

SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL



Greatness Recreation Ground Management & Improvement Plan Adopted September 2008

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Sevenoaks Town Council
Greatness Recreation Ground – Management & Improvement Plan

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1. Introduction

This document has been created by Sevenoaks Town Council to provide a comprehensive framework for all management and development within Greatness Recreation Ground. It is an organic document which will develop further with input not only from the Town Council, but also stakeholders and users of the facility.

The Aims of this management plan are to assist those responsible for conserving, managing and improving Greatness Recreation Ground and to do so in a consistent, sustainable and where possible in an environmentally sensitive way, with the intention of encouraging more people to enjoy this local facility and to respond to changing needs. It is essential that this is used as a working document and reviewed regularly.

Copies of the document are available from the Town Council Offices and on the Town Council's website at :- www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk.

Sevenoaks Town Council wishes to encourage existing and potential new partner agencies to work with it to incorporate targets into this plan. We also encourage suggestions from the wider community, from park users to local residents and community groups to have an input into Greatness Recreation Ground's management and improvement.

2. Urban Parks National Overview

There are strong arguments that urban parks contribute to a wide range of today's social, community and economic issues.

People value parks and green spaces. Over 30 million people in England use them, making over 2 billion visits in total each year. Nearly 70% of people use their parks frequently and many go every day.

However, despite their importance to the quality of life of our communities, the last 20 years have seen a dramatic cut in revenue expenditure. Park stocks are beginning to become polarized with good parks getting better and poorer parks getting worse, and yet they are used by all sectors of the community, evidence of their popularity as a recreational source.

A complete description of what a green space system is all about reads:

"Urban park areas are an essential part of the urban heritage and infrastructure, being a strong element in the architectural and landscape character of towns and cities, providing a sense of place and engendering civic pride.

They are important for enabling social interaction and fostering community development, as well as providing an outdoor classroom for biological and ecological studies. Public green spaces help to conserve natural systems, including carbon, water and other natural cycles within the urban environment, supporting ecosystems and providing the contrast of living elements in both designed landscapes and conserved wildlife habitats within our urban settlements.

Parks and green spaces are supportive of social and economic objectives and activities. In particular the provision of public parks help to reduce the inequalities, poor health and social exclusion in deprived areas and reduces the inherent tension between the many social and ethnic groups who form the wider community. Providing for the recreational and leisure needs of a community assists the economic revival of cities, increasing their attractiveness as a place for business investment, to live, work and take our leisure."

Council of European Recommendation No R (86) 11

3. Greatness Recreation Ground – fundamental purpose

- i) Social Cohesion - To be free, accessible, inclusive and to provide an important urban 'social space' for the community.
- ii) To provide meaning and significance by use so contributing to people's quality of life. To provide a location that enables recreational activity, general opportunities for sociability or alternatively peace and solitude to escape from every day life.
- iii) Environmental benefits – to have a high amenity value by providing a contrast to the urban environment.
- iv) To provide positive psychological effects, even for those not consciously appreciative.
- v) An ecological benefit in the value of an urban park in removing toxins in the air.
- vi) Health and well being – to provide an attractive environment, an antidote to the stresses of modern living, can contribute to sense of well-being and improved mental health.
- vii) Educational benefits – can provide an educational resource for a wide range of subjects, including acting as a catalyst to educate visitors about the nature of the countryside as a sustainable resource. Can provide outdoor education / activity programmes which are used as tools suitable for addressing issues such as juvenile delinquency
- viii) A safe environment for young people to meet and play together.

4. Declaration of Aims

- i) Continue to improve leisure facilities and recreational space within Greatness Recreation Ground.
- ii) Continue to improve security to provide a safe environment for the local residents and users of the park.
- iii) promote the facilities of Greatness Recreation Ground through public events.
- iv) To work together with residents, local authorities, voluntary and other organisations.
- v) To encourage new users and activities in the park.

- vi) To improve the landscaping and car parking of the park.
- vii) To explore and obtain funding for achieving these aims.

