

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH NO INTEGRATED STRATEGY

The large majority of councils that responded to the survey (four-fifths) did not possess a truly integrated strategy for managing public space. In many cases the local authority responses described a strategy for managing public space, but this could not be considered ‘integrated’ for the purposes of the research for one of a range of reasons:

1. TOO LIMITED IN SCOPE

The local authority definitions of ‘external public space’ and ‘public space management’ were too limited in scope to fit the research team’s definition of what constitutes an integrated strategy for managing public space. This was either because external public space was defined as a distinct type, or because management processes were clearly limited to particular narrow aspects of the agenda. Instead, public space strategies generally addressed either one of two distinct types of public space: green/open space or urban/city centre space. While some authorities addressed both, few authorities supplied details of an integrating strategy that linked the two public space typologies to each other, or to the wider public realm.

Examples of the former included green-space strategies, parks and open spaces strategies, trees and woodlands strategies, rights of way strategies and recreation strategies. Other place-specific or area-based strategies included management plans for individual parks or other open spaces under the control of the local authority. A typical example was Sandwell District Council’s numerous green-space strategies covering, parks, playing fields, and trees. Examples of the latter included city or town centre management strategies, and management strategies for particular urban locations, such as commercial streets, nightlife districts, or residential areas. In some cases these were pilot schemes that may, if successful, be extended to mainstream practice. An example was Westminster City Council’s Action Plan for Leicester Square, which, if successful was to be extended to other areas in the borough (see Chapter 10).

2. TOO GENERAL IN COVERAGE

In such cases, mention was made of integrating practice, but coverage was too general to provide a meaningful coordination strategy. Examples included local authority-wide policy documents such as corporate strategies or service strategies that were general in the extreme, but also statutory planning documents such as development plans, or community strategies that provided no more than strategic aspirations. An example was Cheshire County Council’s County Structure Plan and Community

Strategy, both documents that describe rights of way and open space, but do not mention details of a strategy for managing public space.

3. DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITIES

In many parts of the country, the responsibilities for public space remain split between tiers of local government, between the county council (the highway authority) and the district council, which retains responsibility for most other publicly owned spaces. For example Runnymede District Council had an integrated management strategy in respect to its parks and open spaces, but this does not extend to highways and street landscaping. In fact, in this case the district council recently lost responsibility for these areas which it used to manage on behalf of the county highways department.

4. IN PREPARATION

In a number of cases, authorities reported that an integrated management strategy was in preparation, often resulting from the best value review process, but failed to provide any evidence to substantiate their emerging approach. An example was the London Borough of Richmond who responded that they were about to embark on a Street Scene Best Value Review that would address the integration of services in the public realm. The range of these responses suggested that better integration of public space management services is increasingly on the agenda.

5. PARTIAL INITIATIVES IN PLACE

Some authorities had partial public space strategies in place that would indicate that there is a good degree of coordination in the local authority’s management of public space, although not full integration of all public space responsibilities. Examples of such partial strategies included those that integrate public space management policy and delivery. For example, Cambridge City Council have a public space management strategy whose aim is to integrate street cleaning and grounds maintenance service delivery, although this does not extend to the whole of the city’s public space network.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

Only nine local authorities responded with anything close to an integrated strategy for the management of the public spaces in their area, although