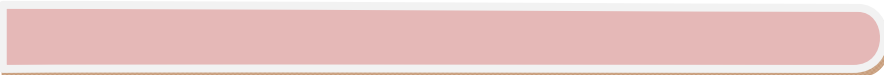


# CUTTESLOWE & SUNNYMEAD PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018 - 2022



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Customer comments

## 1.0 A Welcoming Place

Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park is located in the north of Oxford, with the two segments lying to either side of the A40 Northern Bypass and joined by a pedestrian footbridge. At 42 hectares it is Oxford's largest park and one of its most popular attractions; drawing visitors from all over the city and wider county.

Its popularity lies in its sheer size and the variety of things it has to offer; providing for a complete family day out. Its many attractions include three play areas for children of different ages, a water splash play area, a skateboard park and street sports site for teenagers, football, rugby and cricket pitches, tennis courts, mini golf and a much-loved miniature railway. There is also mature grassland for picnics, informal sports and play; woodland and riverside walks, formal flower beds, areas of wild flowers, a large duck pond with a central island and a Garden Centre with aviary and butterfly farm.

The park has been awarded a Green Flag Standard since 2008 and customer comments are very complementary:

**“Wonderful resource.....increase Council Tax to keep open!....Good local facility.....A very nice park.....Excellent facility.....Miniature railway terrific.....Good Park.....Lovely Space.....Beautiful park.....”**

Although the park attracts visitors from far and wide, it also has strong links to the local community through its active Friends' Group, and provides a range of opportunities for volunteering and community involvement. Over twenty adult and children's football teams play regularly at the park; and during the summer it hosts large five-a-side football tournaments, sponsored walks, and other sporting, community and commercial events. It is also a busy hub for informal exercising and outdoor pursuits, ranging from dog walking, jogging and aerobics to orienteering and Nordic walking.

The park's many and varied types of users means it is busy in the early morning, throughout the day and into the evening, providing natural supervision, and the presence of the Parks Office and Depot create a further sense of security. The park is therefore considered a safe retreat for families and older people and it was recently awarded a silver star by Netmums.com as one of the best free places to visit in the county.

This plan sets out what management strategies are currently in place for the park and what improvements could be made to further enhance it. Although the current period of financial restraint means there is a need to be realistic and pragmatic, this management plan maintains an aspirational approach, and identifies potential avenues of additional funding, such as capital bids and sponsorship. In the past external funding has been secured for the refurbishment of the three play areas and the water splash. Also for the refurbishment of two ageing sports pavilions and toilet block.



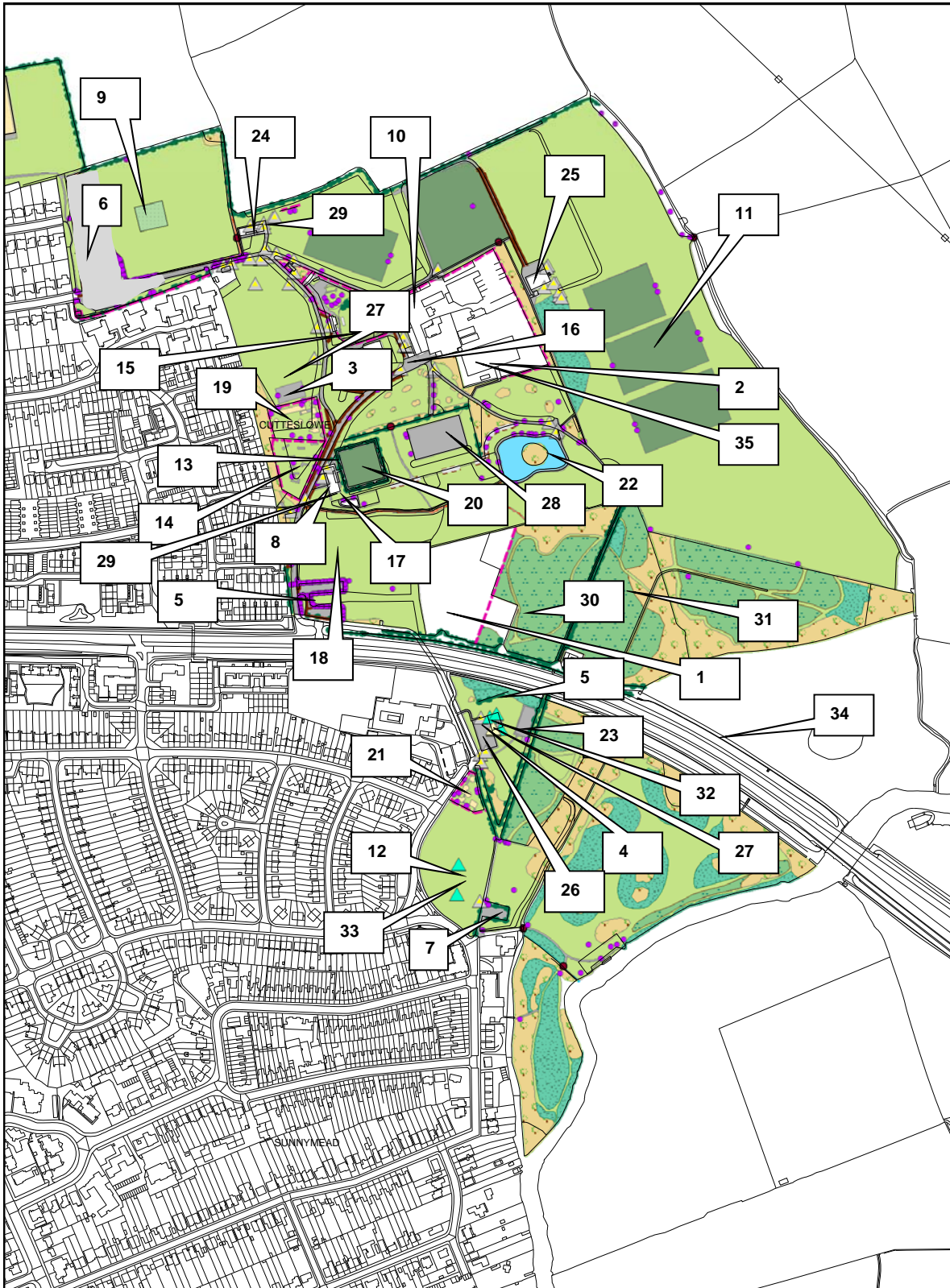
### 2017 Green Flag Judges Comments:

**“A highly enjoyable visit, very informative and we were impressed with what OCC is managing to achieve in these difficult time. Well done and keep up the good work! It is a joy to see a large herbaceous border, particularly one that attracts so many pollinating insects.”**















### 1.1 Site location and asset map


Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park Postcode: OX2 8ES












## Legend

-  OS MasterMap ( Line)
-  Play Equipment
-  Sports Equipment
-  Utility
-  Furniture
-  Architectural Features
-  Retaining Wall
-  Fences
-  Edging
-  Hedge (Line)
-  Hedge (Area)
-  Playsurface

## Grass

 <all other values>

## Type

-  Amenity Grass
-  Conservation Grass
-  Fine Grass
-  Rough Grass
-  Sports Pitch
-  Difficult Ground
-  Hard Surface
-  Planting
-  Watercourse
-  Water Body

1. Allotments
2. Aviary in Garden Centre
3. Basketball court
4. Basketball hoop
5. Car park (By-pass)
6. Car park (Harbord)
7. Car Park (Sunnymead)
8. Community hall & former bowls pavilion
9. Cricket Square
10. Depot
11. Football pitches
12. Kick-about football area
13. Kiosk
14. Miniature golf
15. Miniature steam railway
16. Office (Parks)
17. Water splash

18. Volley Ball
19. Play area (Cotteslowe)
20. Play area (Natural play)
21. Play area (Sunnymead)
22. Pond
23. Skate park
24. Top pavilion (cricket & multi-use)
25. Lower Pavilion (Football)
26. Street sport site
27. Table tennis
28. Tennis courts
29. Toilets
30. Wildlife area
31. Woodland
32. Youth shelter
33. Outdoor gym
34. Pillbox/ guard post
35. Garden centre with aviary and butterfly farm

## **1.2 Park features and infrastructure**

### **Allotments**

The allotment is run by Cotteslowe Allotments Association; an independent group who lease the land from Oxford City Council. Individual allotments are rented on an annual basis through the committee. The council works in partnership with the allotment association to increase use of the plots and the Parks Team help to clear overgrown plots to allow them to be rented out. In 2014 the association successfully applied for funding from the Lottery for a composting toilet, which was installed in 2015.

### **Basketball courts**

There is basketball court in the central area of the Cotteslowe side of the park next to the play area and a smaller practice court with two hoops on a hard-court surface next to the street sport site at Sunnymead. In 2013 work was undertaken to clean and repaint both basketball courts at Cotteslowe and a one metre high fence was erected around the perimeter, which greatly increased usage. These are free popular facilities open all year round for informal play.

### **Benches**

Benches are situated throughout the park. They are in a good condition and any new benches are in a consistent style. There are also 10 picnic benches located in the play areas, next to the pond and by the river Cherwell. Informal seating is located in the woodland area and on Sunnymead where large tree trunks have been left.

### **Bicycle stands**

Bike stands are provided next to the community hall in the centre of the park, the Top Pavillion and at the entrance to the Harbord Road car park.. Those at the Pavillion and car park were provided in response to request from the Friends of Cotteslowe and Sunnymead.

### **Bins (litter and dog waste)**

Litter bins are provided throughout the park. They are in a good condition and two styles are provided. They are normally emptied daily, but can need emptying up to three times a day during busy weekends in the summer months. In order to reduce the frequency of bin emptying, four Big Belly Solar Compaction bins were installed.

Dog bins are located throughout the park; they are well-used and dog fouling is not a significant problem (see Section 4.7 for dog control).

### **Bowls pavilion (former) and Community Hall**

Bowls has not been played in the park for many years and the green was converted into a new 'Destination Standard' play area in 2012.

These buildings are owned by Oxford City Council. The old bowls pavilion, comprises changing rooms, toilets, a bar and a small seating area, is currently underutilised and used as a mess area and storage for the kiosk contractor. Adjoining this is the Community Hall and it is run by the North Oxford Association (NOA). NOA hire the hall out to Age Concern, a nursery group, various church groups etc. Attached to the building are toilets and a large kitchen. We are currently talking to various stakeholders and exploring the potential of creating a park café in the community hall and/or the disused bowls area next to it

## Bridge

Oxford County Council owns the footbridge connecting Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Parks. A mural was designed and painted along the base of the bridge by young people from the estate in 2008 to combat a graffiti problem and this proved a successful and lasting solution.

The bridge is split into a pedestrian walkway and cycle track. This track forms part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network as a traffic free route number 51.

## Car parks

There are two car parks on the Cotteslowe side of the park, one at the main Harbord Road entrance and one accessed off the Northern bypass; and there is a further small car park on the Sunnymead side.

Due to the pressures of providing car parking space both car parks have seen recent improvements. The Harbord Rd car park was improved and extended in 2018 with grass-crete and new markings. This also allowed a safer pedestrian path to be marked. The bypass car park was extended in 2017 with the addition of a summer extension. In 2011 pay and display ticket machines were installed in both car parks.

The car park to the South of the Sunnymead area is smaller. However, this car park is not heavily used as the majority of visitors to this part of the park are families and teenagers who live locally or walk over the bridge from Cotteslowe. Parking here is free.

## Cricket (and multi-purpose) pavilion

This building, known in the park as the Top Pavilion, was fully refurbished in 2013. The funding came from a successful capital bid based on a review of all the City Council's park pavilions completed as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2011.

The building comprises changing rooms, an umpires/referees' room, toilets and a function room, which also serves as a tea room for the cricketers. It is a multi-purpose building, serving cricket during the summer, and football during the autumn and winter months.





It is also available to hire for events, community activities and meetings. In addition to the pavilion, the building incorporates an external toilet facility for park users replacing an old toilet block. It includes disabled and baby changing facilities and is serviced by rainwater.

### **Cricket pitch**

The cricket pitch is booked by cricket teams throughout the summer and is the home base for Wolvercote Cricket Club. In 2013 an all-weather cricket wicket was installed, along with sight screens. It is prepared in line with the rules and regulation set out by the England Cricket Board.

### **Depot**

The Depot is the main base for the Gardeners, Grounds Maintenance, Tree, Fine Turf and Landscape teams. As well as offices and equipment stores, there is a large communal mess room and car parking area.

Machines, equipment, vehicles and tools for the Parks Direct Service are kept in secure stores within the depot. There are skips for litter and dog waste and for recycling metal, and bays for woodchip, sand and other materials.

In 2016 there was further investment in the Depot so that it is fully compliant with the most up-to-date health & safety rules and regulations.

