

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 5 December 2019

**Subject:** Manchester's Park Strategy 2017-2026

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

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**Summary**

This report provides an update on the progress of delivering the Park Strategy since the last report to Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on 24 May 2018.

**Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider and make comments on the content of the updated report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

**Environmental Impact Assessment** - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Parks by nature contribute to the mitigation of carbon across the City and there are a range of actions that are already being taken by the service in relation to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city. There is a section included in the report that sets out the progress to date and some initiatives that will be delivered in the future.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Parks are partnering in new 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 team work are offered through a wide range of volunteering activity.
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 a neighbourhood and enhance the outcomes for the 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 mitigate or contribute to lowering carbon emissions are being explored.
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.

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### **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.

- Take a Brief Walk Through Manchester's Park Strategy 2017 – 2026
- Manchester's Park Strategy
  - Executive Summary
  - Research and Findings
  - Ten Year Action Plan

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The last update on progress of the delivery of Manchester's Park Strategy was presented to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on 24 May 2018. This report is an update on the progress made to date and the deliverables over the first three years.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 In December 2017 a ten year strategy for Manchester's Parks was launched to guide their investment, upkeep and activation. It sets out the vision, key themes and actions that are needed to ensure parks and green spaces can continue to serve the needs of communities across the city, providing popular and attractive open spaces for play, sport and informal recreation. There is a focus on 4 key themes:

1. **Parks at the Heart of Neighbourhoods** looks at the physical role of parks in neighbourhoods across the city, as well as their size, accessibility and character.
2. **Vibrant Parks, Vibrant Communities** considers the use and activities that take place in parks to ensure they are a focus of community life, providing opportunities for exercise and sport, and a wide variety of events that can generate additional income for the benefit of parks.
3. **A Manchester Quality Standard** sets out a good-quality standard for managing and maintaining parks.
4. **Productive Parks in Partnership** describes ways to deliver park services in a more collaborative and fruitful manner with communities and local organisations, not just the Council.

- 2.2 In the first three years of the Strategy the following actions have been prioritised for delivery:

1. Co-ordinate stronger **Management Plans** for individual parks.
2. Seek to leverage further **investment** from housing growth opportunities and planning gain.
3. Continue the **conversations** and improve **communication** of programmes, activities and plans.
4. Improve access to **information** about Parks.
5. Develop new **quality standards**, communicate them and seek out investment to maintain them.
6. Update and expand the use of **digital** / information technology in parks.
7. Identify sustainable **income** generating opportunities and bring forward investment cases.
8. Strengthen partnerships with **Friends, communities and volunteers** and introduce a volunteer strategy so that residents who want to do more can.

### **3.0 Progress against the actions**

#### **3.1 Management Plans**

**3.1.1 Park Plans** - The action plan set out the development of 15 park plans in year one of the Strategy, with a further 35 in the following two years. A template was piloted across these first set of plans, ensuring that stakeholders were fully involved in their development. The first set of plans are now complete and the team have been able to reflect on the process and learn lessons for the development of the plans moving forward.

**3.1.2** The next 35 plans have been agreed, which, together with the plans already completed, will see a park plan in place for each ward across the City, apart from Burnage which shares the boundary with Cringle Park. Learning from the first 15 plans, listening to residents and team members has identified that a conversational approach worked the best. The approach has been tweaked and to ensure that our stakeholders and the team are fully supported this has been developed into a training package which launched on 27 November 2019. This will also see the development of a toolkit that will sit alongside the training for future plans.

**3.1.3 Wythenshawe Park Strategic Framework** - The ten year Strategic Framework produced by Pleydell Smithyman following detailed work with park users, stakeholders and the wider community has been approved by partners and Members. A Project Manager has been appointed to start delivering on the plan and this role will be supported by a Project Officer, for an initial 2 year period. In the short term the focus is on essential improvements to the changing facilities at the Athletics Track, looking at the future uses for Wythenshawe Hall and bringing together the range of stakeholders who all share a passion for Wythenshawe Park.

The capital works to repair the fire damage at the Hall are due to be completed in mid November and officers are working with colleagues from Corporate Estates to address immediate needs once the contractors are off site and discussions are taking place with the Friends of Wythenshawe Hall to look at next steps over the coming months.

