



Report to Scrutiny

Item No:

Contains Confidential OR Exempt Information	No
--	----

Subject of Report:	Call-in: Creation of a regional park
Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Thursday, 5 October 2023
Service report author:	Sam Bailey – Head of Democratic Services 020-8825 7497 baileysa@ealing.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer:	Sam Bailey – Head of Democratic Services 020-8825 7497 baileysa@ealing.gov.uk
Cabinet Responsibility:	Cllr Deirdre Costigan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action) Cllr Polly Knewstub (Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities)
Director Responsibility:	Peter George (Strategic Director for Economy & Sustainability)
Brief:	To consider the Cabinet report attached, with reference to the purpose and reason for it being called in.
Recommendations:	That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, decide whether to uphold the decision, or to refer it back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

1. Call-In: Creation of a regional park

The Cabinet considered a report at its meeting of 13 September 2023. The purpose of the report was to set out the statement of ambition, vision and principles for the creation of a regional park in the borough of Ealing. The report recommended the appointment of landscape architects and land use consultants to develop the vision and to deliver a business case for the regional park. The report also sought authority to engage residents on the proposal to permanently close Perivale Park Golf Course to enable the transformation of the course into a new publicly accessible park that was ultimately going to form part of the regional park. The report set out that transforming the golf course supported the Council Plan objective to create ten new parks, to increase tree canopy and respond to the Council's key priorities.

1.1. Recommendations agreed by the Cabinet

After considering the report, cabinet agreed the following:

1. Agreed the Statement of Ambition and Vision Statement for a new regional park included at paragraph 4.7.
2. Authorised the Strategic Director of Economy & Sustainability to commission consultants to develop the ambition, vision, objectives and business case for the creation of a regional park in Ealing to include a review of the of the future provision of the borough's golf courses to understand the options for their future relationship with the regional park.
3. Authorised revenue expenditure of up to £0.200m over the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, with a view to review of costs and capitalisation as part of approved capital programme budgets as the business case for the Regional Park is approved and proceeds, for the commissioning of consultants to deliver the brief set out in the above recommendation as highlighted in paragraph 6 of this report.
4. Authorised revenue expenditure of up to £0.160m over the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 for the cost of project support to include the appointment of an interim project director to support existing and future projects under the umbrella of the regional park including but not exclusively related to a new Lido facility (noting the Lido update report is on this same Cabinet Meeting agenda), a new cultural venue and the Gurnell Leisure Centre redevelopment. Revenue expenditure will be reviewed and capitalised as part of approved capital programme budgets when the business case for the Regional Park and other projects are approved and proceed.
5. Agreed to the principle of a regional park in Ealing and further agrees that the vision and intention should be formally captured in a spatial policy within Regulation 19 of the Local Plan.
6. Agreed that a full consultation exercise be carried out, informed by a consultation plan, to establish detailed proposals for the future management

of the park and ensure that they are co-created with key stakeholders

7. Agreed in principle to the closure of Perivale Park Golf Course in financial year 2023/24 subject to the outcome of the proposed consultation.
8. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy & Sustainability following consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Climate Action and Thriving Communities to make any final decision to close Perivale Park Golf Course following consideration of the representations received as part of the consultation.
9. Authorised the expenditure of £0.075m over the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support a closure of Perivale Golf Course and for the rewilding and transformation of the golf course to park land, to be funded from the existing parks capital programme budgets, S106 and grant contributions.
10. Authorised the Strategic Director of Economy & Sustainability to consult with the community on proposals for an amphitheatre style outdoor cultural venue, and where community support can be demonstrated, commence a process to appoint a partner to design, build and operate the outdoor cultural venue within the Regional Park.
11. Noted that in the Summer 2024 a further detailed report including a fully worked up financial business case (including any meanwhile and long-term proposals for Perivale Park Golf Course) will be presented to Cabinet on the outcome of the commission set out in paragraph 2.2 above.
12. Noted that the proposed final layout of the regional park will be brought back to Cabinet for decision following a collaborative process of community engagement alongside technical considerations.
13. Noted that soft market testing with cultural operators on the inclusion of an indoor cultural facility will be reported back via the next Cabinet Report

Reason for Decision and Options Considered:

1. Cabinet recalled that Ealing Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, and that it committed to treat the climate and ecological emergency as a crisis requiring immediate and vital action. Cabinet's aim was for Ealing to become carbon neutral, as a borough and an organisation by 2030.
2. Climate change was driving nature's decline, and the loss of wild places left Ealing ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. Cabinet considered that responding to the climate crisis was not possible without creating more space for nature.
3. Ealing Council's council plan sets the vision and strategy for the next four years and the Council's 'promises' to focus on the priorities of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The plan was the Council's high-level strategic response to the opportunities and challenges facing Ealing now and in the

future.