### **Flower beds**

- Cotteslowe Park is renowned for its impressive floral displays. How the displays are managed changed in 2010: they used to be filled with annuals which were changed with a spring display planted in October and a summer display planted in May, which was wasteful and increasingly expensive. Now, the material required each season is reduced by investing in new perennial plants and shrubs:
- Large beds are planted with shrubs and perennials in the centre to provide a structure to the display and all year interest.
- Architectural shrubs are used in place of spot plants which were previously replaced each season.
- A strip of bedding is used around the edge of the beds to provide colour highlights throughout the year.
- A greater variety of flowering plants is used to cover the ground which improves the appearance of the park and suppresses weed growth.
- Some smaller beds are planted with wild flowers.
- Using less material reduces the environmental impact of using peat, reduces the energy used to produce plants in a heated green house and reduces waste caused by plastic pots. The need for watering is also reduced.
- On-site gardeners are involved in the design of the beds.
- There is a large herbaceous border on the front lawn, which is being re-designed and re-planted in 2019.

### Football pavilion

This building, known in the park as the Lower Pavilion, is located in the lower-lying area of Cotteslowe Park next to the football field. It is heavily used by Summertown Stars Club during the football season, and is hired out to other teams and for events during the summer.

It comprises a male section with eight changing rooms with integrated shower areas and a toilet block. There is a female side comprising two changing rooms and a toilet block. There is also an events suite with views over the field.

A full refurbishment was completed in 2016 with funding from a successful capital bid based on a review of all the City Council's park pavilions completed as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2011 and additional funding from the Football Foundation.

### Football pitches

Children's football is very healthy in the park, with 20 teams regularly using the site. Three adult, one junior and 6 mini football pitches are marked out and maintained on the Cotteslowe area of the park. Football pitches are available for groups to hire through Oxford City Council. The goals are moved routinely to prevent goalmouth wear and tear.

### Garden Centre

The green houses were empty for many years. However in 2014 they were leased to People in Action who are a non for profit organisation working in horticultural therapy. In 2016 they opened to the public and now offer horticultural therapy for people with disabilities and learning difficulties, as well as employment and volunteer opportunities.

Facilities include:

- One to one or group based support
- Arts and crafts & woodwork projects
- Glasshouses for seed-sowing, potting on and flower displays
- Community areas for meeting and socialising
- Well stocked shop selling quality plants and products to the public

On site they also have a super Butterfly and Aviary, featuring various butterfly species, birds and bugs. Native butterflies are breed to be released into the park. There is a Community Craft Centre and a small "Duck Pond Kiosk" selling hot and cold drinks and snacks.



### **Gym (outdoor)**

An outdoor gym was installed next to the street sports site in Sunnymead in 2014. It was funded through a successful WREN bid from the adjacent Cotteslowe Community Centre and a significant contribution of £3,859 from the Friends of the Park.

### **Kick-about football area**

There is a kick-about area with two mini goals at Sunnymead and a single kick-about goal close to one of the adult football pitches on the Cotteslowe side.

All these goals are heavily used so are moved routinely to prevent goalmouth wear and tear.

### **Kiosk**

In November 2014 following a tender process San Remo Catering were successful in winning the contract to run the kiosk in Cotteslowe Park. They bring many years' experience of catering in public parks, working with local authorities and key stakeholders.

They completely refurbished the kiosk and made huge improvements to style/quality/range of confectionary offered, including fresh hot food and healthy options to order. They have created a covered area so that the kiosk can be open all year around. They have worked with OCC on waste transfer and re-cycling and recently won an award for their efforts.

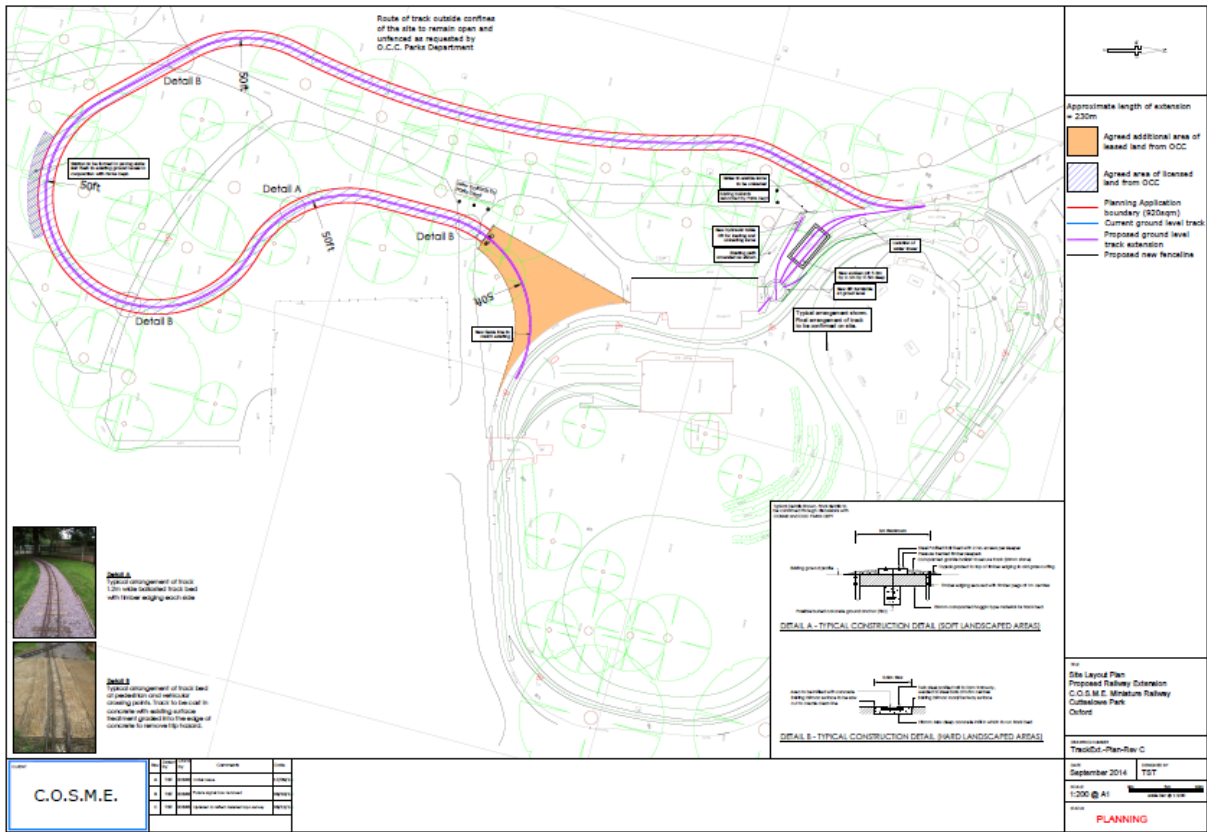
### **Miniature golf**

The miniature golf course was installed in 2002 by Oxford City Council,. In 2015 the new kiosk franchise, San Remo Catering, invested £50K to refurbish the facility. In Easter 2016 there was a grand opening of the new kiosk and mini-golf. This is now a very popular facility.

### **Miniature railway**

The City of Oxford Society of Model Engineers Club (COSME) moved to the park from Blenheim Palace in 1988. They operate a miniature railway running steam and diesel locomotives on a track in the centre of the Cotteslowe area of the park for public rides. This is a unique and very popular facility, attracting a lot of people to the park from all over the city. The railway operates from April to October each year and averages over 20,000 users per season. It is also available for hire by small public groups or individuals. More information on the railway can be found at [www.cosme.org.uk](http://www.cosme.org.uk).

COSME built a new 'station pavilion' in 2009, and in 2011 they received a Lottery Grant for the purchase of a purpose-designed railway carriage for elderly and disabled passengers. In 2013 they built a new station/ticket office. In 2015 they gained planning permission to extend the track. The aim is to complete the extension ready for the 2019 season.



Miniature train extension

### Orienteering route

The orienteering route was surveyed in 1992, and is marked by posts around the site. Maps have been produced by the Thames Valley Orienteering Club, however the route needs updating.

### Paddling pool / Water Splash and Play

A successful capital bid of £100K in 2014, followed by a successful WREN bid of £50K in 2015, provided the funds to turn the old paddling pool into a modern, more environmentally-friendly, splash and play feature. Careful thought went in to the design of the facility to ensure it remained visually pleasing during its annual hibernation over winter. A pond theme was chosen, with lily pads that squirt water when pressure is applied and two green fronds spraying water overhead. The theme is continued with a children’s bench in the shape of a swan and a frog shaped litter bin. The feature remains free to use and has proved even more popular than the old much-loved paddling pool it replaced.



### **Parks Direct Service office**

The Office is located in the centre of Cotteslowe Park, and is the base for the Parks Direct Service Management Team, Cemetery Office and Sports Bookings. The office is open Monday to Friday 0900 to 1700, and has a hatch where parks users and sports customers can come and talk to the administration officer if they have any issues.

### **Paths**

A combination of hoggin and tarmac paths run throughout the park. These are regularly edged to keep them tidy and hoggin topped up as necessary.

From the Harbord Rd car park, a tarmac road leads past the miniature railway to the Parks depot and continues towards the play area and the community hall. Taking this path further south leads to the pedestrian footbridge over the A40 towards the Sunnymead area.

Less defined paths break off in Sunnymead, leading through Countryside areas towards the River Cherwell.

The path in the woodland area can get very boggy and difficult to pass. The Friends group had flagged this as a priority and together improvements were made.

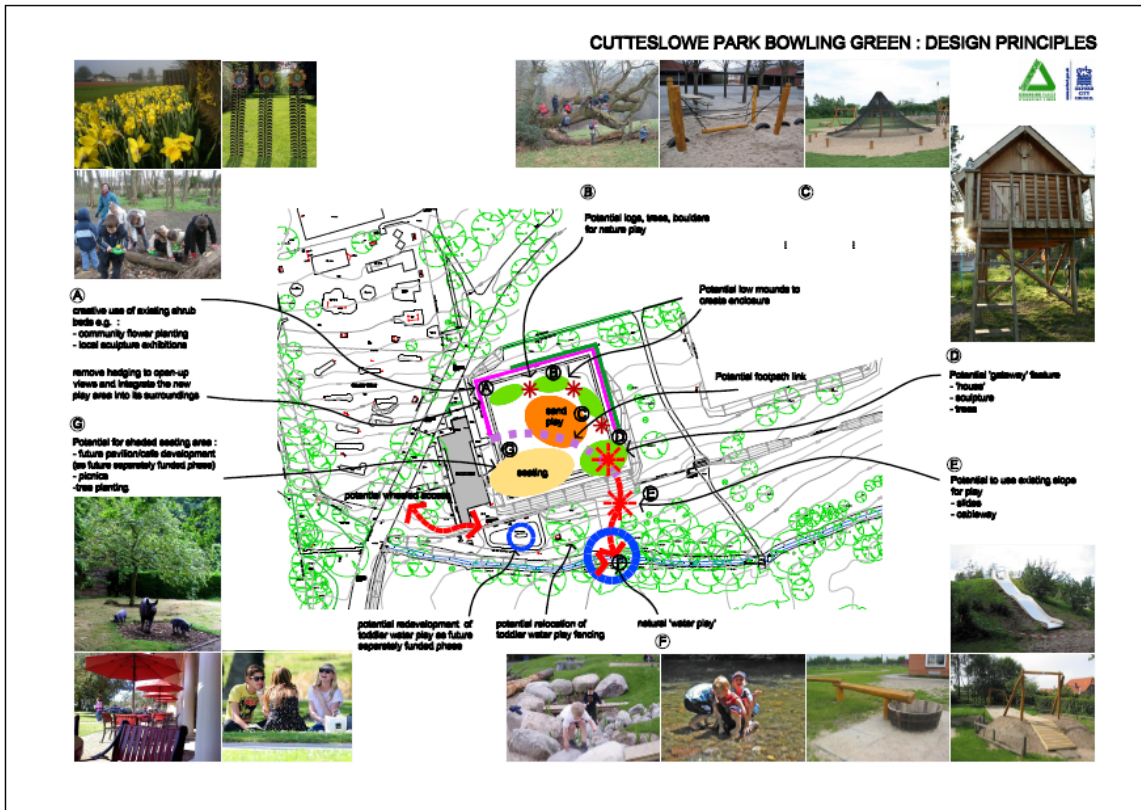
### **Play area (Cotteslowe)**

A review of all Oxford's plays areas resulted in a successful capital bid, and Cotteslowe Park received £150K throughout 2009/10 to create a 'Destination Standard' play area. In 2011 Groundwork carried out extensive consultation with users and the Friends' Group resulting in a decision on an imaginative natural play area to be installed on the former bowls green.

The area contains natural slopes, sand and boulders, as well as a large feature slide. The play area is extremely popular, and is very busy throughout the spring and summer months.

In 2016 there was a city wide consultation on making fenced plays a voluntary non-smoking zone. This was widely supported and has been implemented.





### Play area (Sunnymead)

The play area south of the A40 has modern play equipment, including a multiplay unit and wetpour surface.