5. Sevenoaks Town Council – Open Spaces Services

- Strategic Policy

The Town Council aims to provide a strategic approach to the management, development and promotion of recreational and statutory facilities in a sustainable way. Within the service, the key objectives that relate to Greatness Recreation Ground are to provide a facility that meets the recreational needs of both the local community and across Sevenoaks Town, encourages involvement, promotes a healthy lifestyle and provides a safe, clean and sustainable environment.

- Mission Statement

"Together we will ensure that the outdoor environment is valued, nurtured and enhanced for the benefit and enjoyment of all, now and for the future."

- Vision

To develop a high performance, multi skilled team that will strive to develop the full potential of green space within the remit of Sevenoaks through effective partnership and joint working. To achieve the aims and key tasks within agreed principles and values and in particular to:

- Contribute to the economic, social and environmental well being, improvement and development of the town.
- Improve the quality of life for the people of Sevenoaks in accordance with their needs
- To make the town more attractive to visitors
- To promote inward investment, development and heritage conservation
- To promote bio-diversity through sustainable habitat and species management practices.

6. Greatness Recreation Ground – Management & Improvement Plan

Greatness Recreation Ground is solely owned and managed by Sevenoaks Town Council.

Fields in Trust (previously known as the National Playing Field Association) has a view that children's needs for playing space are significant in their own right and merit a different approach from the needs of adults land for sport and recreation. Providing and encouraging play for children is part of the Town Council's overall aims and objectives.

7. Aims for Achievement in Five Years

The vision for Greatness Recreation Ground's five year management and improvement plan is to increase the enjoyment for all sections of the community visiting Greatness Recreation Ground. This will be achieved by improving leisure, play and customer services facilities and renovating areas of horticultural interest.

The vision can be split into the following objectives:-

- i) Creating a safe, secure and welcoming park and facilities
- ii) Good and well maintained customer service facilities, bins, benches and good paths etc.
- iii) High quality / fully stocked shrubs.
- iv) Consider creation and continued development of a wildflower area
- v) Improved signage and on site interpretation (where necessary) to improve the quality of experience for visitors
- vi) Maintain and improve play facilities
- vii) All facilities to be accessible to all sections of the community including people living with disabilities
- viii) Increase community involvement by liaison with local stakeholders, consider community planting days and other events
- ix) Seek funding to achieve the above.

8. History of Greatness Recreation Ground

Greatness is an area in the north east of the town. It was owned by Lord Greatness until the 1920s, when it was given to the local council. Greatness Recreation Ground is situated within this area, adjacent to Greatness Cemetery.

Greatness Recreation Ground is also home to Sevenoaks Football Club, founded in 1883, who currently play in the Premier Division of the Kent County Football League.

In 2007 Sevenoaks District Council transferred the ownership of Greatness Recreation Ground to Sevenoaks Town Council.

Since acquiring the park the Town Council has provided tangible improvements in the form of the following:-

- Installation of new play area and fencing
- Regular grass cutting
- Regular litter picking
- Marked reduction of anti social behaviour
- Increased usage of open space for correct purpose
- Regular liaison with stakeholders in the facility

The new play area was opened by the Town Mayor on 29th April 2008. The play equipment is sited on wet pour rubber safety surface which conforms to appropriate standards. Photographs below depict before and after pictures of the play area:-



As with many parks and gardens across the country, lack of investment over previous decades has seen general standards and the condition of facilities in Greatness Recreation Ground gradually deteriorate.

Sevenoaks Town Council recognised in 2007 the need to upgrade the facilities available in Greatness Recreation Ground and to develop ways to increase the use of this area by responding to current interests and needs.

It is believed that a tangible feeling of pride, involvement and excitement is returning to the local community and council staff from the improvements already instigated to date.

Grounds maintenance programmes are being developed to raise standards and increase public awareness of all outdoor spaces managed by Sevenoaks Town Council. The Town Council's Open Spaces Team is responsible for the day to day maintenance of these sites.

The Town Council has been working with Sevenoaks District Council, the Big Lottery Fund, local residents and Sevenoaks Football Club regarding the provision of a skateboard park within the Recreation Ground. Following a long period of discussion and reviewing potential location it is intended that the facility will be installed and available for use for the Autumn of 2008.