4. Climate Action was one of the three cross cutting strategic objectives over the next four years to realise the vision for the borough by greening and keeping Ealing clean, achieving net zero carbon, and ensuring parks, open spaces and nature were protected and enhanced.
5. The Council Plan committed to create 10 new parks and open spaces, give back to nature 800,000 m² (the same as 130 football pitches) through re-wilding and re-introducing wildlife, and pioneering 10 new community growing spaces. Furthermore, it pledged to make streets and open spaces beautiful and resilient through planting another 50,000 trees, work towards increasing the proportion of the borough covered by tree canopies to 25% by doubling the number of trees planted each year, and ensuring every town had access to wild fruit.
6. Cabinet considered that the creation of a Regional Park offered the perfect opportunity to develop a wider, more connected Ealing that was equipped to tackle the Climate Emergency. Alongside the climate action agenda, there was also a growing recognition of the need to begin to restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity and provide space for nature to re-establish itself. With these issues in mind, putting nature at the heart of a green 'post-covid' recovery, could help drive locally led economic regeneration in a way that was good for nature, climate and people.
7. The creation of a Regional Park was going to be a major transformation of the landscape of Ealing to deliver a wide range of significant benefits including:
 - Making Ealing a more vibrant, green, and attractive place to live and visit.
 - Supporting nature recovery in Ealing by providing more space for nature-rich habitats and potential new species reintroductions.
 - Increasing the carbon storage and sequestering capacity and contributing to the Council's carbon reduction targets.
 - Providing more opportunities for Ealing's residents to connect with nature.
 - Providing much needed flood resilience
8. A key concept that had emerged in recent years is that of 'rewilding'. Re-wilding Britain, a UK Charity, defined re-wilding as: "the large-scale restoration of ecosystems to the point where nature can take care of itself. Rewilding seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species – allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within. Rewilding encourages a balance between people and the rest of nature so that we thrive together. It can provide opportunities for communities to diversify and create nature-based economies; for living systems to provide the ecological functions on which we all depend; and for people to reconnect with wild nature." – It was recognised that rewilding differed from traditional conservation as it was more focused on the action of 'returning' a place back to its natural state rather than preserving a place in its natural state. Thus, rewilding focused on actions to move a place from an impacted state to a natural state. As such, there are significant opportunities for rewilding with three broad options that can be further examined:

- Passive or Abandonment Rewilding: the simplest option; implies the abandonment of green space to turn into woodland in its own time, with woodland developing within 25 years. This would lead to the loss of open grasslands. Only minor infrastructure would be required.
 - Community Rewilding: similar to the above but with higher levels of intervention, which in turn is more likely to secure external funding. Woodland would develop within similar timescales to the above option but would also involve keeping more of the site open. The option would also include resources for proactively seeking funding for visitor infrastructure that may be required and on some commercial activities to generate income subject to consultation and sustainable business planning. This would also enable planting new trees as part of the plan to plant 50,000 trees for woodland creation.
 - Active Rewilding: Infrastructure may involve a wellbeing hub and café; in addition, there could be exemplary cycle infrastructure, with an accessible pathway, suitable for cycles and other wheeled users through trees.
9. The borough population was projected to grow by over 38,000 from 360,000 to 398,000 in the ten years from 2021 to 2031 with an expected increase in demand for different less formal outdoor spaces for people to be active. Regional Parks developed a network of parks and trails that provided connectivity for people, wildlife, and ecosystems. It was widely understood that people visited regional parks to participate in activities such as hiking, walking, riding, cycling, camping, swimming, boating, nature study, and organised group activities. These activities can be enjoyed year-round, and they contributed to a healthy lifestyle. Regional Parks provided for the health, inspiration and education of residents and visitors through a wide range of indoor and outdoor experiences and activities that fostered enjoyment of and appreciation and respect for the region's natural environments.

Vision, Ambition, and Governing Themes

10. Cabinet considered the successful legacy that the proposed regional park was expected to achieve through a clear articulation of the Council's ambition, vision and three thematic priorities for the regional park.
11. The design, development, and curation of the park was going to be governed by the following three themes:
- Sustainability and Accessibility
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Economy and Culture
12. Cabinet considered the further detail of the potential of the Regional Park to deliver against the key themes which was provided in Appendix 1.
13. Cabinet understood that in the evolution and development of the three themes it had been identified that inequalities, diversity and inclusivity also needed to be an overarching theme given that the creation of a Regional Park could have a significant positive impact on these issues affecting the borough's residents and communities.

