

Green Spaces Annual Progress Report

2022 – 2023

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism: Councillor Charn Singh
Padda

Director of Borough Economy: Alice Davey
Assistant Director (Green Spaces): Matthew Huggins

Sandwell Has...

 **32 Parks & Gardens**

 **33 Outdoor Gym sites**

10 

Skate Park Facilities

 **25 Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAS)**

12 BMX Tracks 

 **4 Bowling Greens**

 **15 Playing Pitches**

9 Nature Reserves 

14 Green Flag Awards 

40 allotment sites, with 1,366 plots 

Level 1 Typology	Number	Area (Ha)	% of Total (Area)
Allotments	40	43.72	6.3
Amenity Greenspace	211	269.33	38.9
Cemeteries & Churchyards	21	80.60	3.9
Green Corridor	22	75.36	4.1
Institutional Land	90	216.67	16.6
Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	75	727.83	13.8
Outdoor Sports Facilities	48	334.61	8.8
Parks & Gardens	32	264.89	5.9
Provision for Children & Young People	10	5.30	1.8
Total	543	2018.31	100.0

Sandwell Green Spaces

Our Green Spaces Team develop our green spaces, including:

-  Completing monthly and annual inspections of all our play equipment (over 800 pieces of equipment, across 69 sites).
-  Managing our green spaces facilities, including pavilions, changing rooms, and toilets.
-  Managing our football pitch bookings and working with our sports team to improve outdoor sports activity in green spaces.
-  Working with partners to manage 1,366 allotment plots.
-  Maintaining Green Flag Awards for 9 parks & gardens.
-  Working with external partners and funders do develop our green spaces, including multi-million-pound investments.
-  Working with our friend's groups and community groups who use and support our green spaces.
-  Managing a new volunteer and education programme for our green spaces.
-  Developing our nature reserves and supporting our climate change objectives.
-  Managing our destination sites, including Sandwell Valley Country Park, and Lightwoods House and Park.
-  Working with our events team to use green spaces for community and external events, including fairs.

Our Green Services Team maintain our green spaces, which includes:

 **MOWING OVER 30 Million** of grass a year

 **Inspection and looking after hundreds of trees a year.**

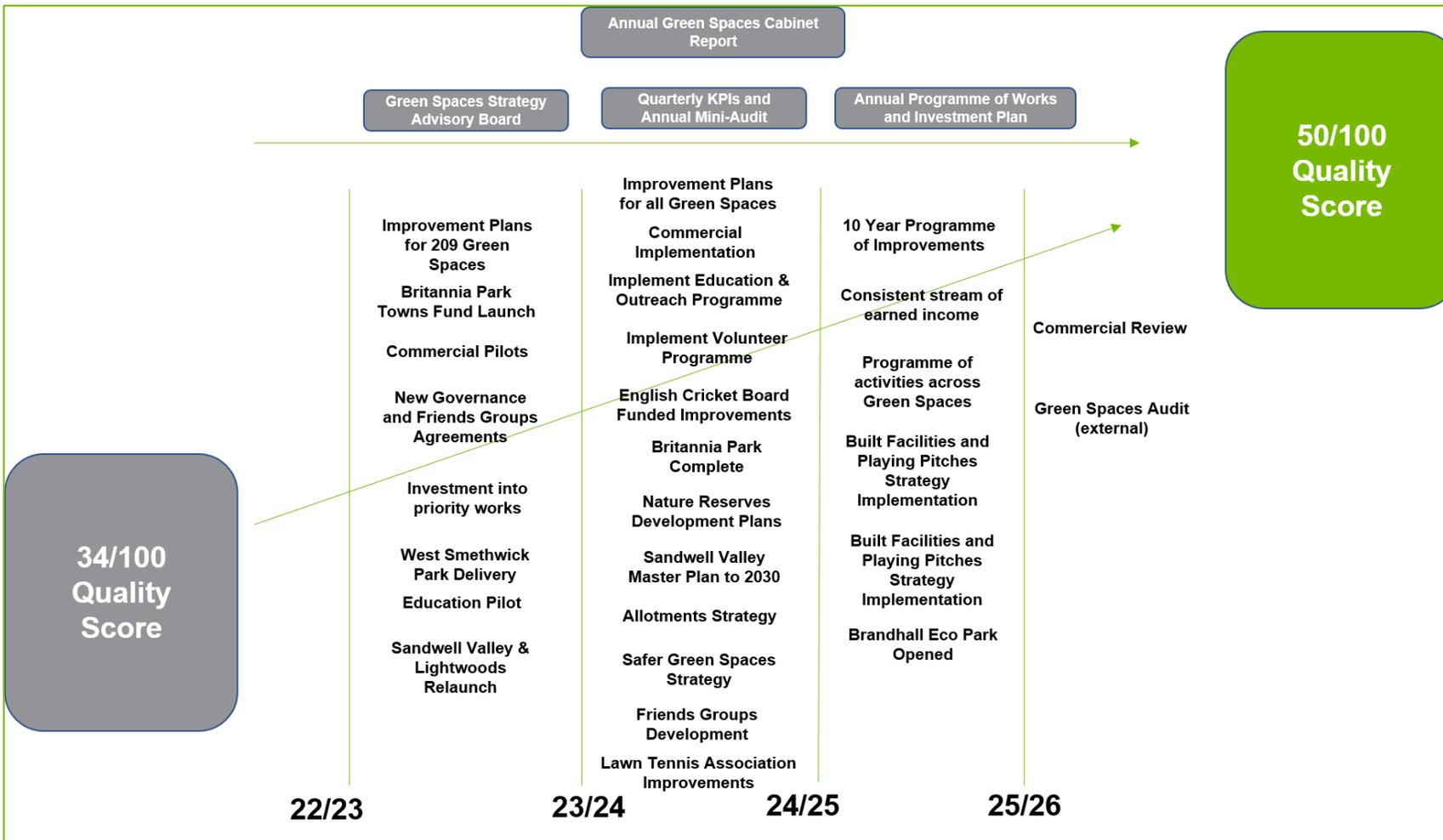
 **Strimming & maintaining hedges and overgrowth.**

