**PUBLIC EXHIBITION - PUBLIC SPACES & RECREATION STRATEGY**

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| **ATTACHMENTS:** | **1. IMPLICATIONS**<br>**2. PUBLIC SPACES & RECREATION STRATEGY 2023** |
| **RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** | **LINDA PERRINE – COMMUNITY, CULTURE & LEISURE DIRECTOR** |
| **AUTHOR:** | **JULIE WHITFIELD – OPEN SPACE PLANNER** |
| **CITY STRATEGY OUTCOME:** | **3.4 – CREATE DESIRABLE PLACES TO BE AND ENJOY** |
| **MEETING DATE:** | **23 OCTOBER 2023** |

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Council's endorsement to exhibit for public consultation Council's new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023.*

## 2. OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

**That Council:**

1. **Endorse the public exhibition of the new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023*.**

2. **Receive a report in March 2024 on the outcome of the public exhibition of the new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023*.**

## 3. BACKGROUND

In its 2022/23 Operational Plan, Council approved funds to undertake the review of the *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013* and develop a new strategy.

Councillors received briefings on the development of the new strategy on 8 August 2022, 16 February 2023 and 11 September 2023.

This report details the process and engagement activities undertaken to develop Council's new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy*.

## 4. DISCUSSION

In December 2022, Council engaged Cred Consulting to undertake the development of a new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy* 2023 (the Strategy) to guide Council over the next 10 years. This report outlines the new Strategy, including the important role that the community played in shaping its development.

Concurrently, Officers were involved in the development of the *Review of Supply and Demand for Sports Facilities in the NSROC Region.* This involvement ensured an alignment with Council's *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023*, regarding issues relating to sports facility supply and demand issues.

The current *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013* incorporates the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE) *Regional Assessment of Recreation Needs for Northern Region 2003.* The need for review was timely given changes to population over the past 10 years and to the changing recreation needs of the existing and future communities living and working in the Willoughby Local Government Area (WLGA).

**Challenges for Council**
By 2036, an additional 13,000 people will live in Willoughby, increasing the already high population density in areas like Chatswood. Council has limitations in its ability to increase the amount of public space due to limited land availability, constrained land ownership and the very high cost of land.

Residential real estate sales in Chatswood 2023 reveal an average rate of $10,000 per square metre; commercial property averages $12,000 per square metre. The purchase of property for a new local park of 1000 square metres could cost $10M, plus demolition development costs.

In acknowledging these costs, the optimisation of the currently available public land has merit in terms of affordability and sustainability for Council.

**A new placemaking approach**
The new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023* is underpinned by the 10 principles for public space in the *NSW Public Spaces Charter 2021* as Council shifts its emphasis to 'placemaking' in the established public spaces within the WLGA.

Placemaking is a practical process for transforming public spaces - both in retrofitting an existing space or in planning a new space. It also involves a willingness from Council to share responsibility for creating places that the community love to use. In essence, it is a process enabled by Council, but led by the community.

It is timely to adopt a placemaking approach to the public spaces of the Willoughby LGA (WLGA) as the population continues to grow and use the public spaces available. Placemaking will link the Council's *Community Engagement Strategy*, *Resilience Strategy* and a future *Chatswood CBD Implementation Strategy.*

Over past 20 years, Council used the process of preparing masterplans for parks to cater for population changes and recreation needs. Several of these masterplans are over ten years old, and include actions that the community may now consider a low priority, or not needed at all. As part of the briefing Councillors received on 8 August 2022, officers provided a review of the number of completed masterplan actions, and those still outstanding. There is limited value to continuing the master planning process as most parks in the WLGA have reached their development potential and now require a less plan-based approach.

The new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023* will provide the new direction for the next decade and a placemaking planning tool for Council and the community to enhance the liveability of the WLGA.

**Process and consultation**
Community input has been central to the development of the *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023*. Over a four-month engagement period, community consultation gained ideas from more than 300 people from diverse ages, genders and cultural backgrounds who live, work and study in the WLGA.