In 2016, a small grant supplied by a local ward councillor provided the funds to source and transport a number of large logs which were placed outside the fenced area to encourage natural play. These have worked extremely well, with one parenting commenting: “Thank you for the logs, my children have sailed round the world on them”. Being close to the local Primary School this play area is extremely busy. In 2017, after consultation with the school, an additional large wooden netted climbing frame was added outside the fenced area. This compliments the log installation and sits well in the natural setting.

### Pond

The pond and its central island provide a haven for wildlife, and is popular with people for feeding the ducks. However, this has resulted in artificially high duck and gull numbers. Bread accumulating in the pond was a problem, so educational signage were installed which has improved the situation. Occasional pollution from street run off into the source stream also occurs.



The pond has a few leaks, but the wet patches have encouraged different plants to grow and invertebrates to thrive. The pond can get stagnant, and aeration of the pond water needs considering.

The Friends' Group identified it as a priority to make improvements to the pond and surrounding area, including a ramp over the stepped/bridge to allow for easier access for wheelchairs and pushchairs. So in 2016, the path was improved so that access is all the way round.

In 2017 work started on a wildlife interpretation board and is due for completion in 2019.

### **River fishing**

River fishing is popular on the section of the River Cherwell which forms the eastern border of Sunnymead Park and includes the old Bathing Place (The remnants of which can still be seen). Anglers just need a rod licence to fish there.

### **Signage**

On arriving at the at the entrance to Harbord Road there is a sign which says: 'Leading to Cotteslowe Park'. However there is a need to improve the signage at the bypass entrance.

Visitors to the park's main entrances are greeted with an attractive welcoming sign. Once in the park there is a wildlife interpretation board in the community woodland area, and one planned for the pond. There is also an information sign about the Sri Chinmoy peace mile.

In 2011 two community notice boards were installed in the park managed by The Friends' Group. There is also a wooden pin board next to the ice cream kiosk in the centre of the park for community use.

The Garden Centre have improved signs to the nursery, by installing hand made chalk and board directional signs.

### **Skate park**

After consultation with local residents, a skate park was installed at Sunnymead in 2002. The skate park contains 'street' style equipment and was designed with help from The Oxford Wheels Project. This facility has proved very popular, and along with the streetsport site, provides a much needed 'space' for older children and teenagers to hang out. Despite the number of teenagers using this facility, antisocial behaviour is very rare, though there can be litter to clear up most mornings.

### **Sri Chinmoy peace mile**

The Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team established a one-mile course in the park as a permanent facility for runners in 1987. This international organisation sponsors some 500 running events around the world each year. There is a sign at the start of the route explaining about Sri Chinmoy and a map showing the one-mile course.

A special event was held in 2012 to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration and a new sign was installed.



### **Street sport site**

The streetsports site was built in 2002 as part of the redevelopment of Sunnymead Park, and along with the skate park and youth shelters, forms part of a wider facility for teenagers. The city council's Sports Development Team runs skater hockey sessions at this site during school holidays which have proved very popular.

### **Table tennis**

One concrete table lies next to the above street sports site and is free to anyone who has their own bat and ball.

Two additional tables were provided next to the basketball and tennis courts in Cuttleslowe through the PING! Programme in 2014 and these have been installed as permanent features.

### **Tennis courts**

There are four hard courts in the Cuttleslowe side of the park. Capital funding was obtained to refurbish the courts in 2014, and this included repair and repainting of the surface, new nets and posts and repair to the surrounding paths.

The tennis facilities are run by Parks Tennis, a community interest company, who have been working in partnership with the City Council for 3 years to bring low-cost tennis and coaching for all ages and abilities to Oxford's public parks. Booking can be made on-line or through an app on a smart phone. Charges apply, although a number of free slots are still provided.

The Parks Tennis programme offers something for everyone including pay & play court bookings for those that just want to play a social match, coaching for those looking to learn the game or improve their skills, cardio-tennis for anyone wanting to focus on fitness, Advantage Tennis just for the men, Tennis Tuesdays just for women and the Oxford Tennis League for friendly competition.



## Toilets

A set of individual toilet cubicles is attached to the community hall and they include a disabled toilet locked with a Radar key. These were refurbished in 2016 and use a grey water supply from the splash development.

A set of new toilets, which includes baby changing and disabled facilities was incorporated into the cricket and multi-purpose pavilion. These are serviced by stored rainwater.

The old wooden toilet block was knocked down leaving an accessible chamber containing the water and waste outlets that will be retained on the site to provide services for temporary events toilets.

All toilets in the park are cleaned daily and locked before dusk. Both sets of toilets receive Platinum in the national “Loo of the Year Awards” and in 2017 Cotteslowe Park won the Parks and Gardens in the Leisure category.

## Youth shelters

There are two youth shelters at Sunnymead, one of which provides a covered meeting place for those using the streetsports site, and the other looks on to the skate park. Both are well-used.

## Volleyball court

In 2015 the council was approached by a beach Volleyball ball company who had funding to install one court in a public park in Oxford. A number of parks were reviewed and it was decided Cotteslowe was the preferred location. The court has been in use since 2016.

## Woodland and wildlife area

An 8 Hectare area of the park adjacent to the allotments is set aside as a woodland and wildlife area.

Numerous paths run throughout the woodland providing pleasant walks and the opportunity to view wildlife. It also provides a location for more adventurous play and exploration by children.



## **2.0 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**

### **2.1 Historical background**

Oxford City Council acquired Cotteslowe Park between 1936 and 1938. Sixty one acres were purchased in 1936, seven acres added in 1937, and a further six acres purchased from the Dean and Chaplain of Westminster in 1938. The site was previously a farm and allotments, and the Parks Depot retains many of the original 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century farm buildings, including the rather grand farmhouse.

The size of the park further increased when a disused section of allotment land was added. This piece of land, in the south east of the Cotteslowe area, is currently maintained as a nature area and community woodland.

Sunnymead Park was once a council tip. After being covered, it was left for a long time as a wasteland area. It started being used as an unofficial motorbike track in the 1980s, triggering a public meeting and the creation of the 'Cotteslowe/Sunnymead Group'. The group worked with the City Council to clear fly-tipping, create a sports zone, improve wildlife areas and paths and generally transform the site. The old Drovers road or droveway, a route used for driving livestock into Oxford's markets, is still visible and remnants of an old bathing place can also be seen on the bank of the Cherwell.

## 2.2 Biodiversity

In addition to being the city's most well-used green space by the public, Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park also provides a rich and diverse habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species. Although the park lies on the urban fringe, on the northern edge of the city, even when seen from the countryside to north and east it appears like a green oasis compared to the monoculture of flowerless, pesticide treated crop fields and narrow hedges which characterise this arable land.

The park's importance for wildlife lies in the diversity of its habitats, which include a wild flower meadow, wetland area, dedicated wildlife area and community woodland of around 8 hectares (20 acres), extensive areas of short and long grass, a large duck pond with central island, river and stream banks, a huge range of cultivated and wild flowering plants, 1700 mature trees and over 6km (3 and a half miles) of hedgerows. As a result, the park supports healthy populations of badgers, foxes, hedgehogs, rabbits, bats, grass snakes, frogs and toads; over sixty species of birds, and an abundance of bees, butterflies and other insects.

This Biodiversity Action Plan was begun in 2013 to introduce a more systematic and scientific approach to inform the on-going process to protect and further enhance the park's habitats. It is also designed to set out the department's policies in relation to biodiversity and maintaining the balance between the needs of park-users and the desire to protect habitats. Educating park users regarding wildlife will be an important aspect of this, and there will be opportunities to encourage volunteering and to develop natural play for children by introducing them to wilder areas of the park.

In June 2014 the park hosted the Oxford Festival of Nature, which included a range of activities for the public, including guided wildlife walks and talks, and there was close involvement with the Sunnymead Community Association and local schools. There was also a Bioblitz, where a team of wildlife experts tried to identify and record as many species as possible within 24 hours. All the information obtained from this event has been fed into the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Work to undertake a detailed survey of the park's various habitats was begun in 2013 and the information obtained from this is provided in the Biodiversity Action Plan, which also includes initial surveys of the fauna and flora. Further work is needed to provide a complete picture throughout the year, and as discussed above, this work will continue in 2019 and beyond. Once complete, the results from the surveys will be used to further inform and expand the Action Plan, which at present is very much a work in progress. However, much good work has already been done and initial recommendations have already been identified:



### **Work undertaken to improve the park's biodiversity in recent years**

- Creation of dedicated wildlife area and community woodland
- Creation of a wetland area
- Creation of wildflower meadow
- The planting of approx. 5000 new shrubs and tree saplings
- The planting of 10,000 bulbs
- A detailed tree survey undertaken (appended at the end of this document)
- Introduction of a hedge management plan (appended at the end of this document)
- The introduction of this formal Biodiversity Action Plan
- A review of habitat management is being undertaken in 2019 to ensure all urban parks are maximising biodiversity potential
- Biodiversity surveys
- In 2017 the Countryside Volunteers prepared the ground and cleared competing vegetation to allow 3 nationally rare plants Greater Water Parsnip *Sium latifolium*, creeping marshwort *Apium Repens* and Fen violet, *Viola persicifolia* to flourish and re-colonise the newly created ponds on Cotteslowe low meadow

### **Further work needed and initial recommendations for additional improvements**

- Complete biodiversity surveys of the park's fauna and flora
- Use information obtained from surveys to inform future planting, and management of habitats
- Extend wildflower meadow and increase the range of plants growing there
- Continue programme of tree planting, including succession of Horse Chestnut avenues with appropriate species (commenced in 2014)
- Change working practices to retain more standing dead wood, and implement a policy regarding management of fallen leaves, dead wood and other organic matter
- Install an aerating pump in the pond to increase oxygenation and reduce algae
- Educate park users regarding habits and wildlife, and consider installing information boards on the park's biodiversity.
- Investigate why there is continued pollution in the brook through the park from sewage from the Thames Water pumping station in Sparsey place. Take advice on improving biodiversity in the brook and the pond and possibly seek financial assistance / compensation from Thames Water (eg to provide an aerator for the pond see above).

### **Habitat and wildlife conservation**

There is a natural transitional zone of open fields and allotments between the formal park and the wildlife area; and this creates a surprisingly tranquil enclave for wildlife, even when the park is at its busiest. Although there are paths running through the wildlife area (providing access to walkers who also appreciate its tranquillity) most of the site is covered by thick undergrowth which remains undisturbed; and it is completely unlit and lies away from any properties or any kind of night-time disturbance, other than some traffic noise from the bypass. The adjacent wetland area shares these benefits, but is also the one area that is fenced off as it is too fragile a habitat to allow significant footfall.

Although the park is of a considerable size, there is the potential for there to be conflict between the protection of wildlife and users when hosting large events over several days. Therefore careful consideration of particular habitats needs to be taken into account.

The Council's policy is to use as few pesticides and herbicides as possible, as little as possible and only when strictly necessary. The only chemical used regularly in the park

is Glyphosate (Nomix Dual - non-hazardous to animals) which is used twice a year to treat the paths.

Oxford City Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the park's varied and important habitats and increasing its biodiversity. The programme of surveys and research will continue, and the information obtained will be used to ensure habitats are managed appropriately and that a careful balance is maintained between the needs of park users and the desire to protect and encourage wildlife.

### Trees - Succession of Horse Chestnut avenues

There were three Horse Chestnut avenues in the Cotteslowe side of the park, comprising a total of 69 trees. Over recent years Horse Chestnuts have increasingly been under attack from numerous pests and diseases, most notably Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner, *Guignardia* leaf blotch and Bleeding Canker. The trees in Cotteslowe have been badly affected, and in addition to the impact of their visual decline, they now pose a danger to the park users as they frequently drop limbs.

A long term plan has therefore been put in place to gradually replace them with alternative species, and the following considerations were taken into account when deciding which species would be most appropriate:

- Suitability for the local environment of North Oxford
- Suitability for the urban fringe
- Traditional avenue form and year round visual interest
- Autumn colour
- Bark interest
- Flowering
- Biodiversity value

Rather than having a single species, multiple species have been chosen, which together best meet the above criteria. In addition to improving the visual amenity of the park, this is also increasing the bio-diversity of the tree stock and the range of wildlife attracted.

The succession of the Horse Chestnut Avenues began 2014 and is scheduled to take seven years.

In 2017 the Tree team trialled a watering-bag scheme for newly planted avenue trees to save time (and emissions) related to the 3-year watering programme.



## 3.0 Community Involvement

### 3.1 Stakeholders and partners

The Friends of Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park Group was established in 2008, just before the first Green Flag Application. This active and dedicated group is still going strong and has contributed significantly to the park's on-going improvement by being a consultative group for the Council and by raising funds.

The introduction of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG), which coordinate the skills, powers and resources of the police, local politicians, city council and numerous other agencies, has resulted in a significant reduction in the level of antisocial behaviour in the city. The Green Space Officers form an important element in the NAG team and specifically target their resources to tackle issues highlighted as NAG priorities. They have been particularly successful in greatly reducing dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering which previously blighted a number of the city's green spaces; and have achieved this through a combination of education and enforcement.