Sustainability and Accessibility

14. Cabinet recalled that Ealing Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, committing to treat the climate and ecological emergency as a crisis requiring immediate and vital action. The aim was to become carbon neutral, as a borough and an organisation by 2030.
15. The Council's approach to Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy had been to focus on five themes, where the organisation had the most control and direct influence, based on policies, procurement, projects and relationships. Each of the five themes within this strategy identified unique objectives, targets and actions that were going to either reduce or capture carbon emissions in Ealing and beyond.
16. Cabinet understood that all carbon emission sources were going to need to be cut to zero eventually, this strategy was the first step toward reducing emissions significantly by 2030.
17. The creation of a Regional Park was going to significantly support the ability for the Council to meet the Climate and Ecological Emergency strategic objectives. It was recognised that the pandemic of 2020 had identified the importance of our greenspaces for mental health and well-being and that they were places which should be treasured and protected. The trees, hedgerows, parks, rivers, ponds, fields and gardens in Ealing all had a vital role to play in storing carbon and combatting climate change. It was of equal importance for the borough to retain a diversity of habitats which were connected to each other. The Strategy sought to increase the amount of greenery in the borough through further development of carbon sequestration habitats including the number of trees and area of meadows. The objectives set out in the Strategy were going to work alongside the borough's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which was the borough's strategic framework and road map for improving its biodiversity including all plant and animal life.
18. The vision for nature in the Strategy stated that the Council was continuing to reshape and modernise the approach to the management and maintenance of the Borough's green space network to maximise carbon capture, enhance the wildlife value, provide flood resilience and ensure these spaces were equipped to sustainably meet the needs and aspirations of communities recognising the following as a set of benefits.
 - Increased mental health and wellbeing of residents
 - Improved air quality
 - Urban cooling and adapting to extreme heat events
 - Education and access to nature
 - Increase biodiversity and connections for wildlife
 - Increased community engagement amongst residents, reducing loneliness
 - Reduction in noise pollution
 - Reduce risk of flooding
19. The scope for habitat creation with such a large area is extremely valuable as large areas with connected habitats offered the best opportunities to encourage wildlife and provide ecological resilience. The borough currently had limited capacity for tree

planting due to the demands on our existing green space and such an area would enable several hundred thousand trees to be planted, providing new woodlands. A mosaic of connected habitats could be created encompassing the river, meadows, woodland, wetland, ponds and lakes in line with the Council's Biodiversity Strategy. The park project would allow the creation of a new generation of wildlife grassland.

20. Three of the best ways to capture carbon were tree planting, ponds, wetlands and meadows. The scope for increasing the borough's ability to move to net zero by 2030 would be greatly enhanced with the opportunities the new park would offer. Such large areas of new planting and areas managed for biodiversity would increase the Council's ability to filter pollutants and improve water quality.
21. The new park was going to offer many new opportunities for walking and cycling. Having more of the river available would enable better public access of this key asset with new crossing points, paths and seating.
22. Alongside the nature of the offer of the open space, the accessibility to the open space was of particular importance if the open space was to adequately cater for a regional user catchment. The London Plan supports maximum distances for residential properties within London to a Regional Park of 8.0km.
23. While the open space definitions identify that car parking should be accommodated within Regional Parks, accessibility by public transport was an essential characteristic of strategic open space. Long distance accessibility is primarily dependent on the rail system, both London Underground and Overland Network. High quality routes to and from stations to the strategic open spaces network are vital and developing those routes should be considered as an integral element of the management of the strategic open space aspirations.
24. As part of the Local Plan Evidence Base and community led regeneration frameworks, the Council had followed a 20-minute neighbourhood approach to its seven towns. The 20-minute neighbourhood is the idea that people should be able to access their local shops and services including access to public transport, health, education, employment, community, retail, culture, leisure and green spaces within a 20 minute walk or cycle of their home.
25. A regional park at the heart of Ealing with new east-west and north-south active travel routes would be within 20 minutes reach of Greenford, Hanwell, Ealing, Perivale towns and parts of Southall whilst improving accessibility for residents across the Borough. It was going to enable travel by modes other than private car between multiple centres and improve interaction, sociability and access to a wider range of amenities than available currently.
26. Access to open space from a closer catchment could be achieved by both the bus network and pedestrian/cycle networks. Such local access could often be significantly enhanced through relatively small scale interventions that overcome existing barriers to access. This could include works such as opening up existing boundary fences, providing new road crossings, pedestrian and cycle bridges over rivers or rail, or establishment of new links and routes between separate land ownerships.

