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I am pleased to present this Report on behalf of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board which it has been my privilege to Chair.

I know that many people who live, work or do business in Knowsley are passionate about the borough’s diverse and good quality parks and green spaces; they care very deeply about protecting these prized public assets for the benefit of Knowsley’s communities and natural habitats. I certainly share such views and can assure you that my leadership of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board has entirely focused on securing such objectives.

Knowsley is fortunate to host a wide range of different types of good quality parks and green spaces distributed widely across the borough, many holding the prized Green Flag standard. However, all of the traditional funding from Knowsley Council to sustain these precious sites will cease from April 2019. This is a dramatic change that could have serious consequences unless a completely new approach can be found to funding and managing them. I am convinced that a new future for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces can be found; and that the financial challenge offers great opportunity to really harness the true value of these unique assets for the benefit of everyone forever.

Since 2010, due to significant central Government cuts to funding for local public services, Knowsley Council has had to make a permanent saving of £86 million which equates to an overall reduction in its budget of 42%. The Council now faces the challenge of making a further £14.9 million of permanent savings by 2020.

To deliver the permanent savings required, Knowsley Council has identified that from April 2019 (because of Government cuts to funding), it will no longer be able to fund the upkeep of public parks in Knowsley. With the available funding, Knowsley Council has to prioritise other essential statutory community services, such as services for vulnerable children and adults. Therefore Knowsley Council’s annual funding for parks is no longer available and the Government will not provide any new funding for them.

This has been an extremely difficult decision for Knowsley Council and certainly not one it would have wished to make given their extensive use and the wide range of benefits that Knowsley's parks and green spaces provide.

Given this situation on 25 January 2017 Knowsley Council resolved, through a Notice of Motion to Protect the Future of Knowsley Parks, that an independent Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board be established. The Board’s remit has been to identify, for Knowsley Council’s consideration in November 2017, a new way of paying for the maintenance, management and positive use of Knowsley’s parks so that their unique qualities can be sustained in the short term and then for generations to come.

My interest in this very important matter very much reflects my roles within the Liverpool City Region as:
- Chair of Nature Connected the City Region’s Local Nature Partnership;
- Metro Mayoral Advisor for the Natural Environment; and
- Chair of the Innovation Agency, the Academic Health Science Network for the North West Coast (AHSN).

So I very much seek to champion and promote the significant benefits the natural environment can offer society in terms of health and wellbeing and economic regeneration, and to ensure that these outcomes are secured whenever possible.

Given this, I was asked by Knowsley Council to lead the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board in an independent, transparent and robust manner; taking into account innovative ideas, current best practice and the views of the many people who have an interest in this wide ranging topic.
In light of the exciting opportunities that the review offers to make a meaningful change for the on-going good of all those who live, work and do business in Knowsley I was very pleased to agree to Chair the Review Board.

The Review Board was established in March 2017 and consists of 20 members drawn from a range of community representatives; social, public and private sector organisations; and academic institutes. Since then the Board has had seven formal meetings and conducted extensive research, heard from expert witnesses and undertaken a range of field trips to see alternative ways of funding and managing public parks. This has all informed its consideration of the challenge faced by Knowsley Council and helped shape its thinking as to a potential solution. Whilst very interesting, this has been a challenging programme of work given the Board’s commitment to identifying a fundamentally new way of funding parks and green spaces in Knowsley.

The Review Board has been committed to seeking the views of those who live and work in Knowsley on this important matter. Therefore a very important part of its work has been to undertake research during August and September 2017 to secure people’s thoughts on how they value Knowsley’s parks and green space and what they think about ideas on how they could be managed in the future. As such the Board has completed an extensive public consultation to test its ideas with the public in a manner that meets best practice guidance on how such surveys should be undertaken.

The Review Board has now concluded its research and I am very pleased to be able to present its findings and recommendations to Knowsley Council in this Report.

The Board certainly recognises that a lot more work is needed to develop these proposals to the necessary level of detail that allows the Council to take the necessary economic, financial and commercial decisions to implement a new way of funding and managing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. However, what the Board has been able to do is to provide a well thought through strategic solution that has been demonstrated to have the backing of the majority of those living, working and doing business in Knowsley.

Our proposal does offer a new future for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces which I am confident provides the foundations that will now enable Knowsley Council to progress quickly to undertaking the necessary detailed business case analysis and subsequently implementing the Review Board’s plans for April 2019.

I look forward to seeing good progress.

Finally I must emphasise the collaborative nature in which our review has been conducted. All members of the Review Board have shown tremendous commitment to understanding some complicated issues and bringing their collective wisdom to bear on this extremely difficult issue to address, which I understand has yet to be resolved in any area of the UK. They have all given their time, knowledge and vigour to our meetings voluntarily, and through the amiable and thorough approach they have brought to our review have certainly become my trusted colleagues. My immense gratitude and best wishes goes to them all, and to the outstanding detailed support of Knowsley Council officers Rupert Casey and Caroline Holmes.

Gideon Ben-Tovim OBE
Chair of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board
6 November 2017

The Members of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board

The following individuals formed the membership of the Review Board. They were invited to do so by Knowsley Council given their very relevant and complementary local, specialist and academic knowledge and expertise which they have brought to bear to ensure that the review has been undertaken in a comprehensive and robust manner through their intelligent questioning, appropriate challenge and scrutiny of the issues. They have given their time voluntarily and acted as Board Members in an individual capacity.

- Gideon Ben-Tovim OBE (Chair) - Chair of Nature Connected
- Paul Nolan OBE (Vice-Chair) - Project Director The Mersey Forest
- Joanne Burgess - Friends of Ten Acre Pits (Huyton)
- Jennifer Chadwick - Councillor Prescot Town Council
- Eddie Connor - Councillor Knowsley Council, Neighbourhoods Cabinet Member
- Ray Davis - Councillor Whiston Town Council
- John Fleming - Secretary, Millennium Green Trust (Kirkby)
- Racheal Jones - Chief Operating Officer, Knowsley Community and Voluntary Service
- Neil Joseph - Councillor Knowsley Town Council
- Zoe Knowles - Professor of Engagement & Learning and Practitioner Psychologist, Physical Activity Exchange, Liverpool John Moores University
- Ian Morris - Chair of Delaware Allotment Garden Committee (Kirkby)
- Peter Neal - Peter Neal Consulting Ltd
- Tony Newman - Councillor Knowsley Council, Cabinet Lead Member for Neighbourhoods
- Edward Perry - Chair of the Knowsley Place Board and Operations Director Knowsley Safari Park
- Dave Rostance - Councillor Cronton Parish Council
- Anne Selby - Chief Executive Officer The Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Deputy Chair of Nature Connected
- Bob Swann - Councillor Halswood Town Council
- Bob Taylor - Chief Executive First Ark Group
- Muhammad Hafiz Ullah - Stadt Moers Allotment Garden (Whiston)
- John Woollam - Friends of Court Farm Woods (Halewood)
- Jennifer Chadwick - Councillor Prescot Town Council
- Joanne Burgess - Friends of Ten Acre Pits (Huyton)
The Review Board would like to thank the following people who have provided extremely valuable information, guidance and insight to its research and discussions.

- Dan Barlow, Head of Financial Management - Knowsley Council
- Philip Bowsher, Head of Environment, Education and Volunteering - The Park Trust Milton Keynes
- Joanna Caldwell, External Affairs Consultant (North) - National Trust
- Alan Carter, Development Director - The Land Trust
- Euan Hall, Chief Executive - The Land Trust
- Glynis Johnston, Trustee The Key Park - The Blundellsands Park Trust
- Karen Hewitt, Land Manager Haigh Hall Woodland Park - Wigan Council.
- Andy Jackson, The Heeley Development Trust
- Lydia Ragoonanan, Senior Programme Manager - NESTA
- Lizzie Kenyon, Director - Centre for Social Innovation Keep Britain Tidy
- Peter Neal, Landscape Consultant
- Paul Nolan OBE, Director - The Mersey Forest Team
- Anne Selby, CEO of The Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Iain Taylor, IMT Consulting
- Rose Tehan, Market Research Manager - Centre for Social Innovation Keep Britain Tidy
- Sarah Williams, Policy and Projects Executive - The Land Trust

The Purpose of the Report

This is the Report of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board. It presents the research that the Review Board has undertaken during the period March to October 2017 which has informed its identified findings, conclusions and recommendations. The Report has been prepared for the consideration of Knowsley Council who invited the Review Board to act independently in assessing options for the future management and funding of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces. Such careful planning is needed in light of the difficult decision the Council has been forced to make to end its annual financial contribution to managing, developing and maintaining these sites from April 2019 in light of the severe and on-going cuts to its budget by central Government.

Given this situation the Review Board was tasked, based on its strategic overview of the situation, with finding a new tangible alternative delivery model for sustaining these public assets in perpetuity whilst negating the dependency for the Council’s annual financial resource expenditure to maintain their upkeep and deliver their much valued outcomes.

This has certainly been a tall order; but one that the Review Board has worked hard to achieve and firmly believes it has secured.

The Structure of the Report

This Report is structured to articulate the information gathering journey the Review Board has taken over the course of the last eight months. The Board has conducted its research in a logical and systematic manner to ensure that it is presenting well evidenced conclusions and legitimate recommendations to Knowsley Council.

The Executive Summary provides an overview of the issues the Review Board has considered, its understanding of the consequence of not responding to the impending financial challenge to funding the upkeep of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, the potential solutions it has assessed and the Preferred Way Forward it has identified;

In its Introduction the Report explains why the Review Board was established, the objectives it was set by Knowsley Council and provides a summary of its key lines of enquiry and activities;

Setting the Scene provides important context against which the Review Board has understood the current methods and standards by which Knowsley Council manages the borough’s public parks and green spaces and the strategic objectives of Knowsley Council and its partners to make Knowsley The Borough of Choice. The driver for change is a single cause; which is Knowsley Council having to respond to significant and ongoing cuts to its funding for local public services throughout this decade that have been imposed on it by central Government;

In Reviewing Management Models for Parks and Green Spaces the Review considered a range of case studies, undertook field trips and heard from a range of very informative and helpful expert witnesses. This certainly helped to shape the Board’s view on the alternative management and funding model that would be best suited to leading, governing and managing Knowsley parks and green spaces as part of a new way forward in Knowsley, and indeed was influential in its subsequent appraisal of funding opportunities; Through Reviewing Funding Models for Parks and Green Spaces the Review Board has been able to assess which opportunities are most suited for application in Knowsley and which of these are likely to provide the scale and sustainability to play an influential role in protecting parks and green spaces;

This analysis has then been focused on Using an Endowment to Fund Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces. This concept has been explored by the Board and its application in Knowsley demonstrated;

In light of the Board’s assessment of the challenge, the negative implications of not finding a solution and the opportunities it has found to be available to find a sustainable solution the Board has an Identified Preferred Way Forward. This is founded on its strategic and conceptual approach to the review (in line with its Terms of Reference) and acknowledges that a detailed assessment of its viability is required if this is an approach that Knowsley Council decides to pursue;

A key component of the Board’s review has been testing its Preferred Way Forward with those who live, work and do business in Knowsley. In Engaging with Knowsley Residents and other Stakeholders the Board has sought to distil the wide range information it has gathered and the outcomes of the options it has assessed into a format that can be readily understood, reflected on and responded to by the public without them having the benefit of this insight. The Board’s strategy for doing so has been compliant with best practice and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct;

The Results of the Review Board's Public Consultation and Market Research provide an excellent and in-depth analysis of many stakeholders’ view on this really important matter for Knowsley. The results are very important to the Board;
The Review Board has debated a lot of information during its review and the outcomes of this need to be presented in a logical manner against which the Board has developed its perspectives. Therefore following each relevant section in this Report the Review Board’s Findings are highlighted and the Conclusions it has made from this information are presented. The subsequent Recommendations it is making to Knowsley Council are captured at the start of the Report along with the areas of issue or risk in respect to each of the recommendations, and suggested potential measures that Knowsley Council could employ to mitigate them. This information has been collated on the basis that:

- The Review Board Findings represent the information it has obtained during its review;
- The Review Board’s Conclusions represent an opinion it has formed after considering the relevant facts and evidence; and
- The Review Board’s Recommendations are its suggestions to Knowsley Council as to what it believes are good or sensible things to do in the circumstances.

Executive Summary

The Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board was formed in March 2017 at the request of Knowsley Council in light of its desire to find a new method by which the 161 public parks and green spaces in Knowsley can be funded and managed. These areas of land form 593 hectares of a total of 893 hectares of Public Green Space in Knowsley (the remainder being grassed areas adjacent to housing and roads).

Finding such a solution is a requirement if these much loved public assets are to be saved from rapid decline and widespread closure. This dilemma has been directly caused by central Government’s public sector austerity policy and Knowsley Council’s subsequent necessity to utilise the funding it does have to prioritise its statutory obligations and protect the most vulnerable people. Consequently the Council has very reluctantly made the decision to stop the circa £1.3 million of annual funding it provides to maintain parks from April 2019.

The Review Board has looked at other funding options that Knowsley Council could employ to sustain the great value that these sites provide post April 2019. They have heard from expert witnesses; reviewed strategic, financial and service information; undertaken a range of field trips; consulted with those who live, work and do business in the borough; and asked challenging questions in order to inform their consideration of what could be tangibly applied to Knowsley. They have sought a solution that could be proposed to Knowsley Council who in turn may then build on this proposed way forward through detailed analysis and business case preparation to structure and finance such an alternative delivery model.

The Board’s review has been framed to adhere to the Policy Objectives it was set by Knowsley Council and with an understanding of the development and regeneration that is successfully taking place across Knowsley aimed at improving social value and economic prosperity; a fundamental priority is demand for quality new homes and land to build them on is required over the next 15 - 20 years.

Whilst the funding of public parks is a challenge for most local authorities, given that Knowsley Council has been hardest hit by central Government cuts it is facing the most acute crisis in continuing to deliver such non-statutory services. Whilst the scale of such a challenge is significant and its negative implications are very apparent, on the up-side it does offer the opportunity for everyone who has an interest in this agenda to really re-think why public parks are important, why their attributes need to be maintained and how innovative new approaches can be devised for sustaining them for the benefit of everyone now and in the future. The Review Board has been ambitious yet pragmatic in its deliberations in the knowledge that staying as things are is simply not an option. The Board wished to find a holistic and sustainable solution for Knowsley’s network of parks and green spaces.

The Review Board has identified excellent examples of how public green space assets are being managed and improved for the benefit of local communities through charitable trusts with appropriate trustee and member governance alongside having certainty of long-term funding through an endowment. Such examples include The Parks Trust Milton Keynes, The National Trust, The Land Trust and The Wildlife Trusts. An endowment is an amount of money invested for long-term income, effectively forever. Unlike a personal endowment to support a mortgage on the home, it does not have to achieve a particular value by a given date, but instead is focused on producing income annually. Its value can rise and fall over time, but if properly invested, should provide sufficient funds to fund the annual costs of the parks and green spaces.

The Review Board has looked at other funding and resource streams too. These have included philanthropic giving, encouraging and recognising volunteering, transferring individual parks to third parties, generating income from cemetery services, seeking Corporate Social Responsibility Bonds, grant funding and providing Ecosystem Services (the services and products that nature provides grant funding and providing Ecosystem Services).
is not achievable, especially in the short-term. Therefore the Review Board has found that it is only an endowment that provides the scale and permanence to bring the level of new income that is required to fund parks and green spaces from April 2019. Given this research the Review Board has identified the following approach for the future funding and management of parks and green spaces in Knowsley. This is the primary outcome of the review and is the Preferred Way Forward that the Board is recommending to Knowsley Council.

The Review Board’s Recommended Governance and Management Model:

a. The transfer of parks and green spaces into a new charitable trust with a trading subsidiary from April 2019; as demonstrated to be a successful way of managing through public sector austerity public green spaces e.g. The Parks Trust Milton Keynes. The parks and green spaces would be transferred only for permitted uses which would be regulated through a long-term lease and legal agreement between the trust and Knowsley Council.

b. The Knowsley Parks Trust, as it is proposed to be called, would be established as the independent governing body with its objectives set by Knowsley Council e.g. free public access and delivering Green Space Strategy outcomes. It would have a Chair and a Board of Trustees with local representation (voluntary roles) to govern its strategic direction and operational outcomes. There would be oversight by Knowsley Council and other potential Founding Members of the Trust.

c. Knowsley Parks Services Ltd would be the Trust’s trading arm with social enterprise credentials. It would deliver the Trust’s operational parks management and maintenance activities plus additional services that generate income and profit; these would be re-invested to help meet the charitable, social and green space protection objectives of the Trust.

d. The creation of The Knowsley Parks Trust offers the opportunity for continuation of employment for appropriate staff at Knowsley Council who currently develop, manage and maintain parks and green spaces. It also offers the opportunity to create new job roles within The Knowsley Parks Trust and its Trading Subsidiary where new skills and experience will be required e.g. endowment fund management and the organisational professional services of Knowsley Council that are no longer available e.g. human resource, IT and legal services.

The Review Board’s Recommended Funding Proposal:

a. The creation of an Endowment of £40 million (+/- 10%), invested wisely with the interest earned being circa £1.3 million per annum. This provides an amount of money that is invested for long-term income, effectively forever and the interest earned is used to prevent the need for annual Council funding. It represents the only way to secure the scale and permanence to meet the expenditure that Knowsley Council is seeking from an alternative source and should be regarded as the mainstay of The Knowsley Parks Trust funding strategy. There are good and long-standing practice examples of charities and trusts using endowments to fund their operations e.g. The National Trust and The Land Trust.

b. However, other funding / income generation opportunities must also be fully utilised for site development and to support community projects:
   - Traded services e.g. via the open cemeteries or through concessions, events and activities;
   - Corporate Social Responsibility Investment;
   - External grant funding; and
   - Community volunteering.

The Review Board’s Recommendation for Creating the Endowment:

a. In April 2019 the endowment could be funded by Knowsley Council using Prudential Borrowing loan and other resources. The sum secured for the endowment would be recovered by the Council over a 15 year period from the sale of a limited number of parks and green spaces (either whole or part) for new development that is required in the borough e.g. commercial, social care or housing use.

b. The Board has identified strategic criteria for the selection of parks and green space sites for sale (but has not applied these to identify actual sites for sale).

c. From April 2019, based on the Review Board’s assumptions, at least 90% of parks and green spaces will be maintained and protected as public green space assets forever. The Council will dispose of up to 10% parks and green spaces (either whole or part) over 15 years to recover its funding of the endowment.

d. The return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million) is ring-fenced to be used to maintain these sites, with the actual endowment pot (£40 million +/- 10%) not being used.

e. Using this funding method and placing the parks / green spaces in an independent Trust as their custodian would protect them from any future Knowsley Council budget savings. This will give reassurance to the people of Knowsley that the vast majority of green spaces will be protected to a good standard forever by The Knowsley Parks Trust.

f. The sale of a minority of land within the parks and green spaces estate (up to 10%), protects the majority (e.g. 90%) forever.

g. This method of creating the endowment utilises only the parks and green space land within the scope of the Board’s review. However, Knowsley Council should identify what land is available for sale for the same types of development from Public Green Space land that is not in the scope of the Board’s review too (e.g. the grassed areas maintained by Knowsley Council’s Streetscene Services) using the Board’s Strategic Selection Criteria. This should be done before the sale of any sale of parks and green spaces is considered. Furthermore no further sale of any Public Green Space land should take place until Knowsley Council has considered the Board’s recommendations and identified its next steps.

h. The parks and green spaces identified for sale / development will be retained by Knowsley Council. They will be maintained to appropriate functional standards (depending on the site) as directed by Knowsley Council via The Knowsley Parks Trust. This would be funded from a proportion of the return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million total per annum) given this is the approximate level of funding that currently maintains 100% of parks and green spaces. The proportion required to cover such costs will decline in value over 15 years as these sites are developed and so no longer require such maintenance.

It is against these strategic principles that the Review Board has made its recommendations to Knowsley Council and in so doing fully recognises that their application will require detailed business case development by the Council to test the deliverability of this identified preferred forward.
The Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward - Recommendations

Recommendation 1
The unique role that public parks and green spaces play in shaping Knowsley as a Place and supporting its society, economy and environment must be preserved: they are fundamental requirements to sustaining and promoting Knowsley as a great place to live, work and do business. This role should be utilised by Knowsley Council in its delivery of its Corporate Plan priorities e.g. the beneficial role that green spaces play in improving educational attainment should be reflected in the Council’s Schools Commission agenda and their role in helping to promote healthy lifestyles being a continued Public Health intervention.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
- The risk of not finding a sustainable funding and management solution has been identified and the detrimental consequences of this described.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
- Through it accepting the recommendations of the Review Board and commissioning a detailed business case to be prepared on the basis of the Review Board’s strategic assessment and the Board’s identified Preferred Way Forward.

Recommendation 2
Knowsley’s parks and green spaces should be managed, developed and funded as a collective group of spaces as it is their diverse offer and equitable spread across the borough that needs to be maintained in any new way forward, indeed it is their network across the borough that brings a combined added-value to Knowsley and this should be utilised to enable the identification of a comprehensive solution.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
- That whilst the ideal is to find a solution for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as a network, the ability of the Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward to provide a holistic solution for the majority of such sites needs to be tested. If found not to be viable then Knowsley Council will need to look at parks / green spaces on an individual basis and identify what funding each can generate to support their own upkeep; those that have the ability to do so will need to develop such income generation and those that cannot will need to be managed in their decline and probable closure. The cost implications of this scenario i.e. one-off closure expenditure and subsequent site security will need to be assessed by Knowsley Council.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
- Working proactively and innovatively in collaboration with all interested stakeholders to pursue the realisation of the Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward.
- The realisation of current individual parks improvement projects that will support their upkeep and have the potential to release funding to support other parks / green spaces in Knowsley e.g. Bowring Park and Court Hey Park.

Recommendation 3
The Natural Capital value that green infrastructure provides (i.e. social, health, economic and environmental benefits) should be presented to central Government, and Knowsley Council’s partners and businesses located in the borough and the Liverpool City Region so that they realise the wide ranging contribution these public assets make to their objectives and are able to use this evidence in their investment decisions.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
- The evidence that supports such valuation is not commonly used in public or private sector investment decisions.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
- Promoting the Green Infrastructure Toolkit developed by The Mersey Forest Team as a mechanism for valuing such assets and acknowledging such worth in its discussion with central Government, developers and businesses.

Recommendation 4
Greater levels of volunteering should be secured to support the maintenance and improvement of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. Furthermore the benefits of such generosity, i.e. health and well-being, social value and skill development, should be promoted by Knowsley’s Friends of Park groups; with Knowsley Council recognising, appreciating and supporting these green space champions.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
- That the passion for such volunteering is not lost through the establishment of The Knowsley Parks Trust (as people may perceive that it will be competing with them for grants or look to overshadow their contributions).
- Volunteers cannot be expected to be used to replace routine, complex and significant activities currently undertaken by Knowsley Council staff (or contractors used by the Parish and Town Councils). They will however have a primary role in working within or with the Trust.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
- Through setting the charitable objectives of The Knowsley Parks Trust in a manner that ensures that it is required to facilitate and support existing and new voluntary green space focused initiatives, individuals and groups i.e. through its charitable objectives.
- By reassuring those involved in such volunteering that the relationship between them and the Trust will be positive and complementary, as the community groups that champion Knowsley’s parks and green spaces are the very attributes that the Trust will be set-up to protect - they will be a cornerstone of the Trust’s success.
- Knowsley Council should formally celebrate / reward the volunteers that play such an important role in maintaining and developing green spaces.
- Social enterprises, educational establishments and businesses should be encouraged to utilise Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as a means of improving the health and well-being, skills and employment prospects of their employees or students through their voluntary involvement in green space improvement projects. Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services (KCVS) should be asked to co-ordinate this call to action in order to listen and to work with the needs of target audiences and utilise their links with established networks to reach new people.
- The Review Board’s market research / public consultation indicates that 96% of residents believe that parks make Knowsley an attractive place to live, work and / or visit. Furthermore 90% think parks are important to them personally. This fantastic interest in green spaces should be harnessed through a new call for volunteers.
- By promoting the current regeneration project at Bowring Park and the opportunities for developing a new future at Court Hey Park to catalyse community interest.

Recommendation 5
The establishment of The Knowsley Parks Trust on the basis that:
- The Knowsley Parks Trust would be a new entity established as an independent charity with a defined purpose to safeguard and manage Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces.
- The Trust would be registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales so as to demonstrate through its Charitable Objectives its public benefit and transparency in its financial proceedings, governance, legal requirements and performance reporting.
- The Knowsley Parks Trust would lease the Parks and Green Spaces under its custodianship from Knowsley Council on a long-term lease (e.g. 999 years) which would stipulate what that land can be used for i.e. freely publicly accessible parkland plus the standards to be maintained and activities to be provided by the Trust. Therefore the land that the Trust is responsible for will remain under the ultimate ownership of Knowsley Council and so will be responsible for ensuring that the Trust fulfils its obligations set out within the lease agreement.
• The conditions of the land lease would be reflected in a legal agreement between Knowsley Council and The Knowsley Parks Trust that would stipulate the Trust's conditions of operation and business plan priorities, which must align to the ethos of Knowsley Council and its partners.

• The Knowsley Parks Trust would be responsible for the maintenance, management, development and positive use of the parks and green spaces under its remit - with outcomes associated with such matters being stipulated in the lease / agreement / charitable objectives.

• The Knowsley Parks Trust would be established by Founding Members i.e. prominent organisations with an interest in Knowsley and be managed by a Board of Trustees (voluntary positions) that have the necessary experience and skills to actively guide and support the activities of the Trust and monitor / report on the Trust's performance to the Founding Members (which could include representation from Knowsley Council and Knowsley's Parish and Town Councils) and hold the Trust's professional management team to account.

• The Knowsley Parks Trust is to be able to generate income / profit through trading with such revenue being re-invested against the charitable / social / green space objectives of the Trust i.e. for public good in Knowsley - through a trading subsidiary e.g. Knowsley Parks Services Ltd registered with Companies House and operating as a social enterprise.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:

• To ensure that the public of Knowsley are reassured and so have trust that The Knowsley Parks Trust will operate professionally and effectively, is accountable for properly managing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to defined standards and outcomes, and does not conflict or compete with the friends or parks groups / resident associations.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:

• It will be Knowsley Council that establishes the new trust with an independent Chair and Board of Trustees (voluntary roles) who will be selected to ensure they are properly qualified and experienced to run the Trust, and they are prepared to be held to account to the Charity Commission and Knowsley Council for the Trust's decisions.

• Knowsley Council (and the Friends of parks groups / residents associations) will maintain an active role within the Trust to ensure its work best serves the communities of Knowsley as either a founding member or through trustee representation.

• In establishing the Trust Knowsley Council will prepare detailed legal documents to ensure that it has clear objectives and that its outcomes are reported back to the Council. For example, the parks and green spaces will be transferred to the Trust on a long-lease (e.g. 999 years) which will ensure that only use permitted by the Council can be undertaken on the land and they cannot be sold for alternative uses or developments without the Council's consent.

• The professional staff managing the running of the Trust in line with Trustee strategic direction must be suitably skilled and experienced to ensure the success of the new venture.

• The management and maintenance of the parks and green spaces may be undertaken by Knowsley Council staff who may move over to be employed by the Trust or its trading subsidiary (the legal implications and management of such a transfer have not been considered by the Review Board as this is a matter for Knowsley Council to determine and is expected to form part of its next steps detailed business case preparation - it is noted however that an option to be explored is the secondment of existing Knowsley Council staff into the Trust rather than a direct transfer of employment).

• The intention is that quality and approach will remain unchanged and the community may well not notice any difference in the appearance of their local green spaces or the people involved in their management and maintenance.

• In recent decades independent trusts have become a popular vehicle for managing parks and green spaces, with national research published in the State of UK Parks 2016 highlighting that many have weathered the recent financial crisis in a relatively healthy position e.g. The Parks Trust Milton Keynes.

• Undertaking a detailed business case assessment of the Review Board's strategic assessment findings, conclusions and recommendations including strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management case preparation. This approach follows the recognised Five Case model promoted by HM Treasury in its Green Book Appraisal for Public Sector Business Cases.

• Taking appropriate specialist financial and legal advice before proceeding.

• Communicating good examples and the benefits of charitable trusts to the public and explaining how lessons learnt from poor performing trusts will be taken on board.

• Highlighting the beneficial Social Value opportunities The Knowsley Parks Trust would bring.

• Explaining that the creation of The Knowsley Parks Trust offers the opportunity for continuation of employment for appropriate staff at Knowsley Council who currently develop, manage and maintain parks and green spaces. It also offers the opportunity to create new job roles within The Knowsley Parks Trust and its Trading Subsidiary where new skills and experience are required and the organisational professional services of Knowsley Council is no longer available. It is highly likely that jobs will be lost if the Preferred Way Forward is not progressed as Knowsley Council has no funding after April 2019 for these services, which includes funding the posts that deliver them.

Recommendation 6

Through its governance arrangements the Knowsley Parks Trust must demonstrate its independence and professional standing. Therefore its Trustees must provide the necessary local interest and ambitions for Knowsley whilst complementing this with the expertise and experience of those from further afield. As a collective the Trustees must have the following key skills (in no particular order of priority):

• A love of parks and green spaces
• Charity governance
• Charity law and administration / Commercial acumen
• Communications and information technology
• Community engagement
• Environmental knowledge and expertise
• Financial and investment management
• Fundraising
• Human resources / personnel management
• Land management, horticulture and the natural environment
• Local knowledge
• Marketing, networking promotions
• Project management
• Senior management professional experience
• Social, health and educational interests
• Strategy development and business planning

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:

• Securing interest from a suitable cohort of individuals with the necessary interest and skills to lead the management of Knowsley's parks and green spaces.

• This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:

• By remaining engaged with those who have been members of the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board and seeking their input, at an appropriate time, in Knowsley Council's detailed business case.

• Providing the Knowsley Parks Trust with short-term resources to secure specific skills and expertise as required providing technical and professional support during its start-up phase.
Recommendation 7
The Knowsley Parks Trust must engage readily with the people of Knowsley and so be recognised at a community, borough and Liverpool City Region scale as a principal organisation working to enhance the public realm, provide social value, improve people’s health and wellbeing and support economic prosperity.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
• Those living, working and doing business in Knowsley do not feel that they are sufficiently represented on the Trust.
• The Trust is not proactive and ambitious in its strategy and business plan objectives.
• The Trust fails to collaborate, influence and deliver shared outcomes with partners.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
• Ensuring that the overarching principles / objectives of the Trust, and its approach, are in line with Knowsley Council and its partners’ ethos and strategic priorities.
• That the Trust has professional management and operational staff in place, and resources to deliver its services and build wider partnerships.
• By the Trust having its headquarters in one of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces e.g. Bowring Park or Court Hey Park.

Recommendation 8
The Parks Trust Milton Keynes, The National Trust, The Land Trust and The Wildlife Trusts should be approached to find out what they could offer to maintain and manage Knowsley’s parks and green spaces in order to assess the benefits of applying the services / experience of an existing such trust or establishing a new trust entity (noting that these organisations would require new funding to deliver their services in Knowsley).

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:
• These organisations may offer governance, land management and endowment investment advice etc. which is positive and must be explored fully; however it is likely that they will want a fee for bringing such expertise / services to Knowsley (which is reasonable). They will not take on the management of any of Knowsley’s parks or green spaces without a new income stream being available to them that covers such costs e.g. an endowment.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:
• By including discussions with such organisations to clarify what their offer could be as part of Knowsley Council’s detailed business case development.

Recommendation 9
The funding model should be founded on the creation of an Endowment held and managed by The Knowsley Parks Trust to secure return on its sensible investment (by the Trust) as this provides the scale and permanence to meet the majority of the expenditure the Council is seeking to secure from an alternative funding model (circa £1.3 million per annum):
• In April 2019 the endowment could be funded by Knowsley Council using Prudential Borrowing loan and other resources. The sum secured for the endowment would be recovered by the Council over a 15 year period from the sale of a limited number of parks and green spaces (either whole or part) for new development that is required in the borough e.g. commercial, social care or housing use.
• The Review Board has identified strategic criteria for the selection of parks and green space sites for sale (but has not applied these to identify actual sites for sale).
• From April 2019, based on the Review Board’s assumptions, at least 90% of parks and green spaces will be maintained and protected as public green space assets forever within The Knowsley Parks Trust. Knowsley Council will retain and then sell for development of up to 10% of the parks and green spaces (either whole or part) identified for such change of use over 15 years to recover its funding of the endowment.
• The return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million) is ring-fenced to be used to maintain these sites, with the actual endowment pot (£40 million +/- 10%) not being used. Using this funding method and placing the parks / green spaces in an independent Trust as their custodian would protect them from any future Knowsley Council budget savings. This will give reassurance to the people of Knowsley that the vast majority of green spaces will be protected to a good standard forever by The Knowsley Parks Trust.
• The sale of a minority of land within the parks and green spaces estate (up to 10%), protects the majority (e.g. 90%) forever.
• This method of creating the endowment utilises only the parks and green space land within the scope of the Board’s review. However, Knowsley Council should identify what land is available for sale for the same types of development from Public Green Space land that is not in the scope of the Board’s review too (e.g. the grassed areas maintained by Knowsley Council’s Streetscene Services) using the Board’s Strategic Selection Criteria. This should be done before the sale of any sale of parks and green spaces is considered. Furthermore no further sale of any Public Green Space land should take place until Knowsley Council has considered the Board’s recommendations and identified its next steps.

The Review Board have identified that the majority of green spaces identified for sale / development will be retained by Knowsley Council. They will be maintained to appropriate functional standards (depending on the site) as directed by Knowsley Council via The Knowsley Parks Trust. This would be funded from a proportion of the return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million total per annum) given this is the approximate level of funding that currently maintains 100% of parks and green spaces. The proportion required to cover such costs will decline in value over 15 years as these sites are developed and so no longer require such maintenance.

Whilst the endowment is the recommended mainstay of The Knowsley Parks Trust funding, it is also very important that other funding / income generation opportunities are further explored which will also contribute to, with varying scale and longevity, the funding of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. Such funding could be used for site developments / improvements that enhance the green space offer and will potentially bring in new income too. These include:
• Traded services with the ability to generate profit (for the public good) including those provided through cemeteries and ecosystem services, and concessions, events and activities (as examples).
• Utilising the income generation opportunities offered by the current regeneration project at Bowring Park and the opportunities for developing a new future at Court Hey Park.
• Engaging with Knowsley businesses to secure much more Corporate Social Responsibility investment (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility Bonds) in the parks and green spaces in proximity to their premises and employees homes and for the wider benefit of the borough.
• Identify and secure external grant funding opportunities to support both revenue and capital infrastructure works.
• Providing further encouragement and support to engaging philanthropic giving, community volunteering, third sector and asset transfers where a sustainable business case can be demonstrated.
In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:

- The ability of Knowsley Council to identify sufficient park land that is of sufficient interest to developers for them to purchase the land; a pipeline of sites / areas of sites is required over a 15 year period that will create a capital value of approximately £40 million (+/- 10%) in order to create the endowment.
- Public concern over which parkland will be included in the 10% for sale and how this will be selected.
- The ability of Knowsley Council to pump-prime / create the necessary scale of endowment from April 2019 in advance of the sites for sale being purchased by developers.
- Securing the necessary return on the endowment’s investment in an astute and ethical manner, and managing appropriate levels of risk and return.
- That should Knowsley Council or the Knowsley Parks Trust secure a financial windfall during the 15 year period, or there is significant material change (i.e. political, social or economic factors), then the need to dispose of parks / green spaces to fund the endowment should be reviewed.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:

- Through its detailed business case preparation: development / application of the Strategic Site Selection criteria identified by the Review Board, collaborative engagement with the Parish and town councils and due-diligence checks on any leases and land title to ensure that all legal aspects of the land, including restrictions, are understood.
- Explaining the criteria it has used to select the sites for sale and the method by which they have been applied.
- At the earliest opportunity letting the public know which sites / areas of sites have been selected for sale and those that will be retained / preserved.

Through its detailed business case preparation: financial and treasury management, and engagement with investment parties.

### Recommendation 10

The Review Board’s Proposed Strategic Criteria for Selection of Parks and Green Spaces for Sale are as follows:

- Selecting sites that are not in an area that is defined as Green Belt land within Knowsley’s Local Plan.
- Selecting sites that do not form part of a Park Network (e.g. green corridors that link sites together).
- Selecting sites with limited biodiversity / wildlife value.
- Selecting sites that have limited recreational value in terms of their use for sports and formal leisure.
- Selecting sites that have limited community use in terms of informal leisure use (e.g. walking, relaxation, play).
- Selecting sites that have little or no historical value or cultural significance.
- Selecting sites in areas that already have parks and green spaces in close proximity.
- Selecting sites that could have an alternative use (e.g. not for public use).
- Selecting parks and green spaces that could be of interest to developers.
- Selecting sites that would offer a high financial contribution to the endowment.
- Selecting sites that are currently overlooked by / or in close proximity to residential properties.
- Not selecting sites that contain sustainable travel routes (e.g. cycleways or walkways).
- Not selecting sites that provide green corridors for wildlife migration.
- Not selecting sites that provide positive landscape / visual landscape / visual amenity value.
- Not selecting sites that maintain the benefits of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as identified in Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:

- That those living in proximity to a park or an area of green space identified for sale will undoubtedly oppose this happening and lobby for such a decision to be changed.
- The on-going maintenance of such sites before they are developed on needs to be agreed, funded and resourced - if they can remain accessible to the public but maintained to a minimum standard that allows this to happen, that would be preferable.
- That Knowsley’s Local Plan requires the provision of 382 hectares of Public Green Space Land; however the total amount of such space in the borough is 893 hectares which is 134% more than is needed according to the Plan. The 893 hectares includes 593 hectares of parks and green spaces within the scope of the Board’s review.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:

- That the Council’s Planning Authority statutory functions are fully applied to any development proposals / applications.
- That the Board’s findings and recommendations are available for public scrutiny / comment.
- That the Council’s Planning Authority statutory functions are fully applied to any development proposals / applications.
- That the on-going sustainability of Knowsley parks and green space network is promoted - without this solution much more than 10% of such sites would be closing.
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- That the Council’s Planning Authority statutory functions are fully applied to any development proposals / applications.
- That the on-going sustainability of Knowsley parks and green space network is promoted - without this solution much more than 10% of such sites would be closing.

### Recommendation 11

That once Knowsley Council has fully considered this Report’s findings, conclusions and recommendations and made its response to the Review Board, that the Report is made publicly available and formally launched by Knowsley Council in partnership with the Review Board in January 2018.

### Recommendation 12

Subject to Knowsley Council’s response to the Review Board’s Report the Board’s Chair convenes a meeting with the Liverpool City Region Mayor to brief him on the Board’s findings and to seek his support in seeing if greater City Region collaboration and additional resources can be secured around this approach.

In taking this recommendation forward Knowsley Council should consider the following issues / risks:

- This approach has not been considered in any detail by the Review Board as part of its work as it was not part of its Terms of Reference, however the Board has identified that its Preferred Way Forward for Knowsley may be of interest to the other Liverpool City Region local authorities.

This matter could be mitigated by Knowsley Council:

- Through its consideration of the Review Board’s report and its decision on next steps.

### Recommendation 13

That if Knowsley Council decides to take forward the Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward then it should do this in a manner that develops this proposal into an Outline Business Case and if appropriate a subsequent Full Business Case (i.e. following the HM Treasury Five Case Model) to ensure the viability of establishing The Knowsley Parks Trust and its future sustainability from financial, commercial, legal and stakeholder engagement perspectives. Due-diligence of the Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward is needed.
The Review Board’s Terms of Reference sets out eight Policy Requirements which Knowsley Council asked the Board to frame its work against. As such the Board has kept these objectives in the forefront of its thinking during its consideration of information and in the subsequent development of its conclusions and recommendations.

The Board is pleased to be able to provide a positive response to all of the Policy Requirements which are summarised below.

- **Policy Objective (A) - Safeguarding Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces**
  
  Ensure that the Borough’s parks and green spaces remain freely accessible to be enjoyed by all, and belong to the people of Knowsley in perpetuity.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  The Review Board has identified that Knowsley’s parks and green spaces should be transferred under a long-term lease from Knowsley Council to an independent charitable trust called The Knowsley Parks Trust. The Trust’s primary charitable objective would be to sustain these sites as freely accessible public assets. Therefore they would belong to the people of Knowsley who would not have to pay the Trust to access them.

- **Policy Objective (B) - Delivering Strategic and Corporate Objectives**

  Deliver the Council’s Green Space Strategy 2015-2020 and realise its outcomes, which will contribute towards meeting the Priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2017-2020.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  Knowsley’s parks and green spaces offer a unique means of supporting the delivery of Knowsley Council’s Corporate Plan’s five priorities. This is articulated in the Green Space Strategy. The Review Board has recognised these priorities and in so doing fully appreciated the attributes that parks and green spaces bring to the borough’s communities, Knowsley Council and its partners.

  Furthermore, this is an alternative delivery model and these are recognised in the Corporate Plan as the future means of delivering appropriate Council services, which we believe this is one.

- **Policy Objective (C) - Improve Grounds Maintenance Standards**

  Maintain and where possible improve the 2016/17 quality grounds maintenance standard outcomes of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  The Review Board has noted that current benchmarking demonstrates that Knowsley Council’s parks and green space team provide a quality service at a good value for money; this is not the driver for change. The Board also understands that good quality maintenance standards encourage positive community use and ownership of green spaces e.g. as seen through Knowsley’s 18 Green Flag Parks. Therefore ensuring that sufficient funding and staff skill, expertise and capacity is available moving forward to enable such standards to be kept and where possible enhanced is essential.

- **Policy Objective (D) - Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model**

  Through the implementation of a new funding and management model, replace the Council’s 2016/17 budget of £1.114 million on the development, management and maintenance of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces, whilst also identifying £0.185 million of new annual funding in order to avoid the need for the Council to find new capital funding resources to maintain green space infrastructure. A total value of circa £1.3 million.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.
The creation of an endowment which, invested wisely, will generate an annual income that will replace Knowsley Council's annual expenditure of circa £1.3 million. The endowment will need to be created through the sale of up to 10% of parks and green spaces for new use e.g. housing or social care homes (for which there is great demand) but this will allow the majority to be protected forever.

