

# BLACKBIRD LEYS PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2018 - 2022

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## 1.0 A Welcoming Place

Blackbird Leys is a 9 Hectare park in the south-east area of Oxford and provides a vital green heart for the Leys housing estate in which it lies. The original Blackbird Leys development was built during the 1960s and its enlightened design incorporated the large park at its centre. The estate was enlarged in the early 1990s with the addition of the Greater Leys development. The whole area is now simply known as the Leys and the population at the time of the last census stood at 13,586.

Unfortunately, high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour blighted the estate through the 1980s and 90s, and it became nationally notorious for ‘joy riding’ and considered locally as something as a no go area. During this time the park itself also became neglected and under used due to fear of crime.

However, over the last ten years the estate has gradually been transformed, and this has included large scale investment in the park to return it to a well-used green oasis, where the estate’s residents can play, relax and exercise. The improvements have included the creation of two new play areas on the either side of the park; the installation of a fit trail, new signage, bins and benches; and tree planting and enhancement of habitats.

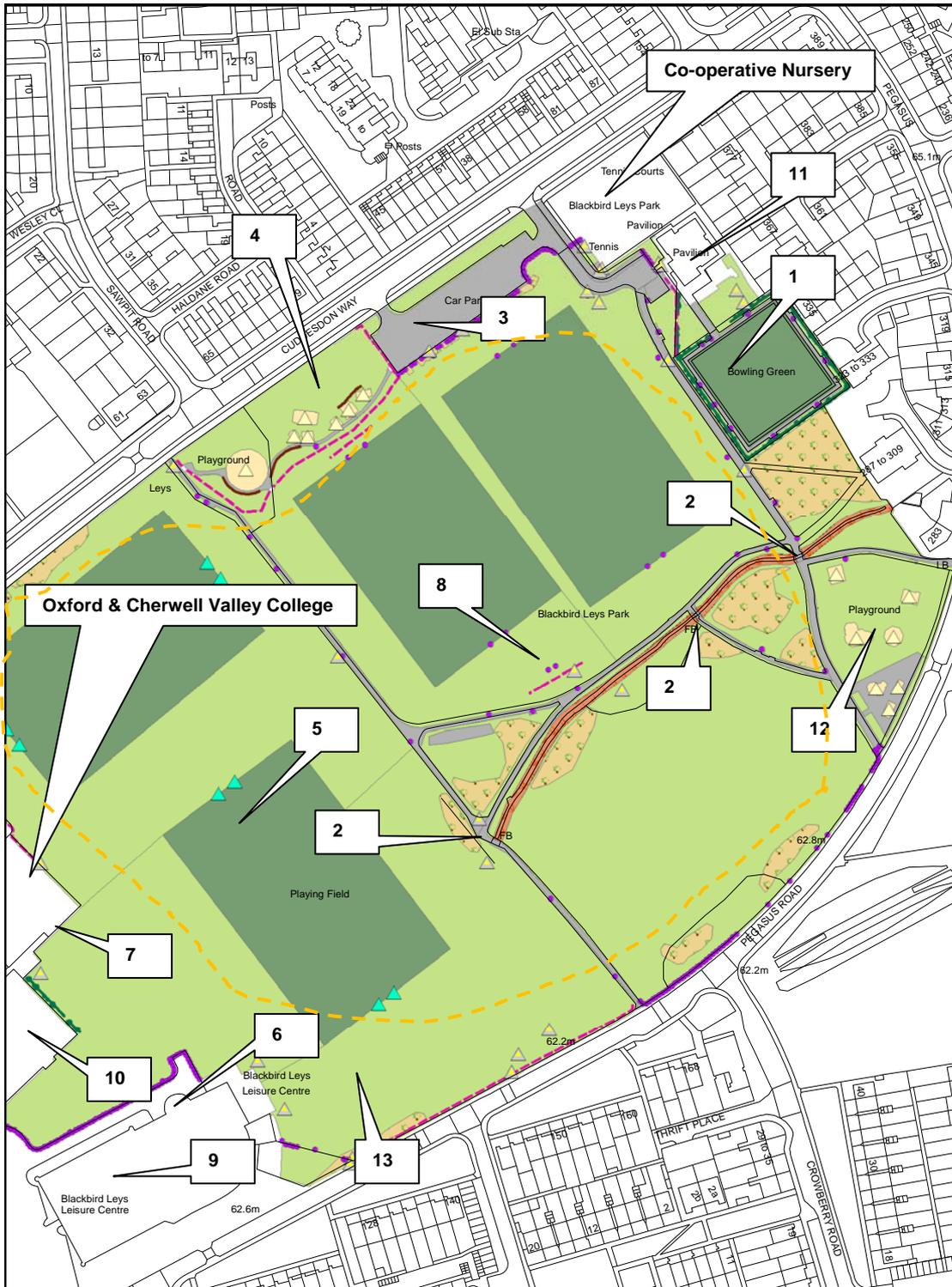
A new leisure centre with a competition size swimming pool was opened on the edge of the park in 2015, along with a 3G floodlit pitch and an extension to the car park and extra cycle racks.

The new play areas have proved particularly popular and the park is always busy at weekends when it supports the thriving Leys football clubs. There is also a bowls club providing a social hub for older people. Nevertheless, despite the on-going transformation of the park, and provision of first rate leisure facilities on the estate, deep rooted health inequalities remain amongst some sections of the local community in this relatively deprived area of the city. Oxford City Council therefore views the continued enhancement of this vital urban green space as an on-going priority. Maintaining the Green Flag Status for its central park is also helping to rebuild pride in the estate and renewing its former reputation as a great place to live, work and play.



## 1.1 Site location and asset map

Postcode: OX4 6DS



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## 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>
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## Type

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

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Bowling green           | 7. Football re-bound wall  |
| 2. Bridges                 | 8. Kick-about area         |
| 3. Car park                | 9. Leisure centre and pool |
| 4. Cuddesdon Way play area | 10. 3G Floodlit Pitch      |
| 5. Football                | 11. Bowls Pavilion         |
| 6. Football Pavilion       | 12. Pegasus Road play area |
|                            | 13. Memorial Garden        |

Fitness trail around perimeter 

A successful WREN funding application was submitted in 2012 to help contribute to the regeneration of the park. The vision is summarised in the proposal below:




Habitat creation along stream for wildlife /educational opportunities




Pegasus Road Play Area to be refurbished by Oxford City Council (funded separately)



New Path, Avenues and perimeter Tree Planting



Fitness Trail and Outdoor Gym Stations



Picnic Area

**BLACKBIRD LEYS PARK PROPOSALS: WREN FUNDING BID**




The detailed aims of the WREN proposal were:

- To reinforce the council’s aspirations to regenerate the area which include management proposals to upgrade Blackbird Leys Park to Green Flag status
- To use the new swimming pool development and ‘flagship’ refurbished play areas as a springboard to revitalise the area, harnessing the new interest and enthusiasm which will be created to regenerate the recreational facilities of the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys communities.
- To implement a range of environmental improvements which would benefit the community, providing increased habitat variety and value whilst extending ecological corridors.
- To improve access and inclusion of people of all abilities.
- To engage and galvanise the local community; providing opportunities for volunteering, training and the promotion of social inclusion.