27. Ealing was a diverse and vibrant borough, but it also faced significant health inequalities. This was because people had unequal life experiences, with different access to opportunities and privileges. As well as differences in health outcomes for example diabetes, obesity etc, these differences are visible in the 'building blocks of health and wellbeing' - the wider life conditions which ultimately impact how well, and long people live. The best evidence for sustainable impact on health inequalities supported work on these building blocks of health and wellbeing, away from a focus on individual behaviour change or the provision of health services alone. Access to functional and good quality green space like that proposed for Ealing's regional park, was a good example of an essential building block of health and wellbeing since there were many health and wellbeing, and healthy equity opportunities and impacts that could arise from its creation.
28. Ealing's Health and Wellbeing Board (a partnership between the Council, Local NHS organisations (Ealing ICB, hospital and community health trusts), VCFS and HealthWatch) have developed 'Together in Ealing' the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-2028 focused on tackling inequality through work on the building blocks of health. Theme 3 in the strategy, '*Connecting the building blocks of health and wellbeing*', included commitments to work on these building blocks, including the equitable provision of good quality green space, through the lens of health equity.
29. Cabinet considered the following as a high-level perspective of some of the health and wellbeing opportunities arising from the creation of a regional park.
30. During the COVID-19 related lockdowns, "going to the park" became a central topic of national conversation. In England, people were permitted to go to parks and sit down, and to meet another individual. For some, this was a pleasant novelty. For others, who have had little access to green outside spaces during lockdown, it was a welcome change in their quality of life. COVID-19 refocused attention on the role that parks play in society. There were over 27,000 urban green spaces in the UK, with more than half the UK population regularly making use of them. Parks today continue to serve their primary historical purpose – to provide urban residents, particularly those with little private green space, a shared site for recreation in a natural environment. It was concern about health inequalities and poor housing conditions in booming industrial towns which led to the creation of parks in the late-Nineteenth Century.
31. Lockdown reignited some of this historical sentiment and the debate over the public/private green space divide. Commentators had argued that confinement without access to a park during lockdown would have had a devastating impact on the mental and physical health of those living in high-density urban areas without a garden. Recent ONS data showed that one in eight households in the UK did not have access to a garden, and that Black people in England were nearly four times as likely as White people to not have their own outdoor space. One in five young people had no access to a garden. Those in semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, as well as the unemployed, were over three times as likely to

not have a garden as those in Londoners in general were least likely to have a garden, with 21% of homes having no shared or private green space.

32. There was growing evidence of the physical and mental health benefits of green spaces such as the proposed regional park in Ealing. Research showed that access to green space was associated with better health outcomes, and income-related health inequality was less pronounced where people had access to green space. Research in the Netherlands showed that every 10 per cent increase in exposure to green space translated into a reduction of five years in age, in terms of expected health problems, with similar benefits cited in Canada and Japan.
33. More specifically access to good quality and large open connected green space was associated with positive health outcomes, including:
 - improvements in mental health and wellbeing, such as depression, stress, dementia
 - increased longevity in older people
 - lower body mass index (BMI) scores, overweight and obesity levels and higher levels of physical activity
 - better self-rated health for all ages and socio-economic groups.
 - reductions in a number of long-term conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and musculoskeletal conditions
34. Green space such as the regional park could improve the environmental quality of an area with consequential health benefits. Some of the environmental benefits of green spaces included improved air and water quality, noise absorption and reduced 'urban heat island' effects. Additionally, green spaces could improve absorption of excessive rainwater and reduced surface water run-off reducing the likelihood of floods and sewage overflow, while protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems.
35. Parks could provide alternative routes for circulation including green routes for pedestrians and cyclists; therefore, promoting more active and healthy travel. Parks also provided a place to take exercise; through either formal provision such as tennis courts and football pitches, outdoor swimming pools, running, cycling, yoga or meditation, to take the dog for a walk or gentle stroll. The links between access to green space and levels of physical activity were well-established in research, which showed higher levels of physical activity in areas with more green space. Estimates suggested that an inactive person was likely to spend 37% more time in hospital and visit the doctor 5.5% more often than an active person. In 2007, physical inactivity was estimated to cost the NHS between £1 billion and £1.8 billion. This highlighted some of the indirect and long term cost benefits that could be realised through the regional park.
36. In terms of the potential for the regional park to impact positively on health equity, research showed that living in areas with green spaces was associated with significantly less income-related health inequality, weakening the effect of deprivation on health
37. Access to nature had shown to reduce blood pressure, reduce stress and improve mental well-being. A change of scene and impact on the visual sense were

beneficial aspects of urban green space.