#### **3.2 Investment**

**3.2.1 Parks Development Programme** - The Parks Development Programme is set out to fund improvements to parks that will help to close the gap between ongoing trading income and expenditure in a sustainable manner.

**3.2.1.1** This strategic investment into Manchester's parks received "in principle" agreement from Executive subject to a package of detailed options appraisals and feasibility studies being undertaken to identify the specific investment opportunities for the three elements of work across the City Wide estate, Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park. The programme has been devised to ensure the maximum return in terms of economic, social and fiscal impact and will focus on:

- Investment in community and local parks, green spaces and allotments in Manchester, maximising the outcomes from an Our Manchester approach.
- The continued development of the Hall, Stables and Lake Hubs at Heaton Park in line with the existing Strategic Framework.
- The development of Wythenshawe Park including the Courtyard, Walled Garden, Farm Hub and restoration of the Hall as part of the emerging Strategic Framework.

**3.2.1.2 City Wide** - The vehicle for investment in community and local parks, green spaces and allotments will be a “Parks in Partnership” grant funding offer. A bidding process is being established for community partners to bid into with appropriate support, governance, assessment criteria and management protocols. A robust consultation and communication process is in development to ensure that the fund is accessible, inclusive and easy for stakeholders to navigate. It is anticipated that the fund will be launched in spring 2020.

3.2.1.3 The Parks in Partnership fund will also run in tandem with the identification of income generating opportunities identified through the development of park plans and by the newly established Park Development Team.

3.2.1.4 As an example, the provision of mobile changing rooms at Hough End is one of the early projects being delivered within the City Wide workstream. It consists of a prefabricated mobile solution to replace the condemned provision on site, which can also be relocated following the delivery of the proposed Hough End Master Plan Project. The project approvals are currently at check point 4 and a planning application has recently been submitted. This project will enable any relocated teams to come back on site and restart a revenue income stream for ancillary facilities which was previously in place.

**3.2.1.5 Heaton and Wythenshawe Parks** - Strategic frameworks at both Heaton and Wythenshawe Parks already set out areas for investment and with the ongoing development of a commercial master plan at Heaton Park the work is now nearing the conclusion for priority investments which will be brought forward for further development, with progression through to a full business case and consideration through check point.

3.2.1.6 Heaton Park - Two of the flat bowling greens have recently been converted into crown greens, this will enable greater use of the asset and bring forward additional options for events and secondary spend on site. This project has been developed and delivered in partnership with stakeholders who played an active role within the procurement and design process in producing the characteristics of each green to be specific to Heaton Park, the two greens will deliver to both, county/regional and national standards to cater for all abilities.

3.2.1.7 Wythenshawe Park - Proposals are currently high level with the activation of the Hall a priority following the completion of the construction works (November 2019) to restore the building after the fire damage. It is proposed

that a phased approach will be set out and developed with all stakeholders which identifies the options for use and incrementally schedules and delivers the occupation of the building, from initial operational requirements to enhanced commercial opportunities. This work will be coordinated by the Project Manager who has recently been appointed to the new role.

3.2.1.8 In addition investigations for the replacement of ancillary facilities (disabled toilets and changing provision) within the athletics track are being progressed due to the buildings approaching the end of their useful service.

**3.2.2 Partnership funding** - There was an expectation that the Parks for People funding stream from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) would be the primary source of match funding for the Parks Development Programme. In late 2017, the HLF announced that they were freezing nearly all of their large scale capital investment projects whilst they reviewed, throughout 2018 the priorities for investment. An announcement of the new funding framework was made in the spring of 2019, whilst there is no longer a parks specific strand of funding within the programme there is an opportunity through the broader Heritage Horizon Award that places a strategic priority on landscapes and nature.

**3.2.3 Capital Programme** - In addition to the Parks Development Programme, all pipeline and ongoing capital projects which fall within a Parks remit will now be adopted and managed by the Park Development team. Work will continue in enabling partners such as MCRactive to overlay sports strategy and the investment it brings into Parks, providing healthy activity through more sustainable sports clubs alike.