 **Clearing larger sites of overgrowth and waste.**

 **Testing & treating our water pools and lakes.**

 **Maintaining & line marking for our pitches.**

Sandwell Green Spaces Strategy: Our Approach



- Focus on priority works only for 2022/2023 to achieve zero base on current health and safety / significant community impact issues.
- Implement actions from the Green Spaces Strategy recommendations that can be achieved in the following 3 financial years. Prioritise those actions that allow a transition to a Green Spaces Strategy that works towards the vision set out.
- Continue to maintain the Green Flag Awards currently held; but prioritise further improvements to neighbourhood and local level green spaces (green corridors, play areas, smaller parks, and amenity green spaces) in wards with the highest levels of deprivation.
- Learn from best practice approaches in green spaces strategy and build internal capacity to work towards this.
 - Modernise ways of working: more efficient, transparent, and driven.
- Reconfigure the service to empower community and stakeholder engagement in the development, management, and maintenance of green spaces, and achieve synergy with other services to deliver on the corporate plan and 2030 ambitions.
 - Lay the foundations to secure the financial future of our green spaces.

£935k

Actual
22/23
Spend

Play Areas Improved

- West Smethwick Park
- Victoria Park Tipton
- Victoria Park Smethwick
- Timbertree Open Space
- Sandwell Valley Adventure
- Ron Davies Close
- Redhouse Park
- Pitfields Close Play Area
- Mousesweet Play Area
- Marl Hole Park
- Lyng Play Area
- Lightwoods Park
- Oakwood Park
- Laybourne Park Play Area (NEW)
- Hydes Road Play Area
- Hill Top Park
- Harry Mitchell Park
- Galton Village Play Area
- Dartmouth Park
- Churchfields Play Area
- Charlemont Open Space
- Bury Hill Park
- Brunswick Park
- Broadwell Park
- Brindley Village Doulton Dr
- Brickhouse Play Area
- Bilston Road, Norman Deeley
- Balls Hall Play Area



41 Play Areas Improved



43 Play Area's Easy Gates Refurbs



1 New Play Area Established

6 Swing Basket Replaced

7 Zip Slides Replaced

26 MUGA 10-year line marking

7 BMX / Skate Repairs

10 Nature Reserves Improved

10 Major Green Space Projects

33 Allotment Plots Back in Use



Green Spaces Programme of Works 22/23

£3.071m direct spend on works in 22/23

9 outdoor gym sites refurbished



2 New Multi-Use Games Areas in Progress





BRITANNIA PARK – TOWNS FUND

Work is well underway on the £2.4m investment into Britannia Park, due for completion in March 2024. The project includes new changing rooms and community engagement facilities, creation of new allotment plots, landscaping and conservation improvements, a new play area, and new outdoor sports facilities.



SANDWELL VALLEY URBAN BIKE TRACK

Work began in 2022 on the Sandwell Valley Urban Bike Track, due to open in August 2023. The new cycle trails will offer enhanced facilities for families, children and young people, as well as cyclists of all abilities. The £620,000 project is funded by Sport England, with match funding from Birmingham and Sandwell Councils.

SMALL SIDED PLAYING PITCHES

This project will upgrade eight existing Multi Use Games Areas across the borough. This includes new surfacing, lighting and the opportunity to book the facility for groups or individuals to use for various formal and informal sporting activities. All sites will cater for football provision, and some sites will focus on Basketball or Cricket. Phase One has begun with West Smethwick Park, entirely funded (approximate cost - £280k) from Sport England and the Football Foundation. The current anticipated completion for this project is August 2023.

HOT SPOT SOLUTIONS GROUP

The pilot team set up to clean and refresh open spaces that were littered, fly tipped, and overgrown has improved over 160 sites so far. The team is now permanent and supported by a group of senior officers from across services to tackle open spaces with multiple issues affecting. The team now includes a community officer and additional dedicated support from environmental enforcement.

WEST SMETHWICK PARK – NLHF

The main construction and landscaping works were completed in 2022, with the West Smethwick Park Pavilion and Café opened in August. The NLHF and Sandwell Council funded project has improved landscape features, conservation, restoration and refurbishment of heritage features, new outdoor gym equipment and furniture, play area refurbishments, and improvements to the Son’s of Rest building. The project includes a Community Engagement Officer with a programme of free engagement activities from the park and pavilion until 2024.