38. Child development in terms of both mental learning and physical development had shown to improve through play in a variety of stimulating environments, including woodlands, parks and wetland areas. Play was crucial for many aspects of children's development. Play could promote the acquisition of social skills, experimentation, confrontation and resolution of emotional crises, to moral understanding, cognitive skills such as language and comprehension. Play could also promote physical well-being. Hard spaces offered little opportunity for play and green spaces were preferable offering a diverse range of activities.
39. Play brought diverse people together and improved the social and natural environment. Playful places enabled safe and stimulating interactions between friends, families, communities, strangers and with the built and natural environment. For both children and adults, the social aspects of play were fundamental for relationship building with people and the environment. Research suggested that children's and adults' interactions during play could be essential for creating the kind of supportive social environments that fostered a healthy development.
40. Nature-based play helped to create a greater sense of empathy and respect for nature and could contribute to climate resilience. Investments to 'de-grey' (paving, roads, concrete etc.) public spaces, to make room for increased rainfall, and to allow for more greenery and shade were an ideal opportunity to embed play elements into the design of these nature based solutions. Such investments could create climate resilient environments, educate about the importance of biodiversity and climate action, and open new places for diverse play opportunities.
41. Child and play-friendly spaces could also boost the economic value and long-term viability of the built environment. Public spaces where families with young children chose to visit signal better than any marketing material that an area is clean, safe, and fun. Retail, leisure, and businesses increasingly recognised that play is good for business!
42. Cabinet was seeing a worrying trend of increasing levels of obesity in children. This was because people had unequal life experiences, with different access to opportunities and privileges. These differences were visible in the building blocks of health and wellbeing. These were the health, social and economic inequalities acting as root causes of health and wellbeing and they ultimately impacted how well, and long people live.
43. Addressing these challenges required a collaborative and strategic approach, which was why members of the Ealing Health and Wellbeing Board had worked closely with partners across the NHS, Ealing council and resident and community groups, to develop 'Together in Ealing' the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-2028 with the Vision: We will see Ealing's communities thriving, with good health and wellbeing, and with fairness and justice in the building blocks of health and wellbeing. Cabinet considered the following points which provided a high-level perspective of some of the health and wellbeing opportunities arising from the creation of a regional park.

44. There was a significant opportunity for the Regional Park to support the delivery of the above strategy which had been developed to support the Council's corporate priorities and the administration's manifesto pledges, in shaping the future of Ealing. Together the strategy and Regional Park presented opportunities to contribute to the achievement of outcomes relating to improved health and increased physical activity levels of Ealing residents, establishing how to best meet their current and future health and wellbeing needs and encourage and support the continued independence of Ealing residents, contributing to the priority of making Ealing a better place to live and work.
45. The strategy had developed an accurate and robust evidence base to provide the leisure and sport content for the new draft Local Plan and to help inform planning policy decisions regarding the protection, enhancement and provision of existing and future indoor and outdoor sports facilities providing an understanding of the best location(s) for any new facilities.
46. In order to achieve the vision and 3 key objectives of the 10-year strategy, the Council was exploring opportunities to:
- Enable and promote a network of accessible sports facilities across the borough maintaining and enhancing the borough's built and green infrastructure.
 - Work with commercial and community partners and national governing bodies to enable and secure the development and long-term management as well as financial viability of indoor and outdoor sport facilities across the borough.
 - Seek to maximise opportunities which may arise to develop sports facilities as part of wider regeneration, education or place-based projects.
 - Identify and bid for external funding to support the development and delivery of new sports facilities across Ealing.
 - Help clubs and organisations to promote the benefits of sport to bring communities together to make them stronger reducing inequality and celebrating diversity.
 - Promote sport and active recreation as a key enabler to healthy and active lifestyles.
 - Be innovative and creative when investigating possible solutions to facility supply needs in light of the general reduction in funding available to improve and or build new sports facilities.

Economy and Culture

47. The Council had recently launched its Cultural Manifesto *367,100 Creatives - Ealing's cultural manifesto for creative change* to create direction, focus and purpose for culture in Ealing to achieve a change in the growth, resilience and sustainability of our creative economy and skills sectors.
48. The manifesto was about enhancing connections and enhancing capabilities. Cabinet considered that culture should influence all its services and be embedded in everything the Council does. This included culture-led regeneration; culture to be key in economic recovery and bringing people and pride back to our high streets; requirements for culture embedded in council planning and policies.

49. The creation of a regional park provided an opportunity to further an ambition for the borough to potentially host a new outdoor cultural venue and frame that within the context of the ambition to be the foremost borough of culture in west London. The report recommended the Council consult the community on proposals for an amphitheatre style outdoor cultural venue, and where community support can be demonstrated, commence marketing of Regional Park land to appoint a partner to design, build and operate the outdoor cultural venue.
50. Turbocharging Ealing's creative capabilities by building connections between creative employers and the education sector; local communities and the creative sector working together with the Council; the creative sector collaborating better with each other; and all connecting with and influencing national agencies and organisations. The Council would work with the developer community to provide affordable creative workspaces, contribute to cultural capacity-building, create Culture Hubs and realise the state-of-the art arts centre that Ealing deserves.
51. The majority category (36%) of survey respondents engaged in the development of the cultural manifesto were 'somewhat satisfied' with arts and culture in Ealing, highlighting that the top things currently missing from the creative and leisure offer in Ealing: More venues, creative/performance space/hub for artists, more opportunities to participate, more opportunities for children and young people and to appeal to a more diverse audience.
52. Ealing's local commercial centres experienced a resurgence during the pandemic as lockdown restrictions and an increase in working from home reduced the need to travel, meaning that residents were spending more time in their local area for discretionary activities as well as for employment. The Council was adopting a sustainable polycentric form of development across the borough that was going to reinforce the unique functions and roles of the centres within the local and wider West London economy.
53. A regional park could act as a hub for economic activity, provide hundreds of local jobs and create conditions for economic development across communities. A long-term investment in parks can bring a range of economic activities, creating both direct and indirect jobs and provide people with skills to find employment. The jobs created in parks are meaningful and create a sense of purpose. Even revenue-generating activities in park tend to focus on things that communities value, such as cafes, food provision, community events and physical activities.
54. At a regional park scale, a resilient model of both commercial operations and developing an enterprise to meet the needs of people and planet through social enterprise and cooperatives could be feasible. The key assets carrying higher risks within a regional park portfolio were going to need to be run on a commercial basis alongside a social enterprises model, that was going to reinvest the money they made back into the community, for example. A sustainable revenue generation model, supply chain, skills opportunities and capturing the wider economic benefits was going to need to be considered as part of the business case development.
55. A regional park that connected most of the boroughs town centres had clear benefits to invigorating local business, increasing property/land values, enabling

