



Open Space Strategy: Proposal

1.0. Background

Twyford Parish Council (TPC) manage two open spaces, Hunter Park (including pavilion) and Northfields. Hunter Park provides sports and play facilities, and Northfields provides play and recreation facilities.

TPC started putting money aside to renew play equipment from 2016. The post has been growing by £10,000 per annum. In addition, TPC have been approached by a group of parents to create an inclusive play area. The basketball court at Hunter Park is in need of repair (at quotes of £20,000). There have also been ongoing discussions on the cost of running the sports facilities versus the income generated.

With the above factors being discussed, the Clerk recommended the creation of a 5 year strategy for the Parish Council. This included all projects being considered, including Neighbourhood Plan projects, with a subsection focussing purely on recreation.

The 5 year plan was created by the Twyford Parish Councillors in September 2018, prior to the budget setting for financial year 2019 / 2020. The Councillors were asked for their ideas taken from their work in the Parish and talking to Parishioners. A full list of all initiatives was created, and the Councillors then scored each initiative. The highest scores were taken as the priority projects.

The following Recreation / open space initiatives were identified in the 5 year plan:

Location	Aspect	Deliverable
Hunter Park		
Hunter Park	sports equipment	cut back trees around basketball court
Northfields	ground keeping	tidy up trees and shrubs
	strategy	consider ways to reduce costs and / or increase income
	strategy	management plan for woodland and park - tidying, planting and enhancing
Hunter Park	sports equipment	make basketball court multi sports friendly
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	remove old fencing (tired) and extend new fencing around all of the play equipment
Hunter Park	Play equipment	equipment to be replaced when needed
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	storage containers to be re-furbished / painted
	strategy	apply for grants to help with improvements / funding
Hunter Park	pavilion	security / general LED lighting
Northfields	general	bring northfields up to similar standard as hunter park
moving forward	strategy	invite younger generation to give their ideas on how to improve facilities
Northfields	sports facilities	upgrade basketball court
	strategy	link in with local premier teams for help - maybe free coaching days
Hunter Park	sports equipment	tarmac and update basketball court
Hunter Park	Play equipment	add inclusive play equipment
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	height restriction posts at entrance to hunter park to prevent disruptive access
Hunter Park	Aesthetics	create community orchard (quiet place to sit and think)
Hunter Park	pavilion	upgrade facilities
	strategy	build a fund to replace equipment
	strategy	involve the two schools in the village for input on what needed
	strategy	work with schools on fundraising for the facilities
Northfields	play equipment	upgrade play equipment
	strategy	liaise with WCC on sports / play equipment on a regular basis
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	new wire fencing
Hunter Park	Play equipment	More teenager themed sports equipment
Hunter Park	pavilion	public accessible toilet
Northfields	maintenance	renew all fencing posts and poles at Coles close entrance
Hunter Park	facilities	enlarge car park
Northfields	play equipment	More teenager themed sports equipment
Northfields	maintenance	improve access at Shipley Road
Northfields	maintenance	improve access at Coles close
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	new sign for the allotments
Hunter Park	ground keeping / maintenance	update drive way behind pavilion
Hunter Park	sports equipment	artificial grass strip for cricket wicket

In reviewing the initiatives, it is apparent that more work is required before investment is spent. TPC are required to think the location of each initiative to ensure expenditure doesn't become short lived or redundant in the implementation of a new initiative. For example, £20,000 could be spent repairing the basketball court, when that may be later identified as the best location for an inclusive play area. In addition, assigning a level of need by the parish to each initiative is also required, to ensure that precept is being spent in the most affective way. For example, £50,000 may be spent on young children play area when the biggest need is for play equipment for older children. The priority and order of the initiatives also need to be established, to ensure efforts and funds have maximum impact. For example, TPC may believe the basketball court is the priority, but actually cutting the trees over the court may be most effective. Each factor may well impact the delivery of another.