In placing the majority of parks and green spaces into the independent Knowsley Parks Trust and funding them via an endowment will protect them for any future funding cuts that may need to be made by Knowsley Council. This will give reassurance to the public that this approach will protect the vast majority of parks forever.

- **Policy Objective (E) - Develop a more Commercial and Entrepreneurial Management Culture**
  Establish a new funding and management model which enables the delivery of the Council’s Green Space Strategy through an entrepreneurial spirit and the utilisation of the most effective public, commercial, charitable and social enterprise governance structures.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  Whilst an endowment is the proposed mainstay of funding the parks and green spaces the Review Board very much recognise the need for traded services, corporate social responsibility, grant funding and community volunteering. These sources of income/resource will not on their own meet the shortfall in funding needed to be met, but will provide much needed funding to develop sites so they offer greater value and assist in topping-up core maintenance requirements.

  The Knowsley Parks Trust and its trading subsidiary (with social enterprise credentials) will require the skills and experience to enable these activities.

- **Policy Objective (F) - Promote the Principles of a Co-operative Council**
  Embed the delivery of the appropriate components of the Council’s Priorities, Outcomes and Co-operative Principles into the new funding and management model’s terms of reference and business plan.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  The Knowsley Parks Trust will be independent of Knowsley Council. However the Council will establish the Trust and in doing so will set its charitable objectives, ethos, method of operation, founding members, trustees and staff; so all controlled by the Council through legal agreements and land lease conditions.

  There are many excellent examples of charitable trusts using an endowment to maintain public open space - such best practice would be followed.

- **Policy Objective (H) - Secure Political and Public Confidence and Support**
  Ensure public confidence in the intent, positive outcomes and sustainability of the future funding and management of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces.

  The Review Board’s proposals allow this to happen.

  The Review Board has placed great importance in testing its proposals with those who live, work and do business in Knowsley i.e. given the financial circumstances of Knowsley Council are they supportive of establishing The Knowsley Parks Trust, largely funded by an endowment that is created from the sale of 10% of parks and green spaces for alternative use? This was undertaken in a comprehensive manner to ensure statistically sound data was collected and as many people as possible had a chance to have their say. A good level of response was received, with the majority supporting the Board’s plans.

  The people of Knowsley will need more information about how The Knowsley Parks Trust would be established and how parks and green spaces will be selected to fund its endowment. This is an important part of the next steps that Knowsley Council will need to undertake.
Introduction to the Review and to the Review Board

Addressing a significant challenge through a great opportunity

Parks and green spaces make a significant contribution to the quality and sustainability of Knowsley's neighbourhoods. There is now a significant evidence base that highlights and quantifies the multiple economic, social and environmental benefits that individual and wider networks of green infrastructure can provide for communities. Knowsley Council understands these benefits well and they feature within many of its current corporate strategies and planning policies. These documents, and the actions they have enabled, have steered the development, investment, management and maintenance of Knowsley's parks and green spaces for a decade. Today all of Knowsley's residents now have access to good, and in many cases excellent, quality parks and green spaces close to their homes and places of work. These positively improve their health and wellbeing, and greatly contribute to the liveability of their neighbourhoods. Importantly such resources also provide a strategic tool through which Knowsley Council can market the borough to prospective new home buyers plus encourage business to invest in, and locate to, Knowsley; so making it the 'Borough of Choice'.

Whilst such attributes are evident, and the social, financial and environmental risks associated with their loss are prominent, their traditional method of provision and funding by the Council has become unsustainable with a tipping point into notable decline now being reached. This is a national trend, which has been highlighted by the recently published State of UK Public Parks 2016 Report, and has been caused principally by on-going and significant reductions in the funding the Council receives for providing public services by central Government. Consequently as a largely non-statutory service, the functions of the Council that enable these outcomes to be secured (delivered via its Environmental Sustainability Service (ESS)) are the subject of substantial annual revenue and capital budget reductions from April 2019; with all annual controllable financial resources funding from the Council being withdrawn. This is a dramatic change that could lead to a rapid decline in the quality of parks and their positive use. A consequence of managing such degeneration is likely to include the difficult choice to close of many parks and green spaces as the resources will not be available to maintain them all.

A new future for Knowsley's parks and green spaces must therefore be found.

The imminent financial challenge is the driver for change and whilst this is certainly an undesirable situation there is also great opportunity to find such an innovative way forward that harnesses the wide ranging values that this unique network of public assets provide in a way that protects their benefits for everyone forever.

Protecting the future of Knowsley's parks

Given this reality and Knowsley Council's desire to retain and grow the benefits that the borough's parks and green space offer, on 25 January 2017 the Council passed a Notice of Motion: Protecting the Future of Knowsley's Parks. This public statement recognises their important role in shaping Knowsley the Place and supporting community wellbeing but identifies the need for a new funding and management model founded on the Council's Co-operative Principles, ethos and priorities. The Council resolved:

• That an all-party and stakeholder task and finish working group be set up to explore options to create an alternative funding and governance model for parks so that their continued maintenance, development and investment delivers against a host of priority outcomes for the Council, its partners and our communities; and
• That such a new delivery model will ensure that our parks can be maintained, supported and protected in perpetuity for generations to come.

The Notice of Motion: Protecting the Future of Knowsley's Parks can be found as Appendix A.
Finding the solution - The Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board

Given this call to action the Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board was established and then commissioned by Knowsley Council in March 2017 to be an independent body to undertake an in-depth review of potential new funding and governance models for the Borough’s parks and green spaces. The Board’s objective has been to identify at a strategic and conceptual level its recommended alternative management model to Knowsley Council that enables Knowsley’s publicly accessible network of green spaces to continue to provide their wide ranging and much valued contribution to society in perpetuity, whilst ensuring that Knowsley Council balances its budget in line with the national Government’s public sector spending constraint policy. Therefore the Review Board was tasked with identifying the most appropriate holistic model for Knowsley’s parks as a collective and so has assessed funding and management options in the round, rather than from the perspective and characteristics of one particular type of green space or indeed site.

The members of the Review Board

Gideon Ben-Tovim OBE
Gideon is Chair of Nature Connected, the Liverpool City Region Local Nature Partnership and also Chair of the Innovation Agency, the Academic Health Science Network for the North West Coast (NHS). He is the former Chair of NHS Merseyside and is Advisor on the Natural Environment to the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor. Gideon is also Hon Senior Fellow in Sociology at the University of Liverpool.

Paul Nolan OBE (Vice-Chair)
Paul has been with The Mersey Forest Team since 1994, helping to plant new woodlands, bring woodlands back into management and creating opportunities for community engagement and stewardship. Green spaces provide many benefits, which are under threat. Finding new ways to fund these spaces is essential. Many places across the country are facing the same problems. Paul hopes that Knowsley, with the support of the Review Board might be one of the first authorities to find a solution to this problem.

Joanne Burgess
Joanne studied a degree at Kingston University where she obtained a BA Hons in Environmental Science. She then worked for two local authorities in Surrey for ten years as a Biodiversity Officer. Joanne has always had an interest in the environment and animal welfare. She is the Chair of a local group of volunteers; The Friends of Ten Acre Pits, a small woodland in Huyton. Joanne is passionate about the environment and our open spaces, she believes they are vital for our future and need to be protected.

Jennifer Chadwick
As a Prescot Town Councillor and the current Mayor Jennifer was nominated by Prescot Town Council to become a member of the Review Board. They felt that her involvement for the past few years with The Friends of Prescott Cemetery and Churchyard had given her an insight into green space management that none of the present councillors had. Jennifer’s previous profession prior to retirement was a maths lecturer at Knowsley Community college. She has a passion for conservation in the Prescot area both structurally and traditionally which of course covers green spaces.

Jennifer is also an active member of the Knowsley Council’s Right Track Heritage, Leisure and Culture work stream covering the Prescot Regeneration Programme.

Eddie Connor
Eddie Connor has been married for 42 years and has two children, and four grandchildren.

He has lived in Kirkby for 58 years and in this time been a Merseyside Fire officer for 32 years and a Magistrate. Furthermore, for 23 years Eddie has been a Knowsley Council councillor and a School Governor for many years. Green space was really important for his children to play in when they were young, and now Eddie takes his children to much better looked after parks and green spaces.

That is Eddie’s hope for the future - we must find a way to keep our parks as good as they are today.

Ray Davis
Ray a retired Company Director, is now a Whitson Town Councillor, but mainly driving Grandads Taxi.

He has been active in recent years trying to protect the Green Belt within Knowsley and was keen to be involved with the Review Board in an effort to protect our parks and green spaces for future generations. Ray is concerned at the loss of green belt due to development and believes we all need to do our bit to protect what we have left.

John Fleming
John is part of Knowsley’s Voluntary Community Sector. He is a Trustee of the Millbrook Park Millennium Green and Chair of the Kirkby Festival Steering Group. John also has interests in Kirkby Arts and Crafts, and Jus Kidz.

Racheal Jones
Racheal is the Chief Operating Officer for Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services, an independent body that works with and for the Social Sector in the borough of Knowsley. Her role includes representing the best interests of the Knowsley Social Sector within strategic partnerships and collaborations, providing local leadership and practical support, development and enabling services. Racheal has over 20 years’ experience of supporting social action with specialisms in Social Value and Social Sector Governance, and is passionate about championing the role the Social Sector plays in building communities and the essential contribution of the Social Economy to build a society that is inclusive and socially just.

As a member of the Review Board, Racheal was keen to contribute her knowledge, expertise and insight to ensure people AND place remained intrinsic throughout the process. Her ambition for the parks and green spaces in Knowsley is to secure and build upon their social value, for the benefit of Knowsley communities, whilst protecting and enabling the valuable social action that takes place in these wonderful assets.

Dr Zoe Knowles
Zoe is a Professor of Engagement and Learning at Liverpool John Moores University and a HCPC Registered Practitioner Psychologist. She leads the ‘Green Spaces’ interest group within the Institute of Health Research at LJMU. Zoe has published academic research on the psycho-social benefits of accessing and engaging with green space on health outcomes, specifically those linked to mental health and children’s development. She also loves visiting them with her children and family. The opportunity to work co-operatively and systematically with a wide range of stakeholders on such an important community project was a privilege. Ensuring that the residents of Knowsley continue to have access to green space and all the proven benefits that it brings with regard to health and recreation is very important to me.

Ian Morris
Ian is a full time lecturer in Trade Union Education and has for many years been active personally and professionally in campaigning to protect public parks and green spaces. During this time he worked for many years in Liverpool teaching adults and children about the history and benefits of green space.
of green open spaces. Currently Ian is a member of the Delaware Allotments Association and also a member of the British Beekeeping Association. Ian was keen to accept the invitation to be a member of the Review Board so he could contribute to the protection and development of parks and green spaces within Knowsley. As a green space user Ian felt that he could make a positive informed contribution to finding new ways to fund and manage Knowsley parks and green spaces. Ian is passionate about wanting to see Knowsley’s parks and green spaces managed to a high standard and protected for the use and benefit of all Knowsley residents now and into the future.

Peter Neal
Peter is an independent landscape consultant specialising in the planning, design, funding and management of urban parks and the public realm. He wrote the Rethinking Parks research report for Nestlé, the Liverpool City Region Parks Study, and was lead author for the Heritage Lottery Fund’s State of UK Public Parks reports published in 2014 and 2016. In late 2016 he was invited to give evidence to the parliamentary Select Committee on the Future of Public Parks.

Tony Newman
Tony has lived in Whiston for 44 years and is married with three children and nine grandchildren. He was first elected as a Whiston Town Councillor in 1986 and then a Knowsley Councillor in 1991 and worked for Fords for 20 years. Having children and grandchildren he believes that we need to protect our parks and open spaces for their future health and wellbeing. Tony is passionate about children being able to play in our parks and open spaces and was a committee member and manager of football teams at Whiston Juniors for over 10 years.

Edward Perry
Edward is Managing Director of Knowsley Hall and Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Board member. He recognises the social and Place value of green spaces and parks, and feels that the Safari’s mission (‘To Connect Communities to the Natural World’) and the work it does has relevance and benefit to the future of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

Dave Rostance
Dave is a passionate environmentalist and believes that parks and green spaces provide the “lungs” of an area that improves quality of life and inspires outdoor activities that directly lead to improved health for all ages. The sustainability of parks and green spaces within the Borough of Knowsley is absolutely vital for many reasons primarily the attractiveness of the Borough that has a major influence of external investment, and perhaps more importantly the impact that this has on the health and well-being of residents that can play a major part in reducing the requirement for social care. These are Dave’s key reasons for being part of the Review Board. His primary ambition is to secure the longevity of the parks and green spaces including greenbelt so that current and subsequent generations can benefit by such a valuable asset. Dave believes the Board has made great progress in setting out a plan via trust management and his vision is that future commercial benefits via entrepreneurial ventures will progressively bolster the ability to sustain the current quality and potentially fund improvements.

Anne Selby
Anne is the CEO for the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside. Her career spans working for local authorities and government agencies but has mainly been in the voluntary sector. The Trust has a large portfolio of land which is managed for nature and public enjoyment. With no state funding the charity utilises its 30,000 membership and fundraising to protect these sites for the future. This knowledge was thought to be helpful to Knowsley’s rethink of parks.

Bob Swann
Bob is a retired Transport Engineer and has represented the Township of Halewood as a local councillor since 1986. He is presently serving as a Town Councillor representing Halewood West Ward and served as a Borough Councillor from 1994 to 2016. At a Merseyside Level, Bob is Chairman of the Liverpool John Lennon Consultative Committee and has previously represented Merseyside as a Director of Mersey Waste Holdings Limited and Bidston Methane Limited. Bob has a keen interest of environmental matters and is keen to play his part in ensuring that Knowsley, and particularly Halewood, continues to develop in a green and healthy environment that supports the wellbeing of all its residents.

Bob Taylor
Bob is passionate about creating opportunities that will inspire individuals and give communities the power to generate long term social and economic solutions. Bob pioneered the creation of the First Ark Group, where he is CEO, and is intensely proud of its innovative approach and proven results for delivering excellent services and positively impacting on people’s lives. Under Bob’s leadership, First Ark’s business structure, ground-breaking in the housing sector, enables it to maximise the value of its housing and property assets as well as generate truly creative business and community solutions.

Muhammad Hafiz Ullah
Muhammad is an Independent Buildings Projects Manager, he has 20+ years’ experience in a senior capacity working with teams of architects, interior designers, consulting engineers and landscaping consultants on the delivery of projects ranging from commercial buildings, hospitals, institutions, township, residences, etc. predominantly in the private sector. He is also a keen horticulturist and a passionate gardener. He is actively involved with the local Horticultural/Gardening Societies in and around Merseyside and has initiated RHS in Bloom locally. He would like to see a better rollout of this scheme to improve neighbourhoods, with the help of the local Parish/Town Councils and residents. He firmly believes the social-volunteer sector is the key element in promoting, monitoring, maintaining and sustaining parks and green spaces in our neighbourhood with assistance from the Council. His vision for parks and green spaces is for the Liverpool City Region to develop an institutional way forward. This would be independent of political control and protected for posterity against any austerity financial cuts. He envisions a well-managed, well resourced, independent organisation with the remit of delivering services in an equitable, transparent and financially sound manner, with the aim of providing safe, high quality parks, green spaces and allotments for the benefit of the community.

John Woolam
John has been a resident of Halewood, Knowsley for 34 years. He is the Secretary of the Friends of Court Farm Woods Association, a group of local residents that oversees a three and a half acre woods area at the end of Court Avenue in Halewood Village that is surrounded by houses. It is an area that has local historical significance.
The Review Board’s key lines of enquiry

The Review Board’s Terms of Reference, provided as Appendix B, identify the Key Activity for the Review and also nine Policy Objectives for the Board to observe in its deliberations and to reflect in its subsequent conclusions and recommendations.

Key activity for the Review

a. Understand the continuing implications of the Government’s public sector funding cuts on the future maintenance, management and utilisation of parks and green spaces;

b. Identify the value which Knowsley’s parks and green spaces provide and ways to maximise such benefits for those living, working and doing business in the Borough;

c. Consider innovative, contemporary and best practice approaches to funding parks and green spaces (using examples from the United Kingdom and abroad) and their potential adoption in Knowsley;

d. Investigate the future governance, management and maintenance models which could be applied to Knowsley’s parks and green spaces in order to enable new funding mechanisms to succeed and social, economic and environmental value to be secured;

e. Engage with the people of Knowsley so that they understand why a new delivery model is needed and in order to ensure that their opinions on how Knowsley’s parks and green spaces could be managed differently are considered; and,

f. Draw findings, conclusions and recommendations into a report for consideration by the Council in November 2017.

The Policy Requirements of the Review

a. Safeguarding Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces

Ensure that the Borough’s parks and green spaces remain freely accessible to be enjoyed by all, and belong to the people of Knowsley in perpetuity.

b. Delivering Strategic and Corporate Objectives

Deliver the Council’s Green Space Strategy 2015-2020 and realise its outcomes, which will contribute towards meeting the Priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2017-2020.

c. Improve Grounds Maintenance Standards

Maintain and where possible improve the 2016/17 quality grounds maintenance standard outcomes of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

d. Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model

Through the implementation of a new funding and management model, replace the Council’s 2016/17 budget of £1.114 million on the development, management and maintenance of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces, whilst also identifying £0.185 million of new annual funding in order to avoid the need for the Council to find new capital funding resources to maintain green space infrastructure. A total value of circa £1.3 million.

e. Develop a more Commercial and Entrepreneurial Management Culture

Establish a new funding and management model which enables the delivery of the Council’s Green Space Strategy through an entrepreneurial spirit and the utilisation of the most effective public, commercial, charitable and social enterprise governance structures.

f. Promote the Principles of a Co-operative Council

Embed the delivery of the appropriate components of the Council’s Priorities, Outcomes and Co-operative Principles into the new funding and management model’s terms of reference and business plan.

g. Ensure that oversight and scrutiny rests with the Council

Maintain the Council’s overarching oversight of Knowsley’s green space assets through appropriate arrangements in the alternative funding and management model.

h. Secure Political and Public Confidence and Support

Ensure public confidence in the intent, positive outcomes and sustainability of the future funding and management of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces.

The scope of the services, assets and budgets that fall within the remit of the Review

Services included in the scope of the Review (currently undertaken by Knowsley Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service):

- Development and delivery of Knowsley Council’s Green Space Strategy and Tree Policy;
- Horticultural maintenance of public green spaces*;
- Management and maintenance of all tree stock;
- Cemetery service (including maintenance of closed churchyards);
- Asset management (cyclical repair and replace) of all green space infrastructure;
- Health and safety inspection programme (play grounds / trees / memorials etc.);
- External fund raising programme;
- Green Space Ranger services;
- Delivery of green space hosted projects, initiatives and commercial services to public, private, community and voluntary sector bodies and individuals e.g. Bowring Park Regeneration Project; and
- Statutory planning advice to the Council e.g. Public Open Space / Ecology and Trees.

* includes services delivered to parks and green spaces leased to Knowsley’s parish and town councils (by Knowsley Council) provided by their selected delivery partner.

Excluded from the scope of the Review are the following service areas (currently undertaken by the Environmental Sustainability Service, approximately 10% of its capacity):

- Low Carbon Council, Economy and Society;
- Waste Management Strategy; and
- Public engagement in respect to promoting / encouraging recycling and improved local environmental quality.

Quality standards to be secured:

To maintain, and where possible exceed, the outcomes delivered in 2016/17 i.e. retain the 18 Green Flag Awards, retain the annual RoSPA playground inspection programme, maintain parks and green spaces to a good quality standard that enables a range of recreational, community and sporting activities to be undertaken within them as appropriate to the specific site (e.g. scheduled litter picking, grass cutting, weed removal, sports pitch marking etc.).

Knowsley Council staff included in the scope of the Review:

All staff within the Environmental Sustainability Service as shown in Figure 1 on page 40.

Assets included within the scope of the Review:

- 161 Parks and Open Spaces (593 hectares) land and infrastructure;
- Management and maintenance responsibility for these parks and green space as identified in the Green Space Asset Management Plan; and
- Infrastructure value projected to be £234 million and life-cycle asset replacement cost over the next 20 years projected to be £220 million. This does not include the amenity value of the overall land area of the parks and open spaces as this would include environmental, social and economic value.

Land included within the scope of the Review:

- 161 Parks and Open Spaces (593 hectares) land and infrastructure;
- Management and maintenance responsibility for these parks and green space as identified in the Green Space Asset Management Plan; and
- Infrastructure value projected to be £234 million and life-cycle asset replacement cost over the next 20 years projected to be £220 million. This does not include the amenity value of the overall land area of the parks and open spaces as this would include environmental, social and economic value.

Buildings included within the scope of the Review:

- Parks and Open Spaces Buildings (three Environment Centres, historic courtyard and stable block buildings and two pavilions); and
- The asset value of these buildings is estimated to be £2.2 million.
Knowsley Council budgets within the scope of the Review:
The annual expenditure for 2017/18 is approximately £2.741 million, this is used largely to resource the following items:

- Green Space Strategy development, delivery and performance monitoring;
- Day to day horticultural and tree stock maintenance operations;
- Staffing and equipment costs;
- Community support and engagement;
- Development projects and fund raising activities;
- Asset management, refurbishment and replacement;
- Support to planning services and statutory functions;
- Building management, repair and alteration; and
- Central overheads.

The specific budgets that are in the scope of the Review relate to the following items that are highlighted in Table 1 on page 42:

- Knowsley Council controllable financial resources (i.e. the annual revenue budget contribution from Knowsley Council) of £1.114 million. This is the funding stream that is ending from April 2019 and funds the day to day horticultural maintenance operations (staff, equipment, materials, fuel etc.; building management (environment centres, pavilions etc.); site development and promotion (staff that submit grant funding applications, delivery of events & activities etc.); and support services (utility costs, health and safety inspections).

- Knowsley Council Green Space Asset Management Capital Budget. When Knowsley Council approved its Green Space Asset Management Plan in 2010 (which identified the maintenance / replacement requirements and costs for hard infrastructure in parks and green spaces e.g. gates, fencing, footpaths and play equipment) it allocated £0.500 million of capital funding to pay for these costs. This funding has been used since, in conjunction with external grant funding opportunities, for this purpose. However by the end of 2017/18 it will have all been used. Therefore moving forward there is a need to secure new capital funding at an identified annual level of £0.185 million.

- Combing the loss of the Knowsley Council controllable financial resources (£1.114 million) with the need for a new source of capital funding (£0.185 million) provides the total funding shortfall of circa £1.3 million that is within the scope of the Review.
# Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017/18 Expenditure</th>
<th>£m</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Space Revenue Expenditure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This includes:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £1.390 million of employee costs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.147 million of premises costs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.286 million of transport costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• £0.287 million of supplies and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green Space Capital Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>0.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This varies year on year and varies site by site.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The expenditure includes repairs / replacement of boundary fences, pathways, hard surfaces, furniture, signage, drainage systems, buildings, play equipment etc. An example of a annual breakdown by typology is:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.271 million on parks and gardens</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.154 million on natural spaces</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.118 million on amenity green spaces</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.039 million on children and young people facilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• £0.048 million on allotments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>2.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017/18 Income Sources</th>
<th>£m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley Council controllable financial resources (i.e. the annual revenue budget contribution from Knowsley Council)</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income secured via commercial services (e.g. Public Health Commission, cemetery service income, commercial grounds maintenance contracts, Forest School / environmental education programmes and 'We Know' traded services)</td>
<td>0.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital income sources - these include external grants (e.g. Veolia, Cory Environmental Trust, Heritage Lottery / Big Lottery grants) together with funds associated with planning gains (e.g. section 106 agreements)</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley Council Green Space Asset Management Capital Budget allocation of £0.500 million in 2010/11, in 2017/18 £0.186 million remaining (and will be used, therefore zero capital budget from 2018/19)</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td>2.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**An overview of the research conducted by the Review Board**

The Review Board has met on numerous occasions over the last eight months in seven formal meetings, at conferences and during field trips to locations in Knowsley and further afield; representing many hundreds of hours of research. The schedule and description of work that the Review Board has undertaken is provided below.

**Thursday 9 March 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 1: Setting the Scene**

The Review Board investigated the extent and existing value of publicly accessible parks and green spaces in Knowsley and how they are currently managed and resourced. The improvements made to the parks and green spaces over the last ten years were considered, as was the associated increase in positive community use of these assets. The relevant local, national and Liverpool City Region policy and strategic drivers were explored, including the ongoing national Government's public sector austerity policy and Knowsley Council's response. The impact on parks and green space services of further significant Council funding cuts were considered. The Review Board also agreed its Terms of Reference for their review and after the meeting visited a selection of parks and green spaces in Knowsley.

**Thursday 6 April 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 2: Maximising the Value of Knowsley's Parks and Green Spaces through Alternative Delivery Models**

The Review Board examined the opportunities to enhance the value which parks and green spaces contribute to Knowsley Council’s strategic outcomes and stakeholders and also to the Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy. The Review Board established how such added value could be secured, evidenced and promoted to interested parties. The Board started to consider alternative ways in which public parks, green/open spaces and assets could be managed and funded in the light of the latest policy and practitioner thinking. The Board drew upon case studies to explore the viability of such prospects and so prepared to apply this learning to Knowsley’s parks and green spaces (in Stages 3 and 4). Board members also considered their opportunity to visit other existing Trusts (e.g. Milton Keynes Parks Trust, Sheffield City Council and The Land Trust) during the week commencing 24 April 2017 and week commencing 1 May 2017.

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**Thursday 15 March 2017 - APSE Parks Seminar: Can we afford to Park the problems? (Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire)**

The Review Board attended this seminar to look at new ways of dealing with parks and green space issues, with a particular emphasis on the future funding of parks, and looking at the different alternatives. The Board heard from a range of expert speakers who addressed the following:

- An update on the latest information from other local authority parks services through its State of the Market findings;
- How local authorities can work with national bodies and private sector organisations alike to create new and sustainable green spaces;
- Creating self-financing parks and green spaces developing income generation schemes;
- Meeting the challenge of maintaining high quality parks that are attractive and relevant to the modern user;
- Examples of horticultural excellence;
- The need for Park Managers to adapt to meet new demands; and
- UK and international case studies of good practice re: parks management.

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**Expert witness evidence provided by:**

- Peter Neal - Landscape Consultant and member of the Review Board;
- Paul Nolan - Director The Mersey Forest Team and vice-chair of the Review Board;
- Dan Barlow - Head of Financial Management, Knowsley Council;
- Rupert Casey - Head of Sustainable Resources, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board; and
- Caroline Holmes - Public Open Spaces Manager, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board.

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix C.
Expert witness evidence provided by:
- Paul Nolan - Director The Mersey Forest Team and vice-chair of the Review Board;
- Lydia Ragoonanan - NESTA Rethinking Parks Programme;
- Euan Hall - Chief Executive Officer, The Land Trust;
- Rupert Casey - Head of Sustainable Resources, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board; and
- Caroline Holmes - Public Open Spaces Manager, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board.

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix D.

Field Trips
- The Key Park, Blundell Sands, Sefton (subscription funded park) - 24 April 2017;
- Haigh Hall, Wigan (income generation example) - 24 April 2017;
- Milton Keynes Parks Trust (endowment funded example) - 27 April 2017;
- Brockholes, Preston (Lancashire Wildlife Trust donation example) - 2 May 2017;
- Countess of Chester (The Land Trust endowment example) - 3 May 2017;
- Heeleys Park Trust, Sheffield (community led example) - 4 May 2017;
- Dunham Massey (The National Trust - a blended funding model of endowment / commercial income / alternative land use) - 17 May 2017; and
- Knowsley's parks and green spaces (to help Board members apply their learning) - 18 May 2017.

Thursday 25 May 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 3: Applying New Governance and Management Approaches
The Review Board reflected on the field trips and applied this knowledge, along with their other deliberations, to assessing alternative ways to govern and manage Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

Expert witness evidence provided by:
- Iain Taylor - Director, IMT Consulting Ltd;
- Rupert Casey - Head of Sustainable Resources, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board; and
- Caroline Holmes - Public Open Spaces Manager, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board.

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix E.

Thursday 29 June 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 4: Applying New Funding Approaches
In light of the Review Board’s consideration of new governance and management approaches, the Board identified new funding approaches, reflected on how they could work, and assessed their viability for application in Knowsley. Those deemed to be worthy of more detailed assessment were modelled financially in order to illustrate their delivery and identify key assumptions, risks and mitigation measures. The Board again drew upon case study examples and presentations from expert witnesses in order to inform their discussions.

Expert witness evidence provided by:
- Iain Taylor - Director, IMT Consulting Ltd;
- Rupert Casey - Head of Sustainable Resources, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board; and
- Caroline Holmes - Public Open Spaces Manager, Knowsley Council and Support Officer to the Review Board.

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix F.

Thursday 20 July 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 5: Preparing to engage with Residents and other Stakeholders
Utilising the information and thinking secured from Stages 1 - 4, the Review Board developed and agreed the information and questions it intended to pose to the public and other stakeholders, and the methods by which it will engage with them. This led to a public consultation during August and September 2017 to inform the Board’s findings.

It also used this meeting to assess selection criteria that could be applied by Knowsley Council in determining sites for sale.

Expert witness evidence provided by:
- Lizzie Kenyon - Director, Centre for Social Innovation, Keep Britain Tidy
- Rose Tehan - Market Research Manager, Keep Britain Tidy
- Iain Taylor - Director, IMT Consulting Ltd

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix G.

August and September 2017 - Market Research and Open Public Consultation
- Seven focus groups meetings were held (which 63 individuals attended)
- Meeting with representatives of Knowsley’s friends of parks groups and resident associations - 12 September 2017
- Meeting with representatives of the Knowsley Social Leaders Forum - 25 September 2017
- Meeting with Halewood Town Council - 26 September 2017

The Board reviewed the findings drawn from each of the stages of its research with special focus in its Market Research and Open Public Consultation to clarify its conclusions and recommendations.

Expert witness evidence provided by:
- Lizzie Kenyon - Director, Centre for Social Innovation, Keep Britain Tidy
- Rose Tehan - Market Research Manager, Keep Britain Tidy

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix H.

Thursday 19 October 2017 - Review Board meeting Stage 7: Final Report
The Board approved its Final Report and the associated conclusions and recommendations. On approval the Final Report has been submitted by the Board's Chair to Knowsley Council for its consideration and subsequent decision of next steps at its Cabinet meeting on 28 November 2017.

The notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix I.
Why do we love our parks?

To provide context to the work of the Review Board, an illustrated national and historical perspective of public parks was presented at the outset to help frame and inform early discussion. To reflect this important background this initial section of the Report provides a summary of why people love their parks and green spaces, why they matter and how society should try and make the most of them in the future.

Last summer, writer and journalist Travis Elborough published ‘A Walk in the Park’. It is an engaging read, full of anecdotes and quirky facts about a great people’s institution - the public park. ‘Parks are such a familiar part of everyday life’ he writes, ‘you might be forgiven for thinking they have always been here - and they always will be’. He then continues to warn that ‘in an era of cuts, Britain’s parks are under threat - a small wonder we may on occasion take for granted’.

This short overview sets out some of the origins of public parks, describing their purpose and value, why they continue to be an important part of urban planning and regeneration, the key challenges that they face today and ways that their future can be made more secure.

A great Victorian invention

Some of the oldest parks were created from royal hunting grounds and private estates that initially restricted access to the wealthy, charging an annual subscription for entry to those that lived in surrounding properties and could afford the fee. In the eighteenth century pleasure gardens emerged as the precursor to public parks. Modelled on the private estates with planted walks and ornate buildings they became increasingly popular places for people to meet outdoors, socialise and be entertained, but access remained restricted to those who could pay to enter. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the public park as it is known today emerged as a freely accessible open space for the use and benefit of all people.

Several parks lay claim to be the first to be created, Derby Arboretum is one that was opened as a public park in 1840 after the land was gifted to the city. Birkenhead Park in the Wirral opened shortly after in 1847 and is considered to be the first truly publicly funded municipal park created by a local council for the benefit of local residents.

The Victorians can be justly credited with inventing the municipal park movement that brought much needed green open spaces to increasingly urbanised, industrial and polluted towns and cities. Whilst these early parks were established to benefit people and improve public health, the financial model that underpinned their creation relied heavily on the increase in land values that could be achieved through the development of a new and attractive park. The building costs could then over time be recouped once surrounding plots and properties were sold at a premium. This parks development model was first established by the Prince Regent in the early 1800s working with the architect John Nash on Regents Park in London which still continues today to command some of the highest and most sought after land and property values in the capital.
Industrial towns and cities in the North West were quick to adopt this technique to fund the development of new parks to enhance their stature. The creation of Prince’s Park in Liverpool was originally a private development with the costs being met through the surrounding development of grand Georgian housing. This process was based on what has become known as the proximity principle, where land and property in close proximity to a good quality park commands a higher value. All too often this relationship between parks and their surroundings has been lost. Good quality and well maintained parks were historically seen to make good business sense, increasing the value of property which then generated a greater tax return to benefit public finances. A virtuous circle of investment.

Central to Sustainable Development

Since Victorian times urban parks have played an important part in town planning, providing a key element of urban development and regeneration strategies. Learning from early examples in the UK, the United States extended the model to create connected linear networks of parks, or park systems as they are known. Boston’s Emerald Necklace designed by Olmstead, who had visited Birkenhead shortly after it had opened, is perhaps the most celebrated example that was initially conceived as a means to drain and remediate marshland and support the growth of the city. Today the Emerald Necklace continues to operate as a fully functioning environmental network, improving water quality, reducing flood risk and providing a haven for wildlife in the heart of Boston.

As industrial cities became increasingly overcrowded, new towns were conceived as a means to alleviate overpopulation and improve the quality of life of residents. The Garden Suburbs and Cities that were planned at the turn of the twentieth century included generous provision of green space as a central part of their character and identity. Planted avenues and boulevards, parks and gardens provided form and structure to these new communities and with the inclusion of allotments, pastures, forests and fruit farms ensured that they were also highly productive. These principles were taken forward into the planning of many post-war New Towns including Milton Keynes that was designated in 1968 as part of the third and final wave of development. Its strong green infrastructure of parkways, parks, pastures and woodlands is now maintained by The Parks Trust Milton Keynes, which represents probably the greatest legacy of the development corporation.

Figure 3

Duisburg Nord is a post industrial park at the heart of the vast Emscher Landschaftspark in Germany

Today public parks and park systems are increasingly being used to restructure and reframe urban districts and neighbourhoods. In part this is driven by the need to improve amenity and the visual quality of the environment, but is also seen as means to improve the sustainability and resilience of communities. The Emscher Landschaftspark in northern Germany (Figure 3) has been instrumental in changing the perception of the former industrial region of the Rhur, providing a strong environmental framework for urban regeneration and new post-industrial development. In Stockholm, a network of parks and open spaces are a central component of Hammarby Sjöstad, considered to be one of the most sustainable urban districts in Europe. Here the landscape is perceived as a fully functioning environmental network, managing and improving water quality, enhancing ecological habitats and regulating summer temperatures.

Essential for Public Health

Alongside many environmental and ecological benefits, parks are essential for improving public health and promoting a greater sense of well-being. This wider social value was a principal motive behind the early development of urban parks and this continues to be the case today. There is now a strong and growing body of evidence that demonstrates and quantifies considerable public health benefits that parks provide. The Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University published a useful study on ‘Returning urban parks to their public health roots’. Focusing on parks in the North West, the report presented evidence on the benefits they have on physical, mental and social well-being. The research included levels of awareness in various parks-based health schemes and activities including Walking the Way to Health, Healthy Walks, Green Gyms, Cycling Schemes and GP referral schemes.

In the United States the Centre for City Park Excellence has published practical guidance on ‘How Urban Park Systems Can Best Promote Health and Wellness’. This describes the activities and programmes that specific parks across the US have developed to promote public health in a number of different ways. These include measures to reduce stress, improve facilities for exercise and building personal fitness, increase the connectivity between parks to establish parkways for walking, running and cycling, and working in partnership with health departments and providers of a variety of medical services. Last year the World Health Organisation and the Department of Health published a detailed review of evidence on the impact urban green spaces can have on health. This provides further technical information on physiological factors including improved mental health and cognitive function, reduced prevalence of type 2 diabetes, and reduced cardiovascular morbidity. It also looks at important factors that can influence these health benefits including the size of open spaces, their accessibility and quantity, and the presence of specific facilities for certain activities.

The State of UK Public Parks

Whilst past and present practice clearly demonstrates the multiple economic, social and environmental benefits of parks and green spaces, it is impossible to overlook the considerable financial and management challenges individual parks and wider park services currently face. To assess the extent and impact of these difficulties in greater detail the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has published two consecutive reports on The State of UK Public Parks in 2014 and 2016 (Figure 4).

Drawing on evidence gathered from three separate surveys with the general public, Friends of Parks Groups and Local Authority Park Managers, the studies present a broad and rounded view of both the challenges and opportunities that are currently facing public parks across the UK.

Figure 4

Key findings from the Heritage Lottery Fund’s State of UK Public Parks report 2016
The advantage of having undertaken the study twice and in close succession is that changes and initial trends can be identified for the use, condition, funding and staffing of public parks. It is clear from the research that parks continue to be a heavily used and popular resource. More than half of the UK population, 57%, visit their local parks at least once a month. For those living in urban areas this proportion is higher and parks are seen to be particularly important for families. Over half of all households with young children, 54%, use their local park at least once a week whilst nine out of every ten households with young children, 90%, visit their park monthly or more often.

Local authorities undertake the management of their public parks as part of their non-statutory services; so in comparison to those statutory services that they have a legal responsibility to provide, parks and green spaces often become a lower priority when resources are squeezed. Austerity has therefore had a considerable and often disproportionate impact on public parks. In 2016, 92% of park managers reported that their park’s budgets had reduced over the preceding three years and almost all, 95%, expect their funding will continue to decline over the next three years. Whilst the majority are facing reductions of over 10% on budgets that have already been cut in previous years, some are now facing the real prospect of not having a parks budget by the end of the decade.

At the same time, parks services have seen a significant reduction in staffing, with over three quarters of all councils cutting both managerial and front line staff. This includes a particularly marked reduction in horticultural skills over the past three years. The quality of parks is also expected to decline over the next three years. Fewer park managers now consider their parks are in a good condition, 53% compared to 60% in 2014, and just a fifth of all park managers, 20%, consider their parks will be in an improving condition over the next three years.

Rethinking Parks
These findings suggest that the future health of public parks is at significant risk and they indicate the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the North West regions are experiencing the greatest impact from austerity. This concern has not gone unnoticed by Parliament who convened a Select Committee inquiry on the Future of Public Parks in late 2016. Reporting earlier this year, the committee emphasised the continuing importance of parks particularly for the health and well-being of communities and the need to ensure a fair distribution of good quality parks across the country.

The Government’s response to the Select Committee enquiry has now been published and includes a number of actions to help tackle a variety of immediate challenges. A cross-departmental group will be established and chaired by the Parks Minister to better join-up policies and programmes across government. This work will be informed and supported by a group that is being convened from across the parks sector which will be seen as a parks action group.

The most practical recent programme to establish new ways of working and encourage innovation in the funding and management of parks has been led by the national innovation foundation, NESTA, through the Lottery funded Rethinking Parks programme. This provided funding to eleven projects across the UK to help test and establish new business and management models. Developing alternative sources of income were explored through a Parks Improvement District in Bloomsbury and the potential to establish a city-wide endowment to fund the management of Sheffield’s parks. Other projects focused on increasing charitable giving by setting up a parks foundation in Bournemouth and a crowd funding platform dedicated to parks in Scotland. Alternative approaches to maintaining park landscapes were developed by a number of councils. Burnley transformed areas of high cost amenity planting into perennial and wildflower meadows and sought to generate income through more active management of their woodlands. Bristol worked closely with their friends groups to increase the contribution and impact of community volunteers. Many of the lessons of the programme are now published on NESTA’s website (search Rethinking Parks).

Public parks embody many timeless and innate qualities that people continue to love and greatly value. As the resources needed for their management become increasingly scarce it is essential to learn from and adopt new and innovative approaches to their funding, upkeep and use to safeguard their future and harness their full potential.

Knowsley’s parks and green spaces
A diverse, good quality and unique network of public assets
Over recent years Knowsley’s publicly accessible parks and green spaces have been rejuvenated. This fantastic achievement has been brought about through the ambition and leadership shown by members of the borough’s communities which has been harnessed by the Council to secure a wealth of infrastructure improvements to these numerous and varied locations across the borough. As a consequence all of Knowsley’s residents now have good, and in many cases excellent, quality parks and open spaces on their doorstep!
Figure 7
A map showing the types and locations of Knowsley's Parks and Green Spaces
Securing improvements to these public assets was the overarching ambition of the Council’s initial Green Space Strategy 2010-14 (access using this link - Green Space Strategy) which focused primarily upon improving the quality and public accessibility of Knowsley’s green spaces to address the infrastructure of the borough’s previously run-down, poorly designed and under used green spaces that were hot-spots for anti-social behaviour. This strategy’s emphasis was placed firmly on providing a readily accessible, safe and welcoming environment for those using Knowsley’s parks and green spaces and benefited from over £8 million of external investment that the Council has used to make infrastructure improvements between 2008/09 and 2014/15.

Examples of the outcomes that these improvements secured include:

a. A rise in public satisfaction with parks and open spaces to 82% in 2013/14;
b. A rise in resident satisfaction with open play facilities to 73% in 2013/14;
c. A 73% increase in green space interest community groups from 30 in 2007/08 to 52 in 2014/15;
d. A 100% increase in volunteering and participation in green space events and healthy activities from 35,000 participants in 2007/08 to over 70,000 participants in 2012/13;
e. Based on 2014/15 data, over 8 million visits being made to the borough’s parks and green spaces annually;
f. An increase in Green Flag Awards from six in 2008/09 to eighteen in 2017/18 - an award which recognises their high quality infrastructure and community utilisation;
g. An increase in the number of park and garden typology sites from 18 in 2005 to 28 in 2014/15;
h. An uplift in the average quality of park and garden typology sites from 49 and a fair rating in 2007/08 to 64 and a good rating in 2014/15;
i. An uplift in the average quality of play facilities from 49 and a fair rating in 2007/08 to 67 and an excellent rating in 2014/15;
j. An uplift in the average quality of natural and semi-natural typology sites from 46 and a low fair rating in 2007/08 to 54 and a high fair rating in 2014/15; and
k. An uplift in the average quality of allotment typology sites from 52 and a fair rating in 2007/08 to 65 and a good rating in 2014/15.