development opportunities and job creation. Local residents were also going to benefit from quality of life improvements through better access to recreation and the potential for healthier mode of travel. Land that had previously been built upon within the park would potentially be released for new income generating developments that supported the investment and upkeep and reduced financial pressure on local services in doing so.

56. Creating a large linear park through and close to some of the more deprived areas of the borough had obvious benefits to encourage and enable recreation and would allow a rethink of the recreation facilities in the borough for all ages, where new ideas and connections could be developed to complement the existing popular facilities like the Gruffalo trail, Hanwell Zoo and Horsenden Farm.
57. In addition to diverse residential neighbourhoods, a regional park was in close proximity of many of Ealing's strategic and local industrial areas in Southall, Hanwell, Greenford and Perivale. With a regional park on their doorstep, improved access and investment, the proposal was going to provide much needed local amenity for employees, attract businesses and improve productivity.
58. The Council had launched 'Good for Ealing' inward investment programme and a new regional park in London was going to further reinforce its credentials as a fantastic place to live and work. A regional park provided an opportunity to work proactively with private sector, businesses, developers, social enterprise and local voluntary sector to form partnerships and create a shared ambition.
59. Ealing was currently ranked 15th greenest out of the 33 London boroughs. This park represented a huge potential investment in the boroughs and London's natural capital. As the GLA stated in an urban context, these assets were our parks, rivers, trees, and features such as green roofs that collectively form an essential green infrastructure. Designed and managed as green infrastructure, natural capital could:
 - Promote healthier living
 - Lessen the impacts of climate change Improve air quality and water quality Encourage walking and cycling
 - Store carbon
 - Improve biodiversity and ecological resilience
60. It was rare in London to have the opportunity to realise all this in one space which would impact the lives of almost every resident of the borough and beyond as it would be of London wide significance.
61. The importance of open space provision to area regeneration was highlighted in Government guidance and evidenced in London and elsewhere in the UK. Open space assisted in establishing the setting and quality of new developments and in promoting area regeneration. A regional park was going to contribute to the achievement of regeneration benefits by providing an attractive setting for development and promoting social inclusion and community benefits.
62. High quality parks and public spaces created economic, social and environmental value. They were also highly valued by local people. Research suggested that the

quality of public space and the built environment had a direct impact on lives and the way people felt. In terms of economic benefits there was evidence that high quality green spaces had a positive impact upon perceptions of places, were good for business, and being close to public space adds economic value. Safe, clean spaces encouraged people to walk more and therefore offered significant health benefits. Parks and green spaces offered places for sport, recreation and relaxation, benefiting physical health and mental wellbeing – this was particularly well understood during the COVID Pandemic.

63. There was evidence that access to good quality local spaces could help people live longer and green spaces could provide solutions to redress worsening public health. Green spaces could also bring significant community benefits as places to play, encouraging neighbourliness and social inclusion and as a venue for events that brought people together. Networks of linked open spaces and green corridors could encourage cycling and reduce dependency on the car, reducing levels of traffic. Ealing was particularly well served by Green Corridors with the canal network and River Brent Park providing important routes for people and wildlife.
64. Ealing Council's park service had an excellent track record in the delivery of large scale park improvements and a history of achieving quality accolades. For the ninth year (2022) in a row Ealing had won gold in the London in Bloom Borough of the Year Awards. It had continuously been given the honour in the Large City category for the overall impact of its horticulture and environmental management and for community participation. Historically, the borough had been awarded almost perfect marks for elements such as promoting sustainability, developing local heritage including natural heritage, its achievements in conservation and biodiversity and increasing community involvement. Furthermore, Ealing Council and local groups had recently been awarded prestigious Green Flags for 26 parks and open spaces, further enhancing the borough's reputation as one of the greenest and most beautiful in the capital. A Green Flag flying was a sign that that a park kept the highest standards, was beautifully maintained and had excellent facilities.
65. The Council had also delivered pioneering and creative solutions to park improvements; not least on the award winning park projects to create Northala Fields; to restore Walpole Park and Gunnersbury Park and to create the Greenford to Gurnell Greenway.
66. Additionally, good progress had been achieved to deliver the Council Plan target of creating ten new parks. The Central Plaza in the Acton Gardens development in South Acton was planned to be opened in September 2023. Works were well underway to deliver an area of newly accessible park land at Glade Lane, Norwood Green, Southall; with work extending into surrounding areas, providing wider improvements to the park and the Grand Union Canal. Planning permission had been granted for the newly publically accessible South Lawn at Twyford Abbey and the next phase of the Central Gardens in the Green Quarter, Southall, was expected to be completed by August 2024.
67. The economic benefits were well understood, open spaces improve air quality, provide sustainable urban drainage solutions and could help mitigate against climate change, whilst trees cool air and provide shade. Open spaces were also important areas for wildlife and biodiversity and provided opportunities for local