NEW CRICKET FUNDING

A £133,000 grant from the English Cricket Board will install and replace numerous Non-Turf Cricket wickets across various Green Spaces within the Borough. This project will see the supply of 13 non-turf cricket wickets and also the refurbishment of the Non-Turf cricket Net at Victoria Park in Smethwick, in place by summer 2023.

KEY PROJECTS IN 22/23

Green Spaces Strategy Objectives 22/23 Progress Summary

These are the objectives set out in the Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22 – 25



Improve accessibility and use of green spaces for sport and physical activity.

Small Sided Playing Pitches Project commissioned two new MUGA improvements for 22/23.

Urban Bike Track Tender Awarded.

English Cricket Board Funding Approved (£156k)

Lawn Tennis Association funding for Tennis Courts Refurbs

Mapping of sports and physical activity and strategy for 23/24 onwards

Jubilee Park Astro Turf Project Completed

Increase average quality score for green spaces by 10 points, with a clear strategy to achieve 'good' by 2030.

189 Green Space Improvement Plans Completed

Grounds improvements works completed on 5 low scoring parks, and 22 amenity spaces and green corridors

New interpretation and signage in all nature reserves and parks with average scores

Target score improvements for 23/24 for priority sites with low scores

Improve accessibility and use of green spaces to target health inequalities, loneliness, disability, dementia, and mental health.

Accessibility Audit commissioned for green spaces for users with disabilities.

Volunteer Development Officer and strategy in place for launch.

West Smethwick Park Engagement Coordinator in place with Community Engagement Plan for 22/23 – 23/24

Volunteer Recruitment Campaign launched (100 volunteers recruited).

Accessibility projects to target health inequalities, loneliness, disability, dementia, and mental health for 23/24

Improve stakeholder engagement in the development, management, and maintenance of green spaces.

Friends Groups Consultation and new partnership agreement and ways of working approved.

Friends Groups information on ways of working and funding signposting online.

Stakeholder Analysis for Green Spaces completed for wider stakeholder engagement

Friends Groups Training and Online Resources / Friends Groups Quarterly Meetings

Continue to improve the security and safety of green spaces.

Environment Response Team over 160 sites to date cleared of waste / overgrowth

New solar lights at St Martins Way Open Space

Campaigns on litter and BBQs during summer, including increased security

Hot Spot Solutions Group established to deal with hot spot sites

Safer Green Spaces Strategy

BBQs and Fire Prevention Plan for summer 2023

New anti-social behaviour and water safety signs in all parks and nature reserves

Hot Spot Solutions Group and increased enforcement to deal with hot spot sites

Increase funding for green spaces through income generation, fundraising and external grants, and efficiencies in processes, systems and ways of working.

3 New Café / Coffee Bars Opened
Hateley Cross Big Local 22/23 Spend Achieved
LUF Secured (£85k – Black Patch Park)
£1.37m UKSPF Secured for Green Spaces Improvements at Sandwell Valley / Railer
£100k additional funding from WMCA for community led green space projects
Transitioned to digital systems for venue hire (LIVE), digital project management (LIVE) and PSS Live (LIVE)

Funding scoping report completed
S106 3 Year Spend Plan
Income Generation Strategy for Green Spaces
Review of Green Spaces Built Facilities and Assets
Pilot two dog washing stations
Support to Friends Groups to raise funds for green space improvements

Improve the accessibility and use of green spaces buildings and facilities – achieving maximum utilisation of spaces.

West Smethwick Park Pavilion Open
WSP Sons of Rest Building Refurb
Online booking for facilities now LIVE
Utilisation model and targets for earned income use / community use

Complete review of all green spaces built facilities and assets
Dartmouth Park Pavilion and Red House Park Pavilion programme of works

Improve the provision of allotments and community food production.

Allotments review commissioned.

Allotments review completed and Allotments Strategy

Increase educational activity for children and young people in green spaces, conservation, wildlife management, and access to nature.

Education and national curriculum linked programme for Forge Mill Farm and Animal Welfare LIVE
School Visits pilots bookings LIVE for Q3/Q4
Partnership with Sandwell College for work experience and internships

New classroom facilities for education at Sandwell Valley and Forge Mill Farm
Education and Outreach Strategy for Green Spaces
Partnership with Groundworks and Colleges for Green Space Careers (UKSPF)

Improve the management and development of nature reserves and wildlife.

One Nature Reserve Management Plan Completed (Sot's Hole)
Programme of Works 22/23 approved for 309k of immediate improvements
Trees Strategy and plans in place for inspecting and mapping all trees in red risk areas

Trees Planting Officer recruited and planting strategy in place
Re-wilding Strategy
Wildlife Management Policy and Approach

Achieve excellent governance, oversight, and management of green spaces.

Programme of works for 22/23 published.
Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan approved.
Performance dashboards in place with Cabinet Member.

Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Group set up
Green Spaces Quarterly Progress Published
Green Spaces 22/23 Annual Report June 23