The level of investment undertaken in public open space and the associated achievements have ensured that Knowsley is now recognised as having high quality green spaces which are managed and maintained to a very good standard. Consequently individuals and green space community interest groups have been encouraged by the Council to take a much more active role in the use and stewardship of these local assets; to which a positive response has been generally received. However, notwithstanding this positive improvement, the full potential of green spaces to positively contribute to wider strategic outcomes and objectives of the Council and its partners has yet to be fully realised.

The quantity of parks and green spaces in Knowsley

Knowsley’s Local Plan defines the type of spaces in the borough. Included in this definition is Green Belt Land (which consists of publicly accessible land plus land in private ownership e.g. agricultural land and Lord Derby’s Estate); it further defines Public Green Space Land. It should be noted that an area of land can be classified as being both.

The Local Plan has policies to protect the borough’s Green Belt and Public Green Space land respectively. However, the main difference between Green Belt and Public Green Space is that Green Belt is an area of land that is protected from development which surrounds cities and townships. This is to inhibit ‘urban sprawl’, prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another and preserve the countryside and the setting and character of historic towns. Green Belt also assists in urban regeneration by promoting brownfield development and keeping Green Belt permanently open.

**Green Belt Land**
The Borough of Knowsley is approximately 8,620 hectares in size and of this 4,205 hectares (49%) has been designated as Green Belt Land.

**Public Green Space Land**
Public Green Space (e.g. parks, playing fields, amenity grassed areas and natural and semi natural sites) are essentially areas of green space within the urban area, located in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. It does not include Lord Derby’s Estate.

In respect to Public Green Space Land there is 893 hectares. This comprises of the 161 parks and green spaces within the scope of this review (593 hectares) plus other public green spaces such as verges and grassed areas maintained by the Council’s Streetscene Services (a separate service to the Environmental Sustainability Services whose remit falls in the scope of this review) and Registered Social Landlords (300 hectares).

Of the total of 893 hectares of Public Green Space Land 381 hectares (42%) is part of the Green Belt and therefore protected from development. Furthermore, of the 593 hectares of Public Green Space Land that forms the scope of this review 244 hectares is classified as being in Green Belt (41%). This leaves 349 hectares of Public Green Space Land in the scope of the review not in Green Belt (59%).

The Council’s 2015 Green Space Audit established the Public Green Space Land requirement for Knowsley based on its population of 145,899 residents. The level is 382 hectares and this requirement is incorporated in Knowsley’s Local Plan. However, the borough currently has 893 hectares of public green space. Therefore there is an overprovision against the Local Plan requirement by 511 hectares.

This information is presented in Table 2 below.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Public Green Space Land Provision in Knowsley</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Green Space Land Requirement (in accordance with the Knowsley Local Plan)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Public Green Space Land Provision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowsley Council Parks and Green Spaces (i.e. the sites within the scope of the review)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Public Green Spaces (i.e. amenity green spaces owned by Registered Social Landlords etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Green Space Land Provision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overprovision of Public Green Space (against the Local Plan requirement)</strong></td>
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Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy 2015-20: The Natural Approach to a Thriving Borough

Maximise the value of Knowsley’s publicly accessible green space assets to the benefit of people, the economy and the environment

Good quality green spaces both protect and provide for us. They afford a distinctive approach to help tackle health, educational and social inequalities and provide a unique contribution to the creation of vibrant, healthy and prosperous communities; they are the Natural Approach to a Thriving Borough. Knowsley’s second Green Space Strategy 2015-20 (approved by the Council in December 2014) seeks to realise this potential for the borough and the wider Liverpool City Region. It sets the strategic Vision to maximise the value of Knowsley’s publicly accessible green space assets to the benefit of people, the economy and the environment. Furthermore it identifies that this will need to be delivered through innovation, partnership and community spirit in order to sustain and enhance Knowsley’s green space offer; with the tangible outcomes secured very much helping to highlight Knowsley as a fantastic place to live, work and do business in the North West of England.

Strategic Objectives

Four overarching Strategic Objectives are identified in the Strategy:

a. The establishment of a readily accessible framework through which Strategic Commissioners can identify and access green space services that deliver significant and proven outcomes in line with their strategic needs;
b. The facilitation of a partnership approach to utilising green spaces in Knowsley that encourages innovation through the integration of public, private and community expertise, funding and delivery models for green space management;
c. The provision of a robust evidence base and the strategic intent to provide leverage to grant funding opportunities; and
d. To ensure that the good quality of Knowsley’s green spaces is maintained so as to deliver against the above objectives.

Green Space Policy Themes

To identify the important linkages and contributions that green spaces make to the delivery of the Vision through these Objectives, seven overarching Green Space Policy Themes were identified which highlight the cross-cutting and unique benefits they provide to the Council, its partners and the businesses and communities of the borough. These are highlighted below.

Encouraging Health and Wellbeing

The quality and range of Knowsley’s green space assets and associated services create significant potential to impact on health and wellbeing outcomes by providing innovative, attractive and wide ranging preventative and treatment focused health activity.

Green space is fundamentally important to the quality of life of Knowsley’s residents. There is well documented evidence which demonstrates that contact with the natural environment promotes good health and participation in regular physical activity generates physical, mental and wellbeing benefits. Physical exercise in natural environments e.g. parks and other green spaces has important implications for public health, in particular the preservation of the environment and green spaces has the potential to offer the following health opportunities across a range of sites:

a. Facilities for a variety of outdoor sports and recreation opportunities which encourage regular exercise and activity that can reduce the incidence of obesity and other associated life threatening conditions; and
b. Exposure to outdoor environments that provide opportunities for play and social interaction which can reduce stress and accelerate recovery from physical and mental illnesses.

Providing Social Value

The social value of open space lies in the opportunities it has to facilitate the development of community ties through social interaction, intergenerational mixing and social inclusion. A public space provides an arena for the exchange of ideas, friendships, goods and skills; and through this the development of civic pride and ownership. Green spaces also provide a wealth of opportunities for social growth including involvement in decision making, volunteering and service provision through social enterprise organisations.

Contributing to Economic Growth and Marketing the Borough

As towns and cities increasingly compete with one another to attract investment, the presence of good parks and green spaces becomes an increasingly valued feature within a range of measures targeted at attracting residents and businesses to Knowsley. The challenge given the current economic climate and pressures on public spending is to retain the quality of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces and to utilise their potential as an economic driver for the borough. There is clear evidence to support the case that good quality parks and green spaces make a positive impact on economic regeneration, attracting and retaining residents and visitors into an area.

In 2014 the Knowsley Place Board was established by the council and partners to promote economic development. It highlights that the area is ‘abundantly green and fantastically connected, Knowsley is a great place to set up home’. It is essential therefore that the borough continues to invest in and maintain its green estate not simply for the health and wellbeing of local communities but also to promote the growing perception that Knowsley is a great place to live, visit, do business and invest.

Learning in the Natural Environment

Green spaces provide a living, breathing, fully interactive and continually changing outdoor classroom; a wonderful asset with which to support and deliver a broad range of curriculum, wider learning and training opportunities. Continued investment in the quality of green spaces and the development of the green space education and training service will enable the realisation of these outcomes. Learning outside the classroom should not be regarded as an addition to the traditional methods of teaching a curriculum but seen as an inclusive learning method across a wide range of academic subjects and life skills.

Addressing Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

Knowsley’s green spaces offer fantastic opportunities to mitigate crime and ASB in the borough’s communities by providing a strong focus for community cohesion which facilitates intergenerational respect, friendships and civic pride. Programmes of sport, play and family activity are on-going across Knowsley to encourage involvement, activity and respect. Alongside this, regular investment and maintenance has taken place to ensure Knowsley’s green spaces do not become magnets for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change and Helping Communities Adapt to its Impacts

Knowsley’s green infrastructure has a unique role to play in addressing the climate change agenda. It helps to protect the borough’s communities, especially the most vulnerable, against severe weather conditions and provides an important component of the Council’s contribution to national and international efforts to alleviate global temperature increase.

Enhancing Natural Assets and Biodiversity

Knowsley’s green spaces include sites of biodiversity and geological value that are subject to protection, management and enhancement in accordance with legislative requirements.
The Green Space Strategy’s response to public sector austerity

Knowsley Council is at the forefront nationally of managing the impacts of the significant reductions to public sector funding, with the Local Government Association (LGA) calculating a widening gap of approximately £2.1 billion per year between the financial pressure faced by local authorities to maintain local services and what funding is likely to be available during this decade. This austerity is particularly acute when considered against the Council’s statutory duties e.g. children and adult social care; its priority for promoting economic growth and stimulating employment opportunities; responsibility for embedding Welfare Reform; and meeting the needs of a population that demonstrates significant health and educational inequalities compared to the majority of other parts of the country. Given such context the LGA has identified that the cumulative level of cuts for some non-statutory services, including parks and green spaces, may rise to more than 66% and could increase to over 90% by the end of the decade.

Therefore the fundamental challenge in realising the ambition set in the Green Space Strategy is the current context of significant and ongoing public sector austerity. Despite the value green spaces bring it is evident that over the coming years the Council will not be in a position to continue to resource its commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of the green infrastructure in Knowsley through its annual revenue budgets. As a non-statutory / discretionary service such budget cuts have already been made and more are required over the three year period 2017/18 to 2019/20. Therefore if Knowsley’s green spaces are to achieve the vision set out in the current Green Space Strategy and not fall into a state of decline, that cause new financial and social burdens, the Council needs to ensure that it harnesses all available resources and innovates its role in the management of such assets. To do this the Council must evolve from its current management model of direct control and associated substantive revenue budget funding of its publicly accessible green space assets to a new approach. This must assume a significantly reduced financial contribution from the Council but still deliver the beneficial outcomes of green spaces through new partnerships and enterprises.

To this end, this Strategy recognises the shift of focus that is required in order to capitalise on the success of the previous strategy in securing place based infrastructure improvements to now utilising these assets for the benefit of the people of Knowsley. The following section outlines the importance of the enabling activity that needs to take place so that this shift in focus is made, whilst protecting as far as possible in the current economic climate the quality standards of Knowsley’s green spaces.

Leadership

The Council fully recognises the critical role that engaging a broad range of leaders will play if the Strategy’s Vision and Policies are to be successfully delivered. Although the direct delivery of the Strategy will be led by the Council the leadership role that a breadth of stakeholders have in this must not be underestimated ranging from elected members to strategic commissioners; practitioners in public, private and social enterprise organisations; and those community champions who care passionately about their local park.

Achieving more with partners

The Council is looking for new opportunities to create partnerships with community based organisations and enterprises to support or directly deliver services. There is growing potential for communities to take on greater responsibility for green space design, development and management, but acknowledges there is also much that can be done with other stakeholders to create new management partnerships between public, private and voluntary organisations.

Establishing a robust business case for investing in green space assets

The future economic resilience and competitive success of Knowsley and the wider Liverpool City Region will be strongly influenced by the overall quality of the borough including its parks and green spaces. Therefore there is a need to understand and quantify the economic benefits and functions of Knowsley’s green spaces to help secure new investment in sustaining their benefits that allows the Council’s traditional funding approach to be removed.

Securing funding and investment

Maintaining the quality of Knowsley’s green space network is necessary to maximise its ability to deliver against the Strategy’s objectives. The spectrum of value that Knowsley’s green space offers is such that there is an opportunity to develop new models of working and to secure sources of external funding. The successful delivery of the Strategy will stand or fall on the ability of those with vested interests in Knowsley’s green space assets to secure alternative sources of funding and new models of service delivery.

Identifying alternative delivery models

For the vast majority of public green and open space across the UK, local councils have historically been solely responsible for their upkeep. With the ever increasing pressure on the public purse, the Strategy recognises the need to find new ways of funding parks maintenance, management and development through private funding, support from the community and voluntary sector, greater levels of site based income generation, fund raising and sponsorship.

Measuring the Value of Knowsley’s Green Infrastructure

Whilst the intrinsic value of rare species, a cultural landscape or a tranquil area in the heart of a town or city may be considered by many as priceless, there is a danger that priceless can then lead to them effectively becoming valueless in economic assessment terms - especially when funding for un-evidenced benefits is under great scrutiny.

Therefore, as identified within the Green Space Strategy's enabling activities, there is a need to establish a robust business case for investing in Knowsley’s green spaces as without this they are likely to be ignored when investment decisions are made or indeed funding is stopped. To influence such choices it is important that a monetary value is placed on green space that reflects their underpinning role to society and the economy, as illustrated through the Strategy's Green Space Policy Themes. These can also be referred to as Green Infrastructure Benefits or Natural Capital, commonly used resources shared by all benefitting our society, individuals and indeed supporting organisational success and growth. The majority of such beneficiaries do not directly pay / invest to receive dividends from them; they largely take their value for granted and often do not even recognise such worth. In light of the financial constraints placed on Knowsley Council the case needs to be made to stakeholders as to why Knowsley’s green infrastructure is important and Figure 8 on page 60 gives examples of the reasons why.
The benefits of Green Infrastructure

CASE STUDY: The Natural Health Service
The Natural Health Service is a social enterprise that offers health commissioners a single point of access to a range of well-developed and evidence based natural environment focused products to help tackle a range of health and wellbeing issues. It uses the natural environment as a health asset, mindful of the need to use all of the possible resources that we have to help stem our increasing reliance on the healthcare system.

The Natural Health Service brings together a wide range of organisations to deliver a range of evidence based products that use the natural environment as the venue for physical activity and products that improve mental health. There are 21 organisations currently engaged, including The Mersey Forest, Liverpool John Moores and Knowsley Council, with varying roles:

- Land owner - providing places, close to where people live, as the venue for the Natural Health Service;
- Delivery organisations - delivering the Natural Health Service products e.g. health walks; and
- Strategic/coordinating organisations - providing support and linking the offers to national policy.

The Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit
The Mersey Forest have developed a Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit to provide a method of assessing evidence of the monetary value of green infrastructure and this has been applied to analysing the economic benefits that Knowsley’s public green space offers. This demonstrates that the return on the current investment in green spaces for community and business is very significant. There has been a great deal of academic and project-led work carried out to value the benefits of the natural environment to Place shaping using a wide range of techniques and these have been brought together as the Toolkit to provide a single comprehensive method to enable such evaluation.

Based on nationally gathered information it offers data indicating the potential impact of a green infrastructure investment / intervention or an existing green infrastructure asset in:

a. Monetary terms by applying economic valuation techniques (where possible);
b. Quantitatively with reference for example to jobs, hectares of land or visitors; and
c. Qualitatively by referencing case studies or important research where there appears to be a link between green infrastructure and economic, social or environmental benefit but where the scientific basis for quantification and / or monetisation is not yet sufficiently robust.

These values are Net Present Values and take into account returns discounted over periods relating to each measure, ranging from 10 to 30 years.

A summary of the Economic Value of Knowsley public parks and green spaces is provided in Table 3.
The Gross Value Added (GVA) of Knowsley’s green spaces is delivered through six benefits, with that for tourism providing the greatest value (see Figure 9 on page 63). This highlights the opportunity to link the Council’s green assets with the other cultural assets within close proximity, and also to the town centres so maximising the opportunity for retailers to benefit from the tourists and also encouraging them to stay longer in the area, further increasing awareness and therefore visitor numbers.

The climate change benefit is due to reduced heating and cooling requirements in nearby areas, whilst the water management benefit comes from a reduction in the amount of runoff from the area and therefore a reduced need to treat the water. Labour productivity value is derived from data on improved health and a reduction in absenteeism based on well documented research. Finally, land management value is derived from the presence of additional jobs created in the management and maintenance of the assets.

An assessment of the contribution to property value indicates that the green space assets in Knowsley contribute approximately £231 million. This is not surprising nor out of step with similar reports of uplift to property value after improvement to green infrastructure. The work carried out by the Independent Valuation Office on the creation of the community woodland at Bold Moss, Warrington found a similarly significant increase in property values. The Natural Capital value that green infrastructure provides (i.e. social, health, economic and environmental benefits) show that recreation and leisure is the greatest benefit in financial terms (see Figure 10). This is closely followed by health and wellbeing - a very important result from this study given the currently increasing focus on efforts to improve health and well-being.

Thus the Council’s green assets can be shown to have a significant economic impact which fall into three categories:

- Contribution to GVA (Gross Value Added) - this is a contribution to the economy through increased profit, reduced costs, salary etc. For the Council’s green assets, the toolkit gave a value of £73.2 million.
- Impact on property value - green infrastructure has been shown to have a positive impact on land and property values. In the case of the Council’s green assets, the value is estimated at £231 million.
- Other economic benefit - contribution to the broader economic context such as the value in terms of improved health, or the value that society puts on biodiversity - areas where there

### Table 3

The economic value of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces

#### Summary of economic value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Benefit monetisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GVA value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation</td>
<td>£11.0k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Water management and flood alleviation</td>
<td>£3.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Place and communities</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Health and well-being</td>
<td>£204k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Land and property values</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Investment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Labour productivity</td>
<td>£3.6m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tourism</td>
<td>£56.5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Recreation and leisure</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Biodiversity</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Land management</td>
<td>£9.6m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total economic value of benefits</strong></td>
<td><strong>£73.2m</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These three figures should not be added together, as they represent different kinds of value.

The value of reduced mortality from walking/cycling has not been included in the other economic value total because of the risk of double counting.

---

**Figure 9**

The Gross Value Added (GVA) of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces

**Figure 10**

The Natural Capital value of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces

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The Gross Value Added (GVA) of Knowsley’s green spaces is delivered through six benefits, with that for tourism providing the greatest value (see Figure 9 on page 63). This highlights the opportunity to link the Council’s green assets with the other cultural assets within close proximity, and also to the town centres so maximising the opportunity for retailers to benefit from the tourists and also encouraging them to stay longer in the area, further increasing awareness and therefore visitor numbers. The climate change benefit is due to reduced heating and cooling requirements in nearby areas, whilst the water management benefit comes from a reduction in the amount of runoff from the area and therefore a reduced need to treat the water. Labour productivity value is derived from data on improved health and a reduction in absenteeism based on well documented research. Finally, land management value is derived from the presence of additional jobs created in the management and maintenance of the assets.
is no market that provides a pricing mechanism. For the Council’s green assets the toolkit identified value of £129 million.

Further information on the Toolkit, case studies and the full assessment of Knowsley’s green spaces can be found as Appendix K.

**Delivering Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy**

Knowsley Council’s green space strategy development and delivery is managed and undertaken by its Environmental Sustainability Service through the provision of three core functions:

a. Concept formulation and associated strategy and project formation, development and initiation;

b. The subsequent delivery of the prepared projects, initiatives and commercial services to public, private and community sector bodies and individuals; and

c. The necessary maintenance of public green space infrastructure arising from improvement projects and/or being utilised to host services, projects and initiatives.

This approach reflects the integral correlation between the delivery of the Green Space Strategy outcomes in terms of improved green space assets and their multi-disciplinary offer to a range of stakeholders and the role, responsibility and specialist expertise of the Council’s Parks and Cemeteries Team in sustaining quality green space standards and enabling their safe, positive and enjoyable use.

Thus the Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service is responsible for all aspects of management and maintenance of the borough’s green spaces which includes:

a. Development and delivery of the Council’s Green Space Strategy and Tree Policy;

b. Horticultural maintenance of public green spaces;

c. Management and maintenance of all tree stock;

d. Cemetery service (including maintenance of closed churchyards);

e. Asset management (cyclical repair and replace) of all green space infrastructure;

f. Health and safety inspection programme (play grounds / trees / memorials etc.);

g. External fund raising programme;

h. Green Space Ranger services; and

i. Delivery of projects, initiatives and commercial services to public, private, community and voluntary sector bodies and individuals.

The following two case studies demonstrate how the Environmental Sustainability Services is currently working to develop two primary parks in Knowsley (Bowring Park and Court Hey Park). These are of particular interest to the Review Board given the wide range of benefits these sites offer, the approach being taken in their development and the outcomes being sought being very relevant to the Board’s Policy Objectives.

**CASE STUDY: Current Development Project: Bowring Park, Roby**

Bowring Park is a significant park within Knowsley, with a rich history and a range of heritage features related to the former Roby Hall. However, for years, the Park has been dominated by the Golf Course and is substantially underused in terms of the activities delivered and under-promoted with regard to its heritage. The Park has not benefited from any major investment in recent years. This is because the scale of the work required to develop the Park to its full potential and the specialised nature of the work to restore the heritage features, required significant external funding.

The Council therefore applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund under their ‘Parks for People’ programme. The application was successful and £1.8 million was allocated from the fund to restore and develop Bowring Park. This includes renovation of the existing buildings to expose the heritage features and provide a new café and visitor centre, golf club reception, meeting and function rooms and office space. Externally a new event space will be created on the footprint of the former Roby Hall, with the Dell, Terrace Garden and Walled Garden restored as event spaces, visitor attractions and community gardens. Myerscough College will run courses from the site and a new Project Development Officer and Horticultural Officer will develop an increased range of activities and volunteer opportunities.

This is one of the primary parks and green space development projects in Knowsley (along with Court Hey Park - see case study below). It offers fantastic opportunity to not only regenerate a historic site for local benefit but also to provide an anchor against which the continued sustainability of the wider network of parks and green spaces in Knowsley can be supported. The timing of this project very much aligns to the Board’s review and the future new funding and management model that is needed.

**Figure 11** Bowring Park Development Project
CASE STUDY: A New Way Forward for Court Hey Park
Court Hey Park is one of Knowsley’s key ‘Borough Parks’ which contains historic features, open space, mature trees, two play areas, green gym, bowling-green and cricket wicket, in addition to providing office space and workshop areas. Up until the beginning of 2017, the park was also home to the National Wildflower Centre which operated as a visitor attraction with café and shop, seed business and advisor on creative conservation. Landlife founded the National Wildflower Centre in 1999, combining existing historic buildings with a new iconic Millennium building funded by the Millennium Commission. The Centre operated successfully for a number of years, but unfortunately Landlife was placed into Voluntary Creditors Liquidation by its members on the 16 February 2017. On closure of the National Wildflower Centre, the site quickly deteriorated with anti-social behaviour and vandalism becoming significant issues. The lease for the site was subsequently surrendered back to Knowsley Council.

The Council quickly took action to secure and clear the site to reduce the vandalism being suffered. In addition the closure gave the Council the impetus to consider how the site could be put to new and positive use. An Expression of Interest was issued to allow proposals to be submitted from external organisations on how the site could be operated to maximize its potential and deliver added social, environmental and public value outcomes. A number of innovative responses have been received, which the Council is now considering before an exercise is undertaken to procure a partner to safeguard the sustainability of the site and provide benefit to the local community. This is due to take place during this winter which will hopefully lead to the appointment of a new occupant(s) in spring 2018.

The Council has identified a number of sectors that may have specific interest in developing their business model through the buildings and land available at Court Hey Park and in doing so contributing to the upkeep of the Park, enhancing its offer to the public and importantly cascading added value to the management of parks and green spaces across Knowsley. Therefore this opportunity is of specific interest to the Review Board.

Care and Health
Attracting existing ideas, initiatives and programmes of physical and mental health across the borough and encouraging community led programmes. Court Hey Park could establish itself as a Care and Health Hub promoting and facilitating organisations and groups in the delivery of events and activities that care for vulnerable members of the community and improve physical and mental health of those who participate. This could be linked to the development of a care home and new ideas for a GP Surgery in the Park with health and wellbeing activities managed by on site rangers and prescribed by GPs on site e.g. Legacy Hub Glasgow (Legacy hub services, shaped by the community include a new purpose-built community hall, a nursery, GP surgery, pharmacy, dentist, training and educational facilities and a community café. The hub is central to the community and works towards building confidence and capacity of local people, encouraging all to achieve their potential within their specific field of interest.), the Hub (Camden’s Mental Health Wellbeing Centre).

One option may be the development of a care home within the grounds of Court Hey Park to provide the capital for the development of Council and community led activities within the land and buildings of the former National Wildflower Centre. This could also support the occupation of the Millennium Building and adjacent properties with ancillary uses such as hairdressing, pharmacy, general shop, and café. This broad offer would serve visitors to the park as well as residents and visitors to the care home.

Environment
Building on the legacy of Landlife / National Wildflower Centre and securing environmental businesses, charities and groups within a new ‘Environmental Hub’. The co-locating of environmental organisations and the sharing of common services could create a sustainable model of occupation and an attractive and appropriate alternative location to a business park or city centre location. Linked to this the Friends of Court Hey Park and the existing Ranger Service could be expanded to include other Parks and Sustainability Service roles. Local examples include sites managed by the National Trust such as Speke Hall which combine visitor facilities and volunteer led activities with heritage and environment education, retail and café facilities.

Creative / Business Incubator
Court Hey Park has been home to several small businesses for over 10 years. The Park provides a unique setting for start-up business and small businesses in that it provides a park setting, in architecturally interesting spaces with easy motorway access and convenient public transport. This option could explore links to existing incubator facilities in the area and wider city region and form effective partnerships with them and universities. Specialists in business incubators would be required to manage the site and effectively support new start-up businesses on a path into longer term business premises.

Events and attractions
The location has worked well as a conference and location for special events. The conference market combined with a quality restaurant / café offer should be explored with supporting special events, including weddings. Such activities, including Registry Offices and Services require a range of supporting businesses and professions who would benefit from co-locating on site. The existing car park, good internal roads and excellent motorway links all support the case for a destination and visitor focused option.

Retail / Food and Beverage
There are many established park based retail and recreation based attractions that combine food and beverage options with a unique retail offer. Large scale retail attractions such as Trentham Gardens combine a park offer with a wide range of retail, food and beverage options, but working equally well on a smaller scale are Forestry Commission sites such as those at Grizedale and Whinlatter that combine outdoor activities (Go Ape, running and biking trails) with shop and café facilities. There are also possibilities to explore a ‘destination restaurant’ idea to fully utilise the Millennium Building.

Community Hub
Focused on the needs of the local community. Managed by a social enterprise (or established local charity) bringing together social enterprise, local groups and volunteer supported initiatives to deliver a range of amenities (including a community café) and services to local people and visitors to the park. Has the potential to support delivery of Council services and link into many of the options outlined above.
The parks and green spaces sites identified in land to a standard agreed with Knowsley Council. Parish and town councils to maintain these areas of space within the review’s scope. Within the leases area of 87 hectares of the 593 hectares of green included in the scope of this review; equating to an 1970’s. The lease agreements are up to 999 years predecessors) since the mid-1960’s and early Knowsley’s parish and town councils have leased Knowsley’s Parish and Town Councils Knowsley’s parish and town councils have leased parcels of land from Knowsley Council (and its successors) since the mid-1960’s and early 1970’s. The lease agreements are up to 999 years and include 20 of the 161 parks and green spaces included in the scope of this review; equating to an area of 87 hectares of the 593 hectares of green space within the review’s scope. Within the leases for these sites there are provisions that require the parish and town councils to maintain these areas of land to a standard agreed with Knowsley Council. The parks and green spaces sites identified in Table 4 form part of these leases. Prior to April 2015 the routine grounds and infrastructure maintenance (and associated costs) for all of these leased sites was provided by Knowsley Council. However due to the £86 million saving requirement placed on Knowsley Council it was agreed that from the 1 April 2015 the Parish and town councils would be responsible for funding these maintenance activities on their leased sites. The maintenance programme could be delivered by the Knowsley Council’s existing operational parks maintenance team (via a Service Level Agreement) or the Parish and town councils could procure an alternative maintenance provider. These grounds maintenance operations were a new cost for the Parish and town councils to resource. They secured the funding for this through a combination of reviewing the maintenance schedules for each site with Knowsley Council and identifying efficiencies (e.g. reducing maintenance frequencies and associated costs) and increases to their precepts. In addition to the day to day grounds maintenance costs, these leased sites also have significant ongoing capital costs (e.g. lifecycle repair / replacement of the hard infrastructure) as well as vandalism repair and replacement costs. Knowsley Council has historically funded these costs and continues to do so, often working in partnership with the Parish and town councils to secure external funding and resources. The staff that develop these funding applications and manage the delivery of the capital improvement programmes are all within Knowsley Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service. England’s Parish and Town Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowsley Town Council</th>
<th>Whiston Town Council</th>
<th>Halewood Town Council</th>
<th>Prescot Town Council</th>
<th>Cronton Parish Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley Village Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Windy Arbor Road Playing Fields</td>
<td>Frederick Lunt Playing Fields</td>
<td>Eaton Street Park</td>
<td>The Pasture, Hall Lane Recreation Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longborough Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Robert Faulkes Centre</td>
<td>The Arncliffe Sports and Community Centre</td>
<td>Prescot KGV Playing Fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Lane Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Foxshaws Close Playground</td>
<td>Hilton Grace Playing Fields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syders Grove Recreation Ground</td>
<td>The Sanctuary</td>
<td>Halewood Doorstep Green (north and south)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bole Croft Doorstep Green</td>
<td>Wood Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td>New Hutto Woods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Close</td>
<td>Pool Hey Playing Fields</td>
<td>Wood Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Knowsley’s Parish and Town Councils |

| Table 4 Parks and Green Spaces leased by Knowsley Council to Knowsley’s parish and town councils within the scope of the review |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Knowsley Town Council | Whiston Town Council | Halewood Town Council | Prescot Town Council | Cronton Parish Council |
| Knowsley Village Recreation Ground | Windy Arbor Road Playing Fields | Frederick Lunt Playing Fields | Eaton Street Park | The Pasture, Hall Lane Recreation Ground |
| Longborough Road Recreation Ground | Robert Faulkes Centre | The Arncliffe Sports and Community Centre | Prescot KGV Playing Fields | |
| Mill Lane Recreation Ground | Foxshaws Close Playground | Hilton Grace Playing Fields | |
| Syders Grove Recreation Ground | The Sanctuary | Halewood Doorstep Green (north and south) | |
| Bole Croft Doorstep Green | Wood Road Recreation Ground | New Hutto Woods | |
| Ross Close | Pool Hey Playing Fields | Wood Road Recreation Ground | |

| Table 5 Current arrangements for funding Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017/18 Expenditure</th>
<th>£ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Space Revenue Expenditure</td>
<td>2.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Space Capital Expenditure</td>
<td>0.630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Annual Expenditure</td>
<td>2.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Green Space Revenue Expenditure** includes £0.287 million of supplies and services, £0.286 million of transport costs, £0.147 million of premises costs, £0.118 million on amenity green spaces, £0.154 million on natural spaces, £0.255 million on children and young people facilities, £0.124 million on allotments.
- **Vandalism and theft** costs the Council £0.630 million in 2015/16, which includes costs such as insurance claims, £0.118 million on fire damaged and £0.039 million on fire damaged.
- **Insurance Claims** on average an insurance claim relating to a member of the public’s slip, trip or fall in a park or green space costs the Council £0.630 million in 2015/16, which includes costs such as £0.118 million on fire damage and £0.039 million on fire damage.
- **Removal of fly-tipping** there are around 120 incidents of fly-tipping in Knowsley’s parks and green spaces each year which requires the disposal of approximately 325 tonnes of waste at a cost of £45,000.
- **Green Space Capital Expenditure** this is the resource that delivers the asset replacement programme and varies in value year on year by site. An example of annual breakdown by typology is: £0.271 million on parks and gardens, £0.154 million on nature spaces, £0.118 million on amenity green spaces, £0.059 million on children and young people facilities, £0.048 million on allotments.
- **Total Annual Expenditure** the total annual expenditure for 2017/18 is £2.741 million.
This is the funding stream that is ending

Review are highlighted in Table 6 and relate to:

The specific budgets that are in the scope of the described in Table 5 on page 69.

These functions are resourced through the means

- Central overheads
- Building management, repair and alteration
- Support to planning services and statutory
- Community support and engagement
- Staffing and equipment costs
- Day to day horticultural and tree stock maintenance operations
- Development projects and fund raising activities
- Asset management, refurbishment and replacement
- Support to planning services and statutory functions
- Building management, repair and alteration
- Central overheads

The annual expenditure for 2017/18 is approximately £2.741 million, this is used largely to

- Knowsley Council’s Green Space Asset Management Capital Budget. When Knowsley Council approved its Green Space Asset Management Plan in 2010 (which identified the maintenance / replacement requirements and costs for hard infrastructure in parks and green spaces e.g. gates, fencing, footpaths and play equipment) it allocated £0.500 million of capital funding to pay for these costs. This funding has been used since, in conjunction with external grant funding opportunities, for this purpose. However by the end of 2017/18 it will have all been used. Therefore moving forward there is a need to secure new capital funding at an identified annual level of £0.185 million.

- Combing the loss of the Knowsley Council controllable financial resources (£1.114 million) with the need for a new source of capital funding (£0.185 million) provides the total funding shortfall of circa £1.3 million that is within the scope of the Review.

### 2017/18 Income sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£ million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council controllable financial resources i.e. the annual revenue budget contribution from the Council</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income secured via commercial services (e.g. Public Health Commission, cemetery service income, commercial grounds maintenance contracts, Forest School / environmental education programmes and ‘We Know’ traded services</td>
<td>0.9996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital income sources - these include external grants e.g. Veolia, Cory Environmental Trust, Heritage Lottery / Big Lottery grants together with funds associated with planning gains (e.g. section 106 agreements)</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley Council Green Space Asset Management Capital Budget allocation of £0.500 million in 2010/11, in 2017/18 £0.186 million remaining (and will be used, therefore zero capital budget from 2018/19)</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.741</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Knowsley Council Green Space Asset Management Capital Budget

- Knowsley Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service 2017/18

- Example of how these savings have been achieved:
  - Reduce the number of Environment Officer posts from 3fte to 2fte (Saving £0.032 million)
  - Reduce Climate Change & Sustainability Budget from £0.010 million to £0.001 million (Saving £0.009 million)
  - Reduced payment to Mersey Forest Partnership of £0.006 million per annum from £0.019 million per annum (Saving £0.013 million)
  - Cessation of methane monitoring contract at Stadt Moers Park (Saving £0.030 million)
  - Reduce the Environmental Initiatives Budget from £0.020 million to £0.008 million (Saving £0.012 million)
  - Reduce Woodland Management budget from £0.030 million to £0.025 million (Saving £0.005 million)
  - Reduce Wildflower and Invasive Weeds budget from £0.020 million to £0.019 million (Saving £0.003 million)
  - Reduce Playground Improvement Budget from £0.028 million to £0.023 million (Saving £0.005 million)
  - Reduce the Ranger Promotions Budget from £0.020 million to £0.016 million (Saving £0.004 million)
  - Income target from ESS Traded Services (from 2016/17) (£0.020 million income)
  - Reduction in staffing levels associated with less scheduled grass cutting in parks by adopting differential mowing and creating meadows (i.e. a reduction in staffing and equipment budget) (Saving £0.053 million)
  - Reduce the Playground Maintenance Service (inspections and maintenance). Cease weekend inspections & maintenance and reduce the daily inspections (Saving £0.042 million)
  - Reduce the equipment and materials budget associated with playground maintenance (£0.010 million)
  - Reduction in parks operational material budget e.g. fertiliser / weed spray (Saving £0.015 million)
  - New income secured from external grounds maintenance contracts (Income £0.042 million)
  - New income generation from the Cemetery Service (Income £0.013 million)

### Table 6: Knowsley Council Environmental Sustainability Service Spending Plan Budget Savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010 Revenue Budget</th>
<th>Savings since 2010</th>
<th>% savings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£1.837 million</td>
<td>£0.720 million</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Examples of how these savings have been achieved:**
  - Reduce the number of Environment Officer posts from 3fte to 2fte (Saving £0.032 million)
  - Reduce Climate Change & Sustainability Budget from £0.010 million to £0.001 million (Saving £0.009 million)
  - Reduced payment to Mersey Forest Partnership of £0.006 million per annum from £0.019 million per annum (Saving £0.013 million)
  - Cessation of methane monitoring contract at Stadt Moers Park (Saving £0.030 million)
  - Reduce the Environmental Initiatives Budget from £0.020 million to £0.008 million (Saving £0.012 million)
  - Reduce Woodland Management budget from £0.030 million to £0.025 million (Saving £0.005 million)
  - Reduce Wildflower and Invasive Weeds budget from £0.020 million to £0.019 million (Saving £0.003 million)
  - Reduce Playground Improvement Budget from £0.028 million to £0.023 million (Saving £0.005 million)
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  - Reduce the equipment and materials budget associated with playground maintenance (£0.010 million)
  - Reduction in parks operational material budget e.g. fertiliser / weed spray (Saving £0.015 million)
  - New income secured from external grounds maintenance contracts (Income £0.042 million)
  - New income generation from the Cemetery Service (Income £0.013 million)

### Knowsley Council Spending Plans 2010/11 - 2016/17

Knowsley Council’s funding from central government has been drastically cut. These cuts are continuing to be made year on year, meaning that the Council faces the challenge of making a further £26 million of permanent savings by 2020. This is in addition to the £86 million already saved since 2010. Given the scale of these cuts, the Council has had to look at all of the services and support it provides, to reduce workforce costs, generate more income from other sources and work more closely with partners to find additional savings.

Therefore since 2010, the ESS (which incorporates the Arboriculture and Ecology and the Parks and Cemetery controllable financial resource spend budgets) has reduced its revenue budget by 39%, this has been achieved via staff restructures, a reduction or cessation of certain functions, reductions in material / equipment budgets and the securing of new income. A keen focus has been to reduce the level of direct Council funding by diversifying and increasing the ability of the service to generate an income (in line with the Council’s full cost recovery model and relevant legislation).

A summary of these savings and a description of how they have been made is provided in Table 6 above.
Current Performance Standards and Outcomes

Knowsley Council has a range of key performance indicators which it uses to measure and evaluate green space service delivery. The Green Space Strategy (2015 - 2020) identifies the broader Council outcomes together with the service specific indicators for each of the Green Space Strategy themes. However the headline indicators that demonstrate the positive outcomes that the ESS is delivering are shown below:

- a. 18 Green Flag Awards secured;
- b. The overall green space quality score of 83%;
- c. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) provide an annual independent audit of the Council’s play space equipment which provides reassurance that the sites are safe for public use. Given the level of vandalism and reduction in equipment maintenance the outcome of this inspection for 2015/16 identified a number of immediate failures (which have now been resolved but leading to a budget pressure).
- d. The spending plan identified the use of differential mowing in parks and a reduction in the amount of sown wildflower meadows. This has led to complaints from the public and pressure to revert back to previous arrangements.
- e. A reduction in the annual tree management budget has resulted in the work programme almost solely concentrating on the management of dangerous trees and the associated health and safety concerns following on from resident boundary enquiries. The ESS has not had the necessary funds to undertake proactive tree management works to improve tree health and appearance (this applies across the borough).

Current Service Delivery Challenges

Delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Service green space services during 2016/17 and into 2017/18 is proving challenging. This is associated with the reduction in the resources available whilst meeting the demands of the many people in Knowsley who regularly use their parks.

Maintenance Challenges

Whilst in the main horticultural service quality standards are being retained, along with support to community activities there has been a marked deterioration in the standard of cleansing the service is able to deploy to counter the significant volumes of litter and damage caused by vandalism. Littering has been a particular issue in high-use parks over the course of the summer and has generated complaints and reduced public satisfaction in these assets. Such issues have not been prevalent prior to April 2015 when such parks were safety checked / cleansed over the weekends and funding was available to replace damaged play equipment. The cessation of this service to meet spending plan requirements has led to all available resources each Monday being used to cleanse parks following the weekend’s high public use. Subsequently this impacts on the wider grounds and horticultural maintenance tasks, and in particular the service’s ability to support the numerous events and sporting activities that are held on a weekly basis. Such events are a fundamental part of the green space offer and should be supported, however the flexibility that is needed in the service to do this effectively is at a tipping-point.

Examples:
- a. During the summer Henley Park was regularly criticised on social media channels for overflowing litter bins and high levels of littering. This was even after an additional cleanse was put in place on a Friday and the teams prompt return on a Monday.
- b. The loss of flexibility to provide additional top-up work that is needed to support community events such as football coaching / tournaments. This has been seen recently at KGV playing field (Huyton) when despite cutting the site to schedule the fob left (due to the optimum grass growing conditions) made the pitch unplayable. Consequently the football teams complained to the Council and an additional cut was provided at short notice to allow the teams to play. This impacted on the ability of the service to cut other sites to schedule.
- c. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) provide an annual independent audit of the Council’s play space equipment which provides reassurance that the sites are safe for public use. Given the level of vandalism and reduction in equipment maintenance the outcome of this inspection for 2015/16 identified a number of immediate failures (which have now been resolved but leading to a budget pressure).
- d. The spending plan identified the use of differential mowing in parks and a reduction in the amount of sown wildflower meadows. This has led to complaints from the public and pressure to revert back to previous arrangements.
- e. A reduction in the annual tree management budget has resulted in the work programme almost solely concentrating on the management of dangerous trees and the associated health and safety concerns following on from resident boundary enquiries. The ESS has not had the necessary funds to undertake proactive tree management works to improve tree health and appearance (this applies across the borough).

Community Engagement

The previous capacity of the Environmental Sustainability Service to develop and deliver public behavioural change campaigns and initiatives in respect to local environmental quality to schools, community groups and neighbourhoods has significantly diminished. Given the current focus of some elected members on these matters, given their perceived increase in dog fouling and littering across the borough, the ability of the service to provide an appropriate response is not available. Also the Green Space Ranger service has fundamentally changed its focus in respect to the ESS Spending Plan requirements. Previously they were focused on maximising community use of parks and green spaces by publishing and running events. However, they are now largely commissioned and funded by the Council’s Public Health team to deliver against the objectives of the Public Health Outcomes Framework and their work is target driven to demonstrate their value to this important agenda. Therefore they have not been able to offer the same levels of assistance to friends of parks groups and family events (as examples) and such groups are not keen to go it alone. A further issue has been a significant reduction in the capacity in the Environmental Sustainability Service to manage the Knowsley Allotment Forum (with a corresponding strong push from the Council for allotment committees to self-manage) and the annual renewal of allotment tenancy agreements.

Examples:
- a. A range of dog-fouling awareness raising campaigns, linked to the national Love Where You Live initiative, were delivered successfully by the ESS during 2013 to 2015. This has not been possible since 2016.
- b. The reduction in the number of Rangers and their focus on Public Health outcomes has led to events such as the Webster Park Fun Day and Cronton Gala not being supported.
- c. Allotment committees such as Molyneux Drive and Northwood have failed in their endeavours to be self-managed and are now wishing to return to the Council’s overarching management.

