

FLORENCE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2018 - 2022

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Customer comments

1.0 Introduction and Site Description

Florence Park is a traditional ‘peoples’ park located in the east of the city within the suburb of Cowley, and lies close to the bustling Cowley road; Oxford's most ethnically diverse quarter. In this vibrant but less affluent area of the city, with its tightly-packed terrace housing and busy roads, the park provides a vital green retreat for the local residents and large student population, where they can relax, play, exercise and enjoy the picturesque mature trees and flower displays. The park also provides a pleasant route on the way to and from a number of nearby schools, and now boasts a recently completed ‘Destination Standard’ play area, designed with the help of local people. There is also a wilder space for play and the old play park has been transformed into an area for older children.

The park was opened in 1934 after the land was presented to the City of Oxford by Councillor F. E. Moss, whose firm developed the adjoining Florence Park Estate to house the workers of the Morris Cowley car factory (now the thriving BMW Mini plant). The land was given to create a park in memory of his sister, Florence, whose name it bears; and the care taken by the City Council in planning its layout and planting ensured it became a well-used and much loved local park. The continuing commitment of the council to maintain the high standard of the horticulture and the much admired tree canopies, the recent investment in the play facilities and tennis, means the park is now more popular than ever.

“We all LOVE our beautiful public park, and are very thankful to the city council staff who work so hard to keep it to such a high standard....we feel very privileged to live nearby and use the park.....always clean and tidy..... it is beautiful.....Very glad to have it, a wonderful resource.....It's a good place to go and relax at any time during the day.....Some excellent tree-scapes especially by the commemorative gateway.... A very attractive park with much evidence of renewal” Customer feedback

This report 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 addition to completing the programme of outstanding infrastructure improvements, there is also an opportunity to increase biodiversity by improving the park’s habitats, and to provide interpretation on the park’s history and wildlife.



2016 Green flag judges comments

“The Park felt very open and safe with good site lines across it. There are a lot of differing play and sporting opportunities across the Park.”

“Good to see a vigorous friends group with leading members who are of working age rather than retired... The Friends Group seem enthusiastic and committed to numerous events and schemes to improve the park for all

“This is a lovely park with a great views and an interesting history. It is clearly well used and the appreciated by the community. “



1.1 Site location and asset map

Postcode OX4 3JZ




© Crown Copyright and database right 2013. Ordnance Survey 100019348.

Legend

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

1. Bandstand
2. Former bowls green
3. Café / kiosk
4. Car park
5. Crazy paving seating area
6. Depot
7. Family centre
8. Main flower beds
9. Kick-about goal

Grass

 <all other values>

Type

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

10. Kiosk
11. Mini golf
12. Play area ('Destination Standard')
13. Play area (Adventure)
14. Play area (Older children)
15. Pond seating area
16. Table tennis
17. Floodlit tennis courts
18. Toilet block
19. Incredible Edible Oxford Area



1.2 Park features

Bandstand

The bandstand, with its Ox weather vane, is one of the park's iconic original features and has been maintained in a good condition. It is no longer used for brass bands, but has been converted into a sheltered seating area and is a popular meeting spot. The structure can be subject to occasional graffiti. Where possible this is removed by the on-site gardener, otherwise the City Council's Cleansing Service is requested to clear it.

Benches

Benches are located throughout the park and all are in good order. Two picnic benches are also provide in the new play area.

Bins (litter and dog waste)

Litter bins are provided throughout the park and these are emptied daily. They are all in good order and a standard design was introduced in 2010.

There is a dog waste bin at each of the four main entrances and another in the centre of the park. A number of these bins were recently replaced with a new larger design. The dog waste bins are emptied twice a week. They are well-used and dog fouling is not a major issue in the park (see Section 4.7 for policies on dog control).

Old bowling green

The bowls club was an integral part of the park for 60 years, but sadly, after many years of dwindling membership, it closed its door for the final time in 2015. The club house has since been converted in to a kiosk and café (see below) but a new use now needs to found for the former green which lies within an attractive enclosure. In early 2018 the Friends' Group and park users will be consulted for their views on how this space should be reused. Initial suggestions have included an outdoor seating area for the café, community wildlife garden and temporary events arena (bouncy castles etc).

Kiosk / Café (Old Bowls Pavilion)

In November 2014 following a tender process San Remo Catering were successful in winning the contract to run the kiosk in Florence Park. They bring many years' experience of catering in public parks, working with local authorities and key stakeholders. They have worked with OCC on waste transfer and re-cycling and recently won an award for their efforts.



San Remo Catering completely refurbished the kiosk and made huge improvements to style/quality/range of confectionary offered. Including fresh hot food and healthy options to order. In 2015 they invested to convert the Florence bowls pavilion into a café which can be open all year around. This is a popular facility is a welcome addition to the park.

Car park

Customer surveys have shown that the majority of users live in the surrounding area and walk to the park. For those who do drive there is a small summer season grass area car park with space for approximately 50 cars, which is accessed from the Rymers Lane gate. This is available to park-users free of charge and is open from 1st May to the end of September (weather permitting). A new gate to the car park was installed in 2015.

There is also free, unregulated, roadside parking directly outside the park adjacent to the main play area. This is sufficient to cope with demand during the winter months when the grass car park is out of use.

Crazy-paving seating area

This feature consists of five flat raised beds made of crazy-paving and 3 benches facing the park. In the past the beds have been planted and maintained by people from the Porch 'Steppin' Stone project; a charity which provides support for the homeless and vulnerable people in the community. Now they are maintained by Incredible Edible Oxford.

Depot

The depot in the park is used by the council's Engineering Services for storage. It is locked at all times and there are signs on the gates warning the public to keep out.

Family centre

The Family Centre, which lies within the park but leased was formerly managed by Oxfordshire County Council was closed in 2016 due to funding cuts. This prompted a large swell of local support to turn the former centre into a community hub. A community bid, lead by Aspire Oxford (a social business enterprise) was accepted by the County Council in September 2017.

The hub will include a good food café, a nature focused nursery, family-centred activities, community midwives, stay and play, parenting classes, healthy eating demonstrations and classes, natural crafts and activities in the park. Keeping this building in use is a significant advantage for the park and local community and has been greatly welcomed by all.

A self-contained scheme has been developed to allow secure access to the building independent of the rest of the park.

Flower displays

- Florence 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.

Kick-about football area

There is one kick about goal post with wire fencing behind. It is very heavily used so is moved when the goal mouth gets worn and the area is renovated.

Miniature golf

Customers pay at the kiosk to use this facility. The facility underused and is looking worn out and is in need of refurbishment.



Paths

The majority of the paths in the park are tarmac. They are regularly edged to keep them tidy. In 2013 the paths around the Bowls Pavilion and Kiosk were resurfaced. A further £16,000 has been allocated in 2018 to improve areas of the paths that are deteriorating.

