



Ten-year Parks Strategy

2006/2015

Better City Life



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Foreward



The aim of this Strategy is to set out the Royal Borough's proposed investment in our parks over the next ten years.

We are one of the most densely populated Boroughs in the United Kingdom with possibly the least amount of public green open space. It is therefore the Council's policy to maintain all its parks at an excellent standard, to renew the infrastructure and to bring up to excellence any not now at that standard.

I am very keen that all residents and park users should have an opportunity to become more closely involved in managing the future development of these green lungs. We need to ensure that we are providing a full range of the facilities and amenities that local residents would like to see and clearly this will vary from place to place around the Borough.

In pursuit of excellence, the Council wants each of the eight major parks to gain and keep the prestigious Green Flag Awards. While Holland Park already has a Green Flag, it is our intention that from 2007 each one of the other seven will be brought up to Green Flag level, and this will require that each have its own individual management plan.

This will mean achieving the highest horticultural quality, ensuring top quality maintenance and providing facilities for people to play, walk, exercise or relax. All this needs to be managed to ensure that there is something for everyone in the Borough's parks.

This strategy sets out our vision for achieving that and I hope you will enjoy reading it. If you have comments you would like to make about the content, please send these to The Leisure Services Manager (Parks), The Stable Yard, Holland Park, Ilchester Place, London W8 6LU.

Handwritten signature of Nicholas Paget-Brown.

Councillor Nicholas Paget-Brown
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Waste and Leisure Services

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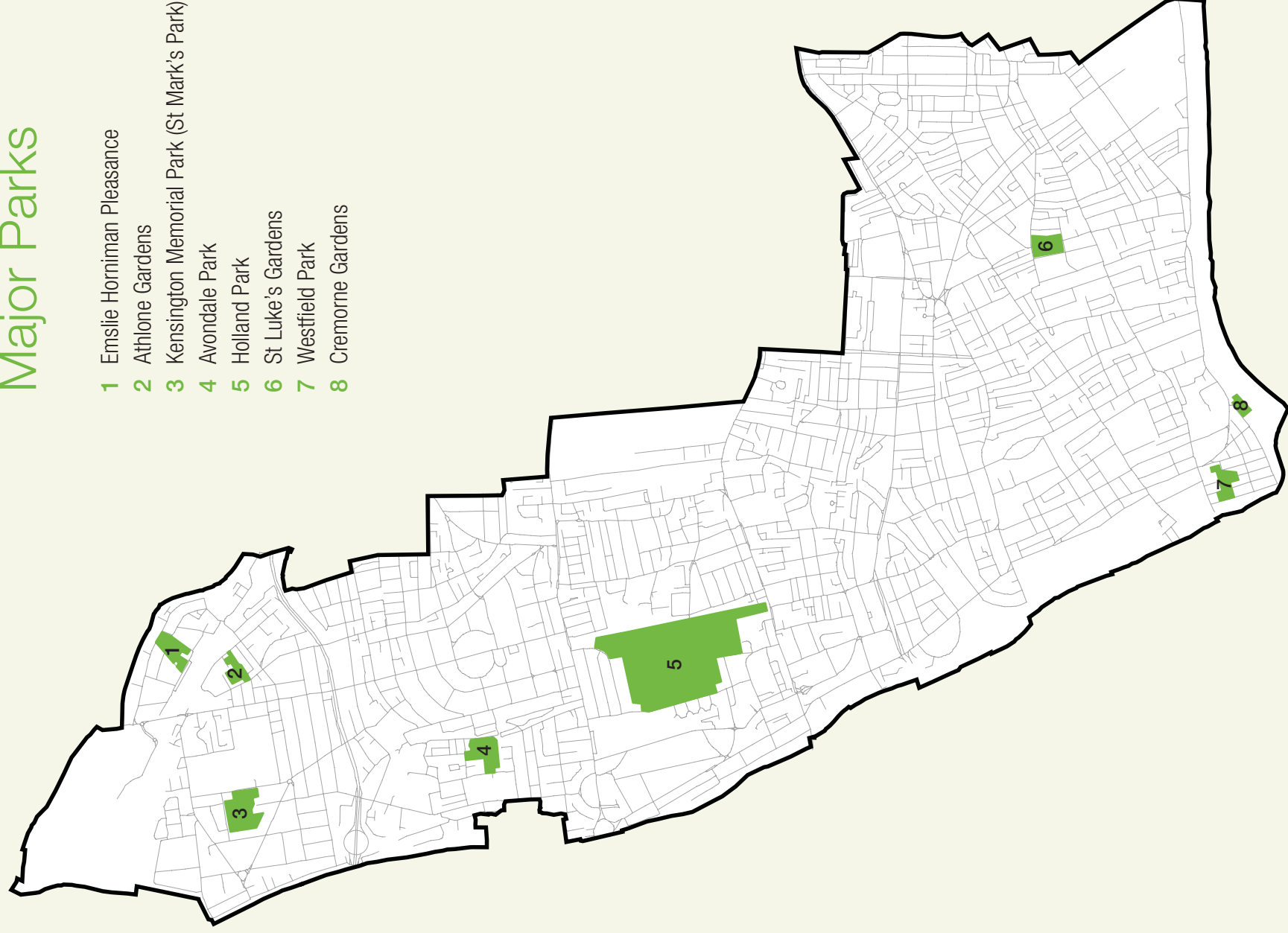
1.0 Introduction: why a parks strategy?



