

# Grove House Gardens Dunstable

## Management Plan 2016/17 – 2021/22



First Edition – January 2016  
Second Edition – January 2018

## **Foreword**



I am delighted to be able to introduce this, the second management plan (second edition) for Grove House Gardens, in support of our bid to retain our Green Flag status.

Dunstable Town Council is very proud of the town's heritage and takes great care and effort in managing a number of Dunstable's main historical features. As part of this commitment, the Town Council owns and manages Grove House and its associated Gardens.

The Gardens are a vital part of Dunstable's town centre, and along with Priory Gardens, they form a pivotal focus for the future regeneration of our town. A recent visitor survey reflected that the gardens are our most positive feature of the town centre.

Achieving and maintaining Green Flag status for Grove House Gardens keeps the Town Council focused on the continuous development and improvement of this important and prestigious open space. The gardens are a popular venue for summer events and general outdoor recreation, and this management plan seeks to build further on the achievements and improvements made over the last six years.

I feel very privileged to Chair the Committee responsible for looking after these beautiful award winning Gardens. I am sure that you will find our new management plan comprehensive and we particularly look forward to working with our partners, and the Green Flag judges, to ensure the continued improvement of Grove House Gardens for future generations to enjoy.

**Cllr Liz Jones**  
**Chair of Grounds and Environmental Service Committee**  
**Dunstable Town Council**

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# **1 Section 1 - Introduction**

1.1 This management plan has been prepared to aid the efficient and effective management of the Grove House Gardens over the plan period 2016/17 to 2021/22. In particular the plan will serve to:

- Aid consultation, achieve consensus and encourage involvement.
- Assist with developing continuity and improve capacity planning by optimising use of resources.
- Help prepare for change and aid future consultation.
- Provide accurate recorded information about the gardens.
- Provide a framework for decision making.
- Assist in setting and maintaining standards.
- Assist in setting and measuring performance.
- Assist with wider strategic planning linked to the development and improvement of green space and the Dunstable town centre.
- Set out a detailed six year action plan.
- Help promote the gardens, raise their profile and increase pride in Dunstable.
- Assist in securing new internal and external funding.
- Aid the economic regeneration of the town.



1.2 This, the second edition of the second management plan for the gardens, remains a working document which will be subject to review every two years to coincide with Green Flag full assessment years. This plan will be fully re written during late 2022/23 in time for the Green Flag submission in 2024.

## **2 Section 2 - Dunstable and the Town Council**

- 2.1 Dunstable is the oldest charter town in the area now known as Central Bedfordshire and is currently home to nearly 40,000 residents. The earliest recorded residents of Dunstable lived on the Downs, the northern most point of the Chilterns and nowadays the 'settlement' nestles between the Downs. Dunstable is fiercely proud of its rich heritage yet, whilst it may be steeped in history, it is very much a town in the present, working towards a bright future.
- 2.2 Dunstable is situated some 25 miles to the north-west of London, with excellent access to the heart of the national motorway network. The town has excellent rail and busway links to nearby Luton and London St. Pancras. The needs of the air traveller are similarly well catered for with London Luton Airport located nearby.
- 2.3 Dunstable Town Council was established in 1985 following a local petition for the Council to be created. Since its creation 33 years ago the Council has developed into one of the largest town councils in the country. It is recognised as an Investors in People Bronze standard organisation demonstrating that the organisation is managed effectively
- 2.4 The Council comprises 21 elected representatives that are democratically elected (typically) every four years. For Town Council purposes Dunstable is divided into 5 political wards. The Council is the body that makes decisions and this is achieved through Committees and Sub-Committees that have delegated authority in line with the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and Delegation of Authority to Members and Officers (please see the Council's website at [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk) for further details).
- 2.5 The Council is entirely funded by the residents of Dunstable through what is known as a precept on the council tax charge and by generating income through services delivered. The 2018/19 budget will set a total precept target of £2,219,034 which equates to a council tax charge of £175.21 per council tax band D household. The Council's total net expenditure for 2018/19 is budgeted to be £2,222,034 and the gross budget is in excess of £3million. In addition the Council had an allocated capital reserve of £1,179,717 and a general reserve of £585,195 (as at 31 March 2017).
- 2.6 Supporting the Council is an officer structure that the Council employs to deliver services and ensure that all decisions are made appropriately. The Council officer structure is headed by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive who is also the statutory Head of the Paid Service. He in turn is supported by three Heads of Service who are responsible for the Council's three service departments. The Council also employs a range of external support services including legal, HR and property support. A copy of the Council's departmental service and functions as well as Committee and staffing structures are provided at Appendix 1



2.7 The Council agreed its *Vision, Mission Statement* and *Values* in 2009 and these were all re-affirmed in 2016 with the adoption of the current Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan 2016 – 2019 can be viewed at [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk)

2.8 The Council's vision is:

**'TO HELP MAKE DUNSTABLE A BETTER PLACE'**

2.9 The Council's mission statement is:

**Using its statutory powers, Dunstable Town Council will do all it can to create a lively and vibrant town, promoting civic pride and improving the quality of life for all those who live, work and visit Dunstable.**

2.10 The Council's values are to:

- **Be an advocate and campaigning voice for the people of Dunstable**
- **Work to the highest standards of integrity and openness and deliver services to the best of our abilities**
- **Work in partnership with other organisations to improve services and deliver value for money for the Dunstable council tax payer**



### **3 Section 3 - The Wider Green Space Context**

#### **3.1 Policy, Strategy, Acts and Guidance**

There are a wide range of documents which support or affect the management, maintenance and development of the Grove House Gardens and these are listed in Appendix 2.

#### **3.2 National Context**

The importance of green space and public open space was highlighted in the Urban Green Spaces Task Force Report in 2002, as a critical element in creating sustainable communities.

Over the past few years the Government have expressed concern about the loss of open space and have sought to improve the quality of existing spaces. The Government has identified a number of key objectives and priorities related to the provision, management and maintenance of Green Space and has developed, through various government departments and external agencies a range of advice, guidance and research documents.

#### **3.3 Regional Context**

Dunstable falls within the scope of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area. The Luton and South Bedfordshire Integrated Development Programme gives an ambition for Luton and South Beds (including Dunstable) to be recognised as a 'Green Growth Area' and a truly sustainable community. The aims include the provision of quality affordable housing with greener spaces and due consideration for the environment. Some 26,000 new homes and 23,000 new jobs are planned by 2021. The short-term priorities include the production of a clear green space strategy.

#### **3.4 Local Context**

A draft Green Space Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (including Dunstable) is being produced by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). Some stakeholder consultation has already taken place. Work is now in hand within CBC to finalise a recreation and green space strategy for the area. The Town Council will be a major partner and stakeholder in the delivery of the strategy objectives for increasing the quantity and quality of green space in the area.

The Dunstable Town Council Corporate Plan 2017 to 2019 sets out a clear vision and a plan for the town's future including a specific priority relating to green space provision and a key action to secure and retain Green Flag status for four parks, gardens and open spaces including Grove House Gardens.



## 4 Section 4 - The Historical Context

### Dunstable

- 4.1 Dunstable is the oldest charter town in the county of Bedfordshire and is currently home to nearly 40,000 residents. The earliest recorded residents of Dunstable lived on the Downs, the northern most point of the Chilterns. Dunstable has a long civic tradition with its first charter, granting independent market rights, being granted in 1131.
- 4.2 Until the mid-nineteenth century Dunstable was a very small agricultural market town built almost exclusively around the crossroads of the Roman Watling Street and the even earlier Icknield Way. Change came in the mid-nineteenth century as the expanding hat and bonnet trade attracted workers and later the railway attracted major industry. Further industrial expansion and associated housing saw the town grow significantly during the 1930's. After World War II the 'Plan for Dunstable' was largely responsible for the civic, shopping and entertainment expansion away from the High Street. By the mid 1980's economic recession had decimated Dunstable's main industries and further regeneration of 'brownfield sites' including mixed uses and housing was necessary.

### A Potted History of Grove House Gardens

- 4.3 The history of Grove House Gardens has always been closely associated with the history of Grove House itself. Grove House, which is currently the main office for Dunstable Town Council, is a Georgian style building. It was originally an inn called the Duke of Bedford's Arms and was built in 1747 by John Swindall.



- 4.4 When John Miller bought the Duke of Bedford's Arms in the late 18th century and turned it into a private house, now Grove House, the garden was little more than half the size of the gardens today. A painting from 1812 shows it as just a lawn, with some trees, surrounded by a paling fence.
- 4.5 Adjoining the garden was Dunstable Park, actually part of Park Farm. Although this was private land and not a municipal park, in Victorian times it was possible to hire it for special events. When John Cooper, the owner of a nearby hat factory in the High Street, gave his employees an occasional holiday he would hire it from the farmer and the bonnet sewers and blockers would enjoy a day out with sports and games and dancing, music played by the local band, and a generous tea for everyone. The last horse races in Dunstable were also held in the gardens in 1854

and a touring English XI played cricket here in 1859 and 1860 against teams from Dunstable and Bedfordshire.

- 4.6 In 1907 a keen gardener and local businessman, Arthur Bagshawe, leased the house. He set about restoring the house and the gardens laying them out with



lawns and flower beds, gravel paths and hedges, and two greenhouses. In 1920 he was able to buy the house and neighbouring Park Farm, and this gave him the opportunity to extend his garden still further by taking in another five acres from the Park, making the Grove House Gardens we know today.