people to experience nature first hand.

68. The London Plan was the overall strategic plan for London, and it set out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2031. It formed part of the development plan for Greater London and it was necessary for the London boroughs' local plans to be in general conformity with the London Plan. The London Plan recognised the valuable contribution that green spaces play in providing a good quality environment. In order to fully understand the provision of open space and the demands and needs placed on them. Policy 7.18C of the London Plan stated that when Councils were assessing open space needs they should include appropriate designations and policies to protect open space and identify areas of open space deficiency.
69. National and regional policy guidance required local authorities to set their own local standards for the provision of open space and apply this through local planning policy and the Local Development Framework. Using 2011 population data it had been determined that the current average provision of public open space across the borough is 1.97 hectares per 1,000 head of population. Over the next 15 years, as a result of projected population growth this was expected to decrease to 1.82 ha / 1000 head population.
70. This equated to just 18.2 m² per person (less than the London average 18.96m²) where the World Health Organization recommended the availability of a minimum of 9m² of green space per individual with an ideal value of 50 m² per capita. One of the primary aims of the creation of a regional park was going to be to increase this availability towards more ideal levels.
71. Whilst the average level of provision was currently 1.97 hectares per 1,000 population the distribution of public open space and the resident population was not uniform. The ward data also showed that the amount of Public Open Space availability over time was going to decline based on projected increases in population. At a ward level Ealing Broadway had just 0.15 hectares per 1,000 population and North Greenford 6.58 ha per 1,000 population, a variation in provision by a factor of over 40 times.
72. All Public Open Space in Ealing had been classified against the GLA hierarchy set out in Table 1 below. In a built up borough such as Ealing large areas of open green space were at a premium. Larger spaces, in particular District Parks over 20 hectares, offered a wider range of opportunities for recreation and for wildlife. Within the borough there were areas of green space which lay adjacent to, or very close to others, and collectively could provide an opportunity to create one larger parcel of land.
73. Ealing Council had used the GLA hierarchy to analyse accessibility to local parks (within 400 m of people's front doors, about 5 minutes' walk) and to district parks (within 1.2 km, about 15 minutes' walk). This provided a consistent approach across London for identifying broad areas of deficiency in provision. In addition, as required by the GLA guidance, the study area was extended for 1.2 km beyond the borough's boundaries to identify district and local parks larger than 0.3 hectares with catchments that carry across into Ealing. Audits of the condition and quality of those sites were not carried out.

Table 1: London's Public Open Space Hierarchy

Type	Area (ha)	Distances from home to open space	Number of sites in Ealing
Regional	Over 400 ha.	8 km	0
Metropolitan	60-400 ha.	3.2 km	2
District parks	20-60 ha.	1.2 km	6
Local parks	2-20	400 m	46
Small local parks	0.4-2 ha.	400 m	41
Pocket parks	Under 0.4ha.	400 m	41

Consolidated sites

74. In a built up borough such as Ealing large areas of open green space were at a premium. In general, larger spaces, in particular District Parks over 20ha offer a wider range of opportunities for recreation and for wildlife. There were several places in the borough where areas of green space lay adjacent or very close by to others and collectively could act as a larger parcel of land. There were two spaces in the borough where this created metropolitan parks (greater than 60ha) – Horsenden Hill, and Northolt and Greenford Countryside Park and there were six other sites where combinations of land parcels created District Parks (greater than 20ha); but nothing as significant as a Regional Park (greater than 400ha). It would be reasonable as part of any feasibility study to consider how the amalgamation of existing spaces in the borough including Brent River Park and Horsenden Hill could support the creation of a Regional Park to achieve the considerable benefits of a Regional Park outlined in this report.
75. It was necessary to consider Regional Parks within the context of current strategic policy guidance. The importance of open space was recognised in a range of government policy and policy guidance. Particular importance was placed on the range of benefits that could be attributed to open spaces within the vision for climate action and thriving communities, particularly in creating improved living environments through the promotion of healthy living, improved accessibility and economic sustainability.
76. Within the GLA Hierarchy a Regional Park was defined as large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which were going to be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. They offered a combination of facilities and features that are unique within London, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.