- 1 The aim of this strategy is to guide the investment needed over the next ten years to bring the Royal Borough's Parks up to a consistently excellent standard.
- 2 While this strategy covers all of the open spaces that are managed by Leisure Services, emphasis has been given to the eight largest Parks in the borough that offer the most scope for improvement. Notwithstanding this, it is the Council's intention to maintain all of its other, smaller parks and open spaces in excellent condition as well. Similarly, it should not be forgotten that the Council is responsible for two major cemeteries, one at Gunnersbury, W3 in the London Borough of Hounslow, and the other at Hanwell, W7 in the London Borough of Ealing. Apart from their obvious role in the care of the dead, they play a vital part of the lives of the living. Hence, it is our intent to also maintain these valued open spaces as if they were in the heart of the Royal Borough.
- 3 Although the scarcity of open space in the borough is touched upon, this strategy is concerned, **first and foremost** with improving the management of the parks we already have, rather than promoting an increase in the overall provision of open space – this being more appropriately dealt with under the ambit of planning policy.
- 4 It is estimated from the Cobb Condition Survey¹ (2003), that at least £5m is needed to cover repairs and replacements alone. More extensive improvements are anticipated to meet present and future community aspirations and these would require further funding still. Although every opportunity will be taken in design to minimise future running costs, it is likely that there will also be a small annual increase in revenue expenditure.
- 5 As the expenditure of such a large capital sum is unlikely to be affordable in the short term, the strategy sets out an action plan (Appendix 1) that seeks to programme the public consultation and actual work in an orderly way over the next ten years. As regards consultation the Council has, over the years, already asked residents what they think about parks. The fairly general findings² from this have helped to inform the strategy and will continue to be taken into account. However, for reasons of safety, urgency or common sense some improvements and repairs cannot wait and will be brought forward to year one³.

Major Parks

- 1 Emslie Horniman Pleasance
- 2 Athlone Gardens
- 3 Kensington Memorial Park (St Mark's Park)
- 4 Avondale Park
- 5 Holland Park
- 6 St Luke's Gardens
- 7 Westfield Park
- 8 Cremorne Gardens



2.0 Some basic facts



- 6 The Royal Borough has 32 public parks and open spaces. Eight of these, including Holland Park, are categorised as 'major parks' due to a combination of size and range of facilities. With the exception of Holland Park, which has been the focus of substantial investment and improvement already, these major parks have been identified for special consideration and investment. The programme order, as set out in the table below, is provisional and will be subject to an annual review taking into account factors such as the impact of associated building developments.

	Park	Proposed year for programmed works to commence
1	Kensington Memorial Park	2006
2	St Luke's Gardens	2007
3	Athlone Gardens	2008
4	Westfield Park	2009
5	Avondale Park	2010
6	Emslie Horniman Park	2011
7	Cremorne Gardens	2012

For example, both Athlone Gardens and Cremorne Gardens could be affected by redevelopment and this could lead to a reschedule of the order. Although the programme seemingly lasts only for seven years it is anticipated that improvement works will, for affordability reasons, need to stretch for the full 10 years in order to spread the costs.

- 7 In addition, as shown in Appendix 2, there are six other secondary parks with playgrounds and eighteen without. Leisure Services are also responsible for the upkeep of many other small sites such as roadside flowerbeds.
- 8 The Royal Borough is the most densely populated borough in England and Wales and therefore it comes, as no surprise, that our open space is a relatively scarce but highly treasured asset. While parts of the borough are said to be deficient in open space there are easily accessible, sizeable parks and open spaces managed by the Royal Parks or neighbouring boroughs that are often used by our residents. These include Brompton Cemetery, Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Battersea Park, Queens Park and Little Wormwood Scrubs. Many of our residents also enjoy the benefit of access to the large number of private garden squares in the borough.

3.0 Our ambition

- 9 As a measure of excellence, the Council wants each of the eight major parks to gain and keep Green Flag Awards, which are managed by The Civic Trust on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Green Flag Advisory Board. A formal management plan is required for each. Holland Park already has a Green Flag and in each year from 2006 one of the other seven parks will be brought up to the Green Flag level.
- 10 The Council wants to involve park users in the running of the parks to both reflect local aspirations and to encourage a feeling of 'ownership'. Consequently, in-depth consultation will be undertaken for each of these parks and will include the involvement of local ward councillors, residents and community groups. Although in each case, the main focus will be on the actual park under consideration, account will also be taken of facilities available elsewhere in the locality. Similarly comments about other nearby open spaces will also be noted and considered.
- 11 The Council aims to provide a wide range of facilities in its parks taking into account catchment areas, local feedback and the availability of like facilities in other nearby locations.
- 12 The state of the parks and open spaces is also an important factor in the Britain-in-Bloom and London-in-Bloom competitions. Success in these competitions is important to the Council and is another reason for seeking high standards.
- 13 Lastly, the Council believes there is a causal relationship between the condition of parks, and vandalism and antisocial behaviour in them. The Council wishes to enhance the experience of all legitimate park users and will therefore seek to achieve this both at the design stage and in the management of each park.



4.0 The vision and the practicalities



14 Ideally, we would wish all our parks to provide a range of facilities for all users and to be within easy walking distance for all residents throughout the borough. While each of our parks can provide a good range of facilities it is clear that it is not readily achievable for all of our parks to provide all possible facilities. Residents have told us that this is not only acceptable but that they actively welcome the differences and diversity of our individual parks.

15 Nevertheless some choices have to be made. Thus, this strategy recognises this constraint and embodies the need to strike a balance between meeting residents' aspirations on the one hand and being realistic on the other. This approach will be important, both in the north of the borough where there are four parks relatively close together and in the south where there are three parks.

16 Successful parks management requires several factors to be developed to the best possible advantage – horticultural, landscaping, buildings and infrastructure, public facilities (playgrounds, catering, lavatories, shelters); sports and exercise; staff numbers and training; security and supervision.

Set against this is the need to understand and balance some of the very different and sometimes conflicting purposes, which bring people into parks. For example, a quiet area for those seeking solace and reflection may not sit easily with a play area for young children.

17 This strategy embraces these and other factors, in Part 9, by setting out and discussing, in depth, a number of key objectives. These objectives also take into account the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Space (CABE) Standards⁴ and the views of residents and community groups who took part in the consultation⁵ carried out by officers in connection with this strategy.