- 4.7 Arthur Bagshawe died in 1926 and ten years later his eldest son sold Grove House and the gardens to Dunstable Borough Council. A Mr A F England gifted ornate gates to the town to create the stone and gated entrance that we see today at High Street North. In the 1950's the gardens became the venue for numerous town events, particularly annual fayres, which were opened by film stars such as Phyllis Calvert and Sam Kydd (a former Dunstable Grammar School pupil).
- 4.8 In 2007 the gardens were completely redeveloped. The catalyst for change and significant investment came with the development of the Grove Park Theatre Complex including a state of the art theatre and multi-purpose arts and entertainment venue along with bars and an improved leisure centre. The leisure centre is currently being further redeveloped. Grove House Gardens benefited from substantial regeneration including new pathways, lighting, a new play area and tree planting.
- 4.9 The next section of this management plan describes the gardens and the key features as they are today and some of the many improvements and activities that have taken place in more recent years.

## **5 Section 5 - Site Description, Key Features and Recent Improvements**

### **5.1 Location - Grid Reference TL01733 22173**

Grove House Gardens is situated in the centre of Dunstable adjacent to the A505 High Street North and is an important green space within the Dunstable Town Centre. The Gardens are bordered by Grove House to the south west, the Grove Theatre Complex to the north east, the former Ashton Middle School to the west and Court Drive to the east. The plans overleaf show the location of the gardens within the town centre area (coloured blue) and provide a more detailed layout of the gardens and key features.

### **5.2 Access**

The gardens benefit from excellent access arrangements by foot, by cycle, by public transport and by car. In particular a main Sustrans cycle route runs adjacent to the park along Dog Kennel Walk. The plan overleaf shows the main vehicle access point from the A505, pedestrian and cycle access points at five locations, bus stops adjacent to Asda on Court Drive and the public parking facilities within a two to three minute walk of the gardens. Dunstable now also benefits from a guided bus way linking the town with Luton and Houghton Regis. The bus way route runs close to Grove House Gardens and a local connection on Court Drive adjacent to the gardens benefits both those visiting the site and theatre goers' wishing to use the Grove Theatre complex.

### **5.3 Ownership**

The Town Council is the freehold owner of Grove House Gardens

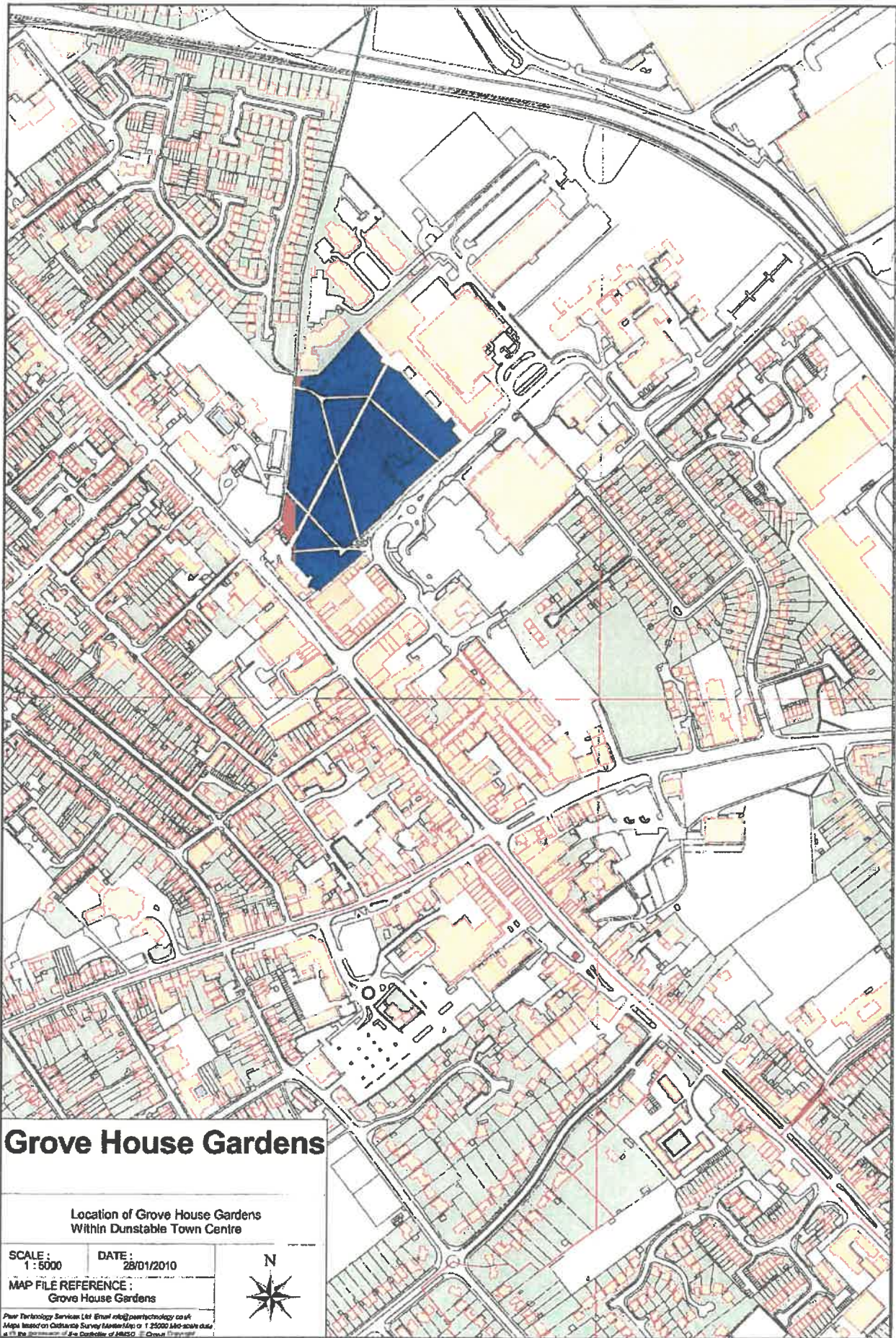
### **5.4 Key Features and Recent Improvements**

Grove House Gardens is 2.37ha and the main features within the gardens are:

- Play area
- Performance bandstand
- Mature trees, views and vistas
- Lawns and horticultural features
- Floral displays
- Wildlife area
- Entrance gates and overthrow
- Interpretation, signage and furniture
- Sculptures
- Footpaths, Access, Security and Lighting
- Recycling point

The plans overleaf show a number of these features within the Gardens and information about each of these is detailed more fully in the next section of the management plan.





# Grove House Gardens

Location of Grove House Gardens  
Within Dunstable Town Centre

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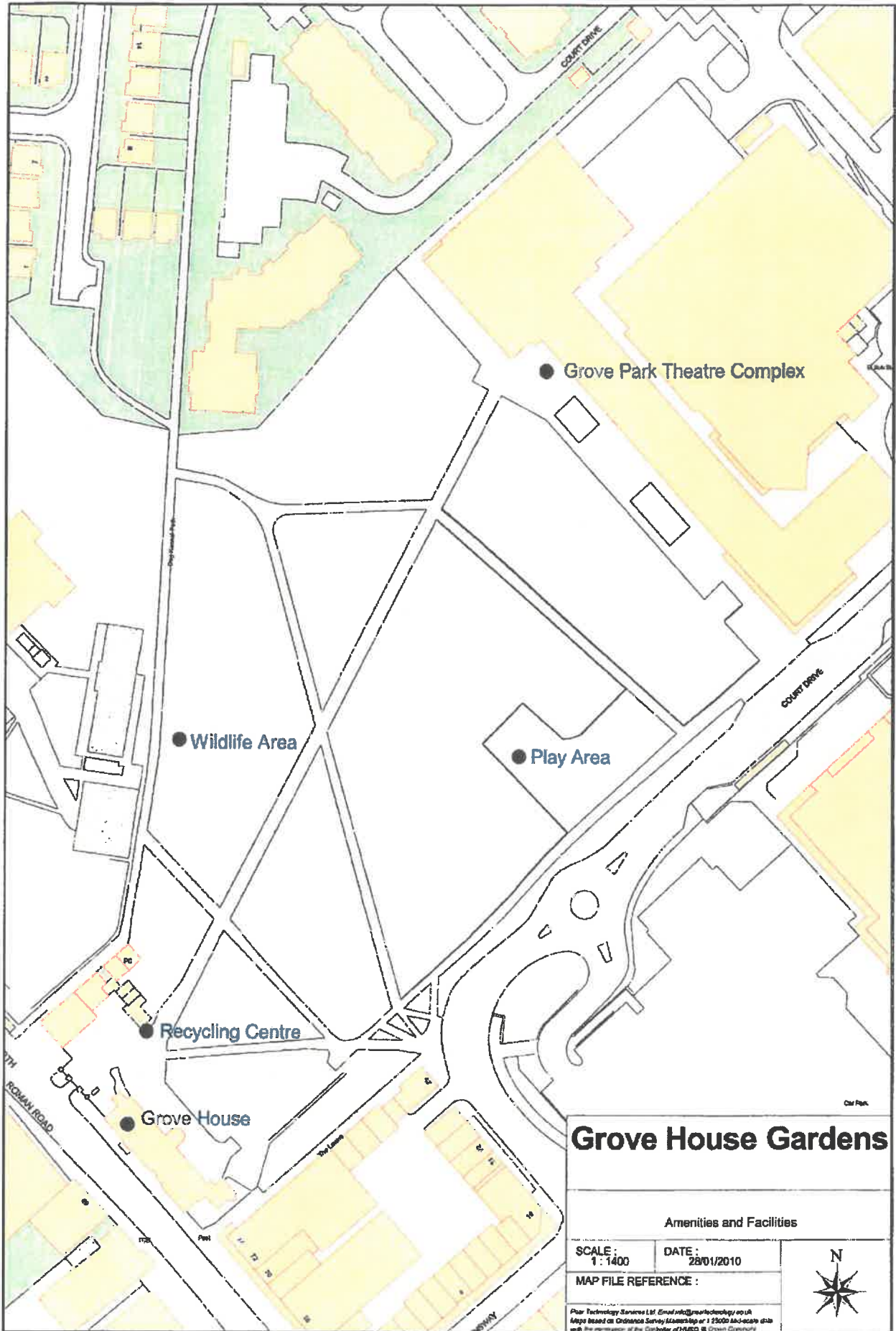
DATE :  
29/01/2010