1.2 Reasons for Call-in

Councillors Gary Malcolm, Athena Zissimos, Connie Hersch, Gary Busuttil, Jon Ball and Andrew Steed from the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillors Julian Gallant, Anthony Young, Seema Kumar, Fabio Conti and Gregory Stafford from the Conservative Group called in cabinet's decision on 21 September 2023,

The reasons given for the call-in are as follows:

- Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome).
- Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers.
- Respect for human rights and equalities.
- A presumption in favour of openness.
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes (i.e. link between corporate strategy and implementation).
- Consistency with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, Contract, Financial and other Procedure Rules, legislative requirements and any other requirements set out in this Constitution.

Detailed Reasons for Call-in:

Call-in to consider recommendations VII in the Minutes of the meeting that Cabinet had agreed because:

Regarding proportionality:

- In Sustainability & Accessibility (i) there is no consideration of the flat and level nature of the golf course which makes it accessible to the elderly, or the fact that it enables access to sport for hard to reach groups through its pay and play payment structure. The limited analysis is flawed and has excluded pay and play users who are likely to be those who are most disadvantaged financially challenged and vulnerable groups of the community including age, ethnicity and gender disproportionately.
- In Economy & Culture (iii) there is no evidence that that Perivale Golf course is a financial burden and unviable or a drain on the public purse.
- There are already approx. 2,000 petitioners who have signed up to keep access to Perivale Golf Course.

Regarding consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers, the call-in is to question why a decision had been taken to close Perivale Park Golf Course before due consultation with golfers, other users, and the Ealing public.

Regarding respect for human rights and equalities:

- Elderly golfers will be disadvantaged by the closure of the Perivale Park Golf Club as it is affordable compared to most golf courses.
- There is indirect discrimination taking place here against hard to reach groups such as elderly users, ethnic minority users and women who use the site to improve their health on a pay and play basis as well as a season ticket holders.

In addition, the pay and play function enables low income users access to public golf course (1 of only 2) in Ealing. They are effectively excluded from private clubs on the basis of cost.

Regarding a presumption in favour of openness, the decision was introduced suddenly and at short notice.

Regarding to the clarity of aims and desired outcomes, the call-in is to question:

- whether the effect on nature of removing an existing golf course has been taken into account.
- whether the Perivale Park Golf Course, open to other users, needs to be closed.
- whether the fundamental differences between Ealing golf courses have been fully taken into account.
- whether the substantial existing green spaces, including an underused rugby pitch, are not sufficient to meet the needs of the Ealing public and visitors.
- whether officers will confirm that a regional park will include ponds, wetlands and meadows

The call-in is also to state that:

- demand for golf is decreasing on the basis of national estimates rather than local examination.
- There is a focus on rewilding Perivale Golf Course whilst dewilding Warren Farm – all of which suggests a lack of method or approach across Ealing.
- The report does not appear to allow for the golf club to exist within a Regional Park. We ask whether the course might be altered to allow for a golf club and other leisure activities to co-exist within a larger Regional Park.

The call-in is also to give details of any negative effect on the flora and fauna in the area caused by any works relating to the creation of the Regional Park.

Regarding consistency with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, Contract, Financial and other Procedure Rules, legislative requirements and any other requirements set out in the Constitution, the call-in is to question:

- whether removal of a sporting facility can ever be considered beneficial for the Council's stated aim of improving public health outcomes.
- whether the provision of a Regional Park good value for money given the costs involved and current economic instability
- whether the basis for consideration of the closure of Perivale Golf Course is indeed to address health outcomes, as these are already being addressed through provision of pay and play (not only annual) membership and accessibility which accommodates a broad spectrum of age, gender and ethnicity.
- Whether the Council will agree to view the up-to-date figures when it reviews its decision. The most up to date figures for golf playing appear not to have been used in making the decision.

1.3 Purpose of Call-In

The Constitution identifies the purpose of call-in. A decision may only be called-in for one of the reasons set out in paragraph 15(e) of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

2 Legal Implications

Part 2 Article 6.03 of the Constitution gives the Overview and Scrutiny Committee authority to hear called in decisions. Paragraphs 15(f) and (g), of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out the Call-In procedures.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may either confirm the decision, or refer it back to the Cabinet, setting out the nature of the Committee's concerns.

3 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to Overview and Scrutiny Committee hearing called-in decisions. Scrutiny has a role in supporting democratic renewal.

Value for money is obtained through scrutiny enabling and supporting transparent decision making and ensuring that debate on called in topics is heard in a timely manner and in a public forum.

The Cabinet report attached, identifies the financial implications with respect to the issue under discussion.

4 Other Implications

Any other implications relating to the matter under discussion are also dealt with in the Cabinet report, which is attached at Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Report: Creation of a regional park
Appendix 2 – Call-in form

5 Background Papers

Background papers are identified in the Cabinet Report.