

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee – 8 February 2024

**Subject:** Update on delivery of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

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### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the implementation and the delivery of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) since the last report to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to consider and make comments on the contents of the report.

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### **Wards Affected: All**

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	Parks by their nature contribute to the mitigation of carbon across the city and this is a key strand of the Parks Strategy. The development and implementation of the Parks Climate Change Action Plan has further connected the opportunities and challenges in meeting the zero-carbon target for the city into the corporate plan, ensuring that opportunities to make progress are maximised and challenges can be considered by a wider audience.
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	The Parks Climate Change Action Plan recognises the need for just and equal delivery of the climate action plan across the city, focusing on areas such as community engagement, sustainable travel for staff and visitors and adaptation of the landscape for carbon storage and sequestration. The specific actions to be undertaken in delivering the plan have been assessed to ensure that they have a positive impact on providing an inclusive and equitable service that is accessible to all residents and visitors.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Parks are partnering in new and fruitful ways with organisations and communities to increase opportunities for personal development through volunteering, work experience, employment and training.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Parks offer a unique opportunity to engage in formal educational activity in the natural environment. Opportunities to build life skills such as communication and teamwork are offered through a wide range of volunteering activities.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Parks are at the heart of our communities, offering opportunities for community cohesion through volunteering, events and activities in a setting that is open and accessible to all.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Parks are an essential part of our neighbourhoods and enhance positive outcomes for residents and businesses. The delivery of a vibrant programme of events and activities is increasing the number of visitors from outside of the City. Whilst parks naturally contribute to the low carbon city agenda, new ways of using and activating the estate in a way that can actively contribute to lowering or offsetting carbon emissions are being explored and delivered.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Parks connect our City in many different ways, physically they are expanding to offer enhanced green corridors for people and wildlife and socially by sustaining opportunities for shared experiences and common interests.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None.

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

None.

**Contact Officers:**

Name: Neil Fairlamb  
Position: Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods  
Telephone: 07798 947609  
E-mail: neil.fairlamb@manchester.gov.uk

Name: John Rooney  
Position: Director of Neighbourhood Delivery  
Telephone: 07971 384877  
E-mail: john.rooney@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Kylie Ward  
Position: Parks Lead  
Telephone: 0161 234 4961  
E-mail: kylie.ward@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Sarah Henshall  
Position: Zero Carbon Manager  
Telephone: 07929 823389  
E-mail: sarah.henshall@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

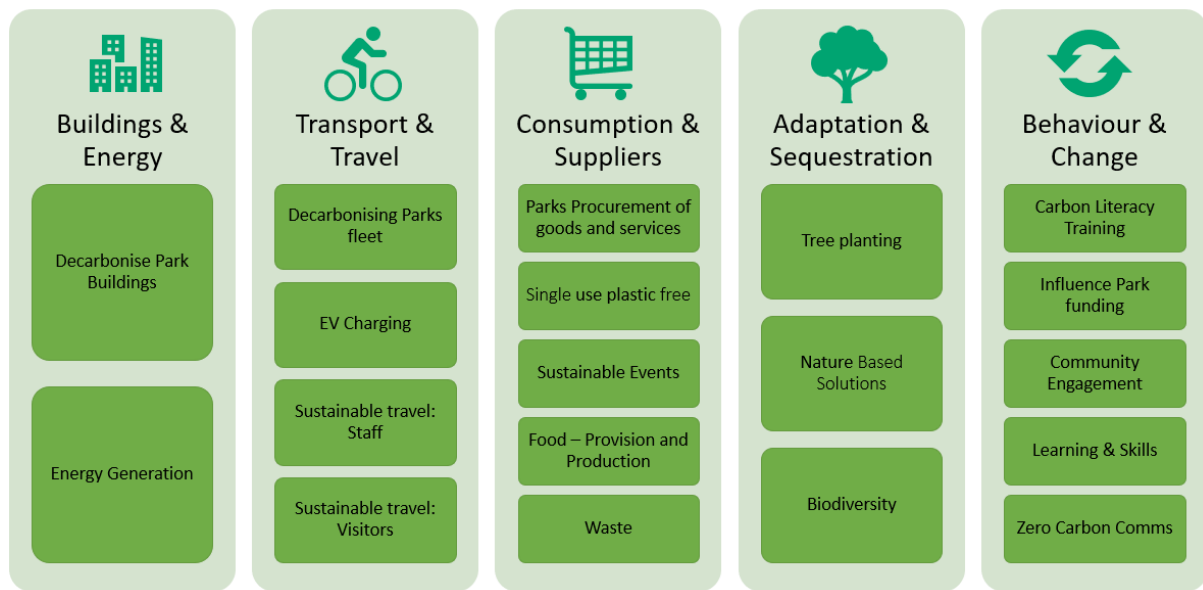
- Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25
- Manchester City Council Climate Emergency Declaration July 2019
- Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 Updated 2022