18 The objectives are based on the following themes and the Council will seek to meet them, as far as is realistically practicable, for each of the major parks set out in the programme:

- **Maintenance, management and safety:** ensuring that the parks are well managed, maintained in good condition and safe to visit,
- **A community resource:** ensuring that each park fits with the needs of the local community,
- **Space for nature:** ensuring that the parks are nature-friendly and protected against development on or near them,
- **Space for leisure and relaxation:** ensuring that the parks have adequate facilities for the recreational and exercise needs of users,
- **Design quality and cultural heritage:** ensuring that parks are to good design standards with public art as may be appropriate and preserving their cultural heritage,
- **Health and well-being:** ensuring that parks enable users to relax and take physical exercise,
- **Local economy:** ensuring that the parks are attractive to visitors and encourage enterprise and employment of local people.

19 Even though the main thrust of this strategy is to establish and address the specific needs of each major park on a year by year basis after due consultation there are a number of works that will almost certainly be carried out and which are known now. To give a flavour of these works, some examples are set out below.

20 In all of the major parks there is a known need to improve the standard of signage, pathways and boundary fences, gates and railings. We also wish to ascertain the feasibility of extracting water in these parks for irrigation purposes by sinking boreholes – following the successful implementation of such a scheme in Holland Park in 2005.

21 Similarly, in individual parks many specific works have been earmarked for attention as well. In St Luke's Gardens the railings and the hard play area are in acute need of replacement, in Kensington Memorial Park improvements are needed to the water play area, and in Athlone Gardens the play area needs replacement and a safety surface needs to be installed.



5.0 Other strategic documents



22 The Parks Strategy is complementary to the aims and objectives of several other planning and strategic documents, most notably the Unitary Development Plan⁶ ('UDP') and its successor the Local Development Framework⁷ ('LDF'). Other documents include:

- The Mayor of London's Open Spaces Strategy;⁸
- The RBKC 2005-2015 Community Strategy;⁹
- The RBKC Play Strategy;¹⁰
- The RBKC Arts Strategy;¹¹
- The RBKC Community Safety Strategy;¹²
- The RBKC Environmental Policy Statement;¹³
- The RBKC Sports Strategy.¹⁴

23 Where relevant, references are made to these documents in the Part 6 of this strategy.

6.0 Funding

24 Although internal capital bids will be made each year to fund the improvements, officers will additionally seek funding from large funding bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund, the Football Association, Sport England and alike. Funding from such bodies is often dependent upon a quite technical application being submitted, ideally from, or at least in conjunction with, a local voluntary organisation. Officers will therefore assist in the establishment of supportive Friends groups so that this can be facilitated.

25 Expenditure in the parks, including maintenance costs, needs wherever possible to be supported by income. Officers will seek to identify innovative income-generating schemes in the parks but will be sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of park users.

7.0 Delivering and monitoring the objectives and targets

- 26 The Council will monitor the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan and performance against relevant Best Value Performance Indicators.

The Council will use the existing system of regular performance reporting to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Housing, Leisure, Arts, and Regeneration. In particular this will comprise:

- a backward looking appraisal of progress made with past annual action plans,
- a forward looking endorsement of each proposed action plan for forthcoming years, and
- an annual review of the Strategy with any necessary updating to ensure that it remains relevant.

8.0 Equalities

- 27 An external consultant was commissioned to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment¹⁵ of Leisure Services in 2005. The final report recommended that, to begin with, the Division needed to put a strategy in place covering its various services. The Parks Strategy makes a significant contribution towards meeting this. In assembling the strategy consultation has taken place at different stages with a range of representative community groups.

- 28 This approach will be carried out in depth each year as the individual major parks are evaluated. At an early stage officers will be seeking to establish a better profile of park users with a view to tackling any existing barriers to fair and equal access.



9.0 Areas for improvement



29 The seven key objectives that have been developed are to:

- Ensure high standards of maintenance, management and safety in the parks,
- Recognise and develop the parks as a community resource and balance the needs of all sections of the community,
- Provide space for nature,
- Provide space for leisure and relaxation,
- Ensure good design quality and observance of our cultural heritage,
- Develop the parks as a source of good health and feeling of well-being,
- Integrate the parks as a part of the local economy.

30 Each of these objectives has several subsidiary points and these are discussed below. The actions needed to realise these objectives are shown in the action plan of this strategy.

OBJECTIVE 1

Ensure high standards of maintenance, management and safety in the parks

Green Flag status

31 The Green Flag award is a nationally recognised benchmark upon which all parks should be judged. Management plans are essential to ensure that future maintenance is carried out to a high standard, in accordance with the ground maintenance contract specification, and in keeping with the aims and priorities of the wider parks strategy. Any park without a management plan cannot be considered for a Green Flag award and so one will be developed for each of the major parks. Each of the major parks will be entered for this award and the action plan aims for at least one to be achieved per year. Incidentally, residents have told us that they think the parks are already generally well maintained.

Facilities

32 The 2003 Cobb Condition Survey¹ identified a number of deficiencies in the facilities provided by the borough and these were highlighted again in the internal 2005 qualitative audit.

Account will also be taken of detailed local consultation findings from each park and the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Housing, Leisure, Arts and Regeneration with local ward councillors in attendance. When finalised a list of works will be established for each park with a timetable for implementation.

Contractual issues

- 33** The existing Grounds Maintenance Contract Specification¹⁶ is a comprehensive document that is not seen to be in need of major change. However, it will be reviewed in 2006, as will the current monitoring arrangements, ahead of the re-tendering process in 2007 and strengthened as necessary. One particular issue to be considered in this is the effectiveness of the current arrangements for carrying out building maintenance and repairs.
- 34** The delivery of the contract hinges on sufficient, competent staff being available when required. There is a national shortage of skilled gardeners and the situation is compounded by the paucity of recruits into the profession. Only 5% of gardeners nationally are under the age of 26, and 40% will have retired within 20 years.

Ahead of the new grounds maintenance contract being tendered in 2007 a re-appraisal will be carried out of the staffing requirements for all sites. This will reflect both the year-round and seasonal duties and will ensure that the future 'labour model' effectively meets the requirements of both.