3.2.3.1 A number of projects have recently been completed (some subject to snagging) which have enhanced quality and the visitors experience across our Parks, a selection of these are outlined below:

- Riverside Park Play Project - S106 Budget £75k. A new play space was completed for the residents of Northenden in September 2019.
- Platt Fields Park Interactive Football Wall - Budget £75k Sport England, £8k Manchester City Council. A project with Sport England partnering Manchester City Council in piloting a new interactive football wall. The wall is linked to an App which can set out users scores against others in many locations, it is an alternative use of play technology which will become more commonplace in the coming years.
- Heaton Park South Play Area - Budget £480k. A new woodland play area adjacent to the Lakeside Cafe hub. Since opening in June 2019 it has been a big hit with families and young people. The play area has also been nominated for the Play Excellence Awards at this year's RoSPA Play Safety Conference, by RoSPA's Head of Play Safety, David Yearley.
- Wythenshawe Park Athletics Track - S106/AMP Budget £152k. This project budget was initially £128k, however the scope of work included the

renovation of the track floodlights and an optional enhancement for the conversion to LED. However, through internal dialogue with our Estates Team a contribution of an additional £24k was made available to add value to the project and capture the carbon reduction outcomes.

3.2.3.2 An overview of projects completed, underway and in the pipeline are captured in Appendix 1 - Capital Plan Spreadsheet.

**3.2.4 Parks Play Area Strategy** - Following the completion of the Parks redesign in November 2019 the focus will move to the development of a Parks Play Area Strategy. The strategy will be developed with an inclusive and collaborative approach with all stakeholders and in partnership with our Public Realm colleagues who are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the play stock. There are 109 play areas within the Parks portfolio of varying sizes with an ongoing need for replacement and repair for which capital and revenue funds are under pressure to maintain our high standards across the City. Significant investment of £659k has been made in to the play stock through Clean City funding since 2014.

3.2.4.1 The strategy will identify the current accessibility, quality and standard of the equipment and will set out timelines for replacement and will investigate the options for travel times and locations of the stock, it will also outline an investment programme to better meet the needs of Manchester residents in line with projected growth over the next 5 - 10 years.

3.2.4.2 Funds of £200k, have recently been allocated from the remaining Clean City budget previously agreed for this purpose for the most urgent works in repairing safety surfacing, this programme is now in development for completion in March 2020.

### **3.3 Conversations and Communication**

**3.3.1 Allotment Forum** - The Manchester Allotment Forum has been developed over the past 18 months and was created to provide a forum for the Societies to network and as a conduit for sharing information. There are 43 Allotment sites across the City, with 36 of them managed by Societies and it is important that good communication and support is in place for the sites to thrive. The forum meets every two months and brings the societies and officers together to discuss current challenges and the future plan for driving improvement across this area of the service.

**3.3.2 Park Plan Stakeholder workshops** - The conversations with stakeholders have been key in developing the Park Plans. Working closely with Neighbourhood Teams, the Parks Team have identified stakeholders for each site and then a series of Stakeholder Workshops have taken place that have given the time to discuss a vision for the Park and to explore what people love about their park and where things could be better. The outcomes of these sessions have then fed directly into the Park Plan. Stakeholders broader than Friends of Parks groups have continued to be engaged in their parks and this

is enabling a more inclusive and diverse approach to the activation and development of parks.

**3.3.3 River Valley Maintenance Schedules** - In June 2018 a new grounds maintenance contract for the 30 river valley and urban countryside sites was awarded to Greenfingers and is a three year contract with the option to extend for another two years. The maps and schedules were shared with Friends groups so that additional activity that the groups would like to undertake to add value can be jointly planned as well as supporting the team to monitor against standards.

**3.3.4 Programmes and events** - Activities and events are being communicated through internal broadcast on a weekly basis alongside the external Manchester City Council webpages. Allsorts To Do continues to be used for specific holiday periods. There is an increasing use of social media advertising for parks events and activities through the corporate social media accounts for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram via the Corporate Communications team. A parks Twitter account has also been introduced to advertise events and share posts with Friends groups, internal and external organisations. Further collaboration with MCRactive has resulted in events being 'pushed' through their web-page and real-time Twitter feed to increase reach.