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 9 March 2023 a report on the first iteration of a Parks Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was presented to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee. The proposed plan recognised that Parks were uniquely placed to deliver positive and visible contributions to the Council's Zero Carbon target due to the high number of resident and visitor interactions and opportunities to deliver services in a more productive manner for zero carbon and climate change across the estate.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on progress made to deliver the actions in the Parks CCAP since its launch on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 A 'deep dive' session focused on parks and their potential to deliver across all five workstreams of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan took place at the Zero Carbon Coordination Group in May 2022. The opportunities to build on positive work that was already underway in the service was highlighted and commitment received across all workstreams to work in partnership with the service to understand the current position and the potential to generate a greater impact and increased positive outcomes at pace.
- 2.2 In September 2022 the main CCAP was refreshed with the inclusion of a new action at 4.3:
  - Deliver - Producing and delivering a Parks specific Climate Change Action Plan.
  - To achieve - increased understanding of carbon emissions relating to Parks and identification of potential carbon reduction options.
- 2.3 With the support of the Zero Carbon Team the first iteration of the Parks CCAP was produced to:
  - Increase the understanding of carbon emissions relating to parks.
  - Identify potential carbon reduction options.
  - Promote wider environmental benefits such as increased biodiversity.
- 2.4 The Parks CCAP identified the actions across all five workstreams of the Council's CCAP, illustrated in the table below:



2.5 The Parks CCAP went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and focused on:

- Continuing to identify good practise that is already in place and finding ways to replicate and embed so it becomes 'business as usual'.
- Learning from the experience of other industry professionals associated with landscape management, heritage and conservation and visitor/stakeholder engagement.
- Ensuring that where changes in the delivery of services are made that these are communicated in full, including what the changes will look like, how staff, volunteers and partners can get involved and above all the benefit of why a change has been made.

### 3.0 Progress against the actions

#### 3.1 Buildings and Energy

3.1.1 **Decarbonise Park Buildings** - LED lighting retrofit is being undertaken at four buildings in parks as part of the Council's wider retrofit programme, these are:

- Boggart Hole Clough
- Platt Field's Park Visitors Centre
- Wythenshawe Park Farm Centre
- Wythenshawe Park Stables and Offices

3.1.2 A further phase of assessments is being programmed with the Zero Carbon and Parks Team working closely to identify synergies or opportunities to set out sites/buildings which could have shared outcomes through existing or pipeline funding proposals.

3.1.3 Zero carbon is a critical factor within the design of investment programmes across the Parks estate. This has included testing new approaches with

partners such as Historic England where an innovative solution is required, this has included:

- Installation of an infrared heating system at Wythenshawe Hall to replace the historic gas system, contributing to the overall reduction in emissions.
- Refurbishment of Chorlton Park Tennis Courts in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association included the replacement of floodlighting with LED lights.
- Refurbishment and activation of the Orangery in Heaton Park for a food and beverage offer is in the final stage of design, inclusive of air source heat pumps. This is a Grade I listed building, and the solution has been designed in partnership with Historic England, MCC planning and various heritage bodies including the Victorian Society.

3.1.4 In some cases facilities have been out of regular usage and it is therefore difficult to make a meaningful comparison between before and after data. Understanding the utility data for parks has been challenging as not all facilities are individually metered. A key action within this workstream is to understand this data in greater detail to enable anomalies to be identified so that a baseline can be set.