The Parks team works with Abingdon and Witney College to deliver an apprentice scheme. The apprentices gain experience in fine turf, horticulture, landscape work, arboriculture, countryside management, cemeteries, ranger work and business administration. It is very successful winning the APSE Apprentice of the year competition on numerous occasions as well as the Freeman of the City of Oxford award for the best apprentice in horticulture.

#### Stakeholders in the park include:

- The Friends' Group
- The Allotment Association
- North Oxford Association
- City of Oxford Society of Model Engineers Club (COSME)
- External contractor for the kiosk
- Sports teams
- The residents of the farm house and cottages within the park
- Harbord Road Area Residents' Association
- Charterville Care People in Action/ Garden Centre



### 3.2 Consultation

Since 2000, Parks Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been completed annually across parks and recreation grounds in Oxford, including Cuttleslowe & Sunnymead Park. Park users are interviewed using a standard questionnaire, or they can complete the survey on-line. This identifies patterns of use and users' improvement ideas which are recorded in an annual report (see Appendix 1) and fed into the Five Year Action Plan (Section 5.0).

Extensive consultation was carried out by Groundwork in 2011 for the new play area, including schools, residents, drop in sessions and all stakeholders in the park.

In 2016 a new survey was carried out to better understand the way Oxford's residents use and value their local green spaces (see Appendix 2). Nearly 500 people responded, making this one of the largest surveys of its kind in the county. The findings revealed just how much people treasure their local parks and nature areas, and that they consider them vital to the health and well-being of themselves and their families:

- Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that their local green space plays a positive part in their happiness and well-being
- Almost all respondents (98%) felt that their local green space helps make their local area a better and a more desirable place to live
- The majority (95%) of respondents felt that their local green space helps to encourage them and others to keep fit and healthy

Many respondents also took the opportunity to praise the quality of the green spaces provided by the City Council and the way they are managed:

- "Oxford should be proud of its green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them"
- "Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/ maintenance"

### 3.3 Events

The Cuttleslowe area of the park is licensed for the performance of plays, films, live music, recorded music and dance from 09.00hrs until 23.30hrs. The council does not organise any events itself in the park, but encourages community groups and corporate organisers to use it as a venue. The conditions of the park's licence restrict it to hosting six large licensed events a year. Local residents are consulted before large events are staged.

Regular events held in the park include sports events (large 5-a-side football tournaments, Sport Relief Mile, Park Run, Xplorer orienteering challenge, orienteering, rambling, UK University Frisbee tournament), outdoor screen films, a motor show, trade shows, community and charity events (scout gatherings, school fun days, walks and races etc.).

The Council's Events team supports small-scale community events in the park, which are covered by the park's licence. Events organisers must seek approval from the Council's Events Officer.

Oxford City Council has two officers who help events organisers to comply with relevant legislation, and to organise safe events. Parks staff play an important part in getting the park ready, monitoring the event and returning the park back to normal afterwards.

In 2015 Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park joined in the “Love Parks Week” campaign and held an event where there was various activities to try for free including Xplorer, outdoor yoga, Tai Chi.

In 2016 there was an opening event for the Lower Pavilion with Summertown Stars, and in 2017 and 2018 Cotteslowe hosted the Cowley Classic Car Show.



**LOVE PARKS WEEK**

supported by  
www.oxford.gov.uk  
OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

relax  
enjoy  
celebrate

**Celebrate Love Parks week here:**  
Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July- Hollow way 2-4pm  
Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August- Florence park 2-4pm  
Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August- Cotteslowe park 2-4pm

Come along and try for Free: Ping! table tennis, Xplorer fun(family orienteering challenge at Florence Park and Cotteslowe Park), Fit Trails, outdoor yoga, Tai Chi, Geo coaching and more!  
Contact: [sportsdevelopment@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:sportsdevelopment@oxford.gov.uk) for more details

Protect, Improve, Promote Green Spaces  
[www.loveparks.org](http://www.loveparks.org)

KEEP BRITAIN TIDY  
LOTTERY FUNDED



### 3.4 Volunteering

In 2017 the City Council achieved the “Investors in Volunteers” award. It promotes volunteering in green spaces in many different ways including:

- Joining the Friends of Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park
- Joining the weekly volunteering working group organised by the Countryside Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Receiving volunteers from the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) which is the foremost organisation protecting wildlife and enhancing iconic landscapes. Also from the Oxford Conservation Volunteers (OCV), a voluntary organisation that has been carrying out practical work conserving the wildlife and traditional landscape of the Oxford area since 1977.
- Since 2010 annually welcoming an undergraduate intern from a University in Holland studying Leisure Development. They provided a lot of support in the customer satisfaction survey analysis.
- Volunteering as an individual to work alongside the Green Flag Park gardeners.
- Business team building days.
- Volunteering to be a Health Walk Leader which includes a free day of training by Natural England.

### 3.5 Contribution to health & wellbeing

One of the aims of the City Council’s Green Spaces Strategy is: ‘To promote the central role that green spaces play in contributing to the city’s health and well-being’. There are worrying trends relating to the nation’s health: obesity and less active lifestyles have led to a rise in preventable diseases which is placing increasing pressures on the National Health Service. Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park provides a wealth of opportunities for exercise and sport. Evidence shows that a brisk walk in a local green space every day can reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes by 50%, fracture of the femur by 30%, colon and breast cancer by 30% and Alzheimer’s by 25%. Add to this the positive impact of exposure to nature and green space on stress and mental health, on aggression and violence within inner-city communities and on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder amongst children, and the full picture in relation to health and wellbeing and access to green space can start to be understood.



Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire



Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park offers many activities that contribute to the national and local health agenda:

- Large grassed areas for informal sports and exercise
- Riverside and woodland walks
- Well-used football pitches for adults and children
- A cricket pitch
- Tennis courts
- Basketball and volleyball courts
- Organised health walks
- An orienteering course
- A measured mile
- Play areas, including adventure play equipment for older children
- A skate park
- Well-used allotments
- Community woodland
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Feel part of a local community
- Organised events such as Park Run
- In 2016 there was a city wide consultation on making fenced play areas a voluntary non-smoking zone. This was widely supported and has been implemented.

## 4.0 Management

Outstanding performance at Oxford City Council has been recognised by achieving a number of high profile awards:

- The Best Achieving Council category at the MJ Achievement Awards in 2014
- Investors in People Gold standard
- Investors in Volunteers standard
- Customer Service Excellence, which is an independent accreditation to recognise organisations that deliver excellent customer service and drive customer-focused changes.
- Oxford frequently performed well in the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom
- Regularly shortlisted for the APSE Parks & Horticulture Service of the year
- Six Green Flag Awards.

Oxford City Council's mission is: 'Building a world-class city for everyone'.

This management plan contributes towards the council's priorities set out in the Corporate Plan for 2016 - 2020 including:

- A Vibrant and Sustainable Economy
- Strong and Active Communities
- A Clean and Green Oxford
- An Efficient and Effective Council

The management plans are one of a number of tools used to deliver the objectives set out in the Oxford Green Spaces Strategy 2012-2026, available on request.

## 4.1 Vision for the park

The vision for Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park is: 'To work with the community to create a world class, vibrant and safe city park that promotes, health, biodiversity and learning, and is accessible to all.'

One of the aims of the Council's Green Spaces Strategy is: 'To achieve high quality green spaces across Oxford, including spaces that are nationally recognised for their quality and attractions'. The management of Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park contributes towards achieving this aim.

Despite the current financial climate, Oxford City Council has been very successful in obtaining capital funding to ensure the infrastructure of its parks is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century and meets the needs of its customers.

Improvements to Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park in the last ten years have included:

- Creation of three high standard play areas for children of different ages
- New welcome signs installed at the main entrances
- Introduction of a standard design for bins and benches
- Refurbishment of the community room
- New toilet block built which includes disabled and baby changing facilities
- Creation of an outdoor gym at Sunnymead
- Refurbishment of the Parks office and yard facilities
- Creation of a community woodland
- Full tree survey undertaken (to be repeated on a three year rolling programme)
- Hedge management plan introduced
- Refurbishment of the Top Pavilion
- Refurbishment of miniature golf facility
- Large investment in the kiosk
- Installation of beach volley ball court
- Extension of the miniature railway
- Composting toilet in Allotments
- New water splash facility to replace old paddling pool
- Refurbishment of Lower Pavilion
- Designation of Areas of Valuable Open Space

The park has seen an investment and upgrade of its infrastructure, toilets, pavilions and play areas that has ensured that it is well on the way to becoming a world class park.

In the light of the very successful programme to improve and expand the play and sports provision in Cotteslowe, it is appreciated that there is a need to ensure the park does not become over developed and that the remaining open spaces are valued as a facility in their own right. Some of these open spaces such as the sports pitches and Rest Harrow Meadow are already protected, but to ensure other less formal grass areas are preserved they have been designated as Areas of Valuable Open Space. This designation reflects a strong desire that they remain open areas for informal recreation, exercise and picnics etc, but also to maintain the park's wider setting. The map below illustrates the areas designated.

## Valued Open Space



1. The Games field
2. The Picnic green
3. American Football Field

A main priority in the future is to undertake a more systematic and scientific study of the park's biodiversity so that a more detailed conservation strategy can be created; and arrangements are currently being made with the University and volunteers to undertake surveys of its wildlife and habitats.

A detailed list of aims and Five Year Action Plan is provided in Section 5.

## 4.2 Well Maintained and Clean

In 2010 (revised 2016) a full grounds maintenance specification and standards was written and applied to Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park, see Appendix 3.

Two skilled gardeners are based in Cotteslowe & Sunnymead three days a week to ensure it is kept in prime condition throughout the year. The gardeners are pro-active and have a can do approach, having been given autonomy and responsibility. In addition, mobile Green Space Field Officers visit daily to patrol the park, and specialist teams look after the facilities, countryside areas, trees and infrastructure.

The service has been accredited with IOS9001:2008 and ISO14001 and monitors the quality of its horticulture.

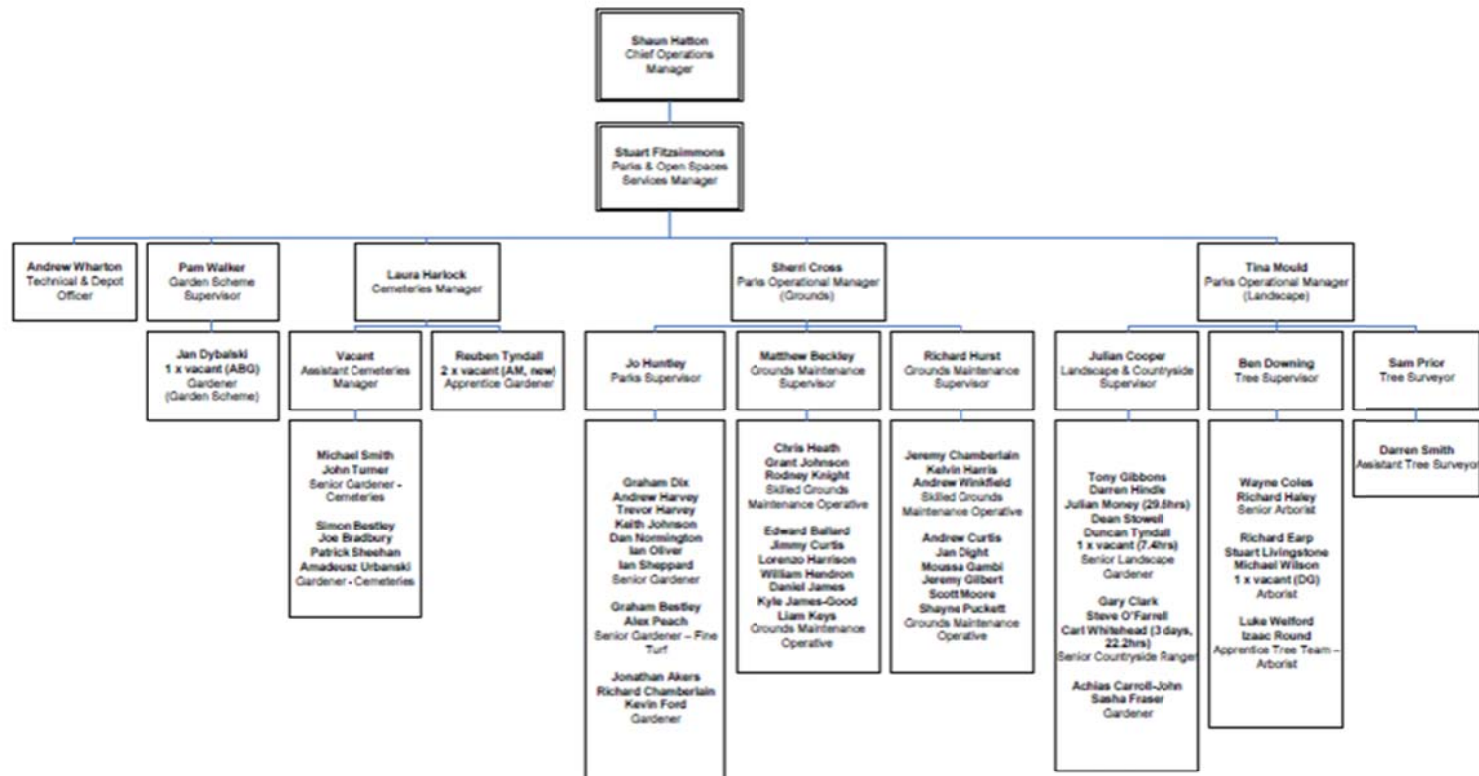


## Management structure

A re-structure at Oxford City Council in 2015 resulted in the management & maintenance of green spaces being located with the Parks and Open Spaces Team within Direct Services. Green Space Development and community involvement in green space is located within Community Services. In 2018 Oxford City Council created a commercial arm called Oxford Direct Services (a Local Authority trading Company) to undertake external work in addition to statutory work.

