Government Ombudsman, therefore it is important that the notification process (as set out by ICCM and underpinned by legislation) is followed.

During the period which attempts are being made by the service to contact the memorial owner, the memorial must be made temporarily safe and the service may make the memorial safe by laying it flat. The service is not required to spend public money on repairing the memorial, as the memorial is private property.

If laying memorials flat creates a potential trip hazard, the alternative for the service is to set the memorial deeper into the ground by one third of its height.

³⁰ ICCM, Management of Memorials, August 2019 [iccm_MM Policy Final 08 2019.pdf \(iccm-uk.com\)](#)

After the ERB period has expired if the memorial is unsafe or details illegible, the service may remove and destroy a memorial provided the provisions of the Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977 are complied with.

It is recommended that the service produces a clear guide on memorial policy as part of the marketing material available to customers. This will enable the control of unauthorised memorials and enable long term control over safety.

Any memorial mason that wishes to work within Portsmouth Cemeteries must be a member of National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) or on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM). This ensures best practice.

A report on the memorials management policy for the service was agreed by Committee on 28 July 2023.³¹

6. Engaging with the community

This should include work to increase community engagement with the spaces, for example, identifying trees or wildlife that could be found in the cemeteries (including after dark bat walks, for example), or creating online history packs including Tomb Trails, identifying locally notable people. These are elements where active Friends groups could greatly contribute, and therefore it is recommended to explore establishing and supporting individual Friends groups for each cemetery, or a service-wide group. A formally constituted Friends group can seek charitable donations and grant funding for the benefit of the cemetery sites.

The historical and biodiversity element could also include the development of links with schools as part of an education package. There is also opportunity to work in partnership with Commonwealth War Graves Commission's engagement team to offer history tours of the cemeteries for Heritage Open Days or other anniversaries and reflect the diversity of the city's population. This could be a particular opportunity with regard to Kingston and Milton cemeteries, as they are in areas of the city where we have less events and are close to densely populated areas. Currently engagement takes place with some primary schools but there is a wealth of historical material in the city cemeteries that could benefit a wider school catchment.

7. Customer interface and marketing

Recent technologies open up several opportunities to enhance the customer experience. An interactive online mapping of grave spaces could help easily identify and manage cemetery capacity - recording burial dates and grave depths. There would also be opportunity to 'map' graves of historical interest and significance. This would have the potential to raise the profile of the significance of the city's cemeteries both nationally and internationally. Digital maps would free up staff time from photocopying existing paper plans.

Customer contact could also be improved by utilising online forms which would create efficiencies of service, reduce the burden on email and phone contact and reduce unnecessary data entry.

³¹ [Agenda for Cabinet Member - The Leader \(Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Portfolio\) on Friday, 28th July, 2023, 10.00 am Portsmouth City Council](#)

The online space for the service could also include the ability to make online payments. This could include both funeral bookings and charges for accessing records information directly or via a third party.

The current Cemeteries webpage could be updated to include consideration for different user groups. This could include the digital services referenced above.

The service currently offers documentation for customers but this has not been refreshed for some years. Consideration needs to be given to positive messaging and a modern brochure will need to comply with accessibility guidelines.

Other local authorities have also introduced Bereavement Services social media pages. This allows for the promotion of the service and may be something the service wishes to consider.

This would be an opportunity to engage with stakeholders to promote the service regarding the wider cultural, social and environmental benefits that cemeteries provide.

Section 6: Action Plan

An action plan has been developed that will be monitored for progress with update reports provided to Cabinet Member covering the key focus areas together with an annual fees and charges review.

The service will also continue to be audited as part of the Council's internal audit cycle.

The directorate works closely with portfolio holders and opposition spokespersons. All Members are encouraged to take an interest in the work to protect and maintain our cemeteries and are welcome to have site visits.

Engagement will continue with the community and customers are encouraged to make contact by service enquiry. Any new Friends network will also be encouraged to feedback.

Action Plan

Action	Who	Resource
<i>Increase capacity of existing burial space and identify new cemetery provision</i>		
1. Undertake a review of unpurchased graves (without headstones) that can be utilised to assess current available space.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
2. Undertake a review of unpurchased graves with headstones.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
3. Undertake a review of purchased graves, where the rights of burial have not been exercised.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
4. Consider and undertake feasibility for new cemetery, including options for land outside municipal boundary, in discussion with other local authorities	Built Environment & Recreation Manager, together with Director and Planning colleagues	Capital allocation will be required for feasibility to take place
5. Review of burial space to ensure the future needs of the whole community can be met including for different faiths.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
<i>Enhance cemetery green space</i>		
6. Allocate wildlife zones and produce supportive education material.	Cemeteries Manager Countryside Officer	Within current cash limit
<i>Review management of assets (buildings)</i>		
7. Undertake condition survey of buildings and consider cemetery needs and opportunities for use. Review opportunities for external funding for improvements.	Cemeteries Manager Property Team	Within current cash limit
<i>Memorials policy and process</i>		
8. Develop and implement a memorial safety policy.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit

Action	Who	Resource
<i>Engaging with the community</i>		
9. Development of resources and links with schools e.g. history packs.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
10. Development of cemetery Friends groups and volunteer opportunities.	Cemeteries Manager Volunteers Officer	Within current cash limit
11. Develop partnership working with Commonwealth War Graves Commission engagement team regarding history/heritage tours.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
<i>Review of funding mechanisms</i>		
12. Review options for exclusive rights periods.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
13. Review cemetery fees on annual cycle.	Cemeteries Manager	Within current cash limit
<i>Review of staffing requirements and structure</i>		
14. Reviewing staffing requirements and structure to ensure business continuity and service delivery.	Cemeteries Manager Built Environment and Recreation Manager	Within current cash limit
<i>Digital customer experience and marketing</i>		
15. Develop digital map of cemeteries.	Cemeteries Manager Digital Customer Officer	Within current cash limit - dependent on corporate resourcing of digital customer support
16. Develop online booking and payment facility.	Cemeteries Manager Digital Customer Officer	Within current cash limit - dependent on corporate resourcing of digital customer support
17. Update Cemeteries webpage with updated brochure information to reflect different user groups and consider viability of social media pages.	Cemeteries Manager Web Team	Within current cash limit

Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA499447890
Date	21/03/2023



Policy details

Request date	21/03/2023 15:30
Directorate	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services
Service	Cemeteries Service
Title of policy, service, function	Cemeteries Framework
Type of policy, service, function	New
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	The cemeteries framework looks to consider the requirements of different faith groups to meet the needs for burial space for the residents of the city. The framework also considers several other key issues. The issues for action are summarised in an action plan to the document.
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	yes
What were the outcomes of the consultations?	Initial discussions have taken place with the Muslim community to understand their needs and this has been taken into account in the strategy. There are also further groups that we are consulting with at draft strategy stage.
Has anything changed because of the consultation?	yes
Please provide details	The strategy is informed by a broader stakeholder base.
Did this inform your proposal?	yes
Please provide details	The strategy is informed by a broader stakeholder base, as a result of consulting with key stakeholder groups

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the

protected characteristics?

<p>With the above in mind and following data analysis, who is the policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?</p>	<p>The cemeteries framework has an effect on different faith groups as they have different requirements with regard to burial.</p>
<p>Will any of those groups be affected in a different way to others because of your policy, project, service, function, or strategy?</p>	<p>The framework takes account of different faith groups and explains how their needs will be met.</p>
<p>If you are directly or indirectly discriminating, how are you going to mitigate the negative impact?</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Who have you consulted with or are planning to consult with and what was/will be your consultation methodology?</p>	<p>We have started consultation and are planning to consult with faith groups, funeral directors, memorial masons and other local authorities. Consultation will be by direct contact.</p>
<p>How are you going to review the policy, service, project or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?</p>	<p>The framework will be reviewed as part of annual monitoring (decision cycle). This will fall to the Cemeteries Manager</p>

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The framework includes a consideration of memorial management and risk assessment to deter anti-social behaviour in cemeteries.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Memorials are to be managed and assessed on a rolling cycle.</p>

Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cemeteries have a secondary purpose as green and open spaces and provide an opportunity for healthy outdoor exercise.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Friends of Cemeteries will enable feedback from the community on the quality of the spaces, and residents can also feedback directly to the service.</p>

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The framework includes reference to Community Funerals (National Assistance Burials). This is a responsibility which sits with the Council to provide a funeral for any person who dies in the city where the deceased has no relatives and no provision has been made.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Community Funerals are managed and measured by Regulatory Services.</p>

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cemeteries are listed in the Local Plan as important open space provision. Their green offer is secondary to their primary purpose as burial sites. In a densely populated city, they provide important access to green space for residents and wildlife.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Updates on individual objectives within the cemeteries framework will be made via the Committee reporting process.</p>

Air quality - will it improve air quality?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The cemeteries include several historically significant memorials and Commonwealth War Graves which form part of the city's heritage offer.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>A rolling programme to review the memorials is undertaken by the Cemeteries Manager and Built Environment Manager.</p>

Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Social value

<p>Please explain how your policy, service, function, project or strategy delivers Social Value</p>	<p>Economic 'Portsmouth Pound' through engagement with local memorial masons and local funeral directors. Sustainable / Environment: the cemeteries offer green open space for free for the recreation and wellbeing of our city's residents. Social: the cemeteries will offer social opportunities, through the development of Friends groups.</p>
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Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Claire Watkins
Name of the person completing this form	Claire Watkins
Date of completion	2023-03-21

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Agenda Item 5



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Subject:	Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

1.1. To seek Cabinet approval to formally adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Cabinet is recommended to formally adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

3. Background

3.1. The purpose of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is to consider how parks and open spaces in the city are planned, designed, managed, protected and maintained.

3.2. The strategy sets out several principles grouped around appropriate themes, to ensure that the parks and open spaces of the city are of a consistent standard. These principles will guide future work.

3.3. The strategy includes a review of up to date policy at a national, regional and local level.

3.4. Detailed studies are included regarding key sites in the city including a standalone chapter focussed on the seafront.

3.5. Whilst an up to date parks and open spaces strategy for the city does not provide any guarantee of securing external funding, the strategy will support the Council's relationship with external bodies such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in demonstrating the Council's commitment towards protecting and enhancing our parks and open spaces.

- 3.6. The strategy links strongly with other strategies including the Portsmouth Local Plan, Greening Development Plan and Climate Change Strategy. Review of relevant overlapping strategies is contained at Appendix 5.2 to the strategy.
- 3.7. The production of the Parks and Open Spaces strategy meets the following priorities under the City Vision 2040:
- 3.7.1. A green city: protect and enhance our green spaces for future generations;
 - 3.7.2. A healthy and happy city: enhance wellbeing for everyone in the city by offering support for physical and mental health, enabling people to thrive.
- The strategy delivers against the Council Plan Mission to improve the lives of residents.
- 3.8. The draft strategy was approved for public consultation by the Cabinet in February 2023 and thereafter was distributed widely to interested parties locally, regionally and nationally. A list of the groups and organisations consulted is included at Appendix 2.
- 3.9. The draft strategy was also promoted widely on the Council's social media channels and website with an invitation to the public to respond.
- 3.10. The director of culture, leisure and regulatory services is grateful to the 698 people and organisations who responded to the consultation during Spring 2023. The responses showed clear support for the principles identified.
- 3.11. The changes made as a result of the consultation were minor and included emphasising links with other plans (such as the Council's Climate Strategy 2022, the Greening Development Plan, Transport Strategy and Langstone Harbour Plan). External respondents included Hampshire Countryside Access Forum and Natural England. Several of the issues raised were already covered in the document, but further clarity has been added. For example, whilst the Brent Geese are fully discussed, reference was missing to the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy in the policy appendix. Other amendments made included seeking ornithological advice when appropriate and amending wording to incorporate sustainable drainage designs.
- 3.12. The consultation report is included at Appendix 3. There was a high proportion of agreement to the themes of the strategy, together with the priorities arising from those themes. The management summary to the report shows the key improvements requested under each principle. A response to the requested improvements is included at Appendix 4. Key changes made to the strategy in response to the consultation include: a proposed revision of the Parks webpage to provide clearer signposting regarding voluntary opportunities and activities, further information added regarding walking trails and consideration of online giving or mobile contactless donation technology.



4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1. An adopted Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will complement the green infrastructure policy of the Portsmouth Local Plan, the Portsmouth Climate Change Strategy, the Portsmouth Greening Infrastructure Delivery Plan, will meet the green and healthy City Vision objectives referenced above and will support bids for external funding.

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1. An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 1. Subsequent IIAs will be produced for each specific scheme or policy change arising from the strategy, at such time as they are planned for implementation.

6. Legal implications

6.1. Members are advised that the key elements of an effective and fair consultation process in relation to a proposed decision are that:

- the consultation is conducted at a time when the proposals are at a sufficiently formative stage;
- adequate information is provided to enable consultees to consider the proposal;
- adequate time is afforded to consultees to allow them to make a proper and informed response; and
- the decision maker must consider the consultation responses in an open minded way and have due regard to them in making a decision on the proposal.

6.2 Beyond the above, there are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendation in this report.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1. The activities proposed within the Parks Strategy are expected to be funded from existing service portfolio budgets, as approved by Full Council. Where there are any activities which have additional financial requirements, funding will need to be identified prior to their commencement.

.....
Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services



Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Integrated Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2: List of consulted groups and organisations
- Appendix 3: Consultation report summary
- Appendix 4: Response to Consultation report
- Appendix 5: Parks and Open Spaces Strategy:

- Appendix 5.1: National and Regional Policy
- Appendix 5.2: Local Policy
- Appendix 5.3: Operational Plans
- Appendix 5.4: Sites Quality Audit results
- Appendix 5.5: Quality Audit criteria
- Appendix 5.6: Quantity and Accessibility
- Appendix 5.7: Open Space Assessment
- Appendix 5.8: Play Value Scores
- Appendix 5.9: Parks Survey results

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Open Space Assessment 2018	development-and-planning-open-spaces-assessment.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development

Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA506854204
Date	11/04/2023



Policy details

Request date	11/04/2023 17:23
Directorate	PCC Culture Leisure and Regulatory Services
Service	Parks Service
Title of policy, service, function	Parks Strategy
Type of policy, service, function	New
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	The previous Parks Strategy expired in 2022. The new parks strategy takes into account new information and policy to bring the strategy up to date and provide a vision for taking the city's parks and open spaces forward into the future.
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	yes
What were the outcomes of the consultations?	An online survey was undertaken in autumn 2021 and an in person 'conversation' event took place at two city libraries early in 2022. The outcomes helped form the draft strategy. A full consultation took place in February - April 2023 to inform the final draft strategy.
Has anything changed because of the consultation?	yes
Please provide details	Additional groups have been represented in the strategy such as Langstone Harbour.
Did this inform your proposal?	yes
Please provide details	The strategy has been amended to include further information from climate groups and greening groups.

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the

protected characteristics?

<p>With the above in mind and following data analysis, who is the policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?</p>	<p>The action principles guiding the strategy include maximising provision and ensuring that no-one is excluded from parks and open spaces on the basis of protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Will any of those groups be affected in a different way to others because of your policy, project, service, function, or strategy?</p>	<p>Current and future design proposals incorporate consideration of neuro-diversity and principal parks and adventure playgrounds are accessible to people with disabilities.</p>
<p>If you are directly or indirectly discriminating, how are you going to mitigate the negative impact?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Who have you consulted with or are planning to consult with and what was/will be your consultation methodology?</p>	<p>Consultation has taken place with a wide range of groups - see Appendix.</p>
<p>How are you going to review the policy, service, project or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?</p>	<p>The strategy will be reviewed by the Parks Manager on an ongoing basis as it affects future work plans</p>

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The strategy sets out 6 action principles that will guide future maintenance and care: parks as community spaces, parks protecting the environment, parks for lifelong learning, parks for health and wellbeing, parks as accessible and well designed, parks well provided for (resourced).
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Google mobility data shows increased use of the city's parks and open spaces. Activity and events programmes will be provided for principal parks. Biodiversity is continually monitored and resources committed annually. Updates on individual projects will be made via the Cabinet / Committee reporting process.

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The strategy references a number of decarbonising measures such as the gradual replacement at lease renewal of fleet vehicles with electric vehicles.
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How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Updates on individual projects will be made via the Committee / Cabinet reporting process.
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Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The strategy references several energy reduction measures such as replacing petrol powered tools with battery powered options.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	The above measure will be monitored by the Grounds Maintenance team.

Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The strategy references wildlife friendly landscaping initiatives such as restricted mowing regimes to encourage wildflower seeding together with other rewilding actions to mitigate surface water run off.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Updates on individual projects will be made via the Committee / Cabinet reporting process

Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The strategy includes commitment to protecting biodiversity, increasing tree coverage, increasing wildflower habitat and restricting/phasing out pesticide use. The strategy references our natural open spaces: Baffins Pond, Milton Common, Hilsea Lines and Portsdown Hill and the steps being taken at these sites to increase biodiversity and protect wildlife.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Through the operational plans for the natural open spaces sites, together with updates on major projects made via the Committee / Cabinet reporting process.

Air quality - will it improve air quality?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The strategy references the heritage value of our open spaces, particularly those along the seafront, many of which are listed. The strategy also refers to the Events offer in our open spaces.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Updates on individual projects will be made via the Committee / Cabinet reporting process together with monitoring of our events offer via annual review.</p>

Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Social value

<p>Please explain how your policy, service, function, project or strategy delivers Social Value</p>	<p>Social value is delivered through community projects and the extensive engagement of volunteers and engagement with schools. Greening the city also makes it a more attractive place to live and work. The strategy plays a key part in safeguarding the environment of the city for all to enjoy.</p>
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Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Claire Watkins
Name of the person completing this form	Claire Watkins
Date of completion	2023-04-11

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Appendix 2

List of groups and organisations consulted in February 2023 for the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

Local organisations (59)

- Baffins Pond Association and Baffins Pond Habitat Volunteers
- Bangladeshi Welfare Association
- BH Live
- Chat over Chai
- City of Sanctuary
- Cosham Park Bowls Club
- Creative Advances Buckland
- Eastney and Milton Allotment Holders Association
- EnableAbility
- Forgotten Veterans
- Friends Without Borders
- Friends of Highland Road Cemetery
- Friends of Portsdown Hill
- Good Mental Health Coop
- Great Salterns Preservation Society
- Gunwharf Quays
- Hilsea Lines Conservation Volunteers
- Homestart Portsmouth
- Landport Community Centre
- Longmeadow Allotment Association
- Milton Neighbourhood Forum
- Milton Park Bowls Association
- Milton Common Volunteer Group
- Moneyfields Allotments
- Motiv8
- Parent Network
- Pembroke Gardens Bowling Club
- Pompey in the Community
- Pompey PALS
- Portsmouth & District Bee Keeping Association
- Portsmouth & District Bowling Association
- Portsmouth Climate Action Network
- Portsmouth Cricket Club
- Portsmouth Creates

- Portsmouth Cycle Forum
- Portsmouth Football Club
- Portsmouth Interaction
- Portsmouth Rotary Housing Association
- Portsmouth Churches Housing Association
- Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust
- Portsmouth Race Equality Network Organisation (PRENO)
- Portsmouth Rugby Club
- The Portsmouth Society
- Portsmouth Tree Wardens
- Portsmouth University
- Port Solent Residents Management Co.
- Positive Minds Veterans (Solent Mind)
- Red Cross Portsmouth
- Roberts Centre
- Salisbury Road Allotments
- Salvation Army
- Shaping Portsmouth
- Society of St James Recovery Hub
- Southsea Green Association
- St Luke's Church
- You Trust
- Victoria Park Friends & Volunteers
- Victory Indoor Bowls
- Volunteer Outreach Support

National organisations (22)

- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- The Design Council
- English Heritage
- The Environment Agency
- Fields in Trust
- Highways England - now National Highways
- Keep Britain Tidy
- Local Government Association
- Ministry of Defence
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- National Trust

- Natural England
- Open Spaces Society
- Public Health England - now Office for Health Improvement
- Ramblers Association
- RSPB
- Sport England
- Sustrans
- The Woodland Trust

Regional Organisations (18)

- Bird Aware Solent
- Groundwork South Solent
- Hampshire Gardens Trust
- Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- Hampshire Ornithological Society
- Hampshire Playing Fields Association care of Hampshire Isle of Wight Community Foundation
- Hampshire Countryside Access Forum
- Partnership for South Hampshire
- Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Partnership
- Portsmouth Water
- Queen Alexandra Hospital Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
- South East Councils
- Southern Water
- Solent LEP
- Solent Partners (Coastal Partners)
- Tourism South East
- Visit South East

Neighbouring Authorities (7)

- Boarhunt Parish Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Havant Borough Council
- Southwick and Widley Parish Council
- Winchester City Council

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Parks and Open Spaces Consultation

Research and Engagement, Corporate Services



Introduction

Introduction

Background and methodology

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy identifies policy priorities for parks and open spaces in Portsmouth and how the council will address and action these priorities moving forward. Portsmouth's previous strategy ran from 2012-2022 and now needs to be refreshed. This new strategy looks ahead to the next 15 years. A consultation was launched to gather feedback on the proposed priority themes and action principles.

A quantitative online survey launched on Tuesday 21 February 2023 and closed on Wednesday 19 April 2023.

Objectives

The main aims of the research were to:

- Understand levels of agreement with the proposed priority themes
- Understand levels of agreement with the proposed action principles

Response rate

In total the survey received 698 responses. It is difficult to calculate the statistical robustness of this consultation because it is unclear how many individuals interact with Portsmouth's parks and open spaces. Assuming a "total population" of 170,818 (the latest 2021 census data from the Office for National Statistics for people aged 16+ in Portsmouth) this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 4%, well within acceptable parameters, although this does exclude the visitor population.

The strategy also received five substantive responses from stakeholders and external organisations.

Respondent profile

There is good representation for age groups between 35-74 and a higher proportion of respondents are female (60%) compared to 40% males. The majority are White or White British and do not have a disability. The majority of respondents were responding as an individual and visit parks and open spaces at least once a month.

Priorities

The vast majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that the council should prioritise each of the themes identified, although a higher proportion are unsure about the theme 'parks as spaces for lifelong learning'. 'Access to parks and open spaces' and 'parks for our health and wellbeing' are the themes respondents most agree with.

Principles

The vast majority of respondents also agree or strongly agree with each principle associated with the themes.

Key improvements to each principle

'To ensure no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces': physical features include access measures and maintenance, ensuring parks are accessible, welcoming, and safe for all, and providing adequate supervision such as parkkeepers, CCTV and community patrols.

'To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat': Plant more and diverse greenery including outside of green spaces, plant and maintain more wildflowers, and improve specific and trained staffing such as gardeners, parkkeepers, and park wardens.

'To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children': Engage closely with children and young people, better advertising and communication about what's available and who Parks Friends are, and more green community events and volunteering initiatives.

'To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna': more and free/affordable outdoor fitness and leisure equipment, improve fauna and flora, and encourage and enable walking through marked trails and guided walks.

'To provide welcoming entrances for all users': Better signage, make entrances more accessible for users, and keep entrances well-maintained.

'To provide safe parks facilities for all users': More staff, policing, and/or park patrols on foot, ensure good lighting and visibility, and crack down on anti-social behaviour.

'To financially resource our parks': Assess/maximise use of current budget/ revenue from council tax, more funding/ investments into parks, and utilise fundraising and income-generating events such as with charities or festivals and fairs like Victorious.

Stakeholder feedback

Responses from stakeholders give general praise for the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, consider protected sites, wildlife and biodiversity, and encourage continued collaboration with other departments to achieve shared and separate goals.

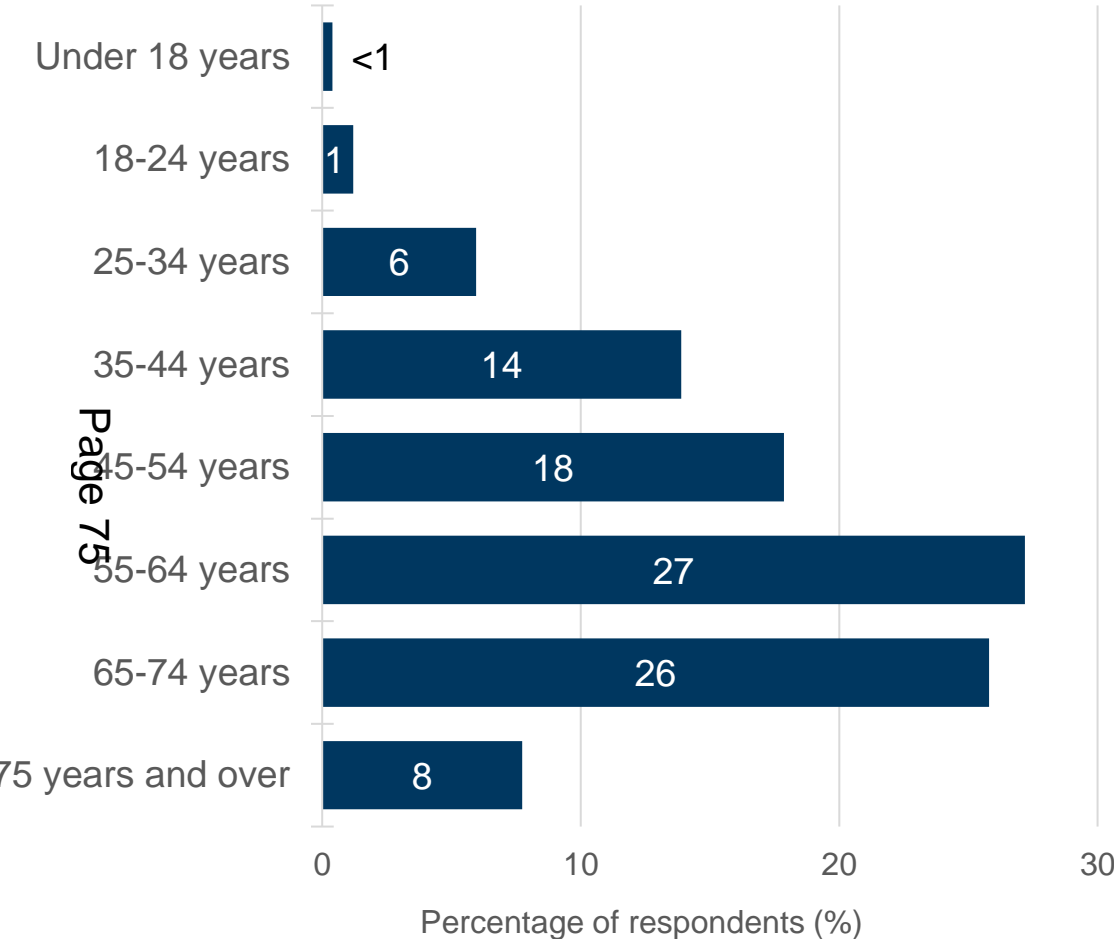


Who we engaged with

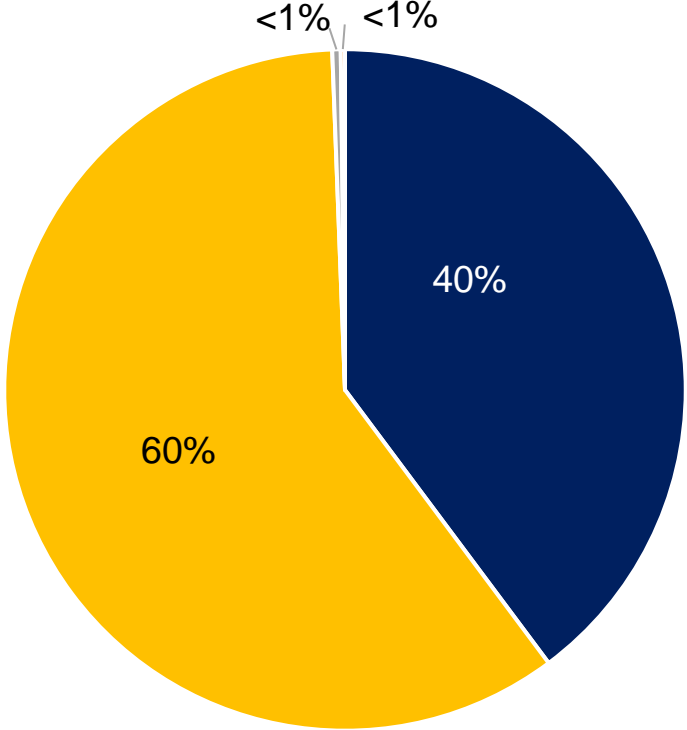
Age and sex

Q: 'What is your age group?' | Base: Total sample (504)

Q: 'What is your sex?' | Base: Total sample (500)



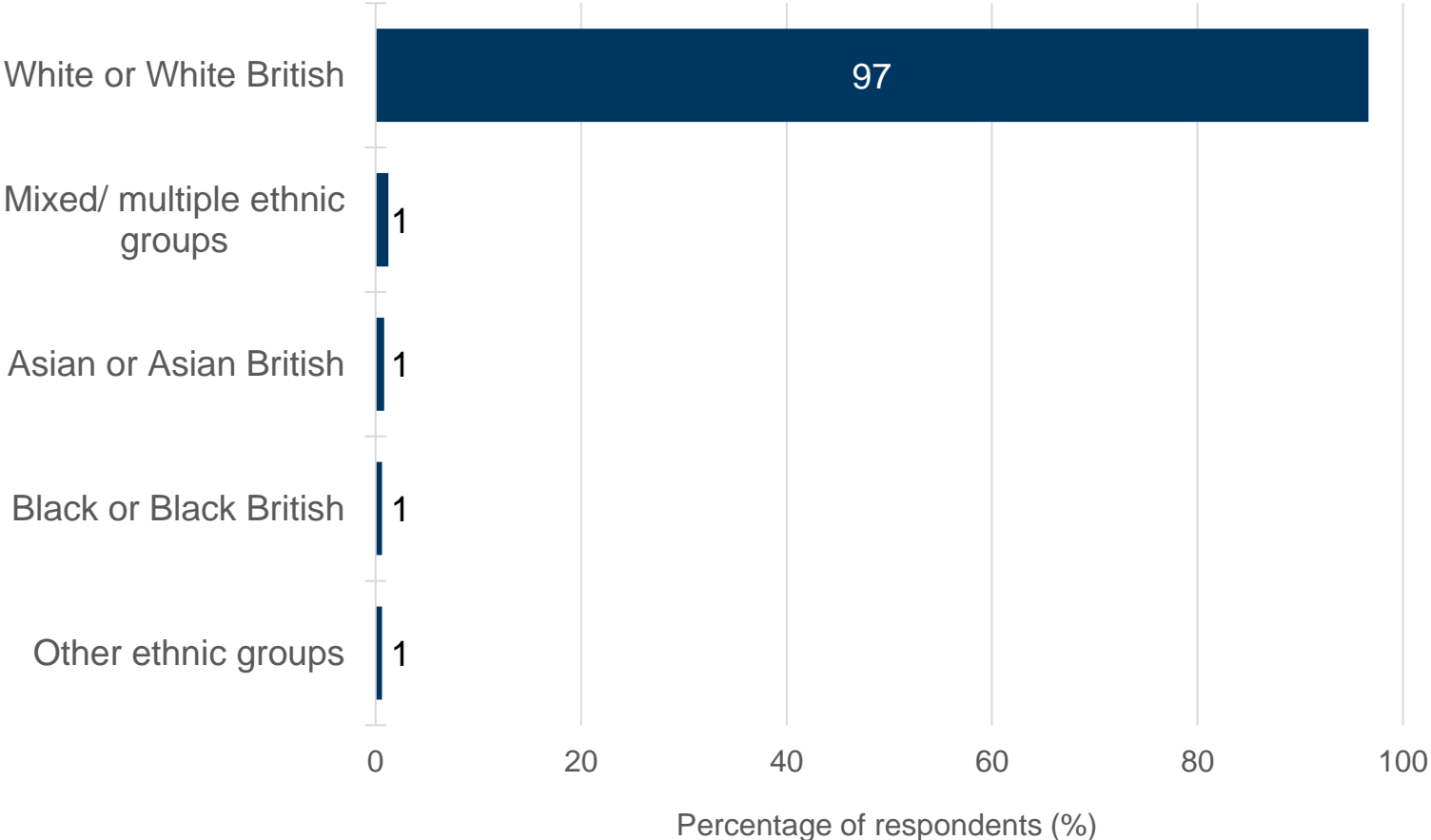
■ Male ■ Female ■ Intersex ■ Prefer to self-describe



- There is good representation for age groups between 35 and 74, with just over a quarter of respondents aged between 55-64 or 65-74. Less than 10% of respondents are under 35 or over the age of 75. These figures are consistent with social research, where individuals aged 45+ are more inclined to interact with public consultations
- A good mix of males and females was achieved in the consultation sample; there are more females achieving a majority of 60%

Ethnicity

Q: 'Which of the following ethnic groups do you belong to?' | Base: Total sample (476)

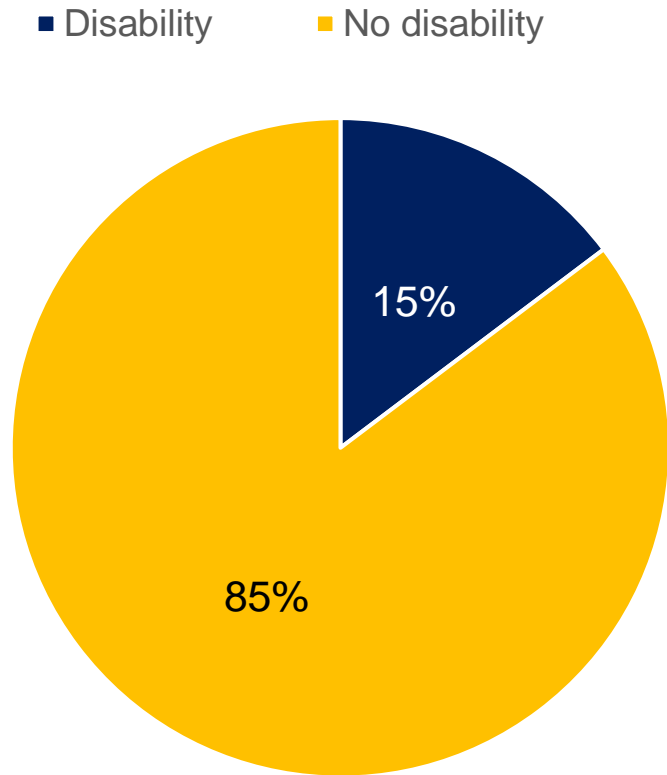


Page 76

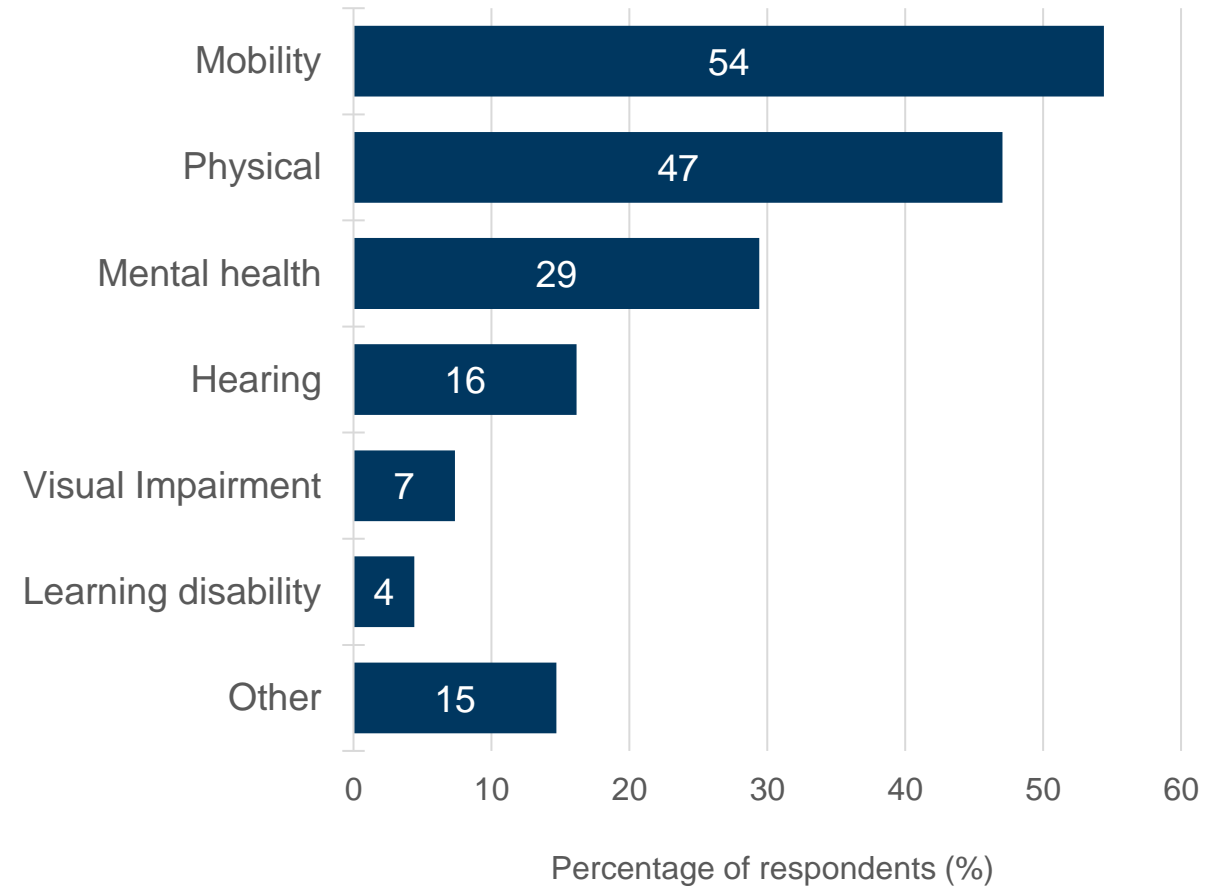
- The vast majority of respondents are White or White British (97%), whilst 1% each are from mixed/ multiple ethnic groups, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, or from other ethnic groups

Disability

Q: 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability under the Equality Act 2010?' | Base: Total sample (496)



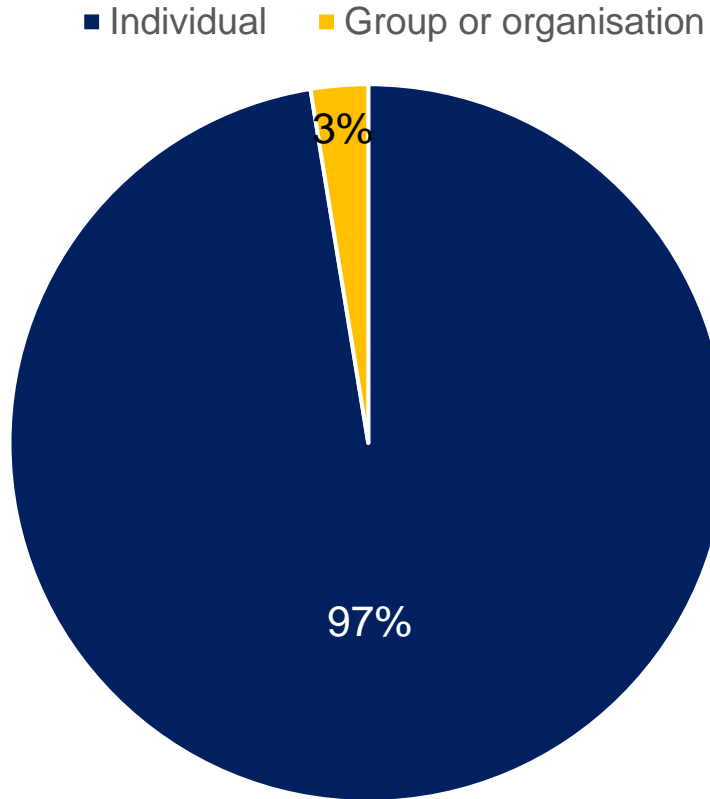
Q: 'What type of disability do you have?' | Base: Those with a disability (68)



- The majority of respondents do not have a disability (85%), whilst 15% do have a disability
- Of those with a disability, just over half have a mobility disability (54%), followed by 47% with a physical disability

Respondent type

Q: 'Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation?' | Base: Total sample (698)



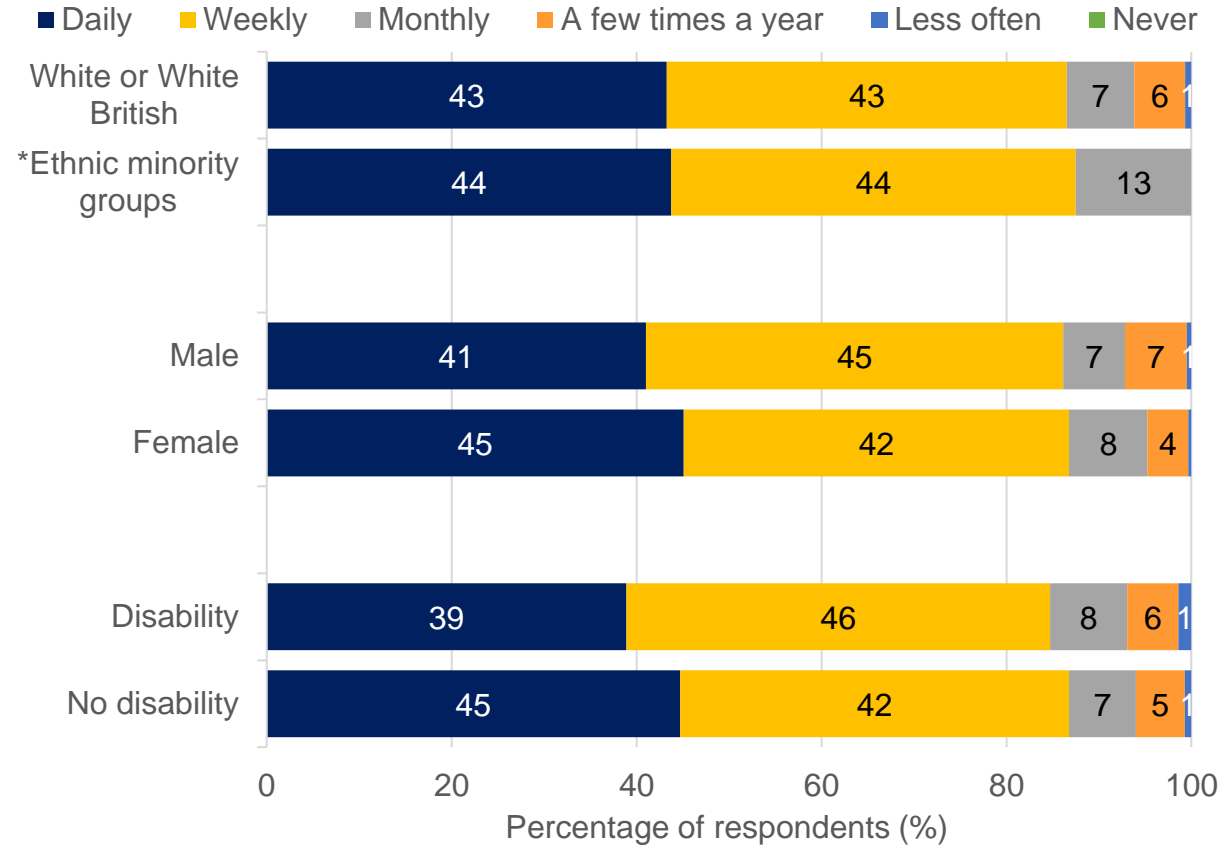
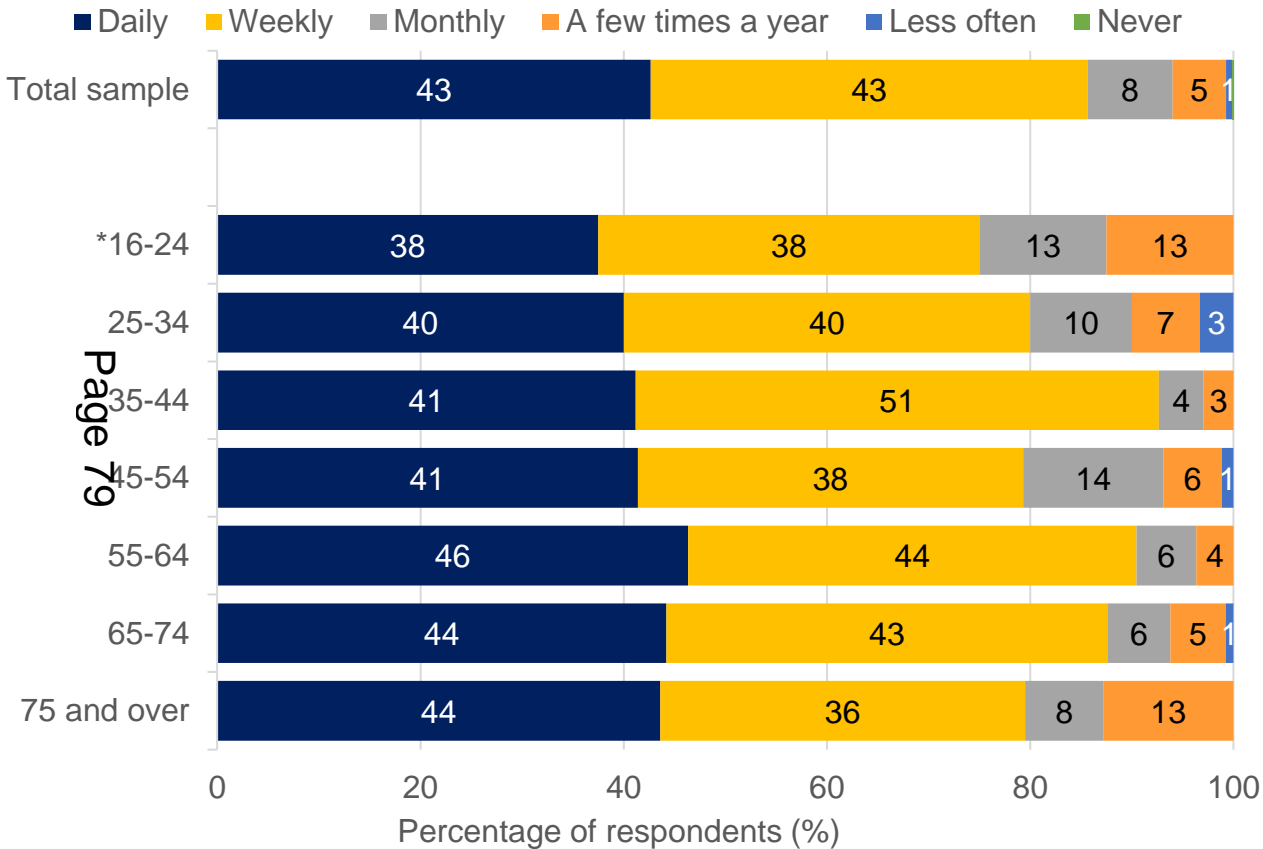
Q: 'Please tell us the name and the group or organisation you are representing' | Base: Businesses (18*) *Caution small base

Groups and organisations
Sport England
Bird Aware Solent
PCC Transport Department
Home-Start Portsmouth
Run-Walk-Local Portsmouth
Portsmouth Creates
Hilsea Lines Volunteers
Longmeadow allotments
Pompey Pals Project
Salisbury Road allotments
PCC Public Health

- The vast majority of respondents were responding as an individual to the consultation (97%), whilst 3% were responding on behalf of a group or organisation

Frequency of visit

Q: **'How often do you visit parks and open spaces in Portsmouth, including the sea front?'** | Base: left chart, from top to bottom – total sample (668) | (8*), (30), (68), (87), (136), (129), (39) | right chart, from top to bottom (453), (16*) | (195), (295) | (72), (416) *Caution small base



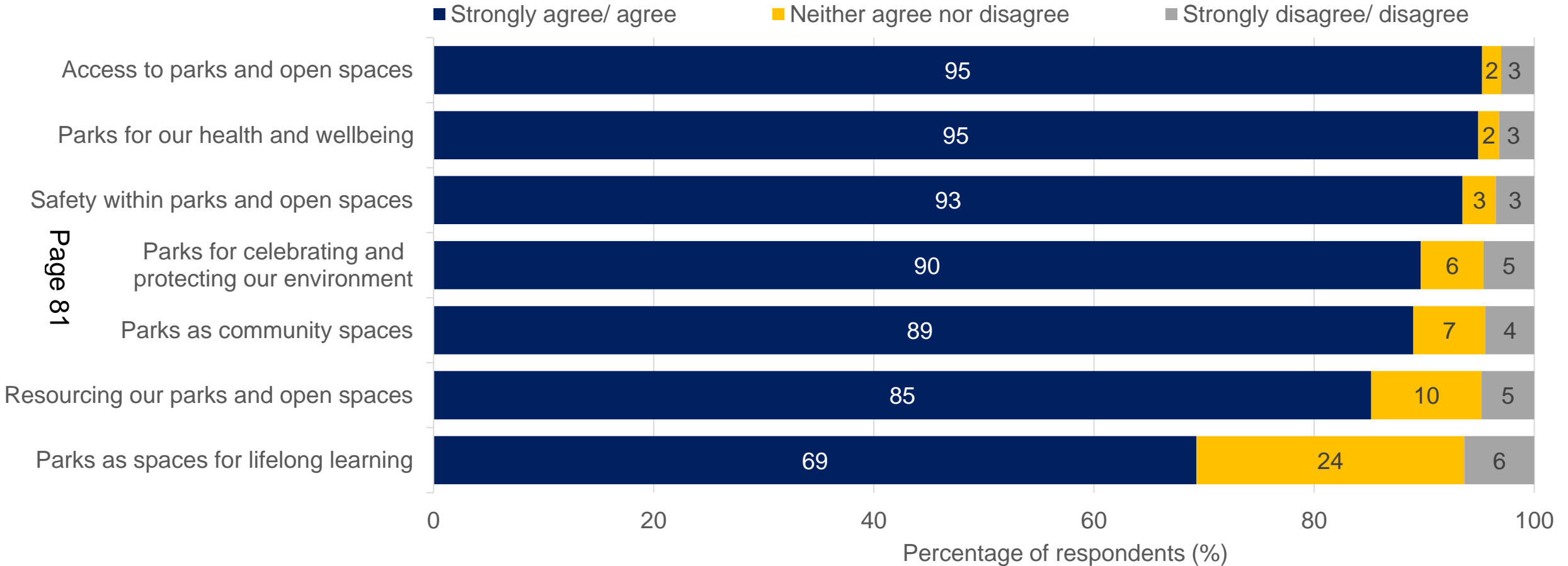
- The same proportion of respondents visit parks and open spaces daily or weekly in Portsmouth (both 43%), meaning the majority of respondents are visiting parks and open spaces at least once a week (86%), whilst a further 8% visit them monthly. Less than 1% never visit parks and open spaces
- Frequency of visiting parks and open spaces is fairly consistent between different ages, ethnicities, sexes and abilities, although slightly higher proportions of respondents aged 35-44 and 55-74 visit parks daily or weekly



Priorities

Priorities

Q: *'Thinking about the seven themes we have identified in the strategy, to what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the things we should prioritise?'* | Base: Total sample (632), (628), (630), (630), (628), (628), (629)



Page 81

- The vast majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that the council should prioritise each of the themes identified, although nearly a quarter of respondents are unsure about the theme 'parks as spaces for lifelong learning'
- 'Access to parks and open spaces' and 'parks for our health and wellbeing' are the themes respondents most agree with (95%)
- There are low levels of disagreement with all themes identified in the strategy (all 6% or less)

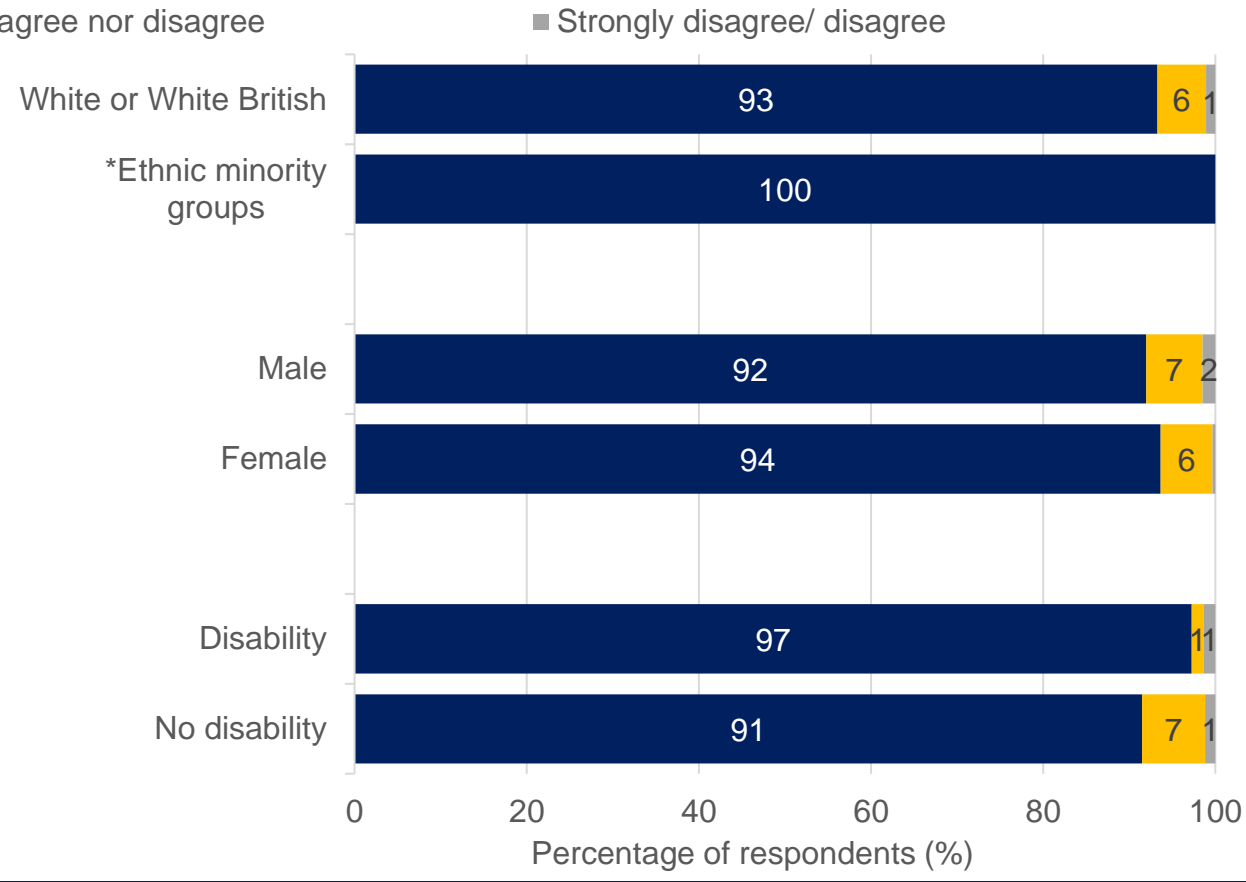
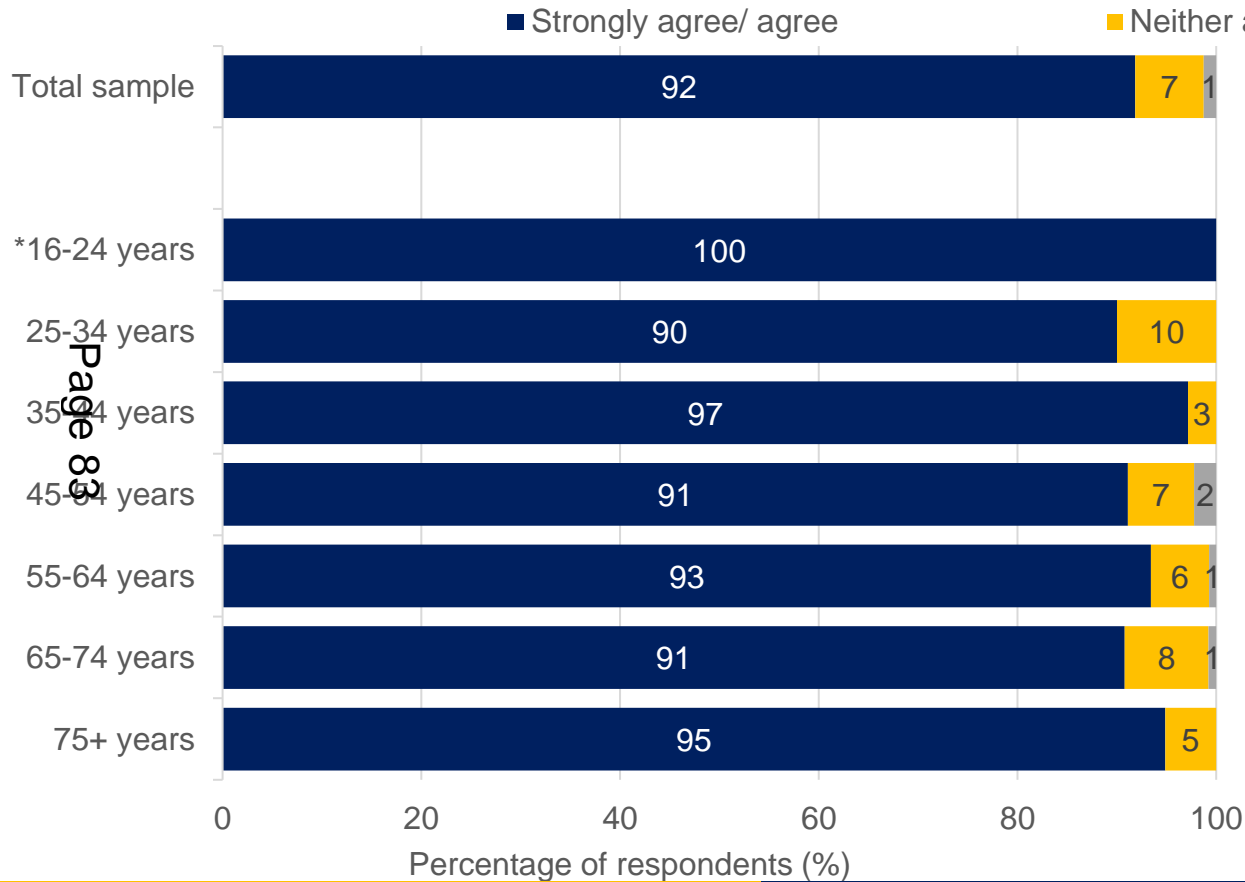


Parks as community spaces

To ensure that no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, age or disability.