Infrastructure Assets

When the Council’s Green Space Asset Management Plan was approved in 2010/11 a one-off capital allocation of £0.5 million was made available to support its delivery. It is likely that this funding will run-out by 2017/18. Furthermore, the ability of the Environmental Sustainability Service to access the Developer Contribution...
funding that also supported the Asset Management Plan has changed. The introduction of The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations placed restrictions on the use and the pooling of such contributions for green space infrastructure improvements. The future introduction of affordable housing contributions, given Knowsley’s economic viability challenges, will mean that it will become increasingly difficult to secure such contributions for green space. This is compounded by a reduction in Environmental Sustainability Service revenue budgets relating to green space maintenance.

Example:

a. Day to day health and safety / maintenance repairs on the green infrastructure are all funded from capital budgets. During 2016, a large number of requests for entrance improvements (e.g. KGV Huyton, Stadt Moers, Halewood Doorstep Green) were made due to anti-social behaviour, Disability Discrimination Act compliance and public safety reasons. To allow this work to be undertaken, funding outside the Environmental Sustainability Service budget had to be secured from other Council stakeholders.

It is evident that service standards have been impacted by spending plan requirements and whilst during 2017/18 the Environmental Sustainability Service continues to manage the Council’s parks and green spaces in a largely positive and community led manner it has reached a tipping point. It is highly likely that without an alternative delivery model that sustains resources in green space management that a rapid and significant decline in the amenity and asset value of the parks will take place.

Knowsley Council’s Strategic Objectives

The delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan for 2017-2020 is designed to secure the Council’s shared commitment with partner agencies and residents to making Knowsley The Borough of Choice by 2023. The Plan’s approach is based upon its Co-operative Principles to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Knowsley, whilst also prioritising its role as a community leader. It recognises that such foundations are necessary for transformation and public service reform; encouraging more collaborative working; and the introduction of alternative delivery models for services in appropriate circumstances.

The Corporate Plan sets five delivery priorities for the next three years to ensure that The Borough of Choice is secured through a quality educational, business growth, housing, public infrastructure and health care offer through the enabling actions and partnership working of the Council:

| Priority 1: | Maximise the Council’s contribution to education in Knowsley |
| Priority 2: | Maximise the Council’s contribution to the health and wellbeing of Knowsley’s residents |
| Priority 3: | Provide high quality and sustainable Adult Social Care |
| Priority 4: | Accelerate business growth, new jobs and new housing |
| Priority 5: | Create a sustainable Borough |

Very importantly the Plan identifies the economic resurgence that Knowsley is now enjoying through the Council and its partners capitalising on the economic opportunities offered by its location and superb transport links within the Liverpool City Region and the Northern Powerhouse. The excellent business and employment prospects within Knowsley are bringing new people and families to the borough and in meeting their needs for housing, and indeed existing Knowsley residents, there is a need for an additional 6,300 homes between now and 2028.

Furthermore, the Plan recognises the enormous challenge of improving life expectancy of those living in Knowsley up to the national average and the necessity for the Council to enable the best independent living conditions for the borough’s increasingly older population and that more residents will need support with complex needs and health issues.

The Plan explains that since 2010, Knowsley has been hit harder by national Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country. This trend is expected to continue to 2020. Central to meeting this challenge will be how effectively the Council can work with partner agencies and local residents to Create a sustainable Borough. Introducing new ways of working and developing new models of co-operative service delivery will be important in this respect in line with an overall aim of enabling local communities to make their contribution to making Knowsley the Borough of Choice e.g. a specific action within this section of the Plan relates to conducting a feasibility study into a sustainable model for parks maintenance during 2017/18. The Plan also prioritises the organisational, workforce and cultural changes required for the Council to adapt from its traditional role of deliverer by default to one of an enabler and facilitator are secured.

Just as an important component of the Plan’s setting of strategic objectives and associated delivery actions is its description of how the Council will operate in delivering them:

• Be a strong community leader and always champion Knowsley
• Build better partnerships and work with others co-operatively to improve Knowsley
• Listen to the community when making decisions


Since 2010, Knowsley has been hit harder by national Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country and this trend is expected to continue to 2020. Given this context the Council has had to make a permanent saving of £86 million over the last seven years, which equates to an overall reduction in its budget of 42%. To meet this challenge the Council is working more effectively with its partner agencies and local residents, enabling local communities to support themselves and operating much more efficiently as an organisation which has included reducing its overall workforce by 29% since 2010 (which includes a 47% reduction in senior management
posts). The Council now faces the challenge of making a further £14.9 million of permanent savings by 2020.

The Council is in this position because since 2010 national Government’s policy has been to reduce Public Sector funding and this has been particularly significant for local government services (which are the functions that Knowsley Council performs). As can been seen from Figure 13 between 2009/10 and 2019/20 the amount of funding that national Government will provide to local government will reduce by 64%.

Of the 353 local government councils in England Knowsley has been the worst affected by this policy which equates to a cut of £485 per person in the borough. This is because it has been heavily reliant on national Government grants e.g. Revenue Support Grant to resource the services it provides, as shown in Figure 14 over 50% of the Council’s funding has come from such sources with approximately 20% being derived from Council Tax given the social demographic nature of many of Knowsley’s communities. This is in direct contrast to other councils, for example Wokingham Borough Council in Berkshire. Wokingham has a similar number of people and houses as Knowsley does and its Council provides a very similar range of services as Knowsley Council. However, they have had the lowest cuts of all councils to their grants from central Government and secure 56% of their funding from Council Tax. Consequently their ‘cuts per person’ figure is £43 (compared to Knowsley’s as shown above of £485).

As a direct consequence of these factors during 2016/17 the Council undertook a detailed review of all of its services so as to target resources where they are most needed. However, as can be seen from Figure 15 opposite over 50% of its funding is used to provide services to vulnerable adults and children which the Council has identified must be prioritised from a moral and statutory / legal perspective. This means that future savings must be found from the remaining services, many of which are non-statutory i.e. they do not have to be provided by the Council.

Figure 13
Since 2010 Public Sector Funding has been cut significantly - particularly local government

Figure 14
Where does Knowsley Council get its funding from?

We are highly dependent on Government Funding

Over 50% of our funding comes from Government Grants

Figure 15
Where can Knowsley Council make the cuts?

Over 50% is spent on Adults and Children’s Services

Source: Resolution Foundation, 2015
The detailed review of Council services in light of this financial context, which included a public consultation on proposed savings options, led to the development and subsequent Council approval on 8 March 2017 of the Council’s Financial Strategy 2017/18 - 2019/20. The Strategy is now the cornerstone from which a sustainable Council will be shaped in line with the Corporate Plan’s strategic direction to meet local needs in a manner that prioritises the protection of the most vulnerable in society, reduces performance in lower priority services and, where appropriate, the implementation of new delivery models from 2019/20. In so doing the Plan’s objective are to:

a. Encourage more business to locate in Knowsley to boost jobs, economic growth and business rate income to the Council.
b. Improve Knowsley’s housing offer to encourage new families to locate to the borough and bring new Council Tax income to the Council.
c. Ensure through these means the Council is more financially stable and less reliant on central Government funding.

Through its approval of its Financial Strategy the Council has set its budget for the period 2017/18 - 2019/20 and as a consequence the Environmental Sustainability Service has been tasked with finding a means of funding its entire budget from sources that no longer rely on annual £1.114 million of Council revenue funding from April 2019. It should be noted however that this decision is aligned to the action within the Council’s Corporate Plan that relates to conducting a feasibility study into a new Council Tax income to the Council.

c. Disposal of parks and green spaces for alternative uses (i.e. rental of a site for non-public use / sale of land for housing and commercial development / private garden extensions etc.).
d. The closure of parks and green spaces that do not offer alternative uses (i.e. infrastructure works will be required to permanently close public access to these site).
e. Removal of certain infrastructure / assets to reduce health and safety risks (i.e. removal of play / green gym equipment, the closure of buildings etc.).
f. Closure of key sustainable transport routes (e.g. cycle networks within green spaces).
g. Cessation of support and engagement to local community / voluntary groups.

It is highly likely that such impacts would lead to:

a. Negative impact upon organisations based within green spaces and the community groups that use them.
b. Failure to deliver the outcomes of the Green Space Strategy.
c. Loss of an important element of Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy.
d. Negative impact on the local community and their associated dissatisfaction.
e. Significant risk of grant claw back associated with a range of funding bodies.

Given these assessments it is considered that such an approach would certainly result in deterioration of green space standards, their ability to deliver the Green Space Strategy, public disappointment in their decline and an increasing unwillingness of the public and businesses to engage in their positive use.

Such a state of affairs has been seen in Knowsley before and it has been the co-operation between the Council and Knowsley’s communities that has enabled parks and green spaces to be rejuvenated over the last decade to the condition to they are today. It is therefore important to remember the condition they could fall back to should a new funding and management model not be found, as shown in Figures 16 to 21 below.

Figure 16: Rejuvenating Knowsley’s parks and green spaces
Not that long ago, a number of parks and green spaces in Knowsley were ‘no-go’ areas in very poor condition.

Knowsley now has 18 Green Flag Awards, with the majority of its parks and green spaces being of good quality.

Some of Knowsley’s green spaces were inaccessible with limited community use.

Parks and green spaces are amongst the most used public assets in the borough with 8.1 million visits per annum.
The majority of parks now benefit from a range of facilities including 37 play areas and 15 green gyms.

Over £8 million has been invested into improving green spaces over the last 6 years.

Not all of the parks and green spaces had facilities within them and those that did have them were often dated.

A lot of the infrastructure was of poor quality and in some instances dangerous.
Managing such decline and the associated loss of benefit to securing the Council’s Priorities is the scenario that should be avoided at all possible and this is why the Council has identified assessing alternative options for the future management, development and maintenance of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as a priority. The Council firmly believes that they should be seen as prized assets and the investment put into them utilised to the benefit of all stakeholders. If they return to the sub-standard quality last seen perhaps only ten years ago their unique offerings will be lost (probably for many years to come) and instead of being a valuable resource they will become costly liabilities or indeed closed altogether on-mass awaiting new developments on the land. Hence an alternative funding and management delivery model is needed that avoids such degeneration and retains the viability of borough’s parks in perpetuity.

This is not only a problem in Knowsley

For the vast majority of public green and open space across the UK, local councils have historically been solely responsible for their upkeep. With the ever increasing pressure on the public purse it is widely recognised by all interested parties that such subsidy is not sustainable and so there is a need to find new ways of supplementing lost Council funding through alternative approaches. These may include private sector funding, support from the community and voluntary sector, greater levels of site based income generation, fund raising and sponsorship or indeed the establishment of an endowment to secure a long-term return on its wise investment.

Central Government Parks Enquiry

In July 2016, the Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched an inquiry into public parks to examine the impact of reduced local authority budgets on these open spaces and consider concerns that their existence is under threat. The Committee is inviting submissions of evidence to examine how parks should be supported now and in the future. This includes studying alternative management and funding models, such as a mutual or a trust.

In September 2017 the Parks and Green Spaces Minister launched a new Parks Action Group to help England’s public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future. The new Parks Action Group will include experts from the world of horticulture, leisure, heritage and tourism, and will be tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England. To support them, central Government is providing £500,000 funding to kick start their work. The action group will propose what steps can be taken in line with the Government response to the House of Commons’ Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into the future of parks and green spaces published in January 2017.

State of the UK Public Parks

In September 2016 The Heritage Lottery Fund’s published their second State of the UK Public Parks report. It findings show that there is a growing deficit between the rising use of parks and the declining resources that are available to manage them. Based on four surveys of park managers, independent park trusts, park friends and user groups, and the general public, the findings show that while parks are highly valued by the public and usage is increasing, park maintenance budgets and staffing levels are being cut. Without urgent action the continuing downward trend in the condition of many of our most treasured parks and green spaces is set to continue. Whilst new ways of working and generating income are showing potential, more support, shared learning and collaboration is needed to support those that manage public parks. Therefore, this research calls for collaborative action to deliver new ways of funding and managing public parks to avert a crisis.

Many sites had limited functionality.

But now they support educational attainment, improve health and wellbeing and encourage social engagement.
Rethinking Parks

A further key report, Rethinking Parks: Exploring New Business Models for the 21st Century (Nesta 2013) acknowledges the requirement for new delivery models to bridge the funding gap and to redesign parks and open spaces to ensure their financial sustainability. A variety of new business models to fund and resource park services were piloted, funded by £1 million from the National Lottery. These related to the following items:

a. Raising voluntary or compulsory levies on businesses by establishing a Parks Improvement District;
b. Providing better facilities within parks that can be regularly used by local businesses and organisations in return for the levy payment, without reducing park use by local residents;
c. Establishing an endowment fund to resource park services at a city region scale;
d. Creating a Parks and Gardens Foundation to increase opportunities for public giving to help financially sustain individual parks;
e. Setting up membership subscription arrangements for parks to provide additional benefits and income to expand park services; and
f. Developing new approaches to managing parks by working with volunteers to adopt alternative maintenance techniques.

Nature Connected Liverpool City Region Rethinking Parks study

Although it was not selected to take part in these studies, the Council has been pursuing opportunities for City Region collaboration in order to up-scale its ambitions to articulate a much wider green space offer than Knowsley can make alone and to secure efficiencies through shared costs, overheads and resources. To this end it has led the Nature Connected sponsored Re-thinking Parks Study across the Liverpool City Region to review a range of options and alternative models, informed by good practice from the UK and abroad. Nature Connected is the City Region’s Local Nature Partnership (established by DEFRA in 2012) and consists of public, private, academic and environmental agency organisations that provide guidance to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on issues relating to how the natural environment can be harnessed to support the delivery of the LEP’s strategic priorities.

The opportunities identified through the Liverpool City Region Rethinking Parks Study could be adopted to manage the City Region’s parks and green spaces as a collective or indeed those of the Council in the first instance; in line with the Council’s Green Space Strategy (GSS) plans.

The study very much focused on opportunities for collaboration and makes the following key recommendations to:

a. Maintain the public and political profile of parks to promote their value and continually present a strong case for their resourcing through repositioning parks services to align with changing corporate and political priorities;
b. Try to protect existing budgets and supplement these with additional sources through fundraising targeted at the LEP and national / EU capital and grants, and efficiencies secured through greater co-ordination;
c. Utilise the growing public and private interest in holding events and activities in parks for commercial return;
d. Consider opportunities to transfer parks assets to local and community based organisations in order to share the costs for upkeep (which could include formal in-kind volunteer schemes and pro-bono professional services);
e. Streamline the officer time spent in preparing plans, research and pilot studies, Green Flag Award applications etc. through a centrally coordinated resource;
f. Recognise the value of niche expertise within the sector e.g. horticultural maintenance and park rangers and to undertake community facing activities that secure the support from local volunteers;
g. Develop an apprenticeship training programme that focuses particularly on the long-term unemployed to initially support and then deliver these niche skills;
h. Explore the scope and remit for a City Region Parks Foundation as a means to champion Environmental Stewardship, through a charitable or not for profit mechanism, with the City Region’s businesses, the voluntary sector and local communities;
i. Consider the establishment of a formal City Region Parks Management Board led by a core group of strategic commissioners appointed by the Combined Authority which as a priority could look at the long-term funding and management of all green space assets similar to Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s Environment Commission;
j. To undertake a detailed commercial and technical analysis of the most appropriate financial model and business case for managing parks on a City Region footprint which could allow individual authorities to pool the management of particular parks, or elements of them; and
k. Assess the need to pool or appoint particular staff with specific skills such as fundraising and business development to facilitate / undertake this analysis.

Figure 22 identifies the range of potential beneficiaries that could be approached to contribute financial / in kind resources into a new management model to fund the future management and maintenance of parks and green spaces.

The LCR Rethinking Parks Study recommended that a comprehensive and fully costed business case should be developed that looks at the income, expenditure and benefits of establishing a new model for the future management and maintenance of parks and green spaces. This business case should establish cost projections, funding streams, organisational structures and a phased implementation strategy that gives flexibility to suit local context, constraints and political priorities.

The LCR Rethinking Parks Study final report was sent to all LCR Chief Executives for further consideration in March 2015. However at this time, there was a lack of commitment to further develop a City Region wide model. As a result, the Council has continued to prioritise the exploration of new alternative delivery model opportunities that can be applied to Knowsley stand-alone.

Liverpool City Council Green and Open Spaces Review

In 2015 the Liverpool City Mayor commissioned a Strategic Green and Open Spaces Review Board to examine how the City can continue to maintain and invest in its parks and green spaces. An independent chair was appointed, along with a small board of councillors, officers and local experts to guide an eighteen month programme of work. The most pressing task for the Liverpool board has been to identify alternative ways to fund the service in the future. A central element of their consideration has been to place the City’s six or seven strategic parks into a trust set up with an endowment of around £27 million funded by the City Council, health services, planning gain and other sources. Additional income would be generated through events, concessions and charges to supplement the annual dividend generated by the endowment. It is understood that current plans relate to seeking management and funding solutions on an individual basis for the City’s strategic parks.

Other City Region local authorities

The other local authorities in the City Region have recognised that their current funding models for maintaining their green spaces are unsustainable given the public sector austerity. However, apart from Liverpool City Council (as referenced above) the Review Board is not aware of any of them developing any robust plans to address this position to date.
Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy - Recognising the necessity for an Alternative Delivery Model

During the development of Knowsley’s revised Green Space Strategy in 2014, it was recognised that funding of the management and maintenance of Knowsley’s green spaces in an era of reduced public funding was a key issue to be addressed. Meetings with Knowsley’s public sector strategic commissioners were held to establish and pursue opportunities for income generation and as a result Knowsley’s Public Health Service commissioned the Green Space Rangers to deliver a range of health related activities. However, it was also recognised that income generation and continuation of obtaining grant funding for capital projects would be insufficient to fund and sustain Knowsley’s green spaces in the medium to long-term. The Strategy therefore included the identification of alternative delivery models for the delivery of the Green Space Service as a key element of research needed.

Setting the Scene - The Review Board’s Findings

- It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the public park as it is known today emerged as a freely accessible open space for the use and benefit of all people. The financial model that underpinned their creation relied heavily on the increase in land values that could be achieved through the development of a new and attractive park. Good quality and well maintained parks were historically seen to make good business sense, increasing the value of property which then generated a greater tax return to benefit public finances. A virtuous circle of investment.

- Alongside many environmental and ecological benefits, parks are essential for improving public health and promoting a greater sense of well-being. This wider social value was a principal motive behind the early development of urban parks and this continues to be the case today. Furthermore well managed green spaces create opportunities for local businesses, for creating jobs, for people to learn skills to find work as well as make areas more attractive to investors, home buyers and developers. More than half of the UK population, 57%, visit their local parks at least once a month.

- Prior to 2010 many of Knowsley’s parks were run-down, poorly designed, under used and hot-spots for antisocial behaviour. However, Knowsley Council’s Green Space Strategy 2010 - 14 has improved the quality and public accessibility of these sites through enabling community action and £8 million of investment into the sites. Knowsley’s parks and green spaces afford a distinctive approach to help tackle health, educational and social inequalities and provide a unique contribution to the creation of vibrant, healthy and prosperous communities; they are the Natural Approach to a Thriving Borough.
Knowsley Council through its Green Space Strategy 2015 - 20 has identified that it wishes to maximise the value of Knowsley’s publicly accessible green space assets to the benefit of people, the economy and the environment but recognises this must be achieved through alternative delivery models due to pressure on the public purse. They contribute £73.2 million Gross Value Added per annum to the Knowsley economy, enhance property values in the borough by £231 million and bring £129 million of other economic benefit in terms of health, recreation, mitigation of the impacts of climate change and biodiversity.

Over 8 million visits are made to the borough’s parks and green spaces annually and there are 52 active friends of parks groups. Knowsley’s residents donate 15,000 hours of their time to supporting the upkeep of the borough’s parks and green spaces.

Knowsley currently has 893 hectares of Public Green Space Land of which 593 hectares is within the scope of this Review; the remaining 300 hectares of amenity green spaces will continue to be maintained by Knowsley Council’s Streetscene Services or Registered Social Landlords.

Of the 593 hectares of wide ranging publicly accessible parks and green spaces, 18 of these spaces hold a Green Flag Award that demonstrates their community value and good quality infrastructure and maintenance.

Of the 593 hectares of Public Green Space Land that forms the scope of the Review 244 hectares is classified as being in Green Belt (41%); this leaves 349 hectares of Public Green Space Land in the scope of the Review not in Green Belt (59%).

Knowsley’s Local Plan requires the provision of 382 hectares of Public Green Space Land; however the total amount of such space in the borough is 893 hectares which is 134% more than is needed according to the Plan. The 893 hectares includes 593 hectares of parks and green spaces within the scope of the Board’s review.

The infrastructure value of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces is projected to be £234 million with the life-cycle replacement costs of assets on these sites projected to be £14.420 million over the next 20 years. There are a number of significant parks development projects underway in Knowsley e.g. at Bowring Park and Court Hey Park.

Knowsley Council is principally responsible for funding the development, management and maintenance of parks and green spaces; however the borough’s Parish and town councils are also funding and managing routine grounds maintenance activity on sites that Knowsley Council leases to them.

In 2017/18 Knowsley Council’s annual funding contribution to support the upkeep of parks and green spaces is approximately circa £1.3 million, the revenue funding it provides has been reduced by almost 40% since 2010 due to central Government cuts to public service funding.

Since 2010, Knowsley has been hit harder by national Government funding cuts than any other local authority in the country - this trend is expected to continue to 2020 and Knowsley Council needs to make a further £14.9 million of permanent savings by then, the funding it does receive is having to be prioritised to support the most vulnerable in the borough’s society. Knowsley Council has set its budget for the period 2017/18 - 2019/20 and this does not include any provision for the circa £1.3 million of annual expenditure it has previously allocated to Knowsley’s parks and green spaces from April 2019 which are not classed as being a statutory duty of the Council to provide. This is not a decision it would have wished to make and therefore a specific action within Knowsley Council’s Corporate Plan 2017 - 20 relates to conducting a feasibility study into a sustainable model for parks maintenance during 2017/18 - the subject of this Report.

Knowsley is enjoying an economic resurgence offered by its location and superb transport links within the Liverpool City Region and the Northern Powerhouse - the excellent business and employment prospects within Knowsley are bringing new people and families to the borough and in meeting their needs for housing, and indeed existing Knowsley residents, there is a necessity for an additional 6,300 homes to be built in the borough between now and 2028. Furthermore there is a pressing need for accommodation that meets the specific needs of the growing elderly population of the borough and in helping those with disability live independently for longer.

Knowsley Council’s ethos is founded on its Co-operative Principles to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Knowsley, whilst also prioritising its role as a community - this involves the introduction of alternative delivery models for services in appropriate circumstances.

Studies have been undertaken at national and Liverpool City Region levels to assess the impact of cuts to local authority budgets on the provision of parks services which have identified how things could be done differently. Over recent years 50% of local authorities have sold / transferred their parks and this is expected to rise to 59% by 2020. Furthermore, 50% of local authorities have transferred outdoor sports facilities to community groups over the last three years.

Setting the Scene - The Review Board’s Conclusions

That the function and development of parks in urban areas stem from the Industrial Revolution and the recognition at that time that a healthy workforce was dependent on access to good quality green space for relaxation, socialising and wellbeing - all themes that remain a priority for society today. Today public parks and park systems are increasingly being used to restructure and reframe urban districts and neighbourhoods. In part this is driven by the need to improve amenity and the visual quality of the environment, but is also seen as means to improve the sustainability and resilience of communities and drive economic prosperity.

Public parks embody many timeless and innate qualities that people continue love and greatly value. As the resources needed for their management become increasingly scarce it is essential to learn from and adopt new and innovative approaches to their funding, upkeep and use to safeguard their future and harness their full potential.

Many of Knowsley’s green spaces are of good, and in many cases, excellent standard following significant investment in their infrastructure and community use. This position has been secured through Knowsley Council’s strategic direction and recognition of the unique Place shaping attributes such areas provide.

Knowsley Council’s parks and green spaces services provide a quality service that demonstrates good value for money, however cuts that have had to be made to its funding are having a detrimental impact on maintenance standards and supporting community activities in parks.
• Individuals and green space community interest groups have been encouraged by Knowsley Council to take a much more active role in the use and stewardship of these local assets; to which a positive response has been generally received.

• The current regeneration project at Bowring Park and the opportunities for developing a new future at Court Hey Park to catalyse community interest are timely and offer great opportunity to provide foundations for an alternative funding and management model.

• Knowsley Council has had to make 40% financial savings since 2010 from its parks and green spaces budget, and has to stop its funding for the maintenance and management of these sites altogether from April 2019; but the area of public parkland in Knowsley remains the same and the public expectation as to the quality of the parks remains the same. A tipping point has been reached with a stark contrast between a dramatic decline in the quality of parks (with many having to close) and their continued positive use or finding a new means to fund and manage their upkeep.

• Staying as things are is unfortunately not an option as Knowsley Council's funding of circa £1.3 million per annum will stop from April 2019, but the Council through the Review Board is committed to protecting their value through finding an alternative funding and management model. This circumstance is a common issue across the country but most acute in Knowsley due to it being the worst affected by the central Government public sector austerity policy.

• Managing such decline and the associated loss of benefit from Knowsley's parks and green spaces is a scenario that should be avoided if at all possible. Knowsley's parks and green spaces should be seen as prized assets and the investment put into them utilised to the benefit of all stakeholders. If they return to the sub-standard quality last seen perhaps only ten years ago their unique offerings will be lost (probably for many years to come) and instead of being a valuable resource they will become costly liabilities or indeed closed altogether on-mass awaiting new developments on the land. Hence an alternative funding and management delivery model is needed that avoids such degeneration and retains the viability of the borough's parks forever.

• All of Knowsley's parks and green spaces should be considered in a holistic manner so a solution can be found that benefits the whole borough, as such those parks and green spaces leased by the Parish and town councils are assumed to be within the scope of the Board's Review.

• The true wealth of local parks and green spaces is not valued as it should be e.g. their use as outdoor classrooms or walking and cycling routes connecting Knowsley's communities and business / employment locations.

• Evidence demonstrates the value that Knowsley's parks provide to Knowsley Council's (and its partners') objectives in terms of supporting individuals to lead healthier lives and so improve their wellbeing, supporting improved educational achievement, enabling social value outcomes and promoting Knowsley as a prime location to live, work and invest. However, the potential of green spaces to positively contribute to the strategic outcomes and objectives of Knowsley Council and its partners has yet to be fully realised.
Exploring alternative management options

Local authorities have traditionally been responsible for funding, managing and maintaining their publicly accessible parks and green spaces. They have by default been the principal body responsible for their development and upkeep and the majority of these services have been funded publicly and provided for public benefit. With continuing reductions in funding most public services are coming under increasing pressure to find additional savings, greater efficiencies and in some cases alternative delivery models. This is particularly evident for non-statutory and discretionary services that include parks and green spaces. Given this situation (as explained in Setting the Scene) a primary component of the Review Board’s work has been to explore alternative management options that work well elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

There is a wealth of models that provide valuable examples and benchmarks that have been used to inform this Review.

In considering an appropriate governance model for the future management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces a number of interrelated factors need to be considered. Central to this is the scope, extent and quantity of the service, as this will have a direct influence on the most suitable management model; as some models may be more appropriate for specific types of green space than others. Therefore it is important to reflect on Knowsley Council’s requirement to find a solution that is the most appropriate holistic model for Knowsley’s parks as a collective; which was been subsequently endorsed by the Review Board as the outcome that should be sought. Therefore the Review Board has focused its attention on assessing the management options that could be applied to Knowsley’s network of parks and green spaces, rather than from the perspective and characteristics of one particular type of green space or indeed site. It is important to recognise that cherry-picking the green spaces with greatest functionality (i.e. social, natural, economic or infrastructure value) and associated community interest may result in Knowsley Council retaining responsibility for less valued parks and losing the contribution that the best sites could cascade to them.

In parallel to the scope and quantity of the resource, quality standards for future maintenance are a key issue to consider. These have been defined within the scope of this Review and the financial resources needed to deliver these have been identified in the Setting the Scene section of this Report. Whilst the relationship between quality and expenditure is complex and greater expenditure does not always correlate with higher quality it is necessary to secure adequate capital and revenue funding to maintain a publicly acceptable level of quality. Thus a quality benchmark needs to be established that sets clear aspirations and targets for the service to ensure it can meet both legal requirements for health and safety and deliver a level of amenity that is acceptable to both Knowsley Council’s elected members and the general public. This is the purpose of the Review Board’s Policy Requirement (c) to maintain and where possible improve the current quality standard outcomes for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces and has been the benchmark that the Review Board has used to assess different management options (and indeed funding options - as discussed in the next section of this Report).

NESTA Learning to Rethink Parks

In commencing its review of management models the Review Board utilised the recent work Learning to Rethink Parks (February 2016) conducted by the UK charity NESTA, who champion the application of innovation and partnerships to solve society’s big challenges. NESTA highlight that public parks need new solutions and new business models if they are to remain free, open and valued community assets. Their research conducted between 2013 and 2015, funded by £1 million of funding from the Big Lottery and the Heritage Lottery Fund, tested new business models that may sustain the UK’s public parks in the face of significant funding cuts. NESTA’s Senior Programme Manager, Lydia Ragoonanan, provided the Review Board at its meeting on 6 April 2017 with an overview of
the findings of their study and case study examples of how public parks can be managed outside of a local authority’s direct control and associated funding obligations.

Lydia explained that like many other public services the UK’s public parks are under increasing pressure, with limited resources available for maintenance and management. Public sector funding for discretionary services like parks is projected to fall by 60 per cent or more over the next decade. Through its research NESTA has identified that ambitious new business models, management tools and partnerships are needed to create a more sustainable future for the way parks are used and maintained. This would not only lead to greater financial security for parks, but it could also create new opportunities for employment and education, increased health and wellbeing, and greater biodiversity.

The Review Board considered a number of case studies and the recommendations that NESTA has made:

a. Bournemouth Parks Foundation - a charity modelled on the parks foundations that are prominent in the U.S. A. This is operating independently from the local authority and was established using funding from digital giving that park users donated when visiting the Foundation’s parks; donations were £20,000 in 2016 and are projected to increase to £43,000 in 2020.

b. MYPARKSCOTLAND is an independent Scottish parks charity that uses crowdfunding to support green spaces in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

c. Heeley Subscription Society utilises donations and a subscription scheme to maintain Heeley Park in Sheffield which is managed by an independent trust.

d. Darlington Rethinking Parks utilises regular volunteering by the employees of local businesses to undertake park improvements; every £1 invested is bringing a return valued at £1.80.

e. Bloomsbury Squared is pursuing the creation of a parks-focused Business Improvement District, securing funding from local businesses to help maintain this area of London’s parks.

f. In Bristol the charity Park Work is working with the City Council to provide horticultural skills and training for people needing help to enter employment, in doing so their work is helping to bring improvements to local parks; every £1 invested is bringing a return valued at £2.40.

g. Bumley GO TO THE PARK encourages volunteers to help maintain local parks and has introduced more natural environments to help reduce maintenance costs, improve biodiversity and reduce CO2 emissions; in 2016 this approach resulted in a saving of £70,000 on parks maintenance costs which is expected to increase to £117,000 per annum by 2020.

In presenting its research NESTA made the following recommendations for parks teams and local authorities, and for funders:

NESTA recommendations for Parks Teams and Local Authorities:

a. Do not expect one answer to solve everything. Diversify your income and find new ways to maintain and manage parks at lower cost.

b. Draw on financial skills and business expertise - inside or outside your team - to understand your current costs properly, and identify opportunities to save money as well as generating additional income.

c. Involve people - parks users, local businesses and residents, and others who care about parks. Understand what they need from parks, what they value and what they can contribute. Involve them in designing and delivering new ideas.

d. Look for other organisations who can address skills gaps, inject new thinking, move more swiftly, mobilise a wider network or provide capital, and build formal partnerships with them to make this happen.

e. Test your ideas in practice with small-scale prototypes. Build in as many opportunities for feedback as you can. Learn and adapt as you go.

NESTA recommendations for Funders:

a. Provide targeted funding and support for teams to establish sustainable business models. This should include access to specialist financial and business advice, and building the capacity of parks teams to innovate and take risks.

b. Deploy different funding models to help parks focus on sustainability, such as mixed grant-loan funds, setting up endowments for parks, or investment readiness support.

c. Encourage collaborations across sectors where parks can make a valuable contribution, such as health and wellbeing, environment, employment or education, as well as business and resident engagement.

The Land Trust

The Land Trust is an independent charity that provides long-term, sustainable management of green open spaces for the benefit of communities. Its Chief Executive, Euan Hall, and Policy and Projects Executive, Sarah Williams, presented information about The Land Trust to the Review Board at its meeting on 6 April 2017. They explained that the Trust takes land into its ownership to manage it in perpetuity primarily by the long-term investment return on an endowment (bringing a permanent revenue stream) which enables:

a. Green space to be designed to meet local needs with a local maintenance provision, so creating emotional ownership

b. Social cohesion

c. Create economic uplift

d. Protect and improve the environment

e. Improve health and wellbeing

f. Provide educational opportunities

g. Relief of pressure on public sector budgets

The Trust has a Board of eight Trustees, supported by eight Members which include The Homes and Communities Agency, Groundwork, National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts. It became an independent charity in 2010 created to improve the lives of local communities by restoring and managing green spaces over the long-term. The Trust operates at a national level (65+ sustainably managed green spaces) bringing economies of scale to the delivery of local green space maintenance and development through its endowment funding approach that removes reliance on constantly needing to fundraise e.g. through short-term grants. The Trust also utilises Section 106 payments, service charges / rental from residential and commercial properties and concessions.

The endowment provides the Trust with the long-term commitment that is needed to protect public green spaces in the current period of public sector austerity. The Trust has an endowment of approximately £120 million which it invests with CCLA who manage £7 billion of investments for charities, religious organisations and the public sector and provide a long-term return modelled at 3.5%. This earns the Trust approximately £4.2 million per annum and provides:

a. An in perpetuity / sustainable funding for their green space maintenance costs and capital replacement costs, undertaken by local service providers.

b. A trusted model of funding that is not reliant on local authority budgets.

c. Mitigates investment risk through long-term investment using a well-established and trusted investment partner.

d. Allows long-term planning, employment and training for local people.

e. Well designed and managed places that people are keen to use, deliver wider benefits e.g. health and wellbeing and reduce long-term cost.

Ultimately, Euan concluded, these outcomes can only be delivered by the Trust having certainty of long-term funding either through an endowment or other secured income streams.


The Key Park -
The Blundellsands Park Trust

Members of the Review Board visited this park on 24 April 2017.

The Key Park was first laid out in 1865 and was donated by the Weld-Blundell family of Crosby Hall for use by the local residents of Blundellsands. It is a natural green space (mainly a dune habitat with mature woodlands), 27 acres in size with eight separate gated entrances. On site facilities include a children’s play area, toilets, various picnic tables and benches, a duck pond, a warden’s office and a network of pathways. Also based within the park is a tennis club which is run independently of the park.

The park is managed by a Charitable Trust which was established in 1905 to administer the park. At present four Trustees manage the Trust with each Trustee dealing with a different aspect. For example:

- One Trustee deals with finance;
- One Trustee deals IT and the website;
- One Trustee deals with legal issues; and
- One Trustee deals with buildings and maintenance.

There is a Trustees meeting once a month and a fortnightly meeting with the on-site warden.

It costs approximately £0.050 million per annum to run the park. The park is well-used by local families and dog walkers. There are 750 key members with a further 250 local residents waiting to become a key member (approximately two to three year waiting list). Any local residents living in either L20 or L23 postcode are eligible to apply for a key. The key provides access for the whole family to use and each key-holding family is eligible to bring two guests into the park. The keys are changed once per annum and there are approximately 80 people that choose not to renew their key. The Trust employs a full-time warden and a weekend warden to undertake the day to day maintenance of the park. There are no volunteers working in the park. To support the ongoing management and development, a 20 year management plan is in place for the site. To encourage positive use, there is a set of rules for the park (e.g. no littering, no bikes are allowed in the park, no dogs are allowed in the play area etc.).

It should be noted that:

- The Governance Model for the park relies heavily on four passionate Trustees with very specific skill sets;
- The full time park warden is extremely passionate with a wealth of local knowledge and will be difficult to replace;
- Park users abide by the rules for the site; and
- The site does not suffer from vandalism or misuse.

Feedback from the Review Board on The Key Park - The Blundellsands Park Trust:

- A beautiful site in an affluent area, but not an arrangement that could be applied in Knowsley given the subscription basis of its funding model.
- Residents in Knowsley would not be prepared to pay in this way and so it would exclude people from accessing the health and wellbeing benefits of parks.
- The site is not freely accessible and so does not meet with Policy Objective (a) of the Board i.e. freely accessible and enjoyed by all.
- Charging for keys to parks is a historic funding method e.g. London Squares, but few parks now require users to pay an entrance charge.
- However, if people are directly paying for a park then their view of the site will change as will their behaviour in it.
- Trustees are difficult to find replacements for at this site - this is an issue that Board identified as being of particular concern as members of the Knowsley Parks Board have difficulty in recruiting volunteer support for their friends of park groups, especially those with the right skills and capacity to be involved.
- The Board also identified that the covenants on Knowsley’s parks may not allow such a charge to be levied and any attempt to do so may face legal challenge.
- The Board reflected that this model is applied to a single park and whilst this has brought funding to this site, and a sense of local pride and ownership, its ability to be effectively applied at scale across a number of sites may not be deliverable.
Haigh Hall Woodland Park - Wigan Council and Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles Trust

Members of the Review Board visited this park on 24 April 2017 and met with Karen Hewitt, Land Manager, Wigan Council.

The historic hall situated on the site was built between 1827 and 1840. The surrounding Haigh plantations were originally laid out in the 1860s, mainly to hide the poor condition of the landscape after being damaged by the mining activity in the area. The site is approximately 250 acres in size with over 40 miles of footpaths. It benefits from a broad range of facilities including formal gardens, woodlands, water courses, play areas, a high ropes course, miniature railway, adventure golf, crazy golf, craft gallery, information centre, various food and gift shops and a cafeterie.

In 2013 a £12 million master plan was developed to transform Haigh Hall and the Haigh Country Park into one of the region’s top tourist destinations. The site is approximately 250 acres in size with over 40 miles of footpaths. It benefits from a broad range of facilities including formal gardens, woodlands, water courses, play areas, a high ropes course, miniature railway, adventure golf, crazy golf, craft gallery, information centre, various food and gift shops and a cafeterie.

The park is an extremely popular and well used site, with approximately 600,000 visitors per annum (a higher than expected figure). Wigan Council, via their Green Spaces Team, continues to provide the day to day operational grounds maintenance activities on the site (e.g. grass cutting, litter picking, horticultural maintenance and woodland works). This is supported by a range of volunteering activities (e.g. the local Friend of Groups, miniature railway operator, staff volunteering schemes etc.)

The management and maintenance of the park is funded via Wigan Council together with funding generated by the Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles Trust by income generating activities delivered on the site via the following activities and concessions:

- Car parking charges (for up to 900 spaces);
- Cafe;
- High ropes area;
- Adventure Golf Course / Foot-Golf Course; and
- Rentals from the various business operating in the courtyard area

Although Wigan Council are subsidising the Trust, they are working to a zero subsidy target by 2020.

It should be noted that:

- Significant investment has been made into improving the quality of the site (particularly the play area);
- Haigh Hall has a higher than expected number of visitors per annum;
- Wigan MBC subsidise the Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles Trust (providing the operational grounds maintenance service on the site);
- Car parking is the main source of income (and was a challenging element of the programme).

Wigan Council and Inspiring Health Lifestyles have only selected three strategic parks for the Trust (of which Haigh Hall is one); the remainder of Wigan’s public parks are funded and managed by Wigan Council in a traditional local authority manner.

Feedback from the Review Board on Haigh Hall Woodland Park - Wigan Council and Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles Trust:

- The arrangement stems from a ten year contract with Wigan Leisure Trust and as such a lot of investment has gone into the site’s infrastructure, but the question was posed as to whether this a long enough time to recoup such investment (after year six the contractor may be thinking about the end of the contract and not wanting to re-invest).
- The Haigh Hall site is very much focused on the health and wellbeing agenda, which is positive, but for Knowsley there is a much wider agenda e.g. jobs, economic growth and investment (linked to Board’s Policy Objective (b) Delivering Strategic and Corporate Objectives).
- A long-term investment time horizon is needed - a solution forever in Knowsley that provides a quality of provision very far into the future.
- A lot of income is generated from car parking charges.
- It seems that the volunteering interest at the site is in conflict with its commercial approach.
- The focus is on the Haigh Hall Park, with the other parks in Wigan being managed / funded separately i.e. no focus on the smaller parks which could fall into decline.
- A similar but smaller scale approach could be adopted in Knowsley for its destination parks e.g. at Court Hey Park, but with the income raised being used to support other smaller parks too - a wider focus with all parks included.
- There is a need to identify cross Knowsley anchor parks that can support the wider network of green spaces - the management of all of the sites needs a shared ambition.
• Applying parking charges at Knowsley's parks was not seen as being viable as people would not be willing to pay.
• However it was noted that such attitudes could change if people enjoyed a good day out in the park with a wide range of attractions and that they were assured that their parking fee was being invested back into the site.
• Whilst car parking would not work in Knowsley the Haigh Hall examples of having a café and hiring rooms / buildings may work.
• Investment in Knowsley's parks will be needed seeking to find alternative management arrangements for their key visitor destination parks (Croxteth Park, Stanley Park and Calderstones Park).

The Parks Trust in Milton Keynes

Members of the Review Board visited The Parks Trust in Milton Keynes on 27 April 2017 and met with Philip Bowsher the Trust's Head of Environment, Education and Volunteering.

The Parks Trust, formerly known as Milton Keynes Parks Trust, was established by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation to own and manage, in perpetuity, the strategic open-space in Milton Keynes. The Trust took a 999 year lease of 4,500 acres and at the same time was given an endowment of around £20 million. The Parks Trust is an independent charity that cares for many of Milton Keynes parks and green spaces (this is not a function that the local authority performs or has to fund) which includes up to 5,000 acres of river valleys, woodlands, lakesides, parks and landscaped areas alongside the main roads (approximately 25% of the Milton Keynes's land area). As the city has continued to grow, new parks and open spaces are being established and transferred to the Trust with an endowment. The endowment sum that is required is the capital sum required to invest to generate the annual income to cover the maintenance costs each year in perpetuity.