MAP FILE REFERENCE :  
Grove House Gardens



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# Grove House Gardens

Amenities and Facilities

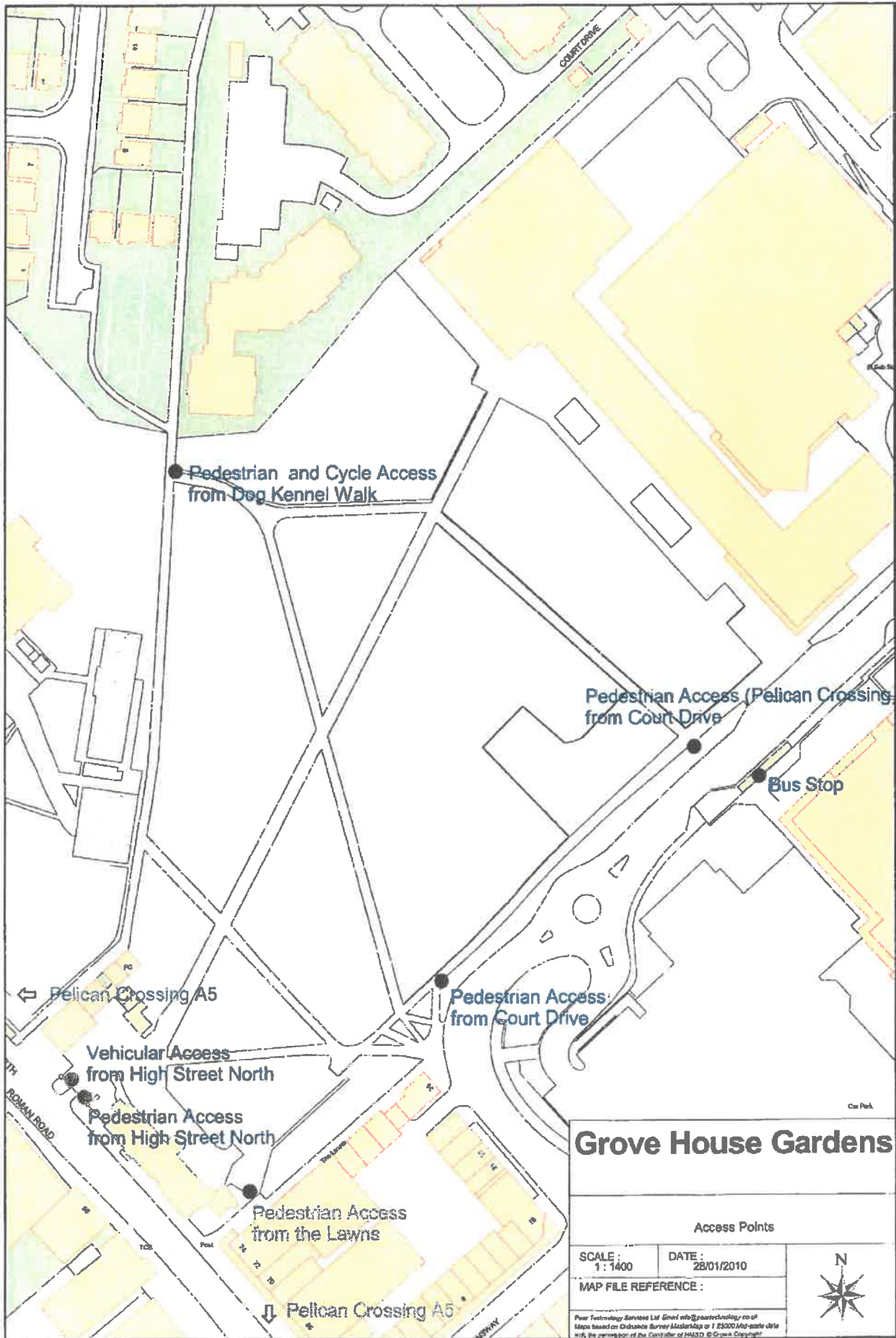
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# Grove House Gardens

Access Points

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#### 5.4.1 Play Area

Since they became a public space in the 1950's the gardens have always provided local people with a play area.



In 2007 a new play area was installed in the gardens as part of the wider Grove Theatre Complex development. This NEAP sized play area caters for toddlers through to teenagers and incorporates fencing and safety surfacing. There is a large grass area with benches for parents to sit and picnic. The site is inspected and litter picked daily 7 days per week. A complete respray of all the equipment was completed in

2016. The Action Plan includes an opportunity in future to provide disabled access play equipment via Section 106 funding from the adjacent Ashton School housing development.

#### 5.4.2 Performance Bandstand

The Performance bandstand is located adjacent to the Grove House outbuildings and faces towards the main lawns. Erected in 2000 this purpose built performance area provides an elevated covered stage with electricity for sound and lighting. Used extensively throughout the summer for music and band concerts and an annual music festival the performance area makes the Grove House Gardens one of the premier outdoor entertainment and event space in Dunstable.



Dunstable Rocks 2016 headlined by Carol Decker, T'Pau



### 5.4.3 Mature trees, views and vistas

The gardens are home to around 80 mature and semi mature trees and some 30 new trees were planted during the extensive 2007 renovations and in later years.

Many of the trees are a legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century uses of the house and gardens as privately owned property. The list of trees is impressive and includes some less common tree species such as Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven), Metasequoia (Dawn Redwood), Quercus ilex (Holm Oak) and Liriodendron (Tulip Tree). A more recent addition is the marvellous Paulownia tomentosa (Foxglove Tree) pictured below flowering in 2017.



The trees forms an integral part of the backbone of the gardens and along with the adjacent listed buildings they help to create a mature and aesthetically pleasing open space with good views and a sense of history and belonging. The trees are also of significant wildlife value to the area supporting a wide range of bird species and smaller mammals.

Over the last five years the Council has invested significant funding in managing the tree stock to ensure that the trees are maintained in a healthy condition. Investment has also included a detailed and mapped survey of the trees and the purchase of 'My Trees' software to create a data base of tree conditions and completed tree works. The software also assists with future programmed management and resource allocation.

#### 5.4.4 Lawns and horticultural features

Some of the grass areas within the gardens are maintained as lawn areas to compliment adjacent ornamental plantings, floral displays and the Grade II listed building, Grove House, which forms a backdrop to the gardens. The lawns are



heavily used for a wide range of activities throughout the year from large scale events through to picnicking, French boule and wedding photographs.

In the past the lawns have been maintained to a very high standard as fine lawns. Maintenance has included box mowing, fertiliser and herbicide applications and scarifying. With changes to the use of the area in the last few years the Council has

decided to continue to provide lawn areas but reduce the level of intensive maintenance. From March 2016 the areas have been cut with cylinder ride-on mowers on a weekly basis and are no longer treated with fertiliser and herbicide applications. This approach is in line with suggestions made by previous Green Flag judges and further supports a more sustainable approach to grounds maintenance.



A number of ornamental planted areas have been created within the gardens to compliment the treescape and the floral displays. Extensive use has been made of drought tolerant and shade loving species including Phormiums, Euphorbias, Achillea, Hebe, Elaeagnus, Bergenia, Heuchera and grasses.



Volunteer planting as part of the Dunstable in Bloom campaign



#### 5.4.5 Floral displays

Summer floral displays in the gardens mainly take the form of free standing displays in tiered containers, window boxes and hanging baskets. There is a small raised brick planter adjacent to Grove House which is maintained and planted with spring and summer bedding plants by the Women's Institute. The more recent redevelopment of the adjacent Court Drive has provided an opportunity to introduce hanging baskets along the boundary of the gardens. Planters and hanging baskets are also provided to the front of Grove House along the main High Street. The ornate entrance railings are used to show off window box summer displays.



All floral display compost mixes are 50% peat reduced and contain water retention gels. Plants used in floral displays include some drought tolerant plant species.

Spring displays largely take the form of naturalised bulbs planted in extensive drifts across grass areas.





