



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 04 January 2024

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure
Lead Director:	Felicity Mercer – Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services
Service Area:	Commercial Services (Operations)
Report Author:	Stuart Davidson – Service Delivery Manager: Operations
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 382601 Email: stuart.davidson@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes - 27 September 2023
Report considered by:	SMT – 05 December 2023 Business Briefing – 14 December 2023 Cabinet – 04 January 2024

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 Endorses the Telford Town Park Strategic Framework.
- 1.2 Delegates authority to the Director of Communities, Customer and Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage and Leisure to progress the further development of the recommendations set out within the Strategic Framework.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the key findings and recommendations of the Telford Town Park Strategic Framework 2023.

3.0 Background

3.1 Telford Town Park covers 150 hectares and is the largest green space within the borough. In addition to the formal play areas located to the north the Town Park incorporates approximately 90 hectares of designated Local Nature Reserve, 13 pools and ponds, historic industrial land marks, formal gardens, sports and leisure facilities, the visitor centre and the Queen Elizabeth II Arena.

3.2 The Town Park is both a recognised regional tourist destination attracting an estimated 700,000 plus visitors per year from across the borough and the wider sub region and an important part of the borough's Green Network.

3.3 Providing a wide range of formal and informal recreation opportunities the Town Park makes a significant contribution to maintaining and improving resident's health and wellbeing. The Town Park is also central to the borough's visitor economy and cultural offer, hosting a programme of events ranging from large music concerts and the annual Balloon Fiesta to local community events and weekly Park Runs.

3.4 The Strategic Framework provides the overarching plan and vision for Telford Town Park for the next 10 years. It identifies future aspirational development opportunities that will help ensure Telford Town Park remains the 'jewel in the borough's crown' and continues to contribute to council priorities. It will be used to inform funding bids, service planning and prioritisation.

3.5 It is over 15 years since the previous Strategic Framework (2006) was developed and ultimately used to inform the successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid and wider interface planning between the Town Park and the Southwater development. Despite the unprecedented and unforeseeable financial climate, the Council has continued to protect, invest in and improve Telford Town Park for residents and visitors alike.

3.6 In addition to the projects identified within the 2006 Strategic Framework the council with the support of a range of partners, including the Friends of Telford Town Park (FoTTP), and neighbouring Town and Parish Councils has delivered a number new initiatives and improvements including:

- Designated Fields in Trust (FIT) status for QE11 Arena, providing additional legal protection (in perpetuity) as publicly accessible green space
- Opened the Adventure Golf Course
- Refurbished and extended High Ropes Course and Outdoor Education
- Opened the Disc Golf course
- Friends of Telford Town Park (FoTTP) Sakura Festival
- Opening of Exotic Zoo

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

- New play areas and refurbishment of 'iconic' play equipment (Spiders Web and Rocket Slide)
- Improvements to the formal gardens in partnership with The Friends of Telford Town Park
- Development of the Covid Memorial Garden
- Extended cycle hire and cycle training
- Ongoing development of annual events programme
- Sustainability improvements such as LED lighting and electric maintenance vehicles

3.7 Since 2022 over 178 Learn to Ride sessions have been delivered through the Cycle Hub within the Town Park, providing nearly 1,500 children with the opportunity to learn to ride a bike in safe environment. Over the same period visitors wanting to explore the wider Town Park hired bikes on over 2,300 occasions.

3.8 Nearly 100,000 visits have been made to the Exotic Zoo over the past two seasons. The Town Park team continue to work closely with colleagues from the Exotic Zoo to jointly promote the two attractions as an affordable family day out.

3.9 The Town Park is a significant contributor to the Telford & Wrekin visitor economy and will form an important part of the new Telford & Wrekin Destination Management Plan. The work of the Council, the Telford Town Park team and partners has been recognised on a local, regional and national level, raising the profile of the borough.

- Awarding of Green Flag status
- Voted Fields in Trust Best UK Park
- Designated Country Park status
- Fields In Trust Best Park in the West Midlands
- West Midlands Tourism Bronze Award
- FoTTP Jolly Green Day (National Award)
- Fields in Trust Best Get Active Award
- ROSPA Play Excellence Award
- FoTTP Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

3.10 In developing the Strategic Framework the Council has undertaken extensive local and national policy research and benchmarking and engaged in a range of visitor, stakeholder and resident consultation. A programme of observational visitor surveys was also undertaken to establish how the park is currently used and by who.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 Key findings

4.1.1 Telford Town Park serves a large sub regional catchment area with over half a million people residing within a 30 minute drive time and is considered to be particularly suited to providing low cost family days out for which there is growing demand as a result of the current economic situation.

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

- 4.1.2 Results of the 2022 visitor survey identify that a quarter of respondents visit the Town Park at least once per month. Reported frequency of visits in 2022 is higher than that identified through the 2015 visitor survey.
- 4.1.3 Evaluation and comparison of the Town Park budgets over the past five years has shown that despite the wider economic challenges financial investment into the park has been maintained. Investing in and developing income generating services and activities has improved the visitor offer and offset costs. The level of income generated as a percentage of expenditure is relatively high and as such, net costs are lower than national benchmarks. National comparators show that such levels of income generation should be considered to represent a significant achievement.
- 4.1.4 The Town Park is particularly well placed to actively contribute toward achieving the three key ambitions identified by the Council and partners within the Telford Vision 2032 plan.