9. The Future

As with many parks and gardens across the country, lack of investment over previous decades has seen general standards and the condition of facilities in Greatness Recreation Ground gradually deteriorate.

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10. Usage

While exact current usage levels are unknown, it is apparent from anecdotal evidence from Greatness Recreation Ground users that the open space is very important to the local community. It is also noted that since the installation of the new play area in April 2008 the visitor numbers have increased. It is not easy to establish how many people use the facility annually, however in the long term management plan a method to calculate this should be investigated.

11. Nature Conservation and Promotion

Sevenoaks Town Council is committed to realising the potential for open space to be utilised as wildlife resources. The Town Council will bear in mind the following principles in relation to this.

- To coordinate and take action to make sure that all sectors of Sevenoaks community are committed to improving, valuing and protecting our habitats and wildlife to provide a well balanced and sustainable environment which contributes to a good quality of life for present and future generations.
- The Town Council, will, where possible aim to reduce chemical, energy and water use by good management practices.
- The Town Council will encourage the management of open spaces in a manner which maximises their wildlife value whilst complementing its open space recreation and amenity objectives on Town Council owned land. This should be done in co-operation with the local community which will also be encouraged to keep disturbance of wildlife to a minimum.

12. Environmental Policy Statement

The following policy statement explains how Greatness Recreation Ground management is being developed in accordance with sustainable work practices.

- **Horticultural Peat**
Every effort will be made not to use horticultural peat within the park.
- **Pesticides / Herbicides**
To maintain the park with the minimum use of any chemicals to control weeds or pests. All paths, shrub beds and borders to be maintained by hand.
- **Water Management**
Where appropriate, watering to take place at various times of day to ensure minimum water evaporation.

- **Soil Conservation**

Poor soil conservation methods result in the reduction of soil fertility and poor soil structure. In turn this leads to plants having reduced flowering vigour and increased propensity to disease. Buying in compost to remedy such a situation would be costly and damage the environment.

To prevent this situation arising, the aim is for the Town Council to produce or obtain from its partners compost bays. Where possible all compostable material produced on site is either to be shredded and put directly onto shrub beds or put into the compost bays. The resulting compost will then be used in shrub and flower beds. This organic matter will rot down and improve and maintain soil structure, aid moisture retention and provide a habitat for micro fauna.

- **Energy Conservation**

Working towards composting on site would provide a sustainable end use, removing the need for transporting materials via road and therefore reducing pollution and the need to use landfill sites.

13. Wildlife Initiatives

Additional planting will be encouraged by the local community and voluntary groups to foster a sense of public ownership.

Bird, bat and insect nesting boxes could also be considered to be put up in the park to provide additional habitats.

14. Tree Management and Conservation

Greatness Recreation Ground contains some mature trees. A stock condition will be incorporated into this Management and Improvement Plan. The results of this will be used to provide a tree management strategy which will include a succession planting programme to provide sustainability over the generations. Trees that are felled as a result of being dead, dying or dangerous will be reused within the Park as park furniture or used as habitat piles and deadwood habitats for decomposers or composted on site.

15. Car Parking

As the park increases in vitality and attracts more visitors the pressure on availability of car parking space will also increase.

Feasibility and costing of options will take place to extend and improve the quality if possible of the present car parking space at the same time being mindful of the aesthetics of the overall open space.

16. Amenities (seats, bins, notice board)

In recent history no overall strategy has been given to the development of the park. Amenities including fencing and seating etc have been installed as and when required.

It is the Town Council's plan to consider this in the long term providing a specification for such items – this may be part of Sevenoaks Town Council policy for all its open spaces, although individual characteristics would need to be borne in mind.

17. Landscaping

To consider methods to horticulturally develop/control the slope at the back of the gardens of Mill Lane so that the edge of the field is redefined and maintained.

18. Security Matters

During 2008 Sevenoaks Town Council has requested that one of the Police Community Support Officer which it funds allocates more time to Greatness Recreation Ground.

Due to the installation of the new play area a higher number of legitimate users are attending the park and this is expected to increase with the completion in Autumn 2008 of a wheeled sports area.

The result of these two changes has seen a decrease in anti social behaviour.