Agreement levels *To ensure no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces.*

Q: ***'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle: "To ensure that no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, age or disability."?'*** | Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (638) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (460), (16*) | (199), (298) | (73), (423) *Caution small base



- The vast majority of respondents agree with the principle of ensuring no-one is excluded from parks
- This is consistent across different demographics where at least 90% of respondents from each group agree or strongly agree with this principle

Q: **'Why do you disagree with the principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (6*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle:

Not feeling that exclusion is an issue for parks and open spaces

Concerns about what it means for the environment to facilitate complete access for everyone, particularly about the physical implications for providing wheelchair access, for example

Page 84

"It is just daft. A park is a park and anyone can use it, why bring equality legislation into the debate?"

"Why would anyone object?"

"What has sex and race to do with it?"

"Because to give 100% access to all abilities may mean changing the nature of some areas i.e. Farlington, Foxes Forest."

"Complete straw man, daft principle. If a space is open, how are specific genders and ethnicities excluded? Agree on protecting access for age / disability but come on... this sounds daft."

Improvements *To ensure no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'** | Base: Total sample (638)

Key themes	%
Physical features: access measures e.g. paths, ramps and gates, maintenance	18
Ensure parks are accessible, welcoming, and safe for all	15
Supervision: parkkeepers, CCTV, community patrols, reducing anti-social behaviour	11
Play equipment: accessible for physical disabilities, appropriate for different ages	6
Provide enough and appropriate seating – benches, picnic tables, cafés	6
Engagement: inclusive events, education, and consultation with relevant groups	5
Sufficient signage: multiple languages, how to report issues, rules of open space	4
Dogs: allow in more parks (on-lead), enforce fines, restrict access	3
Toilet facilities, including accessible facilities	3
Considerations for all disabilities – visual impairments, sensory areas, quiet areas	2
Consider travel links to make accessing parks easy, particularly with active travel	2
Already doing enough in regards to inclusion	2
Other	4
<i>No relevant comment</i>	58

- The most commonly suggested improvements to ensuring no-one is excluded from parks and open spaces relates to their physical features (18%), including considering physical access measures like paths, ramps and gates, as well as maintenance (e.g. removing obstacles from paths)
- Respondents also suggest ensuring parks are generally accessible, welcoming, and safe for all (15%) and suggest improving the supervision of these spaces (11%), such as through physical presence or CCTV



Celebrating and protecting our environment

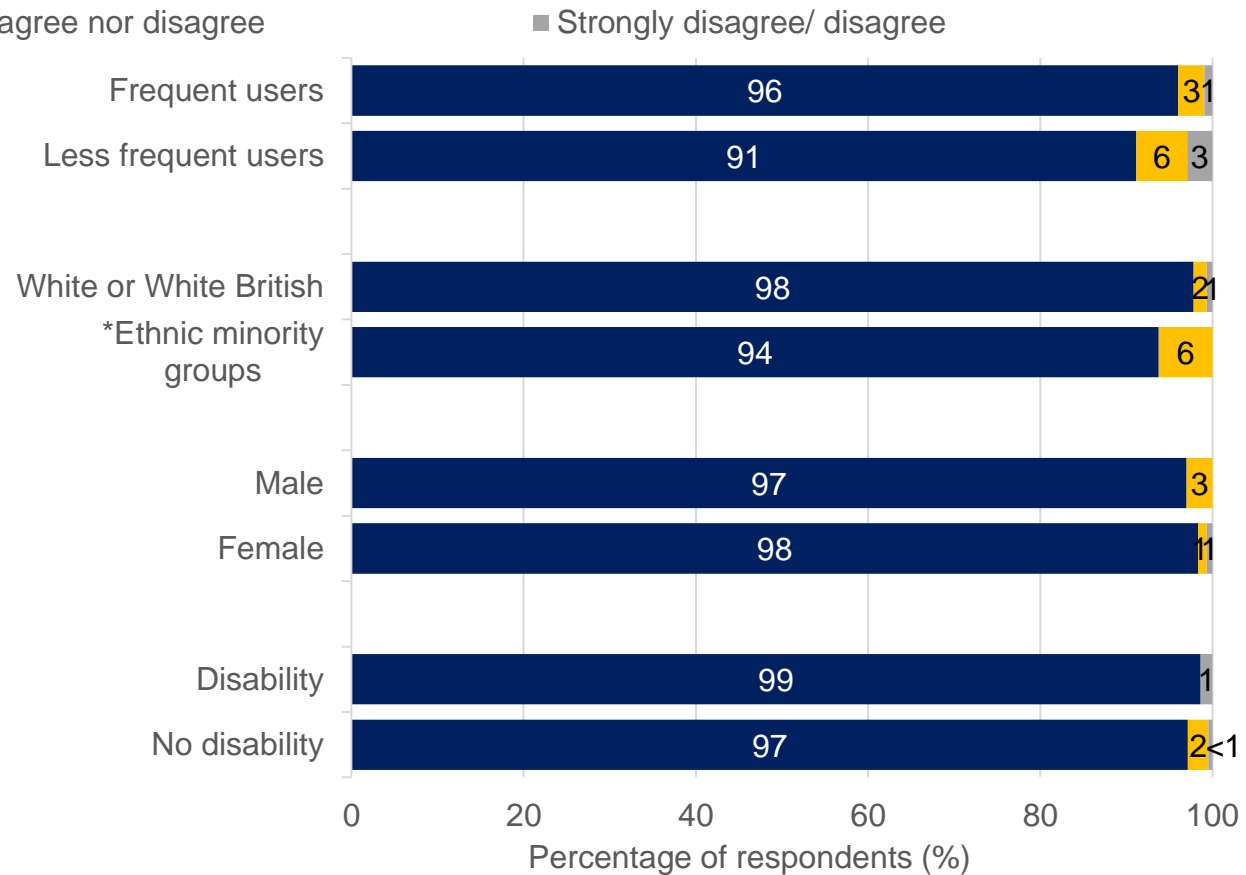
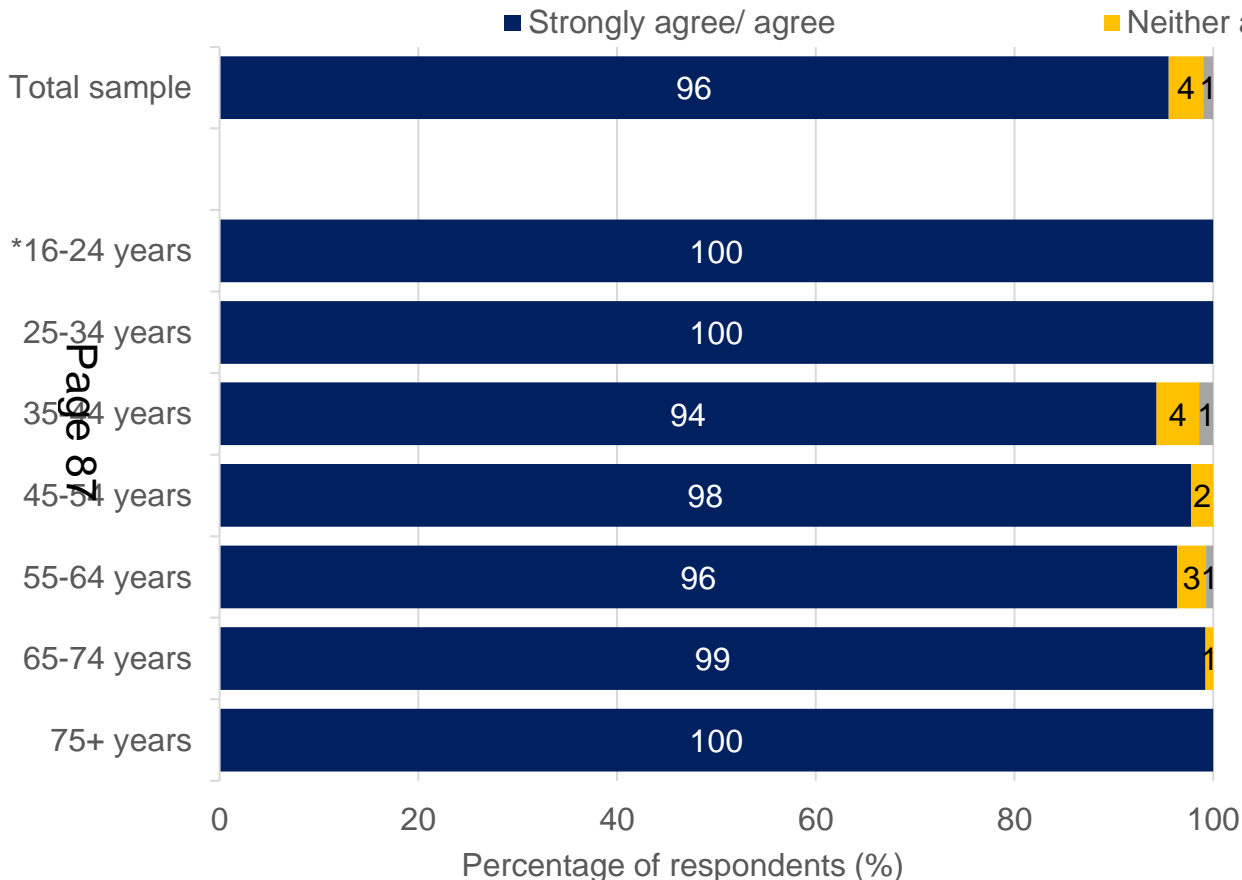
To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat.

Agreement levels *To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat.*

Q: ***'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle: "To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat."?'*** |

Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (600) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (553), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199), (298) | (73), (423)

*Caution small base



- The vast majority of respondents agree with the principle of protecting biodiversity, tree coverage and increasing wildflower habitat
- This is consistent amongst various demographic groupings, including ethnicity, sex, and disability
- A slightly higher proportion of less frequent users of parks and open (less than once a month) are undecided on, or disagree with, this principle than frequent users

Frequent users are respondents who visit parks and open spaces at least monthly.

Disagree with principle *To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat.*

Q: **'Why do you disagree with this principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (6*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle:

- Not feeling there are benefits to the everyday life of Portsmouth residents
- Concern about how this would be implemented, for example, whether maintenance of flora would be halted allowing weeds to grow in 'wildflower' areas
- Not feeling it should be a top priority
- Concern about how effective this protection would be

"Not if it's an excuse to tear out flowers and let weeds grow and call it wild flowers."

"I don't see any benefit added to the daily life."

"Due to some mindless vandals scraping off the bark of them young trees which now have cages around them."

"Your focus should be on ensuring outdoor leisure space for everyone."

"Lake Road meadow planting is beautiful but the wildflower planting on old commercial road and all saints road on the way to Charles Dickens birthplace is unsuccessful very scruffy and looks like a load of old weeds (formerly it was mown grass slope which was dull but smart). Currently the space feels less safe and like wasteland rather than the walking and cycling route to a significant landmark."

Improvements *To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and increase wildflower habitat.*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'** | Base: Total sample (600)

Key themes	%
Plant more and diverse greenery e.g. trees, shrubs including outside of green spaces	19
Plant and maintain more wildflowers	16
Improve specific and trained staffing – gardeners, parkkeepers, park wardens	14
Leave some areas wild and/or introduce no mow zones	11
Practice thoughtful planting e.g. native species, seasonal, wildlife corridors	9
Community involvement/engagement e.g. groups, projects	8
Encouraging wildlife e.g. bug hotels, bird boxes, bee friendly	8
Education e.g. through signage, schools	5
Gardeners/ groundskeepers	3
Council are currently doing a good job/ continue with current work	3
Work with specialist partner organisations to maximise impact	2
Limit use of pesticides/ weedkillers or other chemicals that may damage flora	2
Other	5
<i>No relevant comment</i>	29

- Just under a fifth of respondents would like the council to plant more and diverse greenery in these areas, including outside of green spaces
- Respondents also suggest planting and maintaining more wildflowers (16%), improving specific and trained staffing to tend to parks and open spaces (14%), or leaving some areas wild and/or introducing no mow zones to allow biodiversity to thrive (11%)



Spaces for lifelong learning

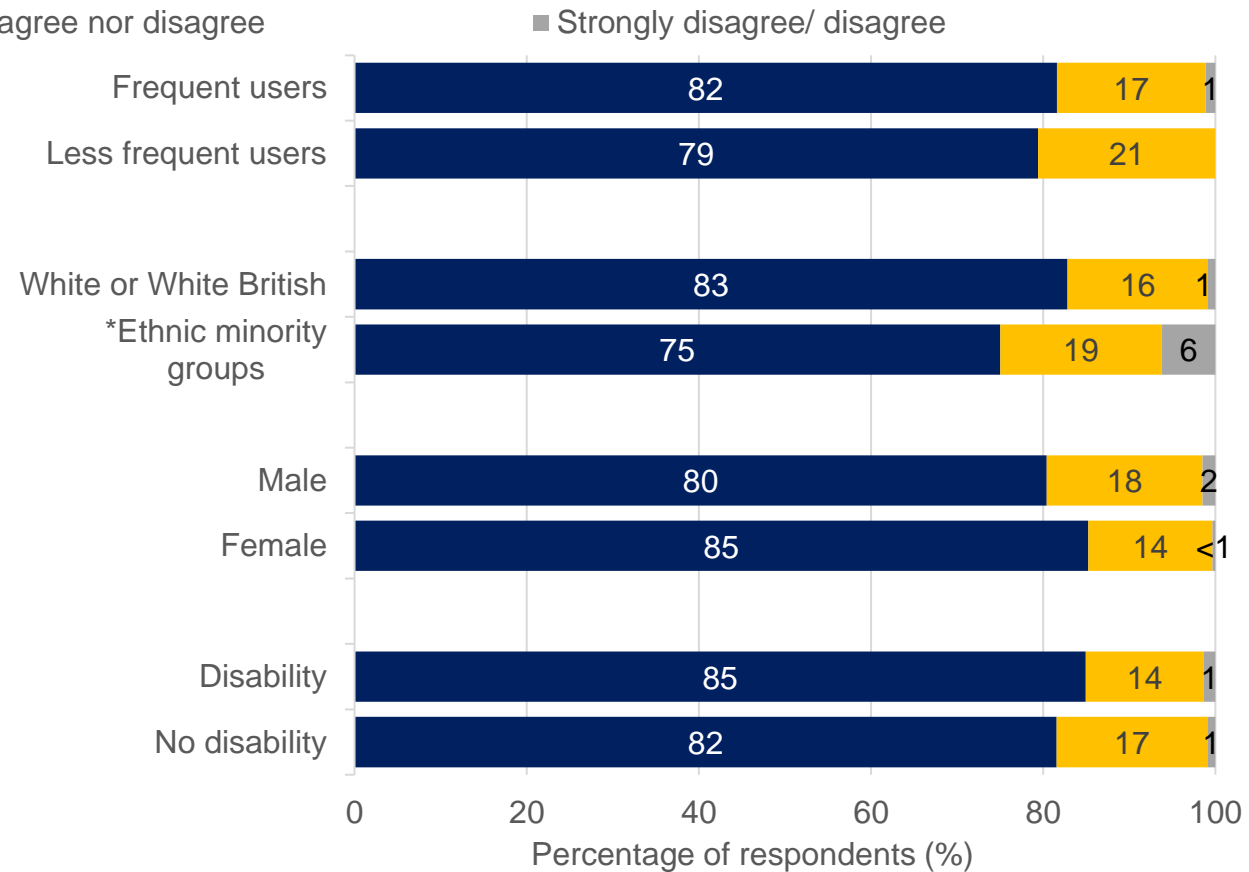
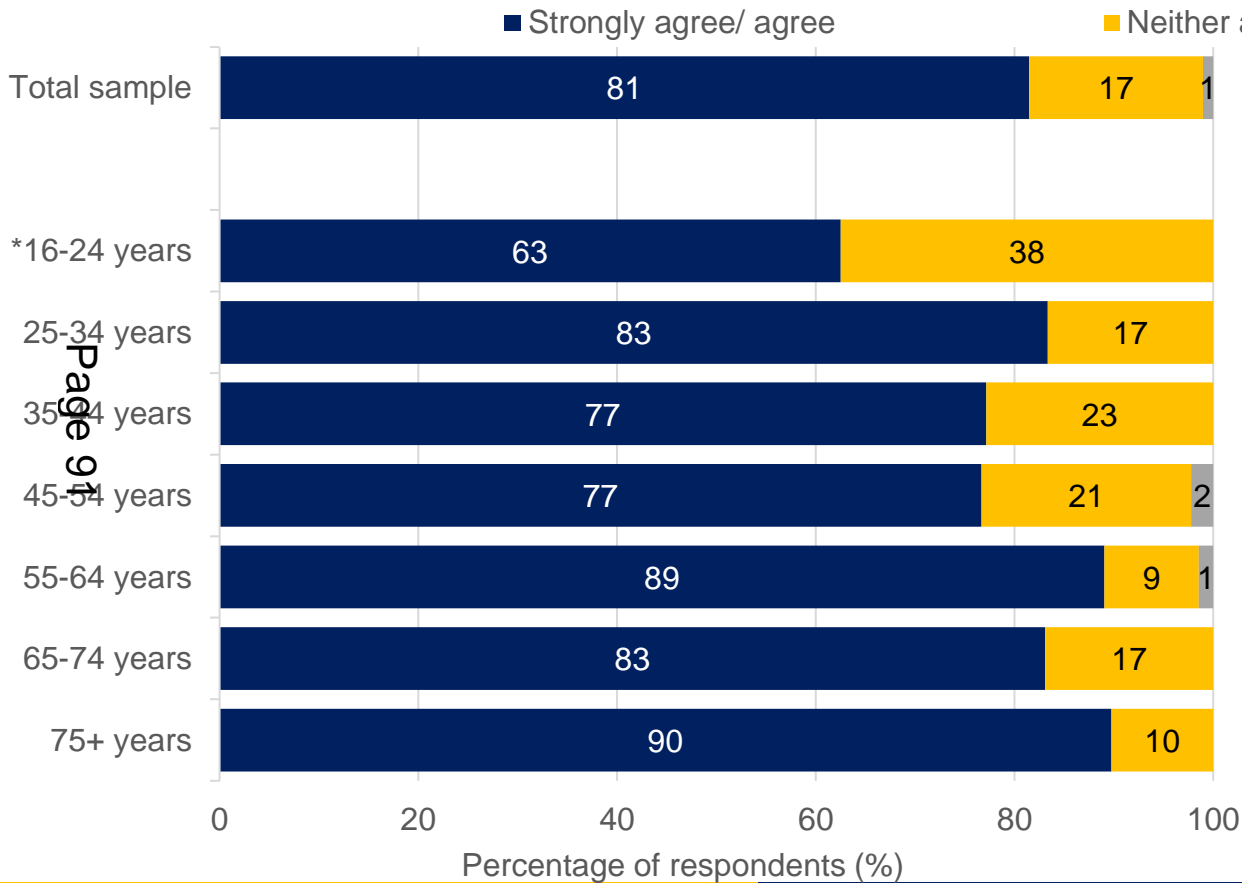
To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children.

Agreement levels *To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children.*

Q: ***'To what extent do you agree or disagree with this principle: "To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children."?'*** |

Base: Left chart, top to bottom – total sample (578) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (532), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199), (298) | (73), (423)

*Caution small base



- The majority of respondents agree with the principle of supporting Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children (81%), whilst 17% neither agree nor disagree, and 1% disagree
- This is fairly consistent amongst various demographic groups, including ethnicity, sex, and disability
- A slightly higher proportion of respondents in ethnic minority groups disagree with this principle, although there is a small base for this group

Q: **'Why do you disagree with this principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (6*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle:

Page 92

- Being unsure how it relates to the priority of 'lifelong learning'
- Not feeling it should be a spending priority
- Being unsure how opportunities would be provided for children

*"How to engage with children?
There are some communal
gardens at Canoe Lake."*

*"What has lifelong learning to
do with it?"*

*"Nothing wrong with the
concept, I just don't support it
as a spending priority."*

*"Principle is great, not sure
how you connect it to the
statement "lifelong learning". If
principle involves facilitating
community ownership and care
of open space - brilliant. Do we
really need to call it life long
learning?"*

Improvements *To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children.*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'** | Base: Total sample (578)

Key themes	%
Engage closely with children/ young people e.g. school trips, work experience	16
Better advertising/ communication about what's available and who Park Friends are	13
More green community events and volunteering initiatives e.g. litter picking, planting days	8
More park rangers/ other staff e.g. to facilitate learning, make it a safe space	6
Work with all sections of community to encourage volunteering, education, and usage	4
Community growing areas with allocated budget e.g. allotments, gardening clubs, orchards	3
Better play equipment for all ages e.g. well-maintained, wider range of sports	3
More arts/ entertainment events (amateur or professional)	3
Learning and information boards/ signs in the parks	3
Council to help with set-up of new groups/ support existing ones	3
Dedicated funding	2
Specific areas for different needs e.g. dog-free, quiet, sensory	2
Other park infrastructure e.g. groups of benches, barbecue stations, drinking water fountains	1
Other	3
<i>No relevant comment</i>	48

- Respondents suggest engaging closely with children and young people (16%) as well as better advertising and communication (13%) to support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children
- Respondents would also like more green community events and volunteering initiatives (8%), as well as more park rangers and other staff, to facilitate learning and ensure parks are a safe space for getting involved (6%)

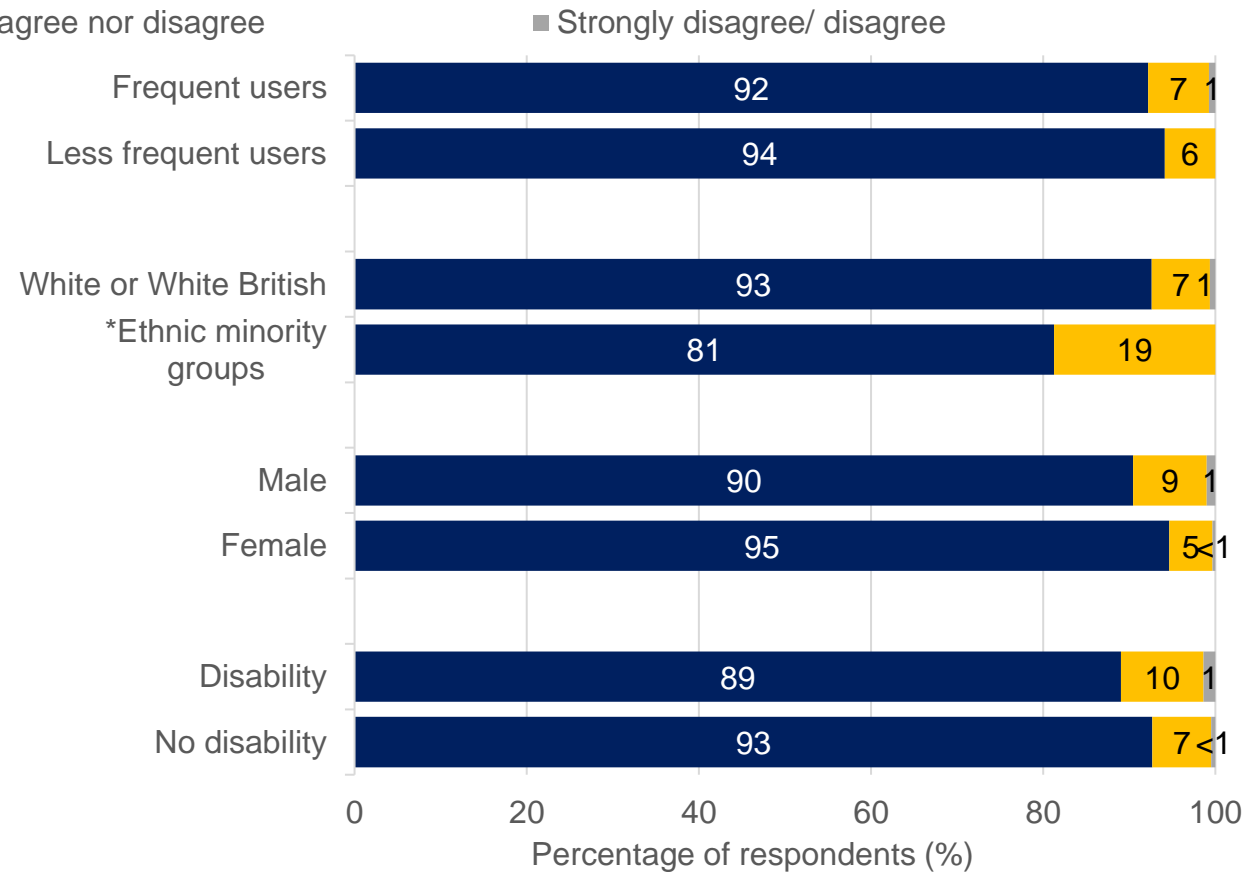
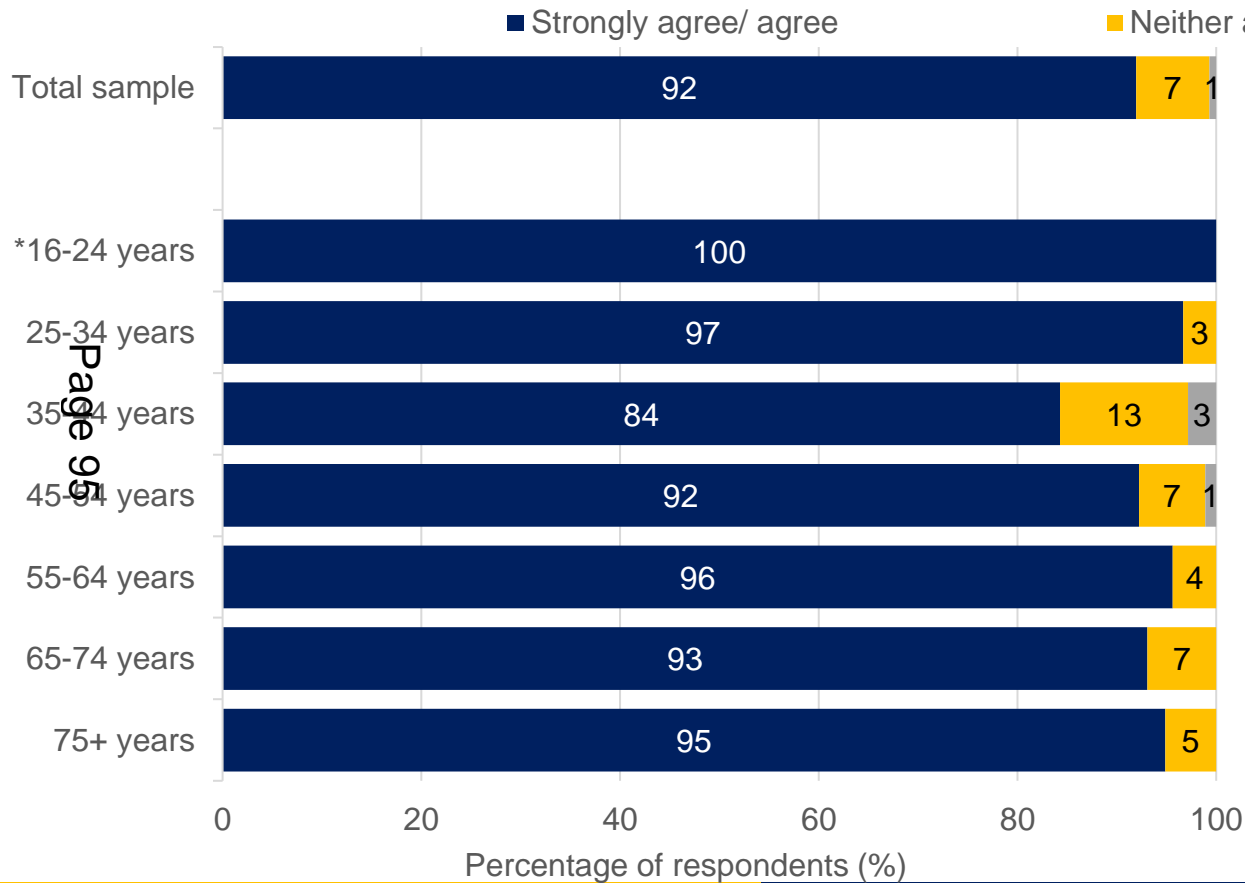


Parks for our health and wellbeing

To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna.

Agreement levels *To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna.*

Q: ***'To what extent do you agree or disagree with this principle: "To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna."?'*** | Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (571) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (525), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199), (298) | (73), (423) *Caution small base



- The majority of respondents agree with the principle of providing opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna (92%)
- This is fairly consistent across various demographic groups
- Slightly higher proportions of respondents aged 35-44 and those from ethnic minority groups are unsure on this principle or disagree with it
- Respondents who disagree with this principle feel parks and open spaces should not be used for any commercial gain associated with fitness classes, or are concerned about outdoor gyms in terms of hygiene and valuable usage

Improvements *To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna.*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area?'** | Base: Total sample (571)

Page 96

Key themes	%
More and free/affordable outdoor fitness and leisure equipment e.g. trim trails, exercise info boards, outdoor gyms	16
Improve fauna and flora e.g. more trees/flowers, diverse and thoughtful planting	9
Encourage and enable walking e.g. marked trails, guided walks, info boards, spotter sheets	7
Specific areas for different needs e.g. organised recreation, dog-free, wildlife conservation	6
Maintenance and safety – employ more parkkeepers and gardeners	6
Council supported physical exercise activities and classes e.g. Tai Chi/yoga classes, children's	6
Facilitate running and cycling/ active travel e.g. marked/ joined up routes, lanes/ tracks	5
Funding and financing (from council, gyms and PTs, exercise classes, maintenance programme)	5
More park infrastructure e.g. seating, picnic benches, litter bins, dog poo bins, drinking fountains	5
Work with community groups/ volunteers to maximise physical exercise, wellbeing and nature opportunities	4
Other e.g. more swimming options, accessibility, parking, keeping as they are	6
<i>No relevant comment</i>	39

- Respondents suggest providing more free or affordable outdoor fitness and leisure equipment to encourage outdoor fitness (16%), as well as improving the fauna and flora in open spaces for users to enjoy, such as planting more diverse and native/seasonal trees and flowers (9%)
- Respondents would also like to see walking encouraged and enabled, such as through marked trails or guided walks (7%)
- The same proportion of respondents suggest specific areas for different needs in open spaces, improving maintenance and safety through parkkeepers and gardeners, and council support physical exercise activities and classes (all 6%)

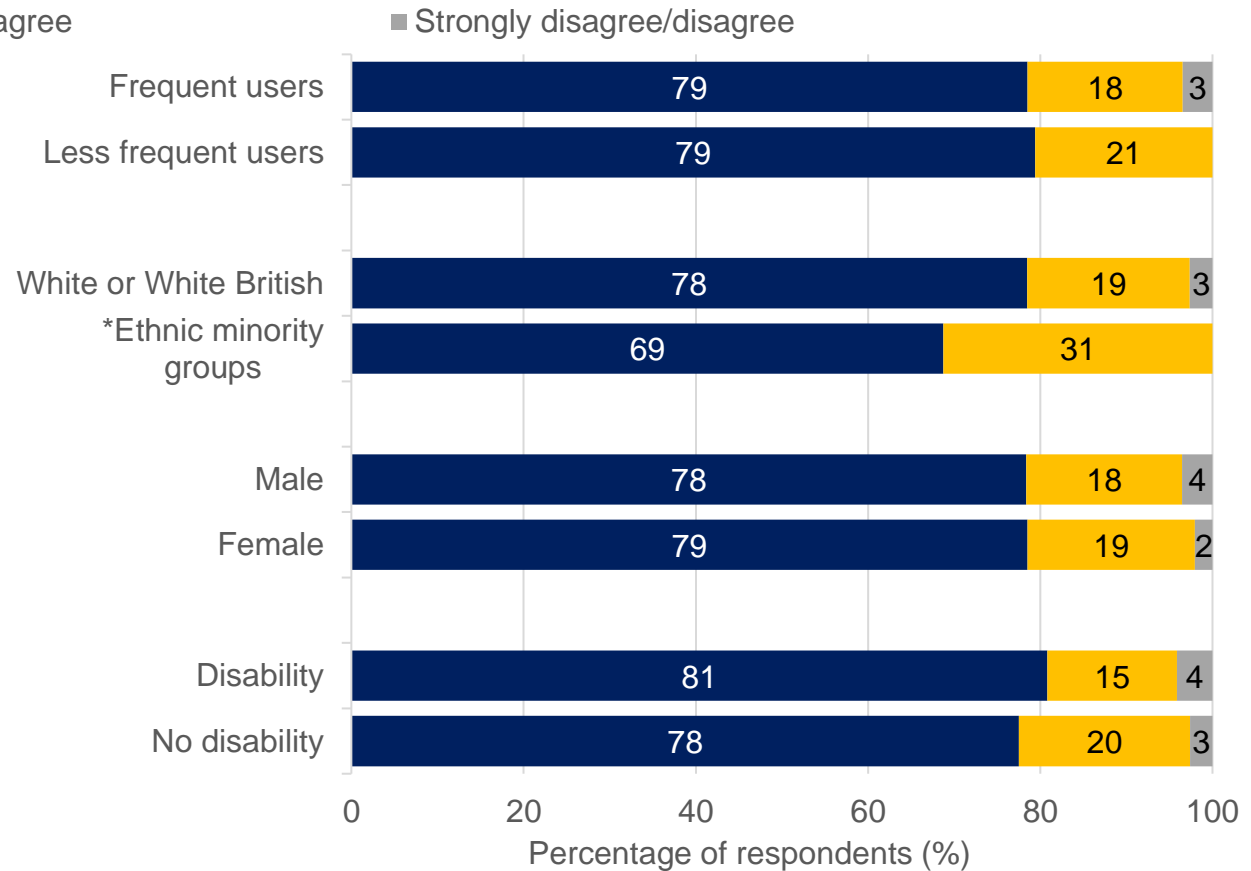
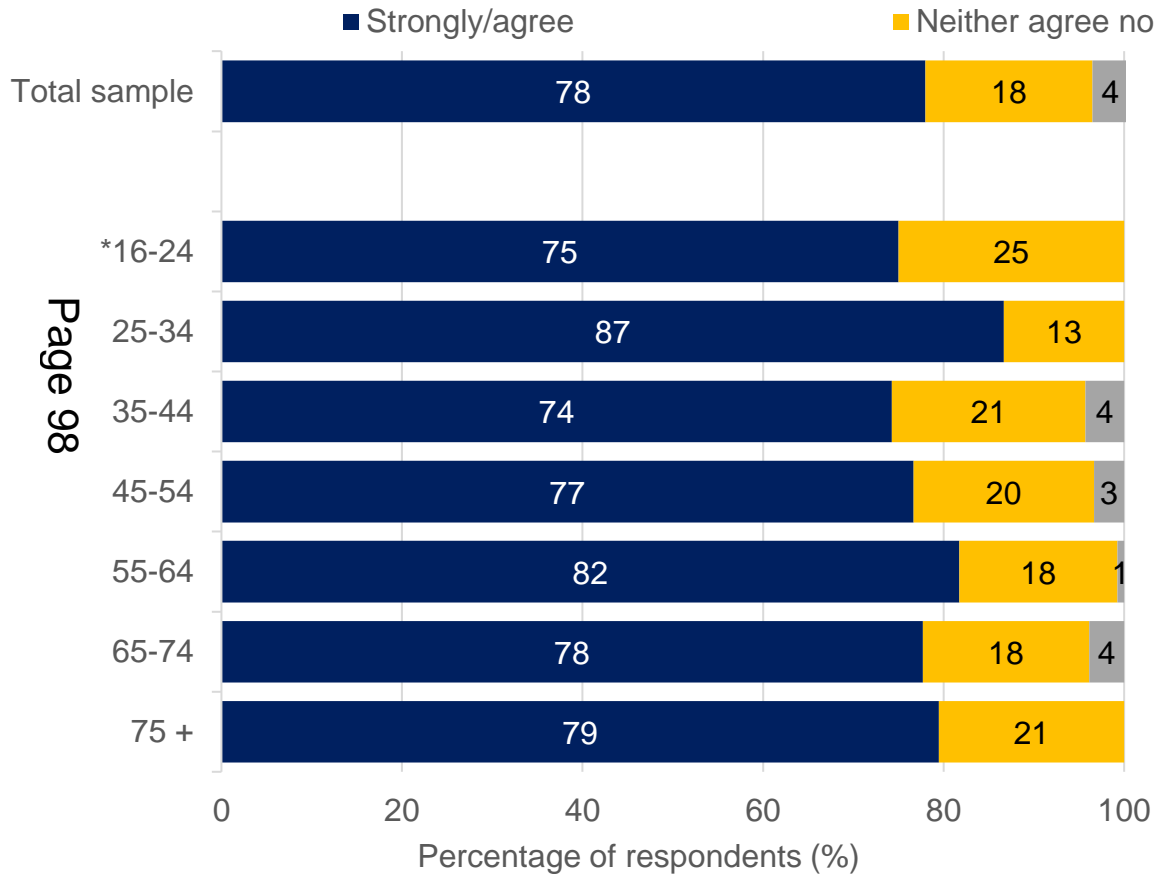


Access to parks and open spaces

To provide welcoming entrances for all users.

Agreement levels *To provide welcoming entrances for all users.*

Q: **‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with this principle: “To provide welcoming entrances for all users.”?’** | Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (568) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (522), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199) (298) | (73), (423) *Caution small base



- A majority of respondents agree with the principle ‘to provide welcoming entrances for all users’ (78%)
- Agreement levels are high across all ages but more so in those aged 25 to 34 (87%) and 55 to 64 (82%)
- Differences in agreement levels are seen between respondents of different ethnicities where ethnic minority groups are less likely to agree with this principle (9 percentage points difference) however just under a third neither agree nor disagree (31%)

Q: **'Why do you disagree with this principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (19*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle :

- Feeling it should not be a spending priority/ money should be put into the park itself rather than the entrance
- Uncertainty about what is meant by a 'welcoming entrance'
- Feeling most parks and open spaces do not actually have 'entrances' so this is not relevant to most of these areas
- Not feeling that *everyone* should be welcomed into parks e.g. those on illegal bikes or e-scooters
- Feeling that focusing on 'welcoming entrances' is overthinking the concept of accessibility

Page 99

"Don't waste money on the entrance. Put it into the park itself. You don't have to market a park!"

"Should not be a spending priority."

"Other than Ravelin Park most of the outside spaces don't exactly have 'entrances'"

"A park just needs to be accessible. It does not need any fancy entrance structure. We go there for what's inside the boundary, not how pretty the entrance is."

"What matters is people can use the space equitably. There is no requirement for wasting money on this topic, it's a distraction from what is important."

Improvements *To provide welcoming entrances for all users.*

Q: *'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'* | Base: Total sample (568)

Page 100

Key themes	%
Signage - more, different languages, maps, walking routes, rules	15
Make more accessible for users e.g. wheelchairs, pushchairs, level paths, no gates	11
Keep well maintained - working gates, clear up litter, broken glass and dog poo	8
Make entrances more visible/ inviting/ aesthetics - artistic gates, arches, sculptures	5
Safety - wardens/ community officers, tackle anti-social behaviour, dog control, fines	4
Greenery and wildlife - flower beds, shrubs, plants to encourage wildlife	4
Lighting	2
Less fencing/ enclosing parks and open spaces	2
Add facilities - car parking, seating, toilets, café	1
Work with community and groups to ensure welcoming for all	1
Other	4
<i>No relevant comment</i>	55

- To provide welcoming entrances for all users, respondents suggest maximising the use of signage, such as in different languages or including maps and walking routes (15%), as well as making entrances more accessible, for example for wheelchair and pushchair users (11%)
- Respondents also suggest keeping entrances well maintained, such as ensuring gates are working and keeping entrances clear of litter and dog poo (8%), as well as making them more visible, inviting or considering the aesthetic quality of entrances (5%)

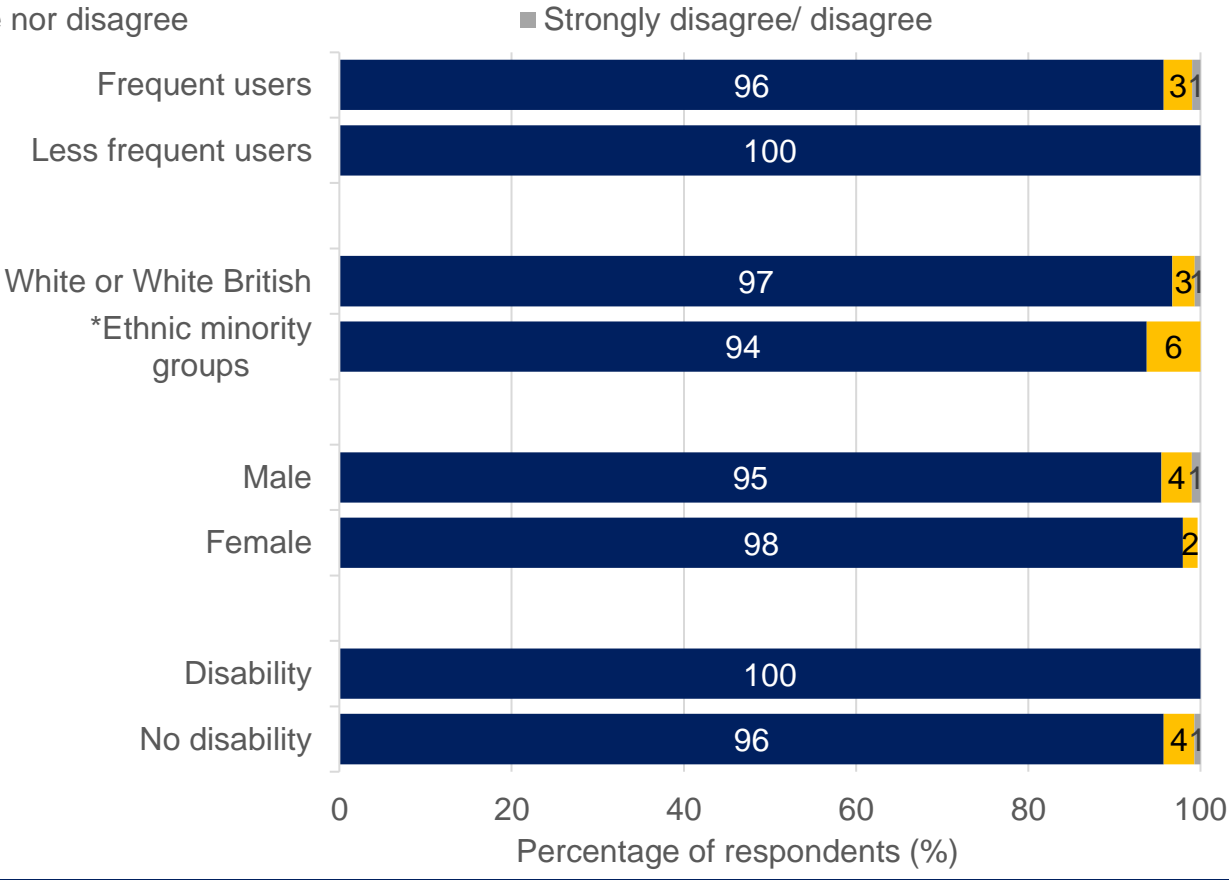
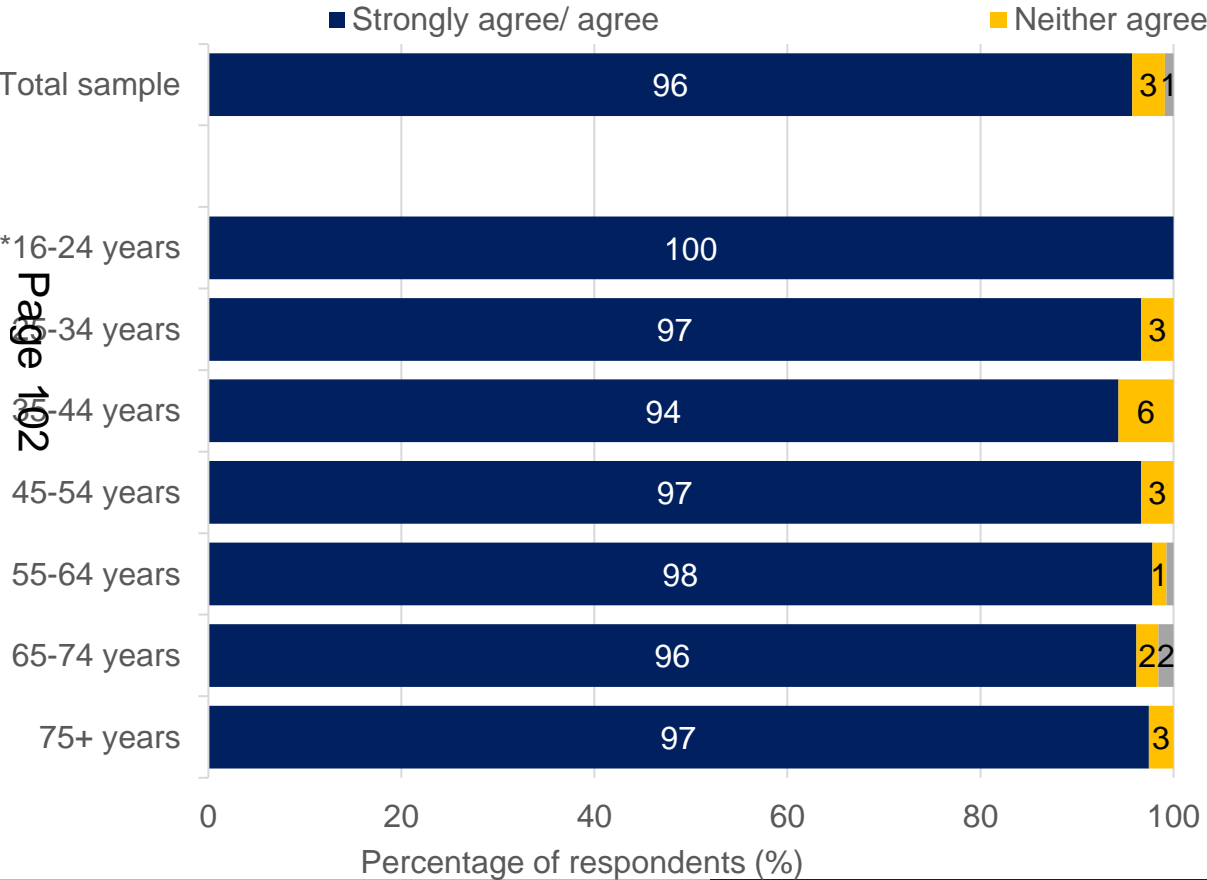


Safety within parks and open spaces

To provide safe parks facilities for all users.

Agreement levels *To provide safe parks facilities for all users.*

Q: **'To what extent do you agree or disagree with this principle: "To provide safe parks facilities for all users."?'** | Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (563) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (518), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199) (298) | (73), (423) *Caution small base



- The vast majority of respondents agree with the principle 'to provide safe parks facilities for all users' (96%)
- There is little variation in levels of agreement across all demographics

Disagree with principle *To provide safe parks facilities for all users.*

Q: **'Why do you disagree with this principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (6*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle:

- Feeling a distinction should be made between 'all users' and particular activities e.g. not for users who take part in illegal activities or anti-social behaviour in parks
- Concern about the meaning of 'safe' – if this means enclosed it could encourage anti-social behaviour
- Unsure if providing facilities like toilets is a valuable use of funds and/or feel facilities will not be clean
- Feeling parks are already safe

Page 103

"There's no point spending our money on toilets as they'll be disgusting day of opening, more recycling bins and baby changing would be great."

"For all legal activities, not all users."

"Who says parks aren't safe spaces already?"

"Safe means enclosed which encourages anti social behaviour - parks should be more flow through."