3.1.5 **Energy generation** - A high-level scoping exercise was undertaken to review the Parks portfolio in terms of appropriate space for energy generation. It was concluded that whilst parks have significant open spaces most are either unsuitable, have other predominant uses or are protected in terms of historic or environmental sensitivity. This also impacts the use of water bodies such as lakes which are activated for public use. However, the opportunities that are presented to generate energy in relation to the built environment (roof mounted PV, ground and air source heat pumps etc) are being captured through existing investment programmes such as the Parks Development Programme.

## 3.2 **Travel and transport**

3.2.1 **Decarbonising the Parks Fleet** - The fleet of vehicles used by the Parks Team have been expanded by 6 e-bikes. The bikes are used by staff to carry out inspections and carry equipment to assist in the delivery of the service. Over 100 miles a week are now covered by bike which would have previously been undertaken by diesel vehicles.

3.2.2 Further options to replace the fleet have been explored with limitations identified in the ability to provide secure charging locations and appropriate alternatives in the marketplace for the type of vehicle required. A working group have been set up to consider the future charging needs of transitioning the council's own vehicle fleet and Parks colleagues are actively engaged.

3.2.3 Influence beyond the parks fleet has grown with contracted partners encouraged to make better decisions regarding their fleet. At Wythenshawe Park the ice cream contractor has replaced their diesel vehicle with electric to

eradicate the emissions generated from idling. Similarly, Debdale Park is now serviced by a new mobile food and drink operator by using an electric vehicle.

- 3.2.4 **EV Charging** - A new EV public infrastructure project was launched in November 2023, funded by the Local EV Infrastructure Fund (LEVI). Phase 1 proposals include 124 new EV charging points in park car parks for 2024. The provision of EV charging as part of the offer to visitors is also being considered through the transport strategies that are in development for Heaton and Wythenshawe Parks.
- 3.2.5 **Sustainable travel: Staff** - On review of the initial data held in terms of car and cycle usage for work purposes it appeared that figures were not reflective of the activity that was taking place. As a starting point activity this year has been to encourage car and cycle users to log work journeys so that there is an accurate baseline to work from.
- 3.2.6 There are a number of strong advocates for cycling in the parks team, two colleagues in particular were recognised during Cycle September for their achievements, Sue Polshaw for cycling a staggering 400 miles to and from work in the month and Zlatina Karamanova for encouraging colleagues to get back in to cycling.
- 3.2.7 To promote the opportunities further, three interactive sustainable travel workshops have been commissioned for February to encourage colleagues to make more sustainable commuting and in-work travel choices, aligned with the Sustainable Travel Policy.
- 3.2.8 **Sustainable travel: Visitors** - New Transport Plans for Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park have been developed to help support the aspirational growth for both sites; 'to increase visitor numbers and dwell time'. The plans included short, medium, and long-term recommendations on how to modernise the current transport infrastructure, link with new shared mobility schemes and prioritise improving sustainable transport options to and from these sites.
- 3.2.9 Improving the quality of information about the different travel options available to get to these sites was one of the short-term recommendations. Working with the Travel Demand Team at Transport for Greater Manchester social media content was created and posted at peak times over the summer period promoting TfGM's journey planner webpage and sign posting the Metrolink stations and bus stops in close proximity to Heaton Park.
- 3.2.10 Promotion of sustainable transport to and from events with event organisers has always been a key part of any Event Management Plan. However, this year we also raised options for event staff to use sustainable transport during the build and derig stages. An example of this was at the Parklife Festival at Heaton Park in 2023 where Parklife staff used EV bikes to get around site and backstage. These journeys would previously have been undertaken by vehicles.

3.2.11 Two separate Visitor Surveys were undertaken in 2023, one for Wythenshawe Park and one for Heaton Park. The purpose of the surveys was to capture up to date visitor data and insight for both sites. Questions included how visitors travelled to the sites, were they aware of any EV charging facilities that were on site (e.g., Heaton Park) and the reasons why they chose that method of transport. Key findings from the surveys stated that public transport was underutilised when travelling to the sites and the car was the most popular form of transport. Further work to strength links with TfGM and joint working will be prioritised in 2024.