As part of the installation of the skateboard project, Sevenoaks Town Council is considering the installation of a remote operated CCTV in partnership with Sevenoaks Football Club.

19. Management Statement

The day to day management of Greatness Recreation Ground will continue to be carried out by full time Sevenoaks Town Council open spaces staff. The play areas will be inspected regularly by open spaces staff and twice a year by an independent inspection.

20. Statement of the role of Partners / Stakeholders

While Sevenoaks Town Council are ultimately responsible for the management and development of the Greatness Recreation Ground, it is recognised that the level of service to the customer will be increased through increasing involvement

with local stakeholders, including local residents, Sevenoaks Town Football Club, park users and local police.

i) Greatness Residents Association

The association was created in 2008.

The Greatness Residents Association was established to represent the interests of residents from the following areas:- Seal Road (Cemetery to Greatness Lane), Mill Lane, Grove Road, Greatness Road, Greatness Lane, Weaver Lane, Millpond Close, Silk Mills Close and North View Road (about 360 residences) as well as users of Greatness Recreation Ground.

The Association will continue to work with Town and District Councils to tackle anti-social behaviour and to achieve effective policing in the area.

We have a good relationship with the Town Council, and will work with them to ensure suitable facilities are provided and maintained for recreation in our local park.

We are keen to improve our environment and are currently in contact with the National Lottery in an attempt to secure a grant to regenerate the Mill Pond.

A considerable community spirit has been generated by the creation of the Association and we are confident this will continue to develop.

ii) Sevenoaks Football Club

Sevenoaks Football Club was originally formed in 1883 and has been based at Greatness Recreation Ground

Further details to be submitted by STFC

iii) Scout Group

Further details to be submitted by scouts group

iv) West Kent Housing Association

Further details to be submitted by housing association

v) Park Users

Every effort will be made to interact with park users either by events or informing them of matters via notices etc.

21. Equality of Access and Interest

Urban parks were first created in the UK in the 19th century to provide access to health, relaxation and exercise opportunities for the newly industrialised urban communities. At this time, only the rich could afford day trips and holidays in the countryside. Parks therefore emerged with an agenda of widening access to the benefits of green space. Sevenoaks Town Council will follow this accessibility ethos to create a park that everyone can enjoy.

22. Evaluation and Review Programme

It is important that this Management and Improvement Plan is monitored to ensure that effective progress is being made. The three year plan will enable people to see how the partnership is making progress in achieving the aims and aspirations of the community regarding Greatness Recreation Ground.

23. Conclusion

Sevenoaks Town Council believes that the active involvement of the community, allied to the enthusiastic and accomplished work of the open spaces staff, with the full support of Sevenoaks Town Council will deliver improvements to the Greatness Recreation Ground every year.

The most critical aspect of the Greatness Recreation Ground Management and Improvement Plan is to ensure that a methodology exists that will enable all stakeholders involved in the development of the Park to assess the effectiveness of the management and the extent of the progress made. It is therefore, important that an annual report is completed before the end of each financial year highlighting the achievements and setbacks encountered on a yearly basis.

An annual review will allow for an assessment of the targets and the critical success factors set out in the three year action plan. The annual review will consist of an appraisal of any developments within the park over the past twelve months and will provide an opportunity to adapt existing targets as necessary or set new and more challenging targets. Key findings of the review, as well as photographs to record improvements, will be available to the public on the Sevenoaks Town Council website and to the Open Spaces & Leisure Committee.

To ensure continuous improvement, development and assessment of the management of Sevenoaks Town Council, it is essential that before the end of the three year plan, a further management plan be developed. This will enable those organisations involved in the management and development of the park to ensure that it is safe, pleasant and a sustainable green space now and for the future.

Sevenoaks Town Council will use an inspection system to monitor maintenance and management standards in Sevenoaks Town Council's managed green spaces. These inspections will provide continual action areas which will ensure a framework for continually elevating standards. The results of the assessment will be discussed with open spaces staff and areas for improvement investigated and acted upon.

SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN

This new recommended Action Plan needs to be considered, adopted, and then reviewed, updated and extended on a regular basis.