The outcomes for the park and area are:

- To reinforce existing tree planting, creating a new landscape structure and framework for recreation.
- A planting framework which defines the new park and provides the structure for the active and passive functions to take place within.
- The creation of a valuable educational resource for use by local schools and other groups providing field studies and educational opportunities.
- To extend the range of active and passive recreation functions.
- Realisation of the potential to create a new sense of pride, ownership and involvement in the whole area including the establishment of a 'Friends' Group.
- An improvement in the ecological value and extension and diversity of the habitats.
- A clean safe environment, rich in wildlife value which can be enjoyed by all.



### 2017 Green Flag Judges Comments

**“Much effort and thought has gone into the design of the new facilities in the park to design out crime and have informal surveillance through good sight lines and location of play facilities adjacent to the roads. There has been significant investment of staff on site, including gardeners and rangers providing a site presence to reduce crime and the fear of crime and this has been with the support of the Neighbourhood Action Group and community policing.”**

**“The park is a real centre of the community and being so well managed and packed full of good facilities, it engenders pride here”**



## 1.2 Park features, building and infrastructure

### Benches

The benches located in the park were all replaced in 2012 so are in a good condition. A new picnic area was installed next to the Cuddesdon Road Play Area, along with a sculptured seating area recognising the links to the mini car industry. In 2016 a memorial garden was installed, this has provided additional seating.

### 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 and new bins were installed throughout 2011. The dog waste bins are emptied twice a week (see Section 4.7 for policies on dog control). Two Big Belly bins were installed in 2013.

### Bowling green

Blackbird Leys Bowls Club is a thriving group, who use the green regularly for fixtures. However the bowling green does not feel like it is part of the park for two reasons: it is hidden on the boundary, and has a large hedge along the side with the park, so it cannot be seen. The hedge improves security for the green, but if the facility could be seen it would become part of the park.

### Bridges

There are three bridges in the park running over the central stream. Their stonework was repaired in 2013.

### Car park

The tarmac car park is in a good condition, but no bays are marked. There are height restriction barriers on both the entrance and exit. There are bike holders, but not secure racks. Secure racks are available at the Leisure Centre. From the car park there is no formal way into the park, so lots of informal paths have been made through the hedge. There is a gate from the car park leading into Cuddesdon Way play area. The bollards in the car park will be replaced in 2018.

### Flower beds and memorial garden

Customer consultation has frequently identified the lack of colour and flower displays in the park. In 2015 a new flower display was installed and well received. It is restocked with separated plants from the herbaceous border in Cutteslowe Park.

In 2016 funding from Blackbird Leys Parish Council and City Council was provided to install a memorial garden dedicated to the memory of three local ward councillor's. Wooden benches were included, hand-crafted locally. It has been planted with sustainable ornamental grasses and ferns.



## Football

The park incorporates a number of football pitches, and these are well-used at weekends, by the many thriving children's teams. Their importance as a facility must therefore not be underestimated, and the improvements planned for the park will be designed to maintain and enhance the pitch and pavilion facilities, even though this will ultimately place limitations on any remodelling of the park.

There are 3 adult football pitches, 1 junior and 3 mini pitches. The Oxford Blackbirds Football Club has 12 teams ranging from Under 8s to men's teams. The pitches are fully booked Saturday and Sunday throughout the football season. The park is extremely busy on these days with participating families and spectators.

## Football re-bounce wall

The wear-marks in the grass show that, whilst basic, the goals painted on the wall are also very popular.

## 'Go Active' Fitness Trail

The Blackbird Leys Park Fitness trail provides free exercise facilities for local residents and also forms part of an extended route linking three local parks. This helps remove boundaries and improve connections between neighbourhoods and communities.

## Kick-about area

The kick-about goals are popular and heavily-used, therefore, the goals are regularly turned to prevent goal mouth damage.

## Lights

All the main routes through the park are lit, and the lighting is on the same timer system as the street lights. They are managed and maintained by the Parish Council.



### Leys Pool and Leisure Centre

The pool and leisure centre is located in the SW corner of the park, creating a combined hub for recreation on the estate which encourages visitors to one to also use the other. The city council recently invested £9.23 million on the centre to create a competition standard pool, with facilities that include a 25 metre pool with moveable floor, teaching pool, splash pool, changing village, spectator seating and sauna. The pool heating is supplemented by a bio-mass boiler. Improvements have also been made to the car park, and landscaping surrounding the centre, which included the planting bee friendly shrubs and installation of bike racks.

The pool and leisure centre is owned by Oxford City Council and managed on their behalf by Fusion Lifestyle, a not-for profit social enterprise. As a registered charity, Fusion continually reinvests to improve the sport and leisure offer in the community.

The partnership objectives are to:

- Further the aspiration of delivering world-class leisure services
- Have a positive impact on participation in sport and physical activity within the city, both by the general population and by members of target groups
- Increase the sustainability of the leisure facility portfolio by facilitating increased income and reducing ongoing net subsidy requirements

In addition to the building of the pool and associated improvements, in partnership with Fusion, the Council has invested a further £600,000 to improve the facility within leisure centre, including substantive maintenance work, refurbished changing facilities and reception area.

### Football pavilion

As part of the improvement to the centre changing and toilet facilities were built at the back of the building for the local sports teams using the pitches in the park. Funding for these facilities 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.

### 3G Floodlit Pitch

The city council invested a further £350,000 to build a new floodlit all-weather 3G pitch facility in the park at the side of the leisure centre which opened in 2016. Booking and access to the facility is managed by the centre. It is well-used and booked out most evenings throughout the week.



## **Paths**

The main paths through the park are tarmac and are in a good condition. The successful WREN bid included improvements to provide greater connectivity between main buildings and the two communities, including the schools, college and leisure centre, and to provide alternative routes from Cuddesdon Way to Pegasus Road.

Around the perimeter of the park is a well-used desire line, which has become the 'Go Active' fitness trail.

## **Bowls Pavilion**

The current pavilion is in two separate parts, one used by the bowls club which is in a good condition. The other part was used for storage by DS Parks, and is due to have an external and internal "face-lift".