### 3.3 Consumption, Emissions and Suppliers

3.3.1 **Parks Procurement of goods and services** - Zero carbon has been built into the procurement of goods and services for parks through the inclusion of an environmental weighting in the assessment of tenders. The specifications for two major contracts within Parks, fixed catering and ice cream have been developed using this model, the invitations will go live in February 2024. Monitoring to ensure compliance with the commitments made in the tender will be a priority action for the Team.

3.3.2 **SUPS** – Avoidable single use plastics have been eradicated across the park's estate working with contracted partners. This has involved working with food and drink providers to seek alternatives to items such as plastic drinks bottles, cutlery and food trays. This approach has also been extended to include funfair providers who have required a greater level of support to make the necessary changes.

3.3.3 In partnership with Race for Life new approaches to the reduction of SUP's have been tested, including messaging to participants to bring their own water bottles and providing water refill points on site as well as seeking alternatives to the use of hazard tape and laminated signs.

3.3.4 The service has actively promoted the Council's pilot scheme to provide a reusable cups service to suitable event providers. This allows the operator to hire reusable cups from a Council partner who will collect and wash them afterwards or during an event depending on its length. This therefore removes the reliance on the traditional single use plastic cups seen at many events. In 2024 the expectation to employ this or a similar scheme across events, including the food and drink festival in Heaton Park will be implemented.

3.3.5 In 2023 the Council supported Parklife and the Noel Gallagher Concert at Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park in their request to move from plastic glasses to cans at the bars. This was partially based on their commitment to remove single use plastics and naturally helps with our own aims.

3.3.6 The service will continue to prioritise this area of work through the commitments laid out in the Avoidable Single Use Plastic Free Action Plan and SUP Policy adopted by the Council in December 2023.



- 3.3.7 **Sustainable Events** - A key development in terms of sustainable events is the project to upgrade or install mains power pillars to be used for outdoor events (which includes Heaton Park, Platt Fields Park and Wythenshawe Park). External consultancy from event power experts has identified estimated costs and carbon savings (through enabling event organisers to reduce temporary power, which is often in the form of diesel generators). The next stage of the process is for Capital Programmes to carry out assessment of costs to inform the next stage of the process.
- 3.3.8 Events with over 3,000 people in attendance must currently complete a climate change impact assessment as a standard part of the application process. Based on the assessment, the team work pro-actively with the event organisers to encourage and ensure that any changes that can be made are incorporated into their planning. A positive example of this being the Oktoberfest event at Platt Fields Park. The event currently has a necessity to use generators to power elements of the delivery. However, following positive conversations, the organisers were able to source more environmentally friendly alternatives that ran on biofuels rather than diesel.
- 3.3.9 Working with other services to provide consistency, the team are seeking to implement conditions of booking such as eradicating the use of SUP's, more environmentally friendly power methods and reducing event millage with a staged approach over the next two years. The service have provided all existing and new event and activity providers with the '5 key questions' document created by the Zero Carbon Team. This provides the organiser with information and guidance on areas where they could make a difference as well as contact information should they wish to ask questions or seek more support.
- 3.3.10 In coordination with colleagues in the Zero Carbon Team, the service proposed several community events for assessment against the climate change impact measures. This included, MELA and Caribbean Carnival, looking at all aspects of event delivery and providing organisers with practical support and guidance. All event providers engaged well with the assessors and results highlighted several areas of good practice as well as some areas for improvement around the use of single use plastics, waste management and food provisions.
- 3.3.11 The City Council will continue to align with the wider events industry developments in sustainability, taking part in the Green Events Code sustainable events pilot in 2024/25 which will test the use of a national set of targets with free-to-access tools to support organisers of all sizes to improve the sustainability and accessibility of their events. Parks events will be included within this pilot.
- 3.3.12 **Food – Provision and Production** - Communal growing spaces have been established at several allotment sites. These spaces serve as community hubs where open days are organised for non-plot holders, providing insights into the process of growing fruits and vegetables. The goal is to showcase

and share the knowledge of sustainable and community-centric gardening practices with a wider audience.