Improvements *To provide safe parks facilities for all users.*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'** | Base: Total sample (563)

Key themes	%
More staff, policing and/or park patrols on foot	35
Good lighting and visibility e.g. limit large areas of shrubs, no hidden corners	15
Crack down on anti-social behaviour - drug use, alcohol abuse, bullying	11
Maintenance – equipment/infrastructure, paths and walkways, clean and tidy	10
CCTV	6
Okay as it is/ happy with the current set-up	3
Restrict access for dogs e.g. designated off-lead areas	2
More general safety measures (unspecified)	2
Safer children's play areas e.g. gated, separate from older children, clean floor	2
Security gates and railings/ locked at night	2
Make sure cyclists/ e-scooter users are considerate of pedestrians	1
More toilets	1
Other	6
<i>No relevant comment</i>	32

- Over a third of respondents suggest having more staff, policing and/or park patrols on foot to provide safe parks facilities for all users (35%)
- Respondents would also like good lighting and visibility in parks and open spaces (15%), a crack-down on anti-social behaviour (11%), and improved maintenance of equipment/infrastructure, paths and walkways, and to ensure open spaces are clean and tidy (10%)

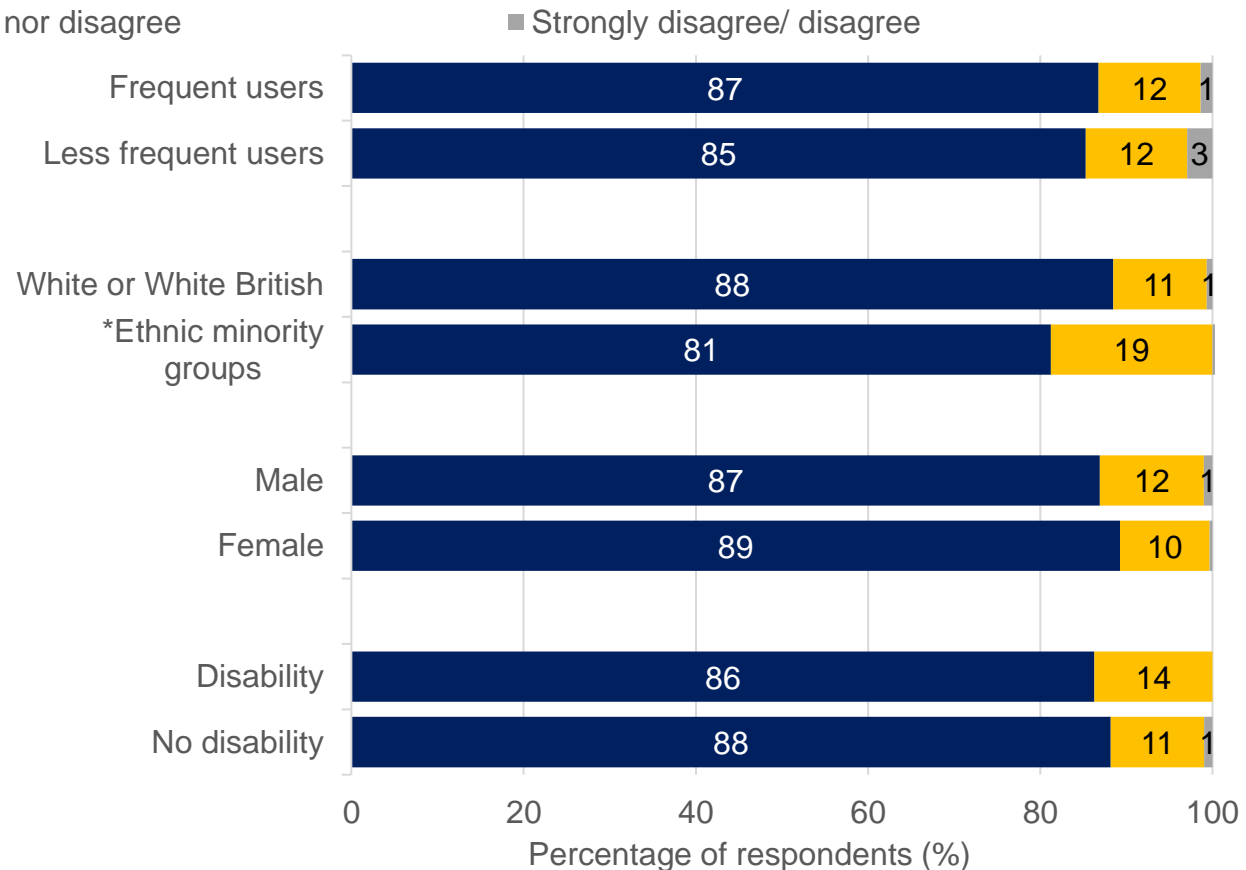
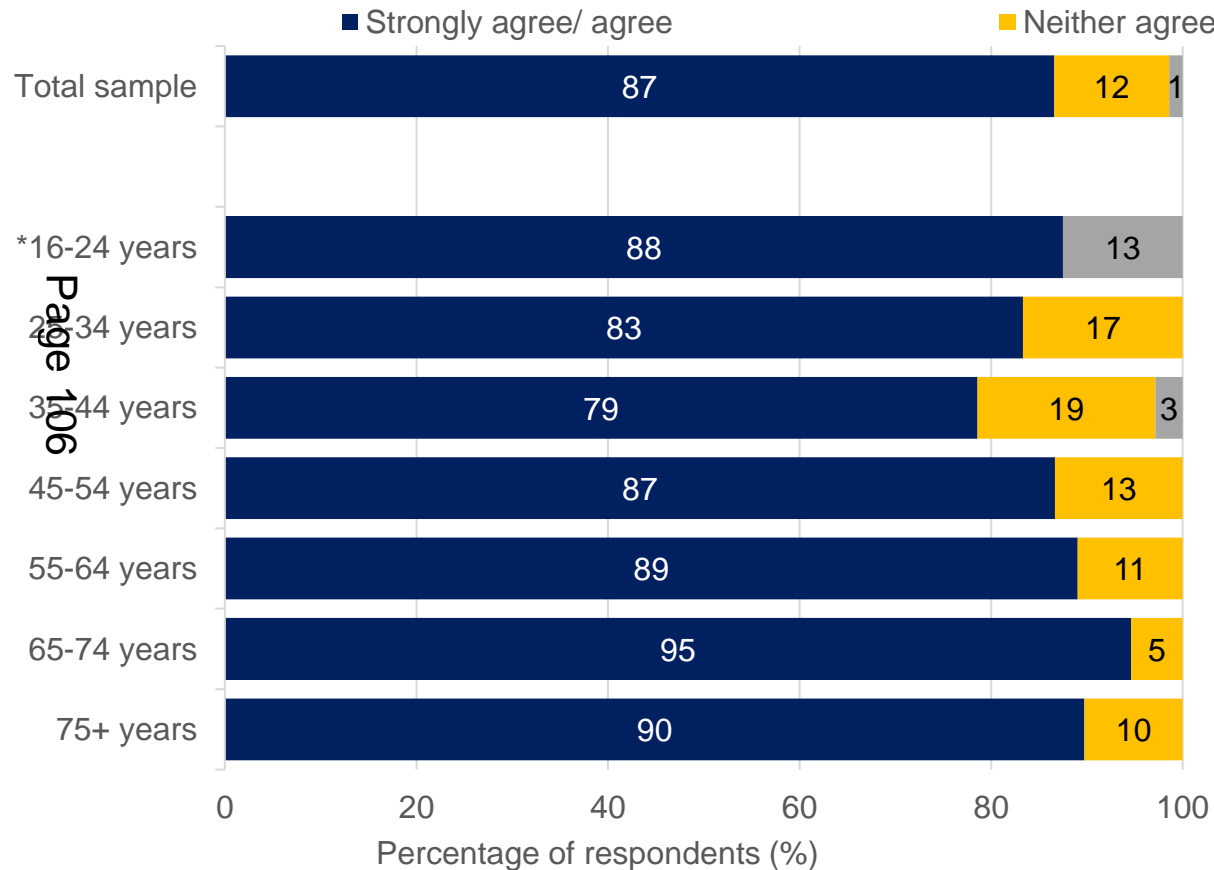


Resourcing our parks

To financially resource our parks.

Agreement levels *To financially resource our parks.*

Q: **‘To what extent do you agree or disagree with this principle: “To financially resource our parks.”?’** | Base: left chart, top to bottom – total sample (559) | (8*), (30), (70), (90), (137), (130), (39) | right chart, top to bottom (522), (34) | (460), (16*) | (199) (298) | (73), (423) *Caution small base



- 87% of respondents agree with the principle ‘to financially resource our parks’
- Older respondents are more likely to agree with this principle – 83% of 25 to 34-year-olds agree compared to 90% of over 75’s
- Ethnic minority groups are slightly less likely to agree with this principle – 81% of ethnic minority groups agree whilst 88% of White respondents agree
- There are little differences seen between other demographics

Disagree with principle *To financially resource our parks.*

Q: **'Why do you disagree with this principle?'** | Base: Respondents who disagree (5*) *Caution small base

Summary of reasons for disagreeing with this principle:

- Concern that residents will shoulder additional fees or taxes in order to finance parks and open spaces
- Feeling financial resourcing of parks should be kept within the council
- Concern that financial resourcing of parks and open spaces may impact their ability to use them e.g. charged entrance fees, restricted opening times

Page 107

"I hope this doesn't mean the council will start charging an entrance fee!"

"Keep it within the council."

"Should be open to everyone at all times. Shouldn't have to pay to go to the park."

"I find it very wrong that I have to pay for everything I do in my own town. I cannot even go to the beach without having to pay."

Improvements *To financially resource our parks.*

Q: **'How can the council help to improve things in this area ?'** | Base: Total sample (559)

Key themes	%
Assess/maximise use of current budget/ revenue from council tax	9
More funding/ investments e.g. grants, lottery, crowdfunding	8
Fundraising and income-generating events e.g. charities, donation boxes, Victorious, fairs	7
Commercial/ community group sponsorship e.g. an area of a park, playground, flower bed	6
Resources/ recognise green spaces for their benefits to physical and mental health	5
Use more volunteers	4
Reduce costs/ use services wisely e.g. less mowing, more wild areas, park wardens to give fines	3
Cafés or other food/drink outlets in parks	3
Charge for use of park for certain activities e.g. fitness/sport groups, community events	3
Already doing a good job/ generally positive	2
Higher council tax	1
Use parking revenue	1
Other	4
<i>No relevant comment</i>	61

- To financially resource parks, respondents suggest the council assess and maximise their use of the current budget/ revenue from council tax (9%), or give more funding or investments to parks (8%)
- Respondents also suggest fundraising or income-generating events such as through charities, donation boxes, or festivals and fairs like Victorious (7%)



Stakeholder feedback

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy received five substantive responses from stakeholders. These include:

PCC Transport Department

The Hampshire Countryside Access Forum

Bird Aware Solent

Natural England

PCC Public Health

Responses from stakeholders give general praise for the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, consider protected sites, wildlife and biodiversity, and encourage continued collaboration with other departments.

General praise for the Parks and Open Spaces strategy highlights the strategy as:

- Well-considered and presented
- Balanced and holistic, considering conflicting demands of Portsmouth's green and open spaces, including protected sites, sustainability, and connecting people with nature
- Informative about the city's parks and open spaces
- Striving for inclusivity, particularly regarding the key principle set out by the strategy of ensuring no-one is excluded from the city's parks and open spaces

Page 111

“Overall the strategy is very informative and contains a lot of useful information about the city’s green space and parks. It is also good to see that one of the key principles is ensuring all members of the community can enjoy the city’s green space.”

- PCC Transport Department

“We are supportive of the strategy and recognise the importance of connecting people with nature, while also balancing the management of the many protected sites and the role of nature recovery and ecological connectivity across the area.”

- Natural England

“We generally regard this as a well-considered and well-presented draft which balances the conflicting demands of local access to both natural and manicured greenspace for all members of the community with environmental and practical considerations.”

- Hampshire Countryside Access Forum

Continued collaboration with other departments is encouraged to ensure:

- Parks and open spaces and transport strategies generally support each other to achieve respective objectives and function holistically
- Accessibility is appropriately accommodated in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- To help achieve sustainability and environmental goals

Appendix 4

Parks Consultation - Management Summary

Response to key improvements arising from public consultation:

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
Community Spaces	To ensure no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces	Access measures: paths, ramps, gates, maintenance	The quality audit provides a scored assessment for access for every park and open space in the city. Improvements will be made on a project specific basis as revenue allows and these will be prioritised in accordance with audit scores.
		Ensure parks are welcoming and safe	<p>The Council will continue to offer supervised adventure playground sites at several of its spaces.</p> <p>Investment will be made to improved lighting schemes on a case by case basis, subject to financial viability. Lighting will be assessed in accordance with the issues set out in the strategy.</p> <p>Community wardens will continue to target key issues.</p> <p>External funded projects - e.g. Victoria Park - will continue to consider welcome and accessibility as part of their masterplan.</p>
		Providing supervision such as park keepers, CCTV, patrols	<p>Whilst it has not been possible for some years to resource park wardens, the Parks Service has a strong and growing volunteer base and some of our open space areas have volunteer warden networks.</p> <p>Considerations for CCTV are made on a case by case basis as revenue allows and decisions will be prioritised in accordance with audit scores.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
Celebrating and protecting our environment	To protect biodiversity, tree coverage and Increase wildflower habitat	Plant trees & shrubs including outside of green spaces	<p>The Council's Countryside team includes an officer for inner city projects, who is able to advise and scope on small project opportunities.</p> <p>The Parks Service are also represented on a cross cutting working group to deliver the Greening Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p>
		Plant and maintain more wildflowers	<p>At our Countryside sites our management plans include work to increase wildflower meadows, by adopting an annual cut regime. We have also reduced our Grounds Maintenance mowing regime for amenity spaces, to encourage wild havens and small mammals and invertebrates in turn.</p> <p>At many of our Parks we have left areas for rewilding.</p> <p>Rewilding of verges may take place where possible, provided it does not cause an obstruction to visibility for public safety.</p> <p>Our Inner City Countryside Officer has engaged with other departments to advise on wildflower friendly native planting.</p>
		Improve specific and trained staffing	<p>The Parks Service has taken on an additional two qualified Countryside Officers in the past year, who are dedicated to the management of our open spaces and other opportunities for biodiversity enhancement (see above).</p> <p>Each year, the Parks Service takes on additional grounds maintenance operatives for the high season. Staff are fully trained and there is opportunity to undertake Apprenticeship Level 2 in Horticulture/Landscape Operation.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
Lifelong learning	To support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children	Engage closely with children and young people	<p>The Parks Service offers Forest School opportunities for children and work placements for young people, such as those studying at agricultural college.</p> <p>The service works collaboratively with colleagues in the Council's Library Service and Museum Service, to hold several 'pop up' engagement days, including <i>Love Our Pollinators</i> event and <i>Coastal Celebration</i> event both with Cumberland House Museum, a stall at the Summer Reading Challenge event with Libraries and a stall at Armed Forces Day in conjunction with the Events service.</p>
		Better advertising and communication about what is available	<p>Communication is offered via various channels.</p> <p>Biodiversity education events are often held in collaboration with our natural history team, Museums (see above). Such events are promoted via the Cumberland House website events page and on associated social channels.</p> <p>Events in conjunction with Libraries are promoted via the Portsmouth Libraries social channels.</p> <p>We have a new social media channel Nature of Portsmouth on Instagram, where our countryside and biodiversity work is promoted.</p> <p>Our flagship project for Victoria Park has its own dedicated website and social media channel.</p> <p>General parks information and contact details are also found on the city council website under 'Parks, gardens and open spaces'. We will redraft our webpage to make it easier to navigate opportunities.</p>
		More green community events and volunteering initiatives	The addition of two further Countryside Officers has enabled the service to expand its community and volunteering initiatives.

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			<p>Subsequent to this, new volunteering groups have arisen, a group for conservation volunteers at Baffins Pond, one for Milton Common, one for Great Salterns and a core city wide volunteer group. Volunteering opportunities remain open.</p> <p>Regarding community events, it is intended that these continue on a co-production model with the other services referenced above.</p>
Health and wellbeing	To provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and the enjoyment of flora and fauna	More free / affordable outdoor fitness and leisure equipment	<p>The Parks Service maintain several outdoor fitness equipment stations in several parks across the city. Consideration for additional equipment stations will be subject to capital funding / CIL allocation and will be prioritised in accordance with the audit scores for parks. In recent years new and improved installations have included Cosham Park, Canoe Lake, Southsea, Drayton Park, Baffins Pond, and Alexandra Park.</p> <p>There are several sport and exercise providers who use our parks and open spaces to conduct personal training, outdoor fitness and group exercise. The Council welcome applications from new providers; applications are subject to a licensing agreement to use the land to ensure high standards of conduct, health and safety and service quality.</p>
		Improve trees, flowers and planting	See above response under Celebrating and protecting our environment.
		Encourage and enable walking through marked trails, guided walks, information boards, spotter sheets	<p>The Council offer Wellbeing Walks in conjunction with The Ramblers Association and Portsmouth walks can be found on their website.</p> <p>Other organisations offering walks in the city include Portsmouth Ramblers, Portsmouth Friends of the Earth, Hampshire and Isle of</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			<p>Wight Wildlife Trust and the Council's own Hilsea Lines and Portsdown Hill Countryside team.</p> <p>Tree trails are downloadable for Victoria Park and Milton Park and there are several links to self-guided walks on the Council website.</p> <p>The Parks Service have installed new and/or replaced several information boards across the parks estate. Most recently at Canoe Lake a new interpretation board has been installed which focuses on the swan diet and includes a self-led children's trail - this project was undertaken in co-production with Craneswater School, the local café, Cumberland House and the Mobile Library.</p> <p>Spotter sheets are available from the Countryside Team and flora to spot is also promoted via the Nature of Portsmouth Instagram site.</p> <p>The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2023-2033 also references several promoted routes in the city.</p> <p>Information regarding the above walk trails has been referenced in the strategy.</p>
Accessible and well-designed parks	To provide welcoming entrances for all users	Signage in different languages	<p>It is no longer industry practice to provide signage in different languages. With any new signage, it is usual to include QR codes, this can include language options or users can utilise translation through popular search engines.</p> <p>From an accessibility perspective, the Parks Service has recently installed an autism board at Southsea and as funding allows this may be extended to other parks in the city.</p> <p>Some services within Culture and Leisure have developed EnableAbility videos, which could be a future option for the Parks Service.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			With any of our existing walking route leaflets, the Council does offer translation on request. Portsmouth Visitor Guides are available in several languages.
		Make more accessible for users re pathways etc.	<p>With any new projects, accessibility forms part of the design proposals, to meet relevant standards and where applicable consultation feedback from stakeholders. At Victoria Park, the improvements include a new hub building and wider entrance at Bishop Crispian Way.</p> <p>Accessibility is subject to the natural topography of the open space in question. For example, Portsdown Hill may preclude unrestricted open access for all, however there are several viewpoints where individuals with mobility requirements can access clear views within the constraints of the site.</p> <p>At Hilsea Lines, recent improvements have included a radar key activated gate with bidirectional movement. Paths have also been widened and surfaced.</p>
		Keep well maintained, free of litter, broken glass and dog waste	<p>Litter is a challenge which has risen proportionately with the increase in parks usage. Considerable capital funding has been directed towards litter management, including litter bins, recycling bins and grounds operatives. The installation of wire mesh bins has proved more successful than traditional bins at some sites.</p> <p>The Parks Service is grateful to its volunteer and friend groups many of whom help with litter picking, being provided with long armed litter pickers by the Council.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			<p>Grounds operatives and community wardens make their best efforts with regard to broken glass and if residents and visitors find instances of broken glass they are encouraged to contact the Council.</p> <p>The sites audit identified that there is good provision of dog bins and at the time of the audit, dog fouling was not found to be an issue in any of the spaces, although the audit is a snapshot in time. The provision of dog control orders at particular sites within a park and dedicated dog spaces, allow provision to be made for all types of parks users.</p>
Maximising safety and Facility provision	Safe parks facilities for all users	More staff, policing and park patrols on foot	<p>The Parks Service take on additional grounds maintenance operatives for the high season who are fully trained for their roles.</p> <p>Community Wardens will continue to work with the Parks Service to target key areas for patrol.</p> <p>Regarding policing, we would suggest that residents and visitors contact the Hampshire Police Commissioner to express their desire for increased policing in Portsmouth parks.</p>
		Ensure good lighting and visibility	<p>Lighting is considered on a case by case basis as there are many issues to consider, as set out in the strategy.</p> <p>Lighting can be used to create focal points, but it can also enable dark pockets within parks and therefore placement needs to be strategically considered for individual parks.</p> <p>Artificial Light At Night ("ALAN") has many impacts on our natural world, concerning species groups that are found in our open spaces. Depending on the park in question, it can be more appropriate to light the perimeter of the park, courtesy of existing street lights, which is also more energy efficient.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			<p>With the Victoria Park renewal project, the design plan includes provision for improved lighting.</p> <p>Within revenue spend, any lighting improvements will be prioritised in accordance with audit scores.</p> <p>Visibility may be enhanced in daylight by clear pathways, identifiable entrances and exits and non-obstructed sightlines which can be achieved by good design such as the Victoria Park project.</p> <p>Clear sightlines may also be achieved by well considered planting and grounds maintenance plans.</p>
		Crack down on anti-social behaviour	<p>The Council encourages residents and visitors to contact the Community Wardens to report all issues of anti-social behaviour. There is also an online 'Report It' form which is triaged through to the correct department.</p> <p>If requiring police attention, residents and visitors can call the non-emergency line on 101 or the emergency line on 999.</p>
Resourcing our parks	To financially resource our parks	Assess / maximise use of current budget / revenue from council tax	<p>The parks and open spaces of the city are managed on a high impact low cost model, with the Parks Service revenue budget dedicated towards grounds maintenance operations, arboriculture, play areas, sports and allotment provision, buildings utilities, materials and equipment for operations.</p> <p>The majority of the staffing cohort is dedicated towards the front line to deliver operations and grounds maintenance with a very small proportion of staffing allocated to two major projects.</p> <p>Aside from the revenue budget, project funding is sourced through a capital bid process.</p>

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			Regular meetings are held throughout the year with the finance team to review, assess and evaluate revenue forecast, spend and outturn.
		More funding / investments e.g. grants, lottery, crowdfunding	<p>There are various routes that the Council pursues to fund investments to parks and open spaces (in addition to capital bid process):</p> <p>Grants: some of our countryside open spaces are funded through an Environmental Stewardship grant with Natural England. The management decisions for those sites must not conflict with the objectives of the stewardship agreement.</p> <p>Sports grants: for example working with the Footfall Foundation to secure funding for the improved public facilities and pitches at King George V playing field.</p> <p>Lottery: the Council were successful in a bid for over £2 million to the National Lottery Heritage Fund which has been accompanied by capital funding to deliver the restoration and improvement of Victoria Park.</p> <p>Crowdfunding: this route has been successful in raising £50k towards Orchard Park basketball court development.</p> <p>In addition to capital funded schemes, the strategy also references funding opportunities offered via Community Infrastructure Levy, under planning legislation, which can be (and has been) used to fund parks enhancements.</p>
		Fundraising and incoming generating events	The parks service offer a range of free events such as those mentioned above under Lifelong Learning, together with the activity programme for Victoria Park.

Theme	Principle	Improvement	Response
			<p>These events are offered free as the council is committed to providing activity at free or low cost, so that no-one is excluded from participation and opportunities are available for all.</p> <p>Where events are chargeable, the income is used to support land and event costs, such as cleansing and repairs.</p> <p>Whilst increasing ticketing for events may be considered, this could cause dissatisfaction from excluding public access to parks and open spaces.</p> <p>An opportunity for the service may be to consider an online giving page and/or mobile contactless donation devices in the future, these could be available at pop up stalls hosted by the Parks and Countryside team at the events mentioned above. This may allow an opportunity for fundraising without preventing access to public space for all.</p>

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2038



Contents

1. Foreword.....	4
2. Introduction	5
3. National and Regional Policy	6
4. Local policy and operational plans.....	6
5. Local authority stakeholders.....	7
6. The current position.....	8
7. What you told us.....	14
8. The role of parks and open spaces	17
Parks as Community spaces	17
Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment.....	20
Parks as spaces for lifelong learning	24
Parks for our health and wellbeing.....	27
9. The limitations on parks and open spaces.....	30
Access.....	30
Safety	32
Financial Resources.....	34
10. Action principles	39
11. Individual sites' plans.....	43
12. Victoria Park.....	43
13. Canoe Lake	47
14. The Seafront.....	51
15. Milton Park.....	64
16. Baffins Pond and Milton Common.....	66
17. Hilsea Linear Park.....	72
18. Portsdown Hill.....	73
19. King George V Playing Fields.....	77
20. Bransbury Park.....	78
21. Cemeteries and Allotments	80
22. Delivery and Monitoring of the strategy	83
23. Resources to fund the strategy.....	83

Appendices

Appendix 1 - National and Regional Policy

Appendix 2 - Local Policy

Appendix 3 - Operational Plans

Appendix 4 - Sites Quality Audit

Appendix 5 - Quality Audit criteria

Appendix 6 - Quantity and Accessibility

Appendix 7 - Open Space Assessment

Appendix 8 - Play Value scores

Appendix 9 - Parks survey results

1. Foreword

This strategy has been written at a time of growing recognition of the deterioration of England's natural environment and reduction in biodiversity and wildlife that has occurred in the past 70 years. The distribution of UK species has declined and this has continued over the past 10 years.¹ Growing concern led the government to declare a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, with many local councils and communities declaring likewise; Portsmouth Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019.

The Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030 indicates the importance of outdoor space for both physical and mental wellbeing outcomes.² Lifestyle choices and a lack of access to the natural environment are an important contributory factor in health outcomes. The coronavirus epidemic brought into focus the link between wellbeing and nature and we all witnessed an increased demand and desire for our city's parks and open spaces which has not abated since that time.

Portsmouth City Council is committed to protecting and maintaining the city's parks and open spaces. This document sets out the current offer, highlights the opportunities going forward and declares the key themes which will guide the future care of our parks and open spaces. Caring for our spaces has the potential to benefit all the residents of the city and promote the city to visitors, where *'spending time in the natural environment - as a resident or visitor - improves our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. It can help boost immune systems, encourage physical activity and may reduce the risk of chronic disease such as asthma. It can combat loneliness and bind communities together'*³

I commend this strategy and look forward to working with officers to implement the key principles over the course of the future, so that we can continue to offer high quality open space as part of our city's footprint.

Councillor Steve Pitt

Leader, Portfolio for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development



¹ [State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf \(nbn.org.uk\)](#)

² [health-and-wellbeing-strategy-january-2022-accessible.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [25-year-environment-plan.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2. Introduction

Recent years have seen a significant upheaval in society due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Various lockdowns and restrictions on travel have witnessed a rediscovery of the local environment. There has been an increase in biophilia, the innate desire in human beings to connect with nature and the environment, which in turn supports physical and mental wellbeing.

Greater shift in seasonal change and increasing global temperatures mean that climate change is also a higher priority both nationally and internationally. For our city, Portsmouth City Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 with an aim to be net zero by 2030. Parks and Open Spaces have a key contribution to make towards climate improvement.

The previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy covered the period 2012-2022. The strategy was comprehensive and included a consideration of all the different types of space with public access, owned by the council.

It is an appropriate time to renew the strategy, in consideration of updated policy, priorities and changing local government pressures. The strategy also considers the results of the online survey to hear from the people of the city and the results of quality audits undertaken of all the sites.

The strategy covers the period 2022 - 2038, to enable it to dovetail with the Local Plan.

National, regional and local policy supports the importance of protecting parks and open spaces and this is considered in the strategy, where applicable.

The parks and open spaces of the city are also agents of social, ecological and cultural enrichment. This is considered under several themes in the strategy which are linked to the recommended actions.



The survey undertaken as part of this strategy revealed, unsurprisingly, that 73% of respondents had visited parks and open spaces more since the pandemic. This strategy considers the current provision and future of the city's parks and open spaces and what can be done to maximise the benefits of these spaces to the city. It includes an in depth consideration of a number of sites, including a comprehensive consideration of the seafront open space. The strategy looks at what we have now as well as the journey we may take in the future, so that our city's parks and open spaces can continue to bring healthy outcomes for the city's residents.

3. National and Regional Policy

National Policy for parks and open spaces is comprised of the National Planning Policy Framework, Public Health England policy, Local Government Association, parliamentary committee and funded projects in addition to relevant legislation. The Environment Act 2021 (which became law in November 2021) comprises legislation to increase biodiversity and protect natural habitats.

The policy detail is included an appendix to this strategy.

National policy follows several themes, that parks and open spaces should:

- Promote social interaction and cohesion;
- Support healthy lifestyles;
- Promote active partnerships and community groups;
- Rethink income models;
- Promote and protect biodiversity

The Local Government Association and Department for Communities and Local Government (department name at the time) found that local government parks and open spaces budgets were under extreme pressure, whilst being of vital importance to covid recovery and wider local authority objectives.

Regional policy recognises that quality green infrastructure has a direct economic benefit to the area, recognises the importance of regional biodiversity and how nature can be harnessed to mitigate the climate crisis.

4. Local policy and operational plans

In Portsmouth, the framework for the city's development is contained in the Portsmouth Local Plan. The Local Plan is under consultation and is anticipated to be adopted in 2024, to cover a period through to 2038. The Plan includes policy for Open Space, Leisure Facilities and Green Infrastructure. Local policy is geared towards the protection of green space, (unless strictly unavoidable) due to the benefits it brings to the community, air quality and local biodiversity, together with the additional benefits where quality open space can help make the streets safer.

Local policy (via the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and Air Quality Strategy) also includes plans to develop the availability of active travel networks, thereby increasing the number of designated routes for walking and cycling through the city. Active travel both contributes to improving air quality and healthy lifestyle, as part of Energise Me Hampshire, the local cross-authority physical activity strategy.

Public Health have also piloted a 'Superzone' in an area of Portsmouth which is a place-making initiative that includes objectives towards improved green space and physical activity. The superzone includes several of the city's green spaces including Nutfield Place, Arundel Park and Landport Park.

The local operational plans for Portsmouth's parks and open spaces have a number of guiding principles, including:

- To manage the site as a quality, safe and accessible area
- To maintain and enhance the nature, value and biodiversity of the site
- To manage the site sustainably
- To promote community involvement
- To promote the site as a resource for healthy living and/or an educational resource

Further details of the local policies and and operational plans can be found in an appendix to this strategy.

5. Local authority stakeholders

The Parks and Open Spaces strategy will be shared with a number of Council directorates including:

- Public Health
- Education
- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- Regeneration
- Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings.

Whilst parks and open spaces are not directly a statutory function, the parks and open spaces strategy plays a key role in developing Portsmouth for the future. As a densely populated urban space, parks provision has direct outcomes on physical and mental health, directly correlating to the demands on statutory functions of public health, education, adult services and children's services. The green infrastructure of the city also develops the city's environmental credentials, opening up further opportunities for investment.

Many residents of the city also live in housing structures without access to private outdoor space. It is therefore essential that the city offers greenspace within the public realm.

In their 2017 report, the Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government recognised calls from across the UK for a statutory duty on local authorities to provide for and maintain parks. The report recognises that reductions in local authority budgets over the past 10 years disproportionately disadvantage discretionary services such as parks. Whilst the service remains a discretionary function, the report recognises that parks and open spaces contribute directly towards wider local authority objectives cross-cutting a number of departments which have statutory duties.



6. The current position

Portsmouth is a unique city, as a considerable expanse of the city comprises an island surrounded by water. It is therefore unable to 'extend' outwards and add further green space to what already exists. It does however have a wealth of existing spaces, of great variety. The offering of open spaces includes wildlife sites, on the edges of the city boundary, such as Portsdown Hill and Farlington Triangle. There are also sites with heritage aspects, such as Victoria Park, Fort Cumberland and Hilsa Lines. Some of the sites form part of our seafront, such as Southsea Common, Canoe Lake and Eastney Beach. There are also several well provisioned parks, including: Kingston Recreation Ground, Alexandra Park, Drayton Park and Milton Park. Larger, mixed use spaces include Milton Common, Great Salterns and King George V Playing Field. Some of the sites lean more towards quiet nature spaces, whereas other sites offer informal sport activity.

Portsmouth's parks and open spaces hold Green Flag awards at the following locations: Rock Gardens, Baffins Pond and Milton Park. The Victoria Park project (chapter 12) fully engages with Green Flag criteria and therefore aims towards a Green Flag award at the project conclusion.

Sites Quality Audit

As part of this strategy, all the sites in the city have undergone a quality audit. The audit considered the following site types:

- Principal, local and pocket parks and gardens
- Natural spaces and accessible countryside
- Amenity Green space
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Allotment sites

Principal, Local and Pocket Parks and Gardens

This includes the city's principal parks (such as Baffins Pond, Victoria Park and Canoe Lake), its local parks (such as Alexandra Park, Orchard Park and Pembroke Gardens) and its pocket parks (such as Esplanade Gardens, London Road Linear Park and Marketway Gardens).

Natural and semi-natural greenspace

These spaces include Fort Cumberland, Milton Common and Paulsgrove Chalkpit and the city's countryside sites at Farlington Marshes and Portsdown Hill.

Amenity Greenspace

This is greenspace that is designed to soften the urban fabric of an area, for example in residential areas, to provide small wildlife habitats and allow for informal leisure and recreation. Amenity greenspace should be linked wherever possible to other areas of open space by interconnected green corridors (linear verges and areas adjacent to strategic routes).

Outdoor Sports Grounds

These are included for the purpose in their use as informal outdoor spaces for recreation. They include spaces such as Anchorage Park, Bransbury Park, Great Salterns and St. Helens Playing Field.

Cemeteries and church grounds

This typology includes both the 3 main cemeteries in the city (Highland, Kingston, Milton) and the greenspaces around the churches such as Royal Garrison Church, St. Andrews Farlington and St Mary's Church.

Allotments

There are 9 allotment sites spread across the city.

Main findings from Quality Audits

Over 180 sites were audited for quality (excluding play sites which are considered separately).

The results of the quality audit score spreadsheet is included at an appendix to this strategy.

The audit scoring is affected by the different criteria:

- signage, entrances and access, inclusivity, design, health and wellbeing, safety and security, dog control, waste management, grounds maintenance, buildings, toilets, infrastructure, conservation, heritage and community involvement.

Full details of the criteria can be found in an appendix to this strategy.

As will be evident from the audit scores spreadsheet, some parks scored high in some areas and low in others, but this would be expected depending on the focus of the particular space. For example, amenity green space does not score highly on community involvement, as this criteria is more applicable for formal and semi formal public spaces.

The quality audit indicates that signage would benefit from improvement across all relevant site types.

There is a requirement for the display of contact information in the event of any issues identified by visitors, for example, particularly for principal and local parks. The audit does confirm good information available at wildlife sites and strong signage at cemeteries.

Access was found to be good across most sites. Gates are wide enough and access is clear, with entrances easy to locate. Wheelchair access was poorest at amenity sites, however due to the incidental nature of such sites, wheelchair access is not always appropriate or required. All parks were found to have sufficiently wide paths and gates for wheelchairs. The majority of the wildlife sites have radar keys for access.

Design scores vary from site to site, as the score is dependent on the variety of the planting. Cumberland Gardens is a good example of design as it has a unique sense of place as a feature garden. John Wesley Gardens is not such a good example as there is minimal consideration of planting. However, this site would score higher under different criteria; for example it has good facilities for sporting activity.

Parks scored well for health and wellbeing where they had availability for shade and shelter. Also, scores were higher where sports development activities were evident: MUGAs, tennis courts, bowls, outdoor gym, outdoor tennis tables. For example, Kingston Recreation Ground has a broad range of sports development activity on offer.

Scores were strong for safety and security where parks and spaces had open sightlines and surrounding properties. In parks and spaces where there are no surrounding properties, safety and security can be improved by CCTV and lighting, where appropriate. Some parks do have incidental lighting around the outside, courtesy of streetlights. Issues to consider regarding additional lighting are set out in chapter 9.

Control of dogs is a difficult issue as some parks are dominated by dogs. For example, on the audit of Braemar Gardens, it was found that visitors brought their dogs and chose to shut the main gates. This makes the park less welcoming; as such, some parks may be considered to have been overshadowed by professional dog walkers. Fouling however was not found to be an issue across any of the spaces, which suggests that the signage is effective and owners responsible.

The criteria for litter and waste considers bin provision, capacity and whether there is evidence of graffiti problems. During the course of the quality audit, no overflowing bins were identified and bins were easy to find. Scores were lower for pocket parks, for example Marketway Gardens did not have any bins and there was evidence of littering at the time of the audit. There were limited bins in some of the wildlife sites, but this is appropriate for the site type. In the wildlife sites, bins were appropriately out of view due to the nature of the site as an informal area. Amenity spaces scored low, but there would only be a justification for bins if there is an intention to upgrade any of these sites to parks spaces.

Grounds maintenance scored well over the variety of site types and there was no evidence of sites dominated by overgrowth, where this was not intentionally part of a rewilding scheme. Please see section on wilding in 'The role of parks and open spaces' headed 'Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment'.

Where parks and spaces had buildings on site, these scored well as they were in good condition at the time of the audit. For example, the café in Victoria Park and the buildings at the church sites were all well maintained. Where the audit revealed the buildings were in poor condition, these were sports pavilions, for example at King George V Playing Fields.

Sports pavilions are recommended as an area for future investment and current progress is set out in more detail in the sections on King George V Playing Fields and Bransbury Park.

The audit found that toilets in parks were limited, which is particularly significant for principal parks. Where there are toilets, these are in good condition and include disabled facilities, for example College Park and Kingston Recreation Ground. Some parks do not have dedicated toilets, but have toilets in the local area, for example Cumberland Gardens does have toilets in the vicinity, at Canoe Lake.

The criteria for infrastructure concerns aspects of hard landscaping, such as railings, paths and seats for example. Scores were good in many parks, however exceptions include Gatcombe House where paths and seats are in poor condition. This will be picked up as part of the annual hard landscaping inspection regime.

Where features were in existence for conservation and heritage, these were well maintained. Parks and spaces with low scores here included Gatcombe Gardens, where there is a stone folly (domed rotunda) that requires some refurbishment. There were some opportunities for designated wildlife habitats in some spaces where they would be appropriate, for example Kingston Recreation Ground is a large park with little evidence of wildlife habitat. In some parks and spaces, such as Cornwallis Crescent, wildlife areas could be better maintained should there be available resources.

Community involvement scores depend on the type of site. For example, cemeteries, by their nature, do not appeal to small children. Principal parks have more features and potential for all age ranges and groups. Ideally, to improve community involvement, all principal parks in the city would benefit from friends groups, where possible. Several local parks have capacity to address features for children, however, in many cases these are already near existing parks with good provision for children. For example, Clarendon Gardens does not have facilities for children but is very near to Wimbledon Park which is well equipped.

Allotment scores were lower where there were only grass site paths in evidence, (such as Knowsley Road and Stamshaw and Tipner) as this would affect public access. Across all allotment sites, signage scored low as there was considerable scope for improvement, such as site maps, which were absent from the majority of sites. This may be developed through collaborative working with Allotment Associations.

Hampshire Gardens Trust also undertook a quality survey of 18 urban parks in Portsmouth in 2021/2022 and the results of this exercise were positive. Further information on this survey is contained in the Regional Policy Appendix.

Sites Play Value Assessment

'Play Value' is understood as the extent to which play spaces offer open-ended and stimulating play experience for children and young people.⁴

Over 110 sites were assessed for Play Value in autumn 2022 by an independent inspector. This is in addition to the continuous fortnightly review cycle by the Council's in house RPII Operational Play Inspectors and an annual independent RPII safety inspection against playground standards.

The results of the play value assessment are included at an appendix to this strategy.

⁴ [Play value - RoSPA](#)

Each space is allocated a site type label.

Site Label	Definition	Number of sites
Door step sites	Spaces within sight of home; catered particularly towards young children	33
Local sites	Larger spaces that can safely be reached by children independently without accompanying adults	62
Neighbourhood sites	Large facilities for informal recreation for children and young people; include a wider range of play experiences	16

The play value results confirm the site type label for each space and scores them for toddler, junior and senior/young person play. Doorstep sites can be expected to show good scores for toddler play and neighbourhood sites can be expected to show good scores for all three types of provision.

The majority of **neighbourhood sites** (13 out of 16) showed high scores (over 20), indicating that there is good provision in the city. The highest scoring neighbourhood sites were Hobby Close and Kingston Park. Both these sites have had recent investment with the majority of funding coming from Big Local. In Kingston Park in 2018 the play area was completely refurbished and renewed following local consultation exercises with the residents. The designs and equipment were chosen with the local community following extensive consultation. The total project cost was £300,000. A similar process was carried out at Hobby Close in 2021 with the final result being a totally refurbished play area and provision of a new concrete skate area. The total project cost was £550,000. The high play value scores following both of these projects demonstrate how capital investment in play areas can make a real improvement to children's lives.

The neighbourhood sites with low scores that may be focussed on for future investment are Bransbury Park, Buckland Park and Knowsley Road. Bransbury Park is undergoing feasibility for a new development (see section 20) and investment in the neighbourhood play site may be considered as part of this development. Buckland Park scored low on disabled inclusion and imaginative play. Knowsley Road scored low on age variety play needs, movement and natural environment play.

The majority of **local sites** (43 out of 62) reflected scores (12 and above) illustrating provision for toddlers and juniors. The local sites with the top three scores are Allaway Avenue, Milton Park and Tunstall Road. All three of these sites scored well on play needs for different ages.

Local sites with the lowest scores which may be a focus for future investment are Binsteed Road, Church Road and Claremont Road. Binsteed Road scored low on movement, which is an important part of exploratory play (see below). Church Road and Claremont Road both scored low on provision for ball games.

Regarding **doorstep sites**, (24 out of 33) reflected scores of 6 and above, suggesting good provision for toddlers. The highest scoring sites were Denmead House and Privett House. Denmead House scored well as it has a unique ball games area as part of the site and Privett House also scored for ball games provision.

Doorstep sites with lowest scores include Providence Place, Boxgrove House and Bournemouth House. These sites had low scores for toddlers in terms of movement and play value.

The identified elements in the play assessment scores will provide the direction of future investment in these play spaces. The Play Safety Forum identifies that when designing play spaces, a balance should be made between risk and benefit. It is important that fear of litigation does not detract from the design of dynamic play spaces. High value play provision offers children the opportunity to engage with risk as part of a controlled learning environment. This is no different to other leisure activity for children, for example in football and other child sports which are perceived as positive to child development and incur a greater risk of injury than that of playground participation.⁵

New installations in the city's play spaces therefore seek to increase play value through dynamic equipment that engages the child to take decisions, for example on balance and movement. Where design seeks to eliminate risk, children and young people will seek out risks elsewhere in uncontrolled environments. Without challenge, children and young people seek alternative stimulation which can lead to vandalism of equipment and anti-social behaviour.

The Council aims to increase play value in all open access play areas as often as budgets allow, further developing and improving sites where possible.

Sites Quantity and Accessibility Audit

A review of quantity and accessibility was last undertaken in 2018 and a copy of this audit is appended to this strategy. *Quantity* considers how much green space is available in the city and *accessibility* considers the walking distance to a type of open space. Summary findings are set out below, with details of the assessment appended to this strategy.

The quantity and accessibility is assessed under the same headings as for the quality audit. The review findings are as follows:

Typology	Key finding based on population numbers	Comment
Amenity greenspace	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - shortfall in Cosham, city centre north and central south	New development must provide for amenity greenspace and green travel options
Public parks and gardens	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - good - population falls within catchment	
Natural and semi natural greenspace	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given

⁵ [mrpp-position-statement-2021.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)

Typology	Key finding based on population numbers	Comment
		to improve quality of existing space
	Accessibility - good - population falls within catchment	
Allotments	Quantity shortfall	Difficult to increase due to city's geography; priority given to improve by introducing community gardening
	Accessibility - shortfall in south-west and north-east corner of city	
Cemeteries and churchyards	Quantity - not applicable	No quantitative standard as outdoor space is secondary purpose of this typology
	Accessibility - not applicable	No accessibility standard as outdoor space is secondary purpose of this typology
Outdoor sports grounds	Quantity - not applicable	No quantitative standard as primary use is for formal sports activity
	Accessibility - not applicable	No accessibility standard as primary use is for formal sports activity

7. What you told us

As part of this strategy, public consultation has taken place online and in person.

Focussed Events: A Parks Conversation

Two focussed events were held at the north and south of the city, in the city's libraries. Both events were publicised on the library social media feeds and community boards.

The objective of the focussed events was to undertake brainstorming with members of the public, find out what they love about the city's parks and what changes and improvements they would like to see.

Cosham Library Event

The Cosham Library Parks Conversation was held on 12 January 2022. The results of the conversation can be summarised in the below wordcloud:



The following themes and priorities became apparent during the conversation:

- Safe play equipment, accessible to all users;
- The swings, monkey bars and freedom to play football was important to children;
- The parks are well looked after, it is good to see the shrubs neat & trimmed;
- Parks are important so that I can exercise, especially since the pandemic;
- The Council must protect its open spaces;
- More signage would be helpful to alert pedestrians regarding cyclists/ cycleways;
- Littering was mentioned as a problem on Portsdown Hill

Favourite parks in the north of the city were identified as Drayton Park and Portsdown Hill. Although Farlington Marshes was enjoyed as a space for wildlife, in terms of peace and calm users found that they were disturbed at that location by traffic noise, therefore Portsdown Hill was preferred as a natural open space.

Users also mentioned how clean and well looked after the parks were and a common response was *'keep doing what you are doing'*.

Southsea Library Event

The Southsea Library Parks Conversation was held on 19 January 2022. The results of the conversation can be summarised in the below wordcloud:



The following themes and priorities became apparent during the conversation:

- The importance of parks as the 'city's lungs' and their contribution to environment sustainability and climate care;
- The importance of spaces as opportunities for walking and exercise, especially since the pandemic;
- Some respondents were worried about space being built on;
- Parks and open spaces were mentioned as improving positive mental health;
- It was important to aim parks at different ages, some for young children - for play, some for teenagers - to hang out;
- Key parks such as Canoe Lake Park and Victoria Park should be promoted - updated signage;
- Enjoyment of trees, birds and animals in the parks;
- Concern expressed about financial pressures on Parks - bring back Park Rangers;
- The ability to enjoy photography in Parks and possibility of a photography group.

One respondent made a particular point about mental health:

'Without Portsmouth's parks, we'd all be on anti-depressants'

Favourite parks in the south of the city were identified as Milton Park, Southsea Common, Victoria Park, Canoe Lake Park, Rock Gardens and Wimbledon Park.

Online survey

A Parks and Open Spaces residents survey was held between 8 October and 24 November 2021. 1330 responses were received to the survey. The survey comprised 7 questions. Full results are found in an appendix to this strategy.

The survey found that the majority of respondents were now visiting parks and open spaces more than before the pandemic, highlighting their importance to the city. Respondents thought that the main focus for Portsmouth's parks and open spaces should be as green havens: to protect biodiversity and wildlife. The most popular reasons for using parks and open spaces were found to be enjoying a quiet space and visiting nature. This aligns with the focus of parks as green havens and is supported by the other reasons given for visiting parks, which included birdwatching, photography and wildlife observation, mental health and mindfulness. The wheeled sports community also expressed their desire for using the parks as did dog walkers.

The main reason identified from the survey as discouragement from using parks and open spaces was inadequate toilet facilities. As identified in the quality audit, consideration needs to be given whether capital budget can be allocated to provide further toilet facilities in all principal parks. Competing users was also identified as a cause for not using parks; consideration needs to be given to dog designation.

The most popular improvements identified for parks were planting, wildlife habitats and cleanliness. The quality audit did not find extensive evidence of dog fouling, which would suggest that cleanliness refers to general littering, which is constantly monitored by the council's parks and cleansing teams.

In terms of investment, the most popular responses were bins and dog bins, sensory gardens, seating areas and café/concessions. The quality audit found good provision of bins and dog bins, however perception may be affected by usage at particular times of the year. Sensory gardens and seating align with the focus of parks as green spaces and quiet havens. Children's play areas were also ranked as an important area to continue to maintain and invest in.

The most popular parks as selected by respondents were Canoe Lake, Castle Field and Southsea Common.

The majority of survey respondents (35%) came from the Milton and Eastney area, were female and spread across the age ranges. Most were White British and 12% confirmed that they had a disability.

8. The role of parks and open spaces

Research into policy and parks across the UK shows that local authority parks and open spaces have a number of distinct roles. These are:

- Parks as community spaces
- Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment
- Parks as spaces for lifelong learning
- Parks for our health and wellbeing

Parks as Community spaces

The Diversity Review by the Countryside Agency⁶ has considered underrepresentation and barriers to different communities to access to public open space. The review concluded that several factors needed to be considered in parks and open space design.

People with disabilities may feel that they have limited use regarding the city's parks.

⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/63060>

Research referenced in the Diversity Review has suggested that people with mobility restrictions have a preference for wooded areas over wide open spaces. However, either landscape would be preferable where unimpeded motion was available - smooth and unobstructed pathways are important.

Cultural factors may prevent some minority ethnic groups from using the city's parks.⁷ Some communities may be more disposed than others to use outdoor space, due to cultural background or dress codes. Certain groups may feel alienated from the landscape which may be perceived as 'white landscape'. There may be a lack of appropriate activities for particular cultural groups. Groups may fear for their personal safety and have concern about verbal abuse.

Young people have high participation in parks as children but the transition to adulthood is known to reduce use by this cohort. This can be caused by a frustration at not being included in design decisions for spaces and/or negative experiences when young.



Gender can also play a factor. The Diversity Review noted that countryside use is significantly higher for men than women. Women, particularly from ethnic minority groups, feared being alone, particularly in woodland areas.

All different communities therefore need to be considered, when changes are implemented, so that opportunities are available for them to use their local parks and open spaces.

Parks and open spaces provide an opportunity for Men's Sheds communities⁸. These communities are an opportunity for practical interests to be pursued, things made and repaired and skills developed. They provide an opportunity for social connections to be developed, rather than solitary pursuit.

⁷ <https://www.futureoflondon.org.uk/2020/10/20/parks-and-green-space-does-everyone-feel-welcome/>

⁸ <https://menssheds.org.uk/>

Men's Sheds often get involved in community projects such as the maintenance of parks and green spaces. They are also sometimes engaged to help young offenders in the community. There are Men's Sheds in Portsmouth at Drayton, Portsea and Southsea.



The **Commons Select Committee for Communities and Local Government** reported in 2017 that **community groups** may have conflicting demands for the use of parks. Events, particularly in the summer season, are key income generators for Parks budgets, however this could create a nuisance for local communities, cause disruption and damage to the Park. The requirement for events must, whilst establishing exclusive use for an event, continue to allow general access at certain times of the day. On the other hand, greenspace has a part to play in bringing communities together over shared objectives and building a sense of local pride.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Under-representation by minority ethnic groups, particularly women	Engage with communities, community focussed events
	Make safety a priority
Ease of access for those with mobility challenges	Ensure pathways meet suitable design and quality standards
Young people's engagement	Work with Friends Groups to engage young people in open spaces; continued development of use of spaces with Community Engagement Officers
Reduce social isolation amongst men	Engage with Men's Sheds Association.

Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment

As an island city, Portsmouth has a limited number of natural open spaces. As set out in the policy section, these are protected to enable them to support several different habitats and species.

Urban green space in the city has a key role to play in mitigating **climate change**. Exposure to pollutants can be significantly reduced through strategically placed green infrastructure, which includes the correct species of plant and enables barriers and distance between the source of pollution and individuals. This can be assisted by urban greening schemes and wildlife friendly landscaping, such as restricting the mowing of urban pockets of green space and encouraging wildflower seeding between the months of March/April until August/September. The Grounds Maintenance team have different mowing plans depending on the location and type of grass and mowing has decreased from 16 mows annually to between 9 and 12 for amenity spaces to 1 or 2 cuts per year where wild havens are being encouraged. The wildflower growth, in turn, encourages small mammals and invertebrates.

Where it is possible to rewild verges and /or create green corridors, this must be undertaken with a view to public safety. For example, at traffic junctions, edges require mowing to prevent any obstruction to visibility, but central pockets may be left for rewilding.

Where rewilding is an option in parkland, the area can be left for rewilding and paths mown through for access and enjoyment.

Greenspace also mitigates **noise pollution**, through absorption and dispersal of sound. It also refocuses attention away from urban noise.

Cities have concentrated areas of tarmac and asphalt together with heat produced by heating to buildings and from cars. In comparison to rural areas, higher temperatures in urban areas are known as the **urban heat island effect**. The impact of heat exposure increases risk of illness to the population. Green space has a strong association with heat reduction, providing much needed shade and associated cooling effects from water and wind.⁹

Mitigation of the urban heat island effect is possible through landscape softening, such as depaving schemes. In addition to softening the landscape, incorporating sustainable drainage designs and depaving can assist with flood management and climate enhancement. Leaving small unpaved areas as part of street layout changes was referenced in the Biodiversity Enhancement Scrutiny Report which was formally considered at Scrutiny Panel on 22 March 2022¹⁰.

Trees are an essential component to climate mitigation by helping flood prevention, reducing air temperatures, reducing pollution by absorption of carbon and contributing to a nutrient rich soil. The Council inspects trees regularly and only removes them when they present a risk to public safety or property, are dying or diseased, or are required to be removed to meet a development objective in line with planning policy.¹¹ There is also a commitment to replacement of trees to prevent net loss. The Council encourages residents to inform the Council of proposed planting, water trees planted near private property, suggest new sites for tree planting and report any damaged trees.

⁹ [Improving access to greenspace 2020 review.pdf](#)

¹⁰ [Agenda for Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 22nd March, 2022, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

¹¹ [Greening%20Portsmouth%20Strategy%20appendix.pdf](#)

As part of the 'Queen's Canopy: Plant a tree for Jubilee' campaign, the Council is supporting legacy planting in the city in 2022.¹²

The government launched Urban Tree Challenge Fund Round 4 in Spring 2022¹³. This is an avenue for capital funding for urban tree planting. The grant is based on Forestry Commission standard costs, where the Fund will cover 50% of these costs, provided the council can match fund the other 50%.

Trees for Cities is a UK charity and not for profit company which aims to plant thousands of urban trees worldwide each year to help fight climate change. Trees for Cities will compile a block bid for this fund, including submission from Portsmouth. This will be for the planting season winter 2022/23 and winter 2023/24.



Regarding tree planting, great care is taken. Strimmer guards are used unless a protective cage is fitted. Mulch is also used to suppress 'weed'¹⁴ and grass growth in the immediate planting area of the tree. Mulch also assists with moisture retention to help the trees become established.

¹² [Queens%20Platinum%20Jubilee%20Report.pdf](#)

¹³ [Urban Tree Challenge Fund application form round 4 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ 'Weeds or 'weed', where used in the strategy, refers to any plant growing where it is not wanted or considered undesirable.

Sustainability is an important part of climate and environment care. The Parks Service have several decarbonising measures including:

- Operational work schedules follow routes to minimise travel and fuel emissions whilst carrying out required activities. Operatives are instructed not to leave engines idling whilst stationary
- Species rich grassland is subject to a reduced maintenance regime
- Fleet vehicles being replaced by electric vehicles at lease renewal where this is feasible
- Bicycles are available for grounds maintenance staff
- Battery powered tools are replacing petrol powered options for grounds maintenance
- 90% of tree arisings generated are recycled for biofuel for woodchip for landscape use
- Green waste is gathered, stored and collected by a local company (for a fee) who operate an Environment Agency permitted site for compost production.