## **Play areas (Cuddesdon Way)**

The play area was refurbished in 2010 costing £140K under the city council play area refurbishment programme. £88,000 was spent to provide a climbing net, swings and other equipment. The play area was landscaped with mounds and stones to provide an element of natural play. Extensive consultation was carried out by Groundwork, the project managers, with an open session in the park May 2009, where there was a very good turn out from local children and parents. Sessions were also held at Pegasus School, where children were encouraged to talk about the types of play features they like and at the Neighbourhood Action Group where designs were presented and feedback and comments received.

A hoggin path runs through the play area, and this will be repaired in 2018.

## **Play area (Pegasus Road)**

Pegasus Road Play Area was completed in 2013. Again, extensive consultation was carried out by Groundwork Thames Valley on the proposals with local schools. A seating area was included in the design along with items for older children outside the fenced area. It is extremely popular and well used particularly before and after school.

## **Signage**

New 'Welcome to Blackbird Leys Park' signs were installed in 2013; their appearance and quality is consistent with our other Green Flag Parks.

## 2.0 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

### 2.1 Historical background

After the Second World War there was a need for new housing in Oxford to accommodate workers for the Morris Motors car factory and to rehouse people from city centre slum clearance. An area of farmland to the south east of the city was selected for development due to its close proximity to the car plant and outline planning permission was granted for the new estate in 1953.

The estate was built on the site of Sawpit Farm and Blackbird Leys Farm (from which it took its name) and development began in the late 50s and continued through the 1960s. The housing gradually expanded further to the south and east, and the park was created in 1964, and included two play areas, a bowling green, three football pitches and a pavilion. At 14 acres, this was a large area to have set aside in the middle of the development, and demonstrated enlightened thinking that created a green heart in this urban sprawl.

The estate was extended again in 1990s with the development of the Greater Leys area, bringing the population to over 13,000.

Unfortunately, high levels of crime and antisocial behaviour blighted the estate through the 80s and 90s, and it became notorious for 'joy riding' and drug related crime. The park, like so many around the country during this period, also became neglected; and burnt-out stolen cars on its football pitches became a common site.

Transformation of the estate began in 2007 with the introduction of Community Policing and the Neighbourhood Action Group. The newly established Green Space Officers are also employed to specifically tackle antisocial behaviour in the estate's green spaces.

This rejuvenation continues with the commencement of the project in 2017 to renovate the estate's two tower blocks. This work includes recladding of the exteriors of the towers, which has the additional benefit of improving the setting of the park; equally, the on-going enhancement of the park, which lies at the heart of the estate, is forming an important element of the wider regeneration process.

### 2.2 Biodiversity

In the past the park has been referred to as the 'Green Desert'; the lack of trees and the prevailing SW winds and chill N- NE winds can make it feel inhospitable. A tree planting scheme to create shelter belts, has helped to make the park feel more like a park.

#### **Planting of tree avenues in Blackbird Leys Park**

A vital aspect of transforming the park is to increase the visual interest, and given the flat topography and importance of retaining the sports pitches, the best way to achieve this is to create tree avenues between the pitches, along with other planting, based on a long-term vision (Florence Park in the neighbouring suburb of Cowley is a prime example of how a completely flat site can be transformed into a beautiful green space by imaginative tree planting, in this case begun in the 1930s). The planting of the initial avenues began in early 2014, and the following considerations were taken into account when deciding which species would be most appropriate:

- Suitability for the local environment of Blackbird Leys
- Traditional avenue form and year round visual interest
- Autumn colour
- Bark interest
- Flowering
- Biodiversity value

Rather than having a single tree species, the avenues are made up of three or four different species, which together best meet the above criteria. In addition to improving the visual amenity of the park, this will also increase the bio-diversity of the tree stock and expand the range of wildlife attracted.

The grass is left longer along the edge of the stream to encourage biodiversity. Further work along the stream has been identified in the action plan.

The new flower bed outside the bowls pavilion contains species to attract pollinators.



## 3.0 Community Involvement

### 3.1 Stakeholders and partners

The Leys estate has come a long way over the last ten years. It was once infamous as the place where the craze of so called 'joy-riding' began, and it regularly featured on local and national news stories. Vehicle crime and other forms of antisocial behaviour were a common problem, and many of the estate's green spaces were subjected to constant vandalism and fly-tipping.

In order to provide a targeted, multi-agency approach to tackling these problems, the Leys Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) was set up in 2007 and was the first group of its kind established in the city. This forum created a culture of joint-working between the Police, City Council (including its then newly establish Park Ranger Service), youth workers and many other agencies; and it combined their skills and resources to tackle identified priorities. The Park Rangers, recently renamed 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 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, paint railings and repair pathways.

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, Rangering 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.

The City Council worked in partnership with Groundwork to deliver the Play Area Refurbishment Programme.

#### **Stakeholders in the park include:**

- Oxford Blackbirds Football Club
- Blackbird Leys Park Bowls Club
- Co-operative Nursery
- Fusion Lifestyle
- Local schools on the parks periphery
- Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
- Parish Council



Over the last five years there have been several attempts to start volunteer groups within the green spaces throughout the Leys.

In 2013 The Conservation Volunteers (TCV from Reading) were awarded £60k from the People's Health Trust to set up a green community group and arranged activities for over 18 months. They used Spindleberry Park, a nature reserve very close to Blackbird Leys Park, as the project base. They also included three other parks on the estate for events, activities and working days.

The intention was that this could include the formation of the 'Friends' Group that would have the resources to organise events, training etc. However despite much publicity and successful clearing days, no one from the community came forward to run a friends group.

Since then the Countryside Volunteers of Oxford City Council have held regular working parties in Spindlebury Nature Park, which is very close to Blackbird Leys Park, to promote the benefits of green space volunteering. Also, in 2017, the Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) were successful in obtaining a TESCO community fund grant to install a willow dragon in the nature reserve.

**Join the yearly OxClean event**  
**Sat 7th March 2015, 10.30pm - 1pm**

Picking litter and gathering rubbish in aid of OxClean who, throughout the year, work hard to make Oxford a more pleasant place to live, work and relax. We start along the footpath adjacent to Windale Primary School and follow Northfield Brook towards Gillian's Park. There we'll meet up with another group that started at Greenhill. Come along and help keep Blackbird Leys clean!

Meet at the entrance to Fry's Hill Park near Warbler Walk



**Tree planting in Fry's Hill Park**  
**Sat 7th March 2015, 2pm - 3.30pm.**

We will be planting whips (young trees) on the mound behind the skate park. In time, these trees will hide the stadium and create a more pleasant view!