- 35** An assessment will be made of the skills required to deliver the service and the contractor's ability to provide, maintain and develop those skills. Officers will encourage local people to value and aspire to a career in local authority horticulture. This will include making contact with local secondary schools, job centres and the Connexions service. Existing contractors' staff employed as gardeners have told us that they feel obliged to take on more of a park keeper's role. This needs to be considered in such an assessment.

Conflicting demands

- 36** There are conflicting demands made upon public open space from different age groups, user groups, neighbours and other visitors. Consequently, through community consultation, time will be taken to identify such conflicts and this will in turn be important in shaping improvement works.



9.0 Areas for improvement



37 Parks managers will listen to any requests made by the park users and do their best to balance new ideas with the more traditional uses. The multi-use of buildings can pose such dilemmas. So, where buildings are deemed fit for a multitude of purposes, officers will strive to find capacity for specialist non-conflicting uses within them should there be a demand for this.

38 At present cyclists are prevented from riding their bicycles through parks. As pressure grows to encourage more active lifestyles and take up green transport alternatives there is a need to reassess the current regulations. To do this studies will be made of how other boroughs have resolved the conflict between cyclists and walkers. Inevitably, this will also require constructive dialogue with a cross section of park users.

Crime

39 The nature of crime and antisocial behaviour in the parks varies from location to location. Residents believe that there is a link between crime in parks and the socio-economic characteristics of the locality. In the main though they do feel safe in the parks. Thus, there is a need to understand the underlying causes and to tailor responses as required.

It is envisaged that this will involve increased joint working between for example parks officers, the police, and community youth workers and establishing both preventative solutions as well effective enforcement. The recent re-alignment of management of the Parks Police with other enforcement teams within the Directorate of Waste Management and Leisure will facilitate that approach.

Vandalism

40 Vandalism to buildings, playground equipment and plants is, regrettably, a constant drain upon the budgets of the parks section. This will be tackled through the measures outlined in this strategy on crime and safety as well as being “designed-out” where possible when improvements are made to the infrastructure and facilities.

41 On a day-to-day basis it is essential that repairs be carried out as quickly as possible to avoid copycat activity. The effectiveness of this will be informed by reviews of maintenance budget profiles and annual patterns or trends. Empty buildings and those that are only occasionally used are particular targets and accordingly multi-use of buildings is, and will continue to be, encouraged.

Dogs

- 42 The owners of dogs are legitimate users of parks and their particular needs will be accommodated wherever possible. However, some damage is caused by dogs in playgrounds, to plants and from fouling. An assessment will be carried out to balance the respective needs of dog owners and general park users alike. This will require constructive dialogue with the park users and other local authorities to build up a picture of what is possible and pragmatic.

Litter

- 43 This is a concern and the collection regime detailed in the grounds maintenance contract specification will be kept under review and if necessary strengthened. Furthermore, organisers of events in parks will be charged for litter clearing both during and after their events.

Safety

- 44 While the borough parks are essentially safe places to visit there are potential hazards. The safety of visitors and the prevention of avoidable accidents are of paramount importance to the Council and require constant vigilance, action and review.

We will continue to do annual audits of all contractor and Council assessments of the risks relating to the parks.

OBJECTIVE 2

Recognise and develop the parks as a community resource and balance the needs of all sections of the community

Community asset/ownership

- 45 To deliver what local people require it is necessary for them to identify with and share in the ownership of their neighbourhood parks. The council values the contribution made by the 'friends of parks' groups and will take steps to encourage their establishment wherever there is a need. While friends groups will be enthusiastically consulted as a part of the process of park improvements, all local people deserve to have a voice. There are many park users who choose or prefer not to be a part of an organised group but whose views or contributions are invaluable.



9.0 Areas for improvement



- 46** Other community initiatives such as the Sixty Plus group's adoption of a small open space adjoining Meanwhile Gardens and the weekly friends' gardening club activities in Holland Park will continue to be encouraged. Such schemes add value to the quality of open spaces and complement, rather than take the place of the work done by the grounds maintenance contractor.

Volunteers

- 47** Volunteer participation is important to the success of the parks. To date, this has revolved around conservation initiatives but interest is growing in gardening from the 60+ Summer Camps and individuals of different age groups associated with Holland Park. Volunteers recruited either directly or through a friends' group will be encouraged to work alongside front-line gardeners and officers will develop a British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) type network in all of the major parks. The creation of a "green gym" to combine healthy exercise regimes with outdoor voluntary work in parks will also be explored.

- 48** Businesses will be encouraged to follow the example set in December 2004 by La Salle Hotels whereby employees were encouraged to spend a day assisting in spring-cleaning Holland Park.

Children and young people

- 49** Recent surveys have emphasised the need to balance the provision of play facilities for young children with other facilities for older children and teenagers. Traditionally, the latter group have not generally been expressly provided for, mainly because of the restricted space available. For example, facilities for 'extreme' activity also need equal space dedicated for users to 'chill-out'. The former can lead to competition with younger children – often in formal playgrounds and the latter to older people feeling intimidated by groups of young people. Young people have told us though they do not necessarily want facilities that are 'too organised'.

Free and inclusive

- 50** All of the borough's parks and open spaces are free to use by all but there are charges made for the use of specific facilities such as tennis courts and football pitches as a contribution to their upkeep.

Being free, though, does not necessarily make their access inclusive and the impact of this on disadvantaged groups will be tackled in the action plan. Consideration will also be given to this issue in the annual review of charges for sports facilities in the parks.

Place to meet and socialise

- 51 Notwithstanding the pressure to provide dedicated space for younger members of the community to play and gather, the parks also serve as a meeting point for families and friends. The Council will balance the needs of young people identified through the Play Strategy¹⁰ with those of the older community by ensuring that the limited space available is shared rather than reserved exclusively for one or another group and hence the emphasis upon the multi-use of facilities.
- 52 The Arts Service will be encouraged to offer opportunities to organise seasonal events that bring people together. The cultural importance of the park as a meeting place, particularly for immigrant families and communities, is recognised and will be facilitated where possible. Similarly, facilities that reflect and celebrate the multi-cultural diversity of a neighbourhood will be incorporated.