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It became apparent then that to ensure money is efficiently spent, TPC need to establish:

1. **Need** – to what extent are the initiatives needed by how many and which demographics of the village. Have all needs been identified? And how many of them are practical and deliverable?
2. **Location** – which of the two parks is best suited for the initiative, and where in the park is best and will not conflict with other initiatives
3. **Timeline** – which initiatives are the priority, and which order should they be addressed
4. **Budget** – how much should be allocated to each initiative, what is practical, and how much can be obtained from grants.

To establish the 4 steps above, a strategy is required.

2.0. Creating a strategy – the options

To have a vision for the two parks, TPC need to work together to create strategy which is supported by the village. There are a number of methods to create the strategy:

- i) TPC create it themselves
- ii) Bring in external professional support
- iii) Use local people as facilitators

i) TPC create it themselves:

The Clerk could work with the Councillors to create a strategy.

Pros

No costs involved apart from Clerk time

Cllrs represent views of the village

Cons

Clerk does not have time

Will Councillors buy into it?

Will Councillors make time to attend?

Will the strategy have any credence to use for grant applications?

Will the strategy have any credit with parishioners?

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Lack of open space / landscape expertise on Council

ii) Hire external professional support

Pros

Expertise in landscapes and open space

Experts in facilitating workshops

Recommend approach to obtain most buy in in the village

Use credible proven methodology

Does not use up much of the clerk time to set up

End document created in professional format

Act as a medium for working with Councillors and stakeholders from a neutral position

Strategy created professionally to give credence to grant applications

Cons

Cost to the Council

iii) Use local people as facilitators

Pros

Low cost

Experience in facilitating workshops

Cons

Use of clerk time to set up

No professional end document

Not expert in landscape and open space

Questionable if perceived non neutral position to TPC and stakeholders

Will end strategy be viewed with the same credence to win funding bids

3.0. Provider and financials

Hampshire County Council provide a unique service, which helps schools create open space strategy. TPC met with the service provider, who would set up a session to help TPC. The service will be reduced to help meet a reduced budget. For £1,500, HCC will conduct one 3 hour workshop, to which 35 stakeholders will be invited (see Appendix 1). The workshop will identify how the open space is being used, and how the village would like it to be used. A report will be produced by HCC with a designed schematic of what would like to be seen in each area of open space, which will become the back bone of decisions for the Council.

Nearly 40% of TPC total expenditure budgeted for 2019 / 2020 is to be spent on recreation, (£69k out of £184k), spending £1,500 on ensuring the money is spent right is recommended to be proactive and efficient.

The workshop and report will provide TPC with information to help answer factors

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Further work will be required by TPC to agree budgets and grants, and a deliverable timescale.

4.0. Recommendation

It is proposed by the Chairman and Chair of the Recreation committee to support the Clerks recommendation to use Hampshire County Council. Although this is the most expensive option, it will save the Parish Council in the following ways;

- a) Save Clerk time in creating a strategy or output document
- b) Having a strategy which can be published, which the whole village can buy into, and save time debating ideas which tend to go around in circles
- c) Enable TPC to apply for grants to support the strategy, and for TPC to be taken seriously in their bids, demonstrating the level of thought and investment they have put in to designing what is needed to benefit the village.
- d) Prevent a waste of time and money being spent on an initiative which may become redundant in the medium term

Appendix 1 – proposal of stakeholders / demographics to be represented at the workshop

- Dog walkers
- Ramblers
- Elderly / quiet seekers
- Young Child play and sports equipment users (parents)
- Older children play and sports equipment users (parents)
- Football pitch hirers
- Cricket pitch hirers
- Tennis club users
- Fitness equipment users
- Little kindling
- Northfields users – all demographics
- People who do not use the park?
- School – St Mary’s
- School – Twyford public
- Inclusive play area users (parents)
- Social event users (ball?)
- Groundsman
- Allotments
- Caretaker
- Neighbours to both parks