Plaques

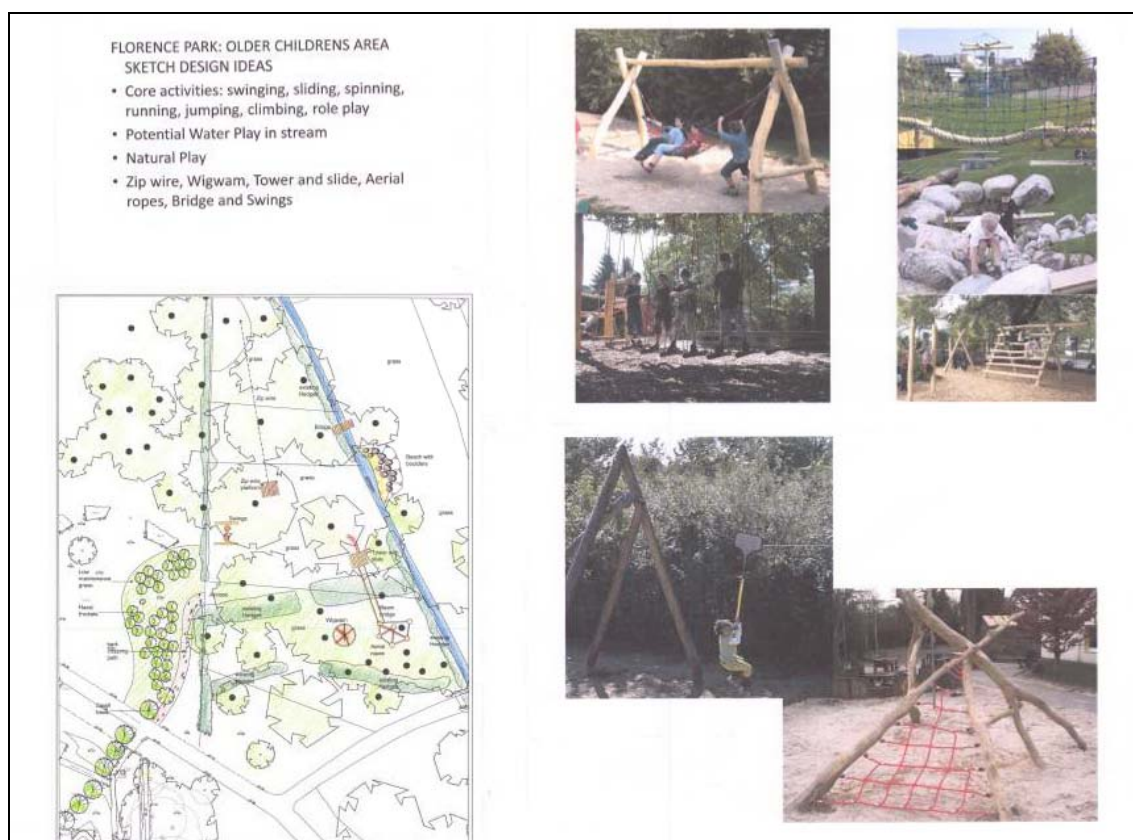
The original brass plaques commemorating the gift of the land in 1934 and opening of the park in 1936 are still in place outside the commemorative gates, and both are in good order.

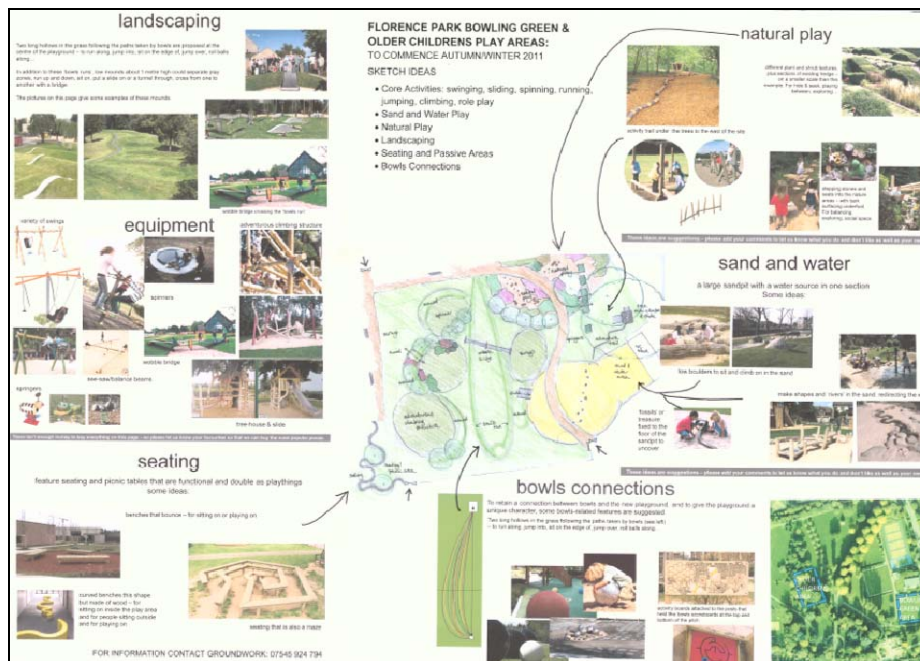
A memorial plaque on a low plinth by the flower beds inside the gates is dedicated to George Mold (1907 - 1993) who built the park and helped design the original planting. The beauty of the park owes much to his skill and vision so it is fitting that he is remembered in this way.

Play areas

Whilst the whole park is seen as an area to play, there are three designated areas for children. A 'Destination Standard' play area was built on a dis-used bowls green in 2012. Groundwork completed extensive consultation on its design including:

- Consultation mood boards
- Drop in events at the Family Children's Centre
- Work with local schools





Also there is an adventure play area in the central copse. A railway sleeper bridge was created across the brook to provide access to this area of equipment.

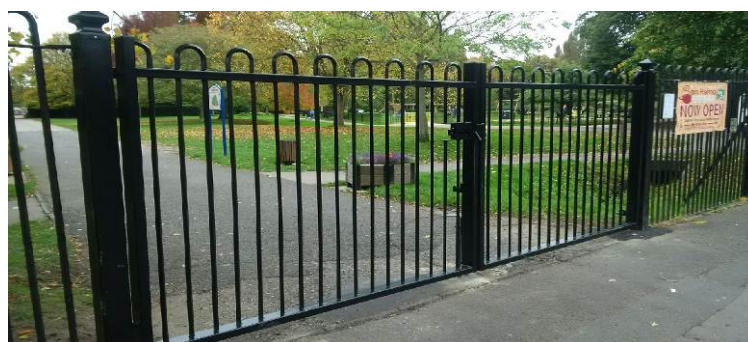
In 2017 work began to transform the old play area site to create a facility for older children. A popular spider-web climbing frame and was retained, and the swings and basketball hoop upgraded and re-positioned and a new zipwire was installed. The council will continue to work with the Friends to further enhance this area by adding natural play logs and seating.

Pond seating area

The small pond lies within a paved area containing seating, surrounded by raised flower beds. The pond frequently silts up and would benefit from being dredged.

Railings

The park still retains its original iron railings which extend around the whole of the perimeter. These are largely in good order and were repainted by a team from the Community Pay Back Scheme in 2009. This was an onerous and time-consuming task, and a substantial amount of money was saved by using the free labour provided by the Thames Valley Probation Service.



Signage

New good quality welcome signs were installed at all the main entrances in 2007. A new community notice board has also been installed by the kiosk.

Table tennis

One concrete table lies next to the kiosk and an additional table was provided next to the old play area through the PING! Programme in 2014 and this has now been installed as permanent feature. Equipment can be hired from the kiosk or people can bring their own.

Tennis courts

Florence Park boasts Oxford's first publicly-accessible floodlit tennis courts. The £264,000 project was funded in 2017 by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Oxford City Council. It includes new light-emitting diode (LED) court lights, nets, posts and surface – installed across all five of the park's outdoor tennis courts. The work will enable the park's tennis courts to open into the evenings – adding 5,000 more playing hours at the facility every year.

The facilities are run by Parks Tennis, a community interest company, who have been working in partnership with the City Council for 3 years now 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 that friendly competition.

Toilet block

Following a successful capital bid the old park toilet block was rebuilt in 2013. The new toilet block, located immediately adjacent to the main play area, includes disabled and baby changing facilities. The back wall and doors are decorated with a mural designed by St. Gregory the Great school.

Watercourses

The ditch which runs alongside the boundary of the park is managed by the Environment Agency. This feature was previously cleared twice a year, but a narrow un-mowed strip is now left down both sides to encourage Water Voles and preserve biodiversity.