Pesticide Use

The increased interest and usage of open spaces as a result of the pandemic has brought further debate around environmental concerns and biodiversity, including how open spaces are managed and maintained. This includes the work by organisations such as Pesticide Action Network UK <https://www.pan-uk.org/> which aims to reduce use of pesticides and eliminate where possible. Council policy, as set out in a report to Cabinet (22 March 2022) is to restrict pesticide use to a minimum and integrate pesticide free solutions such as mulching, overplanting and reduced mowing.

The Council's limited use of pesticides is guided by several factors:

- Herbicide is only used to control 'weed' on hard surfaces where road users visibility is affected, drainage is impacted or 'weeds' on pavements create a trip/slip hazard.
- Selective herbicides are used for 'weed' control on fine turf and sports areas, to maintain a safe and level playing surface. Fungicides are only used to prevent and remove fungus on high quality surfaces such as golf greens.
- Council staff involved in the use of pesticides work to the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012. This legislation imposes a number of requirements on users, including minimal and controlled use as appropriate.

To minimise use, the Council undertakes alternatives to the use of pesticides including the use of 'weed' suppressants (e.g. mulching of shrub beds and use of recycled wood chip) and overplanting to reduce opportunity for 'weed' growth.

Several factors affect the elimination of use of pesticides, including:

- Exposure to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) from the use of hand-held power tools which might be used for mechanical 'weed' removal
- The environmental benefits of pesticide free solutions may be outweighed by the increased use of fossil fuels and emissions from machine use.
- The Parks Service (and other Council services) have limited resources to transfer to various alternatives.¹⁵

At a Council meeting on 19 July 2022¹⁶, the Council resolved further action with regard to pesticides and agreed to:

- Commission further trials of a range of non-chemical and mechanical alternatives to weed treatment;
- Involve local communities in becoming a pesticide-free city by inviting residents to take part in alternative methods of weed management
- Deliver a phased withdrawal from the use of all pesticides over a period of three years



¹⁵

<https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s37325/Use%20of%20Pesticides%20on%20City%20Council%20Land.pdf>

¹⁶ [Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022, 2.10 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Increase biodiversity across the city	Implementation of the wildlife spaces management plans recommendations
Wildflower planting and 'no mow'	Reseeding of grassed areas as pollinator friendly corridors and relaxed mowing regimes across the city's open spaces
Increase tree coverage	Plant new trees in parks and open spaces in accordance with tree replacement programme. Submit bids to national Tree Funds where available / applicable.
Encourage residents regarding greening opportunities	Waterfront Garden Centre - provision of plants at low cost
Bring green waste recycling in house	Seek capital investment for green waste recycling plant via Council capital bid process (implementation subject to approved bid)
Use of pesticide alternatives	Continue to work towards minimal use of pesticides and pesticide phased withdrawal over 3 years
Consideration of secondary or low use Solent Wader and Brent Geese sites	To be considered within ongoing wildlife management plans for sites.

Parks as spaces for lifelong learning

Green and outdoor spaces are ideally placed as an education resource for the benefit of all ages.

The city's parks and greenspaces are an ideal resource for the city's schools and children. They provide direct experience with nature and motivation to explore in a health promoting, physically active way. There is potential for these spaces to close the educational achievement gap between communities, where some communities do not have access to private green space. There is an opportunity to bring environmental concerns into education programmes. This is particularly relevant with regard to Forest Schools. By focussing learning in a woodland or natural environment, the forest school enables the learner to develop a lifelong relationship with the natural world and develop a connection with the community environment. In a densely populated city such as Portsmouth, the city's parks and green spaces can also offer children a sense of place, self-identity and belonging as a remedy to hard urban spaces.

Opportunities continue beyond compulsory education. With the reductions in Parks Service budget there is an opportunity to bring in young people on a placement basis through the government's Kickstart programme.¹⁷ This scheme commenced in autumn 2020 through to the final application deadline in December 2021. It offered six month job placements to young people at risk of long-term unemployment. Individuals had to be 16-24 years old and in receipt of Universal Credit.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

The scheme gave an opportunity to those not in current employment to be engaged learning skills and gaining experience.

The Parks Service was able to utilise the Kickstart Scheme. Two Kickstarts were placed in Grounds Maintenance for a six months' placement in May 2021 and subsequently, due to the experience they gained, were given the opportunity to apply for Horticulture Apprenticeships and seasonal Grounds Maintenance operative positions.



Such schemes may assist Parks Services to develop a workforce with the requisite skills. Nationally there is a skills gap in horticultural skills and green space management and there cannot be a reliance on casual untrained staff. The use of modern apprenticeships can be used to meet this gap, where the Kickstart Scheme was an interim measure.

The Council offers an Apprenticeship Level 2 in Horticulture/Landscape Operation.¹⁸ This apprenticeship covers planning and maintaining large gardens, parks and other green spaces. The course includes soft landscape skills such as the establishment and maintenance of plants and cultivated areas, plant propagation and plant growth.

Work is undertaken outdoors throughout the year. The apprentices learn practical tasks together with specialist skills. This includes learning how to use a wide range of machinery and tools relevant to the role and applicable health and safety legislation, policy and procedure.

¹⁸ <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/horticulture-or-landscape-operative-v1-0>

The course also includes learning about the industry - the benefits of green space and the different types of horticultural skills dependent on the setting. It also considers environmental sustainability and best practice.

The Parks Service is also able to provide for voluntary placements and volunteering opportunities. Many of the open spaces in Portsmouth already have Friends Groups which provide an ideal opportunity for people across communities to work together for a common goal. Volunteering might include those who have no access to private outdoor space. Work placements enable new skills to be learnt and increases employability for disenfranchised groups.



The Council's Countryside Officers have a great depth of knowledge that could be used to advise communities on planting desires and greening initiatives. Additional funding into this team could help increase the availability of resource to educate and inform land management choices.

In terms of lifelong learning, the open spaces of the city can be used for nature walking trails. Signage is important both in a traditional style and in digital format. Digital technology can enable further information to be accessed beyond the content of the physical signage. This enables information to be updated sustainably.

Through partnership working, there is opportunity for parks and open spaces to have 'pop up' education opportunities or hubs. This may be via the Mobile Library Service or in Parks with adjacent suitable buildings, such as Canoe Lake park which is adjacent to Cumberland House Museum.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Maximise usage of the city's parks and green spaces by local schools	Make contact with local schools to encourage greater community involvement; Cross Service involvement with Education Service
Provide voluntary opportunities and work placements	Kickstart Scheme Friends and Community Groups for Parks
Learning opportunities via information points.	Improved positive signage and information about plants and ecosystems.
Maximise opportunities for environmental education	In conjunction with the Education Service, to develop new programmes of environmental education
Developing a skilled workforce	Using apprenticeship models for recruitment practices.
Development of educational hubs	Pop up learning hubs and shared services between Parks, Museums and Libraries.

Parks for our health and wellbeing

The Public Health England report considered earlier in this strategy identifies the primary value of parks and open spaces in improving health outcomes, both in terms of physical health and mental health. This was highlighted during the pandemic when Portsmouth's parks and open spaces saw more activity and use than prior to the introduction of lockdowns.¹⁹ Google mobility data at that time showed that the city's parks and open spaces remained busier than before the pandemic even when social distancing measures were relaxed.

Mental health benefits of green space include improved emotional wellbeing and reduced stress, reduced depression, anxiety and fatigue. The community benefits of greenspace provide mitigation to social isolation which can be a contributory factor to the above mental health conditions. A sense of connection with nature can enable a broader and more balanced mental outlook.

¹⁹ [How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature? - Office for National Statistics](#)



The importance of reducing social isolation and increasing community cohesion are evident through the government's decision to appoint a Minister for Loneliness, particularly following the Covid pandemic and lockdown periods.²⁰ Research by the Scientific Reports journal also found that when people were able to see trees or hear birds, feelings of loneliness fell by 28% and contact with nature reduced feelings of loneliness by 18%.²¹ This is understood to be because natural places in cities enhance attachment to a place and provide an opportunity for social interaction.

Green spaces in urban settings provide places for people to come together to engage in social activities, enable connection between communities, including between minority groups contributing to improved mental health outcomes by increasing social cohesion and belonging.

The natural environment is also able to provide for sensory environments; different types of planting and scented trails can enable people to interact with nature. This is a growing area of interest; green bathing or forest bathing is a form of ecotherapy which credits the benefit of spending time in green spaces to human health. The NHS have updated their advice on social prescribing to include green prescribing. Green social prescribing will link individuals under NHS care to nature-based interventions and activities which might include walking for health groups and community gardening projects.²² This includes a £4 million investment by the government (under Environment Secretary George Eustace) to the NHS and Sport England to embed green social prescribing into communities to improve health outcomes. Public Health and Parks will be working more closely together to develop green social prescribing models and referral pathways.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/loneliness-minister-its-more-important-than-ever-to-take-action>

²¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-03398-2>

²² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/>

To that end, Public Health has already met with social prescribers based in general practice and are in the process of initiating a project which does develop green social prescribing models and referral pathways in collaboration with health partners.

The city's parks and open spaces provide an ideal environment for outdoor fitness. This can take the form of outdoor exercise classes which became more popular during the pandemic due to the issues concerning indoor air circulation. The city continues to accommodate outdoor fitness classes and outdoor fitness equipment at several parks.

There are shared routes for walking and cycling journeys through green spaces, for example at Victoria Park, Bransbury Park and Hilsea Lines, enabling active travel connections between different parts of the city as provided for on Pedal Portsmouth online²³. The Parks Service recognises the commonalities with the Portsmouth Transport Strategy 2021-2038 in working towards sustainable travel and travel between spaces through the increasing network of micromobility hubs (such as bicycle and e-scooter stands). Additionally, it may be possible to provide measured miles routes as part of the Portsmouth Transport Strategy. Measured miles provide for both independent and organised walking, cycling and jogging routes.



To encompass the demographics of the city, other types of exercise may also be catered for in the city's open spaces, such as yoga and tai chi.

Contemporary exercise models need to be inclusive for all social groups. There is opportunity in the city's open spaces to include activities such as PramActive or BuggyFit. These classes provide both an opportunity for exercise, develop social networks and improve mood.

The city's natural open spaces provide an idyllic environment for trail walking.

²³ [Pedal Portsmouth walking and cycling map](#)

Tree trails are available for Victoria Park and Milton Park and there are several links to self-guided walks on the Council website. Spotter sheets are available from the Parks Countryside team and flora to spot is also promoted via the Nature of Portsmouth Instagram site. The Council offer Wellbeing Walks in conjunction with The Ramblers Association and Portsmouth walks can be found on their website. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Portsmouth 2023-2033 also references several promoted routes in the city.

Other local organisations offering walks include Portsmouth Ramblers, Portsmouth Friends of the Earth and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, in addition to the Council's own Hilsea Lines and Portsdown Hill Countryside team.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Providing opportunities for green social prescribing initiatives	Partnership with Public Health to assess opportunities within services
Alternative outdoor fitness initiatives - yoga, tai chi	Explore with local providers as per current fitness trainer delivery model
Measured miles for walking and cycling routes	To be progressed as part of the Portsmouth Transport Strategy
Active Travel	Engagement with Transport to consider active travel opportunities (whether by foot, public transport or micro-mobility options)

9. The limitations on parks and open spaces

Research into policy and parks across the UK shows several limitations constraining the opportunities for parks and open spaces. These are:

- Access
- Safety
- Financial resources

Access

Access to greenspace is not equal for everyone. Some residents will need to travel further than others to access their nearest green space. Individuals on low incomes and with inadequate green space may experience 'green deprivation'. This was exacerbated by the pandemic lockdowns. Inability to access a local green space may have an effect on health outcomes caused by reduced physical activity and mental health strain.

The Quantity Assessment considers access in the city regarding each typology (chapter 6).

Access to green space is directly affected by planning policy. The Local Plan provides for urban centre greening on the west side of the city where there is less green infrastructure. This means that where planning applications are submitted within the urban greening areas, an assessment will be undertaken to compare green infrastructure pre and post development.

Green infrastructure is central to development design and must include attractive routes for walking and cycling. Portsmouth's Transport Strategy 2021-2038 notes that traffic free cycle routes and high quality walking routes are required to reduce traffic in the city and contribute to improved air quality. The Parks Strategy can assist in this development by providing linear natural infrastructure, such as trees and plants to link up green and open spaces to form green networks. These green networks provide both opportunities for active travel and habitats for urban wildlife.

As an island city Portsmouth is limited in terms of its ability to create more green space. Where it is not possible to create further green space, qualitative improvements should be made to existing spaces. This might include improvements to access such as better quality footpaths and improved entrance points to parks.

The government's National Disability Strategy²⁴ includes widening access to outdoor space. It identifies that individuals with health conditions are 25% less likely to have enjoyed nature and the strategy refers to the investment by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to support green social prescribing initiatives (see section on Health and Wellbeing). It also highlights the need for opportunities for disabled children to access inclusive play space. The new National Model Design Code published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in 2021 includes planning and design considerations for local planning authorities to emphasise the importance of providing accessible and inclusive play spaces.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Green active travel options	Development of green corridors to provide traffic free cycle routes and high quality walking routes.
Inclusive facilities for all	Mobility access improvements. Subject to planning, development of inclusive play spaces.

²⁴ <https://disabilityunit.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/28/leisure-national-disability-strategy-explained/>



Safety

Anti-social behaviour is an unfortunate problem in parks and open spaces. This can include vandalism to facilities which discourages use, together with graffiti, flyposting, flytipping and alcohol / substance use.

Play facilities in parks and open spaces need to cater for both young children and teenagers. Young adults need environments for social spaces, including protection from bad weather. There is also a demand for wheeled community use, this can be either outdoor or indoor provision.

Play areas for children are best provided in formal park settings, where there is a higher level of management and there are adjacent facilities such as toilets, clear paths and entrances, seating and access to public transport. Play spaces can build into sustainable design, taking into account the historic and natural environment.

Dog fouling exists nationally although it is an offence to leave dog mess on the ground in a public place. Whilst most dog owners are responsible, the problem is created by a minority. It is desirable to provide adequate dog bins for owners to dispose of waste. The majority of the city's open space allows owners to exercise their dog off-lead, aside from areas designated for play and sport or where wildfowl may be disturbed and collectively offer a wide range of opportunities for owners.

Pembroke Park provides a secure training area for owners who do not yet have confidence in their ability to call back their dog, before being let off lead in designated off lead areas elsewhere.

Safety can be both an issue of direct impact and that of perception. Perception of safety is enhanced where users can clearly see around them and identify focal points. It can be affected by poor lighting and visibility, confusing layout, physical isolation, concealed areas and poor maintenance.²⁵

²⁵ <https://www.pps.org/article/what-role-can-design-play-in-creating-safer-parks>

These factors may be considered when restoring existing parks spaces, such as Victoria Park and mitigations can be made in circumstances where complete redesign is not possible within existing budget frameworks.

People feel safer in parks where there are opportunities for informal surveillance. Whilst it is no longer possible to resource Park Wardens, Community Wardens are available to target particular issues such as anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, dog nuisance, littering and graffiti.

Visibility needs to be considered for public parks spaces and can be enhanced by clear pathways, identifiable entrances and exits and non-obstructed sightlines. Lighting can emphasise pathways and focal points and may be co-ordinated with signage.

When determining whether lighting is appropriate, several factors should be considered. In some instances, lighting can attract anti-social behaviour by increasing the hours of use after dusk, or by creating separate dark pockets adjacent to a lit space if poorly designed or inadequately lit. Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) has many negative impacts on the natural world, such as:

- disturbing flight trajectories of migratory birds;
- affecting the breeding of glow worms;
- disrupting the feeding patterns of bats;
- changing the times of birds' singing patterns;
- disorientating moths and nocturnal flying birds.

Portsmouth has all these groups in our open spaces. Different parts of the light spectrum are more disruptive than others - short wavelength (UV, blue, green) is less wildlife friendly than long wavelength light (orange, red, infra-red).²⁶

Additional lighting also increases energy use and overall maintenance costs and is therefore often most appropriate around the perimeter of the park, courtesy of existing street lit routes, although may be through a park if serving as the primary pedestrian route. There is an inherent paradox in parks design. Whilst visibility is important, natural landscape such as wildflower meadows, shrubbery and wooded areas are also valued. In such natural areas, potential safety concerns can be mitigated by clear signage and layouts.

Signage may be used to encourage pride in a park and open space rather than to solely impose restrictions. Maps may be used (at each entry point) to illustrate the parks layout and facilities.

Whilst barbeques may be incorporated as part of the facilities on offer, they must be planned in such a way that does not affect the amenity of the park or open space. The city provides several dedicated barbeque zones on Southsea Common which include open space and bin provision.

²⁶ [Garden lighting: effects on wildlife / RHS Gardening](#)

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Development of natural play spaces	Play spaces designed using natural materials; rocks, tree stumps, trees
Minimise conflict between dog walking areas and spaces for formal and informal recreation	Dog free spaces / dedicated dog spaces
Safety as inherent in parks design and remodelling	Clear layouts and pathways underpinned by grounds maintenance programmes. Strategically positioned lighting, where appropriate Clear positive signage
Toilet provision	Subject to capital funding, improved toilet facilities where buildings are already in existence and therefore no loss of open space.

Financial Resources

The austerity programme since 2010 has impacted the Parks Service particularly hard. National public policy lacks a long term financial and political commitment to parks and green space provision. There is no 'golden age' for public park provision; in austerity they are subject to the earliest cuts and in times of growth they are subject to pressure from development. Without statutory protection, parks and open spaces do not attract investment.²⁷

Whilst this strategy can set out actions and objectives for the next period going forward, if this is not matched by funding and staffing levels then progress will be slow.

Funding from external bodies

National Lottery Heritage Fund ("NLHF") and Big Lottery invest £34 million in parks annually across the UK however both organisations are concerned about sustainability. In the context of falling budgets Parks Services increasingly rely on grants support for parks and open spaces provision. The NLHF (with Big Lottery) is a significant stream of project grants for parks and open spaces. The investment focuses on capital projects where applications are required to focus on people and community outcomes (learning, volunteering, skills development, and community participation) with accompanying management plans. It needs to be considered that Parks Services require the resources and skills to take advantage of grants schemes.

The limitation of the grant funding approach is that it risks a focus of resources on one specific park. This has the potential to create parks disparity over the longer term. On the contrary the invested park or space can be a flagship example for aspirations for the future. For example, Kingston Park has been transformed in partnership with Fratton Big Local and users of Victoria Park will benefit from a £2.27m grant from NLHF.

²⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/20-2016>

Section 106 Planning Obligation contributions

Section 106 under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables the local authority to negotiate contributions from developers to support infrastructure that may be required as a consequence of the development. Under the Planning Act 2008, the Community Infrastructure Levy means that local authorities can use development to deliver infrastructure, and this can be used as capital for parks improvement. For example, the housing development at Goldsmith Avenue enabled a financial contribution towards improved play equipment and ball court at Orchard Park.

Income from concessions and events

Whilst access to Parks events is traditionally free, pressures on budget mean that local authority parks services may consider ticketed fee paying events.



There is an inherent conflict when restricting public access when events take place and there can be public dissatisfaction with exclusion from public access parks or open spaces. However there is a requirement to consider the relative financial and social benefits. Where parks and open spaces are used for events, consideration of the impact on the landscape needs to be considered.

Leasing of concessions within parks can provide both refreshments and activities which in turn provides a revenue stream to feed into parks maintenance. The monies from such facilities need to be ring-fenced for investment in the sites concerned.

Consideration of alternative management models (Trusts, charities and Community Interest Companies)

In recent years alternative management models for parks and open spaces have been under consideration. These include Community Interest Companies and trusts which, whilst they have political independence and the ability to attract alternative sources of funding, are realistically unable to fund parks due to the financial reality regarding long term maintenance, investment and management requirements. It needs to be considered that many parks are multi-functional spaces, including ecological, sporting and leisure facilities.

If the local authority pursued the trusts model, this would potentially disintegrate the city's park's portfolio, as it would result in multiple trusts across the city with differing priorities.

Bournemouth established an independent charitable organisation to support its parks and open spaces. The charity works alongside the Council to raise funds to improve and enhance what the council is able to provide.²⁸ Bournemouth was also one of nine areas across the UK selected to be part of the Future Parks Accelerator, a collaborative project between National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Trust and Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The project enabled three pilot parks to trial health and community initiatives.²⁹

Rethinking Parks project

The Rethinking Parks programme (a joint Nesta and Heritage Lottery Fund project) operated between 2012 and 2020.³⁰ The remit of the project was to look at innovative ways to manage and finance public parks so that they are sustainable for local communities in the future. The project found that there was a need to diversify income streams towards blended models (a mix of public income, contributions from private and voluntary sector and commercial income).

The project supported two projects to test voluntary donations to parks via contactless donation technology.³¹ This followed a successful approach that had taken place in museums. Key takeaway points from the project were that a support grant was necessary for the initial outlay of the project and that any contactless donation technology should be implemented as part of a wider fundraising strategy (e.g. online donations).

A survey and subsequent report by Fields in Trust found that on being presented with a hypothetical scenario of cuts to local government funding, respondents (including those in lower socio-economic groups) were willing to pay a subscription to an independent not for profit organisation set up to maintain and preserve parks and open spaces in their local authority area.³²

²⁸ <https://parksfoundation.org.uk/about-us/>

²⁹ <https://www.futureparks.org.uk/bournemouth-christchurch-poole>

³⁰ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks/>

³¹ <https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Contactless.pdf>

³² <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/revaluing>

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding could offer local community groups (external to the Council) the opportunity to raise funds to improve the city's parks and open spaces. It is often used to raise funds for creative projects.³³ There are three main types of crowdfunding:

Investment based crowdfunding - individuals invest their money and receive a share and perks.

Donation based crowdfunding - individuals donate their money to the fund.

Loan based crowdfunding - individuals lend money via a platform in exchange for an interest rate.

Crowdfunding is a possible way to support a local cause and the amounts involved can be small. In Portsmouth, it has been successful, for example raising £50k towards the Orchard Park basketball court development.³⁴

Budgets and savings

The Council's Parks Service has been under pressure to achieve savings for a number of years. In 2016 the Council made the decision to transfer grounds maintenance for the north, east and south contracts in house with effect from 1 January 2017.

The projected savings from this decision were £230,000 in the first year which contributed to the savings target of the Culture, Leisure and Sport portfolio. It should be noted that the savings were not ring-fenced for the future development of the parks and open spaces in the city due to corporate financial pressures.

Greenspaces and Natural Capital

Natural capital accounting considers the aspects of the natural environment from an economic perspective. It provides an economic value to natural assets including greenspaces and woodlands according to the reliance placed on them by society.³⁵

A recent study by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has valued UK green spaces at £25.6 billion.³⁶ This is calculated by the Outdoor Recreation Value Tool (Orval), which calculates the value of Portsmouth's green spaces to be £36 million on the basis that 9 million visits are made each year, at a value of £4.00 per visit.³⁷

Currently the worth of natural space to society is not reflected in market prices because many greenspaces are open to all with no financial charge. The 2021 paper for the UK Treasury, The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, argues that there is an overreliance on produced capital to the detriment of natural capital.³⁸

³³ <https://www.fscs.org.uk/news/investing/crowdfunding>

³⁴ [#ProjectSwish: First look at Portsmouth's new-look Orchard Park court | Basketball England](#)

³⁵ <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/focus/climate-change/natural-capital>

³⁶ [Top 10 green spaces in England and Wales for 'welfare value' named in study | Green space | The Guardian](#)

³⁷ [ORVal Outdoor Recreation Valuation \(exeter.ac.uk\)](#)

³⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

As illustrated elsewhere in this strategy, natural capital has a direct bearing on areas of public spend elsewhere: contributing towards healthier lifestyles, physical health and mental health thereby mitigating spend in those areas. It also contributes to the economic growth of the city by making the city a more attractive investment.

This provides an opportunity to the Council to evaluate its natural capital assets and invest accordingly, in proportion to the positive effect the parks and open spaces of the city have on the city's residents and businesses through the green infrastructure.

Investment from other stakeholder services in the Council and the city

In consideration of the wider benefits of natural capital to the city as a whole, it needs to be considered whether a financial contribution is made to the parks and open spaces budget from other departments in the local authority, such as the Public Health budget. The Fields in Trust report calculated that being a parks or green space user is associated with significant savings to the NHS via reduced GP visits³⁹. This does not include savings in onward costs such as reduced referrals, operations and social care costs.

Opportunities

Issue	Action
Budget savings	Transfer of contracted grounds maintenance services complete, giving greater control of operations not influenced by re-tendering and contract inflation.
Development of voluntary donations	Consideration of online giving or mobile contactless donation points at pop up events hosted by the Parks and Countryside team.
Develop interest in a Portsmouth Parks Foundation	Explore Parks Foundation models
Community Infrastructure Levy	Develop proposals for capital investment to identified infrastructure improvement schemes.

³⁹ <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/revaluing>

10. Action principles

The Council commits via this strategy to embed the following action principles into its future planning.

Parks as Community Spaces

We will ensure that no-one is excluded from using parks and open spaces on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, age or disability.

Example

Victoria Park - the masterplan includes an overarching community objective to ensure the park is open and welcoming to all. As a community space it will be safe and inclusive for people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and requirements. The associated activity programme will support all different types of visitors.

Southsea Common - Autism Board. This board is a critical information tool for children with autism spectrum disorders. As a visual support, it can encourage development and independence in the open park setting.



Parks for celebrating and protecting our environment

We will protect biodiversity, increase tree coverage, increase wildflower habitats and restrict pesticide use to a minimum.

Examples

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre surveys record extensive species present at Farlington Triangle and Milton Common including butterflies, moths, invertebrates, birds, mammals and flora.

In the last 4-5 years, 24 wildflower meadow areas have been created covering an area of 2500 square metres.⁴⁰

There are 27,000 trees logged on the Council's network, crossing many different departments including cemeteries, parks and property.

A successful funding award from the Tree Council enabled 400 whips to be planted on Great Salterns field.

Commitment via Biodiversity Scrutiny Report, March 2022⁴¹

Parks as spaces for lifelong learning

We will support Parks Friends, volunteering and opportunities for children.

Examples

Friends Groups - Portsmouth has a number of active Friends Groups which enable regular volunteer working groups including at: Southsea Rock Gardens, Baffins Pond, Milton Common, Victoria Park Portsdown Hill and Hilsea Lines.

Voluntary placements - Hilsea Lines - this open space offers work and school placements including for students, long term unemployed and the disabled.

Forest School is available at Hilsea Lines being the only wooded area on Portsea Island.

'Wild in the Park' event - this has been held as a joint venture between the Council and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It provided wildlife themed activities in Tamworth Park, Milton Park and Victoria Park, animal storytelling and opportunity to visit the mobile library.

Apprenticeships - 3 current apprenticeships being undertaken in Horticulture and Landscape Operation.

Interpretation material - Information boards at wildlife sites and parks to explain about the heritage, flora and fauna.

Parks for our health and wellbeing

We will provide opportunities for outdoor fitness and to enjoy flora and fauna.

Examples

Community garden scheme - the Victoria Park masterplan includes a plan for community growing spaces to provide opportunities for gardening and horticulture.

⁴⁰ Traffic, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel, 22 March 2022.

Horticulture projects - the Waterfront Garden Centre provides therapeutic and social support opportunities via horticulture for adults with additional support needs such as learning disabilities and mental health needs.

Trail walking - Hilsa Lines green corridor includes several interpretation boards providing for self-guided walks through the area. The Millennium Trail provides for an urban trail between Spur Redoubt and The Hard, including several different environments.

Outdoor gym equipment is available in Kingston Recreational Ground, Mountbatten Centre, Southsea Common, Drayton Park, Baffins Pond and Cosham Park.



Fitness training sessions are held across Southsea Common and other park spaces, operated by permitted providers.

Parks as accessible and well-designed

We will provide welcoming entrances for all users.

Example

The Victoria Park masterplan includes improvements to the park's entrances to make the park more welcoming and improve accessibility. Each entrance will also have a distinct name to help visitors find their way around the park.

The entrance at Bishop Crispian Way is currently narrow and a wider entrance will include double gates and a wide path.

The north-west entrance at Anglesea Road / Queen Street will include a new welcome arch with new wording.

Maximising safety and facility provision in our parks

We will provide safe parks facilities for all users

Examples

Adventure Playgrounds: 6 supervised sites at Buckland, Landport, Paulsgrove, Portsea, Somerstown and Stamshaw which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Skating - older children: the Council offers 9 facilities across the city for skateboarding, inline skating and BMX riding (not including the charity Southsea Skatepark).

Enclosed dog training area at Pembroke Road / Pier Road provides a safe enclosed space for training dogs that cannot be let off the lead.

Parks well provided for

We will financially resource our parks

Examples

Sports grants - working with Football Foundation to secure funding and deliver replacement pavilion, improved public facilities and new artificial grass pitches at King George V playing field for community use and to improve football opportunities and health outcomes.

Heritage Lottery Fund Grants - Victoria Park regeneration encompasses a £2.96 million investment into the park including the support of a NLHF grant £2.27m).

CIL monies - these have been used to enable parks infrastructure improvements, including the examples below:

Project	Year	Amount
Milton Allotments improvements	2018/19	£19,362
Bransbury Park gardens lighting replacements	2018/19	£4,148
College Park CCTV	2019/20	£1,500
Contribution towards inclusive roundabout at Kingston Park	2021/22	£4,057
Provision of 3 benches at Pembroke Park	2021/22	£600
Contribution towards Victoria Park project	2021/22	£30,800
Provision of outside exercise area with associated landscaping at Cosham Park;	2021/22	£40,000
Installation of nature trail rubbing posts at Cosham Park and Portsdown Hill	2021/22	£10,000

11. Individual sites' plans

This chapter takes a closer look at the current and future plans for the following key open space sites across the city:

- Victoria Park
- Seafront and Canoe Lake
- Baffins and Milton
- Hilsea Linear Park
- Portsdown Hill
- King George V
- Bransbury
- The city cemeteries and allotments

12. Victoria Park

Victoria Park sits in a key location in the city of Portsmouth, adjacent to the commercial centre (traditional 'high street'), civic buildings, the University and the Royal Navy. The entrances to the park reflect its central positioning to these various points. The park is a heritage asset through its designation as Grade II Registered Park and Garden and it sits within the Guildhall and Victoria Park Conservation Area. The lease for Victoria Park was granted to the Council by the War Department in 1876 and the park opened in 1878. It is significant, for the current project, that it was at this point that the War Department referred to the park in the lease as the 'People's Park'.

Once the lease had been agreed, the Council commissioned Alexander McKenzie to design the park. He had designed several of the London parks and had a particular style which involved central tree lined routes with curvilinear paths, plants that tolerate the British climate and have interest throughout the year and floral beds - all of which are evident - and survive - in the Victoria Park design.

An aviary in the park has existed since 1910. The current aviary opened in 1988. Throughout the history of the park, the aviary has been one of the most popular attractions. The park has also hosted public and private events throughout its history.

The park, with trees, shrubbery and short grassland is an important urban ecological habitat for birds and invertebrates. Within the city centre, it provides an important greenspace and is highly valued by its users (local residents and those who work and study in the city) in contrast to the surrounding 'hard' urban environment.



Current management

Delivery of the grounds maintenance has been carried out by the in-house team since 2017, alongside the other service delivery functions of tree and scrub management, infrastructure, play equipment inspections, maintenance and repair of memorials and monuments and buildings maintenance.

Future development

Victoria Park was awarded National Lottery Heritage Funding in 2019 for a Round 1 Heritage Grant for consultation and feasibility studies to be undertaken. This enabled the Council to work with the public to co-design the future of the park, including an activity and management plan for the period 2022-26, after which the park would be funded through a combination of parks budget and contribution to management from Friends and volunteers

Consultation with the local community took place via an online survey, face to face survey in the park and local ward, meetings with focus groups and stakeholders, representatives from community centres and local organisations. The aim of the consultation was to listen to what the community wanted and assess feasibility of options in consideration of the space and its heritage, to bring a holistic approach to design.

The main reasons cited for visiting the park were to see the aviary, to exercise, to experience nature and use the play area. Respondents also advised that the park was in need of renovation and further provision was needed for events in the park. There is currently limited community involvement or volunteering at the park.

An assessment of the park by LUC commissioned by the Council, together with consultation findings revealed a number of issues and opportunities to feed into the future design, activity and interpretation plans for the park. These included:

- Improve sense of safety and welcome, enhance sightlines, improve entrances including lighting (Design)
- Introduce clear signage and information at all entrances (Interpretation)
- Increase provision for informal recreation (cycle stands, play, quiet space, wildlife walks) (Design and Activity)
- Enhance play area to include natural / sensory features (accessible to all users & ages) (Design)
- Improve the aviary to enhance visitor perception and engagement (Design)
- Enhance environmental sustainability and climate change mitigations (recycling and energy efficiency) (Design)
- Improve natural landscape (Design)
- Provide interpretation & educational activities to share the heritage value of the park and its assets (Interpretation)
- Expand community involvement through volunteering programmes, training and events and activities (establish a Friends group and collaboration with local charities and stakeholders) (Activity)
- Explore the opportunity for local food growing in the park (Activity)



Park Designs

The central area of the park currently contains greenhouses in disrepair and is used as a maintenance compound. The design specification proposes that a **new community hub building** is constructed including public toilets, a large open space for community use, a volunteer office, a kitchenette for community and volunteer use and an external covered area adjacent to the building for educational and group use, providing year round shelter.

The hub is to be complemented by improved and enhanced entrance points including a metal arch feature at the 'Portsea entrance' off Anglesea Road. The entrance at Bishop Crispian Way will be made wider. The tunnel entrance from the War Memorial will include lighting and public art. The entrance opposite Portsmouth and Southsea train station has a new mural and will be better lit from outside the park (not NLHF funded).

As part of the environmental sustainability objective, the roof to the new hub building will incorporate a green roof and photovoltaic solar panels. The heating to the building will be powered by an environmentally friendly air source heat pump (a form of low carbon heating).

The design plan includes the restoration of the Aviary, which incorporates the following improvements:

- Addition of viewing panels at different heights to allow improved visibility,
- additional features of interest for the birds and mammals,
- interpretation panels for visitors to learn about the birds and mammals.

Improvements to the ecological habitats will be made by creating two areas of natural planting, including wildflower and wetland areas. 6 impaired trees will be felled and replaced with healthy specimens and a further 27 new trees planted. The 200 year old Poplar tree will be a feature of the new hub area (the tree is currently located within the Council depot). Planting designs for the park include selections to encourage bees and butterflies. Work to enhance the ecology of the park will be undertaken together with Cumberland House Natural History Museum, local wildlife groups and schools. Wildlife activities will include wildlife photography workshops, tree and nature trails, bird and bug workshops.

Enhancements to the play area will include a new area for younger children. The play area will link to the heritage of the park with a design based on historic Portsmouth fortifications and will include sensory planting and accessible play.

Improvements to facilities within the park include sheltered spaces, cycle stands, recycling bins and rest areas for those with limited mobility.

Opportunities for informal recreation in the park will encompass classes such as tai-chi, yoga, personal training, junior park runs and community gardening.

Activity Plan

The activity plan for the park can be summarised by the following headings and themes.

Activity themes	Activities
Volunteering to build the community	Community gardening Friends group School & College 'takeover' days Park tidy up and litter pick days
Events to build the community	Pop up community events e.g. crafts Dickens Festival Outdoor & board games days Family fun days Exercise classes for physical & mental health
Increasing aspirations	Coffee mornings Taster sessions

Activity themes	Activities
	Work experience for people with learning difficulties HIWWT workshops for schools Apprenticeships in horticulture
Events to profile the park	Free and paid for music & performance festivals Open air cinema and opera in the park Fairs & Festivals

Friends of Victoria Park

A friends group was set up during the early project stages, to provide an opportunity for the community to get involved and shape the parks future. Current Friends are interested in historical research, wildlife care and community growing, environmental education and conservation, children's activities, community group engagement.

The Interpretation Plan

This plan proposes that interpretation of the park should include both the history and how the park is used today. Including the use of modern technology, graphic panels will provide a transition to online trails and further information on Victoria Park's website. Interpretation might also include visual interpretation such as animal sculptures and a display of community art in response to the park.

Interpretation points will be available at all main entrances of the park as part of the welcome to the park. To help with the interpretation of the park, it is proposed that the entrances are renamed with reference to the history and local area.

Round 2 Heritage Lottery Funding will cover implementation of agreed design and delivery.

13. Canoe Lake

Canoe Lake Park is one of Portsmouth's larger parks, comprising just over 10 hectares.

It includes a number of features:

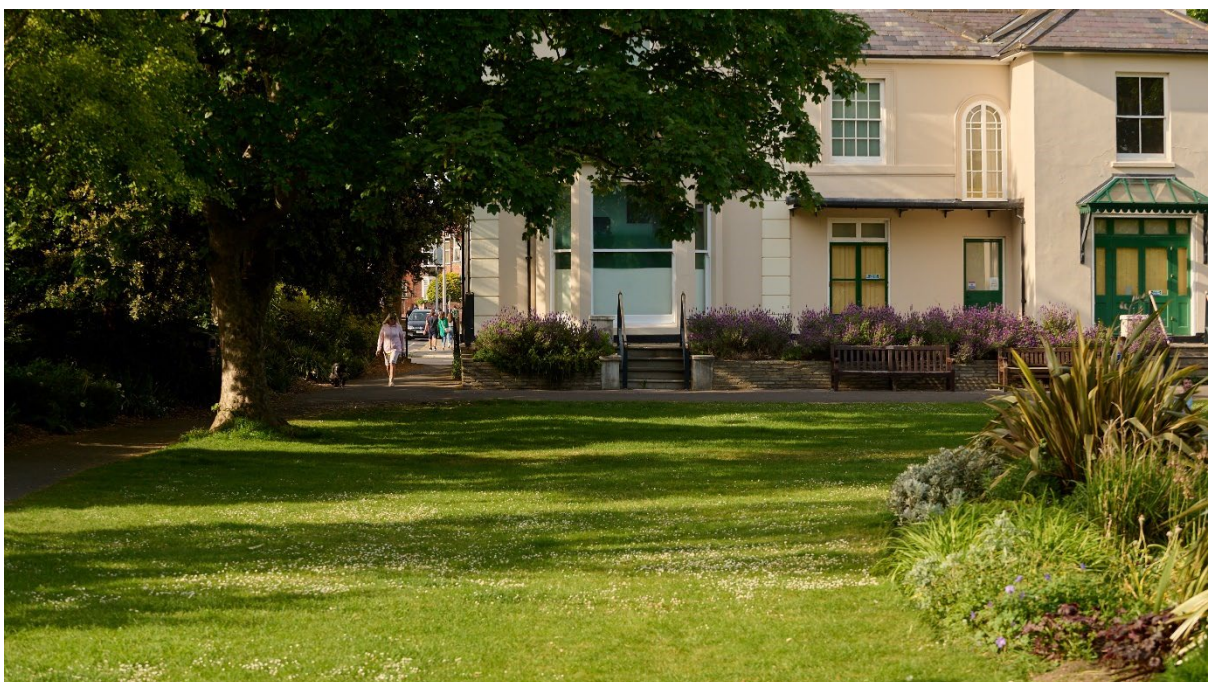
- Pedal boats and Lake café
- Lumps Fort Model Village
- Southsea Rose Garden and Japanese Garden
- Cumberland House Museum
- Children's play areas
- CourtX Ltd (formerly Canoe Lake Leisure Ltd) including Café Fresco

The area forms a natural location for a lake as it is low lying and the boating lake was completed in 1886, after the Navy drained and reclaimed what was marshland.



Lumps Fort was constructed originally in approximately 1545 as part of the land forts to defend the coast from French attack. It was used in the Second World War as training ground for the Cockleshell Heroes. The Fort was transferred by the Ministry of War to the Council after the war. The fort wall, gun emplacements and embankments are not currently in use.

Cumberland House Natural History Museum is a grade II listed building which is used today as a natural history museum. In addition to natural history displays, it includes a butterfly house and observational beehive. The Museum is supported by a Friends group who support and raise funds for the museum.



The Canoe Lake area is managed as a cross service site between the Parks Service, Property Service and Museum Service.

The Council does not have sufficient funds to improve the site without the support of external funding. In 2012 the Council made a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund which was unsuccessful. The aim of the project was to:

- Restore the historic features of the site
- Improve interpretation of the park
- Improve the catering offer

Forward vision

Canoe Lake is a key open space site in the city, as it links history, the natural environment and the seafront. There are a number of issues at the site that could be addressed via a future funding bid.

- Interpretation of the site heritage and ecological significance
- Improved catering offer
- Educational opportunities
- Improved signage and connection for the 'hidden' features of the site
- Better quality site infrastructure, such as the lake perimeter and environs

Interpretation of the site heritage and ecological significance

Currently the different aspects of the site are not linked together. A walking trail could be developed to include all the historical aspects of the site so that visitors to the west side (Canoe Lake) also include Lumps Fort, the Rose Garden and Japanese Garden on their visit.

The site's heritage also provides an opportunity to use the site for events, although this would need to be carefully managed so that footfall did not cause damage to the green or historic infrastructure of the site. Events over the course of recent years have included outdoor cinema, live music and light festivals.

Currently part of the Lumps Fort buildings are used as stores and workshops. Restoration could repurpose this venue for community events or as a high-end tea room within a heritage setting. Military imagery / interpretation could be displayed as part of the specification.

Catering offering

There are a number of catering leases operating in the area of Canoe Lake. A review of the leases is in the process of being undertaken, although it should be noted that any renegotiation has to be undertaken within due process. Catering options should be sustainable and promote healthy lifestyles. There is an opportunity to build these requirements into future tender process.

The Lumps Fort stores are not currently let and there is an opportunity, subject to the Council's needs and requirements, to offer a lease of these premises which could tie in with the site heritage.

Catering options are currently sited to the north-east side of the lake. Consideration may be given to a future concession site to the south-west end of the lake, to operate during the summer season.



Expanding the offering at Cumberland House

Cumberland House Museum provides a family friendly experience for natural history education. Currently there is a permanent display and it could be possible to have a rota/redisplay of cases and art reflecting both the natural history and ecological significance of Canoe Lake and Eastney area. A small section could also be used to reflect the military history of the Canoe Lake site.

The ground floor of Cumberland House could provide a hub and base for volunteers and friends. Southsea Green group <https://www.southseagreen.uk/aboutus.html> currently have a garden adjacent to Cumberland House. This community greenspace includes skills workshops for crafts and gardening and volunteering to grow and maintain a community orchard.

The area could also focus on the ecological importance of Eastney Beach which could include a sustainable natural play space for children to learn about the environment. If a separate education and volunteer hub was constructed separate to the Museum, this could incorporate an architecturally sympathetic reflection of the history and significance of the area.

A separate centre has the potential to engage with youth through the setting up of a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) to develop opportunities for young people to gain work experience and training. A CIO would allow access to different streams of grant funding.

Improved signage and access

A number of interpretation boards could be installed at the site. These could highlight the different features on offer. Signage to the Rose Gardens and Japanese Garden could be improved, with information regarding these features being displayed at Canoe Lake, thereby encouraging the visitor transition to further explore the space. There is an opportunity to enhance the entrance to the Rose Gardens and Japanese Gardens.

There are many juvenile swans at Canoe Lake, and signage has been installed to help education regarding their feeding habits, to improve their health and help manage the lake water quality.

The signage installation was accompanied by an education and activity programme for families run by the Cumberland House Museum in conjunction with the Countryside Officers.

14. The Seafront

Time spent by 'blue space' (near water) is understood to improve our mental and physical health. Blue space therefore needs to be considered as part of the Parks and Open Spaces strategy, as another aspect of the natural environment. Blue space includes the sea, coastline, rivers, lakes canals, waterfalls and fountains.⁴²

The island of Portsea offers 49km of coastline including the seafront which runs for 6km from Portsmouth Harbour to Langstone Harbour. This is a real asset for the city as it offers a large open space without built up development and is therefore a key contributor towards positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

The seafront offers heritage assets, such as the Round Tower, Long Curtain Moat, King's Bastion, Southsea Castle, Fort Cumberland and the many memorials in the area. It also offers natural environment space such as Eastney Beach and Fort Cumberland. It also includes two beaches that have excellent Environment Agency tested water quality and RNLI coverage during the school holidays.

The Southsea Coastal Scheme defence works, which incorporate the seafront from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, are currently scheduled to complete in 2026 and offer an opportunity to reconsider the seafront offering.

Seafront Masterplan

The Seafront Masterplan was adopted by the Council in March 2021. The plan includes the following proposed objectives for the seafront:

- Increase vibrancy and diversification of offer
- Take into account heritage when improving the public realm
- Protect heritage and biodiversity

Vibrancy and Events

Redevelopment is encouraged by the Seafront Masterplan of existing sites which have leisure and tourism uses such as South Parade Pier, Clarence Pier and Canoe Lake.

Small scale cafes and other activities are welcomed, where they may enable the diversity of cultural offer, for example through catering offerings from other cultures.

Lighting is important in terms of the vibrancy of the seafront. It provides for a cohesive identity and distinct sense of place. It can also make the seafront more distinctive and make the area feel safer. LED festoon lighting is being trialled in Avenue De Caen. LED lighting is more energy efficient and more able to withstand outdoor temperature changes and therefore longer term is a preferred option.

⁴² Public Health England, Improving Access to Greenspace, a new review for 2020

Subject to capital funding provision and a maintenance plan being agreed, it may be possible to replace the current lighting on the seafront with LED lighting in partnership with the changes being initiated by the Coastal Defence Scheme.

The culture and events offer across the seafront also adds to the vibrancy of the open space. Most recently, the addition of the Landing Craft Tank 7074 provides a critical point at the centre of the seafront.

The Events Team provide several events on the seafront including Southsea Food Festival (with Economic Growth Team), International Kite Festival, Car Boot series and Live at the Bandstand series. The events contribute both directly and indirectly to the city's economy as part of the visitor offer and the income raised is reinvested to provide further events to engage the local community.

Greener Transport

The Council's Transport Service funded a Park and Ride bus service to Southsea Seafront in recent summer years. This route allowed passengers to travel to the seafront and enjoy its key destinations at the same time reducing the amount of traffic in peak season. The Park and Ride service is in addition to existing bus services to the seafront from Portsmouth and Southsea station and The Hard. It may be possible to run a further Seafront Park and Ride in future years, this will be dependent on Portfolio decision and availability of funding.

The Department of Transport funded Solent Transport in 2021 to run a trial of rental e-scooters in the Solent region as part of a national trial. As part of the Solent Transport partnership, the Council were also successful in receiving funding for the new Beryl bicycles and Breeze app. Together with the open top bus service, these micromobility options have the potential to replace short car journeys, improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion.



Health & wellbeing outcomes

The seafront provides opportunity for informal and formal exercise by offering open space, space for play, recreation space and sport and leisure facilities. Examples of activities available include: running, walking, cycling, beach volleyball, outdoor gym, tennis and mini golf.

As the interest in positive mental health outcomes grows, the seafront is an ideal location for reflective activities, such as yoga, tai chi and pilates to take place outside when the weather allows.

The various attractions on the seafront are accessible via walking routes which can incorporate sites of interest. For example, Southsea Castle is a 10 minute walk from Southsea town centre. There is opportunity to develop connection and transition in the Avenue de Caen area, to provide a link from Southsea town centre to the seafront.

The seafront is also mostly flat, which provides cycling opportunities. The seafront can be cycled safely from Eastney Point to the Hotwalls via a combination of cycle routes, low traffic routes and shared cycle/foot ways. Providing further active travel routes is part of the city's Transport Strategy to improve connectivity, incorporating the broader objectives to commit to cleaner air and reduced carbon emissions. <https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Local-Transport-Plan-2021.pdf>

Mobility access

The promenade provides access along the seafront from Eastney to Clarence Pier. There are also three mobility access points to the beach, two with access matting and one with a wooden ramp. During 2021 trials were conducted for a floating wheelchair to provide access into the sea. Due to the steepness of the shingle it is difficult to get back out of the water, however it is envisaged that the coastal defence works may enable a longer term solution.

The Seafront Environment

The seafront has a key role to play in improving our environment, as it provides a cooling effect on the city. Together with green space, urban blue space removes key pollutants from the atmosphere by affecting the flow and distribution of air pollution. It also has a positive effect on health outcomes by attenuating noise pollution. In addition, blue space mitigates against the urban heat effect (built up areas of asphalt).⁴³ Together with green space, blue space contributes to the biodiversity of the city.

Nature sites at the seafront

Eastney Beach and Fort Cumberland are both designated Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) due to their important contribution to biodiversity. Fort Cumberland includes species such as the Dartford Warbler and Stonechat, the Great Green Bush Cricket, together with several flowers within the gorse and heathland.

Eastney Beach comprises an area of 125,600 square metres. It is distinguishable from the beach to the west as the shingle contains vegetation. Vegetated shingle is a rare habitat and supports plants such as Sea Holly, Sea Kale and Sea Radish.

⁴³ Public Health England, Improving Access to Greenspace, A new review for 2020



In addition to protecting such habitats, development of the seafront needs to take every opportunity to both reduce carbon and incorporate sustainable alternatives as integral features of design.

For example, new developments and refurbishments might include low carbon energy generating technology such as solar photovoltaic panels and incorporate green roofs.

Watersports (city wide)

Activities such as surfing, wakeboarding and kite surfing have become more popular in recent years. Watersports have had a particular association with the city due to the recent history of the Americas Cup and base at the Camber for Ben Ainslie Racing. Whilst the America's Cup Team have moved out of Portsmouth, the 1851 Trust remains based in Portsmouth, engaging with young people through sporting initiatives <https://1851trust.org.uk/our-mission/>.

Development for watersports activities in Portsmouth might include:

- Developing a watersports activities network in the city for clubs to share ideas
- Tie in watersports development with the development of the Hilsea Linear Park project, announced as part of the Levelling Up Fund spend. This includes the refurbishment of Hilsea Lido which could incorporate paddleboarding opportunities
- Further development of watersports programmes with local schools
- Extension of the buoyed adult swim zone
- Introduce a buoyed zone for children, clearly marked with large yellow buoys

Current provision of watersports includes the **Andrew Simpson Watersports Centre** on the Eastern Road facing Langstone Harbour. The centre is a centre of excellence for schools and RYA training centre. The Andrew Simpson Foundation (ASF) operate similar facilities in the UK in Reading, Portland, Birmingham and overseas in Mossel Bay, South Africa, Lake Garda in Italy and the Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean.

The centre enables all Portsmouth children to get on the water whether they have low or no income through the support of the **Andrew Simpson Foundation**. Similarly, through the Foundation, further training is available and RYA qualifications can be achieved.

There are opportunities for our Events Team to support and promote blue space activities such as the Sea Angling Classic Tournament in summer 2022. The team are in regular discussion with UK Sport regarding opportunities to bid for watersports and similar events.

Portsmouth Sail Training Trust also works with the Andrew Simpson Foundation to raise the confidence of young people and provides regular sailing training to Portsmouth Schools which includes the opportunity to gain RYA qualifications.

A capital bid is being put forward for the **Andrew Simpson Centre** as the building is in urgent need of further investment. This restricts the ability of the centre to run activities and it becomes dependent on pop up facilities. The intention is to make the centre more sustainable and photovoltaic panels were installed for this purpose in 2019. Longer term, it is hoped to improve the environmental credentials of the centre. This would include replacing the building maintenance system with a ground heat pump system. In addition, the future model for the centre includes the installation of sleeping pods so that overnight accommodation can be offered with watersports courses over several days.

Watersports activities at Eastney Beach

Licences for personal trainers include training for kite boarding, paddle boarding and open water swimming. The licences are provided on a risk assessment and qualification basis.

There is opportunity to develop plans for improving watersports infrastructure in the city. This could encompass both short term and long term facilities in the vicinity of Eastney Beach, within the context of the environment. The Eastney area is an ideal location for another watersports activities centre for the city, as it is relatively sheltered from the Solent and Isle of Wight and therefore has ideal prevailing wind conditions. A small development could encompass a watersports café, shop and storage facility for watersports equipment. Beach showers could also be installed adjacent to the current public toilets at Eastney. Such developments would be subject to receipt of capital and maintenance funding.

Seafront & water safety

The seafront is a popular area for dog walking and this needs to be undertaken safely, with an understanding of other seafront users' safety. Between the end of April until the end of September (peak season) it is not permitted to take dogs on the foreshore at the section of beach between the Royal Marines Yomper Statue and Southsea Castle, and Hotwalls foreshore. The restrictions do not apply to those using dogs who are registered blind, or require use of an assistance dog from Dogs for the Disabled, Support Dogs, Canine Partners for Independence or Hearing Dogs. A dedicated dog training area is also provided for all year round at Pier Road.

Water Safety is a critical consideration for the seafront as it is for the rest of the city as we are the UK's only island city. This is managed by Seafront Services.

They also support a joint authority Water Safety forum which includes representatives from Portsmouth City Council, Gosport Borough Council, Langstone Harbour Board, the Queen's Harbour Master and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Portsmouth and Southsea Voluntary Lifeguards as well as representatives of groups who regularly use the water for leisure activities. Meetings are held regularly throughout the year to address topical issues such as:

- Designated swim zones
- Use of personal watercrafts
- Anti-social behaviour
- Changes in legislation

Anti-social behaviour includes 'tombstoning' off South Parade Pier and Hotwalls sites. There are also strong tides effected by the shipping movements.

The RNLI have established which are the safest areas for sea swimming and through their 3 yearly review of signage, ensure that public water safety signage reflects this at regular intervals all across the seafront. There are also a number of defibrillators recently installed along the seafront for first aid provision.