Accessibility

- 53 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995¹⁷ establishes the duty for reasonable steps to be taken to eliminate access difficulties for people with disabilities. These regulations became fully effective in 2004. While most parks are generally compliant, any improvements to the infrastructure will also need to comply. Any existing deficiencies such as those identified in the RoSPA survey¹⁸ of play areas will be addressed through the overall improvement programme.

Communication

- 54 Good communication with park users about activities, ways to get involved, and in general promotion is a requirement of the Green Flag Award. Residents have also told us that this is an area where the Council could make improvements. Likewise residents have welcomed the opportunity to share their views with the Council in the creation of this strategy and would like to be able to build on this in the future. Residents have offered several ideas for improvement and there is an obvious overlap on this point with accessibility and equalities. Officers will consider this, liaise with the Media and Communications office and make proposals.



9.0 Areas for improvement



OBJECTIVE 3

Provide space for nature

Balance with the built environment

55 Ensuring the right balance between the built and the natural environment is a delicate matter given the scarcity of open space, extremely high-density housing and the range of competing interests. With so little public green space available in the borough, and in support of the UDP⁶, the Ecology Manager will be consulted to assess the impact of any future developments within the parks. In addition, Planners will be asked for impact assessment to be made of all proposed developments adjacent to parks. Areas of ecological importance will also identified and prioritised within the parks.

56 The UDP⁶ stresses the need to “maintain and increase the provision and quality of open space of local and metropolitan value”. We will resist any attempt to build upon parkland for non-public park use and will actively support the UDP⁶, further, in its objective to secure additional public open space where possible in new development proposals.

Outdoor open spaces

57 There is ample evidence that illustrates the shortage of open spaces within the borough, especially as a proportion of total land area. In view of this, we will endeavour to find ways of making building development sites temporarily available, safe and accessible to the public as “brown field” sites for nature observation.

58 In addition the Council welcomes the discussions that are currently taking place to have a responsibility for the future management of Brompton Cemetery and Little Wormwood Scrubs. If the borough assumes responsibility for Little Wormwood Scrubs, consideration will be given to the provision of allotments.

Nature, wilderness and biodiversity

59 The UDP⁶ stresses the need to have regard to nature conservation and the protection of the natural habitat and wildlife environment in the consideration of all proposals. Residents have said that they see parks as being essential to maintain links with nature and to escape city life. However, some wild creatures can breed to the point that they become a nuisance or adversely affect the ecological balance.

For example foxes, rodents, squirrels, and pigeons may, periodically, need to be humanely culled. Consequently, all improvements and management actions in parks carried will be “impact-assessed” beforehand by the Ecology Manager. We will also support and encourage the provision of new nature gardens and ecological sites for community use.

Green-ness

- 60 The important verdant attractiveness of the parks is dependent on the availability of an adequate water supply. This is being threatened by increasingly drier summers. To help overcome this we will re-assess the choice of all replacement trees and seasonal bedding and opt for drought-resistant species in shrub and herbaceous borders. The option to sink boreholes in other parks, subject to the potential savings paying for the capital, will be explored and implemented where practical. A feasibility study will also be made of undertaking watering in the parks at night.

OBJECTIVE 4

Provide space for leisure and relaxation

Play

- 61 The provision of space to play is at the top of most park visitors’ expectations. We will address these expectations by reference to the RBKC Play Strategy,¹⁰ the audit on the condition of play facilities and the overall audit carried out by officers of the facilities available in the parks. As the improvement plan for each park is developed, so too will a consultation take place on what facilities people wish to see in their park.
- 62 Meeting the present and future needs of today’s communities in parks that were laid out as long ago as the nineteenth century will be fundamental to this. This will ensure that we provide for the future – not merely mirror the past.

Recreation and exercise

- 63 Many people of all ages visit parks to take exercise. The current focus upon encouraging all age groups to take more exercise and enjoy a healthier lifestyle will put the existing very limited playing facilities under extreme pressure.



9.0 Areas for improvement



64 So, every space will be evaluated for its potential to offer opportunities for exercise. In addition to formal games and established exercise regimes, ideas such as the Green Gym (BTCV scheme) will be evaluated and introduced if suitable.

65 Conflicts between active and passive recreational aspirations will be carefully assessed and managed before implementing any changes.

Relaxation and escape

66 With the majority of residents not having access to a garden of their own, it is important that provision is made for them to be able to relax and escape from the pressures of day-to-day life.

67 Taking into account local residents' and users' requirements, there will be an optimum division of space in each park for 'passive activities' such as relaxing and 'active activities' such as football and playing. There are conventional formulae that can be applied to determine the appropriate optimum ratio for the allocation of 'active-to-passive' space. It is proposed that we use these formulae to aid planning the use of space.

Choosing between synthetic and grass pitches

68 The low-in-number but much used borough sports pitches make grass and some of the less durable synthetic surfaces currently in use almost redundant. Unfit pitches prevent play taking place and lessen income.

69 Consequently a feasibility study will be made into the merits of converting some sports areas from grass to synthetic surface and, where appropriate, funding will be sought from bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund and the Football Association.



OBJECTIVE 5

Ensure good design quality and observance of our cultural heritage

Attractiveness

- 70** All parks should be aesthetically attractive, have excellent and valued facilities and be physically accessible to all. Perceptions of personal safety will also add to the attractiveness of parks. Residents have said that they are attracted in particular by the identity and individuality of parks. Future assessments of the parks will include identification of the features or perceptions that attract people to specific parks so that these are built into park improvement schemes.

Design and quality

- 71** Good design as well as the use of quality materials has been key to the dramatic improvements of the streetscape within the borough. Lessons from this can be applied in the parks to make them more attractive, safer, and more resistant to acts of vandalism.