Meet at the skate park in Fry's Hill Park



### 3.2 Consultation

Since 2000 Parks Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been completed annually across parks and recreation grounds in Oxford, including Blackbird Leys 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

In 2011 Communities Team staff arranged a community fun day at Blackbird Leys Community Centre and the following year worked with the Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) to bring Leys Fair back to Blackbird Leys Park. OPA felt that the event was becoming In 2011 City Council staff organised a Fun Day at Blackbird Leys Community Centre and the following year worked with the Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) to bring Leys Fair back to Blackbird Leys Park. Due to the increasing size of the event in subsequent years, from 2014 it was managed jointly by a Parish Councillor, the chair of the Oxford Polish Association and local of residents, working in partnership with the city council and Thames Valley Police.

In 2016 the Leys Festival joined with the Blackbird Academy Trust Horticultural Show. Bringing these events together cut costs and increased resources. By combining the organisational and staffing capacity of the school with the increasingly confident Oxford Polish Association, the Parish Council, City Council staff and a new partner in the MYOX4 wellbeing charity, an established and focused steering group of professionals was created, around half of whom are residents of the estate.

The Leys Festival is now once again an important date in the calendar for the estate's residents, creating a fun day out for all the family and bringing people in to the park. The event also provides an opportunity for the various local community groups to meet other organisations and develop links. This as included a recent example, where following the festival, the FriendLeys older people coffee morning group linked in with a local meditation group who they have invited to come to their coffee mornings and run mediation activities.

**“It is lovely, lovely, lovely. It's great to see all the different nationalities, the children playing and everyone doing all sorts of different activities. It shows that Blackbird Leys is such a wonderful place.”** (Local resident, Leys Fair 2013)

Blackbird Leys Park is licensed for the performance of plays, films, live music, recorded music and dance from 09.00hrs until 23.30hrs.



Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
Oxfordshire



**LEYS FESTIVAL 2017**  
AND HORTICULTURAL SHOW

**BLACKBIRD LEYS PARK**  
SATURDAY 8TH JULY, 12-4PM  
**FREE ENTRY!**  
**EVERYONE WELCOME!**

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Blackbird Leys Community Centre, Blackbird Leys Road  
E: communities@oxford.gov.uk  
T: 01865 262709

www.leyfestival.woobly.com  
#leyfestival

Featuring:  
 \* Mini-Beasts \* Balloon modelling and magic show  
 \* Climbing wall and sensory garden \* Inflatable  
 \* Scientist workshop from Polish Engineers in UK  
 \* Dance Performances \* Face Painting \* Martial Arts Display  
 \* "Have a Go" Sports and Crafts  
 \* Food from all over the world  
 \* Summer Fete "Make & Bake"

And Much Much More!!!!  
All activities are free or low cost!

The logo featured during the event is the Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust logo. Blackbird Leys Park is owned by Oxfordshire County Council. The Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity. The event is licensed by Thames Valley Police. All activities are free or low cost. The event is managed by the Blackbird Leys Community Centre. The event is managed by the Blackbird Leys Community Centre. The event is managed by the Blackbird Leys Community Centre.

### 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:

- Community involvement has been encouraged and activities include planting, stream clearance and litter collections in conjunction with local schools and volunteer groups.
- Join the weekly volunteering working group organised by the Countryside Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Volunteering to be a Health Walk Leader which includes a free day of training by Natural England.
- 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.

### 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 an increase in preventable diseases which are placing increasing pressures on the National Health Service. Blackbird Leys Park provides a wealth of opportunities for exercise and sport. Evidence shows 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 cancer 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.

In 2017 the City Council Green Space Team linked up with Sustainable Healthcare to develop a number of initiatives to encourage more active lifestyles on the estate. This included creating a map of the estate with health walk routes which incorporates the park and links to the other green spaces on the estate.

The park offers 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.
- Leisure centre
- Grassed areas for informal sports
- Play areas
- Opportunities to volunteer
- Feel part of a local community
- Bowls club
- Football pitches

## 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
- 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 park 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 Blackbird Leys 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 Blackbird Lays 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 Blackbird Leys Park in the last ten years have included:

- Creation of two new play areas, one of which is a 'Destination Standard' facility
- Installation of an outdoor gym trail
- Extensive landscaping and a programme of tree planting (ongoing at time of writing)
- Introduction of a standard design for bins and benches and Big Belly Bins
- Full tree survey
- Success in obtaining capital funding to provide modern football pavilion facilities
- New Leys Pools and Leisure Centre
- New football pavilion
- New 3G Floodlit Pitch
- Memorial garden
- Sculptured seating installed in 2015 based on the mini car.

Although the estate has come a long way over recent years, and crime and antisocial behaviour have greatly reduced, the fear of crime still exists; and outdated negative perceptions about the area remain in the minds of many of Oxford's residents. The regeneration of Blackbird Leys Park will therefore play an important part in helping to improve the overall appearance of the area and thus help reduce the fear of crime. A well-used park in the centre of the estate will also help restore a sense of community; and the award of a Green Flag for its main park enhances the estate's reputation and increases a sense of pride in its residents.

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 Blackbird Leys Park, see Appendix 3.

Two skilled gardeners visit 2 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, trees and infrastructure.