Before



After

2.0 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

2.1 Historical background

Florence Park was opened in 1936 after the land was presented to the City of Oxford by Councillor F. E. Moss, of the firm of Messrs. N. Moss & Sons, who developed the adjoining Florence Park Estate. The land, which was previously farmland, was given to the City Council in 1934 to create a park in memory of his sister, Florence, whose name it bears. N Moss and Son was a firm of speculative builders that had arrived in Oxford in 1928 to exploit a market that was desperate for working class housing. Florence Park was the biggest private estate built in Oxford in the inter-war period and consisted of over 600 houses, a pub, seven shops, a doctor's house and the park.

One of the families that moved in to the new estate was the Barkers from Bedford, who arrived in 1935, and they had a five year old son called Ronnie who later went on to become one of Britain's best loved comedians. Ronnie Barker went to the now demolished Donnington School which lay adjacent to Florence Park on Cornwallis Road and he would have been one of the newly opened park's earliest regulars.

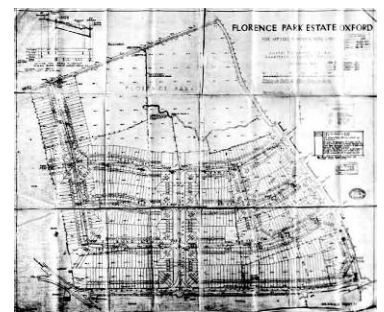
The history of the park and the estate would make a pleasant information board which could also contain information about the park's original planting and specimen trees.

2.2 Biodiversity

One of the aims of Oxford City Council's Green Spaces Strategy is: "to promote the central role that green spaces play in contributing to the city's biodiversity, sustainability and heritage".

Hedgehog Action Plan

The hedgehog population in Britain has declined by nearly 40% in the last ten years, and possibly by as much as 90% since 1950. This rapid decline has been caused by a combination of factors, including: loss and fragmentation of habitat (caused by the introduction of intensive farming and the subsequent mass destruction of hedgerows, an ever-expanding road network and ever-spreading suburbia), the creation of 'low-maintenance' gardens and loss of front gardens to parking bays, lack of food caused by a decline in invertebrates (due to all of the above), loss of nesting material and nesting sites, the increased use of pesticides (especially slug pellets) and an increase in badger and fox populations (badgers compete for the same food and will predate them during periods of food shortage, caused by droughts or other factors, but the impact from foxes is less clear). As a result, hedgehogs are now endangered and have been designated a Species of Principle Importance under the NERC Act 2006.



Oxford Mail – Tuesday 28th July 1936
City Engineers Department Deposited Estate Plan

Florence Park has traditionally been home to a healthy population of hedgehogs, and there are a number of factors which make it an ideal habitat for them:

- It forms the core of a wider mosaic of varied habitats, which include the numerous gardens which back on to the park, two nearby allotments, a nature reserve and a stream with dense bank vegetation
- The character of the park railings means the creatures can move freely between the park and these other adjacent green spaces to forage, nest and mate.
- The park has a numerous wide dense hedges, and one located between the outside of the parks railings and a stream which is free from disturbance by humans or dogs.
- The park's low-lying topography and high water table means the soil remains soft, and the park remains verdant even during hot dry summers, so there is always a good supply of invertebrates in the extensive areas of short grass (the park also has a resident population of crows for the same reason)
- The park's many deciduous trees provide the ideal type of leaves for nesting.
- The roads close the park are all slow roads with very low levels of night-time traffic
- Its suburban location means there are no badgers, and there is only a small population of urban foxes in this area of the city

However, even in this park, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of hedgehogs seen in recent years and it is uncertain whether there is still a viable population. The Action Plan below has therefore been design to halt this decline, and hopefully maintain and increase the population of these endearing and seriously endangered creatures.

In addition to preserving and improving this important habit for hedgehogs, the policies instigated under this Action Plan will improve the overall biodiversity of the park; and this campaign to protect the park's hedgehogs will also be used as a way of involving and reconnecting the public (especially children) with wildlife and green spaces.

Ensuring free range to the wider habitat: Radio tracking surveys have revealed hedgehogs can cover over 2km a night to forage, and have a home range of around 20ha. However, most recent work has identified the need for a minimum area of 90ha of connecting habits to maintain a sustainable population. Through the Friends' Group and other forums the Parks Department will therefore seek to educate the residents of the houses whose gardens back on to the park to ensure they do not erect additional fencing against the railings to screen their gardens, or if they do, to create holes along the base to maintain access/egress for hedgehogs. The residents will also be encouraged to ensure free access between their gardens. This will tie in with the 'Hedgehog Street Campaign' which currently has nearly 30,000 followers (hedgehogstreet.org). However, in order to achieve the desired 90ha of interconnecting habits with the park at its centre, there will also be a need to take the message 'estate-wide'. This would include recruiting and educating the committees and users of the neighbouring Elder Stubbs and Cricket Rd allotments, and Boundary Brook Nature Reserve, along with those who manage and maintain the areas green corridors.

Increasing the availability of food, particularly invertebrates: A policy has been introduced to leave more dead wood and fallen leaves *in situ* in the areas of denser vegetation, and additional decaying logs have been brought in and placed around the edges of the park. Use of pesticides is kept to an absolute minimum (see below).

Use of pesticides and herbicides: The Parks Department's policy is to use as few pesticides and herbicides as possible, as little as possible (only when strictly necessary). The only chemical used regularly in the Florence Park is a Glyphosate (Nomix Dual - non-hazardous to animals) which is used twice a year to treat the paths. In order to try to reduce the use of chemicals in the wider habitat there will be a concerted effort to educate the residents whose gardens back on to the park, and the allotment holders, regarding the impact of pesticides (particularly slug pellets) on hedgehogs and other species.

Ensuring the availability of nest material and nesting sites: Fallen leaves are now left *in situ* within the shrub areas and around the bases of the hedges, and leaves within a two metre strip adjacent to the hedge lines are blown back under the hedges rather than being collected. Areas of vegetation are left un-trimmed over winter and more general areas of longer grass have been created.



Trees

The black and white photograph at the bottom of page 12 shows a view taken from outside the commemorative gates in 1936 when the initial planting had just been completed, and reveals just how flat and featureless the land was before the trees matured. Florence Park is nothing without its trees; they provide its structure, visual interest and picturesque back-drops.

The tree canopy encountered now when entering the commemorative gates is one of the park's finest features and it still contains many of the original specimen trees. The expert knowledge behind the original planting means that it contains every shade of green, and the colours and leaf-forms have been carefully selected to compliment each other (the picturesque setting created by this canopy is regularly used by local people as a back-drop for post-service wedding photos). The park's many mature beeches also provide fine display in the autumn.

A full tree survey is completed every three years, measuring tree type, location, age, height, diameter, crown spread, vigour, condition, risk and any recommendation for tree surgery. All trees are plotted on GIS and stored on our tree management system.

Grassland

In order to encourage Water Voles and to preserve biodiversity, a narrow un-mowed strip is left down both sides of the water courses which run through the park, and areas of longer grass are left around the copse next to the old play area. This copse also contains Bluebells which provide a pleasant dash of colour in the spring.



Photo Courtesy of Maire McSorley

3.0 Neighbourhood, Volunteering & Community Use

3.1 Stakeholders and partners

The Friends of Florence Park Group was established in 2009, just before the first Green Flag Application. This active and dedicated group is still going strong in 2017 and has contributed to the park's on-going improvement and use. They play an important role in organising the annual FloFest as well as contributing to the management plan and responding to consultations.

The introduction of Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG), which coordinates the skills, powers and resources of the Police, local politicians, Council and numerous other agencies, has resulted in a significant reduction in the level of antisocial behaviour in the city. The city council's Green Space Field Officers, who patrol the parks and enforce the byelaws, 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.

In the past the City Council worked with the Thames Valley Probation Service, under the Community Pay Back Scheme, to provide useful work for offenders which also benefits the local community. This has included work in the park to clear vegetation, edge paths and paint all of the railings.

The City Council 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, Rangering and business administration. It is very successful, in 2007 an apprentice won the ASPE Apprentice of the year competition and in 2010 an apprentice won the Freeman of the City of Oxford award for the best apprentice in horticulture.