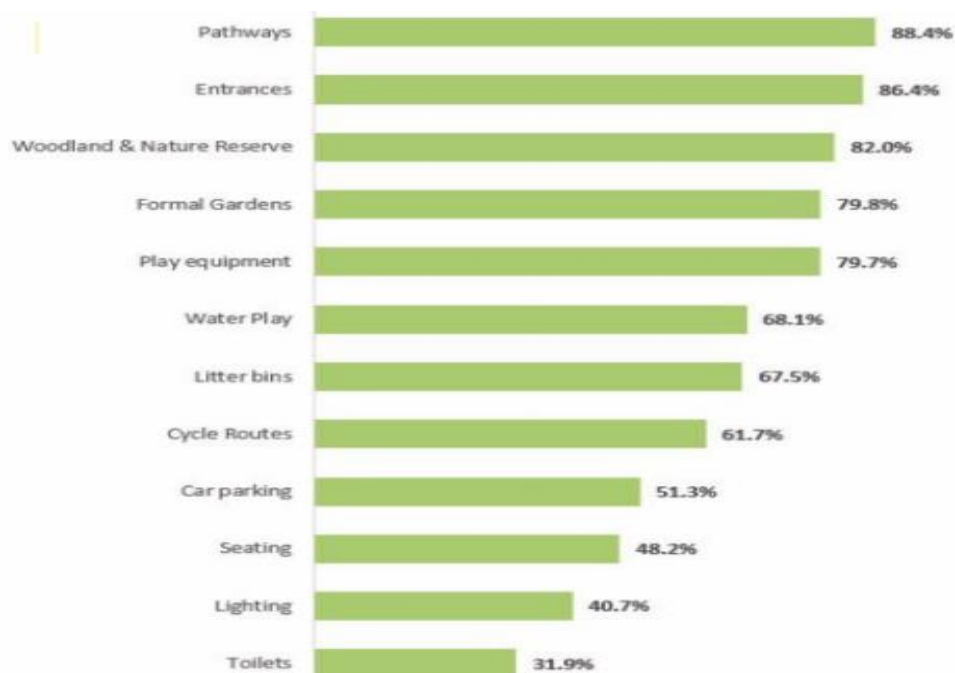
Ambition 1	Inclusive carbon neutral economy	The Town Park provides green sustainable transport and travel links along the Silkin Way connecting local communities and also provides potential carbon offset opportunities.
Ambition 2	Inclusive communities that are vibrant safe and green	Events within the Town Park provide opportunities for cultural diversity and communities to come together.
Ambition 3	Inclusive, healthy, independent lives	The Town Park is free to access and caters for a range of formal and informal recreation activities and the opportunity to connect with nature and be physically active.

- 4.1.5 The Town Park experiences very high levels of visitor numbers during the summer months. The visitor observational surveys, used to identify spatial usage of the park, identify that the areas to the north of the Town Park (including play areas) accounted for 70% of observed visits compared to 30% to the southern areas. Key opportunities identified within the Strategic Framework include encouraging year round usage of the park and encouraging usage of areas other than the formal play areas.
- 4.1.6 The northern areas of the Town Park including the play areas, Visitor Centre and QEII Arena tend to attract younger users, families and groups using the facilities for play and for social and family activities. The southern parts of the park attract a

higher number of older visitors, typically individuals or smaller groups including cyclists and dog walkers.

- 4.1.7 Observational surveys carried out in 2022 identified a more equal gender split amongst visitors compared with previous studies including an increase in the percentage of male visitors in the northern areas of the park and an increase in the percentage of female visitors in the southern areas of the park.
- 4.1.8 The wider park is also used as an important gateway to and from the Town Centre and beyond by residents who live on a number of local estates, enabling sustainable and active travel. The new Station Quarter development will provide opportunities for improved gateways and wayfinding between the station and the Town Park for residents and visitors alike.
- 4.1.9 Online visitor surveys were undertaken to identify satisfaction levels with various aspects of the park. The results have been used to produce a net promoter score (a percentage of satisfaction minus dissatisfaction). High levels of net satisfaction were reported in respect of much of the Town Park infrastructure including the footpaths, gateways, woodlands and nature reserve, gardens and visitor centre. The most significant increases in visitor satisfaction when compared to the previous survey (2014) were in relation to the formal gardens and the woodland and nature reserve.
- 4.1.10 Reported visitor net satisfaction levels were lowest in respect of toilet facilities within the Visitor Centre (capacity) and lack of toilet facilities elsewhere within the Town Park. Satisfaction levels with catering provision was also lower than with the other facilities although satisfaction levels have increased significantly compared with the 2014 survey.
- 4.1.11 Other than facilities, net satisfaction levels with organised events and activities (74.9%) in 2022 has increased the most (26.3%) compared with the previous 2014 survey.