### Parks Direct Services

#### Parks & Open Spaces Services Team



### Community Services



### 4.3 Marketing and Communication

A new service Marketing Plan will be created in 2019 to replace existing plans. A leaflet is available to download from the website, or a hard copy can be obtained from the office containing information about the site and its history. Detailed information, pictures and information about forthcoming events in the park are available on [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk). A copy of the Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park Management Plan is available from the Parks office and on the website.

The service is increasing its use of social media, and now has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. It is including QR codes on new signage.

### 4.4 Healthy, Safe and Secure

Customers view the park as a safe and secure place to be because:

- Most areas of the park benefits from significant natural surveillance from local residents who live in and around the park.
- The Council's Parks Office and Depot are based in the park creating security.
- There are many and varied types of users which means that the park is busy in the early morning, throughout the day and into the evening, providing natural supervision.
- The presence of on-site gardeners.
- The park is also patrolled by the Green Space Officers, who monitor it during the busy weekends when the gardeners and other parks staff are not around. This Service (formerly the Ranger Service), was introduced in 2006 to ensure the safety and well-being of the users of all of the city's main parks by providing a reassuring presence and tackling anti-social behaviour. These officers enforce the byelaws, ensure dog owners act responsibly and issue fines to those who do not; tackle environmental crime and work to ensure the parks are free of graffiti, fly-tipping and vandalism. They have an excellent 'first name term' relationship with the local Police Team, so there is good communication and joined-up working. As a result crime or antisocial behaviour in the park is rare.

Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park is covered by the Oxford City Council Byelaws and a site specific risk assessment, both of which are available on request.

The park is not locked, although toilet facilities within it are locked at dusk and opened at the start of the gardeners' shift.





In 2011 Oxford City Council and local Police teams were given new powers called Dog Control Orders to help deal with irresponsible dog owners. Any owner whose dog is out of control or causing a nuisance in a public place may be ordered to put the dog on a lead immediately or face an £80 fine or court action; and no one is allowed to walk more than four dogs at a time. In addition, the fine for owners who fail to clear up when their dog fouls in a public place increased from £50 to £80, owners can also be fined £80 if they allow their dog to go into a fenced off play area. The Green Space Officers have issued a number of fines in Cotteslowe and Sunnymead using these powers.

At the same time as adopting the act, 150 dog waste bins were installed in parks and recreation grounds across the city to provide a convenient means of disposal for dog waste. As a result dog fouling is not a significant problem in the park.

### Staff

- All staff who use equipment are trained annually by external specialists. Staff are made aware of the council's Health and Safety Policy (available on request) when they begin work. Procedures are included in ISO9001:2008. Internal copies are made accessible to all staff.
- The Parks Management Team undertake risk assessments on all equipment and machinery used by the department.
- Cutting machinery is only used by trained staff
- All staff are provided with, and are required to wear, appropriate safety equipment.
- All parks vehicles are included on a vehicle maintenance schedule, managed by the Council's Direct Services. Maintenance of vehicles is carried out in a dedicated garage within their depot.
- Fuel, equipment and machinery is stored in a secure compound within Cotteslowe Park.
- All chemicals used in the parks are managed in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations. All staff handling pesticides hold a PA/6 certificate.
- Although public vehicles are not permitted inside the park, maintenance, residents and delivery vehicles do drive through. There is a 10mph speed limit, and speed bumps throughout.
- The risk assessment for the Miniature Railway is completed by the City of Oxford Society of Model Engineers Ltd (COSME Ltd).



## Play areas

- Oxford Direct Services Parks in-house Landscape & Play Team maintains the play facilities in Cotteslowe and Sunnymead and have installed and maintained most of the city's playgrounds over the past 25 years.
- They carry out weekly equipment inspections and quarterly safety inspections of the play areas. These inspections test the fixings, supports and components of equipment, and report any faults or required repairs.
- Every member of the team is fully trained in play area maintenance to ROSPA standards, and all have achieved RPII (Register of Playground Inspectors International) Operation Level.
- They are also trained in the use of machinery, health and safety, and all are CRB checked.
- The council's insurer carries out technical checks every 6 months.

## 4.5 Environmental management

A high number of the environmental principles are demonstrated within the service and applied to Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park:

- The service works with the Oxford City Council Climate Change Action Team which aims to tackle the effects of climate change and reduce the overall carbon footprint of its buildings and services.
- The Parks Team is accredited with ISO14001
- Pesticides are used only where there are no practical alternatives. Where more traditional methods can be used, such as the removal of thatch by hand over a small area, or the removal of weed growth within fine turf areas, then these methods are carried out to minimize the environmental impact of using chemicals.
- A chemical log is kept in the store in the depot. When chemicals are delivered, their details are logged. When they are taken out, the user fills in a spraying log, recording when and where the pesticide was used, how much was used, the reason, the application method, the weather conditions and the protective clothing worn. All the contaminated items of PPE and containers are disposed of by an external registered company.
- Old play equipment, and any other metal items collected from the park is brought to the Parks depot and put in a metal skip. All scrap metal is recycled and used as a source of income.
- The service actively avoids the use of peat-based products wherever possible. When ordering floral displays via our suppliers we put within the specification that this is a requirement of Oxford City Council.
- The service utilises vehicles operated via alternative fuels including LPG and electricity and continually seeks to procure the most energy efficient and low-emission vehicles.
- To prepare for the likelihood of a drier climate in future, the use of bedding plants has been reviewed. More resilient plants such as Geraniums, Marigolds and Dahlias are used instead, along side perennial planting. With drier summers, and warmer winters and the reduced risk of frost, we will eventually consider planting Mediterranean varieties of plant (non-hardy varieties). Any new trees and shrubs planted will be able to tolerate future conditions. If summers become even drier, the use of bedding plants may be reduced further.

Oxford City Council's Procurement Strategy states, when buying materials, we will:

- avoid ozone-depleting chemicals & those with a high global warming potential
- use durable products and materials
- choose low-maintenance building materials
- choose building materials with low embodied energy
- use building products made from recycled materials
- use salvaged building materials when possible
- choose European soft wood over hard wood. Wood must come from schemes that have been certified as sustainable, e.g. by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). We will not use tropical hard woods such as teak, iroko and mahogany unless it has been reclaimed for reuse
- avoid materials that will give off gas pollutants
- minimise packaging waste.
- During the tendering process, companies are asked to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and those that comply are looked on more favourably.



## 5.0 Aims and Five Year Action Plan

Action	How	Resources	Timescale	2018 Review
<b>Buildings and infrastructure</b>				
Miniature Railway extension	See map in report	COSME funded	2018	Planning has been agreed and work is now underway
Explore the potential of creating a park café in the community hall and/or the disused bowls area next to it	Consult with the NOA regarding their current views, usage and future plans	Externally funded Internal resource for procurement	Feasibility completed by 2019 and subject to this being agreed delivery by 2020	Initial exploratory discussions underway
Relocate aviary	Aviary to be relocated inside the community garden centre and nursery	Construction of new aviary and decommissioning of old one to be funded internally	2018	Completed
Wildlife interpretation boards	By the Meadow areas and water fowl on the pond	Friends and parks development – funding to be confirmed	2019	Design work on the boards has started
Implementation of Valued Open Spaces policy	Proposal agreed with councillors and Senior City Council Officers	No resource implications	2018	Policy included in this updated management plan to enshrine the concept of the park's remaining open spaces being identified as a facility in their own right
Audit/review bicycle racks	Green Space Development Team as part of wider audit	Funding for any new provision to be confirmed	2019	Audit across all green space started 2018

Improved signage from A40	Such as brown			
Improve the car park at Harbord Road and include a safe pedestrian walkway	Grass-crete and improved markings. Replace the speed bumps.	Oxford Direct Services	2018	Complete

<b>Biodiversity &amp; Heritage</b>				<b>2018 Review</b>
Improve biodiversity through implementation of Action Plan	Work closely with environmental groups such as BBOWT and Brookes Uni to assist with surveys  Undertake surveys of flora and fauna to identify important species and habitats to inform future management to maintain and enhance the value of the park for wildlife	GSD Team to seek grant funding,  Utilise volunteers to undertake surveys and carry out habitat improvement works	2018 onwards	
Utilise a WWII Pillbox in the park as a bat hibernaculum.	Installation of grill to entrance and slots provide access for bats only	CIL fund grant from Local Ward Councillors	2018	
Improve Herbaceous Border	Re-fresh/re-vamp perhaps re-size the boarder	On-site gardeners and volunteers	2019	Work has started and all plants have been removed

<b>Environmental sustainability</b>				<b>2018 Review</b>
Succession of Horse Chestnut Avenues	New tree planting scheme	In house	See main plan Section 2.2	Work started in 2014 and continues
Trial tree-watering bags		Tree team		
<b>Community</b>				
Tree/wildlife trail for families		Friends Group	2018	
Update and repair Orienteering Route		Thames Valley Orienteering Club	2019	
Access Audit		Approach Oxford Unlimited	2019	

## 6.0 Monitoring and Review

The Green Space Development Team, with Parks Direct Services reviews the management plan once a year. This review will incorporate a discussion on the comments and advice from the Green Flag judges. Progress will be measured against the Five Year Action Plan.

All parks staff will be made aware of the Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park Management Plan. All teams (Fine Turf, Landscape and Play, Trees, Green Space Officers, Grounds, Management) have regular meetings, and any actions relating to their respective teams will be monitored at these meetings.

Where individuals are given specific tasks in relation to Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park, it may be appropriate to include the tasks in their Personal Development Plan, and monitor through the appraisal process. User surveys will be carried out in the parks on an annual basis and scores will be used to monitor changes in approval ratings amongst parks users.



## 7.0 Supporting Documents

These documents are made available on request, and are also available to Green Flag Judges on the day of a tour.

1	<b>Cotteslowe &amp; Sunnymead Park Biodiversity Action Plan</b>
2	<b>Grounds Maintenance Service Standards and Specification</b>
3	<b>Splash n Play 2015/16 WREN application</b>
4	<b>New Adventure Golf 2015</b>
5	<b>Refurbishment of Pavilions 2013-2015</b>
6	<b>Refurbishment and New Play Areas 2013</b>
7	<b>Bees Needs Award</b>
8	<b>Customer Satisfaction Survey results</b>
9	<b>OCC Health and Safety Policy</b>
10	<b>Friends of Cotteslowe and Sunnymead</b>
11	<b>DDA Audit – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010</b>
12	<b>Risk Assessment</b>
13	<b>Events</b>
14	<b>Marketing Plan</b>
15	<b>Byelaws</b>
16	<b>New Tree Planting and Avenues</b>
17	<b>Green Spaces Strategy</b>



## Appendix One: 2016 Value of Oxford's Parks & Green Spaces Results



### Summary

The City Council recently undertook an extensive consultation exercise to better understand the way Oxford's residents use and value their local green spaces. Nearly 500 people responded, making this one of the largest surveys of its kind. The findings revealed just how much people treasure their local parks and nature areas, and that they consider them vital to the health and well-being of themselves and their families:

- Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that their local green space plays a positive part in their happiness and well-being
- Almost all respondents (98%) felt that their local green space helps make their local area a better and a more desirable place to live
- The majority (95%) of respondents felt that their local green space helps to encourage them and others to keep fit and healthy

Many respondents also took the opportunity to praise the quality of the green spaces provided by the City Council and the way they are managed:

- "Oxford should be proud of its green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them"
- "Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/ maintenance"

Conclusions are provided at the end of the report on the significance of the results, and how they should inform on-going and future investment and provision of green space in the city.

### 1. Background

In December 2015 The Land Trust commissioned a social value survey on its green spaces. With their permission aspects of the survey were replicated by Oxford City Council. A social value approach provides a method to quantify goods and services, which are not traditionally quantified monetarily.

The survey explored visitors' perceptions of parks, why they used them, the impact they make to people's health and well-being and how they personally value the spaces.

A copy of the survey is provided as Appendix A and compliments as Appendix B.

## 2. The consultation process

The on-line survey was open for 5 months from Sept 2016-January 2017. This was supplemented by on-site interviews. It was also promoted through social media and advertised in email auto-signatures and distributed to Parks Friends groups and at volunteer sessions.