Incredible Edible Oxford is a volunteer-lead group, whose aim is to grow edibles around the city for everyone to help themselves, learn about growing food and get involved. In 2014 they approached the council as they had raised funding for a small fruit tree/community orchard, which they wanted to locate in Florence Park. Following the success of this they now maintain three flower beds in the park with edible plants. In 2016 they were successful in a grant award from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and social enterprises as part of its European Social Fund (ESF) Community Grants to organise regular gardening sessions / working parties.



Stakeholders in the park include:

- Friends of Florence Park
- The Aspire led, community group for the community hub (formerly the Family Centre)
- Private Contractor for the kiosk
- Parks Tennis (formerly Premier Tennis)
- Incredible Edible Oxford

3.2 Consultation

Since 2000 Parks Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been completed annually across parks and recreation grounds in Oxford, including Florence Park. Park users are interviewed using a standard questionnaire, or customers can complete the survey on-line. This identifies patterns of use and customer improvement ideas which are recorded in an annual report (see Appendix 2) and fed into the Five Year Action Plan (Section 5.0).

Extensive consultation by Groundwork was carried out 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 1). 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

- Florence 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.
- Flofest is the main annual event which celebrates the Florence Park area. The first Flofest was organised in 2013 as a Party in the Park to celebrate 80 years of the Florence Park Estate. The event has gone from strength to strength. All organisers, volunteers and most of those involved in catering & entertainment live within walking distance of the park.
- Previous events held include films, brass bands, community and charity events and the Florence Park Flower Show.

- Oxford City Council has a team that helps events organisers to comply with relevant legislation, and to organise events safely. Parks staff play an important part in getting the park ready, monitoring events and returning the park back to normal afterwards.
- In 2016 Florence Park joined in the “Love Parks Week” campaign and held an event where there was various activities to try for free.
- Xplorer events (a family friendly fun navigation challenge) are held in the park, inviting the local schools to join in.

flofest 2017

SAT 24TH JUNE 11 - 5PM



supported by
www.oxford.gov.uk

LOVE PARKS WEEK

relax enjoy

celebrate

Celebrate Love Parks week here:
Friday 31st July- Hollow way 2-4pm
Saturday 1st August- Florence park 2-4pm
Sunday 2nd August- Cutteslowe park 2-4pm

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

Protect, Improve, Promote Green Spaces
www.loveparks.org

KEEP BRITAIN TIDY LOTTERY FUNDED

3.4 Volunteering

City Leisure and Parks promote many different ways to volunteer including:

- Joining the active Friends of Florence Park.
- Joining Incredible Edible Oxford in Florence Park
- Join 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 welcomed 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 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. Florence 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



Florence Park offers many activities that contribute to the national and local health agenda:

- In 2016 there was a city wide consultation on making fenced play a voluntary non-smoking zone. This was widely supported and has been implemented.
- Get involved with Incredible Edibles activity and courses in the park
- Tennis Courts
- Play areas, including adventure play equipment for older children.
- Grassed areas for informal sports
- Organised walks for people from the Cowley day centre (for people with learning difficulties)
- Outdoor classrooms for pupils from the adjacent St Gregory's School
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Feel part of a local community
- A park to encourage the Olympic Legacy
- Geo-caching
- Xplorer trails

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 upon request.

4.1 Vision for the park

The vision for Florence 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 Florence 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 21st-century and meets the needs of its customers.

Improvements to Florence Park in the last ten years have included:

- Creation of a 'Destination Standard' play area and installation of active play equipment for older children
- Building of a new toilet block with disabled and baby changing facilities
- Refurbishment of the pavilion into a cafe
- Building of a new kiosk
- Refurbishment of the tennis courts including new fencing and floodlights
- Resurfacing of paths
- New welcome signs installed at the main entrances
- Introduction of a standard design for bins and benches
- Repair and repainting of the perimeter railings
- Full tree survey undertaken (to be repeated on a three year rolling programme)
- Biodiversity Action Plan initiated
- New gates to car park

Going forward for the next five years the emphasis will be on completing the small number of outstanding infrastructure improvements, developing the former bowls green enclosure based on a use identified through public consultation and maximising the park's habitats to increase biodiversity. There is also potential to provide interpretation on the park's history and wildlife.

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 Florence Park, see Appendix 3.

One skilled gardener is based in Florence Park two days a week to ensure it is kept in prime condition throughout the year. The gardener is pro-active and has 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.

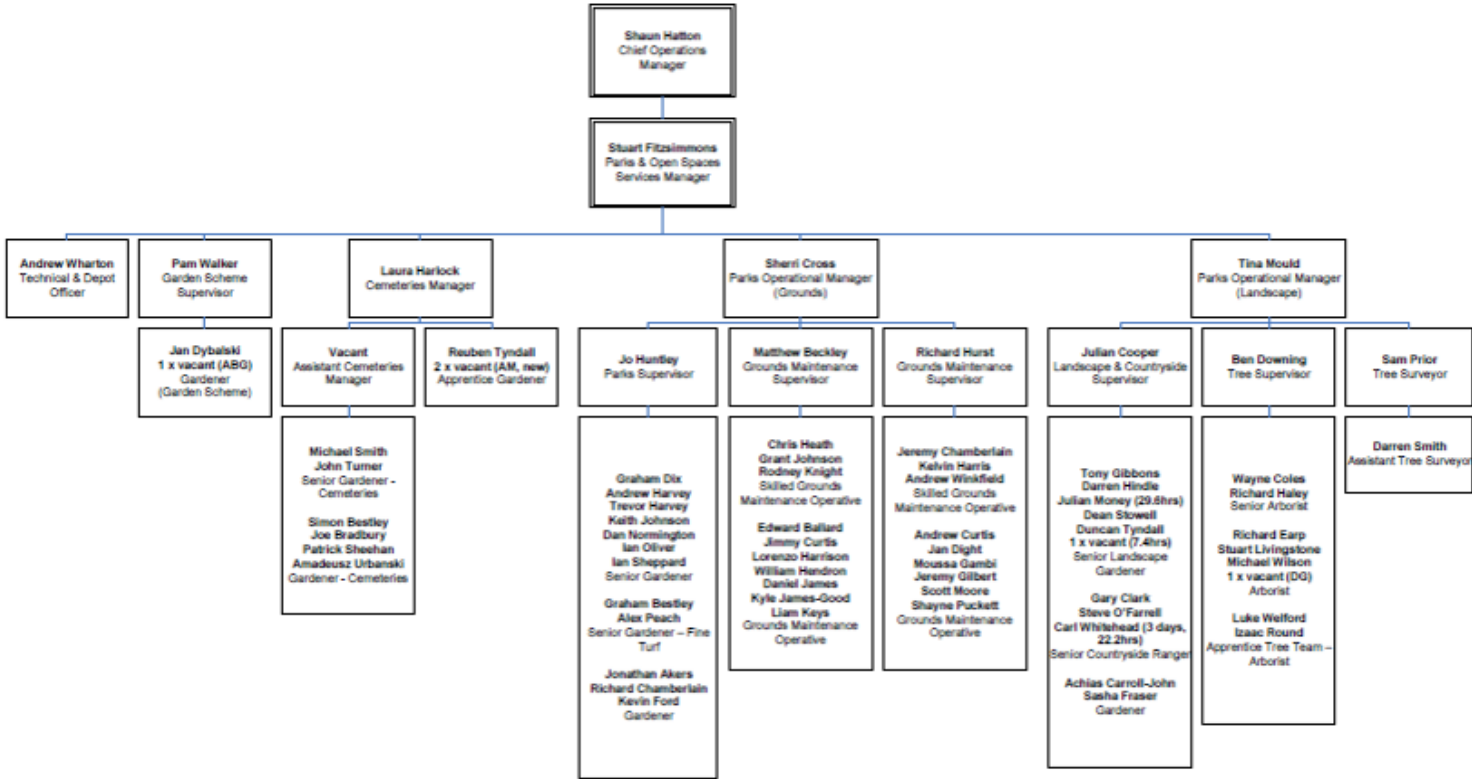
The service has been accredited with IOS9001:2008 and ISO14001 and monitors the quality of its horticulture.