#### 5.4.6 Wildlife area

Beyond the formal ornamental lawns and extensive open grass areas lies an area of semi natural land with mature trees, a shrub understorey, groundcover vegetation and longer grass. The area runs alongside Dog Kennel Walk to the north-west side of the gardens and forms part of the wildlife corridor linking with the Dunstable busway and Dog Kennel Down.



The area is managed with minimal interventions to ensure that it remains undisturbed so that wildlife can flourish.

In 2011 the area benefited from a community planting session to establish a ribbon of native hedgerow plants.

This semi natural wildlife area provides a great opportunity in the future for community activity days and the Council is in discussion with the local Wildlife Trust to establish a good understanding of the flora and fauna present and the value of the habitat with a view to developing a programme to enhance and improves its biodiversity.

Dunstable in Bloom volunteers in action

#### 5.4.7 Entrance gates and overthrow

Access to the gardens from High Street North is via a stone and wrought iron gateway originally installed in 1939 as a gift to the Borough from a local benefactor.

The gates and stone pillars were restored in 2010 and a new overthrow was added across the main entrance to welcome visitors to the gardens. The overthrow replaced one that was part of the original gated entrance in 1939 which had not been in place for many years. This impressive feature is included within the listed building status of Grove House. Pedestrian access is separated from vehicle access by two pedestrian gates located either side of the main vehicle entrance.



Gates before restoration



Gates following restoration



Gates after restoration with new floral displays added



#### 5.4.8 Interpretation, signage and furniture

In April 2009 a series of 4 interpretation lecterns were installed to provide visitors with information about the heritage and wildlife aspects of the gardens. The lecterns have pictorial and written information to assist visitors to the gardens orientate themselves and to provide historical detail on the both Grove House and Grove House Gardens.



The first panel encountered as visitors come through the main entrance into the gardens provides a welcome and orientation point, describing and locating the main features and facilities in the gardens, as well as displaying the location of

the three further interpretation lecterns. The remaining lecterns provide information on the history of Grove House Gardens, the history of Grove House and information on the flora and fauna that visitors may encounter on a visit to the gardens.

The lecterns themselves are in a style to complement the existing furniture and have been installed off the main paths in accessible but unobtrusive locations where they can be studied by visitors. The interpretation information was written



and illustrated with assistance from the Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust and the Dunstable History Society.

In addition to the interpretation lecterns a double sided fence mounted notice board has been installed at the main High Street North entrance to provide community information to the gardens visitors.

In 2011 additional information sign boards were erected at three main entrance points. The sign boards include an illustrated map of the park with key features, contact and emergency information and space for advertising events.

#### 5.4.9 Sculptures

The gardens are home to a number of sculptures created by local artists and local communities. These sculptures enhance the visual amenity of the gardens as well as creating a sense of identity for this important open space. Three of the sculptures are wood carvings made from tree stumps from trees felled on site. These were created in situ as part of a folk festival event in 2005.



In 2010, as part of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, the Town Council commissioned local artist Nicola Daley to work with the local community to create a lasting sculpture to commemorate the event.

The artist's work on the project began at Party in the Park when she ran an interactive workshop with local residents. She then followed this with further sessions with local community groups and she has turned their ideas into 4 sculptures which represent what Dunstable means to its local community.

Local people identified Dunstable with 4 themes including the town's Watling Street Roman heritage, the Priory Church and gliding on Dunstable Downs. The town's young people identified Dunstable with BMX biking.

The artist created 4 metal sculptures using recycled parts from an old Vauxhall car and the sculptures depict the 4 Dunstable themes. The sculptures are now on permanent display in Grove House Gardens along with an interpretation board to explain how they were created. The creation of the sculptures was funded by the Lottery 'Awards for All' fund with an additional contribution from the Town Council.







Sculptures unveiled by the Town Mayor at Party in the Park in 2011

In 2016 a new balloon sculpture was added to the gardens. It was created by the Sustrans team from the local Travel Choices Hub using art work by local school children depicting the many forms of travel.

#### 5.4.10 Footpaths, Access, Security and Lighting

The gardens are very accessible on foot due to the extensive network of paths and access points. The pathways are in excellent condition many having been upgraded and resurfaced as part of the Grove Theatre Complex development. A hierarchy of paths has been created with those most extensively used being surfaced with a resin bonded fine grit stone finish.



The gardens are well lit with modern lamp columns in a range of heights which complement the footpath hierarchy. Additional lighting has been incorporated to light some of the mature trees helping to create an attractive night scene and increase the feeling of safety and security. The extensive lighting further assists with the CCTV installed at two locations along the main thoroughfares.

The main thoroughfare lighting is also used to display Christmas lights each year.



#### 5.4.11 Recycling point

A recycling collection point was installed at the end of 2008 as part of Dunstable Town Council's commitment to improving the gardens. The centre provides a facility for the recycling of glass, plastics and aluminium and has proved popular with users of the park.



The recycling unit is emptied weekly by Biffa on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council. The glass, plastics and aluminium receptacles are highlighted both pictorially and in writing for ease of use.

The action Plan includes a new objective to improve recycling opportunities and the Council will look at providing separator bins when replacing existing litter bins.

## **6 Section 6 - Community**

### **6.1 Current Users**

Information on the gardens users and visitors and their behavioural patterns is based on informal observations and recent satisfaction survey data. It is known that the gardens are used by a wide variety of people including young people, families, local residents, those participating in events, shoppers, college students, older people, newly married couples, theatre and entertainment goers, tourists and other visitors to Dunstable.

The satisfaction survey undertaken in summer 2017 with 50 respondents has provided the following information:

- Most people access the gardens from Court Drive.
- The most popular reasons for visiting the gardens were to use the play area, have a picnic, take children / grandchildren out, go to an event in the park and get exercise and fresh air.
- The majority of visitors either walk to or through the gardens or arrive by car.
- 46% of those surveyed were very satisfied with the gardens and 52% were satisfied. Only 2% of respondents were dissatisfied.
- The top three things people most liked about the gardens were that it was a pleasant open space, the play area and the trees and shade they create.
- Nearly half of all respondents did not list anything wrong with the gardens or suggested no improvements were required.
- The small numbers identifying things wrong with the gardens included dogs off the lead and antisocial behaviour.
- Those identifying improvements suggested the creation of a splash park (now located at Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground), toilets in the gardens and more picnic tables and benches.

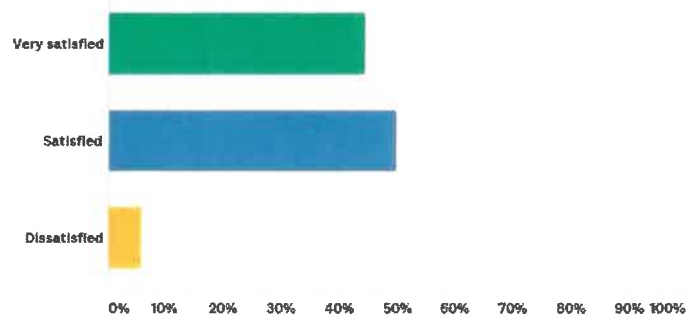
A copy of the questionnaire used is provided at Appendix 3.

Those visitors participating in and attending events at Grove House Gardens during 2017 were surveyed about the events. A copy of the survey questions and a summary of the findings is provided in Appendix 3a. The events questionnaire was available online via Survey Monkey and proved more popular than traditional methods with 331 people completing the survey.

The benefit of using Survey Monkey also meant that results could be immediately seen and trends identified, coupling this alongside the informal social media feedback. For example officers were able to pick up on feedback regarding drinking in the park and drunken behavior, thus creating a 'family area' for Dunstable Rocks! Survey Monkey will be used again to review and evaluate the 2018 events.

Overall satisfaction with the Council's 2017 events programme shows high levels of satisfaction generally. See table below.

**Q11 Overall how would you rate Dunstable Town Council's events programme in 2017?**



Advertising and promotion of the events programme also achieved very high levels of satisfaction. The vast majority of people said that they heard about the events through Facebook posts and it is interesting to note that the majority of those completing the survey were female falling into the age range 25 to 54.

An extract of the events programme for Grove House Gardens for 2018 is provided in the table shown below.

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	Attendance (approx.)
<b>JUNE</b>			
<b>Saturday 16</b>	<b>Dunstable Live</b> <i>An afternoon of music to suit everyone.</i>	Grove House Gardens	5000
<b>JULY</b>			
<b>Saturday 21</b>	<b>Party in the Park</b> <i>A packed family fun day with music, stalls, rides and entertainment</i>	Grove House Gardens	5000-7500
<b>Sunday, 1, 8, 15 and 29</b>	<b>Sunday Band Concerts</b> <i>Traditional and Brass bands</i>	Grove House Gardens	200
<b>AUGUST</b>			
<b>Sunday 5 and 12</b>	<b>Sunday Band Concert</b> <i>Traditional and Brass bands</i>	Grove House Gardens	200

A full copy of the Council's wider events programme for 2018 is provided at Appendix 4.

## 6.2 Current Uses

The gardens cater for a wide range of uses and the description of the gardens in Section 5 of this plan provides a good indication of usage. The way in which the gardens are use can be summarised as follows:

- Informal recreation such as walking and light exercise.
- Picnicing, relaxing and sunbathing.