### **3.4 Information**

**3.4.1 Marketing and Branding** - A brand for the Parks Service is currently being developed, working closely with the Communications Team. Following the success of the branding for Heaton Park, which saw a new identity being put in place, the aim is to follow this through to other Parks in the City. The brand will be launched as part of the refreshed signage that will begin installation in the spring of 2020.

**3.4.2 Data** - Work has been underway to make sure that the base data across the service is in place and accurate. This has involved collating accurate measurements and mapping information for all the Parks, greenspaces, river valleys and allotments. As well as this, a full audit of facilities within the spaces is being prepared for completion. Having this information in place will assist Officers when responding to requests for information, ensuring that consistent and precise information is supplied and in the process for decision making.

**3.4.3 Social Media** - The team have been focussed on ensuring that full use is made of the social media platforms where they are in place, with some encouraging facts and figures.

**3.4.3.1** During Love Parks Week (July 2019) a Facebook campaign was launched targeted at families in a 6km area around the nominated parks. As a result 19k people were reached with 3.1k engagement which is a 16% engagement rate, normally 1-2% is considered good.



3.4.3.2 As part of the same campaign for Love Parks Week, 10 posts across Facebook and Twitter received 58.4k impressions and 146 website link clicks. The highest performing post was the Facebook post about the new playground at Heaton Park, which itself received 18.1k impressions - 84 likes, 28 retweets, 31 comments and 112 website clicks.

**3.4.4 Heaton Park Facebook Statistics** - The Heaton Park Facebook page is the most efficient tool the park currently has for promoting events, activities, work being done in the park and collaborations with our partners and stakeholders. This platform is used to reach visitors far and wide, sharing information and news.

3.4.4.1 Within the last 12 months, the total number of page likes has increased by 3,200 to a total today of 9,866. This number is continually increasing at a rapid pace. The most popular of posts can reach up to 23,000 people in a matter of hours due to partners and followers further sharing information. For 2019, the highest number of people reached so far from one post is 48,000. Work continues to develop this platform to ensure that followers remain engaged and are enticed to visit the park.

**3.4.5 Love Parks Week** - During Love Parks Week 13th-20th July 2019, the team engaged with 580 people. 16 separate events were held in 5 parks - Crumpsall, Alexandra Park, Boggart Hole Clough, Moss Side Rec and Old Moat. With the exception of Alexandra Park, the parks were chosen because of the access to nearby libraries, who worked in collaboration on the project.

3.4.5.1 This year the team worked with Abraham Moss and Moss Side Centre to engage with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students. In total 80 students were engaged through litter picks, willow sculpting, vegetable seed planting and a Love Exploring demonstration.

**3.4.6 My Wild City** is a 4 year partnership between the Council the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside (LWT). The first phase of the project undertook public consultation and received over 2,000 responses. 81% of respondents said that wildlife in Manchester was extremely important to them with 8 out of the top 10 places listed being Manchester Parks.

3.4.6.1 The results are currently being analysed to ensure that the delivery phase of this partnership project, Dec 2019 - Dec 2022, reflects the new information gathered from the consultation process. It is clear from the consultation that parks will play an important role.

**3.4.7 Sites of Biological Importance** - Half of the city's 40 Sites of Biological Importance are in parks and green spaces. Many are in active conservation management and officers are working with Lancashire Wildlife Trust through the My Wild City Project to look at how their quality can be improved by developing a management plan for each site.

### **3.5 Quality Standards**

**3.5.1 Park Inspections** - Public Parks in Manchester offer a safe environment for the public to visit and enjoy the facilities offered. A number of our parks have existed for decades and have been adapted to suit the current environment. In order to maintain parks as safe, clean environments it is important that park inspections are carried out on a regular and cyclical basis. The Parks Team currently carry out this role and record the inspection manually on documents that are then scanned, stored and filed.

3.5.1.1 It is recognised that the current method of inspections is limiting in the type of management information that is required to meet best practice outlined by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). Technology has been introduced when undertaking playground inspections, where the information from the playground inspection is stored electronically, which can then be used to provide management information to aid decision making.

3.5.1.2 This system has since been trialled to undertake park inspections. However, as technology has advanced there are more suitable applications. There are several solutions on the market and an exercise has been undertaken to explore what methods other local authorities are using. The intention is to make better use of technology and transfer the park inspection process to an electronic format.