A £25 shopping voucher prize draw was provided as an incentive to complete the survey, although 45% opted out of being put in the prize draw. A total of 498 surveys were completed; this is the highest recorded return rate for a parks and green spaces survey nationally since year 2000.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Sites Surveyed

Table below lists the sites surveyed and numbers of returned questionnaires:

Site	Total	Category from GSS
Florence Park	68	Green Flag City Park
Cuttleslowe and Sunnymead Park	62	Green Flag City Park
South Park	45	City Park
Bury Knowle Park	31	Green Flag City Park
Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground	26	Local Park
Lye Valley Nature Reserve	25	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Blackbird Leys Park	19	Green Flag City Park
Hinksey Park	19	Green Flag City Park
Port Meadow	17	<b>Countryside Site</b>
Shotover Country Park	16	<b>Countryside Site</b>
Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground	13	Local Park
Kendall Copse	11	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Oxford University Park	9	Other
Rock Edge Nature Reserve	9	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Headington Hill Park	8	City Park
Alexandra Park	7	Neighbourhood Park
Raleigh Park	7	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Fettiplace Barton	6	Local Park
Oatlands Road Recreation Ground	6	Local Park
Magdalen Woods	5	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Aristotle Lane Recreation Ground	4	Local Park
Botley Park	4	Neighbourhood Park
Grandpont Nature Reserve	4	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Kidneys Nature Park	4	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Meadow Lane	4	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Milham Ford Nature Park	4	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Barracks Lane Meadow	3	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Magdalen Quarry	3	<b>Nature Reserve</b>

Northway Park	3	Neighbourhood Park
Thames Tow Path	3	Other
Wolvercote Common	3	<b>Countryside Site</b>
Christ Church Meadow	2	Other
Croft Road Recreation Ground	2	Local Park
Manzil Way Gardens	2	Neighbourhood Park
Rivermead	2	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Rose Hill Recreation Ground	2	Neighbourhood Park
Warneford Meadow	2	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Angel and Greyhound meadow	1	Other
Boundary Brook Nature Park	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Peat Moors	1	Local Park
Burgess Field Nature Park	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Chilswell Valley	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Donnington Field	1	Local Park
Dunstan Park	1	Neighbourhood Park
Hollow Way Recreation Ground	1	Neighbourhood Park
Hythe Bridge Pocket Park	1	Other
Iffley Lock and Thames towpath around that area	1	Other
Louie Memorial Fields, Botley	1	Other
Land from north of Victoria Arms access lane to ring road	1	Other
Margaret Road Park	1	Local Park
Marston (cycle path area)	1	Other
New Marston Recreation Ground	1	Local Park
Old Marston Park	1	Local Park
Quarry Hollow	1	Local Park
Risinghurst Recreation Ground	1	Neighbourhood Park
Ryder close the waterways.	1	Other
Seacourt Nature Reserve	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Spindleberry Nature Reserve	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
SS Mary and John churchyard	1	Other
St Clements	1	Other
Trap Grounds Town Green	1	<b>Nature Reserve</b>
Valentia Road	1	Other
Wellington Square	1	Other
Wytham Woods	1	Other

It is usual for the popular Green Flag Parks such as Cotteslowe & Sunnymead, Florence and Bury Knowle to receive a high number of completed surveys.

However, interestingly, in this survey a lot of nature reserves and countryside sites also featured, some with a high return rate such as Lye Valley and Rock Edge.

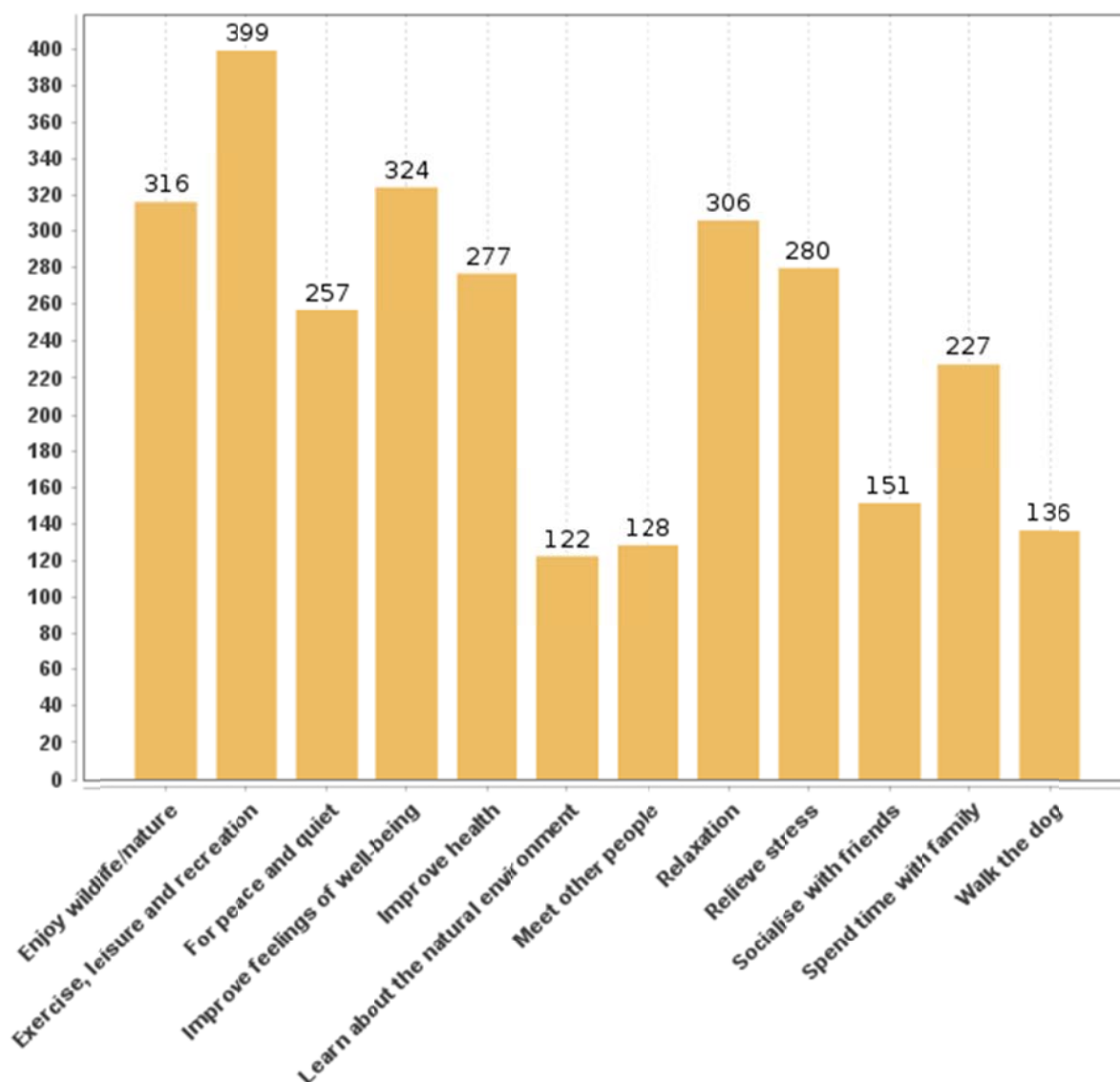
Category	No. of sites surveyed	No. of completed surveys
Green Flag and City Parks	7	252
Countryside Site/Nature Reserves	22	125
Neighbourhood Parks	8	21

Local Parks	12	63
Other plus non-OCC sites	15	26

Based on these results we can suggest that the importance of the nature reserves and countryside sites is evident in the respondents' choice of site.

### 3.2 Health and Exercise

Respondents were asked why they use the park/green space; they could select more than one answer.



The most frequently cited reason for using green spaces was for exercise, leisure and recreation, with 80% of respondents choosing this option. Other high scoring activities included improving feelings of well-being (65%), enjoy the wildlife (64%) and relaxation (62%); all receiving over 300 votes each. Other significant reasons

cited were: learning about the natural environment (25%), to meet other people (26%), walk the dog (27%) and socialise with friends (30%).

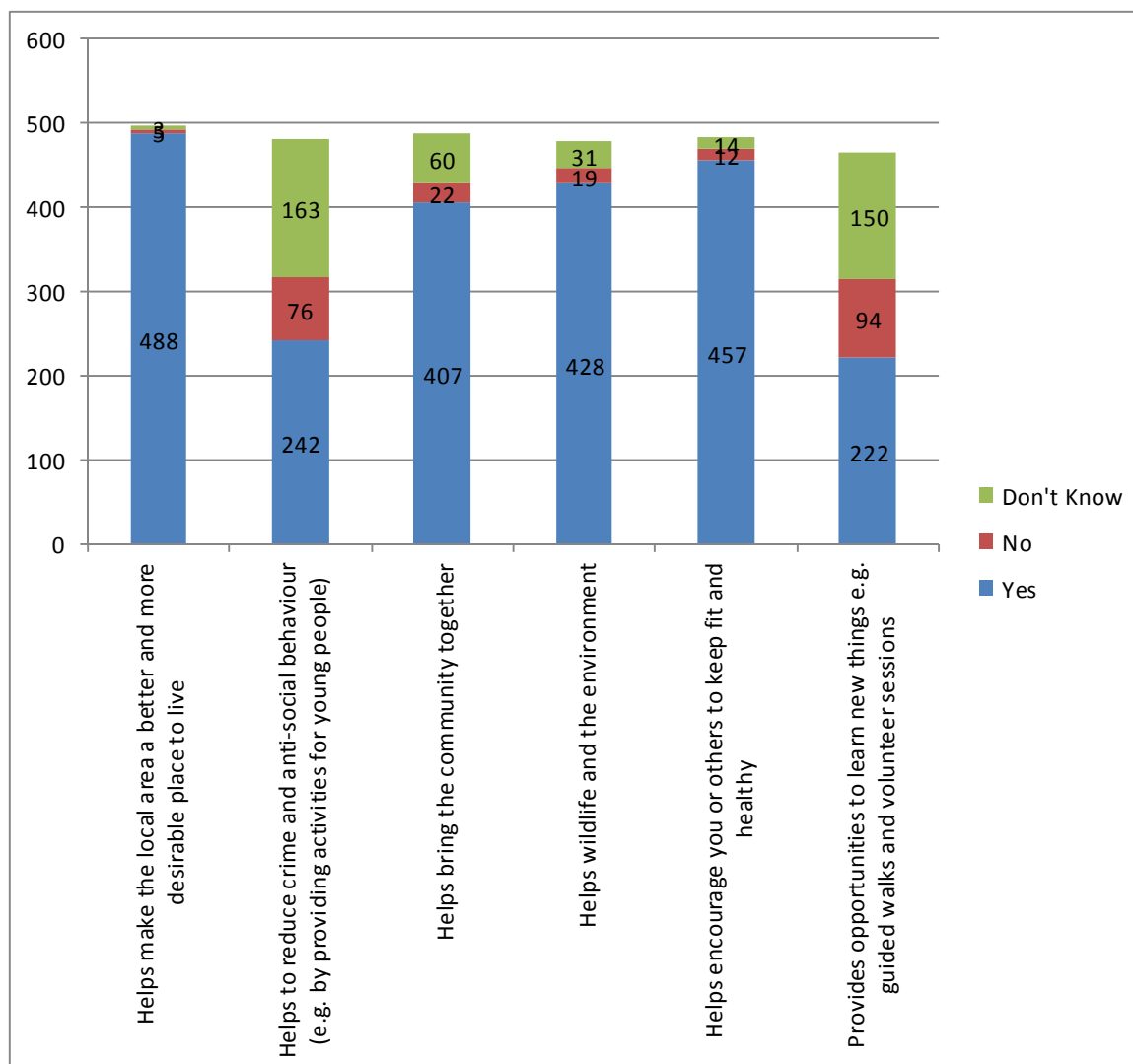
The results from the Oxford survey mirror The Land Trust results in that the most frequent use of the sites is also for exercise, leisure and recreation, but in their survey only 56 percent of respondents cited this reason. The least frequently cited reasons for using the Land Trust sites was to learn about the natural environment (16%), meet other people (10%) and socialise with friends (10%). The main difference was walking the dog, which was cited by 45% of respondents in the Land Trust Survey compared to only 27% Oxford.

**Visitor comments:**

- *“I support people with dementia and they benefit enormously from walking in a safe space where there is no traffic and there are trees and plants and grass. We also enjoy watching children playing and dogs being walked. It is an uncommercial space where you can spend time and feel better for it.”*
- *“They provide sanity and relief from all the traffic and urban environment. As soon as I enter the park I feel a relief from stress and pressure. It's as though a green envelope has folded me inside it and I am calm. Seeing greenery, particularly trees, de-stresses me and makes me slow down.”*

**3.3 Contribution to Local Community**

Respondents were asked a series of questions on whether the site contributes to different aspects of the local community.