The Trust is committed to maintaining its green estate to a high standard and to continually improve its quality. The Parks Trust organises over 200 events and activities in the parks each year and provides environmental education programmes to approximately 6,000 children. The Trust employs approximately 60 members of staff. In addition it appoints local contractors (approximately 50) to provide the operational grounds maintenance activities and has support from a range of volunteers (approximately 150 regular volunteers).

The Parks Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who are also Directors of the company. The Board sets the strategic direction of the Trust and ensures that the Charity is properly managed and complies with all relevant legislation. Trustees have a duty under charity law to ensure that the Trust's assets and resources are only used to further the Trust's charitable objects which are:

- To provide, maintain and equip green spaces in and around Milton Keynes;
- To advance public education; and
- To provide facilities for leisure and recreation.

The Board of Trustees is made up of between 15 - 18 volunteers, with unpaid non-executive directors. Three trustees are nominated by Milton Keynes Council and one by Milton Keynes Association of Parish Councils. The majority are appointed by the Board via an open advert/recruitment and usually serve three or six-year terms.

The original endowment was obtained in 1992 from the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) when the Trust was first set up. This was in the form of a mixed portfolio of commercial properties (light industrial/office/retail units), which the MKDC transferred to the Trust in parallel with granting the Trust 999-year leases over the parkland. The value of the original endowment was around £20 million and the income from this (rent from the leases to the tenants and businesses occupying the premises) was calculated as equating the cost of annual maintenance of the parkland. Since 1992 the value of the Trust's endowment funds has grown by two main means:

- A financial strategy that seeks to grow the capital value of the endowment over and above generating the income needed to pay revenue operating costs; and
- Taking on additional tranches of new parkland as a result of the increased growth and development of Milton Keynes (e.g. the trust took an additional 100 hectares with a £10 million endowment from the Homes and Communities Agency in 2012).

It should be noted that:
- The Trust has begun to invest in property both in Milton Keynes and elsewhere in the country, to ensure that the Trust does not have all its 'eggs in one basket';
- The Board is completely independent of the local authority and has Trustees with a range of skills, knowledge and experience - including investment management. Therefore important to have members skill base and breadth of representatives on the board;
- The lease the Trust holds for their land is a restrictive use i.e. parkland use only;
- Despite being an independent Trust since 1992, members of the public still believe their Council Tax funds the parks and do not necessarily know the difference between the Trust and the Council;
- Commercial property rentals are advertised as supporting parks and green spaces in Milton Keynes;
- The Parks Trust is very proud to be a local charity in Milton Keynes - local control and accountability for local people (as opposed to part of a national organisation); and
- The Parks Trust invests in marketing and event co-ordination (with a dedicated member of staff).
• The Board consists of 15 members, which includes local councillors so the link to the local authority is maintained.

Feedback from the Review Board on The Park Trust in Milton Keynes:

• The strength of the Trust is its independent financial management of these assets and a diverse approach to land management through a long-term strategy - this has meant it has not been affected by public sector austerity, can keep investing and has a very healthy financial position.

• This Trust’s core funding comes from endowment investment and commercial property rental income; a £40 million (+/- 10%) endowment earns £1 million per annum for the Trust.

• The Trust was established during the formation of Milton Keynes and so has been fortunate to have been gifted assets and endowment capital for investment.

• The term of the lease that the Trust holds the land under is very long which allows them time to invest in the sites and improve their offer to the people of Milton Keynes as a holistic Place offer - combined leisure, sports and green space land.

• The independence of the professional Board from the local authority allows it to make decisions quickly and speculatively, moving things forward on the right business cases with transparency, focused on investing in the benefits that parks provide.

• The Trust is seen as a national example of best practice in funding and managing public open space as a self-sustaining model.

• Its focus is investment in the Place and the Trust communicates what its funding provides.

• Jointed-up maintenance approach, with the Council maintaining road-side verges and the Trust managing the maintenance of parks.

• The Board consists of 15 members, which includes local councillors so the link to the local authority is maintained.

Brockholes, Preston - The Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Members of the Review Board visited Brockholes on 2 May 2017 and met with Anne Selby, CEO of The Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Brockholes is the Lancashire Wildlife Trust’s flagship 250 acre nature reserve, a transformed quarry site located straight off junction 31 of the M6 at Preston. The Trust has been working on developing Brockholes for nearly 25 years to develop the site from a huge quarrying site into the vibrant nature reserve that it is today. The reserve has an adventure play area, as well as several accessible trails, hides and viewing points that have been specifically designed to allow visitors to get closer to nature and wildlife without disturbing it. A key feature of the site is the floating Visitor Village, which is home to the interactive Welcome Centre, an activity room, a gift shop and an ice-cream parlour. It also hosts the lakeside restaurant and the conference / wedding facilities.

In March 2009 the Trust secured £8 million of funding from the North West Regional Development Agency to develop the site as a visitor attraction (through the following activities), it opened its door to the public in Easter 2011 for the first time:

• Design and construct an accessible nature reserve;
• Ensure management infrastructure to protect and enhance wildlife value (including monitoring);
• Develop the nature reserve and associated visitor facilities as a regional green tourism destination;
• Provide facilities to optimise education and volunteer potential;
• Provide facilities for local recreational use;
• Establish an income base to sustain the wildlife value;
• Develop partnerships to implement aims; and
• Develop Brockholes as ‘gateway’ to other biodiversity sites in region.

The site received over 150,000 visitors in the first year; it is now attracting approximately 175,000 visitors per annum. The site hosts a range of events and activities for all the family all year round, from food fairs to open air theatre, den building to wild jewellery making. The Ribble Way footpath and the Preston Guild Wheel run through the site providing access for walkers and cyclists. The buildings offer an alternative venue for business meetings and private events in the Conference Centre and Restaurant with a growing number of weddings.

The site is very dependent on volunteers in terms of day to day maintenance, events and operating the visitor centre (approximately 100 regular volunteers). There are 16 full time staff (with a range of seasonal and casual staff as required).

Brockholes has been established as an arm’s length company of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside is a local wildlife charity, which is independent of, but benefits from a close partnership working with the National Wildlife Trust. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust has a board of Trustees, (16 trustees) with a broad range of business, financial and nature conservation skills. Brockholes (the arm’s length company) has its board of Trustees of which the staff / trustees of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust sit on.

The vision for the site was for it to be cost neutral, through income generated from activities / concessions on the site. The site costs approximately £0.140 million per annum to manage. The site currently generates £0.040 million of income per annum through the following activities:

• Car parking charges (350 spaces);
• Cafe / restaurant / ice-cream (in particular);
• Weddings and conferences; and
• Concessions from the shop.

As the income generated on site does not cover the running costs, it is currently subsidised by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The Trust receives its income from annual membership (approximately 30,000 members), donations, legacy’s and grant funding / project income. The Trust have benefited
financially from their partnership agreement with the National Wildlife Trust (e.g. financial loan arrangements).

It should be noted that:
- The site is very dependent on the season / weather for its visitors.
- Visitors were not clear on what the offer of the site was at first.
- The 30,000 members of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust have voting rights.
- Difficult balance between a nature reserve and developing commercial activities on the site.
- A ‘no dog’ policy is in place on the site (i.e. no dogs allowed on the site at all).
- Wedding / conference business extremely competitive and it has taken a long time for the company to gain a good reputation.
- Car parking is a real challenge (issues with payment model / automatic fines / closure of the car park on busy days etc.).

Figure 26
Brockholes, Preston - The Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Feedback from the Review Board on The Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Brockholes, Preston:
- The Review Board particularly enjoyed their visit to the site which gave them good insight into how a green space can be developed into a visitor attraction with specialist interest alongside wider community offers.
- The Trust takes a holistic view of its sites and balances its funding for them across the whole portfolio.
- This site is not maintained by an endowment and the vision is that the pay to use activities / attractions will fund its upkeep, however this has not yet been realised and top-up funding is needed from the Trust’s membership subscriptions.
- It takes the view that Brockholes will break-even, but accepts this will take some time to realise.
- Problems have occurred with applying car-parking charges as visitors have not been willing to pay.

Countess of Chester Country Park - The Land Trust

Members of the Review Board visited the Countess of Chester Country Park on 3 May 2017 and met with Euan Hall, Chief Executive of The Land Trust and Alan Carter the Trust’s Development Director.

The Countess of Chester Country Park is located on a former landfill site adjacent to the Countess of Chester Hospital. The landfill closed in the 1970s when it was made safe, capped and grassed over. Thirty years later the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) took ownership of the site, allocated some of the land for housing development and gave the 19-hectares to The Land Trust to develop as a country park. The site opened as a public park in 2014.

The park (30 hectares in total) is in the ownership of the various hospital trusts on the site together with The Land Trust, but it is managed and maintained as one site. The hospital trusts have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Land Trust regarding which parties fund / undertake certain maintenance tasks. The Land Trust is working in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to support the delivery of maintenance tasks in the park however contractors are appointed to undertake grounds maintenance operations on the site. A part time Ranger post supports the day to day management of the park and a fixed term health Ranger has been secured via external funding grant to provide health walks, buggy walks, Nordic walks and green gym sessions at the park. The park hosts a varied programme of events which includes activities that improve people’s health (e.g. Park Runs), deliver education and training as well providing opportunities for volunteering.

Although the park has the ability to generate a small income source (e.g. a local farmer cuts the field for silage) the main source of income for the site is via The Land Trust’s endowment. The Homes
and Communities Agency provided The Land Trust with funding (£0.650 million) which was used to create an endowment for the site to effectively secure the long-term future of the park. The Land Trust manages individual site endowments as one large investment fund (currently £120 million) which via CCLA is modelled for a long-term return of 3.5%.

Under The Land Trust’s management over recent years the site has benefited from:
- £0.250 million of external funding to create a series of tarmac pathways and trails for walkers and cyclists, connecting the park to the local footpaths and the canal towpath;
- The ‘Life for a Life’ Memorial Forest Scheme - The Chester Memorial Forest is a memorial woodland within the park allowing people to plant trees in memory of loved ones;
- A Ranger building - the hospital has donated a small building in the park which will become the new Ranger station for the park; and
- The Environment Agency has undertaken work on site to create a reed bed, while drainage improvements have been carried out at Finchetts Gutter.

As explained above The Land Trust is an independent charity that provides long-term, sustainable management of green open spaces across the country for the benefit of communities. It was developed by the Government agency English Partnerships (now Homes and Communities Agency) in 2004 and is governed by a Board of 13 Trustees and is supported by 8 Members (national organisations such as the National Trust). The Countess of Chester forms one of 65+ sites (2,300ha) that the trust manages. The Land Trust decided to manage the sites on a national level (rather than a local level) as research had demonstrated that many local Trusts failed due to:
- Lack of scale / skills and resources;
- Constantly needing to fundraise; and
- High start-up costs e.g. setting up finance/administration functions etc.

It should be noted that:
- The Land Trust will only take on land which has an income stream which they can use to invest and manage land sustainably. This income source may include:
  - Endowments
  - Section 106 payments
  - Service charges from residential or commercial properties
  - Hybrid arrangements
  - Rental income
  - Third party grants
  - Commercial use / onsite charges, e.g. concessions
- The decision was made not to install a play area on this Countess of Chester as the maintenance costs would be too high;
- The Land Trust have a core national team and appoint different managing agents and contractors for different sites; and
- The Land Trust manages the endowment as one investment with an agreed return rate to each site, they do not cross subsidise income across the sites.

Figure 27
Countess of Chester Country Park - The Land Trust

Feedback from the Review Board on the Countess of Chester Country Park - The Land Trust:
- This site is funded through the investment of an endowment, with its return being ring-fenced for its maintenance / management.
- The Land Trust will not take on the management of a site (or sites) unless it is accompanied by an endowment (or other source of core funding), but will manage the site as part of its national estate of green space whilst ensuring it local maintenance and use is undertaken as far as possible by community enterprise and volunteers but does have contractors that undertake more extensive works.
- The Board considered the capacity of volunteers in Knowsley and identified that this does need capacity building if it was to be utilised to undertake greater parks maintenance - noting the volunteers require co-ordination, training and tools.
- The Board identified that at the appropriate time there will be a need to more rigorously clarify the offer that the Land Trust could make to Knowsley i.e. to assess the benefits of applying the services / experience of an existing Trust or establishing a new entity.
Heeley People Park
(The Heeley Trust)

Members of the Review Board visited Heeley People Park on 4 May 2017 and met with Andy Jackson of the Heeley Development Trust.

Heeley People’s Park is a community park situated in Heeley, Sheffield and was one of the parks that took part in the NESTA Rethinking Parks research. The Heeley Development Trust was formed in 1996 and secured funding to redevelop an area of demolished housing as a community park. In 1997, the Trust took ownership of the 3.5 hectares of land through a 125 year lease from Sheffield City Council. The park includes a rock climbing area, children’s playground, BMX tracks and large open area where music and community festivals are held during the year.

The site has been developed through a mix of external grant funding (e.g. Lottery funds, English Landscape grants, SRB2 funds etc.). Over recent years the site has benefited from a range of infrastructure improvements including the installation of play areas, seating areas, pathways, woodland / meadowland and horticultural features. The ongoing improvements within the park have also had a positive economic impact on the surrounding area, for example the local pub (that was previously at risk of closure) has now become a key venue on the local ‘real ale trail’. The site is well used by the local community with a diverse range of events and activities regularly held within the site. The two climbing areas now attract users from across the city. The site is maintained by two full time members of staff, who undertake all operational duties but are supported by a range of local volunteers and host a range of training programmes for young people (e.g. NVQs).

The Heeley Development Trust is a charitable trust with a board of 13 trustees. The trustees include local business people, a local GP, a professor from the university, a head teacher from the local school and local community representatives. There are no local councillors from Sheffield City Council on the board at this time. The Heeley Development Trust now has 600 registered members (who have no decision making responsibilities).

The Development Trust was originally 100% reliant on external grant funding, however due to the challenges and uncertainty associated with grant funding they have tried to diversify their income base. The Trust now has a number of commercial contracts with the local council (e.g. Health / Adult Learning and Youth Services) which generate some income. However many of these contracts are short in term (i.e. 9 month contracts) and therefore unreliable in duration. As part of the NESTA Rethinking Parks Project, the Trust was successful in securing grant funding to develop and test how a subscription scheme for Heeley Park could create a sustainable revenue base. The ambition was to get a £10 annual subscription from every household in the surrounding community to meet the ongoing maintenance costs of the park. The pilot has had some success, with 20% of income now received from resident donations, but this did not generate the sum of money required to maintain the park. The Trust are now generating income from the building assets, the community church generates £0.020 million per annum (via sessional lets such as exercise classes, scout groups, parties, weddings etc.) The Trust recently acquired the old school site on a 125 year lease, which it has begun refurbishment works, converting the first building into a small business hub. The refurbishment works cost approximately £1.8 million (funded via Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding and a loan). The commercial rental income from these offices will fund the management costs of the park.

It should be noted that:
- Despite the park being a popular community site, the Trust were unable to generate the necessary income from local subscriptions.
- The 20% of income that is generated from local donations requires a large amount of effort (e.g. campaigns / digital platforms etc.).
- The units in the newly created business hub (i.e. the old school site) were full within 8 months.

- The importance of a strong board of Trustees with a range of skills.
- The Trust are a member of the Locality Network and have benefited from their support.
- The staff / trustees are local passionate people that have developed their knowledge of the park over a period of time.

Feedback from the Review Board on Heeley People Park (The Heeley Trust):
- The Board was very impressed with the enthusiasm of the Trust’s representatives and how well its approach fitted with local community wishes.
- The Trust’s Board takes ownership of the issues and finds solutions - they are proud of what they do and were an inspiration.
- The Trust did not have any assets to use to create an endowment and therefore are using an old school building to run activities and offer room rental to start-up businesses to generate income (room hire is a fundamental part of their financial model).
- The Trust took out a loan of £1 million to develop the site and is paying this back.
- The Trust is heavily reliant on volunteers to maintain the Park.
- Equally the relationship the Trust has with the Council’s adult social care team was seen as very positive.
- The continuity of the Trust’s Board members was identified as a key factor of the Trust’s success - attracting people with a shared objective which once underway retains and draws in members; managing the future of the park for our children.
Dunham Massey Park - the National Trust

Members of the Review Board visited Heeley People Park on 17 May 2017 and met with Joanna Caldwell, the National Trust’s External Affairs Consultant (North).

The National Trust is a charity which was founded in 1895 to protect the nation’s heritage and open spaces for everyone to enjoy. The Trust looks after coastline, forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, villages, historic houses, gardens, mills and pubs. This includes:
- Over 775 miles of coastline
- Over 247,000 hectares of land
- Over 350 historic houses, gardens and parks, ancient monuments and nature reserves

Many of their sites are unable to fund their own permanent preservation. The cost of caring for them is high with the overall conservation expenditure in 2014/15 for the National Trust being £103 million. The majority of their property is held inalienably, so it can never be sold or developed without the consent of Parliament.

The Trust’s Dunham Massey estate includes an Elizabethan manor house, gardens, deer park and farmland and covers an area of 192.7 acres. Its pasture-woodland is occupied by a herd of fallow deer that have been resident in the park for hundreds of years. The park has a magnificent collection of ancient trees, with many of the giant oak trees dating back as far as the 17th century. The whole estate is approximately 3,000 acres in size and is managed by the National Trust as a site of national importance.

The National Trust has a strategic centre based in Swindon that manages all back office functions e.g. HR / payroll etc. Each of the regions has a staffing structure; in the North of England there are approximately 1,000 staff which are supported by between 6,000 and 7,000 volunteers. Dunham Massey is a key visitor attraction in the area, with school trips, families and local residents regularly visiting the site.

The National Trust was first incorporated in 1894 as an Association Not for Profit under the Companies Acts 1862-1890. Underpinning its governance arrangements are Acts of Parliament with the first National Trust Act was passed by Parliament in 1907. A number of successive Acts have since been introduced to update and, where necessary, revise their constitution to ensure the National Trust continues to be well governed and remains true to its cause. The Board of Trustees is the Trust’s governing body and is ultimately responsible for everything that happens at the Trust and for meeting its statutory purpose. The Board does not manage the Trust; rather its job is to ensure the Trust is managed the way it wishes to be. The Board does this by agreeing a strategy and holding the Director-General and the executive team to account for its delivery. There are normally 12 Trustees on the Board but there can be up to 15, and they come from a variety of backgrounds from conservation to business. All Trustees are appointed for an initial term of three years and are eligible to re-stand. Members normally serve for two terms in order to ensure a balance of continuity and refreshment. The Board of Trustees normally meets six times a year.

The National Trust relies on the support of members, donors and volunteers; as well as income from grant-making bodies and commercial activities such as retail and catering, to fund their sites. Within the North of England the funding model (£36.2 million) is a mixed model of income which includes:
- 20% commercial income (from their trading arm)
- 12% admission income (i.e. non-members)
- 20% member income
- 4% fundraising income
- 20% rental income
- 10% investment income
- 10% recruitment credit income
- 1% other income

The National Trust manages a national endowment of £1.027 billion which generates a return of between 2% and 7% (depending on investment risks). In relation to the Dunham Massey site, the endowment is currently at £40 million (+/- 10%) (with the goal of raising this to £45 million). A key contribution to the Dunham Massey endowment was the sale of part of the Dunham Estate land to create the Stamford Brook housing development (700 houses).

It should be noted that:
- The Dunham Massey Estate is one of the National Trust’s most affluent estates
- The National Trust acquire sites that are of national significance (not urban parks and green spaces)
- The National Trust would not take on a site without funding (i.e. an endowment)
- The National Trust recently undertook a review of its governance structure and has subsequently reduced the decision making structure (as it had become a slow process), the executive decision making sits with the Board of Trustees with all other committees acting in an advisory capacity only
- The National Trust recommend a portfolio approach to land i.e. to parcel sites together so they support each other rather than cherry picking sites individually (via an equitable approach)
- Membership in the National Trust increased during the recession (less people on holiday - more days out in this country)
- The sale of estate land (identified as alienable land) was required to help fund the endowment required for Dunham Massey. Key learning from this land disposal included:
  - Robust communication plan is essential - canvassing of the local area, regular updates, dedicated staffing resource etc.
  - Ability to influence quality of design to ensure good quality green space is provided
  - Clear business case - The Trust’s drivers were its charitable objectives (i.e. to preserve the Dunham Massey Estate - not to provide social housing etc.) therefore the financial return from the land disposal was important.

Figure 29
Dunham Massey Park - the National Trust
Feedback from the Review Board on The National Trust, Dunham Massey:

- The Board was impressed with the Trust’s approach and decisions made, plus the control the Trust has placed over the housing developers which has led to good quality homes being delivered that complemented the local area - it was noted that it was an affluent neighbourhood.
- Through the sale of park land, on which 700 homes have been built, an endowment has been created which is funding the maintenance / management of the remaining park estate.
- This has been done on the basis of the Trust’s charitable objectives and the endowment being used to sustain the value from the green space and to prevent any further sale of the park estate.
- The Board recognised that this example demonstrates the logic of surrendering land for capital value that can then be invested so that the remaining park land can be funded from the return on investment - a real success and a model that will last forever.
- The Board acknowledged that given the scale of the funding shortfall in Knowsley then a similar approach may be required - an endowment of some significance will be needed that could be created by using some parks / green spaces for other purposes i.e. surrendering a small proportion to protect the remainder forever; the manner in which this is done will be the key to success along with consideration of inalienable rights (the legal covenants on parks).
- The Board also identified the necessity to ensure that such an approach was in line with the Knowsley Local Core Plan and asked about how much parks / green space is available in Knowsley.
- The Board acknowledged the value Knowsley’s parks and green spaces offered to improving neighbourhoods and communities, and that developers should have greater emphasis placed on them to provide their best quality offer.
- The Board accepted the logic applied by the National Trust and recognised this as a sound principle that their review must take into account - a key consideration would be e.g. 5% surrender of parks to protect the rest may be ok, but this could not be 50%.
- The Board also identified that any such development in former parks would need to be managed as a long-term partnership with a developer in order to ensure its quality and sustainability.

The Future of Newcastle’s Parks

The Review Board was particularly interested in the current review that Newcastle City Council is undertaking into the future funding and management of its parks. This was a feature of the APSE Seminar attended by some of the Board members on 15 March 2017.

Newcastle City Council is having to rethink how it delivers many of its services, including the city’s parks. Over the past seven years, this council’s parks budget has reduced by over 90%, meaning that finding new ways of financing and running the city’s parks is essential. It needs to do this whilst staying committed to improving the way it delivers parks, keeping them in public ownership, safe, free to use, and making sure that local people, community groups and partners are fully involved in the future delivery of the service.

To do this Newcastle City Council has been working with the National Trust, benefiting from their experience in preserving national heritage across the country, to help find a positive way forward for Newcastle. In particular, they have been researching the possibility of transferring the operation, delivery and maintenance of a large proportion of the city’s parks to a new Charitable Trust (Charity); but this remains work in progress.

The core principles of Newcastle’s review are as follows:

a. Council priority: parks are not a statutory service (they are not a service which local authorities are legally required to deliver), but their successful future is a high priority for the Council
b. Public ownership: parks should remain in Council ownership
c. Safe and clean: parks should be clean, and visitors should feel safe, and be safe.
d. Free access for all: parks should be free to access and use, but charging for some facilities / activities continues and grows.
e. Existing groups: an integral part of any new solutions.f. Your parks: no decisions without engaging,

The proposals so far indicate that:

a. Park land held by the Council would be transferred to the Charity to be preserved and managed for public use (Council would continue to own the land)
b. Existing arrangements such as leases and contracts also transfer
c. The charity employs staff, trains volunteers, generates income and delivers services based around its charitable objectives
d. Income from trading is ploughed back into the charity and the city’s parks
e. The non-local authority structure enables new capacity, community and volunteer memberships
f. New and existing groups and individuals continue to help look after individual parks under a new supportive structure

g. The charity would have public reporting and accounting obligations via the Charities Commission

h. The Council as the landowner will operate in the background

Not all of Newcastle’s parks would transfer to the Charity; a proportion would be retained and managed / funded by Newcastle City Council.

Feedback from the Review Board on Newcastle City Council’s current parks review:

• Based on the information available it appears that the proposal is to transfer those sites that offer the best opportunity to generate income from commercial trading and mobilisation of volunteers to undertake maintenance tasks to a charity; the remainder of parks will continue to be funded by Newcastle City Council and presumably be subject to the impact of its cuts to funding.

• The scale and sustainability of the proposed method of funding/maintaining parks in the Charity may not be of a scale and longevity to ensure they remain viable.

• No reference is made to the creation/use of an endowment to fund parks in perpetuity.

• The ethos of parks not being transferred to a commercial entity but rather an entity with charity and community objectives, their involvement of the public in finding a solution and not looking for single park solutions is commendable.
There are a wide variety of different business structures that can be utilised to undertake local authority services including the management and maintenance of parks and green spaces. Whilst some are more commonly used than others a glossary of business management terms is provided as Appendix L.

They include public, private and third sector organisations that can operate independently or in partnership and may be driven by either commercial or more socially focused priorities. Geographically they could operate through either a centralised or decentralised management structure and this may have a direct bearing on the local access and employment base for the service alongside levels of local accountability. Each may adopt a variety of different business and governance structures which can lead to a complex number of variations to each option.

However, to provide focus for the Board’s consideration it considered five alternative Management Model options at its meeting on 25 May 2017: as shown in Table 7 below.

Management Model Option A: Transfer management to a private maintenance contractor (under contract to Knowsley Council)

This option considers transferring the management of service to a private sector company (a Limited Company) via Knowsley Council’s commissioning of medium to long-term green space / parks development and maintenance contracts. This is a model that has been adopted by some UK councils working with established commercial private sector companies.

The service would be overseen by a small central commissioning team within the Council and maintenance would be delivered by a main private lead contractor and potentially their sub-contractors to provide the necessary expertise and resources.

The Review Board undertook a strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats analysis for Management Model Option A and the results of this are shown in Table 8 on page 122.

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Option</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model A</td>
<td>Transfer management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to a private sector maintenance contractor (under contract to Knowsley Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model B</td>
<td>Establish a Public Private or Public Charitable Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model C</td>
<td>Establish a Local Authority Trading Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model D</td>
<td>Establish a Charitable Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E</td>
<td>Establish a Social Enterprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management Model Option B: Establish a Public Private or Public Charitable Partnership

This option looks at establishing an arrangement between Knowsley Council as a public body and a private or charitable organisation. Whilst there is no reason why such partnerships cannot be established with the third and charitable sector, this model is traditionally seen as a Public Private Partnership (PPP). These are established with private companies to deliver more complex and costly public services. Some take the form of joint ventures (JVs) between councils and private companies and can either deliver strategic infrastructure projects such as new schools or hospitals, or long-term services such as highways and public buildings.

The Review Board undertook a strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats analysis for Management Model Option B and the results of this are shown in Table 9 on page 123.

Management Model Option C: Establish a Local Authority Trading Company

This option looks to establish a new trading company that incorporates and restructures Knowsley Council’s existing parks and green space service. Section 93 and 94 of the Local Government Act 2003 enables councils to trade on a commercial basis more widely with the private sector through councils and private companies and can either deliver strategic infrastructure projects such as new schools or hospitals, or long-term services such as highways and public buildings.

The Review Board undertook a strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats analysis for Management Model Option C and the results of this are shown in Table 10 on page 124.

The Review Board asked why the Council established Volair, how it operates and its relationship with the Council. Volair was established as a 100% owned Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) on 1 April 2016 trading with Social Objectives. The primary reason for exploring the available options for an Alternative Delivery Model was to ensure that the most cost effective model was adopted in view of the financial pressures faced by Knowsley Council. The Council is not statutorily obliged to provide Leisure Services and is increasingly required to divert resources to protect statutory services, which by definition creates greater pressure on discretionary areas, such as Leisure Services.

Volair as a LATCo has greater flexibility to reduce its costs than the Council has, and the company therefore has a better chance of achieving substantial savings than the Council has. In this context, the Council and its Cabinet have set Volair the objective of achieving a “zero-subsidy” approach by year five of the agreement. The Board of Volair is currently under review but overall control is retained by the Council as it is 100% owned by the Council. At the current time the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council still sit on the Board but this is under review.

Management Model Option D: Establish a Charitable Trust

In recent decades independent trusts have become a popular vehicle for managing parks and green spaces with many able to weather the recent financial crisis in relatively healthy commercial condition. Probably the largest and most recognised example is The Park Trust in Milton Keynes which the Review Board has visited. There are also a number of smaller trusts that are responsible for individual parks and green spaces. These include the Shenley Park Trust in Hertfordshire, established in 1990; the Heeley People’s Park in Sheffield operated by the Heeley Development Trust set up in 1996 (also visited); and the Potters Field Park Management Trust in London created in 2005.

Each has different funding models and operates with minimal public subsidy. Larger trust organisations, including the National Trust, The Land Trust and the Wildlife Trusts all undertake park management / maintenance activities as part of their wider activities.

Whilst it is not always the case, trusts commonly function under charitable status and must therefore demonstrate both a charitable purpose and a public benefit. The Charity Commission for England and Wales are responsible for regulating charities that are registered with them in order to ensure public confidence in the charity sector.

There are a number of trusts in the UK with a good track record that have been established to manage individual sites or networks of parks and green spaces and many are listed Appendix M.

Management Model Option E: Establish a Social Enterprise

This option considers the creation of a commercial organisation focused on delivering specific community benefit and tackling particular social issues. Social impact, rather than commercial profit, is the principal driver for the organisation which can operate as either a for-profit or not-for-profit company.

Traditional and historic models in the UK include industrial and provident societies, co-operatives and mutuals. Individual companies are owned by and run for the benefit of its members who are actively and directly involved in the business.

As an alternative to being controlled by outside investors members of the company can be employees, suppliers, consumers or the community that the company serves. Variations of this option can include:
- Individual social enterprises on a site by site basis
- Individual social enterprises on a thematic basis, such as allotments or woodlands
- A dedicated green space service operating across the borough

The Review Board undertook a strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats analysis for Management Model Option E and the results of this are shown in Table 11 on page 125.
### Table 8
SWOT analysis for Management Model Option A - Transfer management to a private maintenance contractor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfers specific aspects of risk and liability from the local authority to an external organisation</td>
<td>Provides the opportunity to be released from existing contracts and to negotiate new and potentially more competitive arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to shift existing output based service delivery to increasingly focus on outcomes i.e. a commissioning council</td>
<td>Ability to promote greater knowledge transfer into specific aspects of the service to enhance quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds relationships with larger companies with an established track-record for mutual benefit</td>
<td>Promotes business efficiency and likely to capture economies of scale from companies operating across a wider geographic region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides access to new skills and expertise that would not be directly accessible to the service</td>
<td>Potential to benefit from regular external investment into equipment and facilities to maintain and improve working efficiencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivers new ways of working that have the potential to improve cost-effective delivery</td>
<td>Greater flexibility to change contracts and budgets in short-term as circumstances change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to adopt a more entrepreneurial &amp; business-focused approach to delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifies financial arrangements for the service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No clear funding route in the current economic climate and may be more costly in the short-term</td>
<td>Perception and reality that service is privatised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited ability to raise additional external funding</td>
<td>Financial model usually includes the need for shareholder return leading to outward investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted day to day control of the service</td>
<td>Risk of financial penalties for failing to include specific tasks / activities in contract arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to contractual arrangements that may potentially become onerous and out of date</td>
<td>Deskills the internal workforce leading to the loss of in-house knowledge and expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loose connection or oversight of actual delivery</td>
<td>Management company could become insolvent or terminate the contract if it does not prove viable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited political control as members do not have direct contact or relationship with contractor</td>
<td>Risk of losing social value and benefit of the service as commercial objectives take priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No hands on involvement or ability to use existing knowledge to contribute to service delivery</td>
<td>Limited regular political accountability as contracts likely to run over long period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited control on employment base that is likely to lead to staffing from outside the borough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9
SWOT analysis for Model Option B - Establish a Public Private / Charitable Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balances risk and liability across the public and private or charitable sectors</td>
<td>Ability to partner with organisations that have relevant and extensive experience in particular elements of the service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived as being able to capture the best of both worlds that delivers both public benefit and private commercial and business acumen</td>
<td>Good potential to promote knowledge transfer between organisations to complement and enhance the skills base of the public sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge transfer between public and private bodies works both ways for mutual benefit</td>
<td>Provides the ability to accesses different forms of funding including commercial investment, foundations, grants, philanthropic donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived as a cost effective mechanism to secure benefits from both models whilst capturing specific efficiencies inherent within each sector</td>
<td>Retains a level of political accountability whilst providing the flexibility to engage external organisations capable of operating at arms-length from council policy and decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships between public and charitable sectors likely to reduce appetite for risk</td>
<td>Likely to be a lack of clarity in the contractual arrangements between parties reducing accountability to political community sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parties are likely to have different priorities which can complicate the priorities of the partnership</td>
<td>Partnership frameworks can take a long-term to negotiate and can be at risk at short notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases the complexity of operation by combining the activities of different organisations</td>
<td>Parties with different objectives could fall out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential conflicting employment terms and remuneration between different sectors</td>
<td>Shared common objectives can quickly be lost if political priorities change at short-notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax and financial regulations are likely to be more complex in operating across different sectors</td>
<td>Quality control may be difficult to achieve across different organisations with different priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SWOT analysis for Model Option C - Establish a parks and green space Local Authority Trading Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to maintain much of the existing staff and expertise within the current service</td>
<td>• Ability to maintain much of the existing staff and expertise within the current service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides some level of political accountability as service still retains a relationship with the council</td>
<td>• Potential to provide access to new income streams and access to external investors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishes greater commercial focus of the service to ensure management company has a firm financial basis and systems for operation</td>
<td>• Ability to choose to retain existing contracts that are currently cost effective and beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides familiarity for elected members and communities as existing staff likely to be retained</td>
<td>• Prospects to expand and develop new areas of business where the commercial case is clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flexibility to adapt service to changing needs</td>
<td>• Capacity to operate at arms-length to the council providing ability to make independent decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can be used to deliver council services without procurement processes applying</td>
<td>• Potential to restructure inefficient elements of the existing service at the discretion of directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not be liable for corporation tax and can benefit from local authority services such as insurance and favourable purchasing contracts</td>
<td>• Provides the ability to develop leadership and reward performance outside council constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Additional start-up costs are incurred in establishing new management company whilst perception is that service operates as existing</td>
<td>• Potential to make strategic change quickly, with the flexibility of a private company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Likelihood of additional operating costs and tax liabilities that are currently absorbed by the council</td>
<td>• Funding will still principally come from the council and therefore likely to reduce year on year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complexity of transferring staff, employment terms and pension liabilities to new company structure</td>
<td>• Operation will be reliant on service level contracts with the council which are likely to be reviewed and changed on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lease agreements are likely to need to be negotiated for use of existing facilities which are anticipated to incur additional cost for the service</td>
<td>• Job security for staff is likely to be less certain than direct employment with the council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Operational decisions of the company dictated by commercial requirements that are likely to reduce the ability to deliver social value and benefit</td>
<td>• Performance of the company will be highly dependent on the skills and expertise of senior management and the quality of the board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SWOT analysis for Model Option D - Establish a parks and green space Charitable Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Trusts offer tried and tested delivery structures that have a proven track record of good standards of land management and stewardship</td>
<td>• There is established best practice within the sector that adds confidence to the operation and long-term robustness of the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trusts generally require direct control and / or long-term leases on the land they are responsible for managing and maintaining</td>
<td>• There is greater potential to secure income from a wider variety of sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is greater potential to secure income from a wider variety of sources</td>
<td>• The charitable status enhances perceptions of public benefit to secure gifts and donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be a real or perceived loss of local accountability and oversight of charities operations</td>
<td>• Ability to engage people more locally to address particular problems and meet specific social need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Trustees can often tend to be risk averse to limit their personal liability and risk to the organisation</td>
<td>• More recently the reputation of charitable and not-for-profit sectors has been questioned in the light of specific failures of accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trusts are highly dependent on the quality and expertise of trustees and their network of contacts</td>
<td>• There currently is a debate around standards of governance and oversight of charities operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be a real or perceived loss of local accountability with trusts operating at arms-length to elected members and local communities</td>
<td>• Financial resources required for operation can be directly and significantly affected by financial markets and returns on investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trusts generally require direct control and / or long-term leases on the land they are responsible for managing and maintaining</td>
<td>• Trusts can be highly dependent on the quality and structure of the trustees and the relationship their board has with the trust’s management team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As an independent body they will not have the protection or resources that may be available within larger public sector organisations</td>
<td>• Trusts are likely to have limited resources to meet specific employment terms and pension liabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12
SWOT analysis for Model Option E - Establish a parks and green space Social Enterprise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensures that wider social benefit becomes a clear priority for the delivery of the service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to work across the parks and green space sector in new and innovative ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear benefits to maximise local decision making and regular monitoring of accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a broader social purpose provides the ability to access much wider sources of income and opportunities for grant funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has good perception of acting for public benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promotes opportunities for skills development and accountability across the workforce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides much greater entrepreneurial opportunities to deliver services in different ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Offers the ability to include educational objectives and targets as part of the service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides access to a wider pool and network of partners providing expertise and resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repositions parks and green spaces as a social asset and tool for wider public benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear track record and expertise within the sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Success is often down to the advocacy and leadership of specific individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs long-term commitment and passion to achieve the goals and objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs a lot of intensive management time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs regular oversight with strong, skilled and multi-disciplinary board with good contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs clear partners that may not readily exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential conflict between delivering socially focused outcomes and maintaining sites to meet specific quality standards and targets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual leaders may choose to move on and are often difficult to replace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social enterprises are often less commercially driven leading to a potential instability in the medium-term finance of the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The shift in refocusing and repositioning service to social organisation may lose site specific and original objectives for service delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social enterprises can be very susceptible to service changes in policy and funding priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Niche operations may have limited ability to be expanded and adapted to meet wider needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback from the Review Board on their strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats analysis of each Management Option:

• There is a need to undertake a transaction to safeguard parks forever in a way that is demonstrably tenable if they move outside of the Council’s direct control.
• Under Management Options (a), (b) and potentially (c) annual revenue funding will still need to come from the Council - therefore the Review Board’s Policy Objective (d) Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model cannot be secured.
• If funding remains in the direct control of the Council then return on investment from the creation of an endowment cannot be guaranteed to be ring-fenced to parks forever.
• A Charitable Trust requires strong leadership from its members.
• A Charitable Trust does not pay Corporation Tax.
• The focus of the Review is not on identifying a new way forward because the Council’s parks team is underperforming, so new management and staff are not being sought through this process - it is being driven by funding cut reasons.
• Knowsley Council through its Corporate Plan is committed to looking at alternative ways to deliver public services in Knowsley, this is reflected in its establishment of Volair, and indeed Knowsley Youth Mutual, which have set the precedent for other services to follow suit.
• The type of governance model will set the terms of reference for the investment framework, if an endowment is used to fund Knowsley’s parks and green spaces - from the case studies the Review Board has looked at and from its field trips it appears that an endowment sits well within a charitable trust governance model.

• Such a Trust could offer the opportunity to protect parks forever if funded by an endowment (with the income drawn from the endowment’s investment restricted to only be used to manage parks and bring community / social / environmental / economic value in so doing).
• The Review Board considered that the board of such a trust would need to demonstrate its independence and professional standing, key to success would be:
  • Accountability;
  • Insurance;
  • Governance;
  • Investment advice;
  • Financial management;
  • Risk management; and
  • Clearly defined charitable powers.
• The Board recognised the need to have a Trust Board with the necessary local interest and ambitions for Knowsley whilst balancing the need to also draw its membership from the expertise and experience of those from further afield.
• The Board also identified the need to allow people in Knowsley to advise and comment to the Trust Board, which in turn could lead to increased volunteering and a stronger emotional association to encourage greater community ownership of sites.
• The spilt between Knowsley Council and Knowsley’s parish and town council responsibilities was highlighted, but the Review Board agreed that a holistic solution needs to be found for Knowsley as a borough - if Knowsley Council approves the Review Board’s Report then it will need to carry out detailed work to plan and deliver a new way of working; this will certainly involve collaboration with the parish and town council as very important stakeholders.
The Review Board’s appraisal of the ability of Management Options to meet its Policy Objectives

Following their review of potential governance and management options the Review Board appraised the ability of each of the identified options listed above on their basis as standalone entities to meet the Board's Policy Objectives which are:

a. Safeguarding Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces;

b. Delivering Strategic and Corporate Objectives;

c. Improving Grounds Maintenance Standards;

d. Establishing an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model;

e. Developing a more Commercial and Entrepreneurial Management Culture;

f. Promoting the Principles of a Co-operative Council;

g. Ensuring oversight and scrutiny rests with the Council; and

h. Securing Political and Public Confidence and Support.

Table 13 below shows the outcomes of the Review Board’s assessment which identified the Charitable Trust as being the Board’s preferred governance / management model. Each option was scored on the basis of a score of 1 being un-aligned to the Policy Objective, 2 being neutral and a score of 3 showing the option aligns to the Policy Objective.

The Board also reflected that the Local Authority Trading Company had scored very low in respect to its Policy Objective (d) Establishing an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model and therefore could not offer the solution being sought.

Therefore, the Board concluded that its Preferred Way Forward in respect to the most appropriate future governance and funding approach for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces is as follows:

a. The establishment of a charitable trust, with a trading subsidiary operating as a social enterprise;

b. Noting that such a trust could be created specifically for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces or commissioned through an existing relevant trust or charity; and

c. That the attributes that such a Knowsley Parks Trust would need to possess was a matter the Board wished to explore further.

The Review Board then gave consideration as to whether a Knowsley Parks Trust should be established as a new independent body or affiliated (partnered) to an existing Trust e.g. The Land Trust or the National Trust;

That the government should be taking an interest in this agenda as it is a direct result of their funding cuts that these local decisions are having to be made - however, they argue that this is a local matter.

That Founding Members / Trustees with a commercial background would be needed to drive the Trust forward.

The need for such a Trust to be able to generate income / profit through trading with such revenue being re-invested against the charitable / social / green space objectives of the Trust is for public good in Knowsley - through a trading subsidiary operating as a social enterprise.