**3.5.2 Waste Management** - The presence of litter in a Park has an incredibly high impact on the perception of quality. The challenges fluctuate throughout the year with pressure points outside of the Bank Holiday weekends and school holidays difficult to predict as they are often relative to the weather. As previously reported in 2018/19 external contractors were employed to support the in-house service with the collection of litter during at Alexandra, Heaton, Platt Fields and Wythenshawe Parks, on the basis that these are some of the most challenging sites for the City to manage within the current resource. In 2019/20 Whitworth and Crowcroft parks were added to the list of contractor supported parks. In 2018/19, (excluding Heaton Park and the city centre parks) 123,000 bags of waste were removed from Manchester's Parks, an increase on the previous year of circa 12,000 bags of waste.

3.5.2.1 As part of the developing partnership working with residents, a number of approaches have been trialled to support local initiatives. These include the supply of bin bags, the introduction of skips, agreed litter collection points after clean ups and the replacement of bin bags in bins by Friends Groups.

**3.5.3 Grounds Maintenance** - Traditionally the control of weeds in Manchester Parks has been undertaken using Glyphosate a wide spectrum chemical herbicide. Glyphosate is used on the basis that it has one of the broadest spectrums of control, killing many different weed species effectively and systemically. In 2019, building on trials in both 2017 and 2018 and in accordance with the city's aspiration to reduce the reliance on Glyphosate based chemicals it was agreed to extend the trial of non-use to

all Manchester's parks (with the exception of the treatment of invasive weed species, such as Japanese Knotweed).

3.5.3.1 An examination of the impact on resources and the residual build of weeds will be undertaken in the autumn. Within children's playgrounds where glyphosates have not been used for an extended period saw the most obvious increase in weed build up. At these sites a new approach was trialled which included the dig up and removal of weeds and subsequent treatment of emerging weeds with hot foam. Whilst this process when compared to the use of glyphosates is slower and more costly requiring a dedicated labour and machinery resources, initial results have been very good with a significant reduction in weed development on site. The programme of alternate control methods will be continued in 2020.

**3.5.4 Satisfaction** - various options are being trialled to obtain further information on satisfaction for parks, beginning with Heaton Park. A useful platform is Facebook, enabling recommendations, reviews, comments and messages all providing insight into what our visitors like and don't like. This platform also allows the team to communicate directly with those individuals providing the feedback, thus building a stronger relationship. Facebook reviews currently provide us with a 4.5 out of 5 rating based on the opinion of 98 people. Feedback has been reviewed and the latest TripAdvisor statistics 848 reviews, giving a score of 4 out of 5. 47% scored excellent, 35% very good, 11% average, 3% poor, 4% terrible.

3.5.4.1 Satisfaction monitoring is something that is being explored for the best way to gain further insight across city wide parks and how reviews from Facebook and TripAdvisor can be used to inform standards and satisfaction levels.

## **3.6 Digital**

**3.6.1 Colony** - the allotment management system that is now being rolled out has the ability to be a highly effective tool and is used across the country to manage allotment services. The implementation of the new system has seen some challenges over the past months as the system has become live. The focus will continue on ensuring the accuracy of data and that Societies are suitably trained.

3.6.1.1 Once it is fully embedded Colony will provide the following additional benefits:

- All information held in one single, secure data source, with individual log ins for all staff and Societies.
- Individual records for each site and plot, including tenants, vacant plots and waiting lists.
- Comprehensive plot inspection recording, and ability to attach photos and notes and managing the eviction process consistently.

- Ability to make contact with individual plot holders by email, improving communications.
- Ability to generate a range of reports such as income and demographics.

**3.6.2 Love Exploring** - The Love Exploring app (previously Sprytar) is now being used to promote upcoming events and activities in those parks where it can be downloaded (Alexandra Park, Boggart Hole Clough, Debdale Park, Heaton Park, Philips Park, Platt Fields Park, Whitworth Park, Wythenshawe Park). Nominated authors have the platform to add activities, times, prices and booking detail and this information can then be shared through social media channels. With the permission of the user the app collects data on users, providing a demographic insight into age, gender, activity and location, influencing decisions for future events.