Energy efficiency

- 72** As national standards for energy efficiency increase, it is vital that the parks meet or exceed related internal targets set by the Council. The next Grounds Maintenance Specification will make specific requirements of the contractor to make energy and natural resource efficiencies in line with those set for the Council itself and that these are reported annually.

Green Heritage status

- 73** The Green Heritage Award is a nationally important annual award made by the Civic Trust to ensure that historically important features of parks are adequately managed, maintained and publicised. There are a number of such sites in parks including listed buildings such as the Voysey Garden in the north of the borough, Holland House in the Centre and the Grade 1 St Luke's Church and Chelsea Embankment which are both in the south. These will be managed and maintained in future to a suitable standard to qualify them for Green Heritage Award status.



9.0 Areas for improvement



OBJECTIVE 6

Develop the parks as a source of good health and feeling of well-being

Learning, stimulating development

- 74** The borough's new Play Strategy¹⁰ regards play as an essential learning tool. To fully stimulate personal development the play needs to take place in an exciting, challenging, but safe, environment. Parks are both traditional and well-suited venues for this. We will ensure that new playground facilities are designed with awareness of the recommendations of the Play Strategy.¹⁰

Mental health and emotional well-being

- 75** The parks and open spaces are traditionally places of 'life passage' in which young and old find the space to reflect and cogitate upon events in their own lives, to find solace from the pressures of the modern urban environment. We will identify suitable places, within each of the parks, for such 'quiet spaces'.

Physical health

- 76** Active recreation, both formal games and informal activities, traditionally take place in the parks. These spaces, though, are extremely limited within the borough.
- 77** We will seek to provide multi-purpose courts to optimise the number of different games and sports that can be played within the parks. The playing surfaces of all active recreation areas will be carefully considered to ensure that they can be maintained to a suitably high standard and are able to meet the demands made upon them. Additionally, it will be necessary to ensure that the capital costs incurred are matched by increased demand and income.
- 78** More generally, when considering options for increasing healthy active recreation we will pay close attention to the objectives of the Play Strategy,¹⁰ the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)¹⁹ and the Sports Strategy.¹⁴

OBJECTIVE 7

Integrate the parks as a part of the local economy

Employment

- 79** While there are limited opportunities for gardening staff in the parks service there is, nevertheless, a significant and worsening skills shortage with 60% of the national workforce aged over 40 years. Actions to resolve this, feature under Objective 1.

Residential benefits

- 80** Attractive parks clearly impinge on the popularity of neighbouring residential areas. For example, it was notable that soon after the completion of the Redcliffe Square railings and re-turfing in early 2005, estate agents capitalised on this to sell local properties. According to the CABE Space Research⁴ the value of properties can be enhanced by as much as 7% if adjoining a well-maintained park. Consequently, improvements to the parks stemming from this strategy, will probably add, albeit in some cases marginally, to the popularity of certain localities in the borough.

Local business

- 81** There is almost certainly another connection between the popularity and prosperity of residential areas and commercial activity in local businesses. It follows therefore that improvements to the parks, hanging baskets and street planters will ultimately lead to benefits for local businesses. Local businesses will continue to be encouraged to sponsor horticultural improvements to their local streetscape where appropriate.

Visitors

- 82** The borough accommodates many visitors each year. For example, in 2003, seventeen million people who spent an estimated £2 billion visited the borough. Many of these also visit our parks. We recognise the importance to the local economy of visitors and the significance of maintaining well-managed, attractive parks.



APPENDIX 1

Cabinet member involvement and approval needed
 Mainly officer led
 Management planning process
 Activity (e.g. park overhaul)

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2005	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strategy approved by Cabinet												
Improvement Scheme Timetable approved												
Consultation and approval of KMP scheme												Will include play areas
Capital approved for KMP												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2006	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park's Third Management Plan approved												
Holland Park Green Flag												
Survey of park users undertaken as rec. in EIA of Leisure Services												
Priority works undertaken												See para. 5
KMP scheme starts												
Study into efficacies of using synthetic pitches in parks												
Consultation and approval of St Luke's scheme												Will include play areas
Review and revision of Grounds Maintenance contract specification												
Review and revision of Grounds Maintenance contract monitoring												
Review of current and future skills required in the parks												
Capital approved for St Luke's												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2007	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
KMP Management Plan approved												
KMP Green Flag												
Tenders for new Grounds Maintenance contract												
St Luke's scheme starts												
New play equipment (secondary parks)												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Consultation and approval for Athlone scheme												Will include play areas
Signs in Parks Working Group established and policies agreed												
Capital approved for Athlone												
New Grounds Maintenance contract awarded												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
2008	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
New Grounds Maintenance contract commences (January)												
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St Luke's Management Plan approved												
St Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone scheme starts												
New play equipment (secondary parks)												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2008 (continued)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Dogs in Parks Working group established and policies agreed												
Consultation and approval for Westfield scheme												Will include play areas
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Capital approved for Westfield												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2009	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St. Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Management Plan approved												
Athlone Green Flag												
Westfield scheme starts												
New signs – part of programme												
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												
Cyclists in Parks Working group set up and policies approved												
Consultation and approval for Avondale scheme												Will include play areas
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2009 (continued)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Capital approved for Avondale scheme												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2010	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St. Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Green Flag												
Westfield Management Plan approved												
Westfield Green Flag												
Avondale scheme starts												
New signs – part of programme												
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												
Consultation and approval for Emslie Horniman scheme												Will include play areas
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Capital approved for Emslie Horniman												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2011	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Green Flag												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Westfield Green Flag												
Avondale Management Plan approved												
Avondale Green Flag												
Emslie Horniman scheme starts												
New signs – part of programme												
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												
Consultation and approval for Cremorne Scheme												Will include play areas
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Capital approved for Cremorne scheme												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2012	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2012 (continued)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
St Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Green Flag												
Westfield Green Flag												
Avondale Green Flag												
Emslie Horniman Management Plan approved												
Emslie Horniman Green Flag												
Voysey Garden Green Heritage Award												
Cremorne scheme starts												
New signs – part of programme												
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2013	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St. Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Green Flag												
Westfield Green Flag												

WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2013 (continued)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Emslie Horniman Green Flag												
Voysey Garden Green Heritage Award												
Cremorne Management Plan approved												
Cremorne Green Flag												
New signs – part of programme												
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
2014	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Holland Park Green Flag												
Holland Park Green Heritage Award												
KMP Green Flag												
St. Luke's Green Flag												
Athlone Green Flag												
Westfield Green Flag												
Emslie Horniman Green Flag												
Voysey Garden Green Heritage Award												
Cremorne Green Flag												
New signs – part of programme												

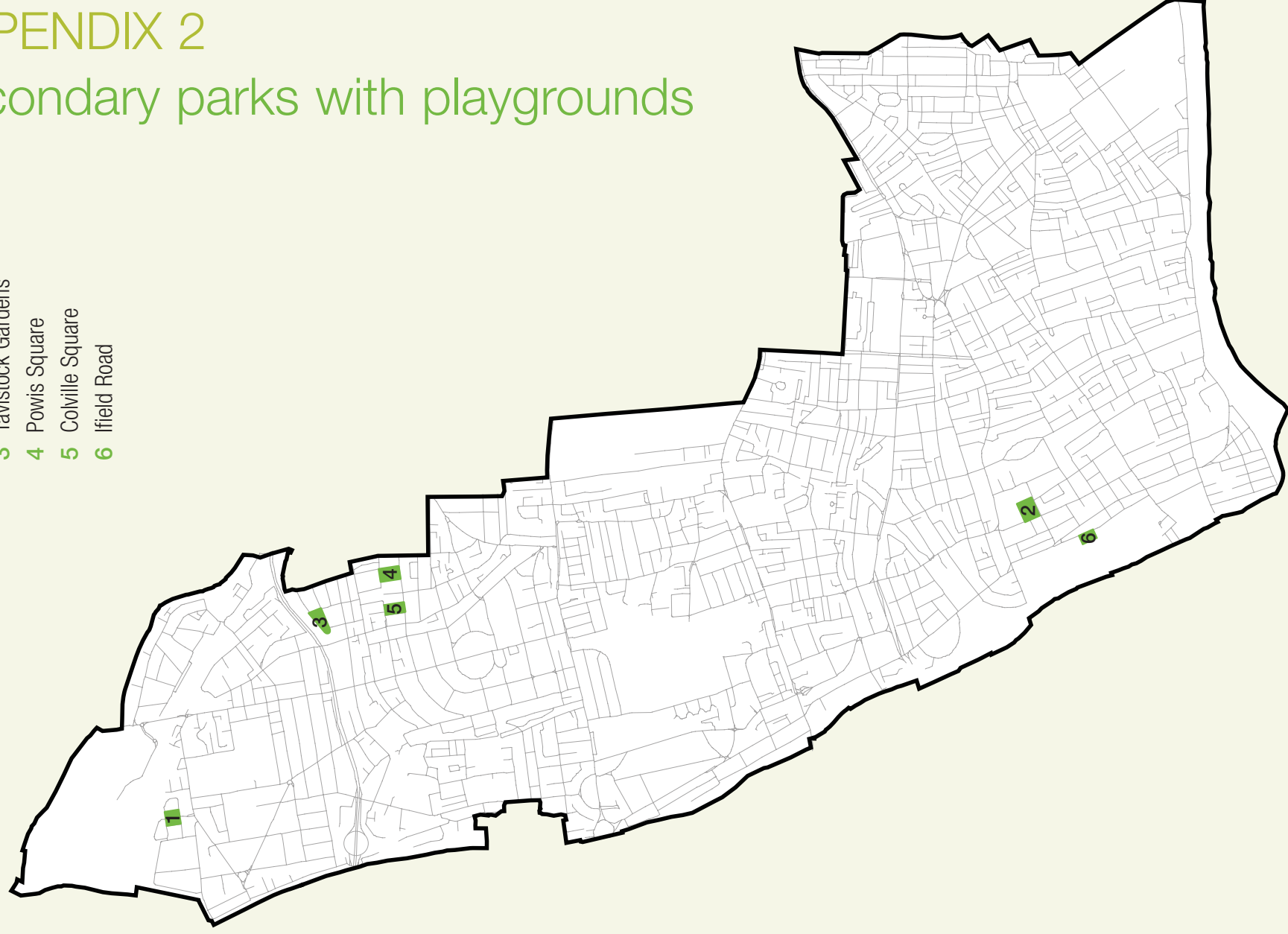
WHAT NEEDS DOING	YEAR											COMMENTS
2014 (continued)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
New play equipment (secondary parks) – part of programme												
Footpath improvements (Holland Park and secondary parks) – programmed												Based upon RSS/RoSPA report
Annual new signs in parks capital bid												
Annual new play equipment (secondary parks) capital bid												
Annual footpath improvements bid (Holland Park and secondary parks)												
Annual review of contractor and council risk assessments for parks												
Automatic watering systems capital bid (secondary parks)												Chelsea Embankment; Alec Clifton-Taylor; Dovehouse Green; Albert, Battersea and Chelsea Bridges
N.B. Should Brompton Cemetery and/or Little Wormwood Scrubs join the portfolio of parks, this annual plan will need to change												

Cabinet member involvement and approval needed
 Mainly officer led
 Management planning process
 Activity (e.g. park overhaul)

APPENDIX 2

Secondary parks with playgrounds

- 1 Rootes/Sunbeam Gardens
- 2 Redcliffe Square
- 3 Tavistock Gardens
- 4 Powis Square
- 5 Colville Square
- 6 Ifield Road



