

## **BACKGROUND REPORT**

### **Green Space Strategy**

1. Over the past seven years parks and green spaces have become a key part of the Government's urban policy and fundamental to achieving their Liveability Agenda of improving quality of life and urban regeneration.
2. Open spaces are vital to the health and wellbeing of the community and natural environment. High quality functional open spaces can contribute to physical and mental well being, have an impact on community safety issues, encourage investment and promote community development.
3. A Green Space Strategy is a vision and plan to deliver improved public spaces. Through an assessment of the needs of communities, available resources and the quality, quantity and accessibility of green spaces, local standards are developed. The standards provide a framework for open space planning, design and management. Using the assessment and standards an action plan is produced to address deficiencies in existing provision. The Strategy is a means to improve the quality of neighbourhoods, to meet community and planning needs and to deliver corporate objectives.
4. The Green Space Strategy has a strong resonance both with the LSP priorities and the Council's Vision. The importance of Green Flag has been recognised in the Corporate Plan with the inclusion of producing a Green Space Strategy with accreditation through award schemes such as Green Flag, within Promoting Civic Pride and an Active Community.
5. The Green Space Strategy would be a key component of Dacorum's portfolio of strategies and a means to deliver Community Plan and corporate objectives for green space. It is closely linked to the Local Development Framework and would form supplementary planning guidance. An initial workshop involving Council Officers and key stakeholders including Portfolio Holders, representatives from Town and Parish Councils, Boxmoor Trust and representatives from the Local Strategic Partnership was held in November 2006 to raise awareness and identify key issues. There is now a need to move the project forward.
6. A budget of £8,500 is sought in 2007/08 and 2008/09 to support the development of the Green Space Strategy. An indicative budget over the two financial years is detailed below.

Fees and Training	£4000
LSP/Stakeholder Group workshops	£1000
Consultation	£2000
Research and Assessment	£5000
Publication	£5000

### **Green Flag**

7. Green Flag is a national accreditation scheme for public open spaces launched in 1996 and managed by the Civic Trust. It is a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country and has been awarded to parks, formal gardens, nature reserves, cemeteries and water

parks. Winners are judged to be welcoming, safe and well maintained with the strong involvement of the local community.

8. The importance of Green Flag has been recognised in the Corporate Plan with the inclusion of producing a Green Space Strategy with accreditation through award schemes such as Green Flag, within Promoting Civic Pride and an Active Community. In addition, the Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement – Safer and Stronger Communities Block has identified the doubling of Green Flag parks in Hertfordshire by 2009 as a specific target.
9. The Landscape and Recreation team will be assessing both Gadebridge Park and Shrubhill Common, with the intention of making an application in 2008. A budget of £3000 is sought in 2007/08 to prepare the application. This is required to fund the application fee, preparing documentation, the assistance of a Green Flag judge and consultation costs such as supporting the development of a Friends group as required by the guidance published by the Civic Trust who administer the scheme. An initial informal review of the two identified sites by a Green Flag assessor has already been commissioned and this will be used to develop the formal applications.
10. Although significant funds have been invested in facilities in Gadebridge Park over the last 2-3 years (children's play equipment and skateboard park) it is likely that some capital investment will be necessary to improve the park infrastructure, pedestrian approaches and entrances. Third party funding will be sought to offset these costs however it is likely that some investment of Council capital funding will be necessary in order to develop a successful bid