3.6.2.1 The app has recently been launched in Philips Park, with an audio trail telling the story of Edward Watkin, who was the pioneer of public parks in Manchester. The app is also now available in Debdale Park, where there are two walking routes available with points of interest highlighted. This has been a collaborative project with GM Walking, who co-funded this latest project with parks.

3.6.2.2 The app was showcased as part of The Festival of Manchester in Platt Fields, where it was downloaded 102 times in one day by people playing the dinosaur safari. Since the launch of the app it has been downloaded 2,371 times and from usage figures and completion rate of the trails gives a total of 2,345 miles walked in Manchester Parks.

**3.6.3 Tree Database** - 2018 saw the introduction of an electronic tree inspection database programme for the city. The database has been used successfully to inspect and map all the City's statutory Highway tree inspection functions. In 2019 the inspection programme was trialled at a number of non-highway locations including parks. In 2020 it is proposed to individually inspect and map 20% of Manchester Parks non woodland tree stock.

**3.6.4 Smart Phones** - As part of a programme of utilising new technology and reducing the carbon footprint the Parks Team have migrated existing mobile phones to new Samsung smartphones. The migration has allowed the team to access all google apps whilst on the move. This is creating new ways of working, plotting direct location of issues, take photographic evidence to support requests and working with colleagues across the wider Neighbourhood Services. In addition, colleagues are using social media to engage with groups and partners, sharing information and providing key updates. The Team have a WhatsApp group to share information and photos that are used for promotion on Social Media.

**3.6.5 Process and Procedure** - Significant engagement has taken place over recent months with the Parks Team and internal operating partners such as grounds maintenance and corporate estates and feedback has been gathered to develop a new Parks standard operating framework. The feedback

indicated areas for potential improvement and in particular, there was a need to strengthen and clarify guidance with one consistent approach and present the full range of processes together clearly and concisely.

- 3.6.5.1 The framework hosts a suite of processes covering managing health & safety, managing operations, managing resources. These are stored electronically on a central file allowing easy access to all staff. The plan is to roll out the framework alongside the workforce development plan as redesigned service is implemented.

### **3.7 Income**

- 3.7.1 Income** - 2018/19 saw an increase in income across the Parks service of 39% from the previous year, from £899k to £1.175m. This increase is largely attributed to the continued success of Heaton Park as an event destination and increased income generated from visitors through catering and car parking. This additional income has been used to build staffing resources to support the parks service.

- 3.7.2 Heaton Park car parking** - A pay and display scheme has been in place for 18 months and has seen a huge improvement to the parks overall traffic management plan. A piece of work was carried out to review all the individual car parks and as a result some car parks were reconfigured increasing capacity without using any additional land. The scheme also saw the introduction of new easy to use electronic pay points at each car park. This has vastly improved the overall visitor experience and reduced congestion at entrance points to the park. Income generated from car parking is directly reinvested in the park.

- 3.7.2.1 A range of commercial arrangements have been refreshed in the last 18 months including catering arrangements at Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park which both returned an uplift on previous income. A range of mobile opportunities were tendered at the same time, with no successful tenders returned, alternative ways of identifying potential operators are being considered.

- 3.7.2.2 Interim arrangements have been put in place at Fog Lane and Fletcher Moss that have enabled a catering offer to operate whilst an invitation to tender is developed. Both operations have been received well by their communities and the data collected on operations will support the development of a viable opportunity that will be tendered in the future.

### **3.8 Friends, Communities and Volunteers**

- 3.8.1 MCRVIP** - With MCRVIP volunteers can register to find out about opportunities to across parks, events, sports, libraries and in their local neighbourhood. The system allows volunteers to log their hours and in some cases earn rewards and incentives. MCRVIP can also be used by organisers to post their events or activities if they would like to engage with

volunteers. Friends of Parks groups are being coached to use the system with ten groups registered and ready to promote their volunteering opportunities.

**3.8.2 Volunteer Insurance** - Agreement was reached with the city's liability insurers for the public liability policy to cover unsupervised work by volunteers directly on behalf of the Council in parks. This work has now progressed, with the first group, the Friends of Wythenshawe Park, now being covered, successfully delivering two large scale clean ups as part of the Great British Clean Up campaign in April 2019. The next steps will be to work with other groups across the City and support them to meet the necessary criteria and work is underway with a cluster of Parks in Didsbury.