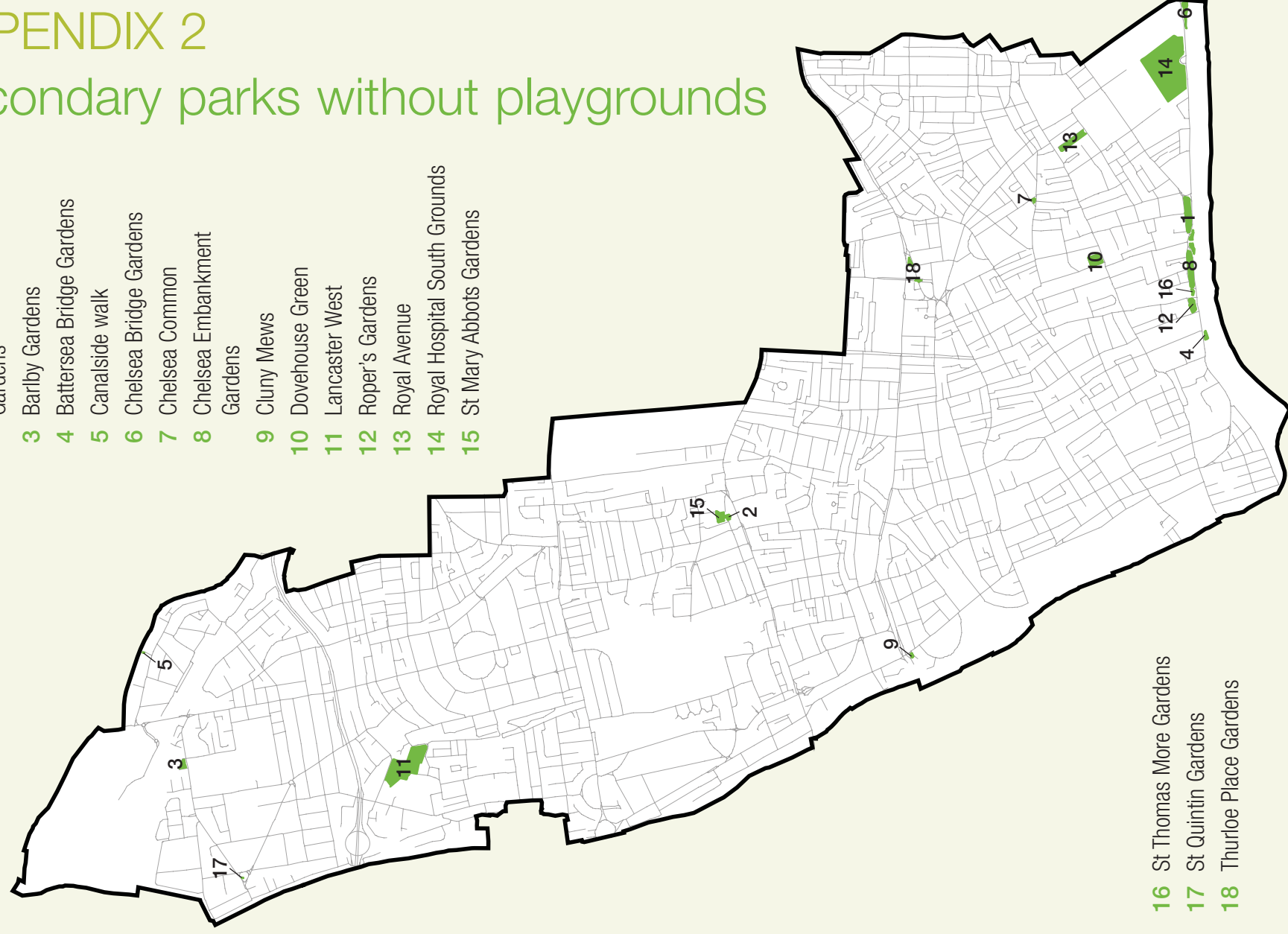
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APPENDIX 2

Secondary parks without playgrounds

- 1 Albert Bridge Gardens
- 2 Alec Clifton-Taylor Memorial Gardens
- 3 Barlby Gardens
- 4 Battersea Bridge Gardens
- 5 Canalside walk
- 6 Chelsea Bridge Gardens
- 7 Chelsea Common
- 8 Chelsea Embankment Gardens
- 9 Cluny Mews
- 10 Dovehouse Green
- 11 Lancaster West
- 12 Roper's Gardens
- 13 Royal Avenue
- 14 Royal Hospital South Grounds
- 15 St Mary Abbots Gardens



- 16 St Thomas More Gardens
- 17 St Quintin Gardens
- 18 Thurloe Place Gardens

List of references



- 1** RBKC Parks Condition Survey
John Cobb, 2003
- 2** Summary of findings from past consultation of the parks
J. Campion-Smith, RBKC, June 2005
- 3** List and timetable of a) high priority repairs and improvements that need attention in Year 1 and b) known other repairs and improvements for non-major parks
H. Pringle/B. Maclaurin, 2005
- 4** Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Space ('CABE') Standards
- 5** Parks consultation – summary from focus group notes
J. Campion-Smith, ES SSD, RBKC, 2005
- 6** Unitary Development Plan, RBKC, May 2002
- 7** Local Development Framework – in preparation
- 8** The Mayor of London's Open Spaces Strategy, 2004
- 9** The RBKC 2005-2015 Community Strategy – Draft 2, KCP, 2005
- 10** The RBKC Play Strategy 2006
- 11** The RBKC Arts Strategy, 2004-2008
- 12** The RBKC Community Safety Strategy, 2005-2008
- 13** The RBKC Environmental Policy Statement, 6th edition 2003-2006
- 14** The RBKC Sports Strategy, due 2007
- 15** Equalities Impact Assessment of Leisure Services
HQN, March 2005
- 16** Grounds Maintenance Contract Specification, RBKC
- 17** Disability Discrimination Act 1995
The Stationary Office, ISBN 0 10 541105 1
- 18** RBKC Play area safety inspection report
RoSPA, March 2005
- 19** Local Public Service Agreement, Improving health by increasing physical activity amongst targeted groups, 2003-2006, RBKC

For copies of any of the documents listed above please contact Neil Herbert or Jenny Campion-Smith in the Strategy and Service Development Division on 020 7341 5157.



www.rbkc.gov.uk