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. At the time of writing Direct Services is creating a commercial arm, Latco, to undertake external work in addition to statutory work.

Parks Direct Services

Parks & Open Spaces Services Team



Community Services



4.3 Marketing & Communication

The service has a marketing plan that provides a full audit of the current marketing situation, available on request. 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 at www.oxford.gov.uk. A copy of the Florence 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.

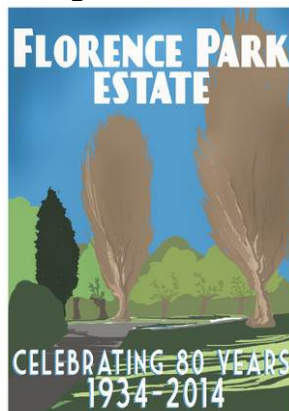
4.4 Healthy, Safe and Secure

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

- The park is surrounded on three sides by residential housing so benefits from significant natural surveillance from local residents
- One of the main council depots and a family centre are situated within the park which further increases the feeling of 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
- The main play area is situated next to the family centre and car park and is visible from the road (Rymers Lane)
- The presence of an on-site gardener
- 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. They enforce the byelaws, ensure dog owners act responsibly, and issue fines to those who do not; tackle environmental crime, and ensure the parks are free of graffiti, fly-tipping and vandalism
- The park is locked park at dusk or 21.00 (whichever is earliest). A consultation was carried out in 2016 to see if the Council should keep locking the park, the majority of local residents wanted to keep it locked.

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

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 after their dog fouls in a public place increased from £50 to £80 and owners can also be fined £80 if they allow their dogs to go into a fenced off play area.

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 owners. As a result dog fouling is not a problem in Florence 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.
- Staff 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 all stored in a secure compound within Cutteslowe Park, with a small amount stored on-site.
- All, chemicals used in the park are managed in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations. All staff handling pesticides hold a PA/6 certificate.
- Oxford City Council has been accredited with Investors in People, reflecting its commitment to its staff. The Parks service values its staff and offers a full programme of training linked to an appraisal system.

Play areas

- The Landscape & Play Team maintains the play facilities in Florence Park , completing 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 environmental principles are demonstrated within the service and applied to Florence 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.
- In December 2011 the Parks Team was 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 with 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.

Flood management

Florence Park is shown inside Flood Zone 2 on the Environment Agency's published flood map. Their consent is therefore required for new building work or the raising of ground levels in the park.

Boundary Brook is located along the northern boundary and the majority of the park lies within its floodplain. Whenever the brook floods water is therefore temporarily stored in the park until the level has dropped sufficiently to allow it to flow back. Drains were installed by the northwest entrance to assist with this process in 2010. This made a significant improvement, though the recent wet summers have still resulted in some flooding.

Whilst the flooding can be disruptive for visitors it provides an important habitat and encourages frogs and toads, important food for hedgehogs.

5.0 Aims and Five Year Action Plan

Action	How	Resources	Timescale	2018 Review
Buildings and infrastructure				
Repair tarmac paths	Resurfacing of paths	Capital funds awarded	2018	Play area to yard resurfaced
Continue redevelopment of old play area site	Logs and natural play	To be undertaken in-house	2018	Zip wire
Better control of cycling in the park	Undertake a signage audit to identify need and locations etc. Consider embedded tiles signage to reduce clutter	Green Space Development Team	2018	
Install more cycle racks	Install a secure bike rack by entrance to the kiosk and car park	Possible ward members budget	To be determined	
Install an historical information board	The board would provide information on the history of the park and the estate, and about the park's original planting and specimen trees.	Friends of Florence Park fundraising	2019	
Consult on alternative uses of former bowls green and future of mini-golf, implement recommendations	Short survey to gain customers opinions	Green Space Development Officer	2018	

Biodiversity				
Improve biodiversity	<p>Work closer with environmental groups such as BBOWT to improve biodiversity.</p> <p>Seek grant funding to survey groups of flora and fauna with the aim of identifying important habitat features and guiding their future management so as to maintain and where possible enhance the value of the park for wildlife.</p>	<p>GSD Team to seek funding</p> <p>GSD Team to work with environmental groups such as BBOWT</p> <p>Approach Brookes to assist surveys</p>	2018 on-wards	
Installation of Bird and Bat boxes		Direct Services Countryside Team	2018	
Improve Pond area	Contact Fresh Water Habitats Trust and produce a mini-biodiversity action plan	Countryside Volunteers	2018	
Community				
Continue to support Incredible Edible Oxford to ensure their areas of the work are kept to a high standard				

Support the Friends of Florence Park in their annual Flofest event				
Access Audit		Approach Oxford Unlimited	2019	
To develop a close working relationship with Aspires Community Hub		Green Space Officers	2018 onwards	

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 Florence 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 Florence 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	Grounds Maintenance Service Standards and Specification – Executive Summary
2	Risk Assessment & ROSPA reports
3	OCC Health and Safety Policy
4	Friends of Florence Park
5	Press Releases, Media Coverage, Events etc
6	Customer Satisfaction Survey results
7	Marketing Plan & Leaflet
8	DDA Audit
9	Play Area / Toilet Refurbishment
10	Byelaws

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	Nature Reserve
Blackbird Leys Park	19	Green Flag City Park
Hinksey Park	19	Green Flag City Park
Port Meadow	17	Countryside Site
Shotover Country Park	16	Countryside Site
Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground	13	Local Park
Kendall Copse	11	Nature Reserve
Oxford University Park	9	Other
Rock Edge Nature Reserve	9	Nature Reserve
Headington Hill Park	8	City Park
Alexandra Park	7	Neighbourhood Park
Raleigh Park	7	Nature Reserve
Fettiplace Barton	6	Local Park
Oatlands Road Recreation Ground	6	Local Park
Magdalen Woods	5	Nature Reserve
Aristotle Lane Recreation Ground	4	Local Park
Botley Park	4	Neighbourhood Park
Grandpont Nature Reserve	4	Nature Reserve
Kidneys Nature Park	4	Nature Reserve
Meadow Lane	4	Nature Reserve
Milham Ford Nature Park	4	Nature Reserve
Barracks Lane Meadow	3	Nature Reserve
Magdalen Quarry	3	Nature Reserve

Northway Park	3	Neighbourhood Park
Thames Tow Path	3	Other
Wolvercote Common	3	Countryside Site
Christ Church Meadow	2	Other
Croft Road Recreation Ground	2	Local Park
Manzil Way Gardens	2	Neighbourhood Park
Rivermead	2	Nature Reserve
Rose Hill Recreation Ground	2	Neighbourhood Park
Warneford Meadow	2	Nature Reserve
Angel and Greyhound meadow	1	Other
Boundary Brook Nature Park	1	Nature Reserve
Peat Moors	1	Local Park
Burgess Field Nature Park	1	Nature Reserve
Chilswell Valley	1	Nature Reserve
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	Nature Reserve
Spindleberry Nature Reserve	1	Nature Reserve
SS Mary and John churchyard	1	Other
St Clements	1	Other
Trap Grounds Town Green	1	Nature Reserve
Valentia Road	1	Other
Wellington Square	1	Other
Wytham Woods	1	Other