Almost all the respondents (98%) felt their local green space helps make their area a better and more desirable place to live, and 95% felt it encourages them or others keep fit and healthy. This demonstrates a very high level of understanding and appreciation residents have regarding the role their local green spaces play in ensuring satisfaction with urban neighbourhoods and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

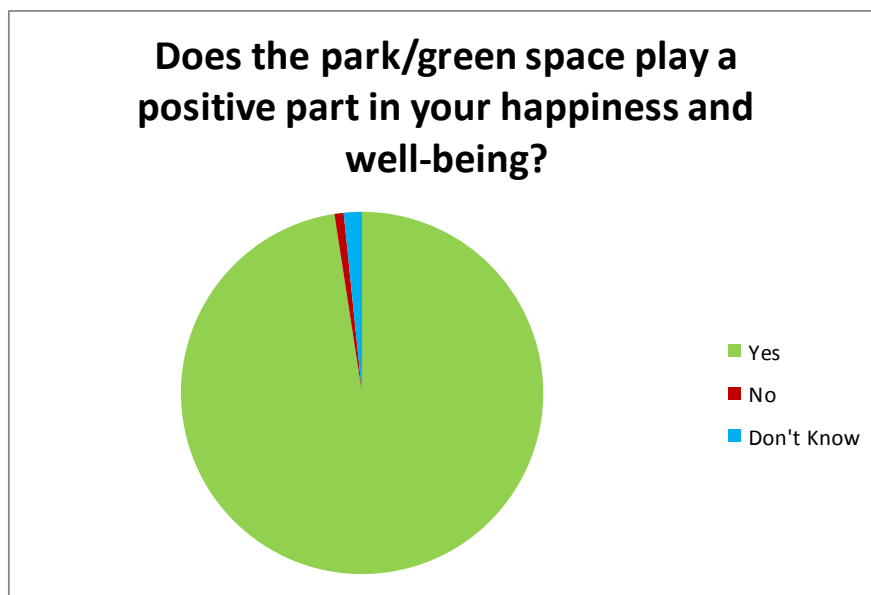
**Visitor comments:**

- *“A small but relatively peaceful oasis acting as an antidote to the noise and poor air quality around the London Road. Well looked-after and vital to me for jogging or convenient quiet walking. A vital asset to the people of Headington.” Bury Knowle Park*
- *“It is hard to overstate how much they contribute to the sense of community and the quality of life in Oxford.”*
- *“Having lived in the countryside all my life, now living in Oxford I am impressed with the quality of the parks, the facilities offered and the attention to the long term environmental developments. It’s like having my own garden back again but without the work.”*

Although 89% of those surveyed thought their local green spaces help wildlife and the environment only 50% though they provided opportunities to learn new things. This suggests there is potential to increase the use of green spaces to teach people, particularly children, about things such as food production, wildlife and caring for the environment.

### 3.4 Contribution to happiness and wellbeing

Almost all the respondents (98%) felt that the sites play a positive part in their happiness and well-being.

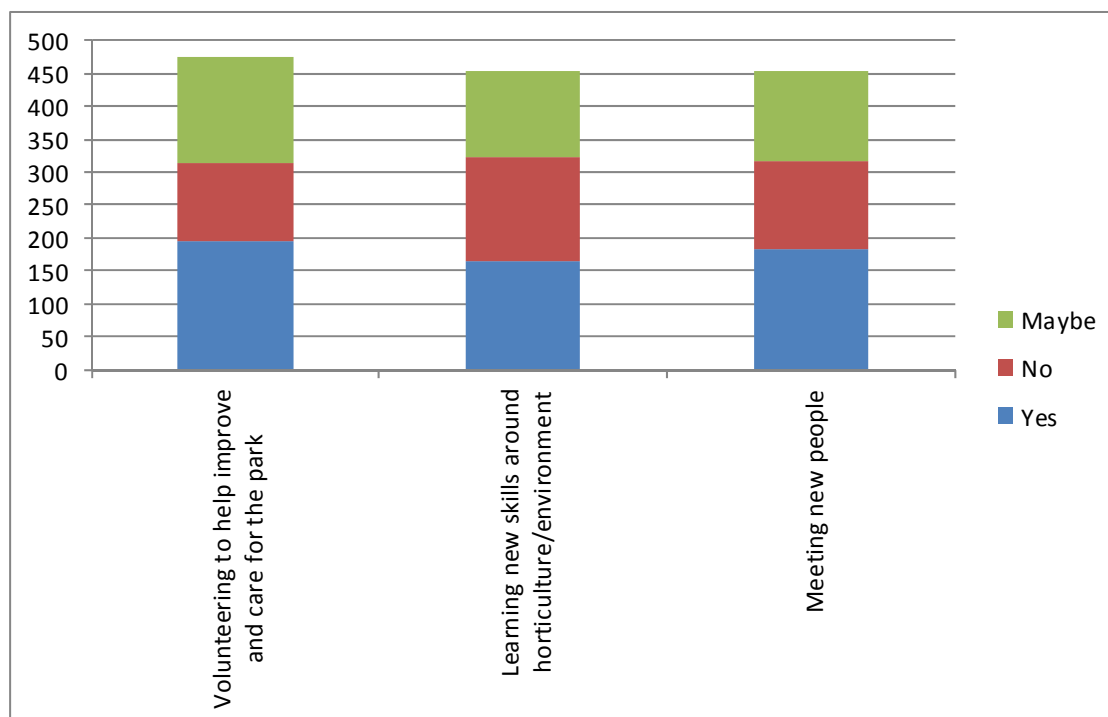


#### Visitors Comments:

- *"I couldn't live happily without it".*
- *"As a GP, I know too well how much we need parks and natural spaces in a town. Especially a densely populated town like Oxford. We need natural spaces to stay mentally as well as physically healthy. Please preserve these parks for all of us to enjoy, get some head space, get sunshine (vitamin D), see beautiful plants and enjoy animals (from insects to deer and owls), get fresh air and exercise."*
- *"In a particularly stressful time I went for several walks on Portmeadow and found that it cleared my head so I could move ahead again. Walking there with friends has also been very enjoyable, and enables conversations in a very different way from being indoors."*
- *"The parks are a really important part of the fabric of the city and help make Oxford such a great city to live in. Maintaining the parks isn't a luxury - it is vital for the health and well-being of the city".*

### 3.5 Getting Involved

Respondents were asked if they would welcome opportunities to get involved in different types of activities. The results were fairly equal across all three options, with a sizable amount of interest in volunteering (40%), meeting new people (40%) and learning new skills around horticulture/environment (36%).



### 3.6 Top Words

Respondents were asked to describe their green space in one word, the size of the word represents the frequency it was mentioned.

Space	34
Peace	33
Beautiful	18
Health	15
Nature	15
Freedom	14
Community	14

## 4. Conclusions

The results of the consultation reveal the high level of value Oxford’s residents place on their local green spaces, and a belief they play a vital role in encouraging healthier lifestyles and maintaining feelings of well-being.

The level of response to the survey, and the numerous and unanimously positive comments, also demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the way the council manages its green spaces and the facilities it provides. This validates the considerable investment Oxford City Council has made in its parks, play areas and



sport facilities over recent years, and the management policies and practices it has put in place.

The evidence provided by the survey should be used to ensure provision of green space is maintained in the city, and that there is adequate provision in the numerous new developments that will be created in reaction to housing need over the next two decades.

There is also a need to increase access and further promote the use of the city's green spaces to ensure all communities are reaping the benefits they provide. The results of this survey can be used to help with this promotion.



**Visitor comments:**

- *“Florence Park allowed me a fabulous opportunity to be involved with the biological processes of our natural environment. As a child I remember distinctly collecting frog spawn to help grow in the family pond. It provides a valuable resource for people of all ages to engage in the nature that defines them.”*
- *“Florence Park is a particularly well-managed resource and, increasingly, working well with local community groups’ positive involvement. I really hope this can continue and increase; as above, I would welcome more opportunities to interact with Council staff (e.g. horticultural training/volunteering in the park) and it would also be great to be able to, for example, purchase Council-made compost and surplus plants. Initiatives like Friends of Florence Park, the new cafe contract, floodlights for the tennis courts and play space improvements are all very beneficial.*
- *“As a Council Countryside volunteer I help clear its paths and cut back intrusive scrub so that people can enjoy the meadow land right in the heart of Headington.”*
- *“I often work as a volunteer in Magdalen Wood West, clearing brush, coppicing and creating glades to encourage butterflies and flowers to return which have been shaded out. It is a wonderful amenity in the middle of a housing estate where I suspect many children are not taken on countryside expeditions by their parents. It may therefore be the only place they can interact with nature.”*
- *“As Britain is a country with a declining species richness, Shotover Country Park should be appreciated more fully as a unique biological reserve with nationally rare and declining species and should managed sensitively in this respect for maximum protection and conservation potential. It should be noted that this conflicts very little with it’s use as a popular country park.”*
- *“The park provides a great amenity for local people. It’s often full of local people playing cricket, football or exercising on the machines. Many of the people I see playing sport in the park are from ethnic minorities including EU migrants, and these groups may generally be feeling less welcome to participate in British society, due to the rise in hate crimes across the country. It’s great to see local people from all backgrounds feeling confident to socialise and play sport together in an open space. Young guys use the basket ball courts, and families with young children frequently use the tennis courts and playground facilities.”*

Appendix A

# 2016 Value of the Park Survey

## Complete the survey for your chance to win a £25 shopping voucher!



Oxford City Council would like to hear what you think of the parks, nature reserves and green spaces that it manages. We want to know what they mean to you and how they benefit the local area. This is so we can learn how to make the parks and green spaces even better in the future.

**Please write the name of the park/nature reserve you would like to comment on**

---

1. Why do you use the park? *Please tick all that apply*

Reason	✓	Reason	✓
Improve health		Walk the dog	
Exercise, leisure and recreation		Socialise with friends	
Relieve stress		Spend time with family	
Improve feelings of well-being		Enjoy wildlife/nature	
Relaxation		Learn about the natural environment	
For peace and quiet		Other (Please state)	
Meet other people			

2. Do you think the park...?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Helps make the local area a better and more desirable place to live?			
Helps to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (e.g. by providing activities for young people)?			
Helps bring the community together?			
Provides opportunities to learn new things e.g. guided walks and volunteer sessions?			
Helps wildlife and the environment?			
Helps encourage you or others to keep fit and healthy?			

3. Pick one word that sums up what this park means to you

.....

4. At the park, would you welcome more opportunities to get involved with:

	Yes	No	Maybe
Volunteering to help improve and care for the park			
Learning new skills around horticulture/environment			
Meeting new people			

5. Does this park play a positive part in your happiness and well-being?

Yes	No	Don't know

6. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the park?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

7. About You

Are you male or female? What is your post code? \_\_\_\_\_

Male       Female

How old are you?

Under 16     16-18     19-24     25-44     45-59     60-74     75+

8. Please supply details if you have answered yes to Q4 or would like to be included in the prize draw.

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Email	
Tel	

**Thank you for taking the time to help us with this survey!**  
 Prize Draw Terms and Conditions are available on request: 07483 010610

## **Appendix B - Compliments**

“Oxford's green spaces are an absolutely vital part of the city for all the reasons above. Oxford City Council does an excellent job in providing facilities and upkeep/maintenance. Any threat to funding or resources must be strongly resisted”.

“It's well managed with good investment” Bury Knowe Park

“Oxford should be proud of their green spaces and the council and staff who develop and maintain them”.

“They are great - well maintained by the council - they are very necessary for well-being.”

“A small but relatively peaceful oasis acting as an antidote to the noise and poor air quality around the London Road. Well looked-after and vital to me for jogging or convenient quiet walking. A vital asset to the people of Headington.” Bury Knowle Park

“The work the Council has done with the wildlife trust to manage and restore the valley is a credit to both parties and to the city.” Chiswell Valley

“It is very well kept and imaginatively cared-for. Its facilities have increased and improved a great deal in recent years.” Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“About time a good water feature has been built - the San Remo cafe is brilliant!” Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“Keep up the great work in the park - well done.” Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“It is kept immaculately clean and tidy; recent changes and upgrades have meant more opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy their visits” Cotteslowe and Sunnymead Park

“It is brilliantly maintained and has wonderful children's playgrounds. Dog bins reliably and regularly emptied.” Florence Park

“It is well maintained, suitable for all ages, the ground maintenance crew are friendly, hardworking and polite.” Florence Park

“The activities at half term and school holidays are brilliant” Florence Park

“A very pleasant, well equipped and well maintained park.” Hinksey Park

“Thank you for the great job that the Parks team does to keep Marsh Rd Park and all the others in such tip top condition!”

“Thank you to all those who keep Shotover so well.”