Feedback from the Review Board on establishing a charitable trust to govern / manage Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces:

- That local residents would see the benefits of a charitable trust and the social value that could be secured through a community approach like that demonstrated by The Land Trust.

- That a benefit of affiliation would bring greater influence / reach to lobby e.g. the government and for benefit from economies of scale.

- That such considerations on the future of public parks is happening across the country and so, if appropriate, the Board’s findings should be considered at a Liverpool City Region scale - provision should be made for neighbouring local authorities to join Knowsley’s approach if they wish to.

- It was suggested that depending on the outcome of the Review (i.e. Knowsley Council’s response) the Chair may wish to convene a meeting with the Liverpool City Region Mayor to brief him on the Board’s findings and to seek his support in seeing greater City Region collaboration can be secured.

- Concern that affiliation may bring strings attached e.g. loss of local credibility / control so it may not be in Knowsley’s best interest.

- That the government should be taking an interest in this agenda as it is a direct result of their funding cuts that these local decisions are having to be made - however, they argue that this is a local matter.

- Other councils are seeking to make savings by asking their parks maintenance contractors to make efficiencies through less maintenance for less cost - recognising that Knowsley’s parks and green spaces appear to be being managed efficiently through the Council’s in-house workforce.

Table 13
The Review Board appraisal of the ability of each management option to meet the Board’s Policy Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The review boards policy objectives</th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
<th>Model C</th>
<th>Model D</th>
<th>Model E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safeguarding Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to a private sector maintenance contractor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delving strategic and corporate objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving grounds maintenance standards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing an alternative sustainable funding model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a more commercial and entrepreneurial management culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting the principles of a co-operative council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring oversight and scrutiny rests with the council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securing political and public confidence and support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The Case for Independence:
- Autonomy in decision making, priorities aligned to local need
- Scale - 593ha of land (Milton Keynes Parks Trust started with 1,820, and the Land Trust has grown over 10 years to 2,200)
- Control of strategy, development and growth
- Local accountability
- Requires own Business Plan, Board and Resources
- The Charitable Trust could take the form of a Company Limited by Guarantee and registered with Companies House and the Charity Commission - this would mean it would not pay Corporation Tax on its income and therefore this would not be applicable if it was to receive an endowment from Knowsley Council
- The Charitable Trust’s trading subsidiary (directly owned by the Trust) e.g. Knowsley Parks Management Limited would deliver the maintenance / development of the parks and green spaces plus undertake commercial activity with the income it generates from this being grafted back into the Charity - this would not be subject to Corporation Tax

### The Benefits of Affiliation / Partnership:
- Potential economy of scale regarding financial matters e.g. fund, audit, insurance
- Existing protocols and policies in place, HR, Finance, Operations, H&S
- Reputational / brand awareness
- Economies of scale in partnering with a national trust

### Issues:
- Ownership and management of all risks
- Founding Members whose principal role is to protect the charitable / public value objectives of the Trust, they add to the Trust’s credibility - longstanding stakeholder organisations e.g. Knowsley businesses, community groups, RSLs. They appoint the Trustees of the Board and also the auditors of the Trust
- Founding Members are organisations with shared objectives and purpose, that see the opportunity for collaboration - they are each represented by a designated person but may send alternates
- Board Trustees who have individual responsibility for the running of the Trust in the Charity’s interest, they represent themselves and are responsible to the Founding Members (at the Trust’s Annual General Meeting)
- The skill set of Trustees was considered
- The Trustees need to have the ability to drive improvement and secure value for money by holding the Trust’s senior staff to account
- Longevity of Trustee involvement is important to ensure consistency however this needs to be balanced against new / fresh ideas coming into the Trust so Trustee succession planning is also important
- A Trustee can be released if not performing e.g. not attending meetings through mechanisms in the Trust’s governance documents
- Such governance arrangements can also be used to deal with Trustee conflicts of interest
- Whilst a Trustee position is voluntary they can be paid by the Trust for delivering its charitable objectives (specific projects)
- Location could be Court Hey Park - capacity to grow if needed

### Using the information provided and its subsequent discussion the Board agreed that the establishment of The Knowsley Parks Trust should be recommended to Knowsley Council on the following basis:
- The Knowsley Parks Trust would be an independent charity with a defined purpose to safeguard and manage Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces;
- It would be registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales so as to demonstrate its public value and transparency in its financial proceedings, governance, legal requirements and performance reporting;
- The Knowsley Parks Trust would lease the Parks and Green Spaces under its custodianship from Knowsley Council on a long-term lease (e.g. 999 years) which would stipulate what such land can be used for i.e. freely publicly accessible parkland plus the standards to be maintained and activities to be provided by the Trust;
- The conditions of the land lease would be reflected in a legal agreement between Knowsley Council and The Knowsley Parks Trust that would stipulate the Trust’s conditions of operation and business plan priorities, which must align to the ethos of Knowsley Council and its partners;
- It was suggested that The Parks Trust Milton Keynes could be approached to see what support that could offer to the establishment of a Knowsley Parks Trust through an advisory / consultancy role rather than affiliation (so keeping Knowsley’s Parks Trust independent).
- The Trust could be established as a Community Benefit Company - this may need to be looked at in more detail by the Council depending on its response to the Board's recommendations.

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### Key Skills that Potential Trustees to The Knowsley Parks Trust should demonstrate:
- Charity governance
- Project management
- Financial management
- Social, educational and health experience
- Land management
- Environmental knowledge and expertise
- Social, health and educational interests
- Community engagement
- Fundraising
- Communications and I.T.
- HR/Personnel
- Networking and promotions
- Strategy and business planning
- Local knowledge
- Charity law and administration
Reviewing ways to manage parks and green spaces

the review board’s findings

- Charitable organisations, including independent parks trusts, are the predominant alternative governance / management organisation for public parks that are not under the direct control of local authorities - their approach appears to be very relevant to providing a solution to the issues being faced in Knowsley.

- In identifying a new management approach it is important to involve those who care about parks in designing and delivering new ideas, and funding, expertise and time is needed to develop such new approaches so that confidence can be secured in their viability.

- The Land Trust provides an excellent example of how public green space assets can be managed and improved for the benefit of local communities through appropriate trustee and member governance alongside having certainty of long-term funding through an endowment. The Land Trust will not take on the management of a site (or sites) unless it is accompanied by an endowment (or other source of core funding), but if this is in place will manage a green space as part of its national estate whilst ensuring its local maintenance and use is undertaken as far as possible by community enterprise and volunteers, however it does have contractors that undertake more extensive works.

- The strength of the Parks Trust in Milton Keynes is its independent financial management of green space assets and a diverse approach to land management through a long-term strategy - this has meant it has not been affected by public sector austerity, can keep investing and has a very healthy financial position. The term of the lease that The Parks Trust in Milton Keynes holds the land under is very long which allows them time to invest in the sites and improve their offer to the people of Milton Keynes as a holistic Place offer - combined leisure, sports and green space land. The Board of the Parks Trust in Milton Keynes consists of 15 members, which includes local councillors so the link to the local authority is maintained.

- The Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Brockholes site provides good insight into how a green space can be developed, with significant funding, into a visitor attraction with specialist interest alongside wider community offers that can raise an income of £0.040 million per annum - however, it is difficult balance between a nature reserve and developing commercial activities on the site.

- A resident subscription scheme to fund the maintenance of Heeley People Park in Sheffield has had limited success and has not raised sufficient income for the site’s upkeep. However, renting space in the old school building at Heeley People Park to start-up / small businesses has been very successful for The Heeley Trust, as has providing services to Sheffield City Council’s adult social care team.

- The National Trust has legally binding governance arrangements that set its strategic direction and are used to set its priorities and measure its performance by a Board of Trustees of wide ranging experience and backgrounds but who work to common goals; this is supported by members, donors and volunteers - this management approach is tried and tested and works very well (with similar best practice being demonstrated by The Land Trust).

- Through the sale of park land on the National Trust’s Dunham Massey Estate, on which 700 homes have been built, an endowment of £40 million (+/- 10%) has been created which is funding the maintenance / management of the remaining park estate - this has been done on the basis of the Trust’s charitable objectives and the endowment being used to sustain the value from the green space and to prevent any further sale of the park estate.
• New business models, management tools and partnerships are needed to create a more sustainable future for the way parks are used and maintained. This would not only lead to greater financial security for parks, but it could also create new opportunities for employment and education, increased health and wellbeing, and greater biodiversity. Thus a management and governance solution needs to be found that will last forever and is not a short-term fix e.g. two year period.

• Knowsley Council has recognised the need to find an innovative solution to create such a future for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces and through its establishment of the Review Board is responding positively to the recommendations made by NESTA.

• The Review Board’s Policy Requirement (c) to maintain and where possible improve the current quality standard outcomes for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces has been the benchmark that the Board has used to assess different management options.

• It is important to recognise that cherry-picking the green spaces with greatest functionality (i.e. social, natural, economic or infrastructure value) and associated community interest may result in Knowsley Council retaining responsibility for less valued parks and losing the contribution that the best sites could cascade to them.

• Volunteers that form the 52 friends of parks groups in Knowsley currently play a really active and important role in maintaining Knowsley’s parks and green spaces - it is essential that this continues, is encouraged and recognised by Knowsley Council - however, they should be utilised in a way that gives them the best interest and satisfaction in their work and should not be relied upon to do the routine maintenance tasks that require professional skills and equipment. It is important to identify work activities that are of greatest benefit to the parks and to the volunteer participants to maximise impact.

• The friends of parks groups really know their local parks context and have the best ability to build relationships with the surrounding community to encourage them to use the park and help as best they can with keeping them fit for purpose.

• Members of the Review Board have difficulty in recruiting volunteer support to their friends of park groups, especially those with the right skills and capacity to be involved - this needs capacity building and it is important to note that they require co-ordination, training and tools (like the role of the Head of Environment, Education and Volunteering at The Park Trust in Milton Keynes).

• A similar but smaller scale approach to Haigh Hall could be adopted in Knowsley for its destination parks e.g. at Court Hey Park, but with the income raised being used to support other smaller parks too - a wider focus with all parks included. The Haigh Hall site is very much focused on the health and wellbeing agenda, which is positive, but for Knowsley there is a much wider agenda e.g. jobs, economic growth and investment e.g. endowment (linked to the Review Board’s Policy Objective (b) Delivering Strategic and Corporate Objectives).

• There is a need to identify cross Knowsley anchor parks that can support the wider network of green spaces - the management of all of the sites needs a shared ambition.

• The Land Trust’s local service providers / managing agents have the opportunity to be social enterprises - local people in employment, maintain the quality of their neighbourhoods.

• The continuity of The Heeley Trust’s Board members is as a key factor of this trust’s success - attracting people with a shared objective which once underway retains and draws in members, the Board takes ownership of the issues and finds solutions - they are proud of what they do and were an inspiration.
The Review Board had learnt a lot from its field trips, and was particularly impressed with the charitable trust models it had seen and their governance capacity, skills and local passion. The ethos of public parks not being transferred to the commercial sector but rather an entity with charity and community objectives is commendable.

The logic of surrendering land for capital value that can then be invested so that the remaining park land can be funded from the return on investment makes good sense and has been a real success for the National Trust at Dunham Massey and is a model that will last forever. Given the scale of the funding shortfall in Knowsley then a similar approach may be required - an endowment of some significance will be needed that could be created by using some parks / green spaces for other purposes i.e. surrendering a small proportion to protect the remaining forever; the manner in which this is done will be the key to success along with consideration of inalienable rights (the legal covenants on parks) and the Knowsley Local Core Plan. This is similar to the approach taken in the mid-nineteenth century to fund the first public parks via the premium paid on land in proximity to such sites for housing.

The manner in which the National Trust is governed at a national level with input from Trustees, donors, volunteers and professional staff could be replicated on a smaller scale in Knowsley.

The Review Board concluded that its preferred way forward in respect to the most appropriate future governance and funding approach for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces is as follows:

1. The establishment of a charitable trust (i.e. The Knowsley Parks Trust), with a trading subsidiary operating as a social enterprise (i.e. Knowsley Parks Services Ltd); and
2. Noting that such a trust could be created specifically for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces or commissioned through an existing relevant trust or charity.

Local input to any new Knowsley Parks Trust will be essential - driven by people’s passion and aspirations for their parks which will secure the public’s trust in the Trust.

Such a Trust will need to draw upon the skills and experience of a wide range of stakeholders to lead, champion and manage its business, to be successful such skills will need to be drawn not only from a Knowsley footprint.

An independent Trust could be the autonomous vehicle to govern and manage Knowsley’s parks and aligned to meet local needs. Such local accountability would be part of the principles set in the Trust’s governing document when it is created. Furthermore if one was established in Knowsley its land holdings would make it one of the largest in the country. So scale would not be an issue for establishing a Knowsley Parks Trust.

Local residents would see the benefits of a charitable trust and the social value that could be secured through a community approach like that demonstrated by The Land Trust.

There is a need to learn from the national good practice, but this needs to be tailored to Knowsley’s circumstances.

The manner in which the National Trust is governed at a national level with input from Trustees, donors, volunteers and professional staff could be replicated on a smaller scale in Knowsley.

The Trust model provides the assurance to the public that the parks will be protected forever. Local residents would see the benefits of a charitable trust and the social value that could be secured through a community approach like that demonstrated by The Land Trust.

There is a need to learn from the national good practice, but this needs to be tailored to Knowsley’s circumstances.
Looking for a funding solution independent of Knowsley Council revenue and capital budgets

At its meeting on 29 June 2017 the Review Board specifically considered the available Funding Strategy options that could be applied to sustaining Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, and their likely impact in terms of meeting the Board’s Policy Objectives, particularly objective (d) Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model. It used its findings and conclusions from its previous meetings and field trips to inform this part of its review.

A priority aspect of the Board’s review is to identify, at a strategic level, a funding solution that is independent of Council revenue and capital budgets so avoiding the need for periodic or annual cuts to budgets and the anticipated demise of green space assets.

As previously explained in this Report, continued cuts to the Council’s grant aid from government has placed significant pressure on all of its non-statutory services including parks and green spaces. To continue to deliver the range of parks and green spaces services and their associated beneficial outcomes, the Review Board is seeking to identify an alternative funding model. This circumstance is not just an issue for Knowsley.

The need for alternative funding models is echoed across the UK as reflected in the Heritage Lottery Fund report on the State of UK Public Parks 2016. NESTA (a foundation focussing on innovation) also recently reported on their Learning to Rethink Parks programme. The programme supported eleven local authorities, looking at a range of potential alternative funding models. Although no single answer was found through this programme it did identify that there were opportunities to diversify funding sources for parks.

There are a growing number of models that have been developed in the UK and abroad that provide a variety of sources that have been considered by the Review Board through the information provided by expert witnesses and via their field trips. Those that were specifically considered are as follows and these are described in the following section of this Report:

a. Annual local authority financial contributions
b. Generating new income streams
c. Maximising voluntary / community opportunities
d. Encouraging Corporate Social Responsibility
e. Utilising external grant funding
f. Planning and development opportunities
g. Promoting Ecosystem Services
h. Return on endowment investment

Annual local authority financial contributions

Local authorities have traditionally been responsible for funding, managing and maintaining their publicly accessible parks and green spaces. They have by default been the principal body responsible for their development and upkeep and the majority of these have been funded publicly and for public benefit. As outlined in this Report it is apparent that Knowsley Council is now struggling to find the required funding to maintain its statutory services and meet its legal obligations. Over future years there will be no financial support available to provide many of the non-statutory (discretionary) services it delivers; this is why Knowsley Council is not in a position to continue to resource parks and green spaces via a direct annual budget from April 2019.

There may be future opportunities for local authorities (potentially across the Liverpool City Region) to continue to contribute to green space services as a collective into a parks body that they commission jointly for the whole conurbation. Such an approach may realise savings and the combined value of their contribution could be used to lever greater external funding opportunities. However, following the recent Liverpool City Region Rethinking Parks Study, there appears to be little appetite to progress this regional approach at this time.
Council Tax

In Knowsley, Council Tax represents just 16% of Knowsley Council's total funding. A 1% increase would only raise about £300,000 in extra funding, so bills would have had to go up by a total of 7.99% (i.e. 3% more than the actual increase in 2017/18) to generate the amount needed to protect the parks and greens spaces. Even if this was acceptable to residents, the Council is actually limited by the Government in how much it can increase Council Tax each year. For services excluding Adult Social Care, the Council is already planning to increase Council Tax by as much as the Government will allow over the next three years (2% per year).

As an example Knowsley Council's Environmental Sustainability Service (ESS) is undertaking a feasibility study for the establishment of an end to end bereavement service. Its implementation would provide the capacity to deliver all aspects of a full funeral service, including those currently carried out by private sector undertakers. It is anticipated that such a service would generate income which could contribute to funding an alternative delivery model, and depending on the governance arrangements in place, could also generate a profit that is directed back into ongoing green space management.

A further example is the feasibility study that the ESS are conducting to assess the opportunity for establishing a Green Care offer within Knowsley's parks and green spaces that could be utilised and funded as a resource to support the delivery of outcomes identified by the Council's Adult Social Care services.

There is an opportunity for the ESS to increase income generating activities by starting to trade more widely and charge for certain services to fully recover costs or generate a profit (if the client is another public body) e.g. cemetery memorialisation services. The ability and extent to which this can be done is governed by the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 that allows councils to trade with each other and with designated public bodies in using these services. A full assessment of this model would need to take account of the current management regime, organisational structure and existing costs to identify where changes and improvements could be made and where services could be extended to other parties and charged for. However Knowsley Council's Commercial Services Review recently concluded that it will be extremely challenging for the ESS (and indeed other Council services) to secure any significant new income and profit from the available public sector market in the North West of England. Based on the analysis of this review to date it would appear that the ability of the ESS to extend its traded services under its current position within the Council are very limited; they can certainly not be relied upon to replace the Council's annual funding of circa £1.3 million.

Feedback from the Review Board on Annual Local Authority Financial Contributions:

- In light of the decision by Knowsley Council to end its annual funding of the parks services from April 2019 this income stream will not be available. Therefore the Review Board agreed that this income must be ruled out; and
- It is apparent that Council Tax cannot be increased and so the Board has ruled this out too.

Generating new income streams

There are a number of income opportunities that could be considered within a new model (e.g. expanding the green space traded services offer, events, sports pitches, cemetery expansion / services income, concessions, franchise opportunities, leasing buildings and sponsorship). Knowsley Council currently secures £9.997 million of income through commercial grounds maintenance contracts, the green space traded services offer, the Cemetery service and We Know services. Therefore a priority in any new funding model must be to retain and where possible further develop these existing income sources.

Case Study: Public Health Programme

Physical inactivity is an important precursor to the development of over twenty chronic health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity and mental health problems: the overall cost of residents’ physical inactivity to the borough has been estimated to be £32 million per year (UK Active ‘Turning the Tide of Inactivity’ report 2014).

To help address these serious health issues, Knowsley Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service developed a funding proposal to the Council’s Public Health and Wellbeing Service to implement a five-year health and wellbeing improvement programme to be delivered by the Green Space Rangers.

This programme aimed to improve the physical health, mental wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities of Knowsley residents by encouraging greater independent use of Knowsley’s parks and green space, and providing a tailored programme of activities and events within the borough’s parks and green spaces. The delivery of the programme was costed at £0.140 million per year and would cover three broad themes:

- Increased physical activity;
- Improved mental wellbeing; and
- Community health.

In 2014, A Service Level Agreement was secured from the Council’s Public Health and Wellbeing Service to support the Green Space Rangers delivering the programme on a rolling yearly basis to 2019.

The programme has been developed to meet the requirements and professional standards of over nineteen partner council services and external agencies, and includes:

- Regular walks, cycling and Nordic walks, targeted at ability and health needs;
- Learning in the natural environment, targeted at improving knowledge and confidence of the outdoor environment;
- Volunteer sessions to encourage social skills and mental wellbeing;
- Specially developed walks and activities for dementia sufferers;
- Targeted programmes of activities for early years to Year 6 children that helps to tackle obesity;
- Green Challenge / Forest Schools sessions that would build resilience and social skills; and
- Community events.

The activities are free to participants and are widely advertised to Knowsley residents who can just come along or can be referred to programme by health professionals.

The Green Space Ranger Public Health Programme has been very well received by both the participants and our partner services and agencies. In 2016 / 2017 31,311 residents participated in green space health activities; 347 early years to Year 6 children participated; and 26,237 volunteer hours were carried out on our green spaces.

The Review Board’s preferred way forward of a Charitable Trust with a trading subsidiary operating as a social enterprise would offer greater potential to generate income than the ESS through an ability to generate profit and potentially a more cost competitive offer without the significant overhead costs of Knowsley Council needing to be included.

Therefore although new income sources may be identified and secured, it should be noted that they are most likely to only be able to contribute to the overall funding of the new model and will not be at a level to replace the Council’s controllable financial resources. This would apply to the existing ESS and the potential Charitable Trust with a trading subsidiary operating as a social enterprise.
It is important that ongoing voluntary support is part of the new model. However the experiences gathered by the Environmental Sustainability Service in their significant engagement with Knowsley’s communities on green space projects shows that whilst people are very keen to provide casual support, which can be very significant, they generally do not want the responsibility of providing the full spectrum of maintenance schedules, the upkeep of the necessary equipment or to manage the necessary governance, administration and decision making - they very much look to Knowsley Council for this. Whilst enabling community leadership is an important part the Council’s Co-operative Principles relying, especially in the long-term, on community groups / volunteers to sustain Knowsley’s green spaces is not expected to provide on its own a viable way forward that supports all parks in a holistic manner in perpetuity.

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**Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR - also referred to as Corporate Responsibility) can be defined as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large - World Business Council on Sustainable Development. In the UK the Institute for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (ICRS) was set up in 2014, highlighting the growing professionalism of the role of Corporate Responsibility professionals. Specifically, CSR can be seen as the actions that a business can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, to address both its own competitive interests and the interests of wider society. Participation in CSR should be seen as an investment in a strategic asset rather than a company expense.

There is a lack of consensus on what CSR actually means and its value, from glossy reports and a public relations exercise, to a source of business opportunity and improved competitiveness, to sound business practice. Others may perceive CSR as a distraction or threat. However, it is widely acknowledged that companies have an impact on society and the environment through their operations, products and services, and through their interaction with key stakeholders - including employees, customers, investors, local communities and others. Corporate responsibility encourages and enables companies in managing these impacts, adding value to the company while increasing wider economic, social and environmental wellbeing in the longer-term.

Responsible business can help to innovate and develop new products and services and access new markets, and implement initiatives and programmes not only to minimise risk but also to improve their positive impact through:

a. Treating employees fairly and respectfully
b. Protecting the environment
c. Managing impacts of business operations, products and services on society and the environment
d. Interacting with key stakeholders including employees, customers, suppliers and communities
e. Observing basic human rights
f. Understanding the impact their business activity has on society
g. Questioning businesses as usual
h. Harnessing diversity

Companies are facing a new market place where transparency and accountability are increasingly important. Consumers increasingly want and expect retailers to do whatever they can to ensure the products and services they buy come from environmentally and socially sound sources and those companies contribute to the local area. Thus increased competitiveness can be a direct result of employing an active and visible approach to CSR. Companies perceived as being socially responsible are generally viewed favourably overall - directing consumer choice to the extent of boycotting or purchasing products on ethical grounds. Products directly linked to charitable causes through cause related marketing further enhance the competitive advantage and contribute to the company’s reputation, again influencing consumer purchasing through links with charitable organisations.

They also need to attract and retain the best possible workforce, and present and future employees are placing increasing value on an organisation’s credibility and commonality with their own personal values, increasing awareness of CSR means companies will need to look carefully at their CSR record. CSR should not be viewed as an ‘add on’ rather it should be embedded in the everyday work of the company being ‘part and parcel’ of everything they do. Companies that are seen to support society and local communities, and taking steps to minimise their impact on the environment are consistently considered to be a ‘good’ place to work.
A less tangible benefit of CSR is its contribution to building and maintaining a company's reputation. Creating a license to operate (i.e. the support a company needs to conduct its business successfully); building trust and enhancing credibility is central to CSR, contributing to a company's reputation among:

a. Employees: that a company is good to work for;
b. Customers and suppliers: that a company is a reputable organisation with which to do business and they have trust in the company product / brand;
c. Investors and financiers: that a company is worth backing (in terms of security of and return on investment); and
d. Community: that a company cares about and responds to local issues.

Central to Knowsley Council's parks and green spaces success is its partnership ethos: working with communities and businesses to secure benefit from the borough's multifunctional green spaces for the benefit of all; as set out in the Green Space Strategy. The activities hosted by Knowsley's green spaces already have the opportunity to meet the local business CSR objectives and targets described above. Green space intervention activities can provide multiple CSR benefits including increased recreational opportunities, health and mental wellbeing, biodiversity enhancements, opportunities for social cohesion and improved local and regional image - ensuring that company investment delivers greatest benefit. Such attributes support the company undertaking CSR and the Council in the delivery of its Green Space Strategy. This is very much supported by the valuation of the economic benefits of Knowsley's parks and green spaces which has shown that they provide significant value.

As such the Council’s Environmental Sustainability Service already delivers a wide range of generic green space community and business engagement programmes but there are opportunities for bespoke new programmes to be developed with companies to meet their specific targets. Projects undertaken by the ESS have been shown to have a positive effect on the image of an area influencing where people want to live, work and visit. In particular, interventions relating to the greening of transport corridors and derelict, underused and neglected land have been noted as having a positive influence on the regional image (for example the investments at Northwood Forest Hills). This improved image supports the encouragement of increased inward investment and prosperity in the borough. Furthermore CSR is not entirely altruistic – ‘responsible’ companies have been shown to have an economic advantage, and a company with strong corporate social responsibility (particularly in developed, higher-income markets) will often be more successful in generating economic value added. The ICRS website has a number of examples as does the recent report on CSR by KPMG. As such companies undertaking CSR projects within Knowsley's green spaces are likely to see the outcomes from this as important to their future economic prosperity.

It is important that the CSR services that support Knowsley's green spaces are able to demonstrate that they contribute towards CSR performance indicators. However, whilst there are some recognised standards for CSR implementation and measurement (including CSR processes, systems and principles) there is no single commonly held standard for measuring CSR performance. Corporate CSR strategies tend to include key performance indicators (KPIs) against which they can measure their CSR performance. KPIs help businesses to implement strategies by linking various levels of an organisation (business units, departments and individuals) with clearly defined targets and benchmarks. However, although sharing some commonality in the CSR components and criteria being measured, these KPIs tend to be tailored to the specific operations and business needs of the individual organisation.

There are a range of CSR services that could be developed by the Council to increase interest in their use by Knowsley's businesses. As highlighted some of these services are already operating, but there is the scope to do more if there is an opportunity to charge appropriate rates for these services to the businesses that use them. Table 15 opposite provides an overview of the potential CSR services that could be offered.

### Table 15: Potential Corporate Social Responsibility green space services and associated funding from businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Green Space Bond</td>
<td>A bond scheme that businesses invest in to gain CSR benefits, delivered by the Council working in parks and green spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One off donations</td>
<td>Could be linked to the Bond Scheme (see below), or directed at specific projects in parks and green spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Days</td>
<td>Providing high quality employee days, paid for by the company, can both provide income to the parks and green space service and also help with the management of sites and/or delivery of projects - building up relationships with businesses may encourage contribution to the Bond scheme. Employee Days are currently being provided by the ESS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Volunteering Programme</td>
<td>As above, but with more frequent engagement from employees, with the Council’s support paid for by the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon offsetting</td>
<td>The careful marketing of carbon and other offsetting programmes (biodiversity offset for example) may secure funding. The key issue is to reduce any reputational risk to the Council and to ensure that the models used to calculate offset value are recognised as being good quality and accepted in the wider market place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bespoke services</td>
<td>Specific services co-designed with businesses to realise CSR benefits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CSR Bond is a new concept that has the potential to attract significant income from local businesses if it is developed, marketed and managed. The concept of the Bond has been developed by The Mersey Forest Team, but can be applied locally, potentially with the Mersey Forest Team support. An overview of the mechanics of the Bond is provided in Figure 30 on page 146.

A Knowsley CSR Bond model could be used to enable businesses to invest a sum of money into Knowsley’s parks and green spaces over a fixed period of e.g. 3 - 20 years, during which time the interest on the capital sum is used to deliver a range of CSR activities. Investors will be allowed to reclaim their investment sum after the fixed period ends, but will be encouraged to extend the arrangement where appropriate. All investors will receive a report detailing the CSR benefits their investment has generated. This report mirrors the type of report that may be provided for an investment in a financial product but, rather than financial return, the annual report lists the social benefits that have been delivered, monetising them where possible.

The Bond has two key advantages to potential investors:

a. It can provide CSR outcomes against a business’s social and environmental objectives that increasingly can be measured in financial terms; and
b. The Bond is a way to achieve CSR objectives quickly and simply, without demanding significant time and effort by the business’s managers where that may otherwise prove an obstacle to involvement by a business.

By investing in the Bond, companies could legitimately say that they were investing in Knowsley's parks and green spaces and could show how that investment was bringing benefits to their local area: highlighting the community and environment return in their CSR reporting, alongside stories about the projects and the communities involved. Engaging Knowsley businesses through the Place Board and Chamber of Commerce could help to develop and deliver a strategic approach to this Bond. There is therefore a clear need to get high level political and officer support for this activity.
To achieve this there is a need to establish a clear brand for Knowsley’s green space CSR services, and to use this consistently throughout all CSR Marketing material to ensure it is easily recognisable. This would include a page on Knowsley’s website which will provide information about available CSR services and could include a footer on email signatures which will link to the website’s CSR page. Initially, those organisations which have had previous involvement with Knowsley’s green spaces would be targeted for any marketing activity, including those who responded positively to the market research in relation to receiving more information about such CSR services. As the CSR services become more established, wider marketing to a range of companies could take place, particularly targeting those sectors identified in the market research and particularly those organisations which are able to make local choice on their involvement with organisations to deliver their CSR obligations. Marketing measures could include a tailored mail drop specifically promoting CSR services, or a CSR flyer which could be distributed with general Council business post i.e. Knowsley Business News and at conferences and other events.

Feedback from the Review Board on Encouraging Corporate Social Responsibility:
- The Review Board was very keen on the development of a Corporate Social Responsibility Bond which Knowsley Businesses use to support the upkeep of their local parks - they felt that this was something that should be pursued through the Knowsley Place Board.
- Whilst the Board recognised that this approach will require co-ordination and will take some time to build-up, it has the potential to provide a solution; its value and reliability needs to be tested.

**Utilising external grant funding**

Knowsley Council has been successful in securing significant amounts of external funding to support parks and green spaces over the past ten years. Currently around 38% of the Parks and Green Space expenditure is funded from these external sources with the latest significant success being the award of £1.85 million Heritage Lottery Fund to support the regeneration of Bowring Park. As public funding continues to decline, there is an increasing amount of competition for external funds from an array of organisations. This may be compounded when the UK leaves the European Union e.g. the Countryside Stewardship Scheme is part of the EU supported Rural Development Programme for England and offers opportunity to secure new funding for Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

This success has been secured through the Green Space Strategy and an in-depth assessment of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces developed by the Council (ESS) which has provided a robust evidence based programme/pipeline of projects that has been used for external funding bids. Such projects have been undertaken in close partnership with communities, with a firm focus on the assessment of the value of parks and green spaces against their local needs so that they address these matters. Therefore such a strategic and evidenced based approach to external funding is important moving forward, and future opportunities are identified in Table 16 on page 148 based on the following factors:
- Funding source
- Indicative scale of funding - what is the likely scale of funding that might be secured
- Risk - an assessment of the likelihood of success, on average, of bids. Larger bids tend to be more risky, but obviously offer significant reward if successful
- Assessment of whether the fund will support capital or revenue programmes
- How long is funding for - the average duration of the funding source

The CSR Bond is a new concept that has the potential to attract significant income from local businesses if it is developed, marketed and managed.
The Board recognised the success that has been achieved in securing external grant funding. Feedback from the Review Board on Planning and development opportunities sets out the policies for planning gain. Parks and green spaces have previously benefited greatly from funding via Section 106 legal developer contribution agreements. The Council has recently adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out its prioritisation of infrastructure required to support sustainable development.

Currently green space provision and qualitative improvements in areas of deficit is the top of the priority list for new residential developments (as per the SPD), whereas the current affordable housing provision in line with the Council’s Core Strategy Policy CS15 and CS27 is only considered an equal priority to green space provision (enhancement or new) if the Substantial Residential Area (SRA) where the housing development is located is in Surplus. The Review Board also noted that a new development’s SRA must continue to be available for asset replacement / improvement projects - a Trust would allow this to happen.

Feedback from the Review Board on Planning and development opportunities:

- As such the Board agreed that this funding source is not a solution in its own right, but must continue to be accessible for asset replacement / improvement projects - a Trust would allow this to happen.
- Opportunities to secure income (potentially with profit) through providing parks / green space horticultural maintenance services for housing developers that have had to provide new green space as part of their planning requirements.
- To harness opportunities for new income to maintain green spaces by applying ground rents to occupiers of new homes in the borough.
- Opportunities to secure income from new housing development in the borough its availability to fund green space improvement projects has diminished. Hence, it cannot be relied upon to sustain the borough’s green spaces moving forward.

Planning and development opportunities

Knowsley Council recently adopted Local Plan Core Strategy sets out the policies for planning gain. Parks and green spaces have previously benefited greatly from funding via Section 106 legal developer contribution agreements. The Council’s recently adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out its prioritisation of infrastructure required to support sustainable development.

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Feedback from the Review Board on Planning and development opportunities:

- In a similar way to granting the Review Board acknowledged that funding from Developer Contributions (Section 106 Agreements) would remain an important funding source for capital improvement works. However the Board also recognised that it is the responsibility of Knowsley Council to allocate such funding, a Trust would not be able to influence this decision. Therefore it cannot be relied upon to provide a solution under such a governance / management model.
- The Review Board also noted that a new housing development may be required to include a new park / green space for its residents to use - the maintenance of such new green space could be undertaken by the Trust - with an associated income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding source</th>
<th>Indicative Scale (£)</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Capital/Revenue</th>
<th>How long is funding for? (indicative - years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Urban Development</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLF Transition Fund</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Stewardship</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESIF - Low Carbon Economy</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Capital Financing Fund</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landfill Communities Fund</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Trusts</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Trusts</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Council England - Small Capital Grants</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Council England - Large Capital Grants</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery Fund - Parks for People</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery Fund - Heritage Grants</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery Fund - Our Heritage</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Lottery</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Lottery Awards for All</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Need</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier bag schemes (funding distributes the Sp charged for plastic bags by retailers)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcode Dream Trust - Dream Fund</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcode Local Trust</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Capital/Revenue</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promoting ecosystem services

Over the past 15 years there has been an increasing spotlight on the benefits that are provided by the natural environment and attempts made to identify how the beneficiaries could be persuaded to pay directly. The term Payments for Ecosystem Services is commonly applied to this work. Such services may include direct services such as food and timber provision, clean water, renewable energy and biomass together with indirect services such as water treatment, flood risk management, improving air quality, carbon capture and enhancing biodiversity. This area has been championed by central government (Defra recently published the report Payment for Ecosystem Services), however it remains a relatively new area for exploration and securing the associated funding. Its opportunity is enhanced when considered at the City Region level, but none the less remains an important consideration for Knowsley alone.

An example of this type of approach being applied is the recent report by Forest Enterprise. It is likely that central government support for the public forest estate will be assessed on the basis of the value of the ecosystem services that are delivered by Forest Enterprise. With this in mind, Forest Enterprise has recently released their first report identifying the scope and scale of these services as the start of the conversation with government about resourcing the organisation, this is shown in Table 17 below.

Whilst this is a good example of the application of the idea, it still relies on government or public funding. There have however been some successes in securing payments for ecosystem services from a broader range of businesses. For example, in South West England, South West Water pays for specific land management in their upland water catchments. The payments made are to ensure good water quality running off the water catchment. The benefit to the water company is that there is a lower cost for the treatment at the water treatment plant. The net effect is to increase the support for sustainable land management and to reduce costs/increase profit for the water company.

The funding provided by the Council’s Public Health team to deliver health and wellbeing programmes in the borough via the ESS could be seen as a Payment for Ecosystem Services approach.

Table 17
Forest Enterprise Natural Capital Benefit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural capital benefit</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Baseline year 2013/14</th>
<th>Reporting year 2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timber Provision</td>
<td>Woodland Net asset value for timber produced</td>
<td>£/yr</td>
<td>8.492m</td>
<td>7.335m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Regulation</td>
<td>Woodland Carbon sequestration value £/yr</td>
<td>98.739m</td>
<td>83.074m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bogs</td>
<td>(0.523)m</td>
<td>(0.547)m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and Public Access</td>
<td>Whole estate Net asset value for recreation £/yr</td>
<td>147.142m</td>
<td>147.943m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and seed supply</td>
<td>Whole estate Plant and seed revenues £/yr</td>
<td>3.091m</td>
<td>3.774m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food provision</td>
<td>Whole estate Net asset value wild game management £/yr</td>
<td>0.013m</td>
<td>0.040m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals</td>
<td>Whole estate Mineral sales value £/yr</td>
<td>0.896m</td>
<td>0.594m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the principle of payments for ecosystem services is sound and there are some good examples of its application, there remain barriers to more payment agreements. In 2014, the Welsh Government produced a document assessing the potential for ecosystem services, with a series of recommendations to overcome the existing barriers to take up of agreements. The potential for payments for the wide range of benefits (services) provided by Knowsley’s parks and green spaces has been considered. These are highlighted in Figure 31 below.

Figure 31
The potential for Ecosystem Services
A total of 20 possible purchasers of the types of ecosystem benefit provided by Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces have been identified. Some of these are specific such as the Environment Agency and United Utilities, whilst others are more generic, for example, farmers with grazing animals or who need to find areas for hay cutting. The list of potential green space customers is provided in Table 18 below.

Table 18 Potential customers of Knowsley’s green space ecosystem services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Businesses</th>
<th>Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)</th>
<th>City Region/LA</th>
<th>Local communities - food growing/ fuel</th>
<th>Developers</th>
<th>Employers - wider than private businesses</th>
<th>Environment Agency</th>
<th>Farmers looking for grazing land</th>
<th>Insurers</th>
<th>Land owners</th>
<th>Mersey Travel</th>
<th>Natural England</th>
<th>NHS</th>
<th>NW Coast and Flood Board</th>
<th>Public Health</th>
<th>Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)</th>
<th>Stobart</th>
<th>United Utilities</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

An appraisal has been made of the basic, necessary elements that would need to be in place for each of the potential benefits to enable marketing of the ecosystem services benefits to this target audience. The outcomes of this assessment are shown in Table 19 opposite. In this table a green box indicates:

a. A possible link to the CSR programme; and  
b. An assessment that the condition is already in place, i.e. that the Council already has this agreement or evidence available.

Thus there is increasing potential for securing payment for the ecosystem services provided by parks and green spaces. This may include direct services such as food and timber, clean water, renewable energy and biomass together with indirect services such as water treatment, flood risk management, improving air quality, carbon capture and enhancing biodiversity. The opportunity for this is enhanced when considered at the City Region level.

Ecosystem services offer a great opportunity to diversify the services that Knowsley’s green spaces offer and in turn generate new income streams to support their upkeep. As such they are an important part of any new funding model but they need to be much more developed before their financial value can be gauged and arrangements secured with customers to deliver them.

Feedback from the Review Board on Promoting Ecosystem Services:

- This is a new area of opportunity that the Board felt should be pursued, however commissioning organisations such as the Environment Agency / NHS also have to manage their services within smaller budgets. Nevertheless, investment in such measures is being identified as being worthwhile and new funding is becoming available.
- The Board accepted that this is not a short-term solution but should be pursued and, like the Corporate Social Responsibility bonds, will take some time to realise.

Table 19 The marketing of Ecosystem Services to potential customers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Who benefits?</th>
<th>Possible CSR</th>
<th>Necessary conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>CCGs</td>
<td>High quality sites and products to support good health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Evidence of impact in reducing costs and keeping people well, professional approach to service delivery for health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Flood risk reduction</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>United Utilities</td>
<td>Long-term ownership and management of sites, site use agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NW Coast and Flood Board</td>
<td>Long-term ownership and management of sites, site use agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Labour productivity</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>City Region/LA</td>
<td>Evidence of impact for businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RSLs</td>
<td>Evidence of impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Quality of place</td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>City Region/LA</td>
<td>Plans for integration of parks and green spaces into regeneration and other strategic plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RSLs</td>
<td>Evidence of impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Land management</td>
<td>Land owners</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RSLs</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Reducing urban heat island/climate change adaptation</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Plans for heatwave risk reduction - evidence of impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>Plans for heatwave risk reduction - evidence of impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Products</td>
<td>Stobart</td>
<td>Woodland resource management plan in place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities - food, fuel</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on page 154
Not all parks and green spaces are managed in a traditional manner by local authorities. Historically around the turn of the twentieth century garden suburbs and cities and model villages were created by visionary planners and wealthy industrialists. These included Letchworth Garden City and Port Sunlight that included good provision of parks and green spaces. At the time trusts and foundations were often established to fund and maintain these spaces independently and in perpetuity for the benefit of local communities.

The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, established in 1995, is the modern-day successor to the original garden city development company. Operating as an industrial provident society with charitable status it is a self-funding organisation with an annual endowment income of around £10 million from an asset base of £52 million (property portfolio 2014). Its landscape team maintain the garden city greenway and support a number of environmental improvements across the town. Another example is the Port Sunlight Village Trust in the Wirral which was set up by Unilever in 19999 and is responsible for preserving and maintaining the conservation area, amenities, architectural heritage and open spaces. In 2015 it had an income of £2.8 million generated primarily through residential and commercial rents and an operational budget of £2.1 million, of which £0.574 million was spent on landscape maintenance. Adjacent to this is the Port Sunlight River Park, created from a former landfill site and provides connections to the historic Port Sunlight village and Lever’s factory. The site is now managed by the Land Trust who has appointed Sunlight village and Lever’s factory. The site is now managed by the Land Trust who has appointed Sunlight village and Lever’s factory.

Consequently endowments are an alternative way to fund green spaces and have proved to be an extremely successful way of securing a long-term, protected source of income. An endowment is an asset that generates income: the income, or part of it, is used to fund the green space while the capital remains invested and secured. Endowment income may come from its investment in the stock market which generates interest (equity) or a property portfolio that generates rental income, or a bond / loan to a third party with a return.