- Children's play.
- Passing through along a main town centre thoroughfare.
- Informal outdoor games.
- Special events and community and music performances.
- Somewhere to sit, eat and meet.
- Bird feeding and watching and being close to nature.
- Marriage celebration and photography.
- Recycling.
- Parading

### 6.3 Stakeholders and Partners

Dunstable Town Council is working with or actively developing new relationships with a number of groups and organisations across a range of activities and issues associated with the gardens. A full list of the Grove House Garden stakeholders is given below:

- Local residents and visitors to the town.
- Dunstable Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council elected members.
- Central Bedfordshire officers
- Dunstable Joint Committee
- Bedfordshire Constabulary and the local Community Policing Team
- Street Pastors
- Grove Theatre Complex Management Team
- BBC 3 Counties Radio
- Central Bedfordshire College
- CBC Registrar's Office
- Event Organisers
- Adjacent Restaurant and Pub Owners
- Dunstable in Bloom and Promoting Dunstable
- Specialist and External Contractors and Suppliers.
- Bedfordshire Wildlife Trusts
- Sustrans and Travel Choices Hub

### 6.4 Community and Business Forum for Grove House Gardens

The Council has previously attempted to establish a 'Friends of Grove House Gardens'. However, early attempts to develop a specific group dedicated to the gardens were not successful.

The Council recognises the advice received from previous judges on community engagement and will make further attempts to establish a Community and Business type forum of existing users, stakeholders, agencies and neighbouring businesses to ensure that the local community in its widest sense can play an active part in future management, maintenance and decision making. This action has been added to the 6-year action plan as a new objective.

### 6.5 Future Community Related Activities.

The Council recognises that it is important to develop a range of community engagement and participation opportunities for the gardens over and above the wide ranging events programme. Whilst some limited progress has been made during recent years through specific activities including bulb planting with various community groups and schools, the community art project to develop the four sculptures and various Dunstable in Bloom launch events it is considered that the gardens lend themselves to the following activities:

- Community planting events.
- Wildlife area maintenance and litter picking.
- Summer play activities for young people.
- Big Lunch event for older people.
- Love Parks Week activities.
- Healthy living activities

These have subsequently been added to the Action Plan as new objectives.

In addition the gardens provide an ideal place for community groups and organisations to plan and hold their own events. The Council has robust arrangements in place to support individuals and communities with organising these events in the gardens in a safe manner. Appendix 5 provides a copy of the event application documentation.



## 7 Section 7 - Management and Maintenance

### 7.1 Management Arrangements

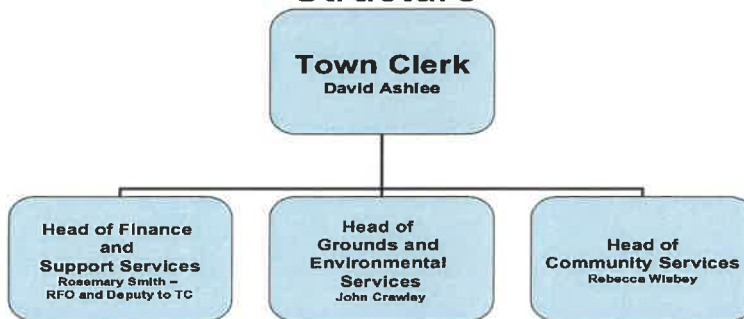
The gardens are owned and directly managed by Dunstable Town Council.

In April 2009 the Town Council reorganised its committee, management and reporting structures and arrangements and established three distinct services each led by a Service Head.

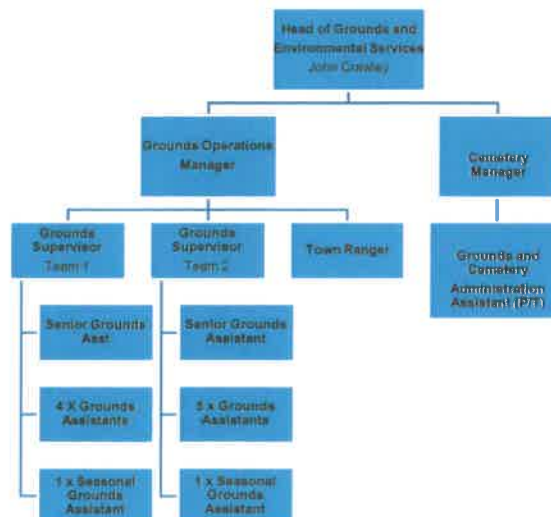
- Grounds and Environmental Services
- Community Services
- Finance and Support Services

The Town Clerk and the three Heads of Service form the Senior Management Team and the management structure is reflected in the committee structure.

### Senior Management Team Structure



Following a restructure in 2012 the day to day operational management of the Grounds Service is led by the Grounds Operations Manager who has responsibility for two service teams each headed by a works supervisor.



Whilst for supervisory purposes there are two grounds teams the reality is that all grounds staff are available to work in the gardens as the need or work programme requires. The teams do not work in isolation.

Community Services is responsible for a range of services including events management, older people's services, younger people's services and town centre management. These services have an active part to play in the management and use of the gardens and there is significant cross organisational working between services and teams to ensure that appropriate and high quality services are delivered to the residents of Dunstable.

The Town Council also works very closely with the Police, Central Bedfordshire Council and other agencies to address issues associated with safety, antisocial behaviour and security through a specially convened problem solving group. The group monitors unacceptable activity and crime on a monthly basis through intelligence sharing and multi-agency interventions can be organised quickly to tackle problem areas.

In February 2013 The Town Council secured Investors in People status at the standard entry level. The Council's Senior Management team has been working closely with the assessor to develop an improvement programme to achieve a higher status level in years to come.

## 7.2 Maintenance Arrangements

With the exception of lighting maintenance and tree management all grounds maintenance and cleansing activity is undertaken by the in-house maintenance teams.

Lighting within the gardens is the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council and tree management is undertaken by specialist companies.

In addition the Council has retained the services of a Property Management and Building Consultancy to assist with management and maintenance of all the Council's buildings. The Council also employs specialist contractors for major refurbishment and renewal works such as the recently refurbished Grove House Gardens outbuildings.

The grounds teams are responsible for delivering day-to-day maintenance of the gardens including grass cutting and fine turf maintenance, floral display planting, watering and weeding, shrub border maintenance and pruning, minor tree works, litter collection and bin emptying, sweeping and cleaning, play area inspections and maintenance and minor improvement works.

The Council has established a Town Ranger service to provide a quick response reactive service to local residents to deal with graffiti, fly tipping, cleaning and general vegetation management around the town and within the wider public realm.

The Town Ranger provides the Council with a quick response mechanism for both its own land and the wider public realm and the service has proved invaluable in dealing with issues as they have arisen in the gardens. In 2016 an additional Town Centre Ranger was established to work entirely in the Town Centre area including Grove House Gardens. The new Ranger is equipped with a good range of specialist equipment including a street sweeper, trailer mounted pressure washer and an all-terrain utility vehicle.



A summary of the maintenance operations and an 'at a glance' programme of works for Grove House Gardens is available at Appendix 6.

### 7.3 Health and Safety

Over the last few years the Council has made significant improvements in its management of Health and Safety issues and responsibilities. The Council has a contract with a specialist Health and Safety consultancy to provide robust support and advice on a range of health and safety related matters. Key officers of the Council meet on a regular basis as an internal Health and Safety Advisory Group (HASAG) to deliver further Health and Safety improvements.

A copy of the Council's Health and Safety Policy Statement, a list of work related risk assessments, example of an event risk assessment and a site specific risk assessment for the Gardens are available at Appendix 7.

### 7.4 Sustainable Management

The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the impact of its activities on the wider environment is managed and where possible reduced. The Council adopted an Environmental and Sustainability Policy in June 2016 and a copy of the policy is available at Appendix 8.

The following arrangements have been adopted to support the policy.

### Pesticide Usage

The use of herbicide on hard surfaces is kept to a minimum by ensuring that applications are undertaken on a spot treatment basis rather than coverage of a whole area. Furthermore, the spot treatment is only undertaken on instruction from the Operations Manager where difficult perennial weed cannot easily be removed by hand. The primary method of weed control is by hand and is achieved through good husbandry. Herbicide is not used on any planted areas.

In 2016 the council stopped applying pesticide or fertiliser to the ornamental lawns. The lawns are now managed as per other grass areas in the gardens but cut more frequently. This change is in keeping with previous judge's comments suggesting that resource intensive maintenance of the lawns was no longer appropriate for the site.

A new objective recently added to the Action Plan includes the elimination of herbicides entirely by 2019/20. The Town Ranger team will trial the use of the hot water pressure system on weeds in hard surfaces in 2018.

### Use of Horticultural Peat

The Council has significantly reduced the use of peat within the last few years. All bedding plants, hanging baskets and containerised displays are now grown in a 50% peat reduced compost.

A new objective recently added to the Action Plan includes seeking further reductions in the use of peat for growing bedding plants beyond the current 50% reduction. This will involve discussion with current and future suppliers regarding the viability of alternative composts.

### Water Saving Techniques

Watering of floral displays is undertaken on an as required basis to maintain plants in a good condition. Unnecessary watering is avoided at all times. Where watering is required this is carried out early in the morning to reduce loss of water through evaporation.

Composts incorporate water retaining gels and crystals to assist in reducing the need for watering. Pole and barrier baskets contain reservoirs to retain water. All outside taps are securely locked when not in use.