Heritage assets

The seafront offers a wide range of heritage assets including the historic fortifications at Portsmouth Harbour such as the Square Tower, Round Tower and Point Battery, together with Long Curtain Moat, Spur Redoubt and King's Bastion. The Council's Heritage Strategy⁴⁴ identifies the benefits of such assets, which *'enhance the look and feel of a place, contributing to a sense of identity in a landscape. This in turn can support positive lifestyle behaviours that contribute to other outcomes - getting out and walking about the local environment'*.

There are also various key landmarks along the seafront, which provide the seafront's distinct character. These can help orientate people and can be used as a meeting point for social connection. Significant examples include Hotwalls, Royal Garrison Church, Royal Naval Memorial, Southsea Castle, Landing Craft Tank 7074 and Lumps Fort.

⁴⁴ [Portsmouth Heritage Strategy 2021](#)



In 2021 the Culture & Leisure Directorate obtained funding for a Waterfront Welcome Team during peak season. The Welcome Team were on hand from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, to provide assistance to members of the public with regard to attractions and heritage, and orientation between sites. The Welcome Team served again in summer 2022, funded from within cash limits.

Sea Defences

Part of the city's climate change mitigation includes taking steps to build resilience against rising sea levels. The Southsea Coastal Scheme is a significant development to affect the seafront along 4.5km over the next period. The project is primarily funded by Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) with contributions from the Council and Solent LEP. It covers the seafront from Old Portsmouth to Eastney, to reduce flood risk to over 8000 homes and 700 businesses and will be delivered in six phases / frontages. Whilst it will cause some disruption, it also provides an opportunity to regenerate the seafront through public realm improvements. Between Pyramids and Eastney the beach will form part of the flood defence and beach materials will be imported to widen the beach (the new beach will be similar in width to the existing Eastney Beach).

The Scheme offers an opportunity to engage with the community as the work develops. There is a Project Information Centre at the Scheme site office on Pier Road and the team also engage with the local residents through regular newsletter updates, together with schools visits, stands at events, such as Victorious and exhibitions in the city's libraries.

The public realm improvements include an opportunity to source artwork which can subsequently be incorporated into the landscape design (e.g. artwork embedded into new structures). Where there are expanses of concrete as part of the design (e.g. replacement promenade surfaces and flood walls), the artwork can be used to provide variety and engagement.

The Scheme commissioned a public art strategy to be undertaken in conjunction with the detailed design to assist in delivering this opportunity alongside the flood defence works. The artwork of 20 local artists was subsequently showcased to the community in autumn 2021.

A key part of the design of the sea defences is to ensure sensitive integration into the natural and historical environment at the seafront. As the Scheme interfaces with several scheduled ancient monuments (frontage 1 and frontage 4), Historic England are consulted on the material selection, to ensure that the design and construction within these frontages is sympathetic to the heritage.

The Scheme will deliver a new promenade between Saluting Platform and Eastney (St Georges Road) which will be two tiered at Southsea Castle and Long Curtain Moat. It will also include new lighting, new seating, additional planting and two replacement bridges, at Long Curtain Moat.

During the construction of frontage 1 - Long Curtain Moat, seventeenth century historic walls were discovered. These have subsequently been repaired and are showcased in the finished Scheme alongside the other historic structures. New lighting and interpretation panels have been installed to illuminate the heritage features and improve/ update the historical interpretation. New interpretation panels are also included in other frontages and will cover other topics such as ecology in addition to the heritage aspects.



Biodiversity net gain is a key consideration of the design. Tide pools, seed rocks, bee bricks and wildflower planting will be installed across the six frontages. The planting design will mimic the existing vegetated shingle at Eastney Beach but will include both native and non-native plants to increase biodiversity. The planting will attract bees and enable self-seeding and self-colonising. Evergreen plants will be included to provide year round colour. The seasonal planting will include plants that already exist on the seafront beach and the wildflowers will provide a sea of colour similar to the wildflower planting elsewhere in the city.

The species are chosen with the coastal environment in mind and are subject to minimal maintenance. There is also some proposed new tree planting as part of the design.

The defences will allow for a broader route around the tip of Southsea Castle. They will improve the walking and cycling infrastructure particularly at that section of the seafront. The Scheme are also working with the Active Travel Team, to appropriately position cycle lanes ensuring the seafront highway layout integrates with the wider cycling network, both now and in the future. The design for frontage 3 (Southsea Common) will result in significant changes to the highway layout. The road will become single lane (east to west), parking will change from chevron to parallel and a two-way cycle lane installed.

The Serpentine Square hardstanding and promenade adjacent to Blue Reef will be raised and include terracing. This will create a new functional space which could be used to host small events such as a community market / art exhibition / pop up kiosks.

Specific Seafront Sites

The following section considers specific areas on the seafront and the unique character and opportunities they present.

Old Portsmouth to Clarence Pier

Old Portsmouth dates back to 1180 and contains many historic attractions such as Royal Garrison Church, Portsmouth Cathedral, the Square Tower and the Round Tower. The success of the Hotwalls development, located in the Grade I listed and scheduled Point Battery, is a prime example of heritage reimagined. The area houses gallery spaces for artists together with a quality café and includes use of the Round Tower as an exhibition space. It is now fully known as the creative quarter in the city. Further funding is required to fully weather and waterproof the Round Tower.

King's Bastion was originally constructed as part of the city's defences, forming part of the curtain wall, in the sixteenth century. At King's Bastion, there are four magazine bunkers which could be developed in a similar manner to the Hotwalls. Whilst this is a listed historical structure, a redevelopment undertaken sympathetic to the heritage of the area could encompass a café, bar, restaurant and / or arts and cultural space within the magazines. A seating area atop of the Bastion would offer magnificent views across the Solent. Events could then take place at this location to tie in with the resident artists.



Southsea Common is the city's key historic park on the waterfront. It is a Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden within the seafront conservation area and Old Portsmouth conservation area. The Common is a crucial part of the city's green infrastructure. It is utilised for recreational and leisure space and key events are also run here. This is balanced with the need to protect the environment, through initiatives such as tree planting schemes. As a listed park, there is also the requirement for any development to be sensitive to the area's heritage.



Southsea Castle sits at the furthest point south. Key attractions in this area, in addition to the Castle, include: Blue Reef Aquarium, the Bandstand, D-Day Story and Landing Craft Tank, Southsea Splashpools. The volleyball court is currently located opposite the Landing Craft Tank, however due to the proximity to the coast there is daily sand movement and overspill. There could be opportunity to relocate the volleyball court to the north of the city as part of the Hilsea Linear Park and Lido proposal.

Speakers Corner is situated directly on the seafront. In the past it has been associated as a place for public speaking. It has great views over the Solent and has recently been adopted as a key site for our wheeled sports community (skateboarders, longboarders, roller skaters, roller bladers, BMX and scooter). Following the success of Sky Brown at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games for skateboarding and her award of BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year 2021, the sport is becoming ever more popular. In addition, Portsmouth-born Declan Brooks also brought home a medal from the 2020 Olympic Games for BMX Park Freestyle. Portsmouth has its own Skating Group https://www.instagram.com/portsmouth_skating_group/?hl=en in recognition of the growing popularity of these sports.

The area is also currently used as a start and end point for the Southsea Park Run. It has occasionally been used as an event space with previous artist markets occurring and in 2021 it was used to support a skateboarding event. The sound impact of any performance needs to be considered due to the proximity of the space to residential areas.

The area also has the potential to host a small food festival in conjunction with the adjacent food outlets.

On the seafront side of the Speakers Corner shelter, redevelopment could encompass beach shower facilities.



Canoe Lake as referenced earlier in this chapter.

Eastney Beach (St George's Road to Henderson Road) is a protected area due to its rare vegetated shingle habitat (as referenced above). This restricts development opportunities in the area. However, the Canoe Lake area case study considers a development of the offering at Cumberland House to include interpretation of the ecological significance of this site. It could also include light interpretation of the heritage assets in the area, such as Eastney Batteries East and West.

Fort Cumberland and Ferry Point

Fort Cumberland is both a Scheduled Ancient Monument due to the 'Star Fort' on site and also a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation due to the biodiversity of the habitat. The monument is managed by Historic England. It may be considered that the importance of the biodiversity at this site could also be promoted via the development of the educational and visitor offering at Cumberland House.

Aside from Fort Cumberland, the land to the east of Henderson Road leading to Ferry Point is currently under the Portfolio of Planning and Regeneration. There have been several issues in this area in the past including abandoned watercraft, permanent campervans and discarded litter. To manage the amenity of the area in the future, a small parking charge might be introduced, with an exception to those with permits (such as for licensed fishing). This would discourage vehicles from being left in the area over the long term. A Parking Restrictions sign has been installed to assist with abandoned vehicles in this area.

The Council could work with the Langstone Harbour Board to manage access to Eastney Slipway. In addition all houseboats in the area would need to abide by the Harbour licence conditions. Seasonal staff could be engaged to keep Eastney Slipway clear, receive permit payments for use of the Slipway, manage parking and provide information to users of the area.

Seafront Aspirations

Where the seafront aspirations are able to be delivered, consideration will be given to the wider context in which they sit, including waste management and traffic management.

Aspiration	Responsibility	Term/ progress/ dependencies
Replacement of current seafront lighting with LED lighting	Seafront Manager	Initial work underway; further areas will be reviewed considering coastal defence works.
Park and Ride Bus to Southsea Seafront during summer season	Transport Manager	Dependent on funding.
Active Travel routes	Transport Manager	See Local Transport Plan
Mobility access from shingle to sea	Seafront Manager	Wooden ramps now installed on seasonal basis. Longer term solution and access out of the sea only likely through coastal defence scheme.
Watersports Activities Network	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager	2 years

Aspiration	Responsibility	Term/ progress/ dependencies
Watersports Programmes with Schools	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager	2 years
Extend buoyed adult swim zone & introduce children's buoyed zone	Seafront Manager	Completed
Beach Shack development at Eastney	Seafront Manager	Challenging due to drop on shingle, however other options being considered e.g. sauna.
Installation of beach showers at Eastney	Seafront Manager	Dependent on funding.
Improve wayfinding signage, and linkages between key areas/gateways.	Seafront Manager	Ongoing as part of coastal defence scheme.
Small events space at Blue Reef	Seafront Manager	Dependent on coastal defence works.
Development of Kings Bastion heritage space	Seafront Manager	With Regeneration team.
Relocate volleyball court as part of Hilsea Linear Park.	Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager + Hilsea Project Manager	Linked to development of Hilsea Linear Park
Develop transition connection gateway between Southsea town centre and seafront in area of Avenue de Caen	Seafront Manager	10 years - dependent on capital funding and development opportunities
Pop up sites for high quality concessions	Seafront Manager	Improved options and expanded sites in operation. (coastal defences allowing)
Speakers Corner Beach Showers	Seafront Manager	Not currently part of design schedule for coastal defence works.
Introduction of parking charges & limitations at Ferry Point	Seafront Manager	2 years Transfer of land to Culture & Leisure Portfolio
Management of Eastney Slipway with Langstone Harbour Board	Seafront Manager	2 years Transfer of land to Culture & Leisure Portfolio
Increase wildflower planting & biodiversity	Coastal Defences	Integral to coastal defences design
Increase wildflower planting & biodiversity on Southsea Common	Parks Manager	2 years

15. Milton Park

Milton Park is one of the city's urban parks, comprising 5.25 hectares.

It includes the following features:

- Play area
- Tennis courts
- Multi-use games area
- Skate park
- Bowling greens
- Community centre including café and toilets
- Library
- Barn Studio Theatre (Portsmouth Players)

The Bowls Association at the park is an association of bowling clubs that use the greens in the park. In 1997, a successful lottery grant bid by the Bowls Association enabled an extension to the pavilion, to improve the facilities, irrigation and fencing.

The café in the community centre opened in 2012 and is a very popular facility in the park.

The tennis courts were refurbished in 2013; local residents can play free by borrowing equipment from the café.

The Friends of Milton Park and Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens are keen supporters of the park and undertake community garden sessions.

History

Milton Park is a visible reminder of Portsmouth's rural past. Records of medieval Milton go back to the fourteenth century, when the area was a manor with fishing rights. The name Milton is thought to come from the old English for 'middle tun' or Middle Farm. By 1722 the manors of Eastney and Milton became the property of John White, the then Mayor of Portsmouth. By the nineteenth century, whilst the growth of the dockyard brought change to much of Portsea Island, Milton remained a rural area, dominated by small market gardens.

The Goldsmiths are the most prominent family in the history of Milton, acquiring land in the area in 1755. The family built up several farms and resisted the sale of the land for urban development. Goldsmith Avenue, running alongside Milton Park, was named after James Goldsmith in 1896.

Following the acquisition of Milton Farm by what was then known as the Portsmouth Corporation, in 1912, the ground was arranged as a park and formally opened in July 1923, with Milton Bowls Club forming later that year. The thatched barn in the park today, home of Portsmouth Players, is one of the original Milton Farm buildings.

Further information regarding the park can be found at the Portsmouth History Centre.

Forward Vision

The future of Milton Park may sit within the following themes:

- Biodiversity
- Wildlife and heritage education
- Community events
- Physical wellbeing

The park contains several sustainable planting beds. Choice of trees (replaced where trees have died) maintains a balance between native and non-native species. Wildflower meadow areas will continue to be introduced within the amenity grass areas where possible, to maximise the opportunity for visitors to experience sensory environments and planting will give consideration to plants that can provide food to wildlife (berries, seeds), attract insects (bees, butterflies) and provide nesting habitats for birds. Hedges in the park continue to be cut outside bird nesting times.

Work will continue in partnership between libraries and parks services to develop events partnership in the Milton Park space. This work will be developed following the appointment of the new Countryside Officer to focus on open spaces in Baffins and Milton Wards. The focus of this role is to increase community engagement and participation in how the sites are managed and access to information and interpretation on the wildlife present.

Future education opportunities in Milton Park may take a joint approach to both promote the ecology and heritage of the park, referencing the importance of the thatched barn for example and the Goldsmith family. Education could take the form of modern interpretation boards and/or open day community events at the park. There are a number of mature trees in the park which may form the basis for an ecology trail walk.

Opportunity for exercise by different users will continue to be encouraged in the park in several ways. There is provision for dog walkers who are welcome to use the park, in conjunction with the dog control order (which disallows dogs from the play area, bowling greens, tennis courts and skate park).

The tennis courts (refurbished in 2013), play area infrastructure, multi-use games area (MUGA), skate park and bowling greens encourage physical exercise by a broad variety of users. It is intended these features will be maintained. Pathways are also accessible for wheelchair and buggy users.

Centenary Year

2023 is the centenary both of the park and Milton Bowls. A celebration event was held in July involving the community and friends of the area following the success of the 75 year celebration held in 1998.

16. Baffins Pond and Milton Common

Baffins Pond

Baffins Pond is one of Portsmouth's larger parks, comprising over 18 hectares.

It includes the following features

- Large open parkland (Tangier Field)
- Copse & natural areas important for wildlife
- 1.7 hectare pond and recreational fishery
- Facility for 5 a side football
- Local library
- Children's play facilities area
- Facility for daytime parking
- Community centre, garden and café
- Bowling green, tennis court, multi use games court and outdoor gym facilities

The importance of this area is evident from its history. The area was originally farmland which was encroached by housing development in the 1930s. In 1938 following public pressure the pond and land adjacent was sold to the Council with the specified objective to preserve the site.



Wildlife

A number of species of birds are found at Baffins Pond including Canada Geese, Barnacle Geese, Mallard and Tufted Duck. In the winter season Brent Geese use Tangier Field as a habitat when they migrate to the UK during the winter season. It is rare for the geese to choose an urban environment in which to make their home for the season.

They travel from northern Russia to western Europe and stay together in groups across multiple breeding seasons. Brent Geese pair for life and search for coastal grassland or farmland to graze, rest and feed.

Brent Geese are protected as in the 1950s their global population had fallen to 16,500. It is important that their overwintering sites are not destroyed by development.⁴⁵ To protect the species, the eastern side of Tangier Field is fenced off between October and March and no dog walking is permitted in the enclosed area.

Ecological issues

As a contained body of water (no in or outflow), water quality management is of key importance at this site. There are a number of interdependencies:

- Water quality is affected by nutrients in the water. High levels of nutrients encourage algal blooms, which reduce oxygen levels in the water as part of its cycle and consequently may impact on the conditions aquatic life needs to survive.
- During summer season there is significant build up of sediments within the pond, highlighted by low water levels in hot climatic conditions.
- The pond is an important site for wildfowl, however wildfowl contribute droppings into the pond which contribute to the nutrient level.
- The main fish stock in the pond is carp, which are a bottom feeder and constantly disturb the sediments. The pond is currently overstocked and excess disturbance means nutrients cannot be "locked" into the sediments and are constantly being thrown into the water column. A fisheries plan is in place to resolve this issue in conjunction with the Environment Agency.
- In recent years marginal planting has taken place to create wetland areas around the pond, this enables removal of nutrient from the water and also ammonia and other toxic compounds.
- Increasing instances of extreme weather caused by climate change will continue to cause low water levels and threaten oxygen levels in the water. Aeration devices are installed in the pond to help maintain dissolved oxygen and prevent fish death during extreme weather.
- Water quality is checked weekly to check whether any further actions are required.

Ongoing and future management of the pond relies on careful balancing of these differing requirements.

The fish stock in the pond are managed by the local angling society.

The woodland area, with the support of Baffins Pond Association, boasts 848 trees planted with the involvement of the community. The orchard area includes 13 fruit trees donated, planted and cared for by the community.

⁴⁵ <https://healthylifeessex.co.uk/articles/outdoor-life/wildlife/birds/brent-geese/>

Forward vision

The future of Baffins Pond and Tangier Field sit within the following themes:

- Wildlife education
- Increase biodiversity
- Site infrastructure
- Physical activity
- Community events and initiatives

Wildlife education

The ecological issues regarding the pond are complex. It would benefit the community and care for the site if these were more widely known and understood.

A communications strategy plan would include updated information available easily online. For example, it would tell the public what action to take if they came across a sick animal or bird. A Countryside Officer has been appointed to further develop work with the Baffins Pond Association including providing further support for their events.

In 2021 the Council's Library Service, together with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, held *Wild in the Park* events to allow children to take part in wildlife education activities. This could be introduced to Baffins Pond as a joint initiative between the Countryside Officer, HIWWT or similar organisation, Baffins Library and Baffins Pond Association. Particular activities could focus around the Brent Geese habitat.

The Sword Sands Road entrance to Tangier Field is directly opposite Milton Common. Linkage between these green spaces could be improved in terms of signage and information made available on active travel routes at the Baffins Pond Community Centre and Baffins Library.

Increase biodiversity

The wetland reed beds will continue to be planted and maintained to allow improvement to water quality. This will prove challenging due to sporadic mass disturbance by waterfowl. However, further sectional segregation may prove effective. The plant selection is made based on water levels and to improve the aquatic habitat by removing the nutrient. Sustainable planting has been introduced in the bedded areas to the south side of the pond. There is an opportunity to increase the wildflower areas on the north side, adjacent to Tangier Road. Similarly, wildflower strips could be added to Tangier Park Field.

A new Countryside Officer has been appointed to focus on the conservation of open spaces in Baffins and Milton Wards, increasing community engagement and participation in the way the sites are managed and access to information on the flora and fauna found within.

In conjunction with the Council's Greening Strategy, 200 whips and 1 standard tree were planted in Staggs Wood in the year 2020/21. In year 2021/22 6 standard trees were planted around the pond area. Moving forward there could be further whip planting and planting of trees at marginal gaps around the circumference of Tangier Field. These would be broad leaf trees for their benefit in improving air quality. However, any planting needs to take account of the Brent Geese flight path, and would benefit from specialist ornithological advice prior to further planting, as an open grassland habitat is required.



Site infrastructure

The site has a number of access points particularly for Baffins Pond and these are all mobility friendly. There is scope for further investment to be carried out to the pathways which could be funded by a community infrastructure levy (CIL) payment on new development in the area, or other funding source such as an Environment Agency grant.

The timber log wall around the pond also needs further investment to maintain the infrastructure which would also need to be funded via CIL or other funding source. The site furniture surrounding the pond needs further consideration as to its layout and the memorial seating could be rationalised.

Baffins Pond Association have made information signs for the woodland and orchard areas in Tangier Field.

Physical activity

The site contains a number of opportunities for physical exercise. Capital funding previously has allowed for outdoor fitness to be installed for the benefit of local clubs, residents and visitors.

There is a children's play area and by extension, natural play available for children in the copse woodland. The Baffins Pond Association continue to work on a dipping pond development adjacent to Stag Woods on the north of Tangier Field for children to provide further opportunity to explore the natural environment as part of their play.

When the Brent Geese are not in residence, Tangier Field is accessible for further activity and is used by Solent Softball which is open to all abilities. The north-eastern end of the field is home to Swordsands Bowling Green and Naismith Bowling Club.

There is a ball court in the Baffins Pond area that is available for multi-use games together with a tennis court. Surface improvements could be made in the future via a CIL payment or other funding source.

Community events and initiatives

The site lends itself well to community events. There is an annual programme of events run by Baffins Pond Association (BPA). Previous events have included: nature based activities for children, Easter Egg hunt, Community Fun day, Teddy Bear picnic, Conker Bash, Santa Visit and Litter Picking.

Moving forward a community liaison officer might work with BPA together with the Council's Events Team to expand and build on the events offer.

Littering is a challenge for the park. This can only be mitigated in part by enhancing the educational and community offer. BPA include regular litter picks as part of their events offer and the Council will be providing long armed litter pickers in the near future to assist with littering in the wetlands areas.

Milton Common

This site is comprised of reclaimed intertidal land and provides a broad diversity of almost 200 species recorded within the site. It includes nationally scarce and county scarce species. The site has been awarded a Higher Level Stewardship grant from Natural England for its management and is managed in accordance with the environmental aims set out in the grant. The site was previously used as a municipal refuse dump until the late 1960s, which generates particular requirements with regard to managing the area.



Future planning for the site includes:

Visitor experience

The visitor experience to this site could be improved by a broader education outreach to the public, improved interpretation and signage to include linkage with the surrounding sites Baffins Pond and Great Salterns Recreation Ground. The role of the new Countryside Officer at Baffins and Milton includes the development of volunteer and community interest at this site and promoting the area as an educational resource.

Habitat protection

Monitoring of species continues at this site with reporting to Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. Improving the quality of the habitat includes restoration and management of the grassland for target species.



Site infrastructure

A longer term objective is to divert recreational pressure away from the coastal path by developing the inland footpaths and cyclepaths, to minimise disturbance to species such as wildfowl, whilst at the same time, developing green travel routes.

17. Hilsea Linear Park

The Hilsea Linear Park project was submitted as part of the Portsmouth North Levelling Up Fund bid. In November 2021 the government confirmed this bid had been successful in securing project funding via the Levelling Up Fund.

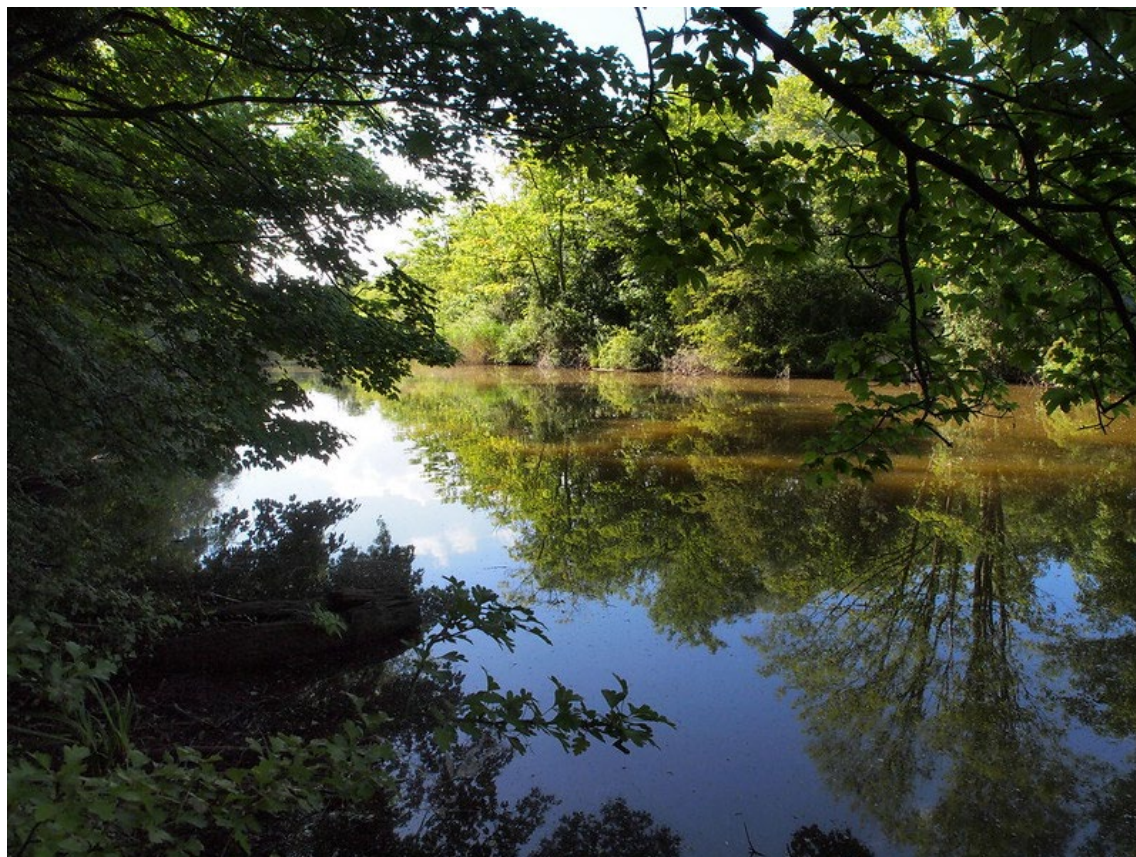
Connection

The plan for this park is to further enhance the existing green infrastructure at Hilsea Lines. The Linear Park will improve walking and cycling routes around the northern tip of the city. Coastal defence works in this area have already improved the walking and cycling route from the Mountbatten Centre to Hilsea Lido and there will be further integration of active travel routes. A new bridge will then link the east and west sides of Hilsea Lines and further connectivity will link Anchorage Park to Farlington Marshes and Drayton, thereby extending active travel across north and south by improving cycle and footway access.

Heritage and Ecology

Hilsea Lines is a natural area which has developed from a previous military base. The current line defences, a scheduled Ancient Monument, were constructed in 1871, but previous defences had existed since Tudor times.

Some of the bastions are in use and there is opportunity to open up more of them. There is also a diverse range of wildlife at the site, as the varied woodland benefits many plants and animals. Development of the linear park will include signage and interpretation for the ecology and heritage in the area.



Play and Recreation

The Linear Park development will incorporate further opportunities for high quality play areas and outdoor exercise, with refurbishment to the existing Lido, the ever popular splashpool and play park and maximise the potential of the space for the community, whilst focussing on accessibility for all. There will be active travel opportunities, which may include bicycle hire for example.

18. Portsdown Hill

Portsdown Hill is of great ecological significance, due to the calcareous (chalk) grassland which forms one of the most diverse habitats in Great Britain. Around 55 hectares of Council managed land is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A similar area is open space and supports a variety of habitats from woodland and scrub to grassland. The grassland varies from intensively used amenity grassland to a species rich community. The non-SSSI sites are managed sympathetically for wildlife to complement and extend the wildlife of the SSSI. Calcareous grassland is a Priority Habitat as recognised by the Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). It enables a diversity of plant life, which in turn, supports a great variety of invertebrates. Several other Priority Habitats (e.g. hedgerows) both on and off the SSSI, add visual and biological diversity to the area.



The SSSI, although directly north of an urban city, is comparable to other sites further up the Meon Valley. It is unusual to have a site of such rich biodiversity directly adjacent to an urban population and local residents would usually need to travel much further afield to access the flora and fauna this site contains.

The Hill offers the residents of Portsmouth excellent views on a clear day of the city, the Solent, Hayling Island, Gosport, the Isle of Wight and Butser Hill and an ideal starting point for an interest in wildlife and ecology.

History

Evidence of flint working has been found, illustrating that the site has been in human occupation since prehistoric times. Between 1860 and 1875, five hillforts were built to protect Portsmouth Harbour from invasion from the north - the concern was that an invading army would land in another area, progress to the top of Portsdown Hill and attack Portsmouth from that point; Hilsea Lines were not considered a strong enough defence.

Centuries of extensive grazing produced large areas of chalk grassland. In the 60 years leading up to the end of the last century this was reduced in extent through land use change such as intensive agriculture and an absence of management and development. The most diverse chalk grassland habitat is restricted to the SSSI with isolated fragments elsewhere on the hill.

Management

To maintain the calcareous grassland, grazing and scrub control is required. Some scrubland is beneficial as there is value in scrub to insects and birds, but this must be balanced against the biodiversity richness of the grassland habitat. Management of scrubland also makes the site more accessible for visitors.

Management of Council maintained public open space on Portsdown aims to maintain the variety of calcareous grassland types, scrub habitats and intermediate communities in a mosaic of optimal proportions for wildlife that also enables easy public access. This requires scrub control, mowing and grazing informed by the distribution of notable species over a range of sites ranging from high value chalk grassland to amenity open space with a high visitor presence.

Whilst some scrub brings benefits in terms of shelter and habitat variation it will inevitably spread into grassland and restrict visitor access if left unmanaged. Ongoing control is therefore required. It is not currently possible to use grazing animals such as goats, therefore mechanised techniques are used, notably flail mowing. Species rich grassland requires annual defoliation to maintain it, which involves either mowing or grazing.

Further consideration of the relative climate change effect of the different scrub and grassland management techniques must be borne in mind as grazing animals produce methane and mowers are reliant on fossil fuel for power. A balance must be struck between maintaining biodiversity and climate impact.

The approach taken is to estimate and regularly re-evaluate the carbon footprint of the management regime. An initial assessment would suggest that fuel usage is more than offset by carbon storage in the soil and woody vegetation. It compares favourably with recreational or agricultural land uses.

Forward vision

The future vision for Portsdown Hill can be summarised by the following themes:

- Maintenance, connection and expansion of Portsdown's characteristic diversity
- Agricultural modelling
- Partnerships with adjacent sites / landowners
- Ecological education and learning
- Equality of access
- Corporate sponsorship

Preferred outcomes

With further funding, management of the site could be incorporated into a sustainable biodiversity model incorporating other sites on the escarpment that are managed by other bodies. Incorporating Portsdown Hill's extensive but low level productivity into nearby equine and agricultural systems will achieve the desired outcomes of site management for biodiversity and reduction of the environmental consequences of conventional fodder production in the locality.

Conservation haymaking on Portsdown Hill can yield a product of use to farms and equestrian centres, thereby reducing their environmental impact arising from bought in fertiliser grown hay. Fertiliser is a particularly carbon invasive product.

The impact of keeping animals is further reduced by grazing them on Portsdown Hill, again reducing the amount of fodder called into existence with its attendant fertiliser requirement.

A potentially valuable source of compost is produced by both the conservation management and the animal keeping operations. Scrub control and mowing operations on Portsdown Hill generate organic material in the form of a variety of shredded plant material. This is currently incorporated into tree planting areas. Stables produce a considerable amount of high fertility waste which has the undesirable consequences of excessive soil nutrient levels and atmospheric pollution when formed into dung heaps. A considered and resourced waste management system could produce a flow of valuable growth material, whilst minimising adverse consequences of handling the material.

Biodiversity and habitat connectivity across Portsdown Hill is an important consideration. The most significant areas of Portsdown's remaining biodiversity lie within the Council's boundary and the majority of this is managed by the Parks Service. It is therefore appropriate that the strategy for reconnecting biodiversity across Portsdown Hill, through ecologically viable corridors, comes from the City Council.



Further cross service work could be undertaken with the Museum Service, in particular working with Cumberland House Natural History Museum. The aim would be to increase biodiversity awareness to run joint walks and activities that could be advertised in the city's community centres. This work could be enabled by a Countryside Education Officer who could also expand the current schools offer. Many children in the city do not have access to private gardens therefore Portsdown Hill is a key environment for schools activities.

The topography of the site precludes open access for all however there are pockets of opportunity where access could be broadened. There are a number of viewpoints at the north and south of the site, where persons with mobility requirements could have access to clear views across the area, within the constraints of the environment.

Currently the Countryside Officer is discussing with Queen Alexandra Hospital to enable patients and staff to have direct access to Portsdown Hill without leaving the hospital at the main entrance. This will allow for safe, healthy walks in the section of Portsdown Hill adjacent to the hospital site.

NHS staff working at Queen Alexandra Hospital currently park at Fort Southwick. The Countryside Officer is undertaking a clearing of the route so that the staff can walk through the reserve to the hospital (instead of taking the shuttle bus).

There is a constant pressure with regard to anti-social behaviour at the site, including burnt cars, littering, flytipping and prohibited motorcycle use. There is an ongoing relationship with the Police and it is hoped that further investment into education programmes and signage might provide some level of mitigation. Communication continues with agencies on adjacent land with regard to their responsibilities for litter clearance.

At the present time the wildlife work at Portsdown Hill is funded in entirety via a Countryside Stewardship agreement.

This will be replaced by the Environmental Land Management Scheme. It may be possible to explore corporate sponsorship towards meeting the environmental objectives at the site from local companies as part of their corporate social responsibility models.

The Countryside Officer works collaboratively with colleagues across the Council, who have Council budgets to achieve general management outcomes. Care for the wildlife rich land such as Portsdown Hill is achieved via external funding streams. However, management of the more conventional 'parks' functions is shared, e.g. amenity grass cutting, rubbish bin collection, together with infrastructure requirements such as car parking, signage and seating. Additionally, work is undertaken by the Council's Highways contractor regarding verge maintenance.

19. King George V Playing Fields

This site in Cosham is part of the city's provision for sports facilities for football. The site is protected in perpetuity by Fields in Trust.

The Football Association, Premier League and Sport England have developed a strategy to target areas of the country where there is pressure on provision.⁴⁶ This strategy provides investment into facilities for local communities and is known as the Parklife Football Hub Programme. The programme prioritises local authorities with populations exceeding 200,000 and Portsmouth meets this criteria. The purpose of the programme is to make sure local areas have a sustainable model for football provision, based on artificial grass pitches at key sites.

Implementing the Parklife model in Portsmouth included consideration of a number of sites, including Farlington, Langstone, Rugby Camp and Alexandra Park, together with looking into the feasibility of partnership models. The assessment concluded that King George V Playing Fields (KGV) was the most appropriate site, as reflected in the Portsmouth Playing Pitch Strategy 2018-2034.⁴⁷ As part of the model, it is important that undue pressure is not put on ancillary facilities (changing rooms and social facilities). At KGV, the changing rooms were good quality but were damaged by arson in 2017.

The Council made a submission for funding to the Football Foundation (which now incorporates the Parklife Programme) as part of the Local Football Facilities Plan. The Council also committed funding via their capital programme. The scheme incorporates a new pavilion (changing facilities, café space and toilets) in addition to two artificial grass pitches (AGP) which provide a variety of pitch options. The advantage of smaller pitches is that they can provide for youth football and training and encourage children and young people to take part. The toilets and café will also be of benefit to other users of KGV and the AGPs, by providing all weather provision, will help prevent overplay of other grass pitches. The plan allowed for the appointment of an operator for the facility through open tender. Residents' feedback was sought regarding the scheme in autumn 2021.

⁴⁶ <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/parklife-football-hub-prospectus-july-2017.pdf>

⁴⁷ [Final Draft Portsmouth City Council Stage D -PPS - V7 - 08.03.18.pdf](#)



The Council is continuing to work with the Football Foundation, Hampshire Football Association and local clubs towards delivery of the enhanced pavilion and pitch provision for the site. Planning consent has been granted for the development and having successfully received financial support from the Football Foundation, the hub is due to open in within the next year.

Additionally, KGV is a key events space for the north of the city, having previously hosted fireworks celebrations and one of the Big Lunch destinations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022.

20. Bransbury Park

Bransbury Park is a popular park to the south of the city at Eastney. Current facilities include playing pitches, hard courts, a model railway, children's play area, café and formal garden. Eastney Community Centre is also based here.



In 2020 it was established that Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre required major capital expenditure and significant ongoing subsidy to keep them open. Feasibility studies established that the wet and dry provision at Eastney and Wimbledon Park respectively should be combined into a new facility, a community sports hub at Bransbury Park. A city consultation in 2020 established that 63% of respondents were supportive of this proposal and 78% of respondents intended to use the new facility. A more focussed consultation in 2021 targeted local residents and existing users of the community centre. This found that in the PO4 postcode which includes Bransbury Park, 80% of respondents said they would be likely or very likely to use the facility.

The facility mix is currently being developed and will include a swimming pool, a learner pool, a sports centre (studios and gym) and a GP surgery. The addition of the learner pool at the site will be a significant improvement on the Eastney Pool provision, which in addition to requiring ongoing subsidy did not include a shallow/learner pool provision, meaning it was not suitable for stages 1-3 of the learn-to-swim programme.

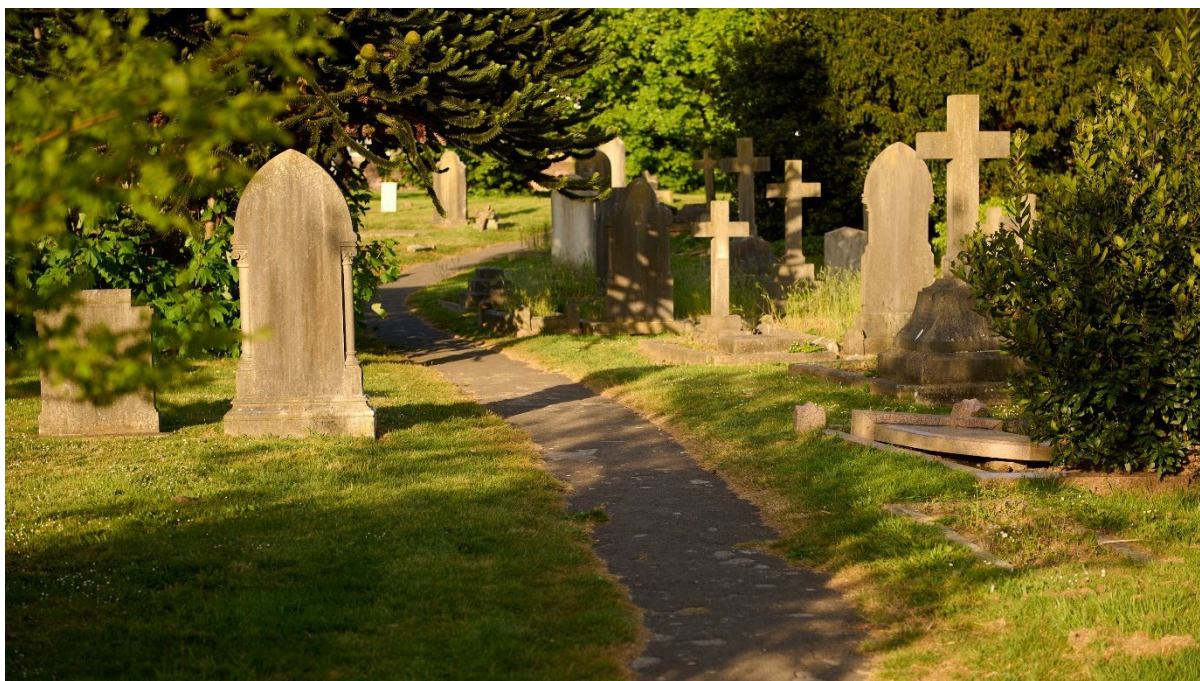
The planning application will focus on how and where the current hard courts can be re-provided elsewhere and on the planning case for loss of court space. It is important to note that the loss of space would be relatively unused hard court space rather than playing fields or 'green space'.

21. Cemeteries and Allotments

Cemeteries

Portsmouth has three cemeteries: Milton Road, Kingston and Highland Road.

Although their primary function is as burial sites, cemeteries provide multifunctional space. Members of the public can walk, run and dog walk through these areas and they also provide much needed biodiversity and wildlife space. They provide a quiet space for reflection. There are opportunities to increase community engagement with these spaces, either in terms of wildlife or historical interest.



The cemeteries strategy considers how to manage existing cemeteries space to meet current demand and plan for future requirements. It notes their secondary function as referred above.

The strategy considers several issues for future consideration, including:

- Increasing capacity for burial space;
- Designating areas for particular communities;
- Improving and enhancing cemeteries as areas of public value for green space;
- Options for long term sustainability.

Improvements to cemetery green space include tree and biodiversity management. The strategy notes that there is also opportunity for community engagement, such as the possibility of Friends groups for each or all the cemeteries.

Allotments

There are 9 allotment sites of varying sizes across the city.

A total of 1851 allotment plots sit under the council, spread across the following sites: Horsea Lane, Knowsley Road, Longmeadow, Milton sites (Milton Piece, Eastney Lake, Hope Cottage), Moneyfields, North Harbour, Salisbury Road, Stamshaw and Tipner, and (outside the city) Durrants (Rowlands Castle).

Waiting list times vary across the sites from approximately 1 year to 4 years. To increase the number of plots, larger plots (over 253 square metres) are now divided into 2 or 3 plots.



Allotment sizes provide several benefits to their users:

Sustainability

Allotment gardening contributes towards biodiversity health through organic gardening (free of pesticides), green waste recycling, water retention and working in harmony with nature.

Physical and Mental Health

Gardening provides restorative benefits to those with physical and mental health challenges and encourages physical activity for those living inactive lifestyles. It provides a sense of fulfilment by growing and consuming self-grown produce. They provide an opportunity for outdoor recreation space in a densely populated city where many households do not have a private garden.

Community building

Allotments can be utilised by everyone in the community. They can draw groups of people together across the age groups and social groups. Whilst they may be registered with one person, they can be used by family groups and groups of friends.

Education

Allotment growing introduces principles of cultivation and plant growth to child development. A number of schools in the city have allotment sites and this also provides opportunity for nursery groups and youth groups. Schools may also choose to create their own plots within their school grounds.

Each allotment site has an allotment association. The associations are a great source of support and knowledge for tenants, who may choose to be members. New allotment holders are provided with information on the processes and requirements of taking on an allotment by the allotment association, at the start of their tenancy.

The Council provides tenants with a copy of the terms and conditions that must be adhered to, in particular, allotment holders should always ensure that the plot site is left secure.

It is permitted for 25% of a plot to be left uncultivated for the purposes of rewilding but this must not be so wild that 'weeds' cause problems for adjoining plot holders.

Allotment inspections are carried out regularly, if uncultivated a dirty plot letter is issued and if not resolved, a notice to quit issued and ultimately the tenancy will be terminated. Inspections are undertaken between March and September.

Maintenance issues and addressing untended 'dirty' plots is required to be undertaken from within a tight revenue budget, together with dealing with security issues where there is not sufficient budget for CCTV monitoring, without a capital investment. Since 2018 over £30,000 capital investment has been made to the allotment sites, in the form of new fencing, gates, repairs and new access locks.

Subject to land becoming available, new allotment sites may be considered, particularly in areas of the city which are currently furthest away from any allotment sites.

However, any decision to provide new allotment sites is made in consideration of other demands on public land. An assumption of refusal of any application for planning permission is made where it would result in a net loss of publicly accessible open space.

An alternative to allotment spaces is community garden projects. A community garden project allocates a growing and garden space to a community group to enjoy and look after together. The space can be used to grow flowers and vegetables and encourage wildlife in the area. It also provides a pleasant environment for the community to meet and provides health and social benefits to participants. A community garden space is included in the plans for the regeneration of Victoria Park. Landport Community Garden is an example of a successful current space, where all are welcome to participate.

There are 6 pantries and 3 larders in the city shown on the [Portsmouth Food Support Network](#). Some pantries are already connected to allotment sites for receipt of community produce and it is intended that this connection continues.

22. Delivery and Monitoring of the strategy

The strategy will be taken to Cabinet for approval following consultation. The plan will be monitored over the course of its term, through regular project reports added to the Members Projected Work Programme and project corporate performance monitoring.

There are several audits that take place regularly, including for play equipment, pitch provision and plant machinery. Grounds condition is continually assessed via annual and season renovation schedules as part of operational plans.

Greening reporting is taken to Cabinet as a cross portfolio item, which includes updates on greening and biodiversity for parks and open spaces.

The action principles in this strategy will be considered in more detail via service operational plans.

The directorate works closely with portfolio holders and opposition spokespersons. All Members are encouraged to take an interest in the work to protect our Parks and Open Spaces and are welcome to have site visits.

Key projects, such as Victoria Park, are subject to consultation with the community. Customers are also able to make contact by service enquiry and the directorate has a strong network of volunteers via existing Friends Groups who are encouraged to feedback.

23. Resources to fund the strategy

As illustrated in chapter 9, Parks Service budgets are extremely tight. All day to day spending must be managed by a balanced budget and cash limits are increasingly stretched to cover rising costs, which means there is little surplus, as the budget is for the most part taken up by maintenance requirements for existing spaces.

The full implementation of the projects highlighted in this strategy depend on either capital funding or grant funding. The service may apply for capital funding from the council and it is the council's decision as to how capital funding is allocated across all directorates. Not all schemes will be approved for capital funding, as there are only limited funds to utilise. The decision to award capital funding will be dependent on the current administration's priorities.

As at the 2023/2024 budget, the following schemes have been allocated capital funding by the Council for the period 2018-2024⁴⁸:

Scheme	Council contribution⁴⁹
Allotment Security Grants	31,787
Binstead Play Area	15,000
BMX Track (Baffins)	125,000
Bransbury Park Pavilion	150,000
Canoe Lake De-Silting	25,000
College Park Play Equipment	10,000
Contribution to roof at Southsea Skatepark	10,000
Disabled Beach Buggies and Access Mats	20,000

⁴⁸ Resources have also been committed towards Greening The City, as part of the Environment and Climate Change Portfolio.

⁴⁹ Where applicable, this includes section 106 and CIL funding.

Scheme	Council contribution⁴⁹
Farlington Pavilion Refurbishment	274,262
Gatcombe Park Play Area	15,000
Hilsea Basketball Court refurbishment / resurfacing	60,000
In-House Parks equipment ⁵⁰	104,571
Investment in Football Facilities including Changing Facilities	2,699,867
Milton Park Barn Thatched Roof	138,518
Outdoor Fitness Equipment	40,743
Parks and Open Spaces Boundary Protection Measures	65,032
Parks and Open Spaces Protection Measures to prevent incursion	12,840
Paulsgrove Football Club Fencing	30,000
Portsmouth Watersports Centre	709,830
Provision of a Dog Exercise and Training Area	23,883
Repair/ refurbishment of Southsea Splashpool	101,736
Renewal of skate ramps (Milton)	25,000
Re-provision of Leisure Centre, Pool and Community Centre ⁵¹	13,566,919
Seafront Litter Management	35,000
Southsea Common & Town Centre Litter Management	43,360
Victoria Park Heritage Lottery Fund	497,944
Total	18,831,292

External grant funding may come from several sources. The Levelling Up Fund was applied to for the successful Hilsea Linear Park bid. This fund is a £4.8 billion central government fund, for investing in infrastructure that improves everyday life outcomes, regenerates local centres and invests in cultural and heritage assets. The project could therefore demonstrate eligibility against the funding criteria.

New projects increasingly look towards external funding partners. The Victoria Park project has been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This looks to fund projects that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage. The Victoria Park project meets the criteria as it seeks to improve habitats, help people connect to nature, conserve a historic park and develop activities to engage the community.

The service can also take advantage of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This money is raised from developers when undertaking new building projects and can be used for required infrastructure resulting from the development. In addition, the CIL Transformation Fund allows for residents to raise money for community improvements and apply for match funding for half the project, up to £5000. This can include planting schemes and open space improvements.

⁵⁰ This is calculated as an annual average, based on the contributions for the period.

⁵¹ This sum includes borrowing of £1,223,129

Agenda Item 6



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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Community Inclusion Grants
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Report by:	Head of marketing, communications and engagement
Wards affected:	None

1. Requested by

1.1. Leader of the Council

2. Purpose

2.1. To update on the Community Inclusion Grant scheme.

3. Information Requested

3.1. In 2022 the council launched a one-off Community Inclusion Grant Scheme inviting community and voluntary sector groups to apply for up to £1,000 funding to support activities which challenge inequality, advance equality and celebrate diversity in Portsmouth. It resulted in 33 applications being taken forward representing a total of £32,444.80 in grant funding.

3.2. Following this in 2023/24 £30,000 from the Voluntary Sector Capacity & Transition Reserve was allocated to fund a second round of Community Inclusion Grants aimed at projects

- Advancing community cohesion and diversity by bringing people together
- Positive impacts relating to equalities, diversity and inclusion across the city
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the city
- Supporting community and residents with protected characteristics
- Tackling inequalities

3.3. Applications were open from 16 October until 3 December and 60 applications were received.

3.4. Each application was assessed by a range of council officers whose work focused on equalities, diversity and inclusion or frontline work with communities, as well as a representative of HIVE Portsmouth.



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3.5. A request for an additional £1,304.63 from the Voluntary Sector Capacity & Transition Reserve was agreed to enable funding for 32 projects to be progressed. A full list of these can be seen in appendix A.

3.6. Those applications that were not successful in securing a grant should not infer that they were in any way less worthy causes than others, decisions were made based on which applications best met the specific criteria of this scheme. All unsuccessful applicants have been advised how to work with HIVE Portsmouth in order to identify more suitable grant opportunities for their projects and support with developing any future grant applications.

.....
Signed by (Director)

Appendices:

Appendix A - List of applications awarded Community Inclusion Grants.

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

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Appendix A - Community Inclusion Grant recipients in 2024

- **432 Nomads** - This project presents the story of Ahmed and Walid, two Sudanese brothers who have risen from immigrant youth to become esteemed UK boxing champions. This is an immersive project including videos, street dancers and poetry reading.
- **Abilities for Life** - Abilities for Life is a community group that was set up by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. The group is solely delivered by volunteers with own experience of disabilities. The funding will be used over a timeframe of one calendar year and pay for room hire, transport and raffle prizes.
- **Boogie Mites** - Four music workshops to be delivered on Saturdays during Feb/March 2024 by Boogie Mites Teacher Pauline Nixon, for families with SEN children attending the school. Covering content included in Boogie Mites App: Building Strong Foundations for Language and Literacy Through Music.
- **Downtown Pompey** - The funding will be used for two workshops - the first focuses on upskilling young LGBTQIA+ people (between 10-12) by developing hard skills such as interviewing, writing and recording, including a focus on enriching 'soft' skills such as empathy and understanding. The second session will be a 'Hey Babe!' lunch where the young people host the space and conduct interviews between them and older LGBT+ people, these will be recorded and edited to create a podcast series named "Yap! - across the generations" that will be available for the public.
- **Fighting with Pride** - The Project name is called: 'Welcome Home Project'. The funding is intended to be used to support a number of activities and events for two key purposes: The first is to bring LGBT+ veterans together in order to build community and individual self-confidence and reduce loneliness and isolation. The second is to support promulgation of the recommendations made in the LGBT Veterans' Independent Review Report dated May 2022 by Lord Etherton (The Etherton Report). The Community Inclusion Grant funding will help support the information dissemination process through attendance at events and activities across the Portsmouth area.
- **Follow Your Dreamz Performing Arts** - Provision of hot meals to 70 individuals (Jan to Apr) as part of the FYD's mission of giving young people



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from disadvantaged backgrounds or with an invisible or visible disability a chance to express themselves through the medium of performing arts.

- **Global Music Vision CIC** - Project which supports and encourages school pupils with SEND, SI and other needs, to explore sounds, music and song creation, and to develop their listening, language, communication, and memory skills. This will take place in one school in Portsmouth, between April 2024 and January 2025.
- **Harbour Church** - Monthly provides a pop-up spa space, providing a safe, confidential space for women to come and receive a warm welcome, free beauty treatments and a delicious brunch.
- **Headway** - A three-month project providing inclusive sport, leisure and exercise classes to those with brain injury, including wheelchair users.
- **HomeStart Portsmouth** - Creating a Play & Stay group for LGBTQIA+ parents.
- **Host Space** - The Host Space is a not-for-profit coworking space. Of the regular coworkers, around 10% identify as trans+, 23% as LGBTQIA+ and 19% ADHD or Autistic, 8% with accessibility needs. The grant would go towards a series of awareness and training events for The Host Space wellbeing team in order to best care for workers with diverse needs and backgrounds. Secondly, the grant would go towards a ramp being built at the main entrance, so that wheelchair users who want to use the coworking space don't have to use the side entrance and be left feeling undervalued.
- **Hounds for Heroes** - Our principal objective is to enhance the quality of life of HM Armed Forces and Emergency Services personnel who have become disabled through injury or illness at any time. Our funding request for £1,000 would enable us to purchase five puppy packs. Our volunteer puppy parents are provided with all they need to give our puppy the best start on their journey with Hounds for Heroes. This year alone, we have acquired eight puppies with two new additions joining early in 2024.
- **Noah Mapalo Help Centre** - Portsmouth Unity Festival is a community-based initiative designed to celebrate and promote diversity. The project's main goal is to foster inclusivity, encourage cross-cultural understanding, and bring the residents of Portsmouth closer together by hosting a small-scale festival that

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showcases the cultures and backgrounds in the city. The funding will be used to cover decoration, catering and marketing costs.