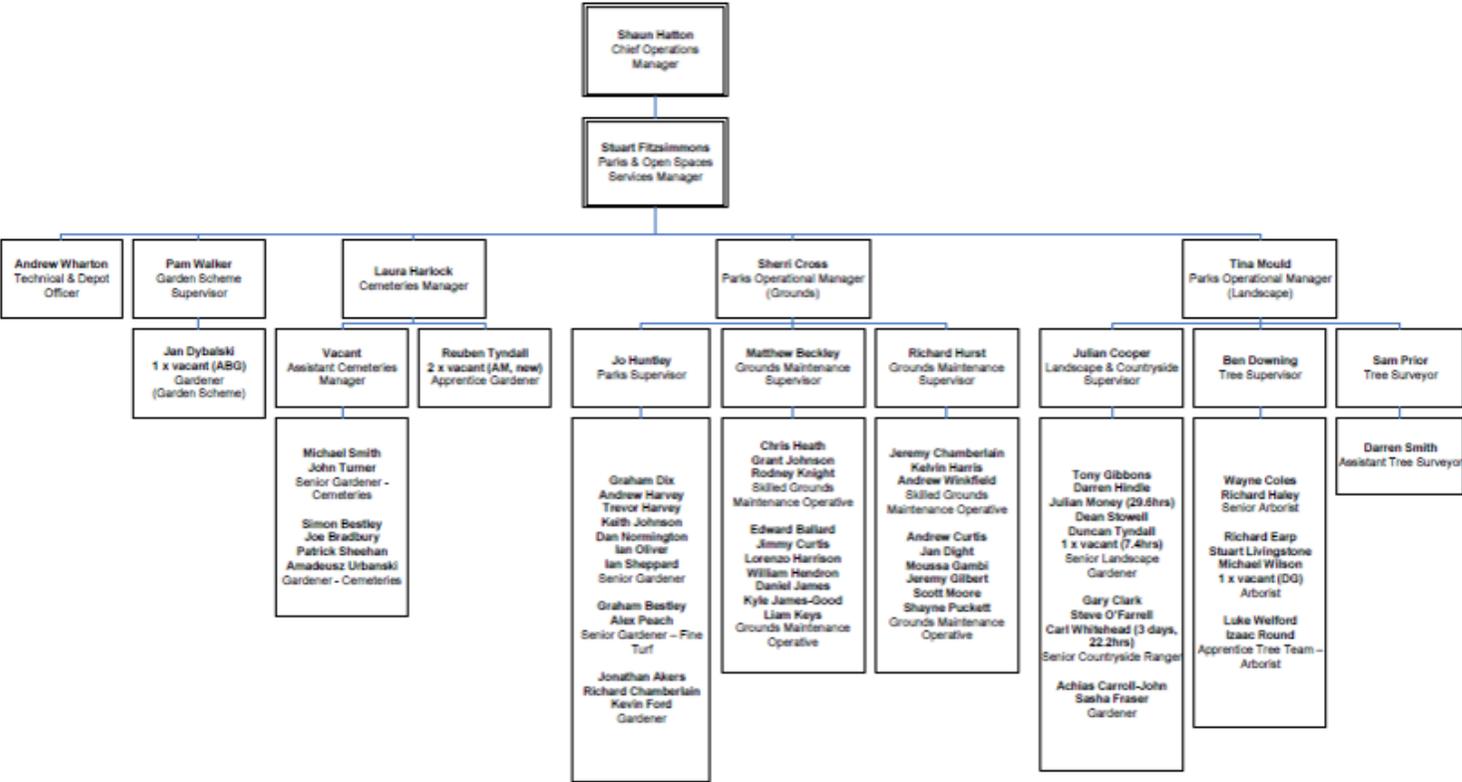
The service has been accredited with IOS9001:2008 and ISO14001 and monitors the quality of its horticulture.

## 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**

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](http://www.oxford.gov.uk). A copy of the Blackbird Leys 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**

Although all forms of antisocial behaviour have greatly reduced over recent years, there is still occasional crime on the estate, some of which is drug-related; and this creates a lingering and disproportionate fear of crime and negative perception of the area. The City Council will therefore continue to work closely with the Police and other agencies to help further reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. The Green Space Officers have built up an excellent first name term relationship with the local Police team and carry out joint patrols and enforcement work to tackle specific issues.

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

- The park is open with few hidden dark corners and lines of vision are good.
- It is overlooked by houses, schools and shops from either side
- The park is a busy walk-through and is used by dog walkers from the early morning through into the evening.
- The existence of the leisure centre and bowls club on the site helps to improve customers' perception of safety.
- The play areas are located on the edges of the park which allows for good natural surveillance from the pavement.
- The presence of 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.

Blackbird Leys Park is covered by the Oxford City Council Byelaws 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 in to a fenced off play area. A number of fines for dog fouling have been issued in the park by the Green Space Officers.

At the same time as adopting the act, 150 dog waste bins were installed in parks and recreation grounds to provide a convenient means of disposal for dog owners. As a result dog fouling is not a major problem in Blackbird Leys Park. However, there are still some irresponsible owners on the estate, and the Green Space Officers will continue to target them to further reduce fouling and tackle the issue of uncontrolled dogs.

## 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 are all stored in a secure compound within Cutteslowe Park, with a small amount stored on-site.
- Oxford City Council has been accredited with Investors in People, reflecting its commitment to its staff. The Council values its staff and offers a full programme of training linked to an appraisal system.

## Play areas

- The Landscape and Play Team maintains the play facilities in Blackbird Leys 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 Blackbird Leys Park:

- The services 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 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 electric 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 warmer winters and drier summers 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.
- The Green Space Field Officers use electric bikes to patrol the city's parks. This has allowed them to beat congestion, whilst also reducing the council's carbon footprint and making significant savings on fuel and vehicle maintenance cost.

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 are looked on favourably.

## 5.0 Aims and Five Year Action Plan

Action	How	Resources	Timescale	2018 Review
<b>Buildings and Infrastructure</b>				
New dog bin by bowls green + base	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	Complete
Install base's under all dog bins	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	Complete
Top up hogan paths	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	Complete
Replace the missing bollards in car park and outside bowls pavilion	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	Complete
Kick about goal mouth renovation + painting of posts	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	Complete
Replace reflectors / tape on to path bollards	In-house landscape team	Capital funding obtained	2018	
Old football pavilion	Repair and make more welcoming and attractive the external face of the old football pavilion and entrance to Bowls Pavilion	Funding required	Once funding is obtained	

Resurface tarmac footpaths	Make good	In-house	2019-2020	
<b>Biodiversity</b>				
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	Contacted Oxford Brookes and approached volunteers
Tree planting	Tree planting to soften and screen the rear of the Leisure Centre	Whips supplied in-house	2018	
Improve Ecological Habitats	Further planting along stream corridor to extend and diversify habitats, improve ecological corridors and provide educational and field study opportunities.	Funding required	Once funding is obtained	
<b>Community</b>				
Community Involvement	Community involvement will be encouraged and activities would include	Parks Development Officer		

	planting, stream clearance and litter collections in conjunction with local schools and volunteer groups.			
Access Audit		Approach Oxford Unlimited	2019	

## **6.0 Monitoring and Review**

The Parks Management Team will meet once a year to review the management plan and decide on changes and alterations for the following 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 Blackbird Leys 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 Blackbird Leys 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, 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	Blackbird Leys Park Management Plan
2	Successful WREN Bid
3	The Friends of Blackbird and Greater Leys Parks / Wild Oxford / Spindlebury Wood land Play project
4	Green Spaces Strategy
5	Satisfaction Surveys
6	Grounds Maintenance Service Standards and Specification – Executive Summary
7	Marketing Plan
8	Events
9	Play Area Refurbishments/Pavilions/Fitness Trail
10	Competition Swimming Pool
11	Risk Assessments

## 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
Cuttesslowe 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 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.