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

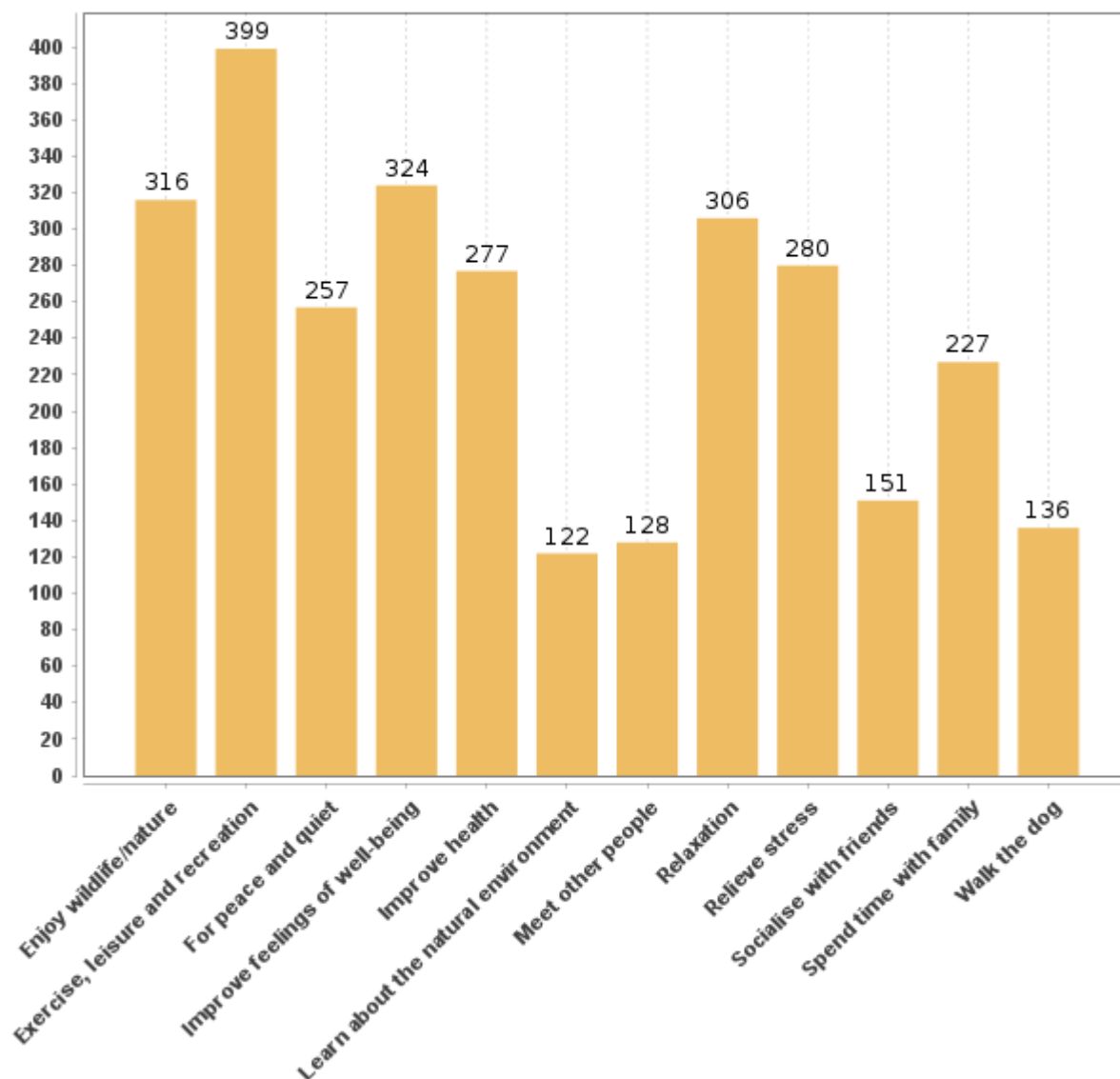
However, interestingly, in this survey a lot of nature reserves and countryside sites also featured, some with a high return rate such as Lye Valley and Rock Edge.

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

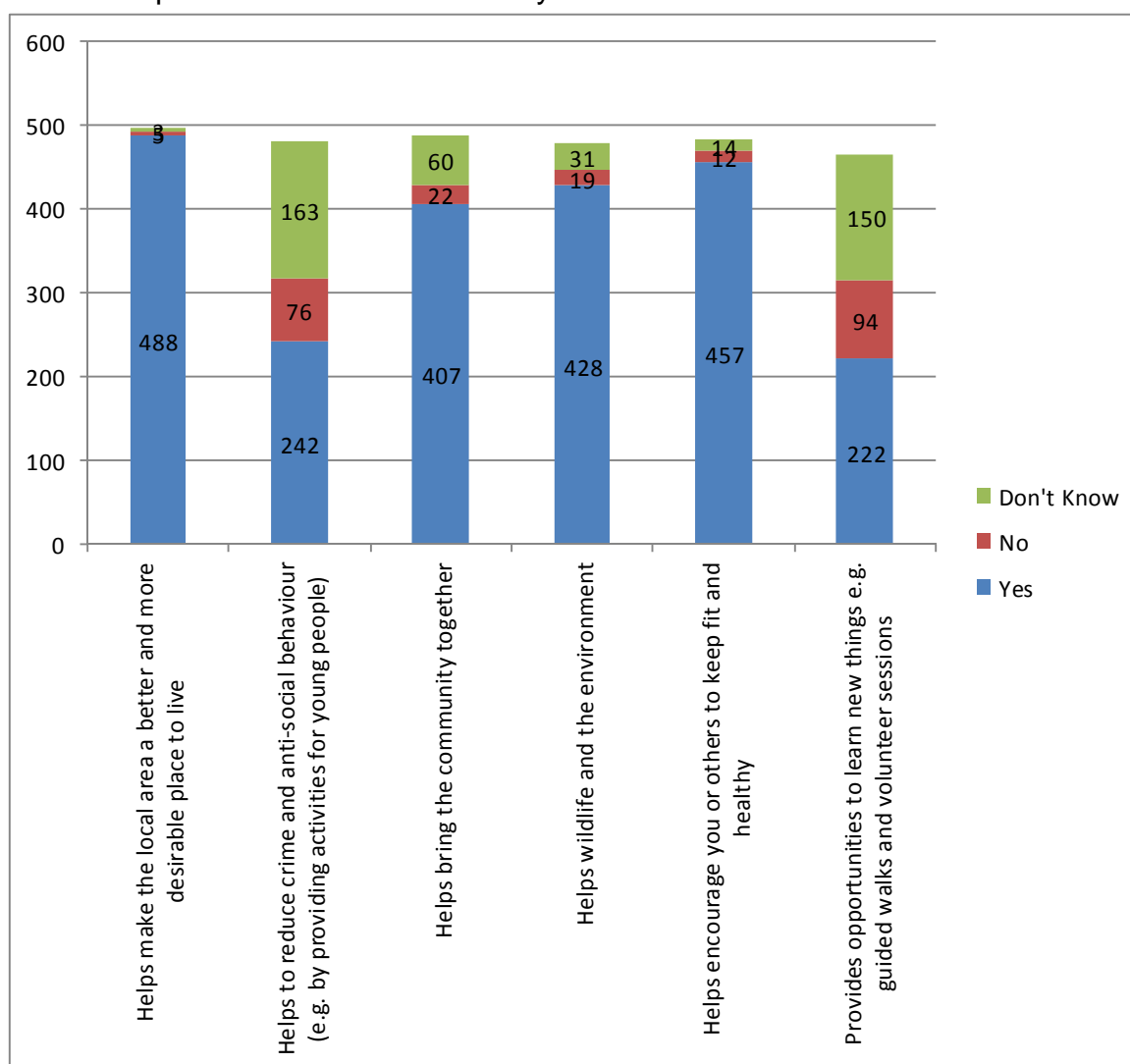
(16%), meet other people (10%) and socialise with friends (10%). The main difference was walking the dog, which was cited by 45% of respondents in the Land Trust Survey compared to only 27% Oxford.

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.