- **Portsmouth City of Sanctuary** - PCoS' survey results indicated that 50% of items provided in a food parcel are food items that are not used or known to families from ethnic minority backgrounds. The funding will provide food hampers for asylum seeker and refugee families living in the city, including ingredients that are familiar to the families.
- **Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association** - Our social outings project focuses on addressing social isolation and exclusion among young people aged 8-21 with Down Syndrome. Funds will go towards the costs of our monthly social outings which always include sports or dance, so have additional fitness benefits. The young people will have exposure to positive role models that help them develop valuable life skills and confidence. By encouraging the formation of friendships, the project contributes to the creation of a supportive community that understands and embraces diversity.
- **Portsmouth Gambian Society** - Portsmouth Gambian Association intends to organise and celebrate a religious feast known as Eid-UL ADHA. This event will bring Muslims and non-Muslims communities together and will help increase religious and cultural understanding, awareness, tolerance and will further help to foster peaceful coexistence within the communities of Portsmouth.
- **SEND Butterflies** - This is a peer led community group for the parents and carers of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The project will be delivered in the community and in an area of deprivation within Portsmouth. It is our intention to use the funding to pay for the hire of the building we are using for the first year whilst our volunteers engage in fundraising via grants and events in the area so that the project can continue after the initial 12 months.
- **Sparkle Lodge** - Sparkle Lodge is an inclusive nursery and already has a large number of children with disabilities. We currently support many children who have a special educational need or disability. We are looking for grant funding to provide the Wellcomm skills, the complete speech and language toolkit, from screening to intervention, as we have a number of children who have significant speech delay or are non-verbal.

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- **Spirit in Sport** - Table Tennis Café - this is a project funded by last year's community inclusion grant and the organisation is seeking more funding this year to allow the project to continue. The vision of the café is simple: to get people of all ages and backgrounds together to enjoy some light exercise (thus making them more healthy and confident) and a cuppa/lunch whilst also mitigating the loneliness that is still epidemic since the Coronavirus pandemic by bringing people together into a loving, welcoming community.
- **Sustrans** - Sustrans' Welcome Wheels project works in partnership to address all these issues. With the right support and equipment, refugees and asylum seekers will develop the skills and confidence to navigate the city by bicycle.
- **The Aldingbourne Trust** - MAKE@Aldingbourne is a Community Hub, providing training and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and Autism. In September 2023, the team at MAKE organised Portsmouth's first Suicide Awareness Public Event in Victoria Park, As a continuation of this event and leading up to Suicide Awareness Day 2024, MAKE aims to develop the project and provide continuous support and signposting to vulnerable people. The project would enable MAKE to hold two workshops a month up to September 2024.
- **The Andrew Simpson Foundation (ASF)** - This is a new joint project between the Andrew Simpson Centre Portsmouth and Paulsgrove Schools to help tackling inequality in that area. The aim of this project is to provide primary-school-aged children in the Paulsgrove area with easy access to water-based activities and watersports that are on their doorstep, but currently not being accessed, due to cost and lack of opportunity. Paulsgrove has high levels of deprivation and an area of concern and focus for Portsmouth City Council.
- **The Elizabeth Foundation** - Purchase of air-conditioning units for rooms where hearing tests for newborns are undertaken to facilitate screenings taking place. If the baby is hot this causes them to become unsettled and the tests cannot be performed.
- **The LifeHouse** - Charity supporting those in need. Grant to go towards providing food parcels (food and delivery costs).
- **The New Ground CIC** - Weekly co-creation program for adults with learning difficulties aged 25+; partnering with local organisations. This will also include a development programme for 13 learning disability ambassadors who are a part

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of Inclusive Arts Committee, offering leadership and workshops, skills development and creative workshops.

- **The Parenting Network** - A pilot programme of Birth Preparation Classes for ethnic minority communities in Portsmouth. Delivered with support of the Cross Cultural Women's group, we would be able to provide four sessions with interpreters/translators and resources in multiple languages, to ensure expectant mothers are receiving the knowledge and care they require. Our Birth Preparation Classes have been approved by PCC/NHS and meet all the current standards and requirements.
- **The You Trust** - YOU helps people in our communities who need care, support, and advice due to poverty, homelessness, disability, age, ill health or abuse. The sessions would be delivered and tailored to meet the needs of our patients, and their long-term conditions would be considered, and sessions adapted to eliminate discrimination. The sessions would enhance equality by improving access to services which wouldn't normally be available due to cost, their health conditions and distance to travel.
- **Tonic Music for Mental Health** - As part of the Never Mind The Mind Stigma Programme, we require a venue to provide peer support groups in order to support the men of Portsmouth who are struggling with suicide ideation (a state of hopelessness & feeling they no longer belong in this world). Alongside this, we will also have a separate support group for those who have been affected by suicide.
- **Toucan Diversity** - Toucan Diversity is a disabled people-led CIC and is a CPD accredited training provider. With the funding, Toucan Diversity will organise 2 x 4 hrs open disability training events for 15 people each. The training looks at the bias of disability, covering the social & medical models of disability and equips the attendees with the correct language and etiquette when interacting with disabled employees or customers. Our training is CPD accredited and has a set lesson-plan with a variety of group activities and video work in place ensuring the required learning outcome.
- **Viva Gymnastics** - Viva Gymnastics Club Viva4All Program - This program aims to deliver FREE gymnastics sessions Family fun session, Play sessions for children who fall under the SEND umbrella over the next 12 months as we build the project into an ongoing, long-term solution for supporting SEND families and young people in Portsmouth at risk of harm. We aim to offer

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support and structure as the months start to get colder and SEND families find themselves limited in their activities.

- **Wet Wheels Solent** - The organisation will provide accessible boating experiences for disabled people with learning disabilities in and around Hampshire, plus friends, family and carers, as a match funding opportunity with the David Solomon Grant.
- **Work Better Innovations** - Developing Digital Skills for Job Search among Minorities, aims to improve employment outcomes for individuals from an ethnic minority demographic in Portsmouth. The project addresses digital inequalities by providing specialist mentoring and support for minority and migrant jobseekers to leverage professional networks and employment platforms available online for their professional integration into the public life of Portsmouth.

Agenda Item 7



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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Full Cabinet
Subject:	UKSPF year 2 Interim Report
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Report by:	Ian Maguire Assistant Director for Planning and Economic Development
Authored by:	Steve Curtis Funding Manager Jane Lamer Head of Economic Development and Skills
Cabinet member	Councillor Steve Pitt Portfolio Holder for CLED / Leader
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

- 1.1 This report, identifying the approved and intended spending allocations under the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) was requested by the Leader, Councillor Pitt.

2. Purpose

- 2.2 UKSPF was launched in August 2022 as a key strategy within the levelling up agenda. UKSPF replaces previous ESF (European Social Funding) and is designed to support local areas to overcome the deep-seated geographical inequalities and promote people's pride in place.
- 2.3 Portsmouth received an allocation of £1,423,433 over 3 years, significantly less than anticipated based on previous ESF delivery, the CRF (Community Renewal Fund) pilot delivered in 2021/22 as a trial for UKSPF and local need.
- 2.4 The allocation is received as follows:

22/23	23/24	24/25
£172,747	£345,493	£905,193

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- 2.5 Money is awarded against a provisional Investment Plan, which was approved and submitted in August 2022, highlighting provisional spend against the 41 delivery lines. The investment plan was clearly linked to Imagine Portsmouth 2040 and Portsmouth City Council's priorities.
- 2.6 In December 2022 we received confirmation of the approved Investment Plan. With contracting agreed we now have an allocation of £345,493 for in year spend for 2023/24.
- 2.7 Spend is over 3 priorities (Community & People / Local Business/ People & Skills), noting there is no allowed spend on People & Skills until year 3 (24/25). 13% (circa 45k) of the overall spend for year 2 (23/24) is required to be capital spend. The investment plan for Portsmouth exceeds this (see Y2 breakdown).
- 2.8 It is noted that in year 1 we saw the ending of significant ESF funded projects.
- 2.9 Allocations have been shared with cross council funding groups to ensure priority has gone to maximising existing funding streams and securing impact for businesses and residents.

3. Information Requested

- 3.1 All spend for Y2 was to be made in full by 31/03/24, however we are now informed we can carry over 20% of spend without penalty. If we carry over more than 20% then this must be justified, and Government will withhold part payment until this is spent.
- 3.2 Up to 4% (£13,820) is allowed each year for the extensive administrative costs for the delivery of the UKSPF. This leaves £331,673 for projects.
- 3.3 Overleaf is an overview of how the funds available for Y2 have been allocated.

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Community and Place Total £81,600

<u>E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets</u>	£9,600
<i>Welcome signage. £12,480 (Capital)</i>	
<i>Overspend against line of £2,880 allocated elsewhere.</i>	
<u>E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces</u>	£9,600 (Capital)
<i>This is currently earmarked for the Fratton Pocket Park, but it hoped this can be paid for by another pot and this can be reappropriated.</i>	
<u>E5: Built & landscaped environment to 'design out crime'</u>	£19,200 (Capital)
<i>Delivery of one floor graphic in Commercial Road - £10k</i>	
<i>Cameras placed around the area to increase visibility.</i>	
<u>E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities</u>	£4,800
<i>"Big read" in Victoria Park, staging, PA, toilets.</i>	
<u>E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living</u>	£38,400
<i>Provide outreach advice and support to increase uptake and reduce drop-out rates from the HUG home energy efficiency improvements scheme.</i>	

Local Business Total £250,073

<u>E16: Open markets & town centre retail & service sector</u>	£9,600
<i>Increased internal ownership of canopies and market equipment to support the Market strategy and opportunities for pop up business.</i>	
<u>E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators & accelerators</u>	£163,673
Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Service	£60,000
<i>Extending the SASH (Solent Apprenticeship and Skills HUB) ESF funded programme working with Southampton City Council we have retained the independent business advice with a continued focus on apprenticeship and training but now enhanced by sustainability funded programmes.</i>	
Student Enterprise Project	£850
<i>Level 4 Adult learners at HSDC (Havant & South Downs College) completing full-time courses to support their business trials. This work includes students engaging with the We Create Christmas Market 10/11 Dec 2023.</i>	

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Pop Up Shop & Small Business Saturday market £20,000

Branding and marketing materials to support the new Pop-Up Shop site in partnership with Cascades and Flude, providing 6-week trial rental opportunities within the high street (Commercial Road for initial pilot – sites in Cosham and other parts of the city are under investigation to widen the social impact).

Processing Spend for E24:

Business cases are being formulated to support the following applications:

Shaping Portsmouth Mentoring programme £20,000

Supporting the partnership work as Portsmouth Business Support Service, a bespoke mentoring programme for SMEs (Small or Medium sized Enterprise) using Shaping Portsmouth partner volunteers and a range of focused events and training responding to identified gaps for businesses working with further volunteers and appropriate professionals.

Business Support branding and signage for
City Buildings

£18,906 (Capital)

Providing clear direction and branding for new Enterprise Centre and business support offer to the north of Commercial Road. Increased marketing opportunity for all businesses at the gateway to the city, significantly increasing visibility of the service and support whilst increasing the image of the entrance point to the area.

City Buildings – Playland site regeneration £ 43,917 (Capital)

Funding is being directed to the capital spend for the regeneration of the Playlands site in City Buildings. The council purchased the building as part of the City Centre North regeneration work, but the outstanding insurance claim is faulting. Whilst this is pursued by the Property Team funds will be spent to provide a simple upgrade for the Playlands site. If this situation continues the remaining funds could apply against 2024/25 allocation to allow opening in April/May 24 supporting the Future High Streets refurbishment work at the north of commercial road (additional £53,099.98 estimated). This investment will support the letting of the site and there are commercially sensitive discussions in place with both community and commercial organisations which will support the work around.

E29: Supporting decarbonisation & improving natural environment £38,400

Project with Shaping Portsmouth to support businesses to reduce carbon and annual licences from a platform called Zellar, which is a sustainability platform that helps measure/report/reduce/link up with grant funding sources for decarbonisation.

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E30: Business support measures to drive employment Growth £38,400

Arts Council Match Funding £33,000

Working with Portsmouth Creates who are administering a minimum of 10 £3,000 match funding grants allowing businesses to access an additional £27,000 of funding each business. This investment will secure £270,000 additional funding into the city.

City Buildings – Playland site regeneration £5,400

As above

- 3.4 Proposal for spend in year 3 (2024/25) will be in line with agreement with Cabinet in 2022. The final projects will be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Culture Leisure and Economic Development ahead of formal allocation.

Signed by pp (Director)

Appendices: Appendix 1 year 3 spend

APPENDIX 1

Portsmouth City Council UKSPF Year 3 spend

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Portsmouth City Council acknowledge the significant reduction in funding impacting particularly on:

- Business support (including start up, international work, R&D, growth)
- Apprenticeship information support (individual and business support)

European social funding has supported a range of projects in the city including support of vulnerable groups (homeless, underrepresented communities), employment-based projects and capital projects.

Current indicative spends are focus on areas which are losing funding and will include commissioned business support in years 2 and 3.

Funding cannot be allocated to the third priority of People and Skills until year 3, and we note key programmes that support this area locally will close in 2024 (including Solent Apprenticeship and Skills Hub) which we would look to extend.

Year 3 Spend - as per plan agreed by Cabinet in 2022 £905,193 (*Italics relate to potential projects to be confirmed by Portfolio Holder*).

Admin up to £36,207.72 (4% as per agreement with Government)

Spend £868,985.28 (20% of spend min will need to be capital - £181,038).

Community and Places	£91,200
E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets <i>Including enhancement of FSH (Future High Street Spend) and delivery of the Market Strategy (Strategy agreed by CLED (Culture Leisure and Economic Development) Nov 22)</i>	£19,200
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces <i>Further cross city work</i>	£ 9,600
E5: Built & landscaped environment to 'design out crime' <i>Supporting safer street work</i>	£19,200
E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities <i>Enabling cultural projects</i>	£ 4,800
E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living <i>Enabling enhancement of essential spend</i>	£38,400

Local business	£537,785.28
E16: Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	£ 9,600

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Supporting small business support and start up.

E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators & accelerators £288,000

Focused start up and acceleration support for Portsmouth based businesses working in partnership with other business support providers to provide value for money. Additional grants as match funding for identified sectors.

E29: Supporting decarbonisation & improving natural environment £ 38,400

Supporting green growth as a key council priority.

E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth £201,785.28

Further development of mentoring, business engagement activities, recruitment for vulnerable groups to meet local need. Support for the exploration of BID (Business Improvement Districts) in key areas of the city where there is business leadership. Ringfenced spend (in the region of £50,000) for the completion of the Playlands refurbishment to allow this to move to renting and support the FSH (Future high streets) spend on Commercial Road).

People and Skills £240,000

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people £144,000
Skills based activities based on business need, led by the business community to support local employment.

E38: Local areas to fund local skills needs £ 96,000
Support for targeted interventions not funded by existing pathways to drive local employment. Potential projects around sector recruitment led by business groups to address under representation.

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The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
UK Shared Prosperity Fund prospectus (Aug 22)	UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
UKSPF Allocations (Aug 22)	UKSPF allocations - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Imagine Portsmouth	Homepage - Imagine Portsmouth
Our council aims and priorities	Our council aims and priorities - Portsmouth City Council

Agenda Item 8



Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Subject:	Supporting residents with the cost of living
Report by:	James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Report author:	Mark Sage, Tackling Poverty Coordinator
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steve Pitt, Leader
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To highlight the impact if the Government decides not to extend Household Support Fund (HSF) grant to local authorities from 1 April 2024, and what this would mean for the Council's ability to support residents affected by the cost of living crisis.
- 1.2. To make recommendations for the Council to continue to provide cost of living support to residents in financial hardship during the financial year April 2024 to March 2025, subject to the Council budget-setting process and any announcement from Government on HSF or other funding for local authorities to provide cost of living support.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet approves the plan to deliver cost of living support to residents through the service delivery outlined in Appendix 1, subject to the Council budget-setting process and any announcement from Government on HSF or other funding for local authorities to provide cost of living support.
- 2.2. Cabinet delegates to the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services, the implementation of the plan and adjustments to the plan and spend, in the event that other funding sources become available, in agreement with the Leader and S.151 officer.



- 2.3. Cabinet asks the Tackling Poverty Coordinator to continue to work with partner agencies and residents to ensure we have a joined up, partnership approach to cost of living support, making best use of resources across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.
- 2.4. Cabinet notes the Leader's letters sent to the Secretaries of State at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shown in Appendix 2, and agrees to continue to lobby Government for additional funding for Local Authorities, to enable us to provide more comprehensive local welfare provision and support to residents affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- 2.5. Cabinet places on record their thanks for the cross-directorate working group which has supported the implementation of the delivery of the Household Support Fund in 2023/24 and produced a plan to sustain a package of cost of living support throughout 2024/25.
- 2.6. Cabinet also places on record a note of special thanks to the teams across the Council who have delivered support to residents affected by the cost of living crisis, and to the Council's Tackling Poverty Coordinator and the Household Support Fund delivery team who have administered the HSF in 2023/24. The setting up of a delivery team, designing application processes to deliver the grant to households throughout the city in the same financial year the grant was received is noted as exemplary work.

3. Background

3.1. Responding to the cost of living crisis

- 3.1.1. Providing support to residents who have been affected by the rising cost of living has been identified as a priority by the administration, and included in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2023/24; under our mission to improve lives, we will work to support individuals and families struggling to make ends meet.
- 3.1.2. Prior to the sharp rise in the cost of living during 2022-23, the Council was already providing a range of support and advice to low income households in the city, with services delivered by a number of Directorates. These include:
 - 3.1.2.1. Specialist money and benefits advice through the Housing money advice team and the Adult services financial assessments and Benefits team;
 - 3.1.2.2. Access to affordable culture and leisure through the Portsmouth Leisure Card;
 - 3.1.2.3. Employment, learning and skills programmes;

- 3.1.2.4. The HAF Fun Pompey programme, offering holiday activities and food to low income families;
- 3.1.2.5. Support for people in fuel poverty delivered through Switched On Portsmouth.
- 3.1.3. The cost of living crisis increased both the number of households that are struggling financially, and the depth of poverty for those already in difficulties.
- 3.1.4. The initial strategy implemented by the Council in response to this had three elements: to understand the existing work happening at the Council and through existing networks to build on relationships and good practice; to put together an immediate response to help people; and to use data and insight to support the development of a longer-term approach.
- 3.1.5. The cost of living project was launched in November 2022, and provides dedicated cost of living support for residents through an online hub, a telephone helpline, and a support worker who deals with complex cases and undertakes outreach work. The activity is supported by a range of marketing to ensure residents are aware of the available support.
- 3.1.6. In its first year (7 November 2022 to 6 November 2023), the online information hub was visited 37,000 times, by over 29,000 users.
- 3.1.7. The most viewed information was help with essential costs, including energy and other bills and help with food.
- 3.1.8. During the same period, there were over 1,700 calls to the cost of living helpline, which resulted in 126 referrals to the cost of living support officer, and 1,021 supported referrals to City Council services, external agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations, including 236 food bank referrals.
- 3.1.9. The project also uses data and insight from a range of local and national sources¹ and results from the Council's most recent resident survey², to understand the impact of the rising cost of living on people in Portsmouth.
- 3.1.10. The rising cost of living is driven by inflation; increases in the cost of everyday essentials for households in Portsmouth.
- 3.1.11. Last winter, maximum energy prices were restricted by the Energy Price Guarantee, which meant that an average household would pay £2,500 per year for gas and electricity.

¹ <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/health/joint-strategic-needs-assessment/poverty-and-cost-of-living/>

² <https://yourcityyoursay.portsmouth.gov.uk/resident-research/>

- 3.1.12. From July 2023, Ofgem reduced the energy price cap to £2,074, and £1,834 from October, before increasing again to £1,928 from January 2024.
- 3.1.13. However, during winter 2023-24, the Government did not provide households with the £600 Energy Bill Support Scheme that was provided the previous winter, meaning that total average household energy costs are very similar this winter to the previous winter.
- 3.1.14. In addition to this, Ofgem has increased the standing charge element of energy bills, which costs more proportionally for low usage households, who are often low income and in fuel poverty³.
- 3.1.15. This means that some of the lowest income households in Portsmouth could have higher energy bills this year than last year.
- 3.1.16. Although the rate at which food prices are rising has slowed, they remain high. The overall price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by around 26% between December 2022 and December 2023. In the 10 years prior to this, overall food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rose by just 9%⁴.
- 3.1.17. The Consumer Price Index reached a peak of 11.1% in October 2022⁵. This reduced to 4.0% by December 2023, however this does not mean that prices are reducing, just that they are increasing at a slightly slower rate.
- 3.1.18. Even if inflation falls further as expected, increases in prices over the last two years will continue to put additional pressure on household budgets until wages, benefits and pensions catch up.
- 3.1.19. In the Council's residents survey in summer 2023, four in five residents told us they are concerned about the rising cost of living and their ability to manage their finances, with those aged 16 to 44, families with children, households with a disabled person, ethnic minority households and renters being the most concerned.

3.2. Government support with the cost of living

- 3.2.1. Household Support Fund (HSF) was first made available to local authorities in October 2021 for six months, and followed the closure of the Covid-19 Furlough scheme, the removal of the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit entitlements, and the first significant increase in the energy price cap.
- 3.2.2. In April 2022, local authorities received confirmation that HSF had been extended until 30 September 2022, and on 30 September, the scheme was extended for another six month period, to 31 March 2023.

³ <https://www.nea.org.uk/news/standing-charge-rises-low-income-households/>

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costoflivinginsights/food>

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/december2023>

- 3.2.3. The Government's Autumn 2022 Budget statement announced that HSF would be extended for another year, in response to the rapidly developing cost of living crisis. On 20 February 2023, Local Authorities received the final guidance for the 2023-24 scheme, which included some significant changes in how support should be delivered.
- 3.2.4. The Council has made full use of the funding available in each round of the HSF, providing a range of assistance to residents directly and in partnership with schools, childcare settings, and voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 3.2.5. Previous reports updating Cabinet on HSF and support with the cost of living are shown in the document table at the end of this report.
- 3.2.6. An update on the delivery of the current round of HSF is provided in Appendix 3.
- 3.2.7. In addition to HSF administered by the Council, Portsmouth residents have been able to receive additional financial support direct from the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 3.2.8. In 2023-24, around 27,000 households in Portsmouth received one-off cost of living payments worth up to £900, 18,400 residents received disability cost of living payments of £150, and winter fuel payments were increased by between £150 and £300.
- 3.2.9. However, the Government's Autumn 2023 Budget statement made no provision for any further Household Support Fund grant, cost of living payments or increased winter fuel payments.
- 3.2.10. The only significant additional financial support announced in the Autumn statement was to re-evaluate Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024, with these rates to be maintained in cash terms in future years.
- 3.2.11. The additional funding for Local Housing Allowance is important for private rented sector tenants facing a shortfall between the amount of financial support they receive and the cost of their rent, but this is only one element of the cost of living crisis, and the increased support will not benefit City Council or Housing Association tenants, owner occupiers, or those living with friends and family. As outlined above, the Household Support Fund has supported a wider range of households who will not receive the same benefit through the increase in Local Housing Allowance rates.
- 3.2.12. Government have indicated that there will be a budget announcement on Wednesday 6 March. In the event that the budget announcement (or any announcement before or after) changes the position by extending the Household Support Fund or providing alternative funding for Local Authorities

to deliver local welfare assistance or cost of living support, the plan set out in this report can be adapted accordingly.

3.3. Proposed ongoing cost of living support 2024/25

- 3.3.1. In the absence of further financial support for Portsmouth households struggling with the cost of living, the Council will need to target limited resources to continue providing support to our residents when needed.
- 3.3.2. The proposal seeks to maintain essential elements of the current offer to help those in the greatest need, within the resource available, by providing:
 - 3.3.2.1. The cost of living support line universal offer, to help families and individuals navigate the support that remains in place across the city;
 - 3.3.2.2. Grant funding to the food support network;
 - 3.3.2.3. Extension of the HAF Fun Pompey programme to enable a wider range of families to access the programme and maintain support for families facing acute financial hardship;
 - 3.3.2.4. Grant funding for debt advice customers who are unable to afford the cost of entering a formal debt solution.
- 3.3.3. The detail of the package and reasons for these recommended areas of focus are outlined in the following section, and summarised in Appendix 1.
- 3.3.4. Even with the additional support in place, the loss of almost £3.8 million in annual funding for local welfare assistance will undoubtedly have a significant impact on lower income households in Portsmouth.
- 3.3.5. The fact that the Government may be withdrawing funding for local welfare provision means that the Council would have no dedicated source of funding to alleviate financial hardship, and would be reliant on identifying other sources of funding to meet this need.
- 3.3.6. The loss of funding for the family voucher scheme is the largest financial loss and will affect around 6,000 families in Portsmouth. This support was delivered in partnership with schools, and the Council will use that partnership to inform parents about these vouchers ending, and the sources of help that remain available to them.
- 3.3.7. Loss of funding for furniture and white goods will increase the number of residents living in material deprivation, without essential items needed for a reasonable standard of living. This will increase demand on local charities that provide essential items, and increase the need for support workers to help

residents find alternative provision, including charitable grants and affordable loans.

- 3.3.8. The online cost of living hub will help to ensure that local residents and agencies supporting them have access to accurate and up to date information on the options available.
- 3.3.9. The loss of funding for additional fuel poverty measures means that needs could be identified, through the Switched On Portsmouth helpline or the LEAP home energy advice visit programme, without funding being available to meet those needs. The council's Energy Team will continue to work in partnership to ensure that Switched On Portsmouth enables residents to access all of the available sources of funding to improve cold homes and reduce energy bills.
- 3.3.10. The Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies poverty as one of the 'causes of the causes' of health inequalities, with work on this priority area led by the council's tackling poverty coordinator, working with the local multi-agency partnership for tackling poverty, which is a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This work will continue, to ensure the council is taking action to tackle poverty in partnership with other anchor institutions and the voluntary and community sector.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1. Access to information, advice and support

- 4.1.1. People in financial hardship can be vulnerable to exploitation, from illegal money lending (loan sharks), to mis-selling of Individual Voluntary Arrangements and other debt relief products.
- 4.1.2. Nearly half (48%) of people who are behind on consumer credit bills have felt overwhelmed by the frequency of contact from their creditors⁶.
- 4.1.3. The latest wave of the council's resident research shows that the council continues to be a trusted source of advice and information, with over two thirds of respondents saying they feel it is very or quite trustworthy, compared to only a quarter for central Government⁷.
- 4.1.4. The council should use its role in the community to help people find accurate, up to date and relevant information that can help residents to manage the cost of living.
- 4.1.5. Not everyone can be helped online or in a single phone call, so in addition to this universal offer, since November 2022, the council's new cost of living support worker has been able to take referrals from the cost of living helpline

⁶ <https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Debts-and-despair-report.pdf>

⁷ <https://yourcityyoursay.portsmouth.gov.uk/resident-research/wave-four-november-2022/trust/>

and other local partners, for people who need one-to-one support with their issues.

4.1.6. Maintaining this specialist support role ensures there is both a universal offer, and additional help when needed.

4.2. Portsmouth food support network

4.2.1. The local voluntary and community sector provides a range of support with food, in all areas of the city⁸. This includes:

4.2.1.1. Food banks, providing emergency food parcels for people who have no food;

4.2.1.2. Community meals, providing regular prepared food for people who may not otherwise have access to cooked meals;

4.2.1.3. Community larders and pantries, offering members food and other essential household items at significantly reduced prices.

4.2.2. The impact of the pandemic followed by the cost of living crisis has meant that services are seeing historically high and increasing levels of need, alongside reductions and disruptions in the supply of food, from individual donations and charitable and corporate support.

4.2.3. HIVE Portsmouth provides support to local organisations looking to develop and extend the provision of food support to areas where it is needed.

4.2.4. Since 2020, the council has provided financial support to food support network services to enable them to continue meeting the level of need in the city. In 2023-24, £360,000.00 has been allocated from the Household Support Fund budget to support these services.

4.2.5. The council should seek to provide a level of grant funding to food support services in 2024-25, and continue working alongside the HIVE and other partners to increase support to the network through the local community, businesses and funding bodies.

4.3. Holiday activities and food

4.3.1. Thousands of families with school age children have benefited from supermarket vouchers under the Household Support Fund. These followed on from previous grants, starting with the Covid Winter Grant Scheme in October 2020, that were provided partly in response to concerns around 'holiday hunger', and the additional financial pressures on low income families in school holidays.

⁸ <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/benefits-and-support/help-and-support/help-with-food/>

4.3.2. Although the Household Support Fund did not provide sufficient funding to distribute vouchers during every holiday period, in 2023-24, vouchers were distributed during the summer and the winter to help alleviate those financial pressure points.

4.3.3. The HAF Fun Pompey programme, funded by the Department for Education's (DfE) Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, will provide a range of activities and nutritious food during the easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2024.

4.3.4. DfE guidance means that HAF-funded activities can only be delivered during these three holiday periods, and the majority of funding must be used for children in receipt of free school meals.

4.3.5. Additional funding for the HAF Fun Pompey programme in 2024-25 will enable the programme to support additional families who might miss out due to the strict DfE eligibility criteria, and allow the programme to provide support to families outside of the three main holiday periods.

4.4. Support for debt relief measures

4.4.1. Free, independent and impartial specialist debt advice is available to Portsmouth residents from the council-funded drop-in centre at Advice Portsmouth, the Money and Pensions Service-funded debt advice service at Citizens Advice Portsmouth, and through the Housing Money Advice team, for Portsmouth City Council tenants.

4.4.2. Debt has a huge impact on household finances, as well as physical and mental wellbeing. Unfortunately many households who are unable to repay their debts struggle for months or even years before seeking help and advice.

4.4.3. An independent debt adviser can help someone explore their options to get out of debt. Sometimes that will require a statutory debt solution, which include debt relief orders and bankruptcy.

4.4.4. But both of these tools to help people move on from debt have fees which must be paid before the process can start. The Household Support Fund has provided grant funding to enable people receiving specialist debt advice to be referred for financial support with these fees.

4.4.5. Allocating funding for debt solution fees, by referral from specialist debt advisers, will ensure that no one is prevented from resolving their debts by the cost of the fee.

5. **Integrated impact assessment**

5.1. A full impact assessment of delivering the support outlined in the recommendations is included at Appendix 4.



6. Legal implications

- 6.1. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 allows the council under its general power of competence to do anything an individual may generally do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation; this general power must be used in accordance with the Act, for purposes for the benefit of the council and its residents. The Council can use this general power to make proposed payments where there is no other power to do so.
- 6.2. In making a decision, the council must comply with the public sector equality duty under s.149 Equality Act 2010. This requires the council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't; foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't (and involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1. Funding will be required to support the proposed service delivery detailed in Appendix 1.
- 7.2. Therefore approval of the recommendations in this report remain subject to approval of the 2024/25 budget by Full Council in February 2024, and any announcement from Government on HSF or other funding for local authorities to provide cost of living support.

.....
Signed by: James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Cost of living support 2024-25 plan

Appendix 2: Letters from the Leader of the council to the Secretaries of State for the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Appendix 3: Household Support Fund 2023-24 delivery update

Appendix 4: Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972



The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Corporate Plan 2023/24	The Corporate Plan.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Cabinet report, 21 June 2022: Household Support Fund	Household Support Fund.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Cabinet report, 13 December 2022: Cost of living support; Household Support Fund	Report for Cabinet December 2022 - Household Support Fund.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Cabinet report, 27 June 2023: Cost of living support; Household Support Fund	Household Support Fund.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Cabinet report, 31 October 2023: Update on cost of living support and Household Support Fund provision	Update on cost of living and Household Support Fund provision.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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Appendix 1 - Cost of living support 2024-25 plan

Support	
Grant funding for food support services	
Additional Holiday Activities and Food provision	
Funding for debt relief measures for debt advice customers	
Delivery of cost of living and local welfare information and advice: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helpline• Online hub• Specialist support• Information, guidance and up-skilling for local agencies and the voluntary and community sector	

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The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Department for Work and Pensions
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7th Floor
6–12 Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Also by email:
mel.stride.mp@parliament.uk

Councillor Steve Pitt

Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2AL

Phone: 023 9283 4551

Email: Cllr.steve.pitt@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Ref: SPOUT059

Date: 15 December 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you as we are deeply concerned that the Government's Autumn Budget Statement contained no announcement of funding for the Household Support Fund (HSF) from April 2024. The Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression reiterated in Parliament on 28 November that no further decisions have been taken on the Household Support Fund, but that "the government continues to keep all its existing programmes under review in the usual way".

It is clear that cost of living pressures continue to have a significant impact on Portsmouth residents. The council's most recent resident survey told us 80% of our residents are concerned about the rising cost of living, with the impact felt disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our communities, including those with disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and those already on low incomes, including families. In Portsmouth, almost a quarter of children were living in families in relative poverty in 21/22. Young people (aged 16-24) are also struggling, with 65% reporting they are unable to meet their day-to-day living costs.

I am seeing resulting high demand across our systems of support from the council's dedicated cost of living helpline and support work to the advice services and food support services provided by the local voluntary sector. This high demand for support is further indication of the level of need in the city, as our residents are struggling to make ends meet and need help with necessities.

I am concerned that the ability of our residents to meet their basic day-to-day living costs will be further diminished this winter. Many households will face higher energy bills following the removal of the Energy Bill Support Scheme and an increase in standing charges, forcing more people into fuel poverty. In our most recent resident survey, 44% of respondents told us they are using less fuel in their home because of rising costs. Food price inflation remains at over 10% and existing high prices are now baked in, which means more families in Portsmouth are turning to the food bank network for support.

Concerningly, one in five respondents to our most recent resident survey told us they are missing meals to save money. Last year 7,600 food parcels, providing three days food for a family, were given out by one foodbank provider in the city, an increase of 51% from 2021/22, and the demand for food is continuing to rise.

Meanwhile, higher interest rates are pushing people further into debt, with almost a quarter of our residents reporting that they are using credit cards to help them manage the rising cost of living and more borrowing from family and friends.

Far from disappearing in April 2024 when the current HSF comes to an end, the pressures on household budgets and the resulting impact on already struggling families and communities in our city, are predicted to continue through 24/25. The council and the voluntary sector are predicting a further increase in demand without commensurate resources to meet that demand.

The HSF has made a significant difference to residents in Portsmouth, and I am concerned about the impact on the most vulnerable in our communities if the funding does not continue.

The previous three rounds of HSF enabled the council to help residents in need more than 85,000 times in 18 months, working in partnership with local agencies and targeting support for those most in need as well as those who don't quite qualify for other forms of support. Through the HSF, we have also provided a comprehensive advice and guidance service that enables residents, assisted by a dedicated support worker, to navigate the sources of help that already exist.


Recognising the levels of need in the city, a significant amount of HSF funding has been targeted to bolster our food support services, including foodbanks, community meals and pantries, who are experiencing growing demand and reducing supply, with individual donations and surplus from the food system now wholly insufficient to meet the need in our communities.

Again, targeted to meet the specific need in Portsmouth, our HSF scheme also helps low-income families with children in the form of supermarket vouchers, provides financial support to low-income households who did not qualify for the DWP's cost of living payments and helps households at risk of fuel poverty to make their home warmer and reduce their energy bills. In line with the new criteria introduced by DWP for this round of funding, we have also made a significant proportion of our fund available to residents directly through a bespoke application process.

While the announced increase to Local Housing Allowance rates is welcome and may help to reduce some of the demand for Discretionary Housing Payments, I am concerned that this is simply not an adequate replacement for the level of support that comes from the HSF. Similarly, increasing working age benefits by 6.7% in April will also go some way towards helping some households but will not resolve the underlying increased cost of living and associated deprivation issues for residents.

We trust this letter has highlighted the vital importance of the HSF in meeting the needs of our residents and the support that will cease to exist if the funding does not continue in 2024/25. It is equally important that local authorities have certainty around funding to enable us to plan strategically to deliver the services and support that our residents so desperately need.

Yours sincerely


Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Economic Development

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The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Email: Cllr.steve.pitt@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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Yours sincerely

Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Economic Development

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Appendix 3 - Household Support Fund 2023-24 update and forecast

Scheme	Total spend to date 12/01/24	Updated estimate
Free Schol Meals family vouchers 1	£652,431	£652,431
Living costs payment 1	£103,200	£104,760
Extension of family vouchers 1	£129,780	£129,780
Living costs payment 2		£200,000
Free Schol Meals family vouchers 2	£756,500	£756,500
Extension of family vouchers 2		£190,000
Home energy payment for disabled people		£60,000
Exceptional hardship payment	£48,660	£776,000
HAF Fun Pompey extended provision	£15,000	£50,000
Essential furniture and white goods	£51,067	£70,000
Fuel poverty measures	£110,000	£110,000
Food support services	£225,000	£360,000
Affordable cooking projects	£3,000	£8,000
DRO / Bankruptcy fees	£6,780	£10,000
Staffing costs - delivery	£90,130	£245,000
Staffing costs - money advice	£30,000	£50,000
Marketing and communications	£500	£1,500
TOTAL	£2,222,048	£3,773,971

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Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA579363257
Date	22/01/2024



Policy details

Request date	22/01/2024 12:34
Directorate	PCC Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Service	Tackling poverty
Title of policy, service, function	Supporting residents with the cost of living
Type of policy, service, function	Existing
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	To continue to provide cost of living support to residents in financial hardship during the financial year April 2024 to March 2025
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	yes
What were the outcomes of the consultations?	Resident research identified the current extent of households facing difficulties due to the cost of living, and which groups are most affected. Discussions with the food support network show ongoing high levels of need which existing resources are unable to meet.
Has anything changed because of the consultation?	no
Did this inform your proposal?	yes
Please provide details	To prioritise funding for food support, and ensure that the offer is available to those groups most likely to be in need.

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the protected characteristics?

<p>With the above in mind and following data analysis, who is the policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?</p>	<p>This project will support people in financial hardship accessing information and advice about the cost of living, and users of food support services, the holiday activities and food programme, and specialist debt advice.</p>
<p>Will any of those groups be affected in a different way to others because of your policy, project, service, function, or strategy?</p>	<p>Factors related to age, ethnicity or race and disability in particular, and other protected characteristics more generally, may make it more difficult for some people with these characteristics to access and utilise advice online and by phone. Therefore the project includes the offer of personalised support where a need is identified, to ensure any barriers are understood and overcome to ensure each customer is able to access the help they need.</p>
<p>If you are directly or indirectly discriminating, how are you going to mitigate the negative impact?</p>	<p>Providing a personalised offer of support when needed.</p>
<p>Who have you consulted with or are planning to consult with and what was/will be your consultation methodology?</p>	<p>The resident research results have been assessed to understand the needs and concerns of residents and how they can be assisted.</p>
<p>How are you going to review the policy, service, project or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?</p>	<p>The project lead will regularly report to a Director-level working group on activity and outcomes, including information on access and equalities, to ensure that help is being provided effectively to all residents who need it.</p>

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cost of living pressures are linked to housing affordability and risk of homelessness, so access to information, advice and support with the cost of living can help to alleviate these pressures and prevent issues from escalating.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Monitor demand related to housing affordability and homelessness, and onward referrals for specialist housing and homelessness services.</p>

Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cost of living pressures impact on a household's ability to meet their essential needs, including the costs of food, home energy, clothing, bedding, housing and essential household items. Living in material deprivation has negative impacts for physical and mental wellbeing. The proposal will ensure that people are able to access advice and support, and provide a resource for related services, such as healthcare settings, to access information for people they are supporting. Work with healthcare providers via the tackling poverty partnership group to ensure cost of living advice and support can be accessed via healthcare settings. Funding for food support services will increase the capacity of their offer, and enable them to maintain better nutritional standards in the range and volume of the food available to service users. Extending the holiday activities and food offer will increase the number of families who benefit, providing physical and mental health benefits and nutritious food. Enabling people to access a formal debt solution will provide them with a route out of debt, which has huge benefits for mental and physical wellbeing.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Review monitoring information provided by food support services to understand the impact of funding on their offer and the needs of people using their services. Seek feedback from healthcare settings on the needs of their clients and access to cost of living support.</p>

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Providing assistance to people experiencing deprivation, and tackling poverty are central to this proposal. This proposal is specifically aimed to mitigate the worst impacts of the government's withdrawal of the Household Support Fund, along with Cost of Living payments, which together will impact around a third of all households in Portsmouth.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Monitor the number of people seeking advice and support, and the type of support needed, to ensure that the offer is responsive to local needs. Look at demographic information to understand if any communities who may be in need are not accessing the support available. Gather quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of support provided.</p>

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cost of living advice and support will identify people in fuel poverty due to living in cold homes, and help them to access help to make their home warmer. In the longer term, this will reduce energy use by improving efficiency and reducing the amount of energy wasted in cold homes. The food support network makes use of surplus food, reducing food waste, and strengthening their offer and increasing their capacity will increase their ability to do this.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Monitor demand for energy efficiency and fuel poverty advice and support and onward referrals for cold homes. Review the food support network activity and opportunities to make more use of surplus food that would otherwise be wasted.</p>

Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>Cost of living pressures are due to a number of national and global factors, and climate change is one cause of increases in food and other costs, so providing information, advice and support to residents will be an essential form of mitigation to help affected residents.</p>
<p>How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>Continue to review issues related to inflation and the cost of living, and ensure information and advice remains relevant and up to date.</p>

Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Air quality - will it improve air quality?

<p>This section is not applicable to my policy</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
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Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

<p>Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?</p>	<p>The cost of living hub will continue to be one source of information on affordable and sustainable transport options.</p>
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How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Monitor demand and uptake of information regarding transport.
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The cost of living hub will continue to be a source of information and advice on adult learning, employment and skills.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Monitor demand and uptake of information regarding employment and skills, and ensure information and advice remains relevant and up to date. Monitor onward referrals for specialist advice and support on employment and skills.

Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Social value

Please explain how your policy, service, function, project or strategy delivers Social Value	All of the activity delivered through this project creates social value, because it helps to improve the lives of residents affected by the cost of living. Besides the core activities of the project, there are no identified secondary social value outcomes.
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Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Mark Sage, Tackling Poverty Coordinator
Name of the person completing this form	Mark Sage
Date of completion	2024-01-22

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Agenda Item 9



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 06 February 2024

Subject: Council Tax Support Fund

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes/No

Full Council decision: Yes/No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The Council Tax Support Fund is designed by Central Government to meet the needs of all council taxpayers who were claiming Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) at the start of the 2023/24 financial year. The scheme has two elements, a core element that is prescribed by Central Government and a discretionary element that is subject to local determination.
- 1.2 The core element is to award all LCTS recipients with an additional reduction of up to £25.00 for the financial year ending 31 March 2024. This was to be included in the annual council tax bill for the financial year 2023/24.
- 1.3 Portsmouth City Council has been allocated £349,016 to provide additional support to reduce council tax bills during the 2023-24 financial year for those households receiving LCTS.
- 1.4 The majority of the funding has been used to meet the Government's objective of reducing bills for working age and pension age LCTS recipients by up to £25.00. This was completed in accordance with the Government's directive to include the additional support in the 2023/24 annual council tax bill. At this point £220,000 has been allocated to households.
- 1.5 Remaining funding will be available to Local Authorities to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the attached Council Tax Support Fund policy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is proposed that where funds remain available after making reductions as outlined in the core scheme's provisions, that Portsmouth City Council apply the discount as described within the core scheme to those chargepayers who become eligible for LCTS in respect of the 2023/24 financial year between 03 March 2023 and 31 March 2024. Any award will be calculated in the same way as those residents that received support from the core scheme within their 2023/24 annual bill. This will, in effect, treat all new recipients of LCTS in the same way as those that were receiving LCTS when annual council tax bills were prepared.
- 2.2 Should it become apparent that funding will be remaining above what is required for the activity detailed in 2.1, the Council will use its discretion to further support vulnerable households in receipt of LCTS where hardship has been identified through the council tax recovery process.
- 2.3 It is recommended that the proposed policy accompanying this report is approved.

3. Background

- 3.1 Council tax levels are a matter for local authorities to decide although the Government sets referendum principles so that residents can have the final say over excessive increases. At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced its intention to increase referendum principles to 3% for core council tax and up to 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, with additional flexibilities for some other authority types for both 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- 3.2 Recognising the impact of rising bills, the Government has distributed £100 million of new grant funding in 2023-24 for local authorities to support economically vulnerable households in their area with council tax payments.
- 3.3 Funding will be allocated to councils based on their share of local council tax support claimants according to their latest data. The Government expects local authorities to use the majority of their funding allocations to reduce bills for current working age and pension age LCTS claimants by up to £25.00. Councils can use their remaining allocation as they see fit to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.
- 3.4 As such there are essentially two elements of this scheme. The first being the core scheme which follows the advice of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and the second being a discretionary element determined by Portsmouth City Council.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The core scheme principles have been determined by Government. The proposed discretionary element provides equity for new claimants of LCTS as those residents



would be treated the same as those residents that were in receipt of LCTS when annual bills were prepared. Additionally using entitlement to LCTS as a proxy for financial vulnerability, would further support the government's intention of seeking to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1 Please find attached at Appendix 2.

6. Legal implications

6.1 Section 13a(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council has the power to reduce the amount of Council Tax a person must pay. This includes the power to reduce the amount to nil and may be applied in relation to specified cases, or by determining a particular type of property in which liability is to be reduced.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 There is no cost to the Council in respect of Council Tax Support Fund awards as Government has made a funding allocation of £349,016. The budget available after the awarding of the initial maximum £25 at annual billing for the local discretionary offer in the 2023/24 year is estimated to be £129,000. The net cost to the council is nil.

.....
Signed by:

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Council Tax Support Fund Policy
Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Local Council tax Support Fund Guidance	Council Tax Support Fund guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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Council Tax Support Fund Policy

Revenues & Benefits

June 2023

Contents

1. Background	3
2. Funding	3
3. Council Tax Support Fund - Core Element.....	3
4. Council Tax Support Fund - Discretionary Element.....	4
5. Notifications	5
6. Payments	5
7. Monitoring and reporting.....	5
8. Appeals	5
9. Fraud & Error	5
10. Complaints	6
11. Policy Review	6
12. Delegated Authority	6

1. Background

- 1.1 Council tax levels are a matter for local authorities to decide although the Government sets referendum principles so that residents can have the final say over excessive increases. At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced its intention to increase referendum principles to 3% for core council tax and up to 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, with additional flexibilities for some other authority types for both 2023-24 and 2024-25
- 1.2 Recognising the impact of rising bills, the Government will be distributing £100 million of new grant funding in 2023-24 for local authorities to support economically vulnerable households in their area with council tax payments.
- 1.3 Funding will be allocated to councils based on their share of local council tax support claimants according to the latest data. The government expects local authorities to use the majority of their funding allocations to reduce bills for current working age and pension age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) claimants by up to £25.00. Councils can use their remaining allocation as they see fit to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.
- 1.4 As such there are essentially two elements of this scheme. The first being the core scheme which follows the advice of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and the second being a discretionary element determined by Portsmouth City Council.

2. Funding

- 2.1 The funding is for the 2023-24 financial year and provisional allocations have been announced with final allocations to be confirmed at the final Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 2.2 Portsmouth City Council has been allocated £349,016 to provide additional support to reduce council tax bills during the 2023-24 financial year, to households already receiving LCTS.
- 2.3 The majority of government funding will be used to meet the government's objective of reducing bills for current working age and pension age LCTS claimants by up to £25.00.
- 2.4 Remaining funding, once expenditure for the core element of the Council Tax Support Fund has been incurred, will be available to Local Authorities to support vulnerable households with council tax bills.

3. Council Tax Support Fund - Core Element

- 3.1 Using discretionary powers under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, Portsmouth City Council will use funding from the Council Tax Support Fund to

reduce to the Council Tax liability of individuals receiving LCTS who have an outstanding balance of Council Tax to pay by up to £25.00 for the final year commencing 01 April 2023.

- 3.2 Where a chargepayer's council tax liability, following the award of LCTS, is £25.00 or less, it will be reduced to £0.00, Where a chargepayer's liability for 2023/24 is £0.00, there will be no further reduction to the council tax charge or credit to the council tax account.
- 3.3 Eligibility for the Council Tax Support Fund will be automatic where the chargepayer qualifies for LCTS on 03 March 2023 when the council tax bills for the period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 were calculated. An application form for this reduction from the Council Tax Support Fund is not required and Portsmouth City Council will assess who is eligible and automatically apply the reduction.
- 3.4 Council Tax Support reductions have been applied from the start of the 2023/24 financial year for existing LCTS customer and was reflected in the annual council tax bill dated 14 March 2023.
- 3.5 It is for Local Authorities to decide how to treat households that become eligible for LCTS during the period from 03 March 2023 and throughout the 2023/24 financial year. As such this matter sits outside the core element of the Council Tax Support Fund and is managed within the discretionary element of this scheme's provisions.
- 3.6 If a chargepayer moves during the 2023/24 financial year, no further payment will be made to the council tax account in respect of the chargepayer's new property.
- 3.7 Reductions through the Council Tax Support fund will not affect the eligibility to any other benefits.

4. Council Tax Support Fund - Discretionary Element

- 4.1 Where funds remain available after making reductions as outlined in the core scheme provisions, the Council will apply the reduction as described in the core element to chargepayers who become eligible for LCTS in respect of the 23/24 year between 03 March 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- 4.2 The award will be calculated in the same way as the core scheme.
- 4.3 Any award relates to the 2023/24 financial year only.
- 4.4 As eligible chargepayers will be identified by the council, and the reduction applied automatically to the council tax bill, an application form is not required.
- 4.5 This policy will be reviewed at intervals during the year (see Section 11), following which the Council reserves the right to modify this approach to discretionary awards.

- 4.6 Should the funding be insufficient to meet the demand the scheme shall close.
- 4.7 Should it become apparent to the Council that funding will be remaining above what is required within the current scope of the discretionary fund, it will use its discretion to top up accounts where hardship has been identified though the council tax recovery process.

5. Notifications

- 5.1 Eligible chargepayers will be notified of any decision to award a reduction from the Council Tax Support Fund through the issue of a Council Tax bill.

6. Payments

- 6.1 In accordance with legislation any award/reduction from the Council Tax Support Fund will be granted as a reduction in Council Tax liability, which subsequently reduces the amount of council tax payable. Payments will not be made direct to chargepayers.

7. Monitoring and reporting

- 7.1 Portsmouth City Council will maintain a record of the support that has been provided, so that the council is able to monitor and report on the level of expenditure provided to residents receiving support through the provision of the additional discounts from the Council Tax Support Fund.
- 7.2 Information will be compiled and provided to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities at their request.

8. Appeals

- 8.1 A chargepayer may appeal to the Council, outlining the reason for their appeal, if they consider the council has made an incorrect decision. Once received, the Council will consider whether any new information would justify a change to an original decision and notify the chargepayer accordingly.
- 8.2 Where a chargepayer remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may lodge a further appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. This further appeal should be made within two months of the council's decision to not grant any reduction. Full details can be obtained by the Valuation Tribunal Service website.

9. Fraud & Error

- 9.1 Portsmouth City Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring such funds are awarded to those people who are eligible for them.

- 9.2 Any person who tries to fraudulently claim LCTS or reductions from the Council Tax Support Fund by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing false statement or evidence may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.
- 9.3 Where the Council suspects that fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.
- 9.4 Where a reduction in liability has been granted in error, the chargepayers council tax account will be adjusted and the chargepayer will be billed in the normal way.

10. Complaints

- 10.1 The Council's complaints process, which is available on the Council's website, will be followed in the event of any complaint associated with this policy.

11. Policy Review

- 11.1 In accordance with Government guidance, Portsmouth City Council will revise its discretionary approach at intervals during the financial year in order to ensure that expenditure for 2023/24 remains with the allocation provided to the council.
- 11.2 Portsmouth City Council reserves the right to end this scheme should the government funding allocation be exhausted.

12. Delegated Authority

- 12.1 This policy has been approved by the Council however authority is delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources to make technical amendments to ensure the policy continues to meet the criteria set by Government and the Council.

Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA563867220
Date	22/11/2023



Policy details

Request date	22/11/2023 09:21
Directorate	PCC Finance and Resources
Service	Revenues & Benefits
Title of policy, service, function	Council Tax Support Fund
Type of policy, service, function	New
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	To deliver the Council Tax Support Fund for 2023/24, achieving the Government's objective to support economically vulnerable households in the area with council tax payments
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	no

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the protected characteristics?

With the above in mind and following data analysis, who is the policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?	The detail of this policy, in the main, has been determined by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with a secondary discretionary element of the scheme subject to local decision making. The policy seeks to benefit all residents eligible to receive support from the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme.
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Will any of those groups be affected in a different way to others because of your policy, project, service, function, or strategy?	Further support may be available for those with the greatest financial hardship
If you are directly or indirectly discriminating, how are you going to mitigate the negative impact?	N/A
Who have you consulted with or are planning to consult with and what was/will be your consultation methodology?	Discussed this policy with the Council's Anti-Poverty Co-ordinator
How are you going to review the policy, service, project or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?	This is a one off scheme funded by Central Government. The core element of the scheme is defined by Central Government. The discretionary element will be reviewed during Q4 2023/24 to ensure that funds are distributed but no overspend is incurred. Delivery of the policy will be the responsibility of the Revenues & Benefits Manager.

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	The majority of funding will be distributed in accordance with central government guidance. The additional support is available to assist with the cost of rising council tax bills, and is in addition to the support provided from the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Negative impacts may be from those not eligible for support from the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme, and therefore also not eligible for support from the Council Tax Support Fund. Where any resident is experiencing financial hardship we will however seek to support them through sign posting to relevant advice, assessment of entitlement to Local Council Tax Support, and assessment of pragmatic payment plans.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	Data will be maintained about the scheme delivery and will also be shared with DLUHC on a periodical basis.

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Air quality - will it improve air quality?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Social value

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Matthew Willis, Shirley Hudson
Name of the person completing this form	Matthew Willis
Date of completion	2023-11-22

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Agenda Item 10



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 06 February 2024 Cabinet
13 February 2024 Full Council

Subject: Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes and Empty Properties

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes/No

Full Council decision: Yes/No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 At the Full Council meeting of 14 March 2023, it was resolved that Full Council declares its intention to implement the following additional council tax premiums, to be applied from 01 April 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to legislation being in place:
 - i) A 100% premium for second homes.
 - ii) A 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years - this will change the current policy of charging a 100% premium where a property is empty and unfurnished for a period between 2 and 5 years.
- 1.2 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has now become law. The Bill, which is now the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023.
- 1.3 Now that the Act of Parliament exists, Portsmouth City Council is able to determine the level of premium to be applied for second homes, and the level of premium to be applied where a property is empty and unfurnished and has been so for a period of between 1 year and 5 years.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to seek confirmation of the Council's intentions in respect of Council Tax premiums.