- 3.3.13 Cleveleys Avenue Allotments have been actively involved in supporting the development of the Pankhurst plot. This area serves as a dedicated space where women, under the guidance of Emmeline's support, engage in gardening activities. The focus extends beyond cultivating their food, as the initiative also aims to provide women with the therapeutic benefits that working in a garden can offer, promoting a sense of calm and well-being.
- 3.3.14 Informal agreements across allotments that enable food that would otherwise go to waste to be donated to local good causes have been established. At Cleveleys allotments, the society built up regular weekly donations between March and October. The selection is seasonal, ranging from rhubarb in the spring through to squashes, marrows and apples in the autumn.
- 3.3.15 The cafe partner at Alexandra Park has recently introduced their 'Cozy Kitchen' programme. This provides free sessions for members of the local community to come along and prepare meals to set affordable recipes in an educational environment. Residents can then take the food home. The aim is to provide support to local residents on cooking methods and has the dual benefit of being affordable, with the aim of reducing food waste.
- 3.3.16 A similar project has been established at Wythenshawe Park with Blossom. The project at Wythenshawe includes growing as part of the syllabus, either locally or at home and focusses on harvesting what you need rather than buying large quantities from the shop. The sessions also help participants to reduce waste by eating parts of the plant that they would normally discard. In 2023 Blossom also delivered a yearlong programme with funding from RFGM Suez offering composting workshops and recycling in more general terms.
- 3.3.17 **Waste** - A programme of bin replacement is underway across the estate that will see the replacement of small bins and dog bins that have reached their end of life with large capacity bins. In 2023 the programme of activity across parks included more than 50 events focused on managing litter.
- 3.3.18 For the second year running parks partnered with a local provider to offer a Christmas tree recycling service at Boggart Hole Clough and Wythenshawe Park. The programme raised over £100k for local charities, including We Love Manchester and recycled circa 5,000 trees amounting to approximately 80,000kg of CO2 saved.

#### 3.4 **Climate adaptation, carbon storage & sequestration**

- 3.4.1 **Tree planting** – The development of the Parks CCAP has brought officers and partners across a range of services together to review the approach to tree planting. A joined up and planned approach has been tested with good results to identify potential tree planting locations which are then tested against the potential outcomes, the current land use and the park plan. To further this approach, external funding is being sought to establish a tree

development officer who would lead this process and carry out proactive engagement.

- 3.4.2 Utilising this approach new tree planting schemes have been implemented at Cheetham Park, Scotland Hall Road, Fletcher Moss, Peel Hall and Sparkford Avenue. Through the working group established to lead on this workstream, opportunities for the coming year are being considered.
- 3.4.3 **NBS** – Nature based solutions have been established as a key consideration in the development of projects in parks. On this basis the new Collyhurst Park has water attenuation designed into the scheme as both a function and provision of a new habitat.
- 3.4.4 With the expected implementation of new legislation in relation to SuDs, the Council are bringing together a coordinated approach in preparation.
- 3.4.5 **Biodiversity** - Parks have been at the forefront of the Council's approach to identifying locations that may be suitable for the future provision of biodiversity net gain units. An initial list of 18 sites were identified through desktop analysis and the parks team have rationalized the proposal into a shorter list for further investigation. If this approach is viable, it could mean that appropriately identified sections of parks and green spaces would move into alternative management processes for the benefit of biodiversity.
- 3.4.6 Differential mowing regimes were implemented in Birchfields, Chorlton and Platt Fields Park during 2023. This approach is being further developed with feasibility works underway to identify additional locations, with consideration being given to resident and visitor engagement.

### 3.5 **Influencing behaviour change & being a catalyst for change**

- 3.5.1 **Carbon Literacy Training** - To date, 87% of parks colleagues have participated in the Carbon Literacy Training, showcasing a significant commitment to environmental awareness. Following on from this 37% of the staff, have completed their pledges and action plans. This combined effort results in an overall completion rate of 61.66% for the entire training program, surpassing the targeted completion rate of 50%. The ambition of the service is to reach 100% completion, it is recognised that factors such as new staff joining the team, long-term absence and the availability of training dates have impacted the completion rate.
- 3.5.2 The service is collating the pledges made and supporting colleagues with any blockages that may prevent them from acting. Key themes include transport, recycling, and different ways of working.
- 3.5.3 Advocacy and support for the wider programme of Carbon Literacy Training within the Council is also in place by enabling a parks colleague to become a trainer for the programme.