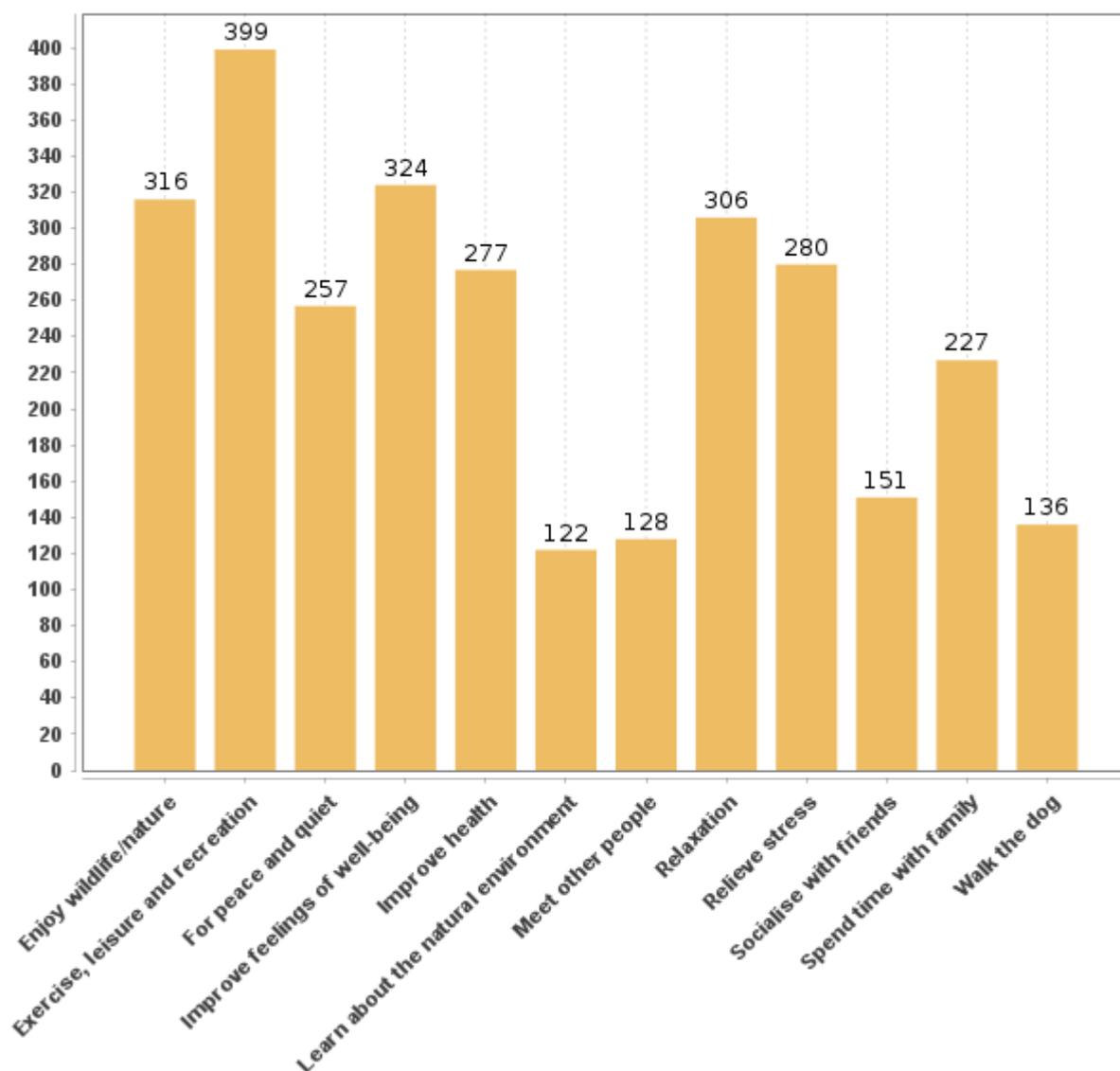
Category	No. of sites surveyed	No. of completed surveys
Green Flag and City Parks	7	252
Countryside Site/Nature Reserves	22	125
Neighbourhood Parks	8	21

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%).

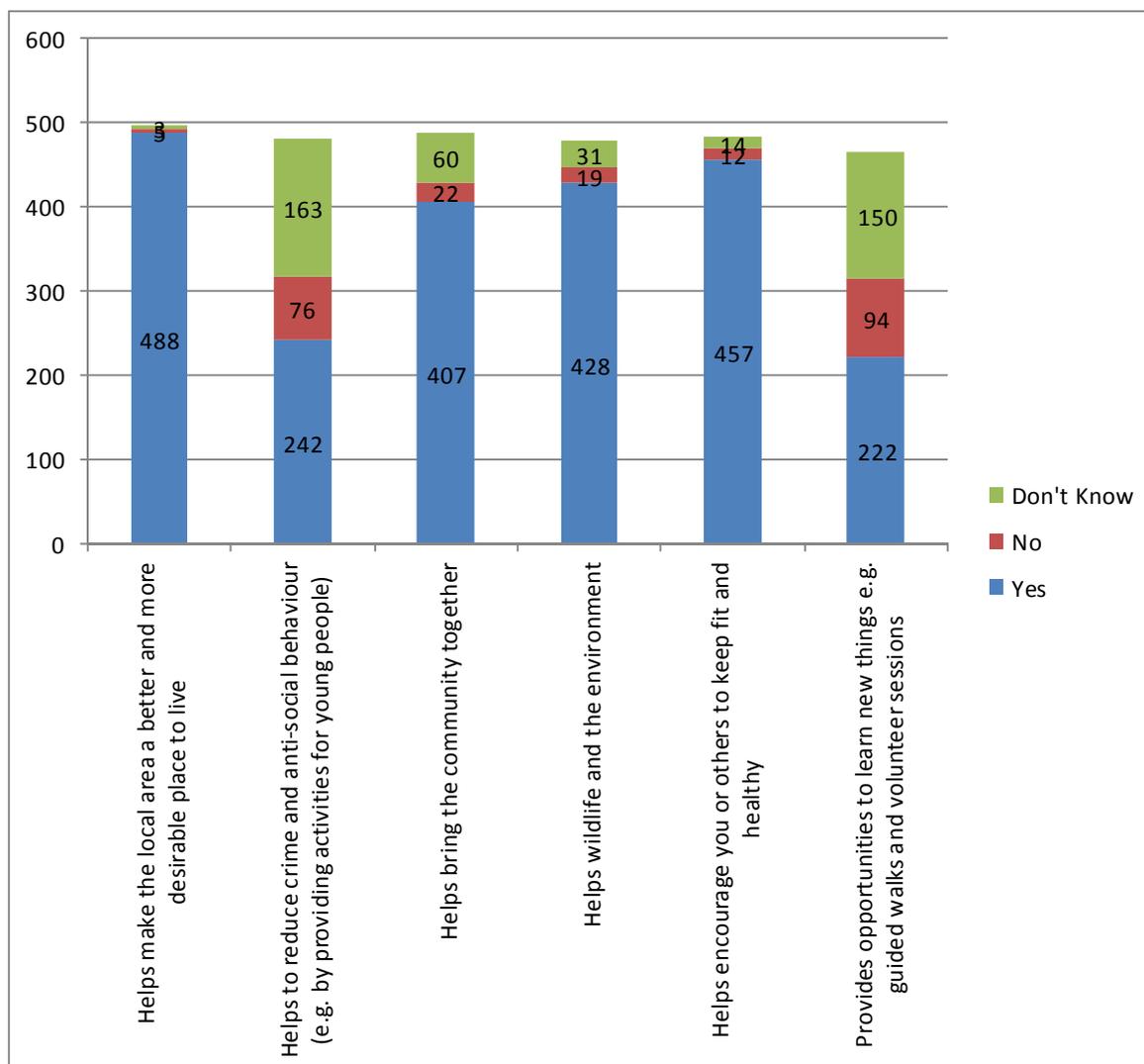
The results from the Oxford survey mirror The Land Trust results in that the most frequent use of the sites is also for exercise, leisure and recreation, but in their survey only 56 percent of respondents cited this reason. The least frequently cited reasons for using the Land Trust sites was to learn 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.