2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Full Council resolves to implement a 100% premium for second homes which will be effective from 01 April 2025, the earliest opportunity for the Council to introduce this change.
- 2.2 It is further recommended that Full Council resolves to implement a 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years. This will change to current policy of charging a 100% premium where a property is empty and unfurnished for period between 2 and 5 years.

3. Background

Premiums on Second Homes

- 3.1 In May 2022 Government published the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which included proposals to further address empty properties via the application of council tax premiums, as well as measures that recognise the impact that high levels of second homes can have in some areas.
- 3.2 Where a dwelling is classified as a second home, the City Council has previously resolved to provide a discount of 0%, in essence meaning that the full council tax charge is levied on second homes. Until the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill was enacted, the City Council had no powers to apply a premium to second homes.
- 3.3 A Billing Authority's first determination under the act must be made at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates. The earliest implementation date therefore is 01 April 2025.

Premiums on Empty Properties

- 3.4 Billing Authorities are encouraged to adopt council tax premiums on empty properties to incentivise property owners to bring properties back into use. At present, premiums can be charged where properties are left empty and substantially unfurnished for periods of two years or more.
- 3.5 Where a dwelling remains unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of two years or more, the City Council has previously resolved to charge an empty homes premium of the relevant maximum in addition to the full council tax charge. The relevant maximum is:
 - 100% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of two years and less than 5 years.
 - 200% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 5 years.
 - 300% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 10 years.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The Act allows councils to apply a premium on second homes from 01 April 2025 and brings forward the date from which a premium can apply to empty properties. This allows councils to raise additional revenue and to acknowledge the impact that second homes and empty homes can have on some communities. In particular in the case of empty properties, this may incentivise property owners to bring properties back into use.
- 4.2 If these changes bring empty properties back into use, it would be supporting the demand for housing within the City.
- 4.3 If these changes increase revenue via council tax, it similarly provides opportunities to support the Council's objectives, though ultimately it will be for the Council to establish the best use of any additional income when setting future budgets.
- 4.4 Analysis shows the application of a 100% premium on second homes could increase the level of collectable council tax by approximately £1.68m across all preceptors (see Table 1)

Table 1:

Potential council tax revenue generated from a 100% premium on second homes (Figures as at 02/10/2023 based on 23/24 charges)

Property Band	Number of Properties	Current 2023/24 Band Charge £	Current Value £	Value with 100% premium £*
Band A	389	£1,320.51	£513,678.39	£1,027,356.78
Band B	196	£1,540.59	£301,955.64	£603,911.28
Band C	127	£1,760.67	£223,605.09	£447,210.18
Band D	91	£1,980.76	£180,249.16	£360,498.32
Band E	91	£2,420.93	£220,304.63	£440,609.26
Band F	65	£2,861.10	£185,971.50	£371,943.00
Band G	17	£3,301.27	£561,121.59	£112,243.18
Band H	1	£3,961.52	£3,961.52	£7,923.04
Total	977		£1,685,847.52	£3,371,695.04

* Excludes any amount for non-collection, or for any changes in usage of the dwelling.

- 4.5 Analysis shows that the application of a 100% premium on properties that are empty for more than one year but less than two may increase the level of council tax by approx. £690,000 (see Table 2)

Potential council tax revenue granted from a 100% premium on properties empty for more than one year but less than 2 years (Figures as at 02/10/2023 based on 23/24 charges)

Property Band	Number of Properties	Current 2023/24 Band Charge £	Current Value £	Value with 100% premium £*
Band A	174	£1,320.51	£229,768.74	£459,537.48
Band B	129	£1,540.59	£198,736.11	£397,472.22
Band C	89	£1,760.67	£156,699.63	£313,399.26
Band D	17	£1,980.76	£33,672.92	£67,345.84
Band E	13	£2,420.93	£31,472.09	£62,944.18
Band F	8	£2,861.10	£22,888.80	£45,777.60
Band G	5	£3,301.27	£16,506.35	£33,012.70
Band H	0	£3,961.52	£0.00	£0.00
Total	435		£689,744.64	£1,379,489.28

* Excludes any amount for non-collection, or for any changes in usage of the dwelling.

- 4.6 The premiums recommended, subject to Full Council approval, have a significant positive financial implication. Based on the data in Tables 1 and 2 above, this may equate to approximately £2.375m based upon the current makeup of the tax base. It would be prudent however to assume a downward shift, as property owners change the use of properties, sell, or as a result of other changes in circumstances. It may therefore be prudent to assume this value reduces by 20% to £1.9m. Implementing these changes will increase revenues to all preceptors on the Collection Fund, with the Council's share being approximately 83%, totalling £1.58m.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 Attached at Appendix 1.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Local Authorities may only exercise statutory powers which have been given to them by Parliament. The resolution made by Full Council on 14 March 2023 provided an intention, however this was before the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act had passed through all of the parliamentary stages and received Royal Assent.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 All of the financial implications arising from the recommendations are contained within the body of this report.



.....
Signed by:

Appendices: Appendix 1

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023	Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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**Portsmouth City Council
Council Tax**

**Policy for Second Homes, Long Term Empty
Properties and determining discounts for certain
dwellings.**

Version control

<i>Version</i>	<i>Version date</i>	<i>Revised by</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	01/04/2014	Pete Middleton	Updated following Cabinet approval of changes to Council Tax regime.
1.1	09/12/2015	Matt Willis	Draft update on proposed changes to the first phase of empty dwellings Approved at Council Meeting 08/02/2016
1.2	13/02/19	Matt Willis / Steven Ranaghan	Update following full council meeting 12/02/2019 to amend the maximum empty homes premium
1.3	20/02/20	Matt Willis	Update following full council meeting 11/02/2020 to amend the prescribed class D discount %.
1.4	22/11/23	Matt Willis	Draft update following the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act receiving Royal Assent

Contents

Introduction	3
Second Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2014 to remain unchanged until 31 March 2025	3
Second Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2025.....	4
Empty Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2024.....	5
Publication of the changes	6

Introduction

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 amends the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allowing local discretion over the implementation of certain discounts and charges applied within the Council Tax regime.

The following policy details the approach to be taken by Portsmouth City Council with effect from 01 April 2024.

Second Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2014 to remain unchanged until 31 March 2025

The City Council under this policy will make a charge for second homes of 100% (a discount of 0%). This is the level charged from 01 April 2014.

In the following cases a charge of 50% will apply (rather than the 100%) as required by legislation;

- Dwellings which are furnished but unoccupied because the owner is liable to a Council Tax elsewhere in job-related accommodation;
- Empty but furnished dwellings of service personnel resident in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence;
- If the dwelling is a caravan or houseboat;
- Clergy who are required to live in accommodation provided by their employer to perform the duties of their office.

The legislation outlining the above is the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012. The regulations require the authority to determine the classes under which a discount will be granted. For the purposes of this policy the classes and discounts to be granted by the City Council from 01 April 2014 are as follows;

Class	Descriptions	Discount
A	A dwelling; a) which is not the sole or main residence of an individual; b) which is furnished; and c) the occupation of which is restricted by the planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.	0%
B	A dwelling; a) which is not the sole or main residence of an individual; b) which is furnished; and c) the occupation of which is not restricted by the planning condition preventing occupancy for continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year	0%

Second Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2025

The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced powers for local authorities to charge a higher amount of council tax in respect of second homes.

The amended regulation, for any financial year, enables a billing authority in England, by determination that where there is no resident of the dwelling and the dwelling is substantially furnished, the discount of 0% does not apply, and the amount of council tax payable in respect of that dwelling and that days is increased by such percentage of not more than 100 as it may specify in the determination.

The Council on 14 March 2023 indicated its intention, subject to The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 receiving Royal Assent, to charge the maximum in respect of the premium for second homes. At this meeting it was resolved that:

Full Council declares its intention to implement and approve the following additional council tax premiums, to be applied from 01 April 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the legislation being in place:

A 100% premium for second homes.

The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 details that a billing authority's first determination under this section must be made at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates. As a consequence, and following the Act receiving Royal Assent, Full Council has revisited its decision and resolved that it approves the maximum Council Tax premium of 100% for second homes to be applied from 01 April 2025.

Empty Homes - Policy effective from 01 April 2024

For Council Tax purposes, the revised legislation determines that the charge for empty dwellings will follow three phases namely:

First Phase: a period during which a dwelling will attract the discount of between 0% and 100% determined by the local authority (as a result of the measures outlined within the Local Government Finance Act 2012). If the dwelling remains empty and substantially unfurnished, this period will last up to 6¹ months as determined by the authority (12 months if the dwelling in addition to being unoccupied and substantially unfurnished is undergoing major repairs²);

Second Phase: a period during which the discount attracted will be between 0% and 50%. The rules for this phase are based on the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012. During this phase the authority can determine (in accordance with Class C of the regulations) the level of discount between 0% and 50%. The second phase will last indefinitely unless the local authority has made a determination implementing the empty homes premium.

Third Phase: an indefinite period starting when the dwelling has been empty for one year. In this phase, the liability may be increased by an additional premium³.

The City Council has resolved that the following will apply from 01 April 2024:

Where a dwelling is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished

If a dwelling becomes unoccupied and substantially unfurnished the City Council will apply a discount of 0%, requiring the full council tax charge to be payable.

Where a dwelling is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished, requiring or undergoing structural alterations or major repair works to make it habitable

- (a) If a dwelling is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished, requiring or undergoing structural alterations or major repair works to make it habitable, a discount of 0% will be granted for any period up to one year.

Where a dwelling remains unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of one year or more

- (a) Where a dwelling remains unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of one years or more, the City Council has resolved to charge an empty homes premium of the relevant maximum in addition to the full Council Tax charge, as allowed within Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

¹ This replaces Class C of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992

² This replaces Class A of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992

³ Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (higher amount for long-term empty dwellings: England)

For the financial year beginning 1 April 2024

The relevant maximum is 100% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 1 year but less than 5 years.

The relevant maximum is 200% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 5 years but less than 10 years.

The relevant maximum is 300% for dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of at least 10 years.

Publication of the changes

The City Council, in accordance with the legislation, will publish the changes to the Council Tax regime within 21 days of making such a resolution.

Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA564594428
Date	24/11/2023



Policy details

Request date	24/11/2023 14:41
Directorate	PCC Finance and Resources
Service	Revenues & Benefits
Title of policy, service, function	Changes to the council's policy for empty properties and second homes.
Type of policy, service, function	Changed
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act provides Local Authorities with the powers to levy a council tax premium of up to 100% for second homes, and further enable the 100% premium on empty properties to apply after 1 year, as opposed to the current provisions that allows the premium to commence after 2 years, The policy is intended to incentivise property owners to bring properties back into use, and to maximise revenue from council tax.
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	no

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the protected characteristics?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Air quality - will it improve air quality?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Social value

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Matthew Willis- Revenues & Benefits Manager
Name of the person completing this form	Matthew Willis
Date of completion	2023-11-24

Agenda Item 12



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	6 th February 2024
Subject:	Integration of LEP Functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities
Report by:	The Chief Executive
Wards affected:	ALL
Key decision:	Yes
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the integration of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs) and seek approval for Portsmouth City Council to work with the Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City Council to jointly take on these integrated LEP functions and deal with the changes that result from this new approach including the creation of a joint UTLA Board to take on these responsibilities. This was proposed by the three unitary UTLAs in the integration pro-forma that was submitted to Government with our proposals for taking this forward.
- 1.2 It should be noted that Isle of Wight Council ('IoWC') and Southampton City Council ('SCC') will also be seeking similar approvals but because of the differing timeframes there will need to be work and decision making in parallel with the approval processes across the three authorities. Recommendation 2.1.9 below allows for this to happen.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to:
- 2.1.1 Note that subject to meeting certain conditions (see paragraph 3.3) the Government is looking to integrate a number of existing LEP functions into UTLAs.
- 2.1.2 Note that to meet the conditions, and to maintain a focus on the Solent area, Portsmouth City Council (PCC) will need to work with Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council to take on these functions through the creation of a new joint UTLA Board.
- 2.1.3 Agree that, subject to the three Solent UTLA area being recognised by the Government as an area for LEP integration, with appropriate due diligence, PCC should become a Member of Solent Partners (SP), a company limited by guarantee, that is a successor body to the Solent LEP, to help drive economic growth in the sub-region. This agreement to be conditional on Isle of Wight

Council and Southampton City similarly agreeing to become Members of Solent Partners.

- 2.1.4 Agree that PCC should not appoint a Director to the Board of Solent Partners to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with the wider governance needed for the new LEP integration arrangements. PCC will seek appropriate requirements, within the articles of Solent Partners, to ensure representatives of the three Solent ULTAs are entitled to observe board meetings.
- 2.1.5 Note the proposed draft governance structure attached as Appendix 1 that shows how PCC should work with partners to achieve our economic growth ambitions which will need to be outlined in an updated Solent 2050 Strategy.
- 2.1.6 Subject to the agreement of SCC and IOWC, PCC is confirmed as the Accountable Body for Solent Partners.
- 2.1.7 PCC, as the accountable body, agrees that any existing LEP funding, disaggregated to the three Solent UTLAs can be pooled (subject to the agreement of Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City Council), for the benefit of economic growth of the region.
- 2.1.8 PCC, as one of the three UTLAs, will work with partners to develop an agreement on how Solent Partners will deliver economic growth for the functional economic area.
- 2.1.9 Agree that delegated authority be jointly given to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and S151 officer, to agree the final details of the transfer of LEP functions to the UTLAs including future governance arrangements.
- 2.1.10 Agree the PCC should seek to support the creation of a Solent Economic Partnership, inviting adjacent Districts and Boroughs, Hampshire County Council, and other key public sector stakeholders, to enable Local Authorities leaders and leaders within the business community to have a regular opportunity to discuss and support economic growth in the region.
- 2.1.11 Note the intention to agree disaggregation of assets held by the LEP to the Accountable Body on behalf of the Upper Tier Local Authorities (subject to the agreement of the three Solent unitary UTLAs).

3. Background

- 3.1 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are non-statutory bodies that were created to promote economic growth and job creation. They are business led partnerships with additional representatives from local authorities, as well as academic and voluntary institutions. Thirty-eight LEPs were established across the Country in 2010-11 and the Portsmouth City Council area is part of the Solent LEP. The Solent LEP was based on the same geography as the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH and now Partnership for South Hampshire - PfSH) with the addition of the Isle of Wight. In 2018 LEP boundaries were reviewed and, as part of this review, it was determined that a district or borough local authority could no longer be in two different LEPs. This meant that the Solent LEP geography could no longer mirror the PfSH geography and so the whole of the New Forest District Council was included within the Solent LEP and the parts of Winchester City Council, Test Valley



Borough Council and East Hampshire that were part of the Solent LEP were transferred to Enterprise M3 LEP.

- 3.2 A further review was undertaken by the Government between early 2021 and the publication of the February 2022 Levelling Up white paper. This led to the ministerial letter proposing LEP integration: 'Integrating Local Enterprise Partnerships into local democratic institutions, 31 March 2022'. On the 4 August 2023, the Government issued a letter which confirmed their support for UTLAs and combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs.

'Where not already delivered by a combined authority, or in areas where a devolution deal is not yet agreed, the Government expects these functions to be exercised by upper tier local authorities, working in collaboration with other upper tier local authorities over functional economic areas (FEA) as appropriate.'

- 3.3 In the guidance the Government state that the geography for integration of functions should either be a whole County area or a functioning economic area that has a population of at least 500k (and for some functions at least 22k businesses in the area). The Government have been clear that they will no longer fund LEPs with core funding from April 2024 and that the UTLAs will be responsible for:

- **business representation** and in particular to *'create or continue to engage with an Economic Growth Board (or similar) made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies to (a) provide the view of local businesses as part of regional decision making and (b) work with local leaders to create a broad economic strategy for the area'*
- **strategic economic planning** - areas will be expected to produce, or continue to update, economic strategies to support local decision making, building on the plans currently developed and overseen by LEPs. The Government expects areas to publish their (existing, new, or updated) strategy within six months of receiving funding and if PCC is the accountable body for future arrangements (see paragraph 4.1 below) then it will need to be published on the PCC website. There will be a need to review, update and adopt the Solent 2050 Strategy and ensure that this is an appropriate strategy for the agreed geography. The guidance also states that areas bidding for local growth funding in future may be asked to demonstrate how a proposal fits into their local economic strategy.
- **responsibility for the delivery of government programmes where directed.** Currently these programmes would be the Growth Hubs and the Career Hubs. The Government expects these functions to be exercised by UTLAs (working in collaboration with other upper tier local authorities as appropriate) where there is not a devolution deal or a deal in the offing. Initial views from Government suggest that they envisage the current Growth Hub to be commissioned on a county wide basis although with the possibility that there could be a Solent front-end for businesses. Further guidance has however suggested a need to ensure



the delivery of government functions is coterminous with the FEA for economic strategy and business representation so further guidance is needed. This would need to be discussed and agreed with the other UTLAs across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (HIOW).

- 3.4 Whilst the Government have stated that their expectation is that the area for integration is a county area or FEA they also state that the starting point for consideration of an appropriate area should be the existing LEP geography. However, Hampshire County Council have been very clear, formally and informally, that they do not wish to keep the Solent geography for the integration arrangements and instead wish for the arrangements to be on a county wide basis or without the support of the three HIOW unitaries the county council area. This ignores the clear functioning economic area across the Solent area which has consistently been recognised by Government (e.g. the creation of the LEP or the Solent Freeport) and as such the three unitaries are keen to work together to bring about the integration of the LEP functions on a Solent geography that comprises the three unitary authorities.
- 3.5 This proposed geography recognises that the two cities of Southampton and Portsmouth drive the growth of the region and have clear links to the Isle of Wight including through ferry routes. There are also key synergies across the area on key economic sectors including advanced manufacturing and the visitor economy and also on key challenges association with deprivation and coastal areas. The three Solent unitaries, working together, meet the thresholds required by the Government and have sent an integration template back to Government on this proposed geography. This Cabinet report takes forward what was in the integration template. Assuming this approach is supported by the Government, and there has been no indication that this will not be the case, there will need to be a strong and positive working relationship with Hampshire County Council, who will be operating in the wider Solent area for the parts of the Solent LEP area that comprises the districts and boroughs.
- 3.6 As noted in the Director of Finance's comments in section 8, in parallel to the integration of functions from the LEP there is a need to consider the disaggregation and transfer of assets from the LEP to the UTLAs. The amount to be disaggregated between HCC, PCC, SCC and IOWC remains to be agreed between the LEP and PCC, acting as its accountable body. It is currently intended that any funding received by the three unitary UTLAs will be pooled and held by PCC as the AB for the three authorities. This funding will be for the benefit of the economic growth of the region. This will be subject to further agreement between the three unitary UTLAs.
- 3.7 In response to the envisaged changes to their operating environment, the Solent LEP decided to look again at their role and how they operate and decided to set up a new company limited by guarantee called Solent Partners. As Government thinking developed on the future role of LEPs it was decided by the Solent LEP Board that Solent Partners would be a good successor organisation to the Solent LEP that would enable the delivery of the functions that were being devolved to the UTLA alongside any remaining LEP functions. The benefit of this approach is that this enables a focus to be maintained on the Solent which will be to the benefit of local businesses and communities. It also means that

should the Government position on devolution change, before or after the next general election, then the area will be in a stronger position to make the case for devolution to the Solent area.

3.8 Whilst Solent Partners can enable the delivery of LEP functions across the Solent area, it will be the UTLAs that will be held accountable for delivery of the functions and economic growth in the area. The governance arrangements detailed in section 4 below recognise this reality and so are based on a model where the three unitary authorities commission Solent Partners to deliver functions on their behalf assuming that Solent Partners is able to demonstrate that it is providing best value services. Whilst the Government guidance states that after the 1st April any arrangements will need to be commissioned in line with normal practice, in reality this is also the case for any arrangements before the 1st April. How this may apply to work commissioned through Solent Partners will depend on the specific governance and function of that company in that period and the funding mechanism chosen by the three UTLAs.

4. The Solent Partners and proposed governance

4.1 The successor body to the Solent LEP, Solent Partners, is a Company Limited by Guarantee (as is the Solent LEP). It has been proposed that the Members, and therefore owners, of the Company will be the three unitary authorities. This is different to the Solent LEP where there are Members from both the public and private sector, and PCC has the role as the accountable body for the Solent LEP. Hampshire County Council has made it clear that it does not wish to be part of Solent Partners. PCC has also agreed to be the Accountable Body for Solent Partners and / or the joint UTLA Board

4.2 Alongside the Members there will be a Board of Directors of Solent Partners. These directors will be appointed in line with best practice for the appointment of Directors and currently it is envisaged that it will comprise:

- An independent Chair, Vice-Chair and non-Executive Director from local businesses
- A Higher Education (HE) representative
- The chairs of the Solent Skills Advisory Panel, the Solent Business Forum, the Solent Cluster and Maritime UK Solent
- The two Solent Partner Executive Directors

The requirement for representatives of the three Solent UTLAs to have the opportunity to observe meetings of the Board of Directors of Solent Partners will be sought to ensure clear oversight.

4.3 As the Accountable Body (AB) for the Solent LEP, PCC has a role to make sure that the LEP Integration Process is undertaken properly and that any decisions around existing assets and liabilities are in accordance with regulations and guidance. The AB role is different to the role in relation to the decisions and wishes of PCC, and as the AB will need to work in partnership with Isle of Wight Council and Southampton City Council to make sure that LEP Integration works successfully for the Solent region and the communities and businesses that are within our geography.



- 4.4 With Solent Partners set up to deliver functions previously undertaken by the LEP for the three unitary UTLAs, there will be a need to set up a commissioning body that comprises the three unitaries. To achieve this requirement, it is proposed that a joint UTLA Board be set up that comprises the Leader and Chief Executives of the three unitary authorities. This Board would commission and hold Solent Partners, or any other future delivery partner, to account for delivery of the programmes and functions assigned to them to support the economic growth agenda across the three unitary authority area. The terms of reference would need to be set so that the limit of the influence is on the areas of joint work so that the sovereignty of individual authorities is recognised whilst also allowing for wider work that supports the devolution ambitions of the area. This Board should be set up, at least in Shadow Form, as soon as possible. The Board would also need to work with Hampshire County Council to try to ensure as much alignment as possible. With the proposal that the Leader and Chief Executive are on this Board it would not be appropriate for the Councils to have a Director on the board of Solent Partners Board, as currently constituted, so that there is no conflict of interest with the wider governance needed for the new LEP integration arrangements.
- 4.5 Alongside the joint UTLA Board there is the potential, and wish, to set up a Solent Economic Partnership. This would cover the wider Solent geography and Hampshire County Council and the districts and boroughs within the Solent area would be invited to be part of this partnership. It would comprise Leaders and Chief Executives, or their representatives, and will enable a discussion to take place on the wider geography and hopefully ensure that there is alignment across the wider geography. Other key stakeholders, such as Solent Transport and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner could also be included in this Partnership. Clearly this Partnership would only be set up if there was a desire from other authorities to be part of this arrangement. With appropriate funding this partnership could also commission Solent Partners, or another delivery partner, to undertake specific work for them.
- 4.6 It is desired that Solent Partners will be commissioned by the joint UTLA Board to:
- ensure that the Solent Functional Economic Area that comprises the three unitaries meets the requirement for business engagement such that local businesses and their representative organisations are influencing relevant decision making on the economic growth agenda.
 - review, update and help prepare a new Strategic Economic Plan for the three unitary functioning economic area and help ensure it is aligned with the Hampshire County Council plan and their expectations for the parts of the wider Solent area that they are responsible for, as far as possible.
 - subject to Government funding being available for the Solent area, deliver the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) contract to run a Solent Careers Hub but ensure that it is also delivering in line with the joint UTLA Board's expectations.
 - promote, and potentially run, the Growth Hub for the wider Solent area.



- deliver any other programmes or activities that the joint UTLA Board wishes it to deliver.
- 4.7 Subject to appropriate legal advice, the joint UTLA Board will set out a clear commissioning plan before the start of each year and this will be used to set the LEP Integration work programme for SP. Meetings will be held quarterly to performance manage this commissioning plan. The joint UTLA Board would be in a position to change the approach, or the delivery partner, if the plan is not being achieved, subject to an agreed notice period. Informal steering groups, under the joint UTLA Board and directly engaging business representatives through Solent Partners and other stakeholders can be formed to provide guidance to key work commissioned such as Strategic Economic Planning and the work of the Careers Hub.
- 4.8 Solent Partners will also be commissioned by PCC, as the AB, to monitor and report on existing programmes that have ongoing monitoring arrangements, which would otherwise fall to the AB to undertake in line with current guidance.
- 4.9 Solent Partners, as an existing private company already undertakes some other current and planned activity outside of the LEP core functions which are being transferred. They have been successful in securing central additional government funding (awarded independently) to deliver relevant economic growth programmes in the region in the 2024/25 year and would continue therefore to do so.
- 4.10 The Solent LEP also undertakes some functions outside of the core functions described above. They have set up two companies to deliver specific economic aspirations in the region. The Membership of *the Solent Cluster Ltd* has agreed to be transferred to Solent Partners and it is anticipated that *Maritime Solent (UK) Ltd* will similarly transfer its membership, subject to its own internal agreement. These two companies have been provided revenue funding by the Solent LEP to operate until March 2026 and thereafter the intention is that they will move to a self-sustained ownership and financial footing. The governance connection between Solent Partners, and its Local Authority Members, and these separate companies will require further discussion.
- 4.11 The Solent LEP has also provided start-up revenue funding for the Solent Maritime Innovation Hub, providing support to March 2026. What role Solent Partners may have in this Innovation Hub during and after that period will also require further discussion.
- 4.12 Solent Partners also have a desire to take on roles in and with other bodies and panels, the most notable of these is the Skills Advisory Panel, which was set up by PUSH before transitioning to the LEP. It seeks to be a steering group for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), a Department for Education funded plan, for which the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce is the designated employer representative body. As economic strategies are disaggregated between Hampshire and the Solent, further discussions will be needed in respect of this Panel.
- 4.13 One of the issues that is outstanding at the time of writing this report is what to do with existing LEP assets and resources and the associated implications on



LEP staff. Government guidance is clear that any reserves and assets built up using public funds will remain within the public domain (i.e. transferred to the relevant local authority or authorities). All LEP employees are employed by PCC and there may be Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) or redundancy issues that will need to be considered depending on discussions that are underway with Hampshire County Council about how programmes are delivered. PCC as the AB, working with the LEP, has to agree how to split public funds that are currently held by the LEP between the UTLAs. The Solent LEP Board believe that because the funds were given for the benefit of the Solent area they should remain in the Solent area and that the best way for this to happen would be for all of the existing funding to transfer to the three Solent UTLAs for the benefit of Solent Partners for them to work across the existing Solent LEP Geography. An alternative approach would be for Hampshire County Council to commit to spending the proportion of the existing funding, relating to the Solent districts and boroughs, across the same geography. This latter approach is the preferred approach of the AB. Discussions regarding the disaggregation method of the existing assets are ongoing with the Accountable Body seeking to agree the disaggregation of funds with the UTLAs over the coming months.

5. Reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Government have stated that all core funding for LEPs will cease and that a number of LEP functions will transfer to democratic control. The Government have set criteria for the return of these functions and the recommendations in this report enable an appropriate mechanism to be put in place to achieve the Government's policy requirements.

5.2 While current guidance is clear that LEPs can continue in a private capacity, the Solent LEP has confirmed that they intend to cease operating as soon as possible after 31st March 2024 and have set up an alternative company, Solent Partners, with aspirations to continue to support the economic development agenda in the Solent. This report therefore notes that assets and resources built up with public money will need to be retained and transferred into the public domain.

6. Integrated impact assessment

6.1 There is no requirement to undertake an integrated impact assessment at this stage in the process. This decision will be reviewed at the commissioning stage of the LEP integration process.

7. Legal implications

7.1 The contents of this report outline the current position within the construct of the Guidance and the current disaggregation plan. What is also clear is that there will be beyond the noting stage of this process a number of legal challenges which whilst as yet to crystallise are in summary (as set out within the body of the report) the following:

- It is recognised that the Solent Partners is of itself an independent company. The company will have a legal share membership from each of the three UTLA's.



- The current model does not espouse that within Solent Partners that the UTLA's will have any director status (this is subject to a current piece of work being dealt with to look at how the independence of Solent Partners sits within the concept procurement and the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR's.))
- The paper alludes to the UTLA's being able within some form of construct to, amongst themselves set the "tone and focus" for how Solent Partners (or indeed any organisation that the UTLA's might wish to align) should deliver key objectives. That can be achieved via some form of "Board structure" which self-governs probably via some form of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- There will be TUPE issues as currently the LEP staff whilst PCC paid will be subject to a material change that will engage the Regulations and potentially some restructure that may or may not lead to redundancies arising.
- There is a need to maintain clear channels of decision making and facilitation separating as far as practicable the respective roles and functions.

7.2 It is also worth noting that the current disaggregation model (assuming that it is agreed) will within the Solent Region provide a finite funding and a limited amount of existing loans as already lent to SME's within the proposed area.

7.3 Beyond the above the current range of recommendations are within scope, they are competent and are limited risk beyond seeking to inform and progress, set as against a fairly changeable landscape.

8. Director of Finance's comments

8.1 Acting as the Accountable Body for the Solent LEP, PCC has an important role in agreeing the disaggregation of assets held by the LEP as at 31 March 2024 and as part of this have been working with the Solent LEP and the four UTLAs to agree a disaggregation method that is in line with the guidance published by the Government.

8.2 The guidance sets out that it is for the LEP and the Accountable Body to agree this method and the Accountable Body will make its judgement having reviewed the formal representations made by each of the UTLA's.

8.3 Fundamentally, the Accountable Body's judgement will be based on the balance of the following:

- a. The rationality of the decision in the public interest
- b. That decisions are taken in line with the National Assurance Framework, adhering to proper governance and due diligence
- c. That decisions are made in accordance with the intent and spirit of any Government Guidance

8.4 Following a review of the submissions and any necessary further consultation with the Solent LEP, the Accountable Body may ultimately agree or disagree with the LEP's position. In the event of a disagreement then the LEP and Accountable Body will engage with the Government to seek their view.

8.5 Acting as the Accountable Body for Solent Partners, PCC will ensure that any disaggregated LEP funding received is pooled, held on a separate area of its balance sheet, and used for the benefit of economic growth of the region subject to the agreement of the three UTLAs.

.....
Signed by: Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Chief Executive

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Proposed Governance Structure

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

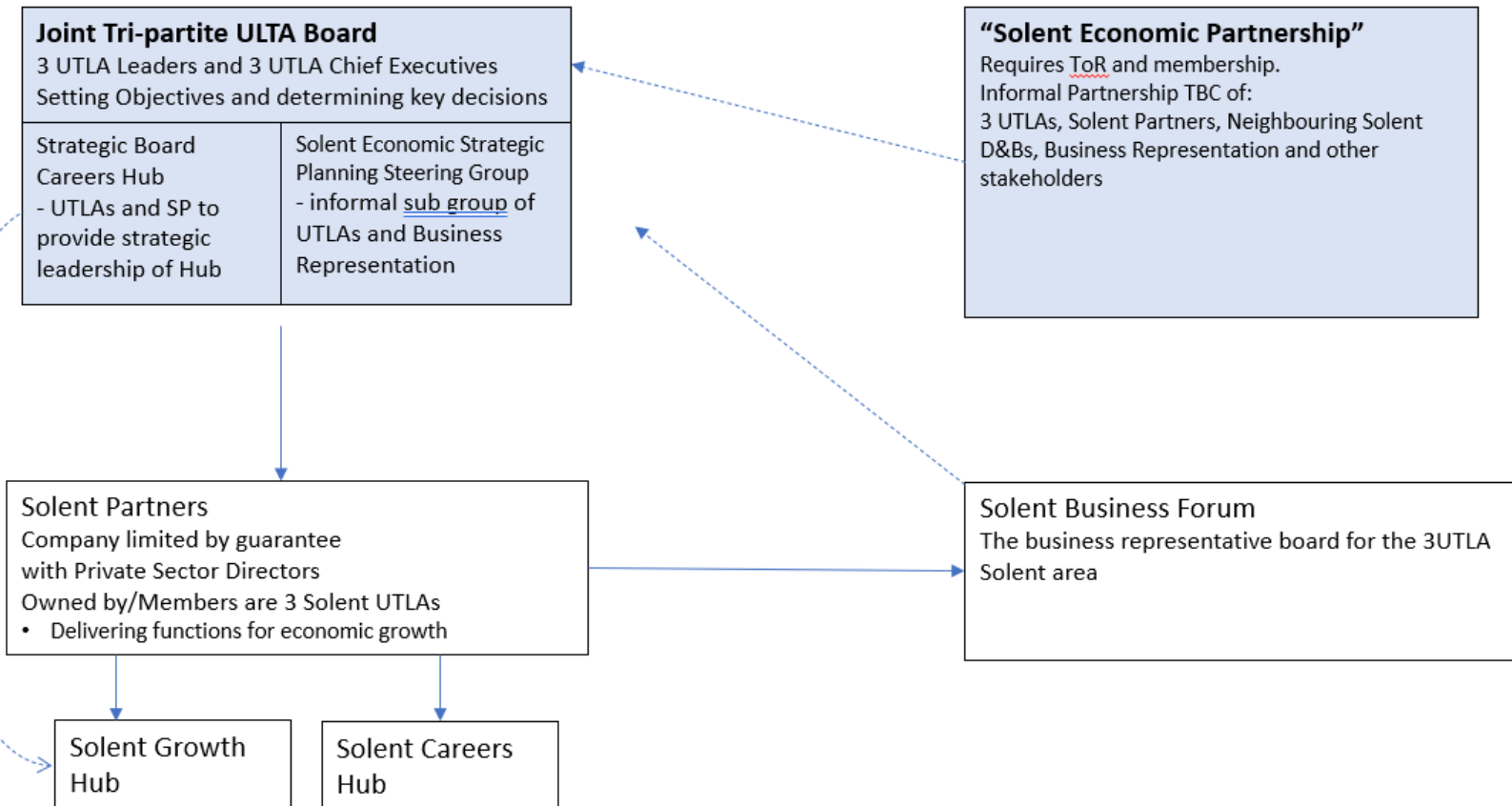
The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Integration Template	Stored on PCC electronic systems.

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

The Proposed Governance Structure for LEP Integration



Page 297

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Agenda Item 13



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Southsea Coastal Scheme and North Portsea Island Coastal Scheme update
Date of meeting:	6 February 2024
Report by:	Guy Mason, Project Director, Southsea and North Portsea Coastal Schemes
Report Author:	Guy Mason, Project Director, Southsea and North Portsea Coastal Schemes
Wards affected:	St Jude; Eastney & Craneswater (SCS) Hilsea, Copnor, Baffins, Milton (NPCS)

1. Requested by

- 1.1. The report has been requested by Cllr Hugh Mason to provide an update on the works carried out to date by Coastal Partners and Portsmouth City Council (PCC) to protect Portsea from future flood events.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To update Cabinet on the progress made on the Southsea and the North Portsea Coastal Schemes.
- 2.2. To note the wider benefits of the schemes and their contributions to sustainable construction with zero to waste at its core, approach to working with and support the natural habitats around Portsea and to note how the Southsea Coastal Scheme continues to surprise with historic finds and adapts to acknowledge the history of the place.

3. Information Requested

- 3.1. Construction of the **Southsea Coastal Scheme** began in September 2020. Since then, work has progressed well on two frontages: Frontage 1 (Long Curtain Moat) and Frontage 4 (Southsea Castle).
- 3.2. The Scheme will cover 4.5km of Portsmouth coastline.



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

- 3.3. Frontage 1 opened in February 2023. Frontage 4 is scheduled to open in May 2024, with Frontage 5 (Pyramids to Speakers' Corner) due to open in winter 2024.
- 3.4. Proposed timeframes for future Southsea Coastal Scheme frontages are:
 - Frontage 3 (Southsea Common) - Winter 2024 - Summer 2026
 - Frontage 6 (Speakers' Corner St George's Road) - Summer 2026 - Winter 2028
 - Frontage 2 (Clarence Pier) - Summer 2026 - Winter 2028.

Please note that these dates may be subject to change and will be based on analysis of the most efficient way of delivering future phases.

- 3.5. The **North Portsea Coastal Scheme** covers 8.4km of Portsmouth's coastline from Tipner to Milton.
- 3.6. Three of five phases are complete, with phase four currently underway at Eastern Road.
- 3.7. Proposed timeframes for future North Portsea works are:
 - Phase 4B (Eastern Road) - Spring 2021 - Autumn 2024
 - Phase 5 (Ports Creek) - 2024 - 2026/27.
- 3.8. The attached appendix outlines key achievements and highlights of the schemes in the following categories:
 - Construction & sustainability (including zero-to-waste)
 - Environment and wildlife protection
 - Historic finds and working within historic surrounds
 - Communication and engagement
 - Aesthetic enhancements (public realm)
 - Funding
 - Program (future phases of both schemes).

.....
Signed by (Director)



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Appendices: Coastal Scheme Achievements

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Southsea Coastal Scheme - our story	Pier Rd offices, Southsea
Coastal Partners partnership report 2 nd edition	Partnership Report - Coastal Partners by Coastal Partners - Issuu
Coastal Partners website	Home — Coastal Partners
Southsea Coastal Scheme website	Southsea Coastal Scheme
Monthly reports for both schemes	Distributed by Coastal Partners

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COASTAL SCHEME ACHIEVEMENTS



MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR



MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

The Southsea and North Portsea Coastal Schemes are both once-in-a-generation opportunities to ensure the city stays safe and prosperous despite the ever-growing threat of climate change. These two flood defence schemes represent over £250m of inward investment and are a huge vote of confidence from the Environment Agency and other funding partners in our ability to deliver complex and lengthy construction projects.

In 2023 we achieved some fantastic results. The highlight for the Southsea Coastal Scheme was the opening of its first phase at Long Curtain Moat in February. There was an excellent public response to this new, improved area and it was great to see the new sea defences performing as they should during the severe Storm Ciaran in early November. Work continued at pace around frontage four (Southsea Castle) with a major milestone being the completion of the new promenade here and the full rock sea defence structure placed.

The North Portsea Coastal Scheme continues to be at the forefront of environmental enhancements, with a highlight being the construction of an island near Eastern Road to ensure that overwintering birds can roost undisturbed. A competition to name the island attracted more than 240 entries – with Cockleshell Island named as the winner. The name is a tribute to the Cockleshell Heroes who trained for months around Southsea and Langstone Harbour before setting off in December 1942 to a daring raid, using kayaks (nicknamed cockles) to blow up enemy ships in occupied France.

The achievements below are a reference to our success to date and the talent of all those who have been involved in this work making our city a safe, vibrant, and prosperous place to live and work. In addition, our work provides greater opportunity for future investment as well as acting as an enabler, enhancing the seafront by ensuring it continues as a source of enjoyment for all user groups.

GUY MASON

PROJECT DIRECTOR - SOUTHSEA AND NORTH PORTSEA COASTAL SCHEMES



FRONTAGE 4 - SOUTHSEA CASTLE

BEFORE



AFTER








SOUTHSEA COASTAL SCHEME ACHIEVEMENTS

The Southsea Coastal Scheme is the UK's largest local authority-led coastal defence project, worth more than £180M. It will stretch for 4.5km from Old Portsmouth to Eastney and help to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 10,000 homes and 700 businesses.

The Scheme is comprised of six frontages. Work commenced on Frontage 1 (Long Curtain Moat) in September 2020 and the area opened to great public

acclaim in February 2023. Frontage 4 (Southsea Castle) is the second phase of the Scheme with work getting underway in January 2022 and an anticipated end date of June 2024. Frontage 5 (Pyramids to Speakers' Corner) began in October 2023 and is due for completion in December 2024. The full Scheme is due to be complete by 2029.

The new flood defences in this area will protect:

 More than 10,000 residential properties	 704 commercial properties	 16 residential properties at risk of coastal erosion	 3 scheduled monuments and 74 listed structures	 4 critical access routes at risk from flood water
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Sospan Dau
Page 306

The completion of frontage one of the Southsea Coastal Scheme was followed by rapid progress on frontage four (Southsea Castle). With the new promenade completed and all the rock sea defence structure in place, it's clear to see we're on target towards a successful opening of frontage four by summer 2024 once all the enhancements such as lighting and seating are complete. In addition, a third phase is also underway between the Pyramids and Speakers' Corner with an estimated completed date of winter 2024. This area is known as frontage five.

CONSTRUCTION HIGHLIGHTS

FRONTAGE ONE - LONG CURTAIN MOAT

Frontage one opened in February 2023. Construction highlights included:

- The old seawall was demolished and a new seawall built
- The height and width of the promenade were increased
- 525 linear metres of sheet piles were installed, totalling 6300m² (if the piles were laid end to end, this would make a total of 12km of sheet piles driven into the ground)
- 11,474 tonnes of rock imported from Norway
- 118 parapet units and 18 special parapet units, totalling 136 units
- 5700 tonnes of in situ concrete
- 18 rock pools
- Two new bridges, lighting, plants and seating were installed
- Clarence Pier carpark was restored.



FRONTAGE FOUR - SOUTHSEA CASTLE

Activity in this section has included:

- 145 000 tonnes of rock imported and placed to make up the new sea defences
- A 96m rock groyne constructed to reduce beach erosion
- Split-level promenade known as the 'Theatre of the Sea' complete
- 45 tide pools installed
- Final aesthetic touches underway, including seating and lighting.



VIEW THE PROGRESS VIDEO →

To make the frontage four area fully accessible and to allow it to reopen by summer 2024, rock work commenced in the area near Blue Reef Aquarium from January until February 2024. Over this period, long reach excavators moved and placed rocks from a large stockpile into place next to Blue Reef Aquarium.



FRONTAGE FIVE - PYRAMIDS TO SPEAKERS' CORNER

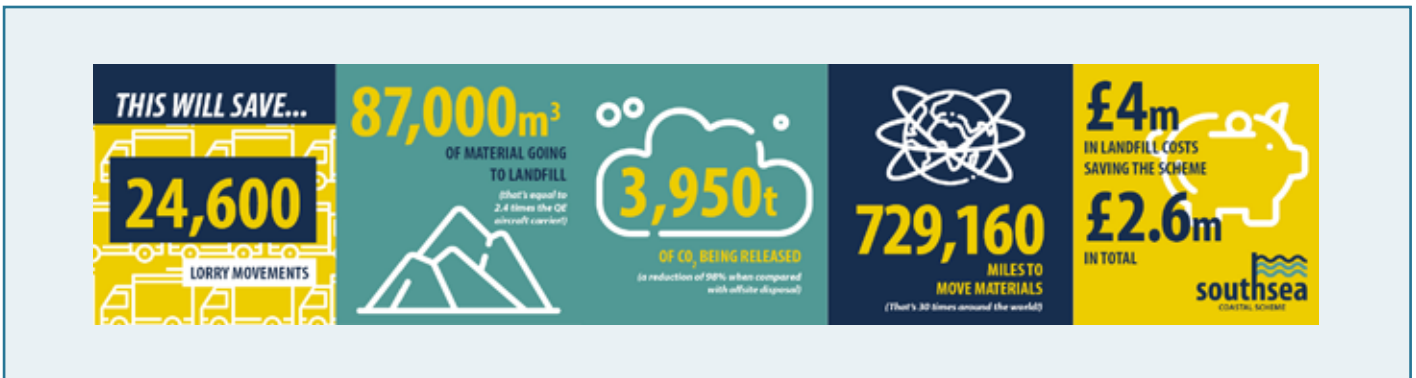
Work began in September 2023. Activity in this section has included:

- The Sospan Dau dredging vessel 'rainbowed' 24,000m³ of shingle to recharge the beach by the newly constructed groyne
- Temporary decking area built for The Briny restaurant to give it space for outdoor dining during construction
- All listed structures have been removed
- The area is expected to re-open in winter 2024.

ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION

The Scheme aims to be a zero waste project and a materials processing site has been set up on the Ministry of Defence Field on Pier Road to achieve this goal. The Scheme plans to reuse material that will be broken and excavated out of the existing structures to provide fill material for the new sea defences and road raising.

Here are some impressive statistics on savings to be gained from the materials processing site:



Across two frontages, the Scheme has installed 63 tide pools to enhance marine life. These concrete pools are designed to create ecosystems that mimic natural rock pools found on rocky coastlines and are found along the coastline and embedded in the groyne at frontage four.

Respecting the habitats of wildlife is a priority of the Scheme, and the team worked closely with Natural England on mitigation strategies for the Brent Geese and Purple Sandpiper birds that previously roosted in construction area. These include providing alternate roosting spaces, restricting noisy work during roosting season, and planting 'seed rocks' to provide food for the birds.



The Scheme also aims to schedule work around the purple sandpiper birds that overwinter in the area around Southsea Castle, restricting noisier work to months outside the time the birds feed in the area. Seed rocks have been planted to speed up the colonisation of the new rock structure by the castle, providing feeding matter for the birds.



HISTORIC FINDS AND WORKING WITHIN HISTORIC SURROUNDS

Throughout frontage one (Long Curtain Moat), materials were meticulously sourced to ensure they closely replicated the original sea defences, with Purbeck limestone (taken from the original limestone seam of material as the original Long Curtain Moat) and granite units making up the new defences. Approval from Historic England for the materials to be used came after more than a year of consultation and testing to ensure the new design was sympathetic to the historic area. This is a great example of pioneering engineering work undertaken by the team and has been extremely well received by the community.

There were several unexpected discoveries made during the works at historic frontage one, and the Scheme worked closely with Historic England and Wessex Archaeology as finds were unearthed. The team uncovered the remains of the 17th century city walls and defences, as well as original bankers' marks inscribed on the stones.



The first historic find came back in late 2020 when sections of the historic defences of Old Portsmouth, possibly dating back to the 17th century, were unearthed on Southsea's MoD field as it was being set up as a materials processing compound.

This was followed by a section of the original wall being uncovered by Long Curtain Moat which has been restored and will be a focal point when the area opens. The finds in this area have been recorded for posterity and will be included on information boards for the public along the new promenade.

Near Southsea Castle, a swivel mount gun emplacement was exposed beneath the existing promenade in front of the Castle, which has been dated to the early 19th century. In addition, a large triangular defence structure was found to the south of the gun emplacement. This is likely to be part of the redesign of the castle by the Dutch engineer Bernard De Gomme and is physical evidence of the large scale upgrading of the historic defences of Portsmouth that took place in the late 17th century. This significant has been incorporated into the esplanade with an etched metal finish displaying the original structure and interpretation signage to be added.





Other finds include:

- The bowl of a smoker's pipe that looks likely to originate from Fareham Pipe Makers in the 1800s
- A copper bell likely dating back to Victorian times found while digging a trench to connect electricity on Castle Field
- A piece of stamped pottery from the Southsea Baths & Assembly Rooms, dating back to 1871
- Sections of Edwardian promenade.

Most recently, two Victorian bottles were found in near-perfect condition while digging up the old promenade at frontage five (Pyramids to Speakers' Corner), with the larger likely to be an inkwell.





COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The team has continuously worked with the community and has its own on-site project information centre where visitors can drop in. Regular stakeholder and community engagement activities are undertaken and a customer engagement officer is employed by the contractor to look after corporate social responsibility.

Prior to the Scheme starting, one of the largest ever consultations held by Portsmouth City Council was undertaken, gathering the views of members of the community regarding design options.

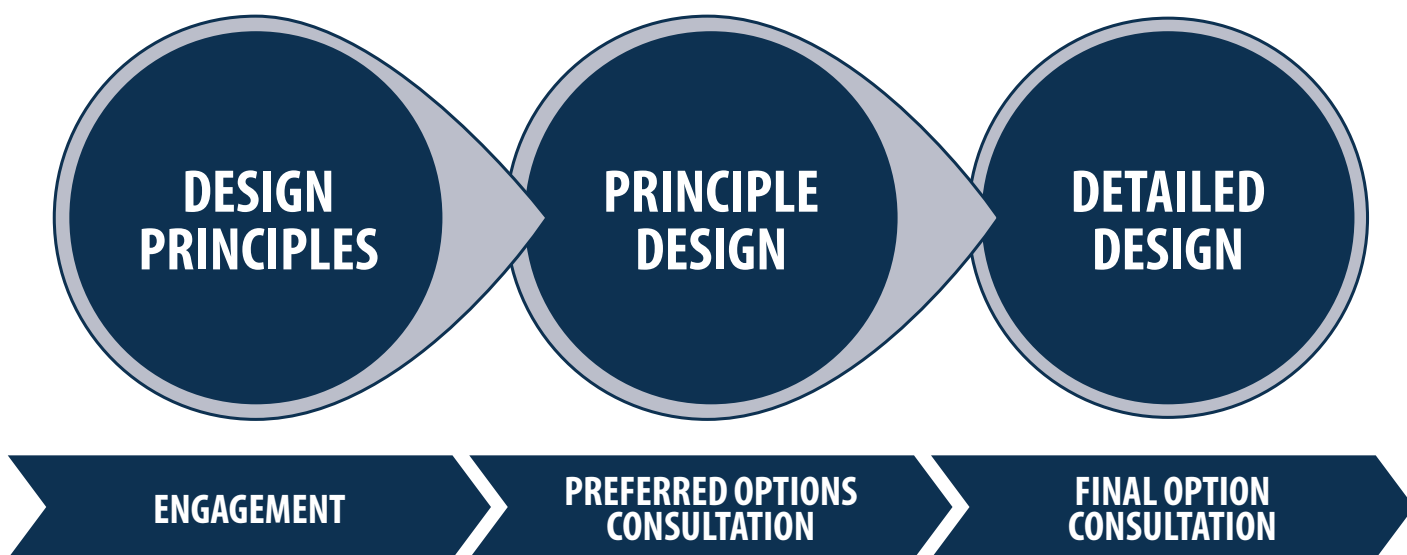


Figure 1: Stakeholder engagement and consultation process

Consultation began with design principles engagement from October to November 2017, followed by preferred options consultation in July and August 2018 then final option (pre-planning) engagement in 2019. Prior to this there was a non-statutory public consultation which ran

for eight weeks from 3 November 2014 to 29 December 2014 which gave the public the chance to view and comment on the short list of coastal defence options being proposed for Southsea. A total of 471 people attended the exhibition events.



Highlights of 2023 included:

- **Official opening with ribbon cutting ceremony with (then) Mayor Hugh Mason in March 2023.**
 - **Summer 2023 Gazebo Road Show - July/Aug 2023 in six prominent locations along seafront over six weeks, speaking to 344 residents over six three-hour periods.**
 - **Biggest exhibition so far at CourtX Tennis Centre in Southsea with 775 visitors over two days.**
 - **Popularity of historical finds - sold out Wessex Archaeology talk on Southsea Coastal Scheme finds, Portsmouth Museum, May 2023.**
 - **Exhibition "Ocean at the end of the Lane" since July 2023 at Portsmouth Museum.**
 - **Great exposure around the arrival of Sospan Dau in September 2023**
 - **Worked cooperatively with the Briny restaurant and Baffled Coffee Kiosk – both in the vicinity of current frontage five work – to promote that they would remain open during the works via diversion signage and on hoardings.**
 - **Site visits from EA, SCG and SCOPAC, Duisburg (Germany) delegation, press, student groups, stakeholders, councillors.**
 - **Engagement visits (with wave tank) to schools, colleges, local groups University of the Third Age (U3A), Sustrans, Portsmouth Society and more.**
 - **Winter Road Show at Southsea Library - 12 December (exhibition from 5 December).**
 - **More and more drone images and footage available - various videos underway.**
- **Key stats at January 2024:**
 - **Weekly update - 5,851 e-bulletin subscribers**
 - **Website: 16k new users since June 2023**
 - **LinkedIn: 1,713 followers, 58, 97 impressions since June 2023**
 - **Facebook: 6,020 followers. Recent most successful post reach: 306,702, engagement: 16,821, 3.5k 🍌 406 ❤️**

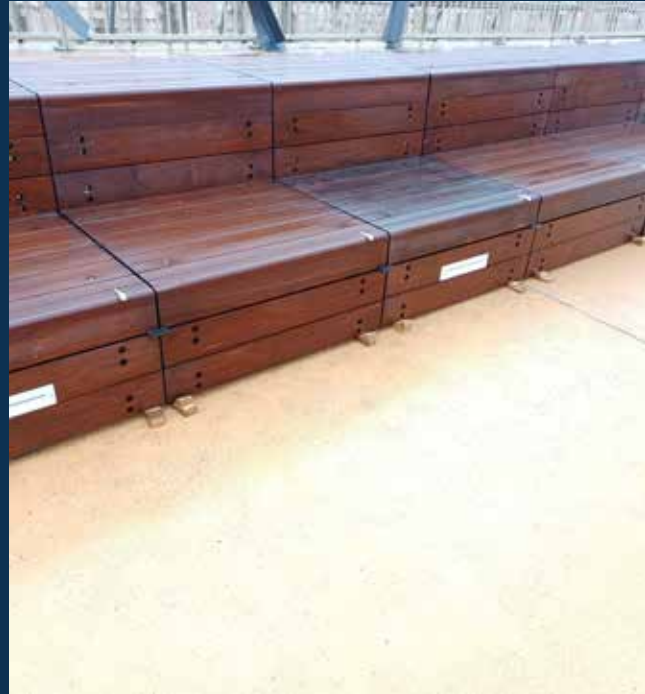


AESTHETIC ENHANCEMENTS (PUBLIC REALM)

The Southsea Coastal Scheme is much more than sea defences. The project provides excellent opportunities to improve the seafront, enhancing the area for the benefit of all, from new lighting and seating to planting beds and the widening of existing walkways.

Public art will be incorporated throughout the Scheme and is being coordinated by the Culture and Leisure Directorate. A Seafront Arts Programme Officer works part-time for the Scheme. One of the projects of this officer is the replacement of the 'long shelter' at frontage five (Pyramids to Speakers' Corner) where plans are underway to design and construct a new 'long shelter' following removal and disposal of the old shelter for construction work.