- 3.5.4 **Influence Park funding** - As mentioned in section 3.1.3 opportunities for future investment are reviewed with zero carbon as a critical factor in the design of projects. The service has also focused on attracting additional funding to support the zero carbon ambition.
- 3.5.5 In January 2024 confirmation was received from TfGM that the Council had been awarded £15k from the Active Travel Fund Cycle Parking Grant programme. The grant will enable the installation of sheltered cycle parking facilities close to facilities in Boggart Hole Clough, Debdale Park, Cringle Park, Platt Fields Park, Fog Lane Park and Wythenshawe Park. The style of parking will take into account feedback received on the requirement for covered and family parking as a way of encouraging cycling as a way of travelling to those sites. It is envisaged that installation will take place for summer 2024.
- 3.5.6 **Community Engagement** - The Parks team actively fosters connections with neighbourhood officers to support ward climate action plans, engaging visitors, friends, and stakeholders to enhance green spaces, accessibility, and promote nature-based solutions.
- 3.5.7 A meadow was established in Fog Lane Park as a proof of concept as a pollinator park in partnership with the Eden Project and Northern Flowerhouse. The development of the meadow has started a positive conversation about the landscape, with residents sharing that they have seen an increased number of bugs and bees in the park. In November the partnership hosted two groups of children from St Cuthbert's RC Primary at Fog Lane to harvest seeds, learning about how the seeds could be grown into plants and how they could be dried to be grown later.
- 3.5.8 **Learning and Skills** - The linkages established through the development of the Parks CCAP have provided an opportunity for Park colleagues to participate in the Schools and Young People's Climate Change Network. Through this network Parks are supporting the School Climate Assemblies project where pupils will submit their ideas for projects that can be school-focused or for actions to be taken in their communities, including Parks. Ideas will be reviewed by a steering group including a representative from Parks for possible implementation and funding.
- 3.5.9 During 2023, through the holiday activity programme (HAF), Parks commissioned forest schools geared towards providing enriching nature-based experiences which 360 children engaged with.
- 3.5.10 **Zero Carbon Communications** - A zero carbon/sustainability calendar has been developed for Parks in partnership with Communications colleagues. The calendar depicts the strategic points in the year where there will be a focus on activation and positive engagement, this includes but is not limited to Carbon Literacy Action Week and Great British Spring Clean. An example of this working in practise is the engagement on Cycle September through the winners of the Love to Ride campaign which encouraged colleagues to commute via bicycle. As mentioned in section 3.2.6 parks colleagues were

highlighted for their achievements on the number of miles travelled and the number of people they influenced to participate.

3.5.11 Building on this success there is a case study being developed that showcases the great sustainability initiatives that have progressed at Wythenshawe Park to demonstrate how parks contribute to MCC's ambition to become zero carbon by 2038. It also aims to highlight parks as a resource for biodiversity, carbon capture, as well as physical and mental wellbeing.

#### **4.0 Conclusion and next steps**

4.1 The first 9 months of delivering against the Parks CCAP have enabled progress to be made across all workstreams of the plan. The delivery of the plan has been achieved through setting a clear vision and leadership around each of the workstreams and enabling a collaborative approach to achieve shared outcomes.

4.2 The plan has been critical in identifying the actions that the service can undertake that align with the Council's CCAP. The plan has also provided a mechanism to capture positive progress and to highlight blockages in order to overcome these.

4.3 In the final quarter of delivery the team will be focused on:

- Reviewing progress against each of the workstreams as part of an end of year review and setting the targets for the next 12 months.
- Considering the barriers to progress and what could be done differently to achieve better outcomes.
- Reporting back to the team of colleagues, volunteers and businesses who have all supported progress.
- Identifying amendments to existing actions and including new actions where appropriate, along with identification of KPIs to measure progress.
- Working with the Zero Carbon team to feed into the development of the next iteration of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-30.