Sevenoaks Town Council welcomes any member of the community (individuals, businesses or other organisations) that can volunteer some of their time and enthusiasm to make any item on this Plan happen.

If you wish to comment on the Three Year Action Plan, please contact Sevenoaks Town Council, Town Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QG. Tel: 01732 459953.

Year 1 (2008) Targets and critical success factors

| Target | Actions by which success can be measured |
|---|---|
| Safe, secure and welcoming park and facilities Improved signage and on site interpretation to improve the quality of experience for visitors | Onsite notice board installed at main park entrance, with Town Council contacts. New notices installed to play area with Town Council contact. |
| Improve play facilities | Install new £50,000 play area |
| Extend play facilities | Install new £100,000 skateboard park |
| Increase community involvement Provide a strategic approach to the management, development and promotion of Greatness Recreation Ground in a sustainable manner. | Produce and enable consultation of this new Management and Improvement Plan |
| Reduce anti – social behaviour | Request increased presence of Community Support Police Officer at the park. Request police to provide a report relating to park safety – consider methods to implement recommendations. Encourage reporting of anti-social behaviour. Consider installation of CCTV. |
| Develop Futsal sport | Install competition standard Futsal goalposts. |

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| Remove all graffiti | Graffiti removed as it appears |
| Winter work programme to be established to include an element of plant / shrub / tree pruning, removal and planting to bring stock levels and qualities to the highest standard. | Introduce planting programme |
| Maintain new play area | Maintain regular clearance and check of play equipment. Repair as needed. |
| Increasing community involvement by utilising community planting days and other events. Bulb and Tree planting days involving local volunteers. | Obtain funding for bulbs / trees. Select and advertise date. |
| To identify funding and make as many quality tangible improvements to Greatness Recreation Ground as possible to progress towards Green Pendant Quality. | Open Spaces Manager and Chief Executive to address. |
| Grass maintenance | To carry out a minimum of 12 cuts per year. |

Year 2 (2009) – Targets and critical success factors

| | |
|---|---|
| Safe, secure and welcoming park facilities | Maintain all structures and overgrown shrubs |
| Improve Play facilities | Continue to maintain and repair of equipment |
| Ensure park is kept free of graffiti | Graffiti and vandalism controlled |
| Community Involvement Foster good relationships with community police , local community and young people | Maintain good relationships Distribute Greatness Recreation Ground – Management & Improvement Plan and invite comments |
| Reduce anti – social behaviour | Continue to work closely with local police and local community |
| Good and well maintained customer service facilities | Maintain, signs, seats, litter bins, notices |
| Winter works programme. Obtain costs for any improvements not carried Identified in year 1. | Prepare budget |
| Identify landscaping needs and programme for implementation | Landscaping plan and budget to be produced |
| Design and identify funding where possible for creation and maintenance of wildlife area | Review funding opportunities |
| Increase community involvement utilising community planting days and other events. | Advertise planting days |

| | |
|---|--|
| Consider present and future parking needs and prepare budget for any improvements required | Seek quotations and consider budget implications |
| Consider long term overall aesthetics – choose type of fencing, signage, type of seats etc. | Produce long term design statement |
| Grass maintenance. | To carry out a minimum of 12 cuts per year. |

Year 3 (2010) – Targets and critical success factors

| | |
|--|--|
| Safe, secure and welcoming park facilities | Continue to maintain all facilities Continue to address issues promptly |
| Improve play facilities | Continue to inspect and repair |
| Community Involvement | Advertise planting days Timetable appropriate recommendations from consultation of Management and Improvement Plan. Consider events for the year |
| Reduce anti social behaviour | Continue to work closely with police and local residents to address local issues Continue to remove all graffiti |
| Prepare action plan for applying for Green Pendant Quality Award | Prepare budget and timetable |
| Addressing parking needs | Budget permitting put in place upgraded parking provision |
| Grass maintenance. | To carry out a minimum of 12 cuts per year. |

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Greatness Recreation Ground

KEY

- 1 - Car Park
- 2 - Children's Play Area
- 3 - Pavilion
- 4 - Football Pitch No. 2
- 5 - Skateboard Park
- 6 - Football Pitch No. 1