Across the Scheme, memorial benches are being replaced with new, sustainable seating. This will provide continuity along the seafront and has been well received by the public. Listed structures - including some shelters - that are removed from frontages along the seafront for Southsea Coastal Scheme construction will be restored and placed back along the seafront once the areas reopen.





FUNDING

The Southsea Coastal Scheme has been funded from several sources; primarily the Environment Agency. A successful funding bid was made to the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership for £5M.

The current financial status is below - Figures correct at December 2023

FUNDING SOURCE	VALUE
Environment Agency - FDGiA	£118,197,881
'Other Government Department' Funding	£27,865,424
Environment Agency – Inflation Uplift	£17,427,730
Portsmouth City Council	£6,536,500
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	£5,000,000
Environmental Enhancement Funding	£463,800

TOTAL

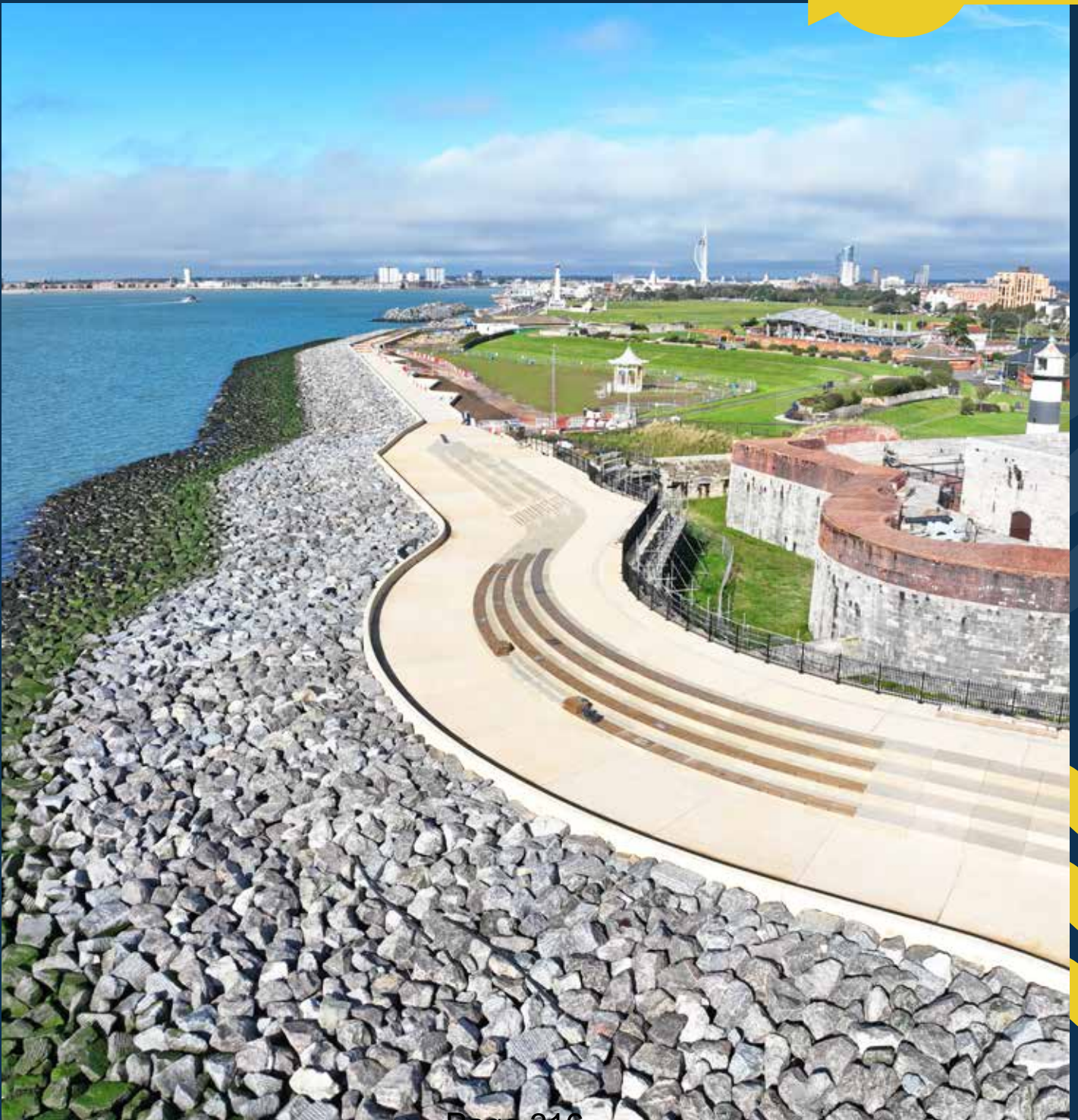
£175,491,335

Page 315

COMING NEXT...

2024 is going to be another exciting year. As ever, dates are subject to change, but here are some things to look forward to:

- April 2024 – Bandstand Field opens.
- May/June 2024 – Frontage four at Southsea Castle opens.
- October 2024 – Construction of frontage three begins.
- December 2024 – Frontage five at Speakers' Corner opens.





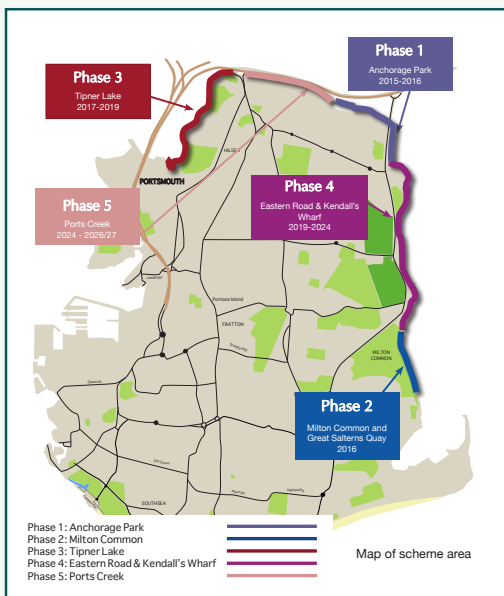
NORTH PORTSEA COASTAL SCHEME ACHIEVEMENTS

The North Portsea Coastal Scheme covers 8.4km of Portsmouth’s coastline from Tipner through to Milton. Most of the area is low-lying and many of the current coastal defences are approaching the end of their effective lives.

With Flood Defence Grant in Aid money secured, new, fit-for-purpose sea defences are being delivered in five phases along Portsmouth’s northern shoreline.

Highlights of the Scheme:

- £67.4million approved funds
- delivered in 5 phases from 2015 - 2026
- 1 in 500 year standard of protection
- More than 4,200 homes, 500 businesses, and critical infrastructure protected
- Design life of 100 years
- First UK Scheme to use a large-scale ecoformliner
- Focus on ‘greening the grey’.



CONSTRUCTION HIGHLIGHTS

PHASE 1 - ANCHORAGE PARK 2015-2016

The first phase of the project included the construction of 1.4km of earth embankment with rock revetment toe.



Before



PHASE 2 - MILTON COMMON 2016

At Milton Common, 1.5km of set-back earth embankment was constructed and a rock revetment structure added to protect from erosion while keeping the natural feel of the area adjacent to green spaces with lakes.



Before



PHASE 3 - TIPNER LAKE 2017-2019

Construction of 1.9km of a seawall, a new improved shared footpath and cycleway, landscaping, play features and information points, introduction of three tidal pools to help encourage marine biodiversity and 200m² of locally grown saltmarsh along with reinstatement of 150m² of divided sedge.



PHASE 4A - KENDALL'S WHARF 2019 - 2020

The first stage of phase 4 (4a) by Kendall's Wharf, towards the northern end of Eastern Road (connecting with phase 1 at Anchorage Park), was completed in 2020 and opened to the public in 2021 (to allow time for planting to establish).

An embankment made from earth was constructed, featuring a new enhanced public path for pedestrians and cyclists. The entrance road to Kendall's Wharf was raised by 1m to ensure continuous flood protection, meeting the embankment. New trees and wildflowers to encourage bees and other wildlife were planted along this 300m long stretch.

In the area leading towards the coastal path, a new sheet pile wall, entirely clad in timber, was built linking towards the first sections of concrete sea wall.





PHASE 4B- EASTERN ROAD 2021 - 2024

Working south along Eastern Road, phase 4b is being constructed through the summers of 2021 - 2024.

In **2021**, the first section of phase 4b was completed up to the land just north of Harbourside Holiday Park. This part of construction involved building the first sections of the new sea wall, featuring the special ecoformliner texture, two areas of glass flood wall, as well as two new improved slipways for the sailing club and the water sport centre.



In 2022 work included the construction of 540m of full height concrete flood defence wall with using 5,700 tonnes of concrete, installation of the third and final area of 310m of glass flood wall at Harbourside Park. To install the glass, individual glass sections weighing up to 350kg each are slotted in between two upright aluminium posts attached to the concrete wall.



Groundwork for the first social spot, situated between the Tudor Sailing Club and the Andrew Simpson Watersport Centre, was completed. For this slabs that were removed as part of the Southsea Coastal Scheme were reused. It features a special compass design and is located next to one of the glass flood wall areas, so visitors will be able to enjoy unobstructed views over Langstone Harbour whilst taking a break.



Work in 2023 included final piling work along the coast from south of the Harvester to Langstone Harbour carpark and from south of Tangier Road to Milton Common, which is a total of 733m of steel sheet pile wall. A total of 733m of full height concrete flood defence wall with was constructed, using an astonishing 9287 tonnes of concrete and 3 out of 4 planned sets of egress steps were completed. Two sets of stairs are now open to the public, all four will be accessible once fully reopened. Finally the new 'bird island', a roost island for overwintering birds was completed and a small section was opened for the public to access during the winter break.

2023 also saw the creation of a dedicated brand for the North Portsea Coastal Scheme, similar in style to the Southsea Coastal scheme branding in order to emphasize the link between the two. All large engagement events (Big exhibition, summer road show etc.) included information on both schemes.



ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION AT THE NORTH PORTSEA COASTAL SCHEME

Construction for the sea defence work at Langstone Harbour is limited to the period between April and September due to the presence of overwintering birds in the harbour.

To ensure further protection of the environment during construction, a silt curtain is used along the frontage to capture any silt from the construction activities. The curtain has a floating top which allows it to rise and drop with the tides and ensures that water quality is not affected.

A number of local ecological enhancements are included as part of the project:

ECOFORMLINER WALL

The award-winning* ecoformliner flood defence wall has a textured surface facing the sea, especially designed for this area to offer additional (vertical) habitat to a number of marine species and plants, offsetting habitat losses.

The project team worked with experts including the University of Glasgow and University of Bournemouth to design the mould. After completing a successful trial, which tested buildability and construction techniques, the ecoformliner is now being used on the entire new sea wall along Eastern Road - making it the first ever large-scale application of such a product in the UK, specifically designed for inter-tidal ecology.

As well as environmental benefits, the marine plant growth on the sea wall is expected to have practical advantages. Following installation, the vegetation should absorb wave energy, reduce temperature fluctuations, and reduce salt ingress and egress into the local ground water to create a more stable environment.

*In 2022 the scheme was awarded with the 'Coastal Management' award at the Flood and Coast Excellence Awards in June and shortlisted for the British Construction Industry Awards in the category Environment & Sustainability Initiative of the Year in October for the development of the ecoformliner.





SALTMARSH CREATION AND PROTECTION USING BESE GRIDS.

Biodegradable Elements for Starting Ecosystems (BESE) grids are another UK first, also installed in phase 3 of the North Portsea Coastal Scheme. The 3D mesh grid structures are used for habitat improvement and act as a temporary structure to start ecosystem restoration. The grids are made entirely out of a waste product, potato starch, and give damaged ecosystems the structure needed to support the colonising and growth of saltmarsh plants. At phase 3 (Tipner Lake) we planted 200m² of locally grown saltmarsh plants and reinstated 150m² of divided sedge. The saltmarsh plants were relocated from a habitat that would have been impacted by phase 4 of work. They now cover an 80m stretch that can be seen from Portsbridge roundabout.

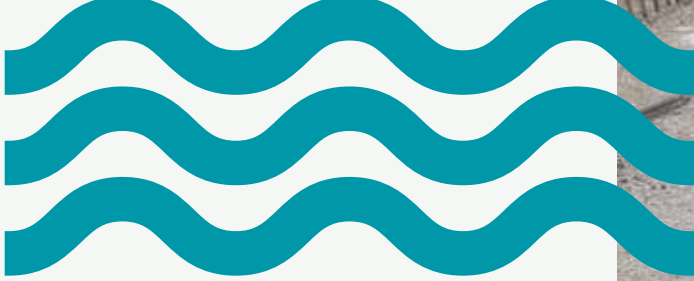
WILDFLOWER AND GRASS SEEDING & BEE-POST INSTALLATION

Bee-posts have been installed along this phase to attract more bees to the area and provide solitary bees with nesting places. The extensive planting in all areas along this phase is designed to be a mix of grass in some areas and coastal wildflowers in others. The coastal wildflower mix chosen has a high biodiversity value, with a 80% grass seed and 20% wildflower mix, and includes 26 different species of wildflower and grass. The selected planting also acts to support to the structure of the slopes, using the roots of the plants to ensure the ground is stabilised and will not be washed away by heavy rain.

TREE PLANTING

In this phase 4 of the North Portsea Coastal Scheme, over 200 trees are being planted. Species include native maples, pines and oaks, all carefully selected to withstand (and thrive in) coastal environments. The trees being planted tend to be larger, longer-lived and will bring the greatest benefits as they mature: cooling, storm water regulation, air quality improvements and providing opportunity for wildlife top name a few. Planting a mix of species is important to ensure our trees and wooded areas are resistant to future pests and diseases and climate impacts.





TIDAL POOLS

Tidal pools have been installed to retain water for marine life to populate. Species expected include seaweeds, barnacles, periwinkles and anemones. Three EONcrete® tidal pools were installed in the North Portsea Coastal Scheme at phase 3 and were the first of their kind in the UK. Phase 4 also introduced 'build-in' tidal pools, which are the base of the concrete sea defence wall and created as part of wall construction.



COCKLESHELL ISLAND

Our new 'bird island', a roost island for overwintering birds. A naming competition was launched in July 2023 and attracted over 240 entries and a lot of interest in the press and on socials. The name is a tribute to the Cockleshell Heroes who trained for months around Southsea and Langstone Harbour before setting off in December 1942 to a daring mission, using kayaks (nicknamed cockles) in occupied France. The common cockle is also present in Langstone Harbour and a major source of food for wading birds.

At phase 4 of the scheme an area of saltmarsh that had to be moved in an earlier phase was relocated and has reportedly taken on and is thriving again.



COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Regular stakeholder and community engagement activities are undertaken and the contractor supplies a Public Liaison Officer to manage stakeholder engagement, alongside Portsmouth City Council communications and engagement team.

In particular, extensive engagement has been undertaken with the Tudor Sailing Club, Andrew Simpson Centre, the Harvester and residents at Harbourside Caravan Park who are all located adjacent to the works and are most affected.

Due to overwintering birds the “construction season” is during the spring and summer months, and engagement and communications activities are focused around these months and include:

- In early 2023 a dedicated brand (mirroring the Southsea brand) was created and has been rolled out
- Monthly updates posted on the project webpage and circulated to 4,009 subscribers of the project mailing list - from January 2024 new dedicated bulletin through PCC govdelivery to include all Southsea subscribers
- Letter drops to affected stakeholders providing key project information
- Project newsletters posted on information noticeboards at positions near the site area
- In-person meetings with affected stakeholders to provide information and explain what is going on
- Hosted a “drop-in” event at the Harvester pub to provide early information for Harbourside residents when works were due to commence nearby
- Attendance at local community events (e.g. Party for Hilsea, talks for U3A and Rotary Club)
- A naming competition for the newly built bird island was run in summer 2023 and attracted over 240 entries and a lot of public interest in the press and on social media.
- Stakeholder site visits include colleagues from neighbouring councils, the EA, local councillors as well as a delegation from Singapore and Penny Mordaunt, 60 students from Portsmouth College
- Underway for 2024: dedicated Facebook page and website for North Portsea Coastal Scheme

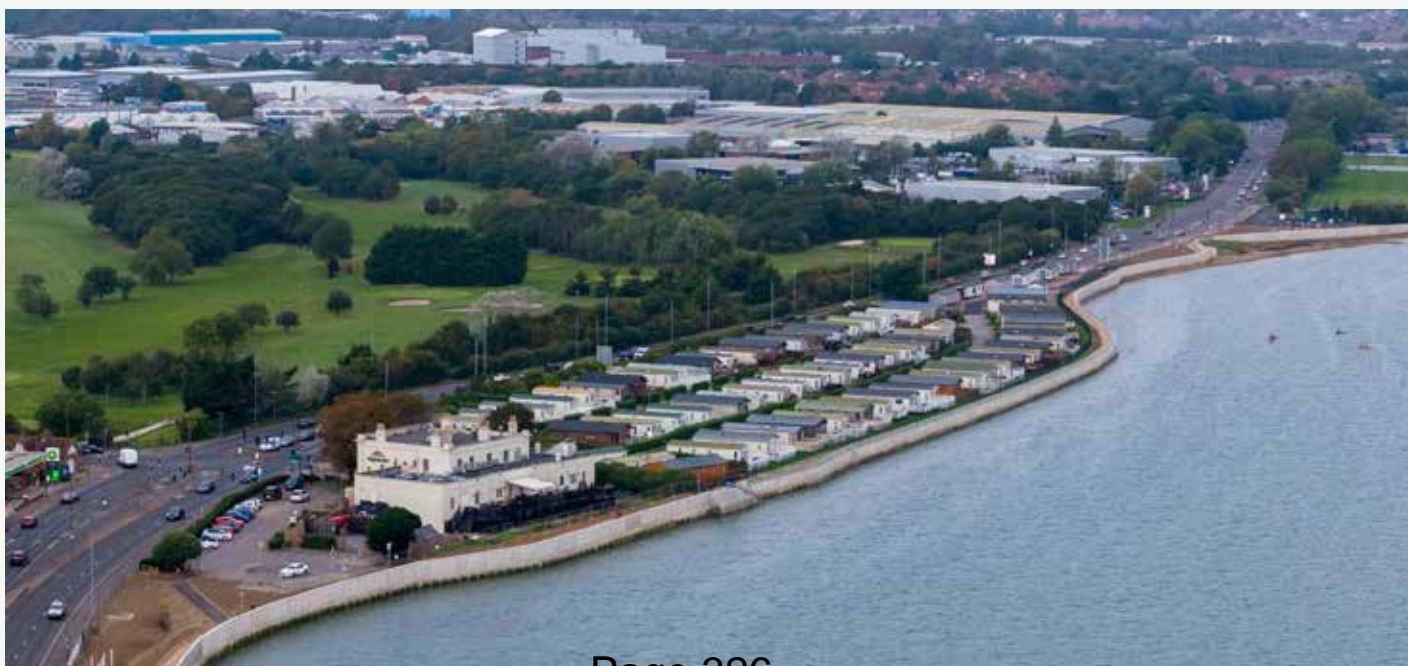




FUNDING

The current financial status is below - Figures correct at December 2023

FUNDING SOURCE	VALUE
Allocated Grant in Aid	£67.4m
PCC Contribution	£282k
Department for Education Funding	£2.5m
Environment Agency – Environmental Statutory Allowance	£905.6k
TOTAL FUNDING SOURCES	£71,054,870



COMING NEXT...

In 2024 work will continue along Eastern Road, once the team returns for construction after the winterbreak in April:

- Completion of the last 200m (approx.) of sea defence wall between the Langstone Harbour Viewing car park to Tangiers Road, including the last set of stairs.
- Raising of the remaining areas along the wall to ensure a max. 1.2m wall height when walking along the coastal path.
- Landscaping, wildflower seeding and planting of more trees - over 200 new trees will have been planted in this phase when completed in 2024.
- Completion of all planned seating areas with benches, tables and way finders and finally reinstatement of the Langstone Harbour Viewing car park.
- An official opening ceremony is planned for the summer 2024 (once complete) including a naming ceremony for 'Cockleshell island' where press, stakeholders and the winners of the cockleshell island naming competition will be invited.
- A dedicated social media presence and website are underway for the North Portsea Coastal Scheme.





PHASE 5 - PORTS CREEK

Phase 5 of the North Portsea Coastal Scheme is located at Ports Creek, and is the final phase. This phase is set to start in autumn 2024 and has a design similar to the completed Phase 1 design at Anchorage Park.

The planned design consists of an earth bund, which provides the required flood defence level, with a rock armour toe. As this phase will be carried out in an area known for its green open spaces, the focus will be on retaining the natural feel by planting more trees, improved paths, and access to the coastal path along this frontage.

The planning application for the scheme has been submitted in 2023 and is awaiting approval, with construction currently programmed to start in late 2024

until winter 2026. Prior to construction, a contractor will be procured and initial vegetation clearance work will be carried out in summer 2024. Once the contractor is appointed, a more detailed programme will be available.

The team have worked with Historic England, Natural England, Network Rail and other statutory regulators to develop the design and construction methods that will be used in the scheme.

**WATCH THE ILLUSTRATION FLYOVER
FOR THE PLANNED DESIGN AT
PHASE 5 HERE →**





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Agenda Item 14



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 6 February 2024

Subject: Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 - 2026

Report by: Mark Jowett, Head of Children We Care For

Cabinet Member: Councillor Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes/No

Full Council decision: Yes/No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To officially launch and provide information about the Portsmouth's Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2023 - 2026 (see Appendix A).
- 1.2 It is an important document that sets out our priorities, recognising the collective responsibility of all elected members, Portsmouth City Council, and partner agencies of the council as corporate parents, and our commitment to ensuring that we are continually striving to improve the outcomes for all the children we care for ¹and our care experienced young adults².

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 For the strategy to be adopted by Portsmouth City Council.

3. Background

The role of a corporate parent

- 3.1 The Director of Children's Services and lead member have a shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for children we care for, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high-quality placements, and proper planning for care experienced young adults.
- 3.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure as far as possible, that children we care for have secure, nurturing, and positive experiences. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities

¹ Statutorily known as Looked After Children, and also referred to as Children Looked After

² Statutorily known as care leavers



have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the Police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn.

- 3.2 The lead member and those on the corporate parenting board and scrutiny committees will have additional responsibilities, but the role is important for all members and officers. Every member and officer within a council has a responsibility to act as they would do as a parent for their own child. This is known as being a corporate parent and it is one of the most important roles that Portsmouth City Council has.
- 3.3 As being a corporate parent is a core responsibility of council members, annual corporate parent training is available to support members to fully understand what this means, responsibilities and how to do this effectively and champion our children.

4. Reasons for recommendations

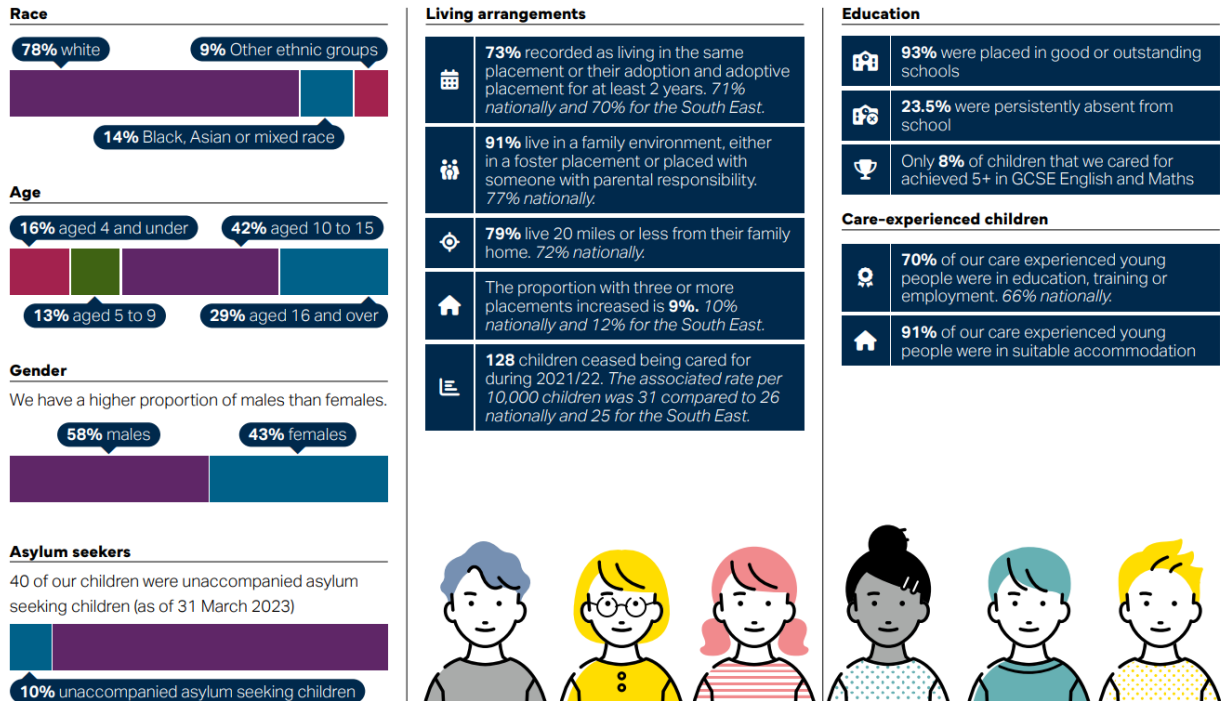
The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 - 2026

Co-production

- 4.1 Our approach to developing the strategy reflected our core values and relational approach in Portsmouth. It was co-produced between Portsmouth City Council staff, partner agencies, carers, and most important of all, children we care for and care experienced young adults. Two large co-production events were held with children we care for, care experienced young adults, foster carers, children's homes workers, frontline practitioners, and corporate parenting decision makers. The February 2023 annual survey also provided some key messages that were incorporated. Once the strategy was drafted, we then further consulted with our children to ensure that we had heard their messages correctly and fully incorporated these. We worked to ensure our priorities were shared and owned.

The children we care for

4.2 As at 31/03/23 there were 386 children in our care.



Priorities

4.3 There are six overarching priorities which list our commitments to ensure the children who are coming into our care, who we already care for, and who are care experienced, get the right services and support:

Hearing your voice

4.4 We will ensure that children and young people are central to all decisions about their lives and that we understand their needs and feelings. We will make sure this is embedded across all services so that all children we care for know who to speak to ensure they have every opportunity to have their say. This will include seeking feedback to continually improve the services we offer.

To promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you

4.5 We will ensure children and young people have the right level of time with their family, friends and anyone else important. We will support children and young people to repair and restore these relationships when it is needed and possible to do so.

To promote learning and employment opportunities

4.6 We will ensure our children and young people have the right support and opportunities at the right time to support them to do well in school, further and higher education, training and employment.

Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you

- 4.7 We will ensure that children and young people have a safe, comfortable and caring home to live in and grow up in a community where they feel they belong and feel loved. We will ensure there is good support for those who provide care, including their own children.

To support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing

- 4.8 We will ensure we identify and appropriately treat the health needs of our children and young people. This will include their physical and mental health. We will make sure we have a good understanding of past experiences, how these may have impacted our children and young people at various times in their lives.

Develop skills for your life ahead

- 4.9 We will provide support and guidance to our children and young people from the day we start to care for them to equip them for the next chapter of their lives.

Development and feedback

- 4.10 The responsibility for achieving the commitments we have made to the children we care for and care experienced young adults is shared by the whole council and our broader partnership. Children and care experienced young adults have told us that they would like to receive feedback on a regular basis to see how well we are using the strategy to improve outcomes, and with this our commitment is to work together as a partnership alongside our children, to ensure that we achieve what we have set out. To enable this, we have identified leads for each of the six strategic priorities and subsequent actions, and progress will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 4.11 The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the lead member and membership includes officers of the Children, Families and Education Directorate, colleagues from Housing, Adults, Health and most importantly, children and young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Experienced Group. The meetings start with hearing our children's voices, and they are supported by our Participation Officer to provide challenge to the Board.
- 4.12 At cabinet you will have the privilege of hearing directly from some of our children, their carers, and care experienced young adults, who have worked with us through the process of completing the strategy, and they will explain why this piece of work has been so important and what makes a good corporate parent.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 See Appendix B.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The legal framework around the report is embodied in the report itself. This strategy underpins the overriding principles of the Children Act 1989 and 2004 that all people



and organisations that work with children and have responsibility for children have a duty to help safeguard them and protect their welfare.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 The recommendations within this report regarding the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2026 are included in the Council's financial resources. Should any policy change be required in future years, this would have to be met within the cash limit budget.

Signed by:

Sarah Daly, Director – Children, Families and Education

Appendices:

Appendix A



corporate-parenting-
strategy-2023-2026-z

Appendix B



Integrated Impact
AssessmentIA58014E

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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Corporate Parenting Strategy

2023–2026

Contents

Forewords	3
Introduction	4
Hearing the voices of our children and young people	5
The Portsmouth Pledge	7
The children we care for	8
Corporate parenting priorities for 2023 to 2026	9
Corporate parenting: our expected activity	10

All photos posed by models



Forewords



**Councillor
Suzy Horton**

Cllr Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Education, Portsmouth City Council

I want to start by thanking everyone who has contributed to developing this corporate parenting strategy, especially our children and young people who we care for and those who are care experienced. As Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education the role of corporate parent is the most important of all of my roles. This strategy sends a strong message from our children and young people to all corporate parents ensuring that we embrace this role and recognise all children and young people

as individuals who have very different needs which need different responses.

There is no greater responsibility than being a corporate parent and this corporate parenting strategy reflects this commitment; it sets out our vision including how we will RESPECT AND VALUE each and every child and young person in their own right, that there is the provision and support to respond to their individual need and that this is provided in a caring, empathic and relational approach. I stand behind the pledges that are set out here and I will be relentless in working alongside all to ensure we deliver our ambitions.



Sarah Daly

Sarah Daly, Director Children, Families and Education, Portsmouth City Council

The role of Corporate Parent is a critical one and here in Portsmouth we are parents with our partners in the council and beyond to just under 800 children and young people we care for and care experienced young adults. As corporate parents we are charged with a responsibility to make sure that all of these children and young people are supported, safe, happy and thriving. This strategy frames how we will achieve this, informed fundamentally by the voices of our children and young people. We are determined

to be the very best parents that we can. This means many things, including enabling children we care for to grow up in stable loving homes, without frequent changes of home, carer or social worker; ensuring that as they grow they can access the best help and support. That our children and young people can access a good education and ongoing opportunities to learn, train and work. That they can maintain relationships and contact with important people in their lives, and have every possible opportunity to become independent, socially connected, economically sufficient, safe and happy adults.

Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of all elected members, Portsmouth City Council, and partner agencies to provide the best possible care and support to children we care for and care experienced young people. Portsmouth's Corporate Parenting Board brings together all these people to provide a forum for accountability and change.



Page 340

When a child comes into care Portsmouth City Council, its partners and elected members of the council become their Corporate Parent. Corporate Parenting is our collective responsibility to make sure that children and young people are provided with every opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, in the same way that any good parent would do for their child. We ask that all corporate parents consider the following questions: "Would this be good enough for my child? If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?". This commitment includes when it is time to move on to independence.

This strategy sets a framework for how the council and partners will be held accountable on delivering the Portsmouth Pledge over the next three years with delivery against these promises monitored by



the Corporate Parenting Board. It has been informed by conversations with children and young people, who are the experts in their experience and with their families and carers involved in their journey.

Our relational approach means we engage purposefully with our children and young people encouraging them to share experiences so that we can better understand the issues that they face and adapt services to meet their needs.

In Portsmouth, we understand that each child has a unique history and vision for their future. By living up to our promises and delivering on this strategy we will ensure that the vision of all children and young people we care for becomes a reality - every child must be supported to reach their full potential, with no one left behind.

Hearing the voices of our children and young people



Page 341

The Corporate Parenting Board is focused on ensuring the voices of our children and young people influence our work and our priorities. For the board to be effective we need to hear what things are like for children and young people. This is central to the board, its structure and the impact it needs to have. This strategy is supported by the Portsmouth Co-production Strategy that sets out in more detail how those who receive our services will shape them into the future.

This strategy has been co-produced with children and young people via a range of groups including:

- Children in care council
- Care experience voice group
- Children in care council activities
- Connect Brook Club activity
- Children's homes visits
- Mockingbird Constellations feedback
- Complaints and compliments
- Advocacy feedback
- Consultation events

During Autumn 2022 two large co-production events were held with children we care for, care experienced adults, foster carers, children's homes workers, front line practitioners and corporate parenting decision makers. Some of the key messages from these were:

To slow down placement processes and to have a gradual introduction to new carers

More appropriate matching e.g. due to religion, culture or interests

To have improved family and friend contact and for all children to understand the reasons for their level of contact

To treat each child cared for as an individual including understanding their individual ambitions and dreams and to take and respond to these seriously

To ensure professionals receive the right support to understand children's needs and that support is trauma informed

Widen the remit of the corporate parenting role to increase possibilities for children cared for

To start planning for the transition to adulthood earlier

To offer work experience opportunities to help prepare care experienced children for independence

Improve support for children to access social activities

Improve options of housing for care experienced children

Page 342

In February 2023 we undertook our annual survey – Feedback February. Some of the key messages were:

85% felt well supported by their worker (up from 80% in 2022) with 1% feeling unsupported

69% felt involved in developing their plans (up from 67%) with 12% feeling they're involved sometimes

Only 43% of children we care for felt listened to when their care plan was made. 32% weren't sure either because they didn't know, sometimes or they were too young. 1 child felt they haven't been listened to in the past but are now

100% of children we care for felt safe, well cared for and supported by their carers

100% of children we care for felt supported in their education with all feeling their foster carers did this the most

84% felt their health and emotional needs were met

64% felt that contact with their family and friends was supported well with 18% feeling this only happened sometimes

86% of care experienced felt they were supported in their employment, education or training, an increase from 78%

The Portsmouth Pledge

The Portsmouth Pledge sets out the following promises for the children we care for:

1

We promise to make sure that you have the love and affection that everyone needs.

2

We promise to always respect your individuality.

3

We promise to make sure your relationships are always at the heart of everything we do.

4

We promise to give you the stable and consistent experience in care.

5

We promise that your mental health and wellbeing will be looked after whilst you are in our care.

6

We will never give up supporting and encouraging you to do the best you can in school, college, university, work and your life.

7

We promise that we will still be here for you, up to and beyond 25. You are as much a part of our lives as we are yours.

8

We promise we will always respect your identity and you, and we promise to help you to connect with your heritage and history.

9

We promise that your voice will always be at the centre of our decisions.

10

We promise to make sure you know what your rights are and how to access them.

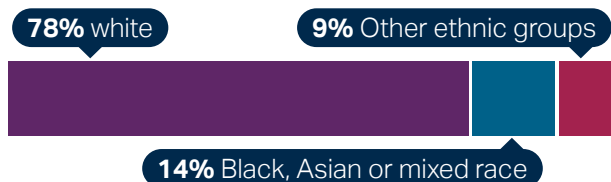
11

We promise to always respect and value your experiences as you are the only people that know what it is like accessing our services.

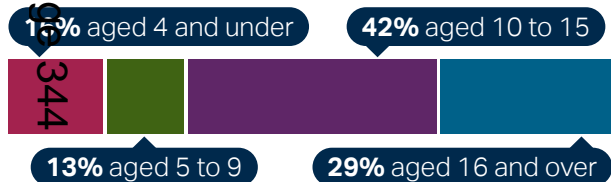
The children we care for

We currently have 386 children in our care.

Race



Age



Gender

We have a higher proportion of males than females.



Asylum seekers

40 of our children were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (as of 31 March 2023)



Living arrangements

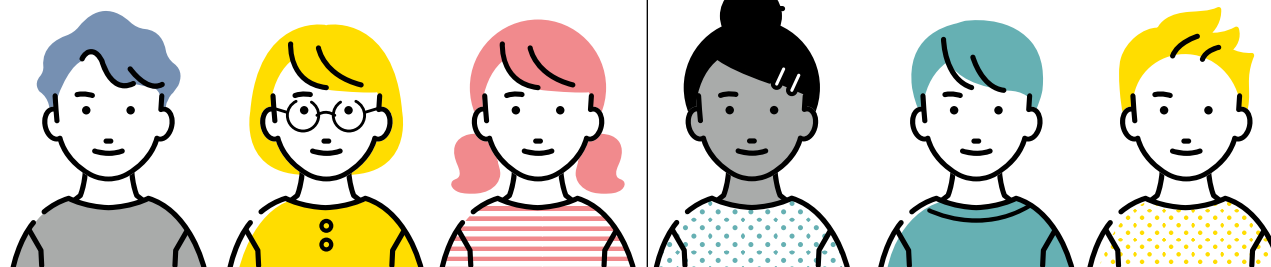
	73% recorded as living in the same placement or their adoption and adoptive placement for at least 2 years. <i>71% nationally and 70% for the South East.</i>
	91% live in a family environment, either in a foster placement or placed with someone with parental responsibility. <i>77% nationally.</i>
	79% live 20 miles or less from their family home. <i>72% nationally.</i>
	The proportion with three or more placements increased is 9% . <i>10% nationally and 12% for the South East.</i>
	128 children ceased being cared for during 2021/22. <i>The associated rate per 10,000 children was 31 compared to 26 nationally and 25 for the South East.</i>

Education

	93% were placed in good or outstanding schools
	23.5% were persistently absent from school
	Only 8% of children that we cared for achieved 5+ in GCSE English and Maths

Care-experienced children

	70% of our care experienced young people were in education, training or employment. <i>66% nationally.</i>
	91% of our care experienced young people were in suitable accommodation



Corporate parenting priorities for 2023 to 2026

These priorities are a list of commitments to ensure the children who are coming into our care, who we care for and who are care experienced get the right services and support.

As corporate parents we will ensure we RESPECT AND VALUE all these children and young people ensuring we recognise and respond to all their unique individual needs. This will be embedded throughout every commitment and the corporate parenting board will ensure that each commitment is closely monitored to make sure we are doing what we have promised.

Hearing your voice

We will ensure that children and young people are central to all decisions about their lives and that we understand their needs and feelings. We will make sure this is embedded across all services so that all children we care for know who to speak to to ensure they have every opportunity to have your say. This will include seeking feedback to continually improve the services we offer.

To promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you

We will ensure children and young people have the right level of time with their family, friends and anyone else important. We will support children and young people to repair and restore these relationships when it is needed and possible to do so.

To promote your learning and employment opportunities

We will ensure our children and young people have the right support and opportunities at the right time to support them to do well in school, further and higher education, training and employment.

Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you

We will ensure that children and young people have a safe, comfortable and caring home to live in and grow up in a community where they feel they belong and feel loved. We will ensure there is good support for those who provide care, including their own children.

To support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing

We will ensure we identify and appropriately treat the health needs of our children and young people. This will include their physical and mental health. We will make sure we have a good understanding of past experiences, how these may have impacted our children and young people at various times in their lives.

Develop skills for your life ahead

We will provide support and guidance to our children and young people from the day we start to care for them to equip them for the next chapter of their lives.

Corporate parenting: our expected activity

Page 3 of 6

The responsibility for achieving the commitments we have made to the children we care for and for care-experienced young people is shared by the whole authority in partnership with relevant agencies, such as education establishments and local health services.

Children and young people have told us that they would like to receive feedback on a regular basis to see how well we are using the strategy to improve outcomes. To enable this, we have identified leads for each of the six strategic priorities and subsequent actions:



Hearing your voice and co-production

All our children and young people are engaged in and co-produce their care plans. They will support our ongoing service improvement.

We will ensure that children and young people are involved in the decisions that are made about their lives when they come into our care and we will find ways to support them to have a voice. We want to know what our children and young people think about the support that they are given and the services we provide and to support us to be the best corporate parents that we can.



We will commit to:

Review and refresh our Co-production Strategy to reinforce how voices will be heard.

Ensure that children and young people are involved in decisions and plans that affect them.

We will provide all children and young people with an advocate to support them individually.

Provide a range of age and ability opportunities to ensure that the voices of our children and young people are heard. We will give our children and young people information and guidance on their rights, what support services are available and how to access an advocate or make a complaint.

Support children and young people to understand the intersections with race, gender, disability and sexuality if you identify as LGBTQ+. We will commit to be an active ally and remove barriers so that all feel safe and thrive.

Embed a trauma-informed working practice whereby all practitioners are trained to address specific needs (including those children from ethnic majority groups and children seeking safety and asylum). Staff, carers and support workers will actively address race and challenge their own biases when working with children and young people.

Create safe spaces for children and young people to speak freely, finding the right balance, without prejudice. Promoting strong relationships with people that understand need.

Enable children and young people to have access to an appropriately matched Independent Visitor.

Ensure that appropriate feedback is given to children and young people in a timely fashion about the impact their feedback has had upon the service delivered.

Ensure children and young people will be supported to be actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives, influencing and co-producing the design of services.

Ensure plans will be put in place to ensure that voices of young people who are quieter, dis-advantaged, vulnerable or professionals find hard to reach are heard.

Provide a trusted, safe and stable home for you

All of our children and young people will be safe from harm, with stability provided through secure placements and excellent carers.

When it becomes necessary for a child to come into care we will ensure that the child has a safe, secure and loving place to live. The duty to ensure a safe home extends to our care experienced young adults and this commitment is set out in our Housing Strategy.

As corporate parents we support our carers to have all the skills, tools and resources that they need to be the best carers to our children and young people. We also understand the importance of support networks and make sure our children and young people have adults that they can rely on and provide as much stability as possible.

We work hard to find long term suitable homes for our children that will allow them to flourish and achieve their full potential.

We will commit to:

Ensure our children and their families receive the right help and support at the right time to prevent the need for care wherever possible.

Ensure that we work to develop going home plans whenever it is safe to do so.

Ensure that children and young people are given information about their new homes and those who will be caring for them at the earliest opportunity.

Provide a secure, stable home where children and young people feel loved and cared for. Finding the right fostering home is important and we will ensure matching is consistently undertaken for all children coming into care.

Provide a range of homes that provide choice and stability. It is important to us that children and young people continue to live near to home and within the area they have lived in. This will ensure minimal disruption to education and the continuation of community ties and friendships.

Ensure siblings can live together when it is the right plan to do so. We will ensure we have more carers that can look after sibling groups through our recruitment campaigns.

Recruit carers that are able to confidently care for any additional needs that our children and young people might have.

Ensure cultural needs including race, language and identity are carefully considered when making matches with carers.

Ensure children and young people are part of the decision-making process at the earliest point of being cared for. Looking at both long term plan and day to day arrangements. We will encourage and support children and young people to chair their children we care for reviews.

Ensure that carers receive robust support and training. We will care for those who care to ensure they are compassionate and skilled in all they do.

Ensure carers and those supporting our children and young people have training to support our trauma informed practice.

Ensure carers have the right financial support to care for our children and young people.



Promote and develop relationships with the people that are important to you

All of our children and young people will be supported to maintain contact with family, friends and communities.

We will ensure that all children and young people have a positive support network around them to help them during their time in care and in adulthood.

We will support our children and young people to learn about their history and background, and have people that they can rely on to support them with this.



We will commit to:

Seek to ensure our children's voice is central in promoting and developing relationship with the people that are important.

Be curious and ambitious in our responses to maintain these links and identify relationships that may have been broken that need repair in moving forward.

Ensure family and network are brought together in a timely way through a family group conference where this is identified as being required.

Advocate for all the important people in children's lives to be able to promote their views and experiences from a trauma informed strengths-based perspective and ensure they are included in all meetings and decision making processes.

Ensure lifelong links are strengthened as young people move to adulthood knowing this is key to successful and happy adult lives.

Use the support of the family rights group to inform our practice and use creative ways to maintain links.

Ensure the people supporting our children and young people will receive training to have the rights tools and knowledge to progress this work confidently and compassionately.

Work intentionally to support family time that is strengths-based and respecting and appreciating individual needs in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin.

Minimise changes of social workers, and ensure social workers share their profiles in advance of working with children and young people to promote and develop a trusting relationship from the start.

Ensure endings are acknowledged and supported as situations change, including celebrating new beginnings.

Ensure children and young people understand their life story and have a clear narrative as to the experiences they have had so that they can talk confidently about these things with all those that are important

Support your emotional and physical health and wellbeing

We will encourage and support our children and young people to live a happy and healthy lifestyle, making sure that professionals work together to ensure that all their health needs are met.

Being happy and confident in identity is a key factor in looking after our mental wellbeing, particularly when it comes to race, sexuality, disability and gender. It is therefore crucial that we encourage and support our children and young people to be comfortable with who they are and demonstrate sensitivity and inclusivity in order for all to thrive.



We will commit to:

Provide a holistic health assessment within four weeks of a child entering our care, and annually or biannually following this, dependent upon age.

The longest interval between oral health reviews for patients younger than 18 years should be 12 months. However where there is suspected or known dental disease or dental neglect and you are struggling to get an appointment, we will support you in being seen as soon as is possible.

Ensure children and young people are able to discuss their physical and emotional wellbeing with a healthcare professional who has undertaken additional training.

Support children and young people to co-produce their health plans.

Provide children and young people the opportunity to be seen alone with the doctor or nurse (usually once they are 12 years of age or older).

We will talk with children and young people about all aspects of their health; from healthy eating, exercising and staying safe, to sexual health, smoking alcohol and substance misuse.

We will ensure that children and young people are able to access mental health support at the right time for the right level of need (KOOH, CAMHS StART, TIMOC, EAP etc).

We will work to understand the effects of race and identity on mental health and wellbeing, ensuring a trauma-informed approach. All children in our care seeking safety and asylum will have access to psychologist support and our Fast Feet Forward Programme (TIMOC).

We will ensure that information about our children's health is kept confidential and only shared with the people who need to know.

Ensure that young people receive a health passport before their 18th birthday, this will include useful information including how to access their health history and details of immunisations.

Promote your learning and employment opportunities

We will champion our children and young people and help them succeed in education and training, supporting lifelong learning and pursuit of their interests.

Ensuring that the children we care for and our care experienced young adults are in good education, employment, apprenticeships and training will always be a priority for us as we know this enables our young people to achieve the best possible outcomes and build successful careers. This includes making the necessary adaptations for our children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, to ensure that they have an equal chance to succeed.



We will commit to:

Work with children and young people to ensure that they have a place at a school/ college/training provision and do not miss out on all the educational opportunities and pathways that are available.

Work with children and young people to enable them to achieve their potential at every age and stage of their education, helping them to meet their targets, goals and aspirations as set out in their Personal Education Plan, Personal Opportunity Plan (Post 16) or Pathway Plan (Post 18).

Work with children and young people to ensure bespoke packages of education and training support are put in place where support is needed to help support any lost learning or identified gaps in knowledge and skills, including effective use of pupil premium funding (SSA).

Be a strong advocate for children and young people, supporting and challenging the school / college / education setting, to make sure they are receiving the best possible education and are able to attend regularly.

Provide a wide range of external opportunities for children and young people to participate in and develop life skills that could include the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, residential trips, National Citizenship Service, sailing experiences, volunteering opportunities, etc.

Ensure that at the end of Key Stages (All) or change of education setting (SSA) children and young people have a robust and well supported transition plan as part of their PEP/POP, which supports their transition into the next stage of their education journey.

Work with children and young people to support their career aspirations and ensure that they receive appropriate information, advice and guidance in order to progress from education into further/higher education opportunities and employment.

Work with local education and training providers, employers, directorates within the council and the Jobcentre to ensure young people have a range of supported pathways and opportunities into employment including apprenticeships and work placements.

Ensure that post 16 year old care experienced young people who are claiming Universal Credit, are supported by a Youth Employment Coach working alongside the careers and progression advisor and personal advisor.

Develop skills for your life ahead

Our young people will be prepared for the world of work and supported to become active citizens when they leave our care. They will be prepared for independence in the best way possible.

In recent years we have become increasingly aware of contextual safeguarding risks for the young people we care for, including sexual and criminal exploitation. Our children do not become less at risk of this harm when they turn 18. When considering these risks we also recognise the need to target specific support to the children seeking safety and asylum who are likely to have very limited local connections.

We listen carefully to our care experienced young adults and work with them to assess and understand their needs to make sure they have all the services they need for a successful transition into adult life. This includes making sure they have access to suitable accommodation, access to employment and support with their emotional and physical wellbeing.

We will commit to:

Work with young people to support them to develop the practical skills needed to live independently such as managing budgets and applying for jobs and continue to provide advice as they gain independence.

We will ensure young people are supported to have access to leisure activities including swimming, gyms, sports, music and the arts.

Support young people to remain in contact with their family as we know these are important links as they journey into adulthood. If young people have lost contact with family living overseas we will support them by linking them with the agencies who will help to trace family members for example the British Red Cross.

Support young people to attend a specific place of worship.

Work to look at making transport/travel around the city affordable for our young people.

Support young people to develop your social and communication skills through a variety of CONNECT activities.

Help young people to identify and develop skills to achieve a positive outcome as they journey towards adulthood through co-production of their Pathway Plan.

Work with our partners to ensure that all children and young people have access to the right digital devices and connections, so they are not disadvantaged.

Embed transitional safeguarding practice so that those turning 18 years of age are safeguarded from exploitation and abuse.

Ensure young people have identity and travel documents to enable you to see the world, apply for jobs, college and any benefits as you enter adulthood.





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Form name	Integrated Impact Assessment
Reference	IA580148687
Date	25/01/2024



Policy details

Request date	25/01/2024 12:13
Directorate	PCC Children Families and Education
Service	Corporate Parenting
Title of policy, service, function	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 - 2026
Type of policy, service, function	New
What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?	To define Portsmouth City Council s approach and ambition to Corporate Parenting, with agreed priorities that will drive to the work to improve outcomes for children we care for and care experienced young adults.
Has any consultation been undertaken for this proposal?	yes
What were the outcomes of the consultations?	During Autumn 2022 two large co-production events were held with children we care for, care experienced adults, foster carers, children’s homes workers, front line practitioners and corporate parenting decision makers. Further consultations took place prior to finalising the strategy. Key messages have been incorporated into the strategy.
Has anything changed because of the consultation?	no
Did this inform your proposal?	yes
Please provide details	See above.

Equality & diversity - will it have any positive/negative impacts on the protected characteristics?

<p>With the above in mind and following data analysis, who is the policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?</p>	<p>Disability - The strategy aims to positively impact this through committing to corporate parenting principle that every child and young person is unique, with different views, needs and priorities. We will tailor our services and support to meet their different needs and priorities, ensuring they are inclusive.</p> <p>Sex/gender - Local data shows that a higher proportion of children coming into care are male, this is in line with national trends. Through the strategy we commit to tailoring our services and support to meet the different needs and priorities of children young people, and supporting families to stay together.</p> <p>Race/ethnicity - We will support for children and young people with mixed heritage, racial and cultural backgrounds and ensuring practitioners understand the sensitivities and complexities.</p> <p>Religion or belief - Placements are specific to the needs and preferences of the child or young person for example we know that some children want a Carer with the same beliefs or background, other specifically do not.</p> <p>Gender reassignment - Through the strategy we commit to tailoring our services and support to meet the different needs and priorities of children in care and care experienced young people, ensuring they are inclusive. We have identified that this is an area where we need to further develop our expertise and knowledge.</p> <p>Pregnancy and maternity - A number of care experienced young adults become young parents. Similar to many young parents they may need additional support, especially where they do not have a support network through family and friends.</p> <p>Marriage and civil partnership - No identified.</p> <p>It is not identified that there will be a detrimental impact.</p>
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Will any of those groups be affected in a different way to others because of your policy, project, service, function, or strategy?	None identified.
If you are directly or indirectly discriminating, how are you going to mitigate the negative impact?	None identified.
Who have you consulted with or are planning to consult with and what was/will be your consultation methodology?	During Autumn 2022 two large co-production events were held with children we care for, care experienced adults, foster carers, children's homes workers, front line practitioners and corporate parenting decision makers. Further consultations took place prior to finalising the strategy. Key messages have been incorporated into the strategy.
How are you going to review the policy, service, project or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?	The priorities in the strategy have an action plan that will be reviewed every two months in the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board.

Crime - Will it make our city safer?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Housing - will it provide good quality homes?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	Suitable housing that meets the needs of children we care for an care experienced young adults is important, along with the best support to develop independence.
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How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	The priorities in the strategy have an action plan that will be reviewed every two months in the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board.
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Health - will this help promote healthy, safe and independent living?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	Children in care and care experience young adults typically have poorer emotional wellbeing and health. The strategy aims to positively impact this through the commitment to ensure that children in care and care experienced young adults have good physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	The priorities in the strategy have an action plan that will be reviewed every two months in the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board.

Income deprivation and poverty - will it consider income deprivation and reduce poverty?

Please expand on the impact your policy/proposal will have, and how you propose to mitigate any negative impacts?	Care experienced young adults are more likely to be on lower incomes or unemployed, with debt problems. The strategy aims to positively impact this through the commitment to ensure that children in care and care experienced young adults have good opportunities to flourish.
How are you going to measure/check the impact of your proposal?	The priorities in the strategy have an action plan that will be reviewed every two months in the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board.

Carbon emissions - will it reduce carbon emissions?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Energy use - will it reduce energy use?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Climate change mitigation and flooding - will it proactively mitigate against a changing climate and flooding?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Natural environment - will it ensure public spaces are greener, more sustainable and well-maintained?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Air quality - will it improve air quality?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Transport - will it make transport more sustainable and safer for the whole community?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Waste management - will it increase recycling and reduce the production of waste?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Culture and heritage - will it promote, protect and enhance our culture and heritage?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Employment and opportunities - will it promote the development of a skilled workforce?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Economy - will it encourage businesses to invest in the city, support sustainable growth and regeneration?

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Social value

This section is not applicable to my policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Involvement

Who was involved in the Integrated impact assessment?	Head of Children We Care For Page 360
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Name of the person completing this form	Mark Jowett
Date of completion	2024-01-25

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