Donations and fundraising activities can be used to build or develop an endowment. In this case, the holder of the endowment provides an assurance that although the funding will be invested over the long-term, the interest will be used to support activities in particular areas identified by the donors or fundraisers e.g. a CSR Bond. Fundraising initiatives and donations for green spaces could therefore be held in an endowment, invested over the long-term and grown to provide a sustainable source of finance from the interest gained.

A pivotal component of a new funding model for the management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces could be secured by establishing such an endowment. This could be linked to a City Region Parks Foundation which may provide the vehicle for developing a strategic endowment fund to secure a more stable and sustainable funding base for the region in a similar way to how The Land Trust uses endowments as their primary method of funding the maintenance of the green spaces they manage nationally. However given the current apparent lack of interest in collaborative working on this agenda at a City Region level the Board should focus on assessing the capability of establishing an affordable and sustainable endowment model for Knowsley that can be up-scaled if necessary.

### Table 19 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Who benefits?</th>
<th>Possible CSR</th>
<th>Necessary conditions</th>
<th>Evidence available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Biodiversity</td>
<td>Ne</td>
<td>Management agreements and clear management objectives for each site</td>
<td>Developers, Visitors</td>
<td>Offset policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Tourism</td>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>Strategy and pricing policy</td>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>Strategy and pricing policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Recreation and leisure</td>
<td>RSLs</td>
<td>Evidence of impact</td>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>Evidence of impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Green Travel</td>
<td>Mersey Travel</td>
<td>Evidence of impact, active travel routes</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Evidence of impact, active travel routes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Income from an endowment investment

Not all parks and green spaces are managed in a traditional manner by local authorities. Historically around the turn of the twentieth century garden suburbs and cities and model villages were created by visionary planners and wealthy industrialists. These included Letchworth Garden City and Port Sunlight that included good provision of parks and green spaces. At the time trusts and foundations were often established to fund and maintain these spaces independently and in perpetuity for the benefit of local communities.

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### Feedback from the Review Board on Return on Endowment Investment:

- The Board noted that this is a tried and tested method of generating income that could replace Knowsley Council’s current annual funding contribution.
- The case studies the Board has seen demonstrate that an endowment can reliably generate income at a rate of 3.5%. Such a return is considered to be pragmatic and in reality the Trust would take independent regulated advice from an endowment fund manager on how best to invest in line with the Trust’s objectives.
- The Board recognised that this does offer a solution to the funding problem.

### Voluntary support and Social Value

Partners in Knowsley including the Council, Knowsley Chamber of Commerce, Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services, Knowsley Housing Trust and the Community Foundation for Merseyside are working with the public, private, social, voluntary and community sectors to develop an approach to using social value. This is in the context of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and aims to use this legislation as a way of enabling all partners in Knowsley to work towards contributing social value in the work that they do. Social Value in Knowsley is being defined as: Outcomes, measures and activity that will create strong and well-connected public, private and social sectors that enable communities to be more resilient. The Council has identified 29 Social Value Measures that it uses to assess the contribution of a service, project or initiative against. These are identified in Appendix N along with the contribution that a new management and funding approach for Knowsley’s park and green spaces could make to them.

On this basis Partners in Knowsley are working to:
- Apply these outcomes and measures to specific procurement exercises in the public sector to see how they can be used in tender specifications and evaluation;
- Encourage partner organisations to use the outcomes and measures as part of their procurement exercises;
- Identify the best way that the private and social enterprise sector might donate the social value that they deliver through the Knowsley Foundation and hence receive recognition for the social value they deliver;
- Identify the best way that the voluntary and community sector might donate the social value they deliver through Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services and hence receive recognition for the social value they deliver; and
- Identify the best way the public sector can collect the social value it delivers and publish and receive recognition for the social value delivered.
The valuable work already being secured is a historic funding method e.g. London Squares, but few parks now require users to pay an entrance charge.

The Land Trust has an endowment of approximately £120 million which it invests with CCLA who manage £7 billion of investments for charities, religious organisations and the public sector and provide a long-term return modelled at 3.5% - this provides an in perpetuity/sustainable funding for their green space maintenance costs and capital replacement costs. It has no reliance on local authority funding and so has been unaffected by the type of cuts that Knowsley Council is having to make.

The Review Board identified that to fund an annual revenue cost of circa £1.3 million (Knowsley Council's 2016/17 spend) would require an endowment of approximately £40 million (+/-10%).

The Parks Trust in Milton Keynes core funding comes from endowment investment and commercial property rental income; a £40 million (+/-10%) endowment earns £1 million per annum for the Trust. Its focus is investment in the Place and the Trust communicates what its funding provides.

Charging keys to parks is a historic funding method e.g. London Squares, but few parks now require users to pay an entrance charge.

The Board acknowledged the need to embed social value as a key theme within any income generating initiative, and indeed the wider ethos of the proposed Knowsley Parks Trust.

Reviewing Funding Models for Parks and Green Spaces - The Review Board's Findings

In light of the decision by Knowsley Council to end its annual funding of the parks services from April 2019 this income stream will not be available. Therefore the Review Board agreed that this income must be ruled out of any future model.

Whilst new income generation is important and must be pursued it will not on its own offer a solution that will generate the required annual funding of circa £1.3 million over the long-term to run Knowsley's parks and green spaces.

It is evident that people's love of parks can translate to philanthropic donations but such models are a longer-term endevour and will be very much dependent on the 'ask' and a culture shift to give to parks rather than taking them for granted as being provided and funded by Knowsley Council. National research into new models for managing parks shows that volunteering, public funding gifts and business donations can make a contribution to the maintenance of parks.

The valuable work already being secured through volunteering endeavours must be congratulated, however it is clear that such volunteering cannot replace core maintenance or management responsibilities that require professional staff and specialist resources.

Examples of securing new income from e.g. applying parking charges are not seen as being viable as people would simply not be willing to pay in Knowsley. Therefore such sources of funding cannot be relied upon to meet the identified circa £1.3 million shortfall in funding per annum.

Charging residents of Knowsley to access parks would not work either as they would not be prepared to pay in this way. Such a policy would exclude people from accessing the health and wellbeing benefits of parks - the sites would not be freely accessible, therefore this approach would not meet with the Review Board's Policy Requirement (a) to ensure that the borough's parks and green spaces remain freely accessible to be enjoyed by all, and belong to the people of Knowsley in perpetuity.

In a similar way to grants, funding from Developer Contributions (Section 106 Agreements) will remain an important funding source for capital improvement works. However it is the responsibility of Knowsley Council to allocate such funding and a Trust would not be able to influence this decision. Therefore it cannot be relied upon to provide a solution under such a governance/model management.

A new housing development may be required to include a new park/green space for its residents to use - the maintenance of such new green space could be undertaken by the Trust's trading subsidiary - with an associated income. However the Trust would need to compete for this work and demonstrate both quality and value for money in doing so.

Ecosystem Services are a new area of opportunity that should be pursued, however commissioning organisations such as the Environment Agency and the NHS also have to manage their services within smaller budgets. This is not a short-term solution but should be pursued and, like the Corporate Social Responsibility bonds, will take some time to realise.

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Reviewing Funding Models for Parks and Green Spaces - The Review Board's Conclusions

As explained in Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy 2015 - 20, parks provide a great venue through which many pressing social needs of the borough can be addressed e.g. health and wellbeing, improving educational attainment and supporting adult social care services. The current funding that Knowsley Council’s Public Health team provides to enable the Green Space Rangers to deliver community activities is a great example of this and needs to be promoted and sustained. As is the Green Care Pilot that is being delivered for Knowsley Council’s Adult Social Care services and the Bush Craft offer that is generating interest in volunteering and Corporate Social Responsibility.

The development of a Corporate Social Responsibility Bond which Knowsley Businesses use to support the upkeep of their local parks has good potential and something that should be pursued through the Knowsley Place Board. This approach will require co-ordination and take some time to build-up but it has the potential to provide a solution; its value and reliability need to be tested.

Knowsley Council, and indeed the Parish and town councils, have been very successful in accessing grants to fund improvements to the borough’s parks and green spaces. However such funding is for infrastructure improvements and will not fund routine grounds maintenance tasks e.g. cutting the grass. Therefore it cannot be utilised to replace the annual funding that Knowsley Council provides to undertake such work. This funding source is not a solution in its own right, but must continue to be accessible for asset replacement/improvement projects - a Trust would allow this to happen in collaboration with all current stakeholders.

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Ecosystem Services are a new area of opportunity that should be pursued, however commissioning organisations such as the Environment Agency and the NHS also have to manage their services within smaller budgets. This is not a short-term solution but should be pursued and, like the Corporate Social Responsibility bonds, will take some time to realise.

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• Volunteer time and donations are important and must be valued and acknowledged by Knowsley Council, however they cannot be relied upon in terms of income or the breadth or skills and resources needed to manage and maintain the borough’s network of parks and green spaces.

• A long-term investment time horizon is needed - a reliable solution forever in Knowsley that provides a quality of provision very far into the future.

• Investment in Knowsley’s parks will be needed to improve their destination status and so ability to generate income from increased visitors/users - this is expected to require an endowment that is of a size that can fund maintenance and such investment e.g. at Stadt Moers Park.

• A lot of income is generated from car parking charges at Haigh Hall, and whilst this would not currently work in Knowsley, such attitudes could change if people enjoyed a good day out in the park with a wide range of attractions and that they were assured that their parking fee was being invested back into the site.

• The logic applied by the National Trust in surrendering land/buildings for capital or rental value that can then be invested wisely so that the remaining park land can be funded from the return on that investment is understood. Real success has been demonstrated by these Trusts and they now have a funding model that will last forever, have well managed green spaces that are protected from public sector austerity.

• Any transfer of Knowsley parkland into such a trust would need to allow oversight of how the land was used and maintained by Knowsley Council and the Knowsley Parish and town councils where appropriate (as per the Review Board’s Policy Objective (g): Ensure that oversight and scrutiny rests with the Council).

• Return on Endowment Investment is a tried and tested method of generating income that could replace Knowsley Council’s current annual funding contribution. The case studies the Board has seen demonstrate that an endowment can reliably generate income at a rate of 3.5%. Such a return is considered to be pragmatic and in reality the Trust would take independent regulated advice from an endowment fund manager on how best to invest in line with the Trust’s objectives and ethical investment requirements. This does offer a solution to the funding problem.

• On the basis of the information presented on Funding Models the Review Board agreed that only the creation of an endowment to secure return on its sensible investment provides the scale and permanence to meet the majority of the expenditure the Council is seeking to secure from an alternative funding model (circa £1.3 million per annum).

• The Knowsley Parks Trust trustees and professional staff will require the skills, experience and capacity to competently manage the endowment fund and develop the range of supplementary trading, grant funding and volunteer engagement activities identified by the Review Board.
Reviewing how an endowment could be used to fund Knowsley parks and green spaces

How an endowment could work

An endowment is a capital sum invested over the long-term. As such a long-term view is taken regarding capital growth and capital is put at risk to achieve higher levels of income than standard savings accounts. The focus of the endowment fund managers is to deliver cash dividend income whilst protecting the value of the fund over the medium to long-term. The capital value growth is targeted to keep pace with inflation. Fund management fees can be based on the capital value (e.g. CCLA / Land Trust) or as a share of the dividend income (e.g. Milton Keynes).

To achieve the required circa £1.3 million of income per annum the following levels of endowment would be required, itemised by the dividend yield (percentage income). Investment fees are assumed to be deducted from the capital sum (see Table 20 below).

Once established, it may be possible to invest part of the fund in higher yielding assets or bonds. Such innovative opportunities could be explored by the Trust working with its partners.

As in the example of The Parks Trust Milton Keynes, rental from property may also be an option to secure an annual income return. Milton Keynes has both property rental income and dividend income and benefits from drawing on a more diverse income stream than say the Land Trust which is wholly reliant on income from its endowment. This risk is minimised by the scale of the Land Trust endowment >£100,000,000 and the range of assets the fund is invested in.

For illustration, a Knowsley Parks Trust should target £40 million (+/- 10%) endowment to safeguard the parks under its management. Additional resources may be required to manage transitional arrangements, the maintenance / replacement of expensive capital items plus have funding available to develop sites to secure them as visitor attractions that will in themselves generate income for the Trust and add value to Knowsley.

Table 20
Projected Endowment Investment Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of dividend return</th>
<th>Total endowment</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>£130,000,000</td>
<td>Example of a low return, high risk averse model, unachievable level of endowment required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>£65,000,000</td>
<td>Low return, risk averse, high level of endowment required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>£37,142,857</td>
<td>Rates achieved by Land Trust Fund, managed by CCLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>£26,000,000</td>
<td>Higher level of dividend income, potential partnership with very large fund, i.e. pension fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>£16,250,000</td>
<td>Bespoke Bond Issue, subject to agreement with appropriate body e.g. a RSL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating the endowment fund

The challenge for a Knowsley Parks Trust is to secure the required level of funds to enable the creation of an endowment fund from day one. Consideration will therefore need to be given as to what pump-prime funding could be available to create a £40 million (+/- 10%) fund from the start. These funding sources may include Council reserves, capital receipts, prudential borrowing or from CSR bonds. The opportunities for securing the necessary funding to create the endowment are outlined below:

Knowsley Council reserves
A bid for any available Council reserves could be submitted in order to fund or partly fund the creation of an endowment. Council reserves may be created in the future from unallocated resources that arise at year end or from resources that become available following the challenge of investment programmes or current reserves (requiring resources to be offered up for corporate re-allocation). The Council would need to see a convincing detailed business case for the Knowsley Local Plan. For illustration, in 2012 Knowsley commissioned an Economic Viability Assessment (via Keppie Massie) of the borough as part of the supporting evidence base for the Knowsley Local Plan. This assessment identified the following land value assumptions for residential developments (Table 21) and office and industrial developments (Table 22).

Therefore based on an average residential land value assumption of £680,000 per hectare (i.e. £275,000 per acre), it is estimated that 59 ha of public parks and green spaces managed by Knowsley Council (i.e. the sites that are within the scope of this review) would need to be surrendered to generate £40.1m in capital receipts. A loss of 59 ha equates to a 10% reduction of public parks and green spaces managed by Knowsley Council, and a 6% reduction in the overall public green space provision (i.e. against the 893 hectare). Any surrender of public parks and green spaces would need to take into consideration site restrictions (e.g. those designated as green belt) and site specific covenants, with surrenders phased over a period of 15 years. Therefore negating the Council’s circa £1.3 million contribution to the maintenance of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces could be secured through the establishment of an endowment which would be appropriately invested, and the interest earned used to off-set the need for such Council funding. Pump-prime funding (from April 2019) for the endowment could potentially come from prudential borrowing. This would be paid back over a period of time (e.g. 15 years) from the sale of a limited number of parks and green spaces over that time frame (which would be selected against pre-determined criteria the Board may wish to consider) for new commercial, social care or housing use. This enables the remaining majority of parks and green space to be retained as public green space assets forever through the return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million) with the actual endowment fund (£40 million +/- 10%) not being used. Using this funding approach, and by placing the parks and green spaces in an independent Charitable Trust as their custodian, would protect them from any future budget savings that the Council may need to make - this would give reassurance to the people of Knowsley that the remaining parks / green spaces would be protected in perpetuity. The surrender of a minority of sites (e.g. 10%) protects the majority (90%) forever. Such a funding model would be designed to specifically meet the following Policy Objectives of the Board:

d. Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model
Through the implementation of a new funding and management model, replace the Council’s 2016/17 budget of £1.114m on the development, management and maintenance of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces, whilst also identifying £0.185m of new annual funding in order to avoid the need for the Council to find new capital funding resources to maintain green space infrastructure.

h. Secure Political and Public Confidence and Support
Ensure public confidence in the intent, positive outcomes and sustainability of the future funding and management of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Office (€/hectare)</th>
<th>Office (£/acre)</th>
<th>Industrial (€/hectare)</th>
<th>Industrial (£/acre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Value Area</td>
<td>865,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Value Area</td>
<td>494,200</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office and Industrial Land Value Assumptions</th>
<th>(€/hectare)</th>
<th>(£/acre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centre</td>
<td>740,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Business Park</td>
<td>495,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley Industrial Park</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halewood</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huyton</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescot</td>
<td>430,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 Residential Land Value Assumptions

Table 22 Office and Industrial Land Value Assumptions
Using an Endowment to Fund Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces - The Review Board’s Findings

- An endowment is a capital sum invested over the long-term - as such a long-term view is taken regarding capital growth and capital is put at risk to achieve higher levels of income than standard savings accounts.

- A Knowsley Parks Trust should target approximately £40 million (+/− 10%) endowment to safeguard the parks under its management.

- The challenge for a Knowsley Parks Trust is to secure the required level of funds to enable the creation of an endowment fund from day one - consideration therefore needs to be given as to what pump-prime funding could be available to create a £40 million (+/− 10%) fund from the start e.g. prudential borrowing - which Knowsley Council needs to be alerted to at a strategic level.

- Any surrender of public parks and green spaces would need to take into consideration site restrictions (e.g. those designated as green belt) and site specific covenants, with surrenders phased over a period of 15 years.

- The Board has not been asked to identify the sites for potential surrender, it is being asked to identify a preferred way forward on a strategic level, an in-principle approach.

- If a larger endowment could be formed then its funding could be targeted as major parks / green spaces site infrastructure improvements that would facilitate other income generating opportunities e.g. events / visitor attractions.

- Knowsley Council will need to develop a convincing detailed business case to fully test the viability of this proposal.

Using an Endowment to Fund Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces - The Review Board’s Conclusions

- An endowment funding model could be designed to specifically meet the following Policy Objectives of the Review Board:

  - Establish an Alternative Sustainable Funding Model
    Through the implementation of a new funding and management model, replace the Council’s 2016/17 budget of £1.114 million on the development, management and maintenance of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces, whilst also identifying £0.185 million of new annual funding in order to avoid the need for the Council to find new capital funding resources to maintain green space infrastructure.

- Secure Political and Public Confidence and Support
  Ensure public confidence in the intent, positive outcomes and sustainability of the future funding and management of Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces.

- The challenge for The Knowsley Parks Trust would be to secure the required level of funds to enable the creation of an endowment fund from day one - consideration therefore needs to be given as to what pump-prime funding could be available to create a £40 million (+/− 10%) fund from the start (April 2019) e.g. prudential borrowing - which Knowsley Council needs to be alerted to at a strategic level.

- Any surrender of public parks and green spaces would need to take into consideration site restrictions (e.g. those designated as green belt) and site specific covenants, with surrenders phased over a period of 15 years.

- The Board has not been asked to identify the sites for potential surrender, it is being asked to identify a preferred way forward on a strategic level, an in-principle approach. Such site selection will be the responsibility of Knowsley Council.

- The endowment should be invested with an ethical perspective.

- If a larger endowment could be formed then its return on investment could be targeted at major parks / green spaces site infrastructure improvements that would facilitate other income generating opportunities e.g. events / visitor attractions.

- It was noted that Knowsley benefits from an over provision of Public Green Space Land (as required by the standards set within the Local Plan).

- The Board wished to consider developing the strategic criteria against which green space sites could be selected for alternative uses (e.g. the protection of designated sites such as nature reserves, considering site functionality and usage, identifying key green space corridors etc.). This was subsequently an agenda item at the Parks Review Board on 20 July 2017.

- Knowsley Council will need to develop a convincing detailed business case to fully test the viability of this proposal.

Feedback from the Review Board on Using an Endowment to Fund Knowsley’s Parks and Green Spaces:

- The endowment should be invested with an ethical perspective.

- If a larger endowment could be formed then its funding could be targeted as major parks / green spaces site infrastructure improvements that would facilitate other income generating opportunities e.g. events / visitor attractions.

- The challenge for a Knowsley Parks Trust is to secure the required level of funds to enable the creation of an endowment fund from day one - consideration therefore needs to be given as to what pump-prime funding could be available to create a £40 million (+/− 10%) fund from the start (April 2019) e.g. prudential borrowing - which Knowsley Council needs to be alerted to at a strategic level.

- Any surrender of public parks and green spaces would need to take into consideration site restrictions (e.g. those designated as green belt) and site specific covenants, with surrenders phased over a period of 15 years.

- There is a demand for such new development in the borough and facilitating such outcomes is a priority of Knowsley Council’s Corporate Plan.

- It was noted that Knowsley benefits from an over provision of Public Green Space Land (as required by the standards set within the Local Plan).

- The Board wished to consider developing the strategic criteria against which green space sites could be selected for alternative uses (e.g. the protection of designated sites such as nature reserves, considering site functionality and usage, identifying key green space corridors etc.). This was subsequently an agenda item at the Parks Review Board on 20 July 2017.

- Knowsley Council will need to develop a convincing detailed business case to fully test the viability of this proposal.
The review board’s identified preferred way forward

The Knowsley Parks Trust

Over the course of its meetings on 25 May and 29 June 2017 the Review Board confirmed its unanimous agreement to the following strategic Preferred Way Forward for addressing the funding challenge facing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces from April 2019.

The establishment of The Knowsley Parks Trust should be recommended on the basis that it is:
• An Independent Trust;
• A Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity;
• Has Founding Members;
• Has Trustees;
• Holds a Trading Subsidiary - operating as a social enterprise e.g. Knowsley Parks Services Ltd; and
• Potentially located at Court Hey Park.

Endowment led Funding Strategy

Only the creation of an endowment to secure return on its sensible investment provides the scale and permanence to meet the majority of the expenditure the Council is seeking to secure from an alternative funding model (circa £1.3 million per annum). The concept by which the endowment would be created and invested is as follows:
• In April 2019 the endowment could be funded by Knowsley Council using Prudential Borrowing loan and other resources. The sum secured for the endowment would be recovered by the Council over a 15 year period from the sale of a limited number of parks and green spaces (either whole or part) for new development that is required in the borough e.g. commercial, social care or housing use.
• The Review Board has identified strategic criteria for the selection of parks and green space sites for sale (but has not applied these to identify actual sites for sale).
• From April 2019, based on the Review Board’s assumptions, at least 90% of parks and green spaces will be maintained and protected as public green space assets forever within The Knowsley Parks Trust. Knowsley Council will retain and then sell for development of up to 10% of the parks and green spaces (either whole or part) identified for such change of use over 15 years to recover its funding of the endowment.
• The return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million) is ring-fenced to be used to maintain these sites, with the actual endowment pot (£40 million (+/-10%)) not being used.
• Using this funding method and placing the parks / green spaces in an independent Trust as their custodian would protect them from any future Knowsley Council budget savings. This will give reassurance to the people of Knowsley that the vast majority of green spaces will be protected to a good standard forever by The Knowsley Parks Trust.
• The sale of a minority of land within the parks and green spaces estate (up to 10%), protects the majority (e.g. 90%) forever.
• This method of creating the endowment utilises only the parks and green space land within the scope of the Board’s review. However, Knowsley Council should identify what land is available for sale for the same types of development from Public Green Space land that is not in the scope of the Board’s review too (e.g. the grassed areas maintained by Knowsley Council’s Streetscene Services) using the Board’s Strategic Selection Criteria. This should be done before the sale of any sale of parks and green spaces is considered. Furthermore no further sale of any Public Green Space land should take place until Knowsley Council has considered the Board’s recommendations and identified its next steps.
The parks and green spaces identified for sale / development will be retained by Knowsley Council. They will be maintained to appropriate functional standards (depending on the site) as directed by Knowsley Council via The Knowsley Parks Trust. This would be funded from a proportion of the return on the endowment’s investment (circa £1.3 million total per annum) given this is the approximate level of funding that currently maintains 100% of parks and green spaces. The proportion required to cover such costs will decline in value over 15 years as these sites are developed and so no longer require such maintenance.

Whilst the endowment is the proposed mainstay of The Knowsley Parks Trust it is also very important that other funding / income generation opportunities are fully explored which will also contribute to, with varying scale and longevity, the funding of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. These include:

- Traded services with the ability to generate profit (for the public good) including those provided through cemeteries and ecosystem services, and concessions, events and activities (as examples).
- Utilising the income generation opportunities offered by the current regeneration project at Bowring Park and the opportunities for developing a new future at Court Hey Park.
- Engaging with Knowsley businesses to secure much more Corporate Social Responsibility investment (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility Bonds) in the parks and green spaces in proximity to their premises and employees homes and for the wider benefit of the borough.
- Identify and secure external grant funding opportunities to support both revenue and capital infrastructure works.
- Providing further encouragement and support to encouraging philanthropic giving, community volunteering, third sector and asset transfers where a sustainable business case can be demonstrated.

Translating this Preferred Way Forward into a deliverable solution will be complex and require detailed business case development to understand its viability. Such analysis is beyond the Review Board’s scope of work / terms of reference and therefore upon receipt of this Report Knowsley Council will need to take the necessary steps, should it approve the Board’s conclusions and recommendations, to quickly mobilise such work. The Review Board would be happy to reconvene at any stage during this detailed business case to consider any issues arising from it.

Feedback from the Review Board in identifying their Preferred Way Forward:

- The Board’s analysis of the 3.5% return on endowment investment and the sale of 10% of parks were based on the information presented to them by the Board’s support officers and expert witnesses; and
- Further much more detailed work needs to be completed before any formal decision can be made to proceed on this basis - this is an important caveat to the Board’s recommendation in this regard.

The Review Board’s Identified Preferred Way Forward - The Review Board’s Conclusions

- The adoption of this Preferred Way Forward offers the opportunity for continuation of employment for appropriate staff at Knowsley Council who currently develop, manage and maintain parks and green spaces. It also should offer the opportunity to create new job roles within The Knowsley Parks Trust and its Trading Subsidiary where new skills and experience is required and the organisational professional services of Knowsley Council is no longer available. It is highly likely that jobs will be lost if the Preferred Way Forward is not progressed as Knowsley Council has no funding after April 2019 for these services, which includes funding the posts that deliver them.

The Review Board’s Proposed Strategic Criteria for Selection of Parks and Green Spaces for Sale

Given the Review Board’s identified Preferred Way Forward requires the sale of perhaps up to 10% of the current land area of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces the Board felt it important to identify the strategic criteria that Knowsley Council should consider using to select such sites if it approves the Board’s proposals. Evidently placing value on the benefits that a certain park or green space provides is very subjective with the description of the criteria and the emphasis placed on them expected to be a matter of great debate between all stakeholders, especially if the Board’s proposals are approved. Therefore given this anticipated interest the Board has given high-level consideration to the type of criteria that could be applied to selecting sites for sale, or indeed retention within a Knowsley Parks Trust, so as to demonstrate to Knowsley Council that it has looked at this very critical matter and in doing so have demonstrated that such criteria can be developed. The outcomes of the Board’s work in this regard are explained below, which must be seen as outline suggestions that Knowsley Council will need to refine if it decides to takes this proposal forward.

Therefore at its meeting on 20 July 2017 the Review Board considered the appropriateness of a number of strategic criteria that could be applied to the identification of parks and green spaces for sale for alternative use on a phased basis perhaps over 15 years; importantly noting that these could be applied to whole or parts of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

Green Infrastructure Value Criteria

a. Not in an area defined as Green Belt Land in Knowsley’s Local Plan
b. Its importance in terms of the continuity and coherence of Knowsley’s park network i.e. parks and green spaces that complement the network of such sites across the Borough

c. Parks and green spaces that provide sustainable travel routes
d. Parks and green spaces that provide green corridors for wildlife migration
e. Its biodiversity value in terms of absence of habitats or species of importance and a low relative contribution to the overall biodiversity network
f. Whether it has any specific technical functional use - e.g. as an area for flood control/water management or noise attenuation

Community Value Criteria

a. Its recreational value in terms of its use for sport and formal leisure use
b. Its value in terms of informal leisure use, e.g. walking, quiet contemplation
c. Its historical value or other cultural significance
d. Its value as a piece of landscape and for its visual amenity
e. Maintaining the benefits of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as identified in Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy i.e. • Encouraging health and wellbeing • Providing social value • Contributing to economic growth and marketing the borough; • Learning in the natural environment • Addressing crime and anti-social behaviour • Mitigating the impacts of climate change and helping communities adapt to its impacts
### Development / Financial Value Criteria

- Ability to be used for alternative use
- Interest from developers
- The sensitivity of the site to any change of use e.g. its proximity to residences or its prominence
- Its value in terms of its productivity e.g. biomass / grazing

The outcomes of the Review Board’s assessment of these criteria is shown in Table 23, with the results of this being that it identified that parks and green spaces that demonstrate the following criteria should be looked at for sale for alternative use.

### Table 23
Proposed criteria to be used in identifying parks and green space areas for sale for alternative use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed criteria</th>
<th>Review board member preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would strongly oppose the use of this criteria</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed criteria</th>
<th>Review board member preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would strongly oppose the use of this criteria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green infrastructure value criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Selecting sites that are not in an area that is defined as Green Belt land within Knowsley’s Local Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Selecting sites that do not form part of a park network (e.g. green corridors that link sites together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Selecting sites that contain sustainable travel routes (e.g. cycleways)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Selecting sites that provide green corridors for wildlife migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Selecting sites with limited biodiversity/wildlife value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Selecting sites that have a specific technical use (e.g. SuD systems to drain water)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on page 170

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community value criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g. Selecting sites that have limited recreational value in terms of its use for sports and formal leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Selecting sites that have limited community use in terms of informal leisure use (e.g. walking, relaxation, play)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Selecting sites that have little or no historical value or cultural significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Selecting sites in areas that already have parks and green spaces in close proximity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Selecting sites that provide positive landscape/visual amenity value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Parks and green spaces that maintain the benefits of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces as identified in Knowsley’s Green Space Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development/Financial value criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. Selecting sites that could have an alternative use (e.g. not for public use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Parks and green spaces that could be of interest to developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. Selecting sites that would offer a high financial contribution to the endowment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. Selecting sites that are currently overlooked by or in close proximity to residential properties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on page 170
Feedback from the Review Board on Selection Criteria for Selection of Parks and Green Spaces for Sale:

a. This is a very high level review of the criteria that could be used - Knowsley Council will consider the Board's recommendations in respect to these and develop them as necessary.

b. The impact on local communities if 10% of parks and green space land is developed for new housing - this would be managed through the Council's approval of a master plan for the development e.g. the Halsnead Development.

c. Any large development may require the provision of additional green space (funded by the developer) but would not be required to be maintained at the expense of the Council, rather it would be funded through ground rent or service charge paid by the homeowner - a service that the Trust could perform but this would need to be explored at the point of design of any new such green space.

Proposed Strategic Criteria for Selection of Parks and Green Spaces for Sale - The Review Board's Conclusions

Results for Community Value Criteria

- 100% of the review board members voting for criteria (g) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that have limited recreational value in terms of its use for sports and formal leisure
- 87% of the review board members voting for criteria (h) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that have limited community use in terms of informal leisure use (e.g. walking, relaxation, play)
- 81% of the review board members voting for criteria (i) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that have little or no historical value or cultural significance
- 100% of the review board members voting for criteria (j) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites in areas that already have parks and green spaces in close proximity
- 86% of the review board members voting for criteria (k) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that contain sustainable travel routes (e.g. cycleways)
- 100% of the review board members voting for criteria (l) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that are currently overlooked by / or in close proximity to residential properties

Results for Green Infrastructure Value Criteria

- 87% of the review board members voting for criteria (a) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that are not in an area that is defined as Green Belt land within Knowsley's Local Plan
- 85% of the review board members voting for criteria (b) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that do not form part of a Park Network (e.g. green corridors that link sites together)
- 67% of the review board members voting for criteria (e) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites with limited biodiversity / wildlife value
- 93% of the review board members voting for criteria (f) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that have specific technical use (e.g. SuD systems to drain water)
- 93% of the review board members voting for criteria (b) were not in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that contain sustainable travel routes (e.g. cycleways)

Results for Community Value Criteria

- 50% of the review board members voting for criteria (m) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that could have an alternative use (e.g. not for public use)
- 85% of the review board members voting for criteria (n) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting parks and green spaces that could be of interest to developers
- 87% of the review board members voting for criteria (o) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that would offer a high financial contribution to the endowment

Proposed Strategic Criteria for Selection of Parks and Green Spaces for Sale - The Review Board's Conclusions

Results for Green Infrastructure Value Criteria

- 87% of the review board members voting for criteria (a) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that are not in an area that is defined as Green Belt land within Knowsley's Local Plan
- 85% of the review board members voting for criteria (b) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that do not form part of a Park Network (e.g. green corridors that link sites together)
- 67% of the review board members voting for criteria (e) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites with limited biodiversity / wildlife value
- 93% of the review board members voting for criteria (f) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that have specific technical use (e.g. SuD systems to drain water)
- 93% of the review board members voting for criteria (b) were not in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that contain sustainable travel routes (e.g. cycleways)
- 100% of the review board members voting for criteria (b) were in favour of this criteria i.e. selecting sites that provide green corridors for wildlife migration
Methodology

As explained in this Report the Review Board have followed their Terms of Reference, and associated remit set by Knowsley Council, and have documented a range of findings, conclusions and recommendations as a result of its strategic overview of the issues and the information presented by expert witnesses and the Board’s Support Officers. Whilst the review has been conducted at a strategic level which has been the appropriate approach for the Review Board the research it has undertaken has been robust and comprehensive, this has given confidence to the Board that its outputs for Knowsley Council to review are well founded and legitimate.

However, before making a submission to Knowsley Council the Review Board has recognised and has placed great importance on testing its Preferred Way Forward with those who live, work or do business in Knowsley. Such engagement cannot practically be based on providing the level of information and options that the Review Board have dedicated their time and energy in investigating but must be founded on providing key facts about the current challenge facing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces and clearly articulating the choice that needs to be made so that people can readily assess the issues and provide their feedback.

The Board felt it essential that their consultation should take place in an open and honest manner so that people know that the challenge being faced over the future funding of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces is being taken seriously and that their views count.

On this basis the Review Board agreed that it needed to develop an effective means of consulting with all stakeholders on its Preferred Way Forward: a. Proposals for establishing an independent Knowsley Parks Trust with a Knowsley Parks Services Ltd trading subsidiary, which may partner with other bodies in order to deliver improved outcomes of value for money.

b. The endowment being the key mechanism for addressing the funding mechanism for addressing the funding challenge facing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

c. The endowment is created through the phased sale of up to 10% of parks and green spaces over 15 years from April 2019.

d. That whilst the Board acknowledged it is not being asked to identify potential sites for sale to fund the endowment, the Board felt it was important to identify the strategic criteria that could be used for such selection.

The specialist market research charity Centre for Social Innovation which is part of Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) agreed to support the Review Board in undertaking a consultation exercise to secure the public’s feedback on the Board’s proposed solution. Securing such expertise reflected the great importance that the Review Board has placed on this particular part of their work plan and KBT have demonstrable extensive experience of delivering market research and also of the parks sector. As such Lizzie Kenyon and Rose Tehan from Keep Britain Tidy attended the Board’s meeting on 20 July 2017 and explained that market research is an essential tool to support effective decision making and can take the form of statistical data (quantitative research) and the comments made by people asked about the particular subject (qualitative research). In particular KBT advised the Board on:

a. The value of high-quality and independent research that captures people’s comments / views and provides statistical data.

b. The approach that could be applied to engaging the public over the Board’s proposals so that it is statistically sound and representative of the views of the population of Knowsley.

c. The questions that could be posed to secure people’s views without the presented information leading them to a particular viewpoint.

d. The need to ensure that such market research / consultation is robust and so able to defend its findings against any potential challenge i.e. complying with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

Reviewing feedback from Knowsley residents and other stakeholders.
Having considered KBT’s advice the Board agreed the following strategy for undertaking the market research and agreed the following three primary activities:

a. **Market Research**

   Independent market research via Keep Britain Tidy during August that provides statistical robust data and captures residents’ views in a manner that is representative of the population of Knowsley (via focus groups and telephone surveys).

b. **Awareness Raising**

   Promoting the open public consultation through an extensive media campaign during September so as to trigger debate about the value of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, the consequences of not adopting a new way of funding and managing these unique public assets and to encourage people to participate in the consultation - at this time the Review Board’s preferred way forward will be published.

c. **Open Public Consultation**

   Allowing all those who live, work or do business in Knowsley who wish to express their views the opportunity to take part in the consultation during September via an on-line survey (with hard copies or telephone surveys available if required).

The Review Board concluded, given their role over the last eight months in reviewing potential solution, that really there are only two realistic options to be presented to the people of Knowsley in the consultation:

**Option 1: Knowsley Council continues to manage Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, but without a budget for maintenance and management.**

Under this option, Knowsley Council would continue to manage the parks and green spaces in Knowsley, but without the circa £1.3 million annual funding from April 2019, and would involve the following:

- The Council would seek to generate income from other activities, such as park events and other services, to meet the costs for the management of as many parks as possible;
- A selection of parks and green spaces would be left unmanaged;
- The quality of the unfunded parks and green spaces will deteriorate;
- Parks and green spaces may close; and
- The Council would remain in charge of the parks and green spaces.

**Option 2 (The Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward): Knowsley Council transfers responsibility for maintenance and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to a Charitable Trust, funded by the sale of 10% of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.**

Under this option, a Charitable Trust would take over the maintenance and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, and would involve the following:

- Over 15 years, Knowsley Council would sell 10%, the equivalent of 82 football pitches, of parks and green spaces across Knowsley - for example, for housing and commercial uses. This money would be used to create £40 million (+/- 10%) funding pot;
- Responsibility for Knowsley’s parks would be handed over to a Charitable Trust along with the £40 million (+/- 10%) funding pot;
- The Charitable Trust would invest the funding pot to raise the circa £1.3 million per year required to pay for the maintenance and management of Knowsley’s Parks;
- The Charitable Trust would be allowed to generate income from other activities, such as park events and other services; and
- The Charitable Trust would not be allowed to ever sell the remaining 90% of parks and green spaces.

Table 24 opposite provides information on the Review Board’s Public Consultation / Market Research Strategy.

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**Table 24**

**Market Research and Open Public Consultation Methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity and purpose</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workstream 1:</strong> Awareness Raising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this awareness raising will be to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Promote the key issues of the public consultation and to trigger debate about the value of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, the possible solutions and consequences of not adopting a new way of funding and managing these public assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Ensure that the issues are well-publicised across Knowsley and that interested parties know how to access further information and the on-line survey (telephone survey if they prefer) via the Council’s web-site - see Workstream C below)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - General Introduction to support workstream 2 i.e. controlled research that does not identify the Board’s preferred way forward to the research participant</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Information from the Chair on the purpose and work of the Board and an explanation of how the Board will be undertaking its public consultation during August and September. This will include:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Email to Knowsley Council elected members and Parish and town council elected members</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maximising existing media outlets - Knowsley Council website (with information about the Board’s work to date but no reference to the preferred way forward) and using Knowsley Council and partner existing social media platforms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Note - no information about individual Board members will be provided apart from the name of the Chair</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Frequently asked questions and answers to be prepared</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2 - Wider Consultation to encourage everyone to have their say in support of workstream 3 i.e. the non-controlled research where the participants are informed of the Board preferred way forward when they take part (during September 2017)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. New message from the Chair of the Review Board to all Knowsley Council plus Parish and town council elected members and Town Clerks - outlining the Board’s preferred way forward and the reasons why it has come to this conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Design, format, content and branding of the awareness raising media</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Outdoor media campaign (e.g. posters on council vehicles, bin stickers etc to promote the consultation)</td>
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<td>d. Media release aimed at local and specialist press (e.g. Knowsley Challenge, Echo, Bay TV etc)</td>
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<td>e. Community messaging</td>
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Continued on page 178
**Workstream 2: Controlled Market Research**

This workstream is designed to provide high-quality and independent research that both provides statistical data (qualitative information) and captures people’s views/ comments too (qualitative information).

It needs to be conducted so that its results are statistically sound and representative of the views of the population of Knowsley so that if necessary the approach and findings can be defended against potential challenge i.e. demonstrable compliance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

- **a.** Convening eight focus groups (each lasting one hour) of ten people per group (drawn from a representative sample of the general public, young people, local businesses and friends of parks groups) to secure their views and to test the questions posed in the online survey before it goes live (please see below). The focus groups would be facilitated by a Market Research Advisor (to be appointed by Knowsley Council on behalf of the Board) with no involvement from the Review Board or the Council being required, as such a presence could influence the group conversation;
- **b.** To develop the Have your say on the future of Knowsley parks survey into an on-line survey for residents and other stakeholders to participate in, with a minimum number of responses of 1,100 needing to be secured for the research to secure a statistically significant result (facilitated by the Market Research Advisor);
- **c.** A telephone survey for any members of the public who would wish to engage in this way (facilitated by the Market Research Advisor);
- **d.** Those participating in the focus groups and the on-line survey would be recruited by the Market Research Advisor to ensure the respondent numbers and demographics are statistically robust and representative of Knowsley.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity and purpose</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. Social media updates (set up a new Parks Review Board Twitter / Facebook page as well as promoting via Knowsley Council and partners social media)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Internal Council updates</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Knowsley News</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Posters in public buildings, including schools and GP surgeries, Whiston Hospital etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Board-branded material e.g. JC Decaux poster</td>
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<tr>
<td>k. Council One Stop Shop plasma screens</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>l. Council web-site / partners websites</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m. Knowsley Chamber of Commerce (including TEN)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. KHF / Villages - newsletters and forums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o. KCVS networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>p. School engagement (e.g. school debates, school newsletters and websites)</td>
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<tr>
<td>q. Public meetings to take place during September arranged by Board members to discuss the Board’s preferred way forward with the community - Board members to confirm dates and locations for public meetings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Workstream 3: Public Consultation (i.e. the non-controlled Market Research)**

This workstream allows all members of the public (i.e. those members of the public not recruited to participate in Workstream B) to express their views and for these to be assessed and reported on as part of the consultation / market research exercise.

- **a.** An online survey (the same as the one being used in Workstream B) for residents and other stakeholders to participate in who volunteer to take part in the consultation as a result of Workstream 1 part 2;
- **b.** Meetings between the Chair of the Review Board and the following stakeholder forums during September 2017:
  - Representation from the Knowsley’s parks and green spaces Friends Of groups
  - Representation from the Knowsley Parish and town councils
  - Representation from Knowsley’s businesses
  - Representation from the wider voluntary and social sector
  - Also see public meetings as highlighted in Workstream 1 awareness raising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity and purpose</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. <strong>Continued on page 179</strong></td>
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</table>
The outcomes of the Review Board’s Market Research (August 2017)

At the Review meeting on 5 October 2017 the Board reviewed the findings of its Market Research. Lizzie Kenyon and Rose Tehan from Keep Britain Tidy attended the meeting to support the Board in doing this by providing expert advice on the methods by which this part of the Board’s review had been conducted and the results it had secured.