**3.8.3 Social Value** - is being embedded across the service, both within capital schemes and also contracting arrangements. There are some great examples of where Social Value has been driven, with some case studies shown below.

**3.8.3.1 Somme Memorial** - Members from The Friends of Heaton Hall, Heaton Park Tramway and the Somme 100 Memorial Team Coordinator were actively involved throughout this project. The volunteers played an essential part of the project team. They had a significant role in shaping the design, producing the text for the interpretation signage and supporting the arrangements for the unveiling event. Their participation and engagement is consistent with the Our Manchester approach. Working collaboratively, we've created an imaginative and respectful permanent memorial to those who fell at the Somme.

3.8.3.2 The memorial utilises selected memory squares that were created as part of the Somme memorial walk in 2016 and highlights some of the associated stories about those remembered - including dedications from a variety of different nationalities, regiments, age groups etc.

3.8.3.3 The Somme Project has kick started Heaton's new educational programme and heritage learning activities. The Heaton Park Team working with the volunteer groups 'Friends of Heaton Hall' and the 'Manchester Transport Museum Society' developed a 'WW1 Heritage Learning Day'. Working in partnership with the School, Heaton's 'WW1 Heritage Learning Day' covers essential requirements in the school curriculum, enriching the learning experience by offering interactive opportunities for young people to engage.

**3.8.3.4 South Play Area, Heaton Park** - The new play area greatly enhances the Lakeside offer at Heaton Park and supports existing businesses which currently includes rowing boats and the Lakeside Café thus safeguarding employment by creating increased demand through higher footfall. The café only opened seasonally prior to the play area being installed and has now increased its opening hours.

3.8.3.5 Five groups from Bowker Vale School were able to get hands on with the construction of the play area by helping to build the bridge across the stream.

## **4.0 Resourcing**

- 4.1 The ambition for the future of Manchester's Parks relies heavily on the work of the Parks Team and it has been recognised that to deliver the themes of the Strategy and continue positive engagement with the Team that the staffing resource needs to be increased and focus on engagement, enabling, good quality standards and closing the gap between income and expenditure to reach a sustainable operating model.
- 4.2 The parks redesign is progressing through the recruitment phase.

## **5.0 Zero-Carbon**

- 5.1 In the consultation to develop the Park Strategy, residents told us that climate change, biodiversity and ecology were really important to them and that parks need to perform for people and nature. This has become even more important with the Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the well publicised and associated biodiversity crisis.
- 5.2 Parks and green spaces in Manchester already make an important contribution to mitigating climate change with around a third of the 1,000+ hectares of land being managed as more natural river valley and urban countryside sites. However, more needs to be done to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as well as mitigate against the effects of extreme weather events and build more resilient ecosystems to help sustain species.
- 5.3 To capture the current position an audit has been undertaken of current activity and ideas generated for future action across the parks estate and activities. It was agreed that parks are great examples of climate-friendly activity that could be used as a way of engaging and inspiring residents to do more themselves.
- 5.4 There are examples of good practice that are being reviewed for roll out across the service - North Team use bikes for park inspections and in the last year covered 903 miles, burnt 45,150 calories and saved 536kg of CO<sub>2</sub>; new catering contracts include environmental conditions and monitoring for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, recycling, eradication of single use plastics; sensor lights have been installed during renovation of buildings to save on power costs; one electric vehicle at Heaton Park has saved approx. 1.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.
- 5.5 Manchester has an average tree cover of 20.6% and a large percentage of these are in our parks and green spaces. Although space is limited for large new areas of tree planting, initial discussions have been held with City of Trees to undertake site audits to identify opportunities for additional tree planting. Management of the existing woodlands is crucial to their long term good health, particularly with challenges such as ash dieback.
- 5.6 Subject to board approval, work will be undertaken with the City Policy Team to develop new action plans for the River Valleys (Irk, Medlock and Mersey). These will recognise the important role that Green and Blue

Infrastructure can play in terms of creating a spongier, more adaptive, biodiverse landscape that will help the City cope with climate change.