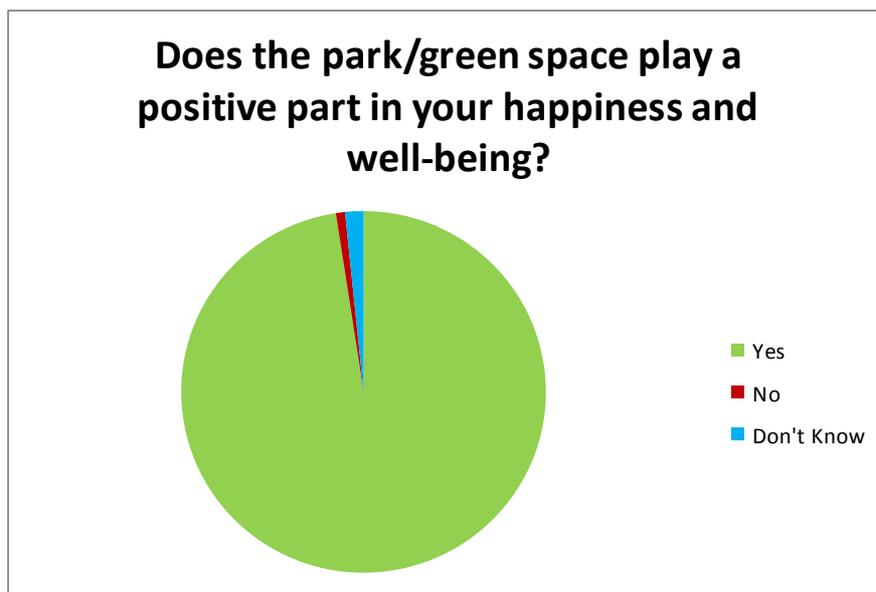
**Visitor comments:**

- *“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.

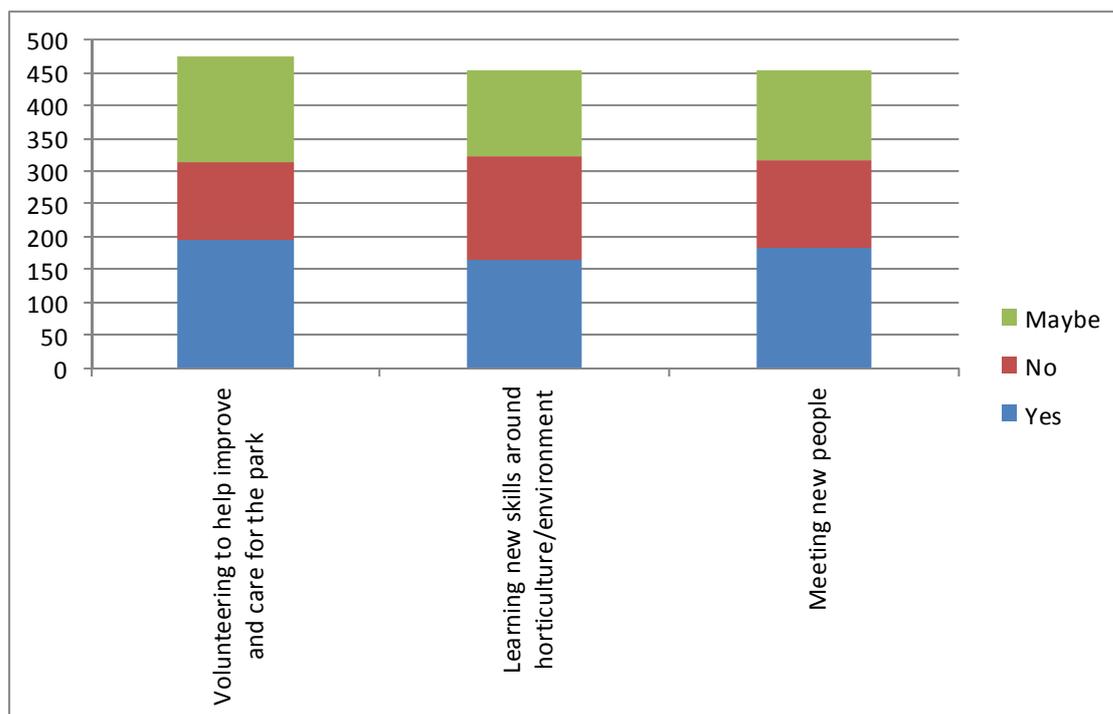


#### Visitors Comments:

- *"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 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.” 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

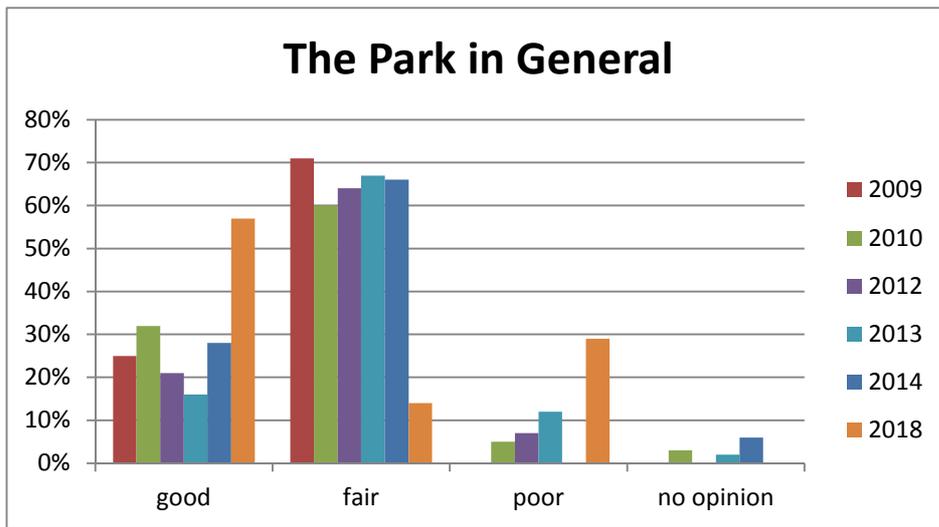
“Thank you for the great job that the Parks team does to keep Marsh Rd Park and all the others in such tip top condition!”