### Waste and Recycling

The Council has set up a recycling station within the gardens to encourage people to dispose of recycled material responsibly. Green waste arising from grounds maintenance operations is disposed of at a nearby transfer station where it further reprocessed at a composting facility. The Council has also established a contract with a confidential waste shredding supplier to dispose of all waste paper in a responsible manner.

A new objective recently added to the Action Plan includes a review of options for improved waste separation and collection at source with existing and future waste collection and disposal companies. This will likely include the introduction of separator litter bins to encourage further recycling

### Vehicle Management

The Council has adopted a vehicle management policy which is provided in Appendix 9.

The policy seeks to ensure a responsible approach to procuring and maintaining the Council's vehicles and plant and requires that the procurement of new vehicles takes account of the opportunities to use eco-friendly fuels and other green technologies including construction and disposal. In addition the Council will maintain a responsible vehicle fleet age profile of 4 to 10 years.

### Procurement of Goods and Services

In order to support the local economy the Council encourages purchasing at a local level.

## 7.5 Ecological Management

The Council recognises the valuable input and advice from previous Green Flag judges and in particular the suggestions to:

- Undertake a baseline survey of existing flora and fauna in the gardens.
- Develop aims and objectives for tree cover and prescription for the management of the wildlife area.
- Provide additional wildlife interpretation information.
- Involve the local community and volunteers in managing and improving the wildlife area.

The action plan has been revised to include the development of these new objectives.

## 7.6 Antisocial Behaviour Issues

Like many Parks and Gardens around the country Grove House Gardens is not immune to antisocial behaviour. Whilst such behaviour does exist it is not the case that it is out of control and it is considered to be largely low level activity. As previously stated the Council works in close partnership with other agencies to monitor and tackle such behaviour. The type of antisocial behaviour occurring in the gardens includes the following:

- Heavy littering of the grass area to the front of the Grove Theatre complex and at the rear of Grove House in the summer months.
- Climbing on buildings and structures.
- Occasional unauthorised vehicles and motorcycles cutting across the gardens as a short cut.

- Occasional large numbers of youths gathering making people feel intimidated.
- Occasional vandalism to the play area.
- Drunken behaviour.

A number of infrastructure improvements have been made to the gardens in the past ten years or so and these coupled with appropriate interventions by Council staff and other agencies assist in ensuring that this type of unacceptable behaviour does not get out of control. These are detailed below:

- Two number CCTV cameras located in the gardens and monitored 24 hours per day.
- Good lighting coverage to the main routes across the gardens.
- Enforcement officers are able to visit if requested to tackle littering.
- Town Council staff undertake litter picking each morning seven days per week and a late afternoon scavenge for litter during the summer months can be carried out by the new Town Ranger service.
- Council staff give out black waste liners to groups of youths to deposit their litter in alongside the many bins that are available.
- Good signage in place regarding littering.
- Council is able to respond quickly to vandalism and has introduced a Freephone number for visitors to report incidents.
- The local Asda supermarket has carried out litter picks using its own staff.
- The gardens are designated as an alcohol control zone and the police are able to enforce this by confiscating alcohol.
- Adjacent licensed premises employ door security to prevent alcohol, glass and bottles leaving their premises.
- Police regularly patrol the gardens.

Whilst these interventions do not completely eradicate antisocial behaviour collectively they go some way to tackling and mitigating the effects of antisocial behaviour.



## 8 Section 8 - Marketing

### 8.1 Event Promotion

Grove House Gardens is one of two premier outdoor events spaces within Dunstable and the Council has developed a wide ranging events programme. The Council publishes a programme of Council events each year in its spring edition of Talk of the Town. Other organisations using the gardens make their own arrangements to publicise their events. However, the Council is happy to use its social media outlets and noticeboards to support these organisations with their publicity needs.

The events programme is promoted in a number of ways and these include press advertising, posters and flyers, articles on the Councils web site, radio and other media coverage and articles in the Councils free quarterly newspaper Talk of the Town. Promotion of music events is undertaken in partnership with the Grove Theatre to assist in reaching wider audiences.



### 8.2 Media Coverage

Media coverage is largely limited at present to publicity and promotion of events within the gardens. Local radio is used extensively for this type of promotion and with BBC 3 Counties Radio having recently established its offices and radio station adjacent to the gardens the Council has developed a strong partnership with producers and presenters.

Green Flag achievements are well communicated to the media via the Green Flag generic template.

### 8.3 Web and Social Media

The Councils web site [www.dunstable.gov.uk](http://www.dunstable.gov.uk) is set up to provide details of all parks, gardens and open spaces within Dunstable which are managed directly by the Council. Specific pages have been allocated to Grove House Gardens. The action plan includes a specific action to develop and refresh the pages to improve the promotion of the gardens. A copy of this management plan is available in PDF format on the web site.

Facebook and twitter are used extensively to promote activities and they have a combined following of nearly 2800 followers.



#### 8.4 Signage

Signage both within the gardens and on adjacent main roads is considered to be of significant importance in promoting this space.

Four interpretation signs have been installed in various locations within the gardens. They detail the history of the gardens and the house, provide information about the wildlife present and provide a general overview of the space. The action plan includes for additional interactive interpretation material relating to the wildlife area.

A Dunstable Town Council information and display case sign is located at the main entrance to the gardens at High Street North (A5). A large welcome banner and directional signs to the Grove Theatre are also provided.

Each of the main entrances to the gardens is provided with an information board providing a plan of the gardens and general information to visitors.

#### 8.5 Place in the Market

With regard to the events programme the Council takes great care to research other event programmes in the area so that it is not in direct competition with other organisations. Where possible events are complimentary to other local events cover a gap in the market. In particular the decision has been taken to retain the Sunday Band Concerts in the gardens as there are few local authorities in the area who are able to offer such facilities.

## **9 Section 9 - The Six-Year Action Plan**

### **9.1 Aims and Objectives**

In order to achieve the Town Council's vision set out in the Corporate Plan the Council has set the following key priority for green open space in Dunstable::

*'To improve further and develop the provision of green and open space in the town'*

In particular the Council's Corporate Plan further recognises the need to ensure that the management of parks, cemeteries and open spaces within Dunstable is improved and new services are developed. More specifically the Council has identified a desire to retain Green Flag status for Grove House Gardens and Priory Gardens as a means to deliver both wider and specific objectives.









The Council recognises and appreciates the need to work towards achieving the following within Grove House Gardens if it is to succeed in delivering its own vision and objectives.

- A welcoming place
- A healthy, safe and secure place
- A well maintained and clean place
- A sustainable place
- A place of conservation and heritage
- A place where the community can be involved
- A well marketed place
- A well-managed place










Much has already been achieved through the first five-year action plan. This new action plan is therefore set out to clearly identify how further progress can be made over the next six year period.

## A Welcoming Place

In order to ensure that the gardens are a welcoming place which people wish to visit the action plan seeks to improve, develop and enhance those aspects of the gardens which currently contribute to this objective. These are outlined below:

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
First Impressions							
Bi-annually power wash the restored heritage gateway at High Street North.							Town Ranger spring clean activity using existing revenue funding. <b>Cleaned April 2016, programmed for March 2018</b>
Annually clean all furniture and signage.							Town Ranger spring clean activity using existing revenue funding. <b>Programmed for March 2018</b>
Provide attractive and colourful floral displays at key access points and intersections within the gardens.							Include supply of 10 plus floral display units within town wide procurement of floral displays. £2,000 existing revenue funding.
Access to Information							
Provide up to date local information on all notice boards located in the gardens.							Town Ranger to refresh notice boards monthly.
Something for Everyone							
Provide a comprehensive events programme to cater for a wide range of audiences							The annual events programme is diverse ranging from traditional Sunday band concerts, family fun days, specific children activities and popular music events. Existing revenue funding secured.
Review options to encourage or support 'Love Parks' week activities							Head of Service to continue to work with in-house Community team to develop the 2018 programme. <b>Dunstable Love Parks week 2017 included a BBQ and team sports for 30 to 40 young people at Grove House Gardens. The 2018 programme will include a BBQ and music for young people in the gardens.</b>



Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Something for Everyone (Cont.)							
Review annual satisfaction surveys to inform events programmes.							Events and Grounds teams to review event and customer satisfaction surveys every second year to inform future plans.
<b>Safe and Secure</b>							
Create a clear delineation between pedestrians, vehicles and cyclists at the main entrance from High Street North.							Work with Central Beds Council as part of the wider de trunking improvements to the A5. £30,000 Unsecured capital. <b>Funding withdrawn by CBC. Improvements to be designed into wider parking improvements.</b>
Improve parking arrangements to the rear of Grove House. Consider creating additional parking provision and landscaping.							<b>£25,000 secured from Town Council reserves. Brasier Freeth liaising with CBC planning to determine options within conservation area.</b>
Restrict unauthorised vehicle access adjacent to Weatherspoon Pub.							Install knee rail using in-house grounds staff. £1,000 existing secured revenue. <b>Re programmed to 2018/19 following discussion with Grove Park leisure complex regarding future access arrangements</b>
<b>Non-Discriminatory Access</b>							
Improve seating provision to accommodate people with differing needs such as wheelchair access and mobility restrictions.							Seek advice from local Disability Resource Centre. £10,000 Unsecured capital
Introduce braille to existing information lecterns. When replacing information panels ensure design complies with RNIB criteria.							Seek advice from RNIB. £5,000 Unsecured capital
Install disabled access play equipment in the existing play area.							Operations Manager. £20,000 Unsecured capital / S106 from Aston School development















## A Healthy, Safe and Secure Place


Recognising that one of the barriers to people visiting the gardens will be a fear for their own personal safety and security it is considered essential that these fears and perceptions are allayed.