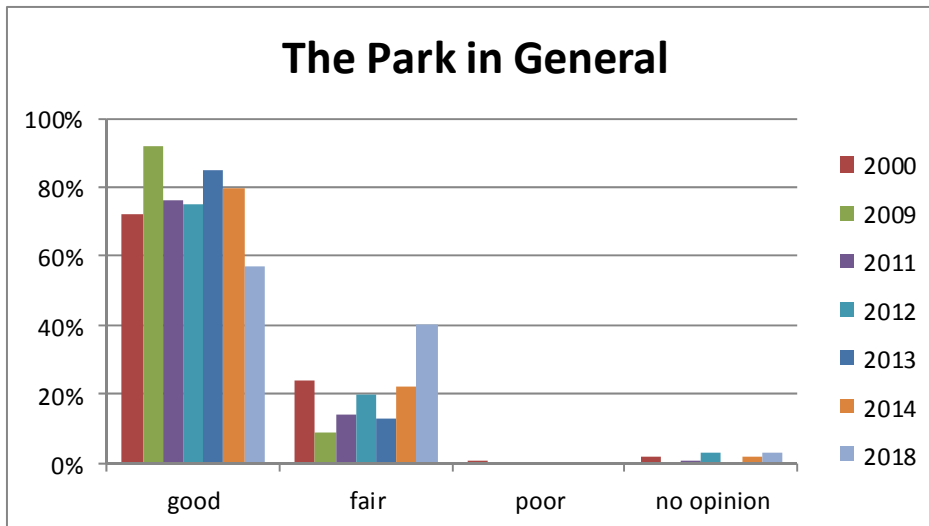
“It's great and very well kept. Thank you very much. Keep it as natural and pure as possible.” South Park

# **Appendix 2**

# **Cotteslowe & Sunnymead Park Customer Satisfaction Results 2018**

## Cuttleslowe & Sunnymead Park - Key findings 2018 customer satisfaction

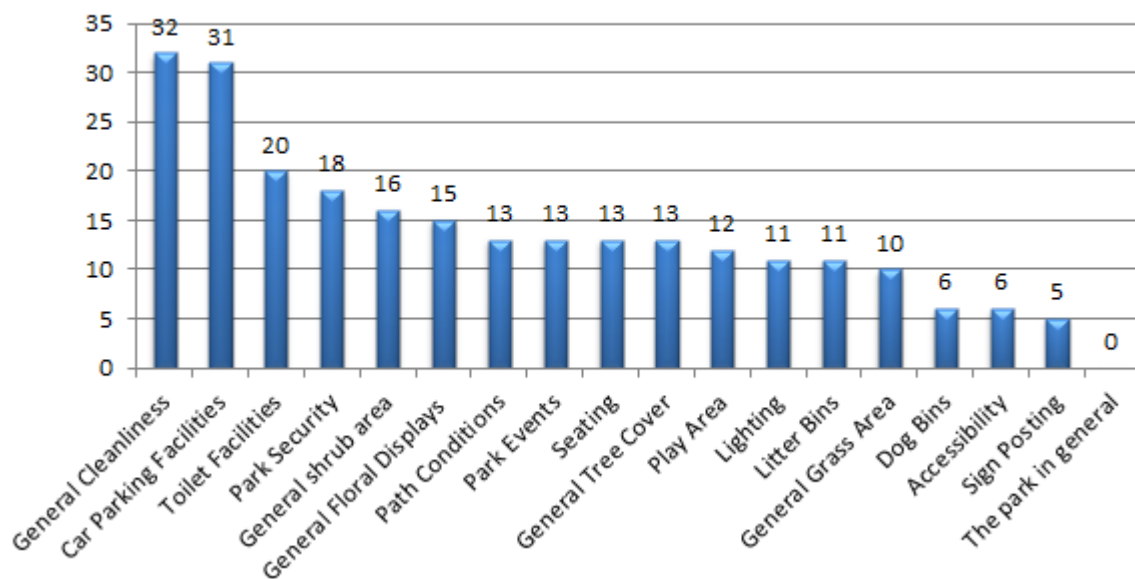
In 2018, 31 surveys were completed for Cuttleslowe and Sunnymead Park. Compared to previous years, the number of participants has slightly decreased. Therefore caution should be applied when interpreting and comparing these results due to the small sample size. However trends over time can still be seen.



In general Cuttleslowe & Sunnymead Park is still a high scoring park in satisfactory level. However the percentage of customers who score the park good has declined and those who score the park fair has increased. None of the parks visitors gave the park a 'poor' score.

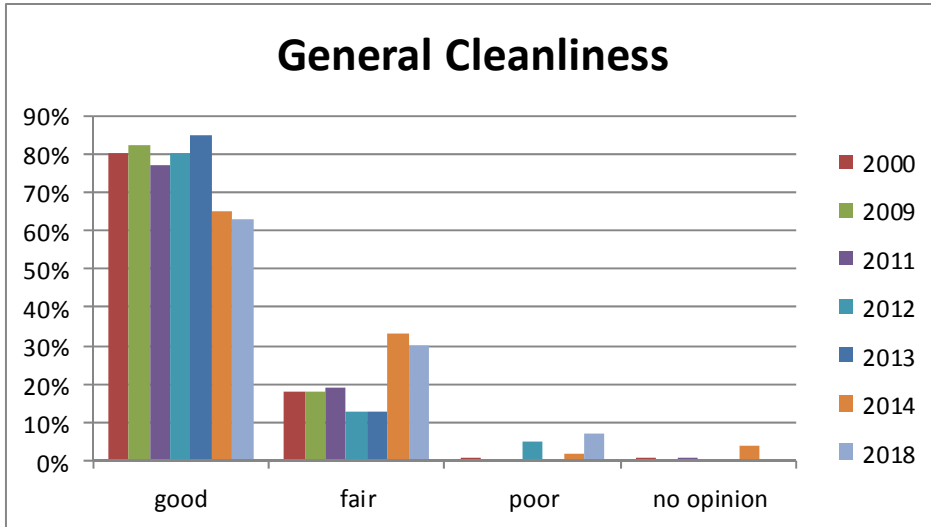
In 2014 the chart below shows that general cleanliness was identified as a priority, closely followed by car parking facilities.

### Priorities

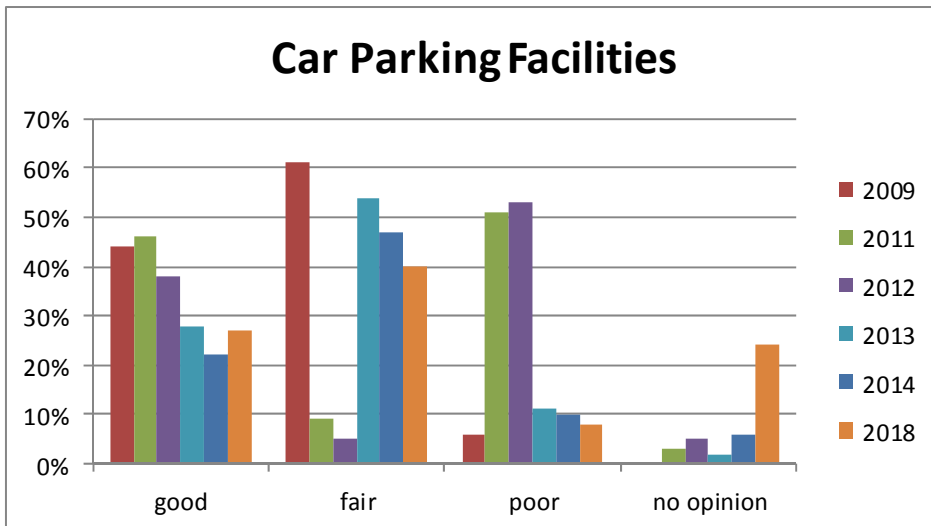




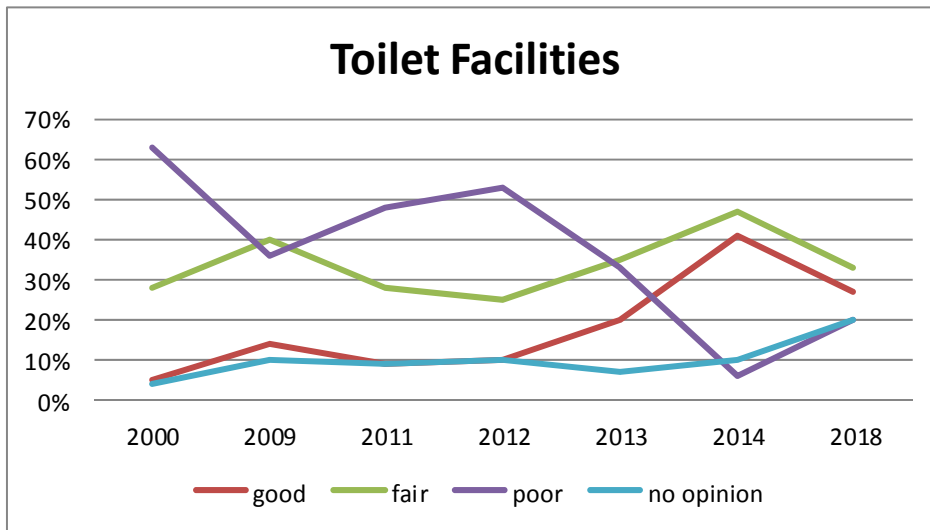
The trends for general cleanliness have remained the same with a similar number of respondents reporting good and fair as in 2014. This is a good result given that the litter picking has undergone a major restructure and based on anecdotal evidence the park is getting busier. Litter picking is now managed by Streetscene which has improved the service and improved the cleanliness at weekends.



In 2018 the car parks were greatly improved and enlarged. This is only slightly reflected in the graph below. It may be that the car parks were not finished at the time respondents were completing the survey.



In 2013/14 the old toilet block was demolished and new toilets provided at the Top Pavilion. Satisfaction results reflect this with a decrease in respondents reporting a poor result and an increase in respondents reporting a good result.



### 2018 Customer Comments

*"The setting of Cuttleslowe park with views over fields and farmland is what makes it so very special -" rus in urbe ".*

*"You haven't included a priority relating to the wild / wild life areas of the park. This would have been my top priority. As the area around us becomes more urbanised we need to provide space for wildlife to exist and thrive. Whilst the park should be clean and tidy it is important that some areas are left wild."*

## **Appendix 3 Direct Services**

### **Parks and Open Spaces Specification Executive Summary (April 2016)**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This summary highlights the purpose of the Parks and Open Spaces specification and provides headline information to Officers, Councillors and the public on the standard of works that we aim to achieve.

#### **2. Purpose of the Specification**

- 2.1 The specification illustrates the way in which we deliver services in the following areas; parks maintenance, outdoor sports facilities, pavilions, litter picking, litter and dog bin emptying, park patrols, cemetery management and maintenance, tree works (including planting), playground maintenance and countryside maintenance.

#### **3. Headline Standards:**

- Litter and Bin Emptying
  - Bins are emptied at the same time as litter picking is undertaken. The frequency varies depending on the usage within the parks from daily in high use parks to weekly in low use parks across the City.
  - In our Green Flag Parks this is ongoing throughout the day.
  - Big Belly bins have been placed around the City Parks to reduce the frequencies of visits. These bins are able to inform use of their status as to when they need emptying. This data is transmitted to our Park Office
- Grass Cutting
  - The majority of grassed areas, termed standard in the full specification, are cut between late March and early November with around 15 to 16 cuts over the year. Grass Cutting is dependent of the weather conditions so as to keep to a high standard across the City Parks
- Sports Turf
  - Maintained to a standard suitable for amateur leagues, such as Football, Lacrosse, Rugby, Gaelic Football, Tennis, Bowls, and Cricket etc. All are maintained by a highly skilled workforce.
  - Marking out is carried out to accommodate all types of rules for individual sport as well as the normal programmed sports
- Shrub Beds
  - Green Flag Parks are maintained on an ongoing base over the year, City Parks are visited by staff and the main works are carried out over the winter months in the dormant season.
  - The majority of shrub beds, termed standard in the full specification, are pruned and maintained twice per annum and barked when necessary
- Hedges
  - The majority of hedges, termed standard in the full specification, are cut according to the nesting season between the months of August and March

- Countryside hedges are cut once per annum again between August and March, any hedge cutting outside of this period would be carried out only with the advice of an ecologist at each are this work would take place. ( note we endeavour not to promote hedge cutting during the bird nesting period)
  - Tree Surveys and Tree Maintenance
    - Tree surveys are carried out as a Parks Management function every three years.
    - The tree team carry out work as required from the surveys based on their priority.
    - Further work may be undertaken as a result of public request following an inspection.
    - Please refer to the Tree Management Plan Dec 2011
  - Pavilion and Toilet Maintenance
    - Pavilions cleaned a minimum of once per week.
    - Parks toilets cleaned daily
  - Playground Maintenance
    - Monthly inspections undertaken
    - Monthly report of repair work carried from weekly inspections
    - Independent engineer checks undertaken every six months
  - We also offer a 24 hour out of hours service – 07711 439 090
- 3.1 The appendices show a summarised frequency table of all of the activities that are covered in detail the full service specification.
- 3.2 The specification will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 3.3 Sites are also monitored to ensure the standards in the specification are being consistently delivered.
- 3.4 This document is only a summary of the specification and the full specification should be viewed for a complete understanding of the standards we aim to achieve. A full copy of the specification is not on the website as it is a working document however it is available from [parks@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:parks@oxford.gov.uk).