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

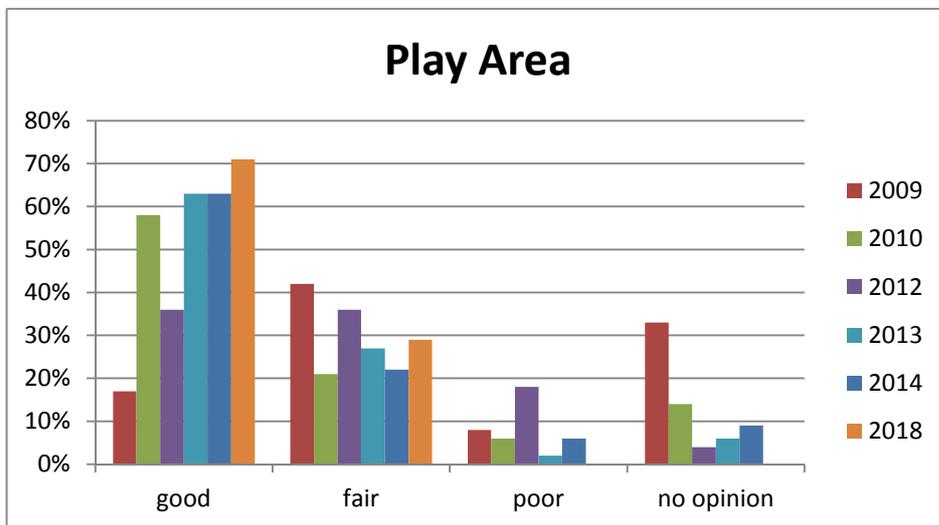
“It's great and very well kept. Thank you very much. Keep it as natural and pure as possible.” South Park

## Appendix 2: Key findings 2018 customer satisfaction survey

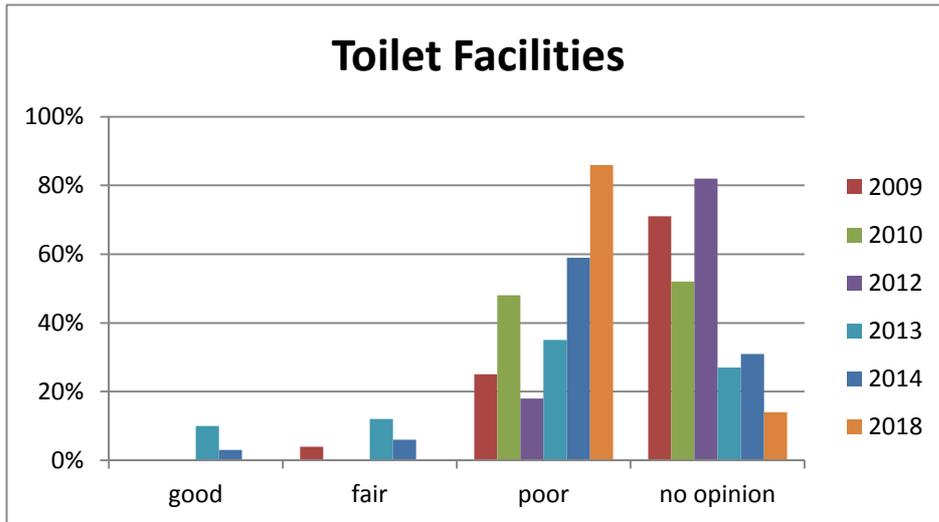
Compared to previous years, the number of surveys submitted for Blackbird Leys Park in 2018 has significantly dropped. Therefore caution should be applied when interpreting these results due to the small sample size of the 2018 survey.



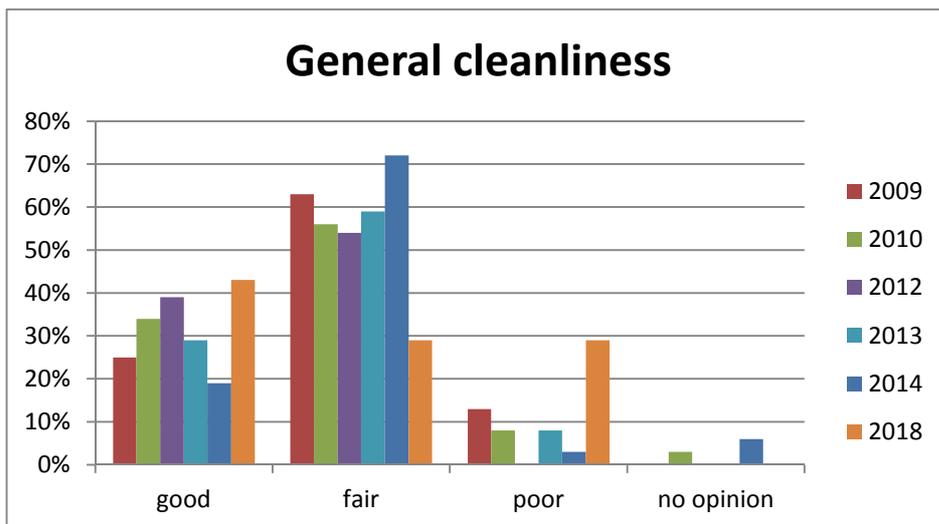
The chart above shows that there is an increase in how good respondents feel the park in general is with over half saying the park is good.



The chart above shows an increase in satisfaction of the play areas over time, reflecting the investment and continuous improvement to these areas.



The chart above shows that respondents are consistently marking the toilets as poor. There are toilets in the Leisure Centre, however it is not clear if park customers can use these. The Bowls Club has its own toilets in the pavilion.



The chart above shows that more respondents view of general cleanliness as good, but there are also some that say it is poor. This could be showing that the depending on what time of day you visit the park, will determine your view. If it is just after a litter pick, or if it is at school home time.

## **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).