Whilst the gardens already have adequate lighting and CCTV, are well maintained and, an alcohol ban is in enforceable it is important that acts of antisocial behaviour are addressed quickly so that they do not become the norm.

In addition it is important that all facilities and equipment are maintained in a safe condition and that all working practices have been adequately risk assessed to safeguard both employees and the general public.

The gardens also represent an opportunity for visitors to pursue a healthy lifestyle through walking and general exercise. Areas set aside for quite reflective contemplation in an attractive environment are also recognised as important in achieving a balanced stress free lifestyle. With these thoughts in mind the following actions are included within the Action Plan:
















Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Personal Safety							
Work with partner agencies such as CBC and the Police to enforcement protocols and procedures to tackle antisocial behaviour as the need arises.							Partner with CBC and Bedfordshire Police to develop emerging Community Protect Notices procedures.
Develop systems to capture true costs of antisocial behaviour and vandalism and measure effectiveness of enforcement and response.							
Deal quickly with vandalism and littering in line with the principles of the 'broken window syndrome.							Use in-house grounds staff and Town Ranger to provide a quick response. Existing secure revenue available.








Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
<b>Managing Risk</b>							
Complete an annual review of all grounds and site related risk assessments							Internal Health and Safety Advisory Group monitors progress. <b>Ongoing reviews of risk assessments by Operations Manager</b>
Inspect and clean the play area on a daily basis.							This is a programmed activity within grounds using existing secured revenue funding. <b>Completed and ongoing</b>
Undertake an independent quarterly inspection of all play equipment via an approved and accredited inspector.							Wicksteed and RoSPA are currently retained to undertake this work on a quarterly and annual basis. Existing revenue funding secured. <b>Completed and ongoing</b>
<b>Healthy Living</b>							
Publish information via social media about how the gardens can be used as a place for informal exercise.							Publish walking / jogging routes with distances and times, physical exercises using existing features. <b>To be published March 2018</b>
Establish level of support / need for installing outdoor gym equipment at various locations.							£15,000 Unsecured capital.



## A Well Maintained and Clean Place






Dunstable Town Council is committed to providing cleaner, safer and greener public open spaces in line with successive the Government agendas for Green Space. The Council recognises that a well maintained and clean gardens makes a positive contribution to achieving many of the ambitions, objectives and actions associated with achieving a Green Flag for the Gardens. As the premier open space for outdoor events and with its proximity to the Grove Theatre Complex and the town centre it is essential that this high profile site is maintained to the highest possible standards. Maintenance regimes for grounds and cleansing already reflect this need and the actions outlined below are designed to support the continuation of high standards and where possible enhance them.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Litter and Waste Management Work in partnership with other agencies, organisations and local businesses to deter littering in the gardens.							CBC as enforcement partners. Work with supermarkets and local businesses to limit litter. Seek opportunities for business staff to carry out litter picks as part of the Great British Spring Clean campaign.
Grounds Maintenance and Best Horticultural Practice Maintain existing high standards of maintenance by establishing comprehensive work programmes for all open spaces.							<b>A dedicated team has been established from within the in-house workforce to improve the quality and maintenance of horticultural features and prestigious areas including Grove House Gardens.</b>
Maintain a skilled workforce establishment.							Use annual performance appraisals to identify skills gaps and develop a comprehensive training programme for grounds staff. <b>Appraisals completed in 2016 and 2017. 2018 appraisals scheduled for March / April 2018</b>






Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Grounds Maintenance and Best Horticultural Practice (Cont.) Manage the tree stock in a planned and proactive manner to ensure that it remains in a good, safe condition							GES Committee approved a 5-year tree risk surveying and management programme in March 2017 and approved £30,000 funding from allocated reserves over the life of the plan. Next survey planned for March / April 2018
Gap up existing shrub and herbaceous borders.							In-house grounds team with secured revenue funding. £500 per year. <b>Gaping up completed February 2017. Additional work planned for spring 2018.</b>

## A Sustainable Place

In order to ensure that the management of Grove House Gardens has a positive impact on the local and global environment the Council will continue to challenge the current arrangements for chemical use, waste disposal, peat usage and conservation of resources.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Environmental Management Adopt a Corporate Environmental Policy							Environment and Sustainability Policy approved by Council in June 2016
Chemical Use <b>New Objective added in 2018.</b> Eliminate use of herbicides entirely in the gardens by 2019/20. Trial town ranger hot water pressure system in 2018.							Use of herbicide is currently limited to a single season spot treatment on hard surface boundaries and play surfaces. Planted areas are already weeded by hand and mulch applied.
Peat Usage <b>New Objective added in 2018.</b> Seek further reductions in the use of peat for growing bedding plants beyond the current 50% reduction							Bedding plants suppliers are currently required by DTC to grown in 50% peat reduced compost. Further reductions will be pursued in 2019 as and beyond as suitable alternatives are made available.
Waste minimisation. <b>New Objective added in 2018.</b> Discuss and review options for improved waste separation and collection at source with existing and future waste collection and disposal companies.							Head of Services will be meeting with current waste collection contractor in Spring 2018 to determine improved waste reduction and recycling options.














Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
<p>Conservation of Resources</p> <p><b>New Objective added in 2018.</b> Review battery powered strimmer and hedge cutter options to reduce fuel use, noise and air pollution.</p>							<p>Operations Manager to review options on market and consider benefits and limitations. £10,000 Unsecured capital.</p>
<p><b>New Objective added in 2018.</b> Keep under close review options for replacing grounds maintenance vehicles with hybrid / electric alternatives.</p>							<p>An electric van was test driven in 2017 and a more robust trial will be set up in 2018.</p>

## A Place of Conservation and Heritage

Whilst the gardens are associated with a Grade II listed building, there are few of the original garden features still in place. However the treescape provides an important reminder of the past and remains an important feature of the gardens both aesthetically and ecologically. The gated entrance to the gardens is also an important feature and its heritage value has been recognised through restoration works.

The improvement of the wildlife area to encourage wildlife to flourish and increase biodiversity will remain a key feature of the action plan for many years. The gardens also provide an important urban habitat for birds and other wildlife. Some initial survey work has been undertaken by Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust to inform the interpretation boards currently in place. The Council recognises the important and valuable contribution that the gardens make to conserving and improving biodiversity and this is taken into account within the Action Plan.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
<b>The Treescape</b>							
Establish longer term aims and objectives for future tree management							Work with TreeWork Environmental Practice surveyor
Plant new, replacement and complimentary trees where appropriate.							<b>Two memorial trees planted by local residents in winter 2016/17. Further replacement trees planted in winter 2017/18.</b>
Install bird boxes to encourage a greater diversity of wildlife.							Work in partnership with the RSPB or local wildlife trust to identify suitable trees, locations and bird box types. <b>Rescheduled to 2019/20</b>
<b>Wildlife Area</b>							
Establish a baseline survey of existing flora and fauna							<b>Discussion ongoing with local Wildlife Trust regarding survey activities for summer 2018/19.</b>














Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
<b>Wildlife Area (Cont.)</b>							
Develop a new management programme to improve and develop the wildlife area and inform future actions within this action plan.							Create a new partnership with interested and relevant organisations to assist with drafting a new management programme.
Provide new onsite interpretation information about the wildlife area, its habitats and its flora a fauna.							Use partners identified above to assist with creating new interpretation material
Work with local schools and volunteers to carry out improvements to the wildlife area in line with the new management programme.							
<b>Heritage</b>							
Provide additional onsite interpretation information about the heritage value of the treescape.							Use wildlife area partners to assist in developing new information.
Upgrade all on site interpretation to include QR codes to link to additional web based information pages.							In house development of new web pages using existing web designers.



## A Place Where the Community can be Involved










































The Council recognises the importance and benefits of working in partnership with all sections of the community and engaging with hard to reach groups. In addition the Council wishes to encourage a wide variety of individuals and organisations to use the gardens for both passive and active leisure and recreational opportunities. It is anticipated that both use and partnership working will take many forms. The community will be encouraged to visit the gardens for special events, participate in hands on management and maintenance, inform decision making and enjoy the park for what it is; a great place to visit, relax in or pass through.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Knowledge of Users and Patterns of use.							
Undertake annual user satisfaction surveys.							The Council is moving to an online Survey Monkey format from 2018 onwards
Encourage and Enable Community Involvement and Use							
Make the gardens available for the annual In Bloom launch where applicable.							Dunstable in Bloom often use the gardens for a participatory In Bloom launch each year. The 2016 launch took place in Grove House Gardens in partnership with Ashton School
Use the gardens as the venue for a family fun day, music events, band concerts, a beer festival and a statute fayre.							DTC Community and Grounds Services work together in partnership with other organisations to deliver a wide and varied range of events each year. Revenue funding secured. 16 events held in the gardens in 2017 including the full DTC events programme and summer play activities, the Big Lunch, an inflatable planetarium, the statute fayre, band concerts and a pancake race fun day.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Encourage and Enable Community Involvement and Use (Cont.)							
Make the gardens available for non-Town Council community events organised by local groups and charities.							Events application procedure in place. Not for profit uses are not charged a hire fee. <b>Five of the 16 events held in 2017 were community events not run directly by DTC</b>
Make the gardens available for summer play activities organised by the Council.							The DTC summer play activities team have identified the gardens as a suitable for this type of activity. <b>The team used the venue in 2017 for an inflatable play day.</b>
<b>New Objective added in 2018</b> Establish a new Friends and Community Forum							Local Businesses and existing partners




















## A Well Marketed Place

As the premier outdoor events space in Dunstable good marketing and promotion of the gardens is essential to ensure that the gardens maintain their reputation and continue to deliver appropriate facilities. The following objectives are included in the Plan.








Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Sharing Information Refresh existing web site pages to include a copy of this Management Plan.							In-house staff to update and refresh pages on an ongoing basis. Bi-annual update of all gardens related content. <b>Updated in February 2018</b>
Regularly report information to Elected Members							Head of Service to include update on gardens in grounds information report to GES Committee on 5 occasions per year.
Make regular use of information boards in the gardens and the local vicinity to post information.							Town Ranger to assist with distribution and posting.
Regularly update Green Flag website specific pages with news and events							
Promoting Events Publicise the annual events programme through a range of media.							In-house Events and Marketing team using newspaper wraps, town and garden notice board posters, Talk of the Town Council magazine articles, social media posts, website and radio / TV promotion.
Retain Green Flag accreditation							Annual entry with bi-annual full assessment. Retained in 2016 and 2017
Enter the gardens into the regional Anglia in Bloom awards to secure Best Open Space accreditation							Annual entry and new regional category award. <b>Anglia in Bloom nominated Best Public Open Space in 2016 and 2017</b>

## A Well Managed Place

Dunstable Town Council is committed to managing Grove House Gardens to the standards set out in 'Raising the Standard' – The Green Flag Award Guidance Manual. The Council recognises the need to have a clear and unambiguous site specific management plan in place which is well communicated and shared with partners and stakeholders. In seeking to manage the gardens to these standards the following objectives and actions are contained within the Action Plan.

Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
<b>Decision Making</b>							
Maintain a 'golden thread' of communication between management, employees and elected members to ensure that timely and appropriate decisions are made about future developments.							Achieved via Grounds and Environmental Services Committee, weekly Senior Management Team meetings, monthly grounds operations meetings, 6 monthly staff performance reviews, job chats, quarterly Town Clerks Information Digest and All Staff Meetings, staff suggestion scheme.
Retain Investors in People accreditation.							External assessment via IIP assessor. <b>Bronze accreditation achieved in March 2016</b>
<b>Financial Management</b>							
Monitor annual revenue expenditure on a quarterly basis.							Head of Service and Finance team. Quarterly budget monitoring reports to Committee
Develop a three year rolling capital expenditure programme and secure internal and external funding.							Elected Members, Head of Service and Finance team.
Review and refresh options to generate additional income.							Head of Service. <b>New ice cream concession negotiated in 2017 /18 for 4 public open spaces including Grove House Gardens. Additional income of £8,200 achieved.</b>
Consider options and business case for kiosk café concession on site							Head of Service



Objectives and Actions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Notes, Partners and Funding
Managing Risk							
Maintain and update a Corporate Risk Log for the organisation.							Senior Management Team update annually each June and Elected Members sign off at Full Council along with Annual Report.
Performance							Chief Executive and Head of Service. <b>New PI's approved 2017</b>

## The Six-Year Finance Plan

The six-year finance summary detailed in the tables below is based on a number of assumptions namely:

- All maintenance and salary costs are reviewed annually and are set in accordance with previous years out turn figures and planned objectives. Typically they remain the same year on year for several years.
- Salary costs are typically inflated annually between 1% and 3%. For the purposes of this plan they are inflated by 2% each year.
- One third of the budgeted costs for the maintenance of the Town Centre and Town Centre Gardens are allocated to managing Grove House Gardens. Grove House Gardens does not have its own separate budget allocation.

### Revenue Expenditure

Description	Status	£ 2016/17	£ 2017/18	£ 2018/19	£ 2019/20	£ 2020/21	£ 2021/22
Salaries and Staff Costs	Secured	38,528	39,353	40,140	40,942	41,760	42,595
Repairs and Maintenance	Secured	2,666	2,666	2,666	2,666	2,666	2,666
Tools and Equipment	Secured	666	666	666	666	666	666
Depot Facilities	Secured	400	400	400	400	400	400
Telephones	Secured	333	333	333	333	333	333
Vehicle Maintenance and Fuel	Secured	4,000	4,000	3,533	3,533	3,533	3,533
Floral Displays	Secured	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Waste Disposal	Secured	1,833	1,833	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900
CCTV	Secured	600	600	600	600	600	600

### Revenue Income

Description	Status	£ 2016/17	£ 2017/18	£ 2018/19	£ 2019/20	£ 2020/21	£ 2021/22
Ice Cream Concession	Secured	600	1,066	1,066	1,066	1,066	1,066
Income from external contracts	Secured	4,966	4,966	4,966	4,966	4,966	4,966

### Allocated Capital Reserves

The following table shows the financial resources that will be set aside each year as allocated capital reserves available to Grounds and Environmental Services. They are separated into various reserve categories but have not been allocated for specific projects or activities. The Grounds and Environmental Services Committee makes decisions on specific spending allocations based on officer recommendations.

Allocated Capital Reserve	Status	Balance 15/16	£ 2016/17	£ 2017/18	£ 2018/19	£ 2019/20	£ 2020/21	£ 2021/22
Vehicle and Equipment	Secured	46,945	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Fencing Renewal	Secured	3,871	10,000	10,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Performance Area	Secured	6,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Open Spaces and Play Improvements	Secured	1,831	15,000	15,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Tree Management	Secured	16,307	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Grove House Outbuildings	Secured			30,000				
Section 106 GHG Play Area					£20,000			

## 10 Section 10 - Monitoring and Review

10.1 To ensure that this management plan remains current and relevant and achieves its objectives the following monitoring and review arrangements will be implemented.

10.2 Annually

- Retain Green Flag status year on year.
- Include the gardens within the In Bloom portfolio and competition to achieve continuous accreditation for town wide environmental activity and maintain the gardens profile.
- Keep accurate written and photographic records of all events, projects and initiatives associated with the gardens.
- Bi-annually review and refresh the action plan in line with Green Flag judging visits.
- Report progress on the action plan to the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee.
- Update and review all relevant risk assessments.
- Monitor and record customer satisfaction levels.
- Monitor and record numbers attending events.
- Undertake daily, monthly and quarterly inspections of play equipment.
- Monitor revenue and capital allocated expenditure and income.
- Monitor key performance indicators.

10.3 Every Six Years

- Fully review and redraft the management plan to ensure that it remains in line with current corporate and wider regional and national objectives.

10.4 Evidence

The following evidence of monitoring and review is provided for information.

10.4.1 Retain a Green Flag

Grove House Gardens achieved Green Flag status in 2010 at its first attempt and this status has been retained in subsequent years through to 2017.





#### 10.4.2 In Bloom

Dunstable achieved a Gold Medal in the regional Anglia in Bloom Competition in the first year of entering and over an eight year period has received six Gold and two Silver-Gilt medals. Grove House Gardens is regularly inspected by the Anglia in Bloom judges. In 2016 the gardens were recognised as the Best Public Open Space in the Eastern Region at Anglia in Bloom and were nominated in the same category again in 2017.

#### 10.4.3 Photographic Records

A photographic record is maintained by the Town Council covering all events that take place in the gardens each year. Some of these are included within this management plan and can be made available to the judges on request.

#### 10.4.4 Refresh Action Plan

The plan contained in this document has been redrafted to mop up a small number of outstanding actions from the previous plan and to include new objectives and actions. The plan also takes account of previous judge's advice and comments on future actions and opportunities and these are added to the plan on an ongoing basis.

#### 10.4.5 Reporting to Committee

A regular information report is presented to each Grounds and Environmental Service Committee on 5 occasions per year.

#### 10.4.6 Update and Review Risk Assessments

This is an ongoing process managed through a Council wide Health and Safety Advisory Group (HASAG) with support from a Health and Safety consultancy company who have been retained by the Council.

#### 10.4.7 Monitor and Record Customer Satisfaction Levels

The first satisfaction survey was completed in spring 2012 using a small sample of visitors. Promoting Dunstable and FOPHAG have since carried out a 50 user survey each year on behalf the Council. The 2018 survey will be supplemented by an online 'Survey Monkey' style survey.

#### 10.4.8 Events Attendance

The attendance figures shown for 2018 events programme in section 6.2 of this plan are based on figures recorded for similar events that took place in previous years.

#### 10.4.9 Play Inspections

These inspections have been fully recorded and are available for inspection. Incidents of vandalism and associated costs for all Dunstable's play areas are reported to each Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting for information.

#### 10.4.10 Budget Monitoring

This is ongoing throughout the year on a monthly basis as part of one to one sessions with managers and supervisory staff. A quarterly financial monitoring report is presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as part of the Councils overall budget monitoring arrangements.

#### 10.4.11 Performance Indicators

Whilst there are no specific indicators related directly to Priory Gardens in place at present the Council has developed wider indicators across all service areas. These are contained in the current Corporate Plan.