The aim of this research was to identify and understand the views of the Knowsley community with regards to the future funding and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. The research objectives were to:

- Conduct a series of focus groups with the general public and with specific stakeholder groups to gain an in-depth understanding of perceptions, key issues and concerns regarding the funding and management of Knowsley’s parks from different perspectives; and
- Conduct a survey with a statistically representative sample of the Knowsley population to ensure that the feedback and views collected were representative of the Knowsley community.

This research involved seven focus group sessions with 63 participants, followed by a telephone and face to face survey with 1,100 Knowsley residents. The Market Research Report prepared by the Centre for Social Innovation Keep Britain Tidy can be found at Appendix O.

Focus Groups

The aim of the focus group sessions was to gain an in-depth understanding of perceptions, issues and concerns with regards to the future funding and management of Knowsley’s parks. An additional aim of the general public focus group sessions was to pilot and gather feedback on the questionnaire used in the telephone survey (and subsequent open public consultation) to ensure that the questions and issues presented were well understood by respondents - which they were. Focus Groups were delivered with the following stakeholder groups:

- Two Focus Groups recruited from the General Public;
- One Focus Group with Parents of Young Children;
- One Focus Group with Teenagers;
- Two Focus Groups with Friends of Park Groups; and
- One Focus Group with Over 65s in age.

Telephone and Face-to-Face Survey

Following the general public focus group sessions, a telephone survey was conducted with 1,100 residents across Knowsley. The survey was designed by Keep Britain Tidy following the input of the Review Board at its meeting on 20 July 2017 and drew on feedback from the Focus Group sessions.

The sample of 1,100 respondents was calculated based on the Office of National Statistics mid-2016 population estimate for Knowsley (147,915) using a confidence interval of three and a confidence level of 95%. This means that the sample size is large enough to ensure a statistically significant representation of the full population of Knowsley and that the Review Board can be 95% confident that if it were to survey all Knowsley residents, the results would fall within a margin of +/-3% of the results of this market research.

Results and Findings - Value of parks to the Knowsley community

Regardless of whether they are able to visit parks frequently, Knowsley residents clearly value the parks and green spaces of Knowsley. Overall, 90% of respondents said that Knowsley’s parks and green spaces are important to them personally, while 96% said that they were important for making Knowsley an attractive place to live, work and/or visit. Respondents indicated that Knowsley’s parks provide a range of benefits that they personally feel are important, in particular, a ‘place to be outdoors (e.g. for fresh air, health, to experience wildlife and nature). These results are presented in Figure 32 below.

Figure 32
The importance of Knowsley's parks and green spaces in providing benefits to residents

As a place to play and exercise (e.g. on play equipment with children, or via informal sports)
Proportion of respondents: ‘Somewhat important’ + ‘Very important’

As a place to be outdoors (e.g. for fresh air, health, to experience wildlife and nature)

As a place to socialise with friends, family and others

As a place to relax and get some peace and quiet

As a place to take part in organised events, team and/or other activities

70% 75% 80% 85% 90% 95% 93% 87% 84% 83% 79%
Key Issues Raised - Value of parks to the Knowsley community

It is important to note that Knowsley’s parks and green spaces were highly valued by those who are not able to visit them for various reasons, such as a lack of time or a disability. These respondents mentioned ‘being able to look at them’ or ‘greenery’, ‘just knowing that they’re there’ and ‘an asset to the community’ as key reasons for valuing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. The importance of parks for children was frequently mentioned by focus group respondents, for example:

“Parks are needed because there’s concrete everywhere. Kids’ activities are expensive. Not everyone has transport, so accessibility is key. People need to be able to walk there. It is so important for children to use parks.”

(General public focus group respondents)

Other benefits of parks and green spaces to Knowsley specifically mentioned by participants included that they:
• Make Knowsley a more desirable place to live and be;
• Provide a space for socialising;
• Provide a place to exercise and play sports;
• Provide a place to get fresh air and peace; and
• Provide a place to visit and play in, particularly for those who cannot afford holidays elsewhere.

“I like to go there to hang out with friends, play footie, talk and hang out.”

(Teenagers focus group respondents)

The health and wellbeing benefits of Knowsley’s parks were frequently mentioned by participants, with many feeling that this had broader benefits for healthcare and social services, and well and healthy people were less likely to require these.

“Everybody would be affected if they were to close.”

(General public focus group respondents)

“Mental health and wellbeing - parks are key for that. Just seeing parks is enough [to benefit the community].”

(‘Friends of’ focus group respondents)

Results and Findings - The Preferred Option

On the basis that the Review Board wished to test the opinion of the public on its identified Preferred Way Forward (following the Board’s analysis of those available and their suitability for application in Knowsley - as described in the preceding section of this Report) the research participants were provided with the following information about two options for the future funding and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

Option 1
Knowsley Council continues to manage Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, but without a budget for maintenance and management.

Under this option, Knowsley Council would continue to manage the parks and green spaces in Knowsley, but without the circa £1.3 million annual funding from April 2019, and would involve the following:
• The Council would seek to generate income from other activities, such as park events and other services, to meet the costs for the management of as many parks as possible;
• A selection of parks and green spaces would be left unmanaged;
• The quality of the unfunded parks and green spaces will deteriorate;
• Parks and green spaces may close; and
• The Council would remain in charge of the parks and green spaces.

Option 2
Knowsley Council transfers responsibility for maintenance and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to a Charitable Trust, funded by the sale of 10% of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

Under this option, a Charitable Trust would take over the maintenance and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, and would involve the following:
• Over 15 years, Knowsley Council would sell 10%, the equivalent of 82 football pitches, of parks and green spaces across Knowsley - for example, for housing and commercial uses. This money would be used to create £40 million (+/- 10%) funding pot;
• Responsibility for Knowsley’s parks would be handed over to a Charitable Trust along with the £40 million (+/- 10%) funding pot;
• The Charitable Trust would invest the funding pot to raise the circa £1.3 million per year required to pay for the maintenance and management of Knowsley’s Parks;
• The Charitable Trust would be allowed to generate income from other activities, such as park events and other services; and
• The Charitable Trust would not be allowed to ever sell the remaining 90% of parks and green spaces and would be required to maintain them to a good standard.

Respondents were then asked to choose which of the two options they felt was best for Knowsley.

Overall, the results show that Option 2 is the preferred option for residents of Knowsley, with 60% of respondents choosing this. It should be noted that respondents were not explicitly given the option of choosing ‘Do not know’ as their response to this question, however as shown, a small proportion (8%) elected to provide this as their answer anyway. These results are shown in Figure 33 on page 184.
This result broadly reflects the findings of the general public and stakeholder specific focus groups. Overall, 44 of the 63 focus group participants chose Option 2, while 12 chose Option 1. Notably, the majority of 'Friends of' focus group participants preferred Option 1, whereas Option 2 was preferred across all other groups.

This information is presented in Table 25 above. While Option 2 was the preferred option across all Knowsley postcode areas, this was significantly less so in the L33 (East Kirkby/Simonswood) and L34 (Prescot/Knowsley) postcode areas. This is shown in Figure 34 below.

Table 25
The preferred option of focus group participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/guardians</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Friends of' groups</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents in older age groups were more likely to choose Option 1 than those younger age groups, however even amongst these age groups, Option 2 was the more popular option as shown in Figure 35 above.

The research found no clear trends to suggest that people who visit parks in Knowsley more or less frequently than others are more likely to prefer either Option 1 or Option 2 as shown in Figure 36 below.
Respondents who lived the furthest from their nearest local park (more than 30 minutes’ walk) were significantly more likely to choose Option 1 as their preferred option as shown in Figure 37 above. It is possible that these respondents perceived there to be a lack of accessible parks and green spaces in Knowsley compared to other respondents, and felt concern about the proposed sale of 10% of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces under Option 2.

Key Issues Raised - The Preferred Option

Feedback on Option 1

The focus group participants generally felt that Option 1 would lead to a greater loss of parks and green spaces across the Borough, as these would be left unmanaged and would deteriorate. Participants felt that this would lead to broader social and environmental impacts, and ultimately cost the Council and local communities more.

“...it would be an eyesore, a neglected park would cost councils more in the future because of fly tipping, littering, and dumping in unmanaged areas. It is going to look a mess, it could cause more anti-social behaviour. It is in the Council’s best interest [to hand management over to the Charitable Trust].”

(General public focus group participant)

However, a number of participants felt that the current funding situation would not necessarily last forever, and that a future (central or local) government may decide to prioritise funding for parks. Under this scenario, parks that had fallen into disrepair due to a lack of funding under Option 1, but which had remained in Council ownership, could always be rejuvenated, whereas the 10% of parks and green spaces sold under Option 2 would be “lost forever”. These participants felt that while it could not be guaranteed that parks would not be sold under Option 1, there was at least a chance that this would not occur, particularly if the public was able to pressurise government towards funding parks.

“Some of them would close under Option 1. The benefits [of Option 1] are that it is the Council and they’re elected. Once it is gone, it is gone, though Option 1 still doesn’t stop the Council from selling land to build on.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group participants)

Feedback on Option 2

Overall, Option 2 was seen as the better of the two options by most focus group participants, as it was perceived to provide more certainty and was considered “the lesser of two evils”. Across all focus groups except for the ‘Friends of’ groups, participants expressed confidence that the funding and management arrangements proposed under Option 2 would lead to a more sustainable future for Knowsley’s parks. Despite this, many felt concerned about the sale of 10% of parks and green spaces and how these areas would be selected, and there were mixed feelings about the Charitable Trust taking over management of the parks.

“Option 2 means [the parks] would be protected and would guarantee that they will be there for everyone to use, the hard bit would be deciding which 10% to sell. Which park it affects is a worry too.”

(General public focus group participant)

“A Board of Trustees would manage it, there would be more direct management, more responsibility and the 90% is protected.”

(General public focus group participant)

“It makes the best of a bad situation. It is bad, but there are alternative ways of raising funds - the community could help in funding the park.”

(Over 65s focus group participant)

“I’d feel more confident if it was in the hands of a Charitable Trust than the Council.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group participant)

“Option 2 is the lesser of two evils.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group participant)
Regardless of whether they preferred Option 1 or Option 2, participants in all of the focus group sessions raised questions and expressed concern about the proposal of having a Charitable Trust take over management of Knowsley’s parks, though this was particularly the case amongst ‘Friends of’ focus group participants. A number of participants said that although they were not completely satisfied with the current maintenance of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, they at least knew Knowsley Council (i.e. they felt that they understood its role, management and operations as an organisation), whereas a charitable trust presented an unknown entity - ‘better the devil you know’ was frequently mentioned. The key issues and concerns raised by participants were:

- That a Charitable Trust would not manage the funds and parks in its care effectively;
- That the people responsible for managing the Charitable Trust would not have the required experience and expertise to manage it effectively;
- That the Charitable Trust could close down if it is not successful, meaning that the remaining 90% of parks would be at risk;
- A lack of information about who would manage the Charitable Trust and its accountability; and
- That the Charitable Trust would not make enough money from investing the £40 million (+/- 10%) endowment fund and additional activities to raise the circa £1.3 million required to manage and maintain the parks.

“There isn’t enough information about the Charitable Trust - who are the charity? Seems too uncertain, we’re better sticking with the Council”.

“There needs to be more information about the meaning of charitable trust - who are they and what do they look like, how they work, would the public choose it, what is the process, how does it affect us, why should we have confidence in who the charitable trust is?”

(General public focus group)

Focus group participants generally wanted more information and reassurance around how 10% of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces would be selected for sale under Option 2 and the benchmarking that would be used for this. Many questioned what 10% of the land actually meant - for example, would the number of individual parks/green spaces, the area or the total monetary value of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. A number also expressed concern that Knowsley Council would start to select the 10% in 2019 and use the time between now and then to sell off ‘as many parks as possible’.

The loss of 10% of parks and green spaces was a major concern for the ‘Friends of’ focus group participants, who felt that Knowsley had already lost large areas of green space to development, and that this was contributing to social and economic pressures to the area, for example by overloading local infrastructure and services. These respondents also felt that the sale of 10% of land could set a precedent for further sales, and they had little faith that the remaining 90% of parks and green spaces would remain protected in perpetuity, as proposed under Option 2.

“The Council are already selling land, and there’s another 10% - when the money runs out, will there be another 10%? It is a bit open ended, and what if it is mismanaged.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group respondents)

Conversely, a large number of respondents felt that selling 10% of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces would not have a significant impact overall.

“If you look at a map at how much green space there is, it is massive. You can be in a city and never see a tree, but five miles out you can see countryside.”

(General public focus group)

“They work, would the public choose it, what is the process, how does it affect us, why should we have confidence in who the charitable trust is?”

(General public focus group respondents)

It is only 10% in the grand scheme of things, it is not a lot is it. People are scared of change, but if there were guarantees put in place and if the public was consulted on which park should and shouldn’t go... [then it would be okay].”

(General public focus group respondents)

“10% isn’t that much really. It might be parts of many parks. Social care is a priority, you’d prefer your family to be looked after.”

(Over 65s focus group respondents)

“I wouldn’t mind a small bit, when it is a huge park - we have to be realistic.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group respondent)

A number of focus group participants felt that they hadn’t been provided with enough information about how the two options were shortlisted by the Board, and wanted to be able to view and have input on other options available for funding and managing Knowsley’s parks. The ‘Friends of’ focus group participants in particular had very little faith that the Board had conducted adequate research to explore the full breadth of alternative options for future funding and management, and felt that the Board was leading them ‘down a path’ by only offering two options. Many questioned whether the Board had looked to other areas experiencing similar issues to see what it could learn and felt that this was an important part of fully assessing the alternative arrangements available.
“Not enough information has been given. We want to know more about the Trust in Option 2 as investment can be a gamble and the Council need to show that the money is being well spent in the area.”
(General public focus group respondents)

“Is this happening somewhere else? Would be interesting to see if it is worked elsewhere and how it has worked.”
(Parents/guardians of young children focus group respondent)

**Results and Findings - Exploring other Funding Sources**

Respondents were provided with a list of funding sources that could be used to generate funding for maintaining Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. Such funding would not be sufficient enough to provide a third funding and management option for managing and maintaining Knowsley’s parks, but could be used under either Option 1 or Option 2 to provide some additional income for the parks. The results are provided in Figure 38 below.

**Key Issues Raised - Exploring other Funding Sources**

**Seeking funding or sponsorship from corporate organisations and local businesses**
The focus group participants had mixed feelings about seeking funding via corporate organisations and businesses. Many felt sceptical that corporates would be willing to fund parks in Knowsley, but saw potential in gaining smaller donations (for example, via community grants schemes offered by local branches of corporate businesses) or through sponsorship deals. Several mentioned the potential for gaining income through local businesses advertising and sponsorship in parks.

**“Local businesses do not really want to know, if they were recognised then maybe would be involved. Local businesses couldn’t afford it. Partnerships with corporates may work.”**
(Parents/guardians of young children focus group participant)

**Applying for grants funding (e.g. grants from charitable foundations)**
The focus group participants generally saw this as a positive and viable option, and one participant (teenagers focus group) highlighted that large grants (for example, from lottery funding) could have the added benefit of promoting Knowsley’s parks and green spaces to communities within and outside Knowsley, potentially attracting more visitors to the area.

**Seeking to secure regular donations, sponsorship and annual subscriptions**
The focus group participants did not see this as a viable option for Knowsley and felt that it could potentially detram a some people from using the parks.

**“It wouldn’t work in Knowsley.”**
(‘Friends of’ group focus group participant)

**Renting out buildings / spaces within parks for private uses**
This was seen as a positive option for parks and local communities by focus group participants, however most felt that without additional investment (for example, for new buildings or other infrastructure), the amount of money raised would be limited.

**“More housing near a park means more people using it. It could be a community café, it would make people value the park more, more people value the area around them.”**
(Teenagers focus group participants)

**Exploring renewable energy schemes in parks (e.g. wind turbines / solar farms etc.)**
While focus group participants were open to the idea of having renewable energy infrastructure in Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, they were cautious about whether monetary returns would make the investment and loss of green space worthwhile.
Ecosystem services (e.g. secure income from selling timber / using green spaces for private grazing)
Focus group participants generally did not see this as a practical or viable option. While some respondents were open to the idea of selling timber through sustainable woodland management, leasing land for grazing was not considered an option for Knowsley at all.

“It is a bad, bad idea. How many trees do you have to cut down?”
(General public focus group participants)

“Leasing land for grazing - that’s not an idea, it is impracticable.”
(Over 65s focus group participants)

Charging for activities and events in parks
Charging for events and activities in parks prompted the most positive response amongst focus group participants, many of whom felt that if done well, this was an exciting and viable option for Knowsley’s parks. Some participants felt that events and activities would attract greater visitor numbers to the parks, and greater appreciation of them. Participants in the ‘Friends of’ group who had experience in running local events in their parks felt that running profitable events was difficult, and suggested large events as a more viable source of income.

“Put on good quality fun days in parks. Festival, concerts - people will pay money to attend events.”
(General public focus group participants)

Charge for car parking
There were mixed responses amongst focus group participants about charging for car parking in parks. Many mentioned that the parks and green spaces in Knowsley do not tend to have car parks in them, meaning that these might need to be built. Others were concerned that charge for parking would push people to park in nearby residential streets, where a limited number of parking spaces is already an issue. Nonetheless, it was considered a practical viable option where appropriate (e.g. in existing car parks) and a means for generating small amounts of income.

“If you have to pay it will make people respect it more, it may put people off going, but it will not put me off. People can just park and walk - they have an option still.”
(Over 65s focus group participant)

Charge for entry into parks
Charging for entry in parks was seen as the most undesirable and impractical funding option by all focus group participants. Participants felt that entrance fees would discourage people from using them, with significant social impacts across local communities.

“Not good for people who cannot afford it. Charging 20p for toilets might be okay, but what if you have five kids. Not good for families who cannot afford it.”
(Parents/guardians of young children focus group respondent)

Raising the Council Tax
This was the most popular alternative funding source suggested by telephone survey respondents and focus group participants. Participants said that they would gladly pay a small amount more in Council Tax each year if it meant more money for managing and maintaining Knowsley’s parks and green spaces. For the focus group respondents, it was particularly important that such charges be itemised separately on their Council Tax bill so that they could see how the money was being spent, at that money raised be ‘ring-fenced’ specifically for the purposes of managing and maintaining Knowsley’s parks and green spaces.

“I would add £10 today to save parks, I would. They should give that option on the Council Tax breakdown.”
(Parents/guardians of young children focus group respondents)

“They could put the Council Tax up to bring in the circa £1.3 million. People may not like it - it would be interesting to see how much it would need to go up by. If they did put the Council Tax up, they would need to give a breakdown, show it on the bill, clarify the % of your tax that goes to parks. It has to be guaranteed that it goes towards parks. People wouldn’t choose to put tax up.”
(Over 65s focus group respondent)

Having the parks and green spaces managed by volunteers
A number of focus group participants and a large proportion of telephone survey respondents suggested that local volunteers could take over the management and maintenance of parks in Knowsley (when compared to other comments made). There was a sense that local communities would ‘rally’ around their local park to keep it open and in good condition. The ‘Friends of’ group participants had mixed responses to this suggestion. Many felt that they could manage and maintain their park themselves without funding from Knowsley Council, and expected that they would be able to raise the funding required for managing their park through events and other fundraising activities. However it was clear that such volunteer groups often need practical support which they currently receive from Knowsley Council, for example by providing insurance and assistance with writing grant bids. Moreover, new insurance arrangements would need to be in place in order for community volunteers to use power tools and other equipment, which they cannot use under existing insurance arrangements. Finally, some ‘Friends of’ group and teenagers group participants felt sceptical towards the extent to which local communities would take on maintenance responsibilities and how this would be sustained.

“People say there’s rubbish everywhere, but they will not clean it up. People say the grass is long, but they will not bring their lawnmower.”
(Teenagers focus group participants)
“We couldn’t manage it alone, we need support from the Council. It is difficult when you have older members, though running events for kids helps [to get them involved in volunteering]. Kids are important as they’re our future.”

“It is difficult to get people involved as a whole, people do not want to help up and want to go their own way.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group participants)

Results and Findings - Criteria for prioritising parks and green spaces

Respondents were provided with a list criteria themes that could be used to select parks and green spaces if they have to close or be sold, and asked to rate each on a scale of zero (not at all important) to ten (extremely important) according to how important they felt it was that the theme be taken into consideration when selecting the parks. For example, under the ‘recreation features’ theme, criteria would be used to ensure that parks with more and better recreational features were prioritised over those with limited or poor recreational features.

Overall, ‘community use’ was rated as the most important criteria for consideration, though respondents generally saw value in all of the criteria themes with the exception of ‘suitability for alternative use’ (i.e. selling parks that are more suitable for alternative use, such as a housing development of significant economic value), this is shown in Figure 39 below. This finding was reflected across all focus group session, as detailed below.

Key Issues Raised - Criteria for prioritising parks and green spaces

The focus group participants generally agreed that the list of criteria ‘covered everything’ and felt that all criteria were important for consideration. Participants appreciated that a process and criteria would be used to select parks for sale or closure, but wanted reassurance around what indicators would be used under each criteria theme (for example, how would community use or biodiversity be measured) and felt that transparency about the processes and indicators used were very important. Several participants, particularly parents and guardians of young children, felt that having toilet facilities in parks was an extremely important consideration, and that this should be included in an existing criteria theme or added as a criterion in its own right.

“All aspects of the criteria are important and applicable to every park.”

(Over 65s focus group respondent)

“The definition of a park means different things to others, to young families, to older people - it is different. So the criteria isn’t uniform… It needs to be specified.”

(‘Friends of’ focus group respondent)

The Centre for Social Innovation Keep Britain Tidy Recommendations to the Review Board

The following recommendations draw on the key issues and concerns raised by research participants, and are intended to provide guidance for engaging with the public on the future funding and management of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, regardless of which option is ultimately chosen.

Provide information on how the two options were identified

Participants were concerned that the Board had not conducted research to explore all of the available options for the future funding and management of Knowsley’s parks, and felt that the Board was leading them ‘down a path’ by only offering two options. Many questioned whether the Board had looked to other areas experiencing similar issues to see what it could learn and felt that this was an important part of fully assessing the alternative arrangements available.

Where possible, provide detail of how the preferred option has been reached, enabling people to see the robustness of the process used. This could include:

- The research conducted to date - what research was conducted and by whom (in particular, highlight where experts have been consulted);
- Case studies from other areas experiencing similar issues - the question as to whether any other authorities had tried a similar approach for managing and funding their park was raised numerous times; and
- The other options identified during the process and why these were subsequently discounted.

Clarify what ‘10% of Knowsley’s parks’ means

Participants wanted more information about what the ‘10% of Knowsley’s parks’ under Option 2 means. For example, they were concerned that Knowsley Council would start to select the 10% in 2019 and use the time between now and then to sell off ‘as many parks as possible’. Participants also questioned whether the 10% would come from slicing off sections of parks for sale or closing down entire parks. Many asked whether it would be 10% of the total number of Knowsley’s parks and green spaces, or 10% of the total area. It is recommended that further information be provided to address these questions. It could be useful to use maps or diagrams to help people to visualise the 10% of Knowsley’s parks.
Undertake due diligence and provide reassurance with regards to the Charitable Trust

There was some concern about what a ‘Charitable Trust’ meant for Knowsley, in terms of who would make up the ‘Trust’, how it would operate and its accountabilities. As such, a case study of how charitable trusts are successfully used in other areas to run both parks and other community assets would be beneficial in making the case to the general public.

If Option 2 is pursued, it is recommended that:

- Ensuring future accountability of the Charitable Trust is carefully considered and that this is clearly communicated to the public;
- Consideration is given to how to recruit and retain the appropriate skills and experience needed to successfully run the Charitable Trust and that this is clearly communicated to the public; and
- Regular feedback is provided to the community about the function and work of the Charitable Trust.

Feedback from the Review Board: Market Research (August 2017):

- The Board noted that Keep Britain Tidy referred to the Board’s approach to the Market Research (and the subsequent Awareness Raising and Open Public Consultation) as being exemplary;
- That the perception is that a Trust will not work, but the Board has seen how such governance can be very successful and resilient to public sector austerity - this needs to be explained to the public so they are reassured;
- That the recommendations made by Keep Britain Tidy should be reflected in the Board’s recommendations to Knowsley Council, noting that the first recommendation should be addressed through this Report and the second and third through Knowsley Council’s response / next steps;
- All but one member of the Board felt that the Market Research had been conducted in a thorough manner;
- The stakeholder meeting with the Friends of Parks representatives conducted as part of the Open Public Consultation was well attended, positive and people understood the difficult decision needing to be made; and
- The results of the Market Research support the Board’s Preferred Way Forward.

The outcomes of the Review Board’s Awareness Raising and Open Public Consultation (September 2017)

At the Review meeting on 5 October 2017 the Board reviewed the approach it had employed from promoting its Open Public Consultation and the initial results it had provided given it closed on 30 September, Lizzie Kenyon and Rose Tehan from Keep Britain Tidy attended the meeting to support the Board in doing this by providing expert advice on the methods by which this part of the Board’s review had been conducted and the results it had secured.

The aim of this research was to give the opportunity to all those who live, work and do business in Knowsley to give feedback on the two options presented by the Review Board. The survey used in the Market Research part of the Board’s review was also utilised in the Open Public Consultation in order to allow a comparison of the responses to each approach to be made, but noting the fundamental difference between them i.e. the Market Research is statistically sound and representative of the views of 95% of Knowsley’s residents whereas the Open Public Consultation does not provide such assurance and so does not comply with the Market Research Code of Practice requirements.

During September 2017 1,235 people completed the survey of which 9990 did so on-line and 236 completed a paper copy.

The Open Public Consultation Report prepared by the Centre for Social Innovation Keep Britain Tidy can be found at Appendix P.

Awareness raising

Press releases
- Liverpool Echo - Online and Printed Article
- 47,862 readers (printed edition)
- Knowsley Challenge - Printed Article
- circulation 30,000
- Place Northwest - Online Article

Interviews
- Made in Liverpool TV interview - average weekly reach of 123,269 viewers; and
- BBC Radio Merseyside - total listeners per week 318,000. The morning and drive time bulletins have the highest day time listener figures.

Online Media
- Dedicated Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board website created - over 4,000 unique visits
- Partner websites

Social Media
- Community Messaging
- Facebook / Twitter updates (via KMBC and partner feeds)
- KMBC Facebook - September Statistics
  w.c. 4 Sept - weekly total reach 10.8k (people engaged 929)
  w.c. 11 Sept - weekly total reach: 8.2K (people engaged 619)
- BBC Radio Merseyside - total listeners per week 318,000. The morning and drive time bulletins have the highest day time listener figures.

Option 2
- 58% of respondents choose option 2; and
- 42% of respondents choose option 1.

Figure 40

Stakeholder Meetings
31 July & 5 September - Staff / JTU meetings
11 September - Knowsley Parish & Town Council meeting
13 September - The Friends of Parks / other interested green spaces groups meeting
19 September - Local businesses via the Knowsley Place Board
25 September - The Knowsley Social Sector Leaders Forum
27 September - Halewood Town Council

Results and Findings - Value of parks to the Knowsley community
- 98% of respondents said that Knowsley’s parks and green spaces are important to them personally
- 99% said that they were important for making Knowsley an attractive place to live, work and/or visit

Results and Findings - The Preferred Option
As shown in Figure 40 below, overall the results of the Open Public Consultation show that Option 2 was the preferred option:

- 58% of respondents choose option 2; and
- 42% of respondents choose option 1.

Outdoor Medies - Posters and Leaflets

Option 2 58%
Option 1 42%
Feedback from Stakeholder Meetings

**Stakeholder Meeting - Parish and town councils**
Representatives from each of Knowsley’s five parish and town councils attended a meeting to discuss the work undertaken by the Board and the Board’s proposals. The key points of clarification raised were:

- Is the Board’s preferred option deliverable and will £40 million (+/- 10%) be enough to secure a return of circa £1.3 million per annum?
- Concerns about the terms and conditions of any Knowsley Council staff that may transfer to such a Trust
- Queries regarding how Knowsley Council will ensure that the Trust operates effectively, and is accountable for properly managing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces?
- What criteria will be used to identify the parks and green spaces for sale and which sites will be selected?
- How robust is the consultation process?
- How will Section 106 Developer Contributions for green space improvements be managed in the Trust?
- What influence will the parish and town councils have in deciding the 10%?
- What happens to the 10% of sites that are identified for sale during the 15 year period over which they are developed for new uses?

These questions were responded to by the Review Board’s representatives attending the meeting. The notes of the meeting made by the Board’s support officers are provided as Appendix Q.

**Stakeholder Meeting - The Friends of Parks Groups and other interested green space groups**
Representatives were invited from all Friends of Park and other interested green space groups to attend a meeting to discuss the work undertaken by the Board and the Boards proposals. The key points of clarification raised were:

- Will £40 million (+/- 10%) be enough to secure a return of circa £1.3 million per annum and how will any shortfall be managed?
- What if the Trust fails?
- What criteria will be used to identify the parks and green spaces for sale and who will decide on their value / application?
- How will Knowsley Council assess how much a particular park / green space is used?
- Is the Review Board proposing that volunteers run the parks?
- It is noted that it is proposed that 10% of park land will be sold to create the endowment but how will the Trust be funded at the start?
- How much has it cost to run the Review Board?
- How will Knowsley Council ensure that the Trust operates effectively, and is accountable for properly managing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces?
- Does the survey have to be completed on-line?
- What commercial work could the Trust undertake?
- Knowsley Council is already selling land for housing development, why does it need to sell park land too?
- How will the sale of sites be managed?
- Who would be employed by the Trust?
- What has the Board done to promote the consultation?
- What will the relationship be between the proposed Trust and the Friends of Parks Groups e.g. will they be competing for grants?
- What confidence can we have in the proposed Trust?
- If after the sale of 5% of parks / green spaces sufficient funds were raised to establish the endowment would Knowsley Council stop selling park land?
- If Knowsley Council cannot agree to support the Review Board’s recommendations what will happen?
- Can the Review Board recommend that a proportion of the 10% to be sold is developed for affordable housing?

These questions were responded to by the Review Board’s representatives attending the meeting. The notes of the meeting made by the Board’s support officers are provided as Appendix Q.

**Stakeholder Meeting - The Knowsley Place Board**
Local businesses, via the Knowsley Place Board, were provided with an update on the work of the Board and the Boards proposals. The key points of clarification raised were:

- Why is the Review Board only presenting two options to the public?
- How will Knowsley Council ensure that the Trust operates effectively, and is accountable for properly managing Knowsley’s parks and green spaces?
- What confidence can we have in the proposed Trust?
- Will Knowsley Council only sell the amount of park land that it needs to fund the endowment?
- Praise was given to Knowsley Council for commissioning the Board to undertake their review.
- How sure is the Review Board on the 10% and will any of the parks and green spaces included in the 10% be in Green Belt?
- If Knowsley Council initially funds the endowment how will it determine the risk of paying this back through the sale of parkland?
- Will the income generated be ring fenced to parks?
- The parks and green spaces should be returned to their natural state and this will save a lot of money as the maintenance resources will no longer be needed.
- The parks should be freely accessible as they bring high social value.
- Knowsley’s parks and green spaces are already endowed to the people of the borough and this must be protected, does Knowsley Council have the right to sell them?
- What commercial work could the Trust undertake?
- The survey question regarding the site selection criteria is confusing.
- How valid are the consultation findings?
- Will the Green Flag Parks be protected?
• Did the Review Board look at a solution just for Knowsley? It would be good to find a solution for the Liverpool City Region
• If Knowsley Council cannot agree to support the Review Board's recommendations what will happen?
• This is going to be a very difficult sell for Knowsley Council - people are suspicious and cynical of its motives; people need to be assured that it is not just shutting the parks down.
• The consultation has not been tailored sufficiently to engage with those with disabilities.

These questions were responded to by the Review Board's representatives attending the meeting. The notes of the meeting made by the Board's support officers are provided as Appendix T.

Stakeholder Meeting - Halewood Town Council
Halewood Town Council called a special meeting of the Town Council to discuss further the Boards proposals. The key points to note are:
• Halewood Town Council has spent a lot of money in recent years on improving Halewood Doorstep Green - what will happen to this investment if this land is part of the 10% of parkland sold for other uses?
• What happens if the political landscape changes over the course of the land sales?
• How will the 10% of parkland identified for sale be maintained whilst it awaits development, what incentive is there to keep this to a good standard?
• The site selection criteria need to be used to compel Knowsley Council to justify its decisions regarding the sale of parkland. Any sale decision will need to be based on the land value, the political fall-out and the site's fit to the responses of the consultation.
• If none of the parkland can come from those areas in Green Belt then this will place the requirement on the other sites - the parish and town councils need close involvement in such decisions given their lease for green spaces and their costs of maintenance. The opportunities and risks for the parish and town councils need to be identified, getting these organisations on-board will be critical to the proposal going forward.
• The parish and town councils would like to see the list of sites that form the 10%.
• The parish and town councils will need to be consulted as part of the site selection process conducted by Knowsley Council.

These questions were responded to by the Review Board's representatives attending the meeting. The notes of the meeting made by the Board's support officers are provided as Appendix U.

Correspondence

Correspondence from Knowsley Town Council
• Knowsley Town Council is totally opposed to both options 1 and 2 and feels that the consultation is inadequate as is the information provided. Knowsley Town Council demands that it is fully consulted in relation to any proposed sale or transfer of management of any publicly owned land within its township. This correspondence is provided as Appendix V.

Correspondence from Whiston Town Council
• Whiston Members confirmed that under no circumstances would they accept any percentage of the parks in Whiston (Henley Park, Stadt Moers Park and Foxshaw Close Playground) being used other than for what is was originally intended, a park for the residents of the area to enjoy. The Whiston Members hope that the board do in fact consider the potential effect on residents prior to making the recommendations to the Borough Council of Knowsley. In summary the Whiston Members did not agree on a preferred option. This correspondence is provided as Appendix W.

Correspondence from Halewood Town Council
• Halewood Town Council did not provide a response on their preferred option, however they have requested that the Strategic Criteria used for the selection of the 10% should be rigid enough to withstand public scrutiny. In addition, they would like a recommendation to the Borough Council that insists on the inclusion of any Town/Parish Councils in any subsequent discussions / project team if acceptance of the recommendations is carried forward by KMBC. This will ensure that any decisions will stand up to public scrutiny and that all precepting authorities have a say in what areas are transferred, retained, maintained and subsequent leaseholding provision going forward. This correspondence is provided as Appendix X.

Whilst UNISON sees the Boards proposals as a potential way forward to safeguards Parks and Green Spaces within the borough they do have one key concern for which they would like to offer a proposal. Their proposal is that the staff are employed on a secondment basis, therefore remaining employees, and therefore contracted to the Local Authority rather than transferred over to the new charitable trust. This correspondence is provided as Appendix Y.

Other Written Feedback
• In addition to the comments captured within the public survey, a number of organisations and 28 individuals have provided formal feedback to the Parks and Review Board. These include position statements, proposals and requests for further information including:
  • A petition from 26 local residents seek to the Chief Planning Officer, Knowsley Council demanding the creation and protection of our parks, playing fields, sports grounds and public green spaces in estate planning provision as Appendix AA; and
  • A request for an extension or a new consultation with further information on option 2 from the Millbrook Millennium Green Trust.
As explained in this Report the Review Board has undertaken its research from a relatively high-level assessment of the issues and potential solutions. From such a perspective it has developed what could be referred to as a Strategic Outline Case in respect to identifying its Preferred Way Forward. At various points during the review the Board has identified factors that require more detailed analysis and due-diligence which it has not been appropriate for it to undertake given its Terms of Reference, timescales and available resources. Such factors have included:

a. A detailed assessment of sites that could be used for an alternative use i.e. those that would form the 10%. Such work will require the refinement of the Board’s recommended Strategic Site Selection criteria, close dialogue with Knowsley’s Parish and town councils and a review of covenants on such land. Furthermore discussion with housing developers (for example) will be needed to test their interest in such land and ascertain the value they would be willing to pay for it;

b. The ability and willingness of Knowsley Council to pump-prime the endowment is a further key consideration that will require due diligence of the sites selected for sale and the confirmed interest of developers to buy them. Treasury management / accountancy procedures will also need to be assessed to ensure that such a large transaction complies with relevant codes of practice; and

c. The arrangements that Knowsley Council will need to put in place for establishing The Knowsley Parks Trust with its governing principles, land lease requirements and recruitment of its Founding Members, Trustees and staff all needing careful planning.

Therefore the Review Board acknowledges that should Knowsley Council wish to develop the Board’s Preferred Way Forward it will need to undertake further work to understand in detail the proposal’s configuration, financial standing, benefits, risks, interested parties, quantitative and qualitative implications, governance requirements, delivery vehicles and funding opportunities. This will involve undertaking further work to develop the Board’s Strategic Outline Case into an Outline Business Case in which the Council will identify its Preferred Option for delivering The Knowsley Parks Trust and its endowment based funding mechanism. The Outline Business Case will provide the necessary robust and transparent appraisal of the Project for Knowsley Council to determine whether it wishes to progress to a Full Business Case which is the point at which Knowsley Council will mobilise / establish the Trust and its funding arrangements. The Review Board understands that Knowsley Council, if it accepts the Board’s recommendations, will seek to complete its Outline Business Case during January to June 2018 with, on approval of this, the Full Business Case being delivered August 2018 to March 2019.

This approach follows the recognised Five Case model promoted by HM Treasury in its Green Book Appraisal for Public Sector Business Cases.

For the Outline Business Case (OBC) to progress to Full Business Case it will need to articulate:

a. The Project is supported by a compelling case for change that provides holistic fit with Knowsley Council’s strategic objectives and those of the wider public sector - the OBC Strategic Case;

b. That the Project has clear and concise spending / investment objectives and represents best public value - the OBC Economic Case;

c. The proposed Deal arising from the Project is attractive to the market place, can be procured and is commercially viable - the OBC Commercial Case;

d. The Project’s proposed spend is affordable and demonstrates the capital and revenue implications for the spending / investment proposal - the OBC Financial Case; and

e. What is required from all parties is achievable e.g. define Knowsley Council’s vires / powers for delivering the Project the OBC Management Case.

Therefore the Review Board has set the strategic principles upon which, through further business case development, a deliverable solution will be formed by Knowsley Council.
The sustainability of Knowsley’s green spaces has reached a tipping point. Knowsley Council can no longer afford their upkeep and the detrimental consequences of this are now emerging; a situation that will only get much worse under the current regime of funding and management. Doing nothing is therefore the route to managing rapid decline and associated liability for problems that will arise and associated new costs, with such matters contributing to wider neighbourhood degeneration and impacting on good public health.

The Review Board’s Preferred Way Forward presents an opportunity to address this dilemma. Options have been explored to establish an alternative funding and management model for Knowsley’s public parks and green spaces against the Policy Objectives it was set by Knowsley Council. A new way forward that negates the Council’s current annual expenditure of approximately circa £1.3 million on the development, management and maintenance of parks whilst ensuring that their unique value to deliver against a host of priority outcomes for the Council and its partners are harnessed fully and then sustained in perpetuity.

A viable and sustainable alternative model has been identified which requires the establishment of an endowment; initially through prudential borrowing and then repaid over 15 years through the sale of a minimal area of parks and green spaces for housing or commercial development. The interest earned on the wise investment of the endowment has the ability to fully replace Knowsley Council’s expenditure on green spaces in the short term whilst bringing a range of added value benefits that are aligned to the Council’s Co-operative Principles.

Furthermore the establishment of The Knowsley Parks Trust to manage Knowsley’s green spaces would be critical to reassuring the public that the remaining majority of parks will be kept to a good standard and meet their needs moving forward, without future risk of Knowsley Council seeking to claw-back additional savings; they have trust in the Trust. Having a Social Enterprise trading arm to the Trust would facilitate the provision of a range of new green space hosted services to bring additional social value to Knowsley whilst allowing the generation of profit from their provision which would be re-invested to bring further public value from the venture.

Given these findings the Review Board recommends this Report to Knowsley Council for its consideration and approval.

Conclusions
Bibliography

Knowsley Council Corporate Plan


Knowsley Council Three Year Budget Savings Report 22 February 2017

Knowsley Unitary Development Plan (Knowsley Council UDP 2006)

The Knowsley Core Strategy (Local Plan)

Knowsley Green Space Strategy 2010 - 2015 (Green Space Strategy)

Knowsley Green Space Strategy 2015 - 2020
(http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/your-council/policies,-plans-and-strategies/place.aspx)

Green Space Functionality Paper (Green Space technical document)

The following links are to a number of research papers that were developed to engage with relevant practitioners and potential commissioners of green spaces and green spaces services in the preparation of the Knowsley Green Space Strategy 2015 – 2020 and have formed an important part of the research base of this review:

http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/pdf/GSS-review-research-paper-4-Social-Value.pdf
http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/pdf/GSS-review-research-paper-8-Climate-Change.pdf

A short video which outlines the wide benefits our parks and green spaces provide to our local communities
(http://youtu.be/7DtsMmCT810)

Link to video on ‘Knowsley’s Greet Outdoor Adventure’
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qf1HqBYXFhw

Link to the ecotherapy video https://youtu.be/k8lgmdBF6HU

Website link
Social media e.g. Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/KnowsleyParks and Twitter (https://twitter.com/KnowsleyParks

The Mersey Forest - Measuring the social return from investment in the Natural Health Services 2016
http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/library/

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http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/library/

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http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/library/

Department of Communities and Local Government - Parks Enquiry 2016/17

Heritage Lottery Fund State of the UK Parks 2014

Heritage Lottery Fund State of the UK Parks 2016

NESTA Rethinking Parks
http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/rethinking-parks

Nature Connected - Liverpool City Region Rethinking Parks 2015
http://www.natureconnected.org/resource-library/

Nature Connected - Liverpool City Region Green Infrastructure Prospectus
http://www.natureconnected.org/resource-library/
The Knowsley Parks and Green Spaces Review Board