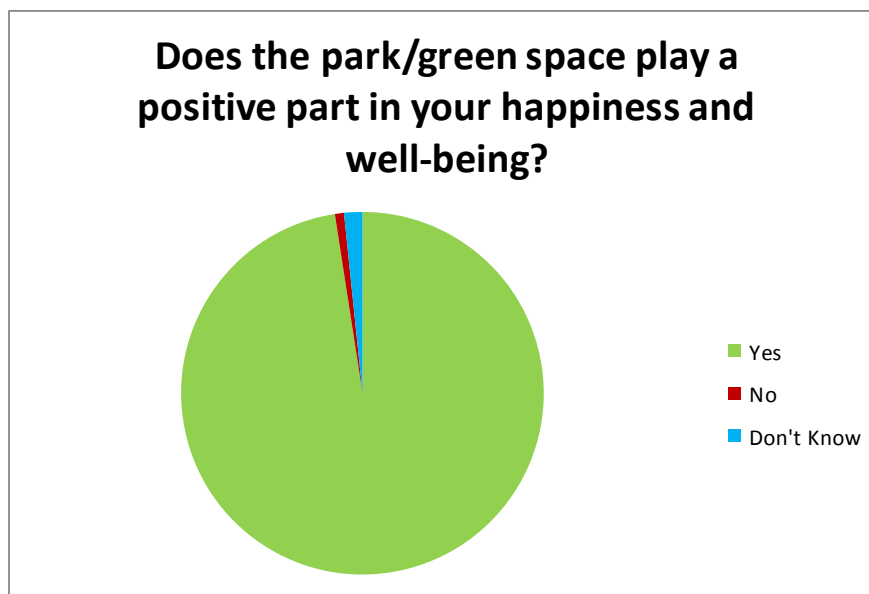
Visitor comments:

- *“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:

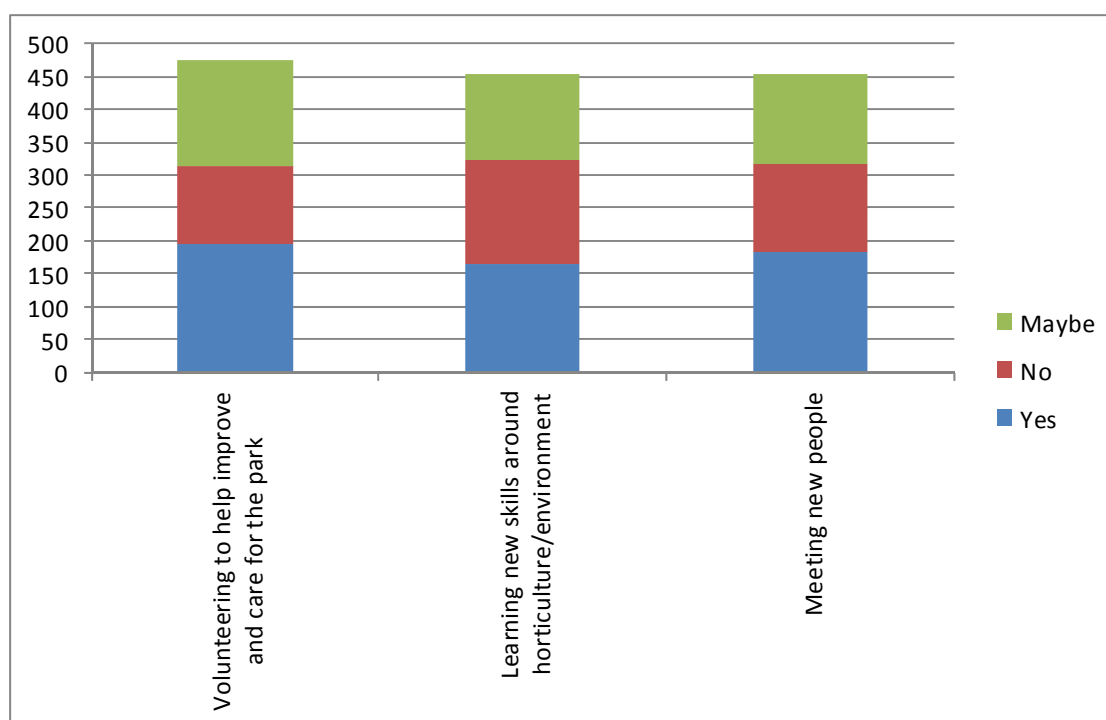
- *“I couldn’t live happily without it”.*
- *“As a GP, I know too well how much we need parks and natural spaces in a town. Especially a densely populated town like Oxford. We need natural spaces to stay mentally as well as physically healthy. Please preserve these parks for all of us to*

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 be managed sensitively in this respect for maximum protection and conservation potential. It should be noted that this conflicts very little with its 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.” Cutteslowe and Sunnymead Park

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

“Keep up the great work in the park - well done.” Cutteslowe 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” Cutteslowe 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!”

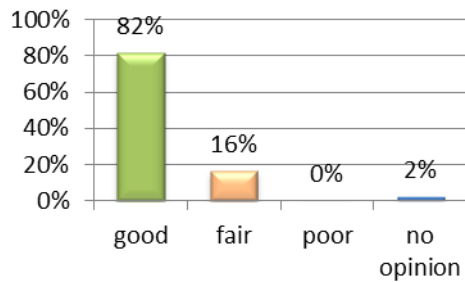
“Thank you to all those who keep Shotover so well.”

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

Appendix 2: Key findings 2014 customer satisfaction survey

49 surveys were completed about Florence Park of which 18 were done online. In 2013 50 surveys about Florence Park were completed.

Park in general

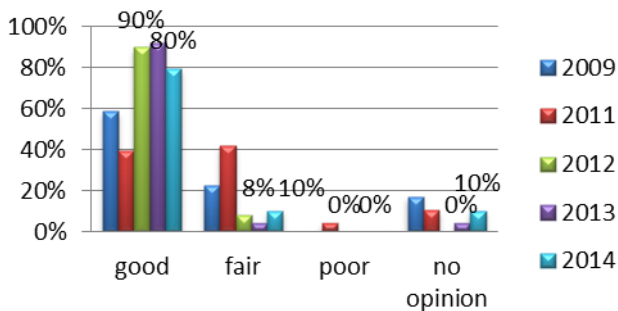


The visitors to Florence Park overall are very satisfied. The park in general scored 82% 'good' and 16% 'fair'.

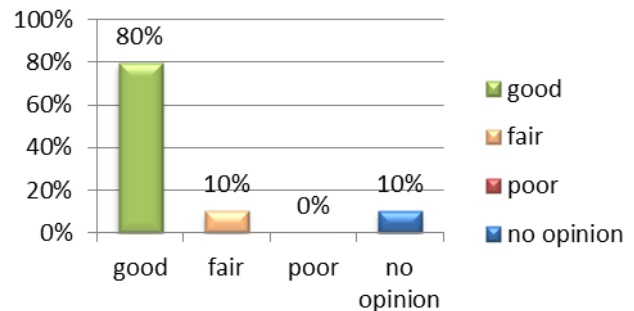
The best scoring features of Florence Park are the play area, general tree cover and general grass area.

The play area scored 80% 'good' which of course is very good however it has declined a bit from the previous years. This could be explained by the fact that the refurbishments done to the play areas were done in 2011-2012 and therefore the 'good' score was at 90%.