The community and stakeholders provided input through:
- Interactive mapping tool
- Community pop-up stalls

- Stakeholder interviews
- Online Have Your Say survey
- Face to face workshops

These engagement opportunities were promoted via Have Your Say Willoughby, social media channels, newsletters, emails, and on-site signage

**The new Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023**
The new Strategy builds on the community engagement and the strategic opportunities identified through the consultation process. The five strategic opportunities are:
1. Create and promote a network of public spaces via recreational links.
2. Leverage future development and underutilised assets to deliver new public spaces.
3. Activate existing public spaces for increased recreational participation.
4. Encourage shared use and multi-purpose design of sports spaces.
5. Promote collaborative and co-ordinated planning and delivery.

The Strategy, at **Attachment 2,** includes a proposed list of actions against each of these five priorities. Officers will seek further feedback on the proposed actions contained in the strategy as part of the public exhibition process.

**Community consultation for the new strategy**
The next stage of community engagement for the new Strategy will include:
- Pop up /drop in sessions to gather feedback on the new Strategy, with an emphasis on selecting times/ sites to catch age ranges eg young adults.
- Creation of a project page and survey on the Have Your Say portal, which will include a Fact Sheet with a summary of the essential parts of the Strategy

Officers will promote these engagement opportunities by:
- Issuing of a media release/ social media notice
- Notification letters/ emails to:
    - 318 stakeholders from the initial workshops/ interviews/ Have Your Say survey
    - 32 attendees from the two face to face workshops
    - Recreation facility and sportsground hirers, including sporting clubs and associations
    - Progress Associations, school and community groups

The consultation period will run from early November 2023 to early December 2023, to allow for reporting to the Council meeting in March 2024. An Engagement Outcomes report on the community engagement will be included in the Council report in 2024.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023* is ready for public exhibition and consideration by the Willoughby community. The Strategy is based on the *NSW Public Spaces Charter (DPIE 2021)* which emphases ‘placemaking’ for established public spaces.

Willoughby LGA has reached ‘peak open space’ due to the high cost of land and lack of available land. The Council’s challenge is to improve access to and the quality of the existing public spaces resulting in an enrichment of the community experiences of these spaces. The adoption of a placemaking approach will require a shift in Council’s approach to planning and managing public spaces, with a greater focus on shared responsibility with the community.

The exhibition of the new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2023* provides an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on this change to a placemaking approach.

| IMPLICATIONS | COMMENT |
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| **City Strategy Outcome** | 3.3 – Create desirable places to be and enjoy |
| **Business Plan Objectives, Outcomes / Services** | Our community will have a guiding document that will provide better access to public and recreation spaces for their health and well-being. |
| **Policy** | *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013*- Willoughby City Council is the current policy document.<br>*Open Space Asset Management Plan 2022-2023* will continue to be applied to asset renewals as complementary to the new *Public Spaces and Recreation Strategy* and placemaking. |
| **Consultation** | Officers provided the consultant with a list of targeted stakeholders and Progress Associations. Pop up meetings within the community at Wilkes Plaza, Willoughby Park and The Concourse were held in January / February 2023. A Have Your Say (HYS) survey site was set up. A total of 318 community members and stakeholders provided responses.<br>Two face to face community workshops on 15 & 17 August 2023 were held with 32 people who responded to an Expression of Interest on HYS.<br>Councillors received briefings on the development of the new strategy on 8 August 2022, 16 February 2023 and 11 September 2023.<br><br>The proposed next stage of community consultation is outlined in this report. |
| **Resource** | The consultant was supported by a working group of two Council staff. Community engagement for the public exhibition of the draft Strategy will be undertaken using existing staff resources. |
| **Risk** | The level of risk associated with this report is low, with moderate consequences under *Council's Risk Management Framework*. |
| **Legal** | Not applicable |
| **Legislation** | *Local Government Act 1993* |
| **Budget/Financial** | Funds for the engagement of the consultant was available from the Council's Operational Plan 2022/23, and was carried over to 2023/24. |

## Attachment 2 - Public Spaces & Recreation Strategy