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework



2022 Reported net satisfaction levels (facilities/infrastructure)

4.1.12 The observational surveys suggest that usage of the Town Park by visitors from diverse ethnic groups is lower than the demographic profile of the borough, which is reflective of national trends. The opportunity exists to engage with underrepresented user groups as part of the future audience development work through events such as Carnival and Love Telford.

4.1.13 Stakeholder consultation identified six key aims and a number of supporting principles to inform and guide future development of the Town Park.

Aim	Related Principles
More accessible & connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working and marketing with Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage site Build on the existing successful offer
More engaging & inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to reduce/mitigate social & physical barriers and invest in key physical infrastructure Continue to work collaboratively with service providers Proactive and joined up marketing Extend the events and activities to make the Town Park a year round attraction
Improving health & wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt inclusive approaches that provide benefits for health & wellbeing of residents and visitors

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

Enhancing biodiversity & heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of the Town Park• Support a greater range of people to have more contact with built and natural heritage
More sustainable management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to secure investment in Telford Town Park as a strategic green space• Introduce new commercial activities where they will enhance the offer
Contributing to a carbon neutral borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable approach to management consistent with the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

4.2 Key recommendations

4.2.1 The Strategic Framework proposes a draft 'Vision' for Telford Town Park:

"Telford Town Park is an accessible, connected and inclusive green space that improves health & wellbeing, provides connection to nature and heritage for local and regional visitors and contributes to a carbon neutral borough."

4.2.2 The Framework identifies a number of key strategic recommendations and related potential future projects or areas of work for future consideration and exploration.

- Improve Connectivity to Neighbourhoods
- Enhance Gateways
- Improve Wayfinding (including links through the Station Quarter development)
- Enhance Nodes (connections or points of interest) & Trails
- Enhance Visitor Facilities
- Investment in Events Infrastructure
- Extend Commercial Activity
- Enhance Biodiversity
- Enhance Blue (water) Infrastructure
- Conserve Built Heritage
- Improving Marketing & Promotion
- Developing Digital Interpretation
- Audience Development
- Support & Increase Volunteering
- Sustainable Management

5.0 **Alternative Options.**

5.1 The key findings and recommendations contained within the Strategic Framework are based upon the associated research and expert opinion and as such are

considered to represent the 'best fit' in order to ensure the continued development of the Town Park and the delivery of council priorities.

- 5.2 The Strategic Framework in itself does not commit the Council to a course of action; it identifies potential future opportunities for further exploration. Individual business cases relating to any future investment will be evaluated at the appropriate time and will include the option do nothing.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 There are no specific risks arising directly from the Strategic Framework. Potential risks and mitigation relating to any future projects or developments will be considered along with the associated benefits at the time.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Strategic Framework supports the council to achieve the following priorities:
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.
 - Our natural environment is protected, and the Council has a leading role in addressing the climate emergency.
 - Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 No funding has currently been identified for the delivery of the recommendations arising from the Strategic Framework.
- 8.2 Potential funding opportunities related to the delivery of the recommendations included within the Strategic Framework will need to be considered as appropriate, and further financial implications considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 Many of the proposals within the draft framework work towards cross cutting Council priorities. These are notably in respect of public health and the environment as well as the visitor economy. The Council has legal duties in respect of many of these themes and the implementation of the framework is one way in which the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting its legal obligations. Legal advice has been and will be provided on ongoing basis as individual proposals are brought forward.
- 9.2 There are no HR implications arising from the recommendations within this report and any specific legal advice will be provided in relation to future developments where necessary.

10.0 Ward Implications

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

10.1 Telford Town Park serves the borough and beyond and as such, the Strategic Framework potentially impacts all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 Prevention is a key priority within the Telford & Wrekin Health & Wellbeing Plan and as the largest green space within the borough, the Town Park is well placed to contribute to supporting residents to be physically active and to connect with nature that has been shown to improve health and wellbeing.

11.2 Attracting over 700,000 visitors per year the Town Park is a significant contributor to the Telford & Wrekin visitor economy and will form an important part of the new Telford & Wrekin Destination Management Plan.

11.3 The annual events programme within the Town Park provides opportunities for communities to come together and to promote cultural and social development.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 In developing the Strategic Framework the needs and barriers to access of a range of groups has been sought. The findings of this consultation is recognised within a number of the key recommendations and will be used inform and shape future service development and delivery.

12.2 Leisure Services have been working closely with a range of internal and external stakeholders including Social Care colleagues and parent carer forums to develop an Inclusive Leisure Plan that aims to further encourage and support access to facilities and services, including the Town Park.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 The Town Park may both benefit from and provide opportunities for offsite development funding arising from the proposed Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy.

13.2 Energy efficiency and sustainability planning will be central to both the development of any new facility plans and facility refurbishment works.

13.3 The Town Park is a highly valued and well-used local amenity resource that is well connected through public transport. It is therefore provides an important sustainable recreational opportunity as part of a low carbon economy.

14.0 Background Papers

N/A

15.0 Appendices

A Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

16.0 Report Sign Off

Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	28/11/2023	29/11/2023	PT
Legal	24/11/2023	30/11/2023	RP