Comparison Play area

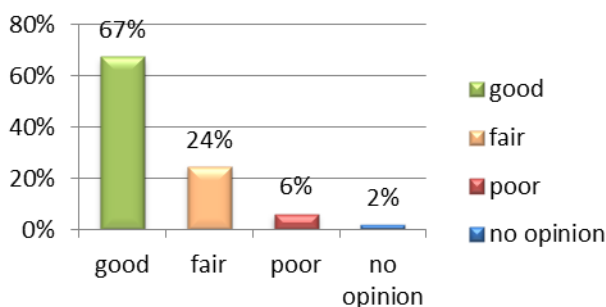


Play area

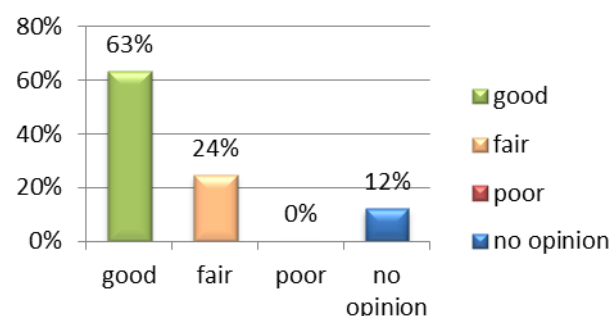


The other highest scoring features of the park are the accessibility and the general scrub area.

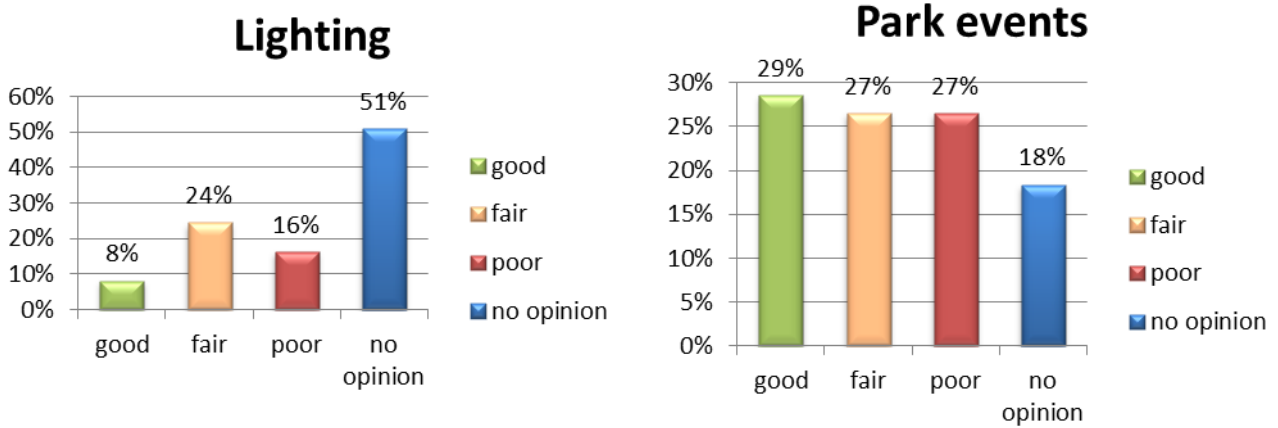
General shrub area



Accessibility

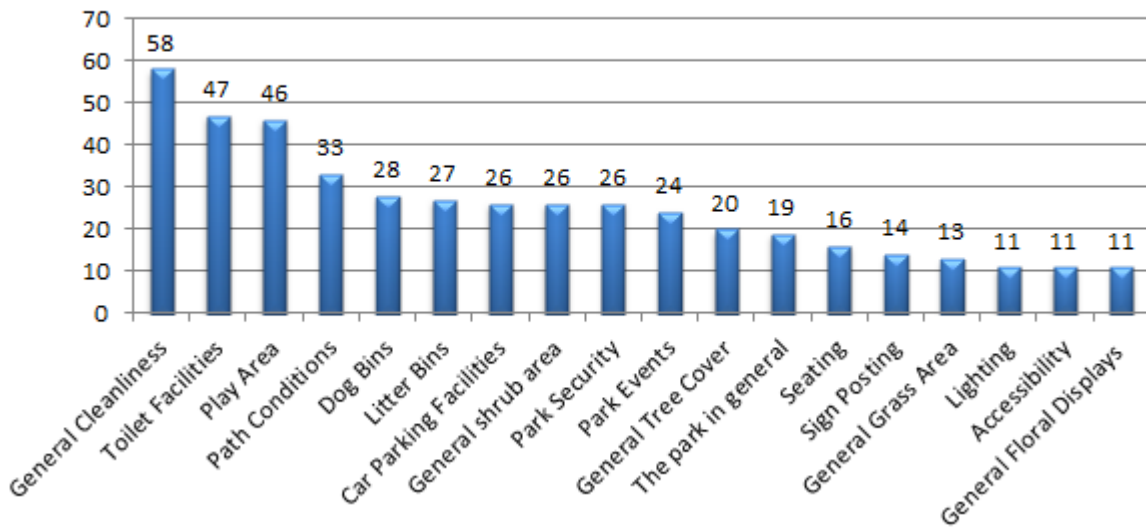


The two features that had the highest rating in the 'poor' category were lighting and park events. Even though the results are still not very dissatisfying these are the point that should be taken into consideration to improve the parks results for next year.

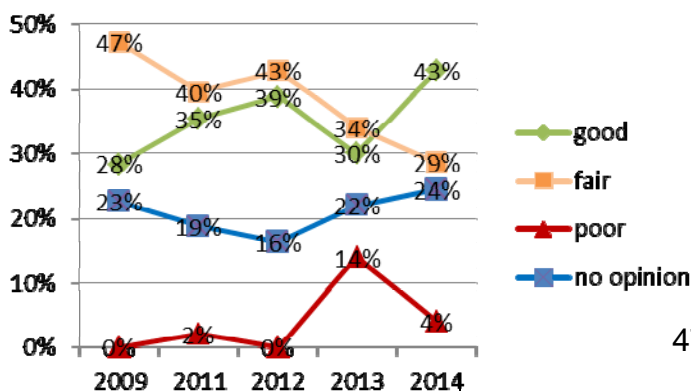


As with the previous analysis on the other parks general cleanliness also proves to be a priority. The toilet facilities and the play areas score satisfactory and they are also indicated as priorities.

Priorities



Comparison dog bins

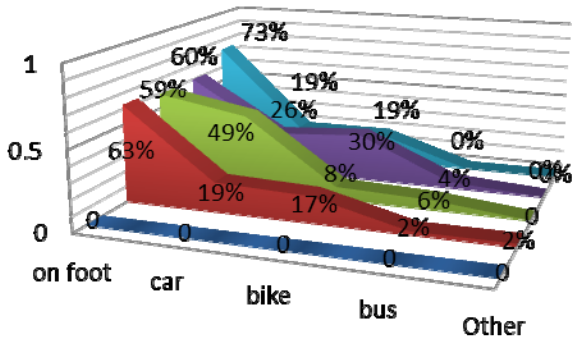


In comparison with the previous years the rating for the dog bins in Florence Park had a positive increase in 'good' rating. The 'good' rating scored 13% more than in 2013.

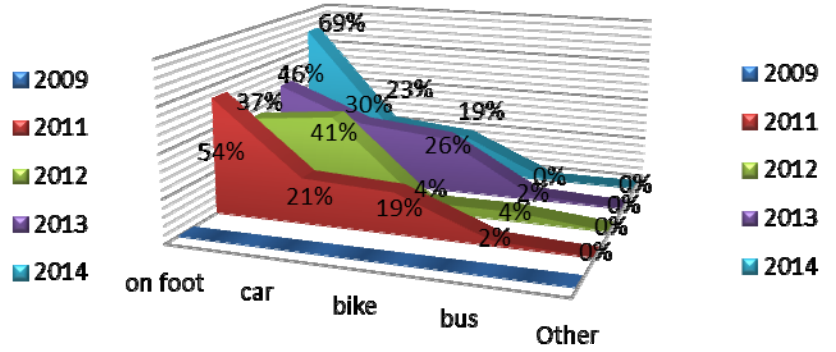
The 'poor' rating shows a sharp decline going from 14% in 2013 to 4% in 2014.

As can be seen from the graphs below people tend to walk to Florence Park and this trend is increasing.

Comparison transportation - Summer



Comparison transportation - Winter



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.

Appendices:

1. Parks maintenance table of frequencies
2. Fine turf table of frequencies