

and significance. Looking beyond the UK, it is equally clear that the field is developing equally quickly in a wide range of cities globally. Focusing on public open (green) space, Chapters 7 and 8 first examined the context for public space management in 11 cities around the world, before focusing on the delivery of management via the four key management processes.

Although none of the cities examined would regard their public space management practice as beyond criticism, all reported considerable benefits from their emphasis on green space quality. These benefits were not accidental, but resulted from the emphasis on, and investment in, their public open spaces and their management, and the associated efforts by municipal agencies to promote these benefits to a wider audience. They included:

- the enhanced reputation of the cities for their high quality living environments;
- their enhanced reputation for sound urban governance;
- city marketing benefits in the light of the increasingly competitive economic environment;
- raised environmental awareness and citizen involvement;
- social benefits through better health, accessibility, recreational opportunities and quality of life.

Lessons from an international stage

Each of the benefits goes well beyond the immediate policy objectives of public space management, and therefore potentially have wider local political advantages for the responsible city administrations. The common experiences from the international cases, combined with those from the English cases explored in Chapter 6 give rise to thirteen key lessons:

1. START WITH POLITICAL COMMITMENT

The need for strong political commitment to deliver public space quality was reinforced throughout the research. Success in the management of public spaces seems to result from a mix of political will by successive administrations, reinforced by the technical skills of public space managers. It is also self-perpetuating, with a positive perception of public spaces leading to greater political commitment and so on. Thus political and administrative commitment needs to exist side by side if a strong organisation to manage public space – both strategically and operationally – is to be built. This is likely to require support for public space issues at all levels of the administration and across the political spectrum. The inclusion

in the local government structures of at least one cabinet-level politician with direct responsibility for public spaces would seem a minimum starting point to build a greater political commitment to public space.

2. MAKE A LONG-TERM STATUTORY COMMITMENT

A long-term commitment went hand-in-hand with a political commitment, as a prerequisite for not only delivering high-quality public space, but for ensuring that quality remains high thereafter. This commitment requires foresight, long-range planning and the fostering of a wider civic commitment to urban public spaces. The direct public benefits from sustaining high-quality public space in cities that have managed to do so over a long timeframe are significant. In such cities, in different ways, the management of public space is invariably a statutory responsibility of the city authorities, and the need to invest in the management of public space is therefore non-negotiable. A carefully constructed set of statutory public space roles and responsibilities might therefore create the necessary incentive to raise the quality of public space management (to at least a minimum acceptable level) in places where practice is currently poor.

3. TAKE A STRATEGIC (POLICY) VIEW

A clear public space strategy can help to ensure that public space priorities infuse other key policy areas, including spatial planning, giving public space management a welcome continuity regardless of political changes and helping to consolidate the importance of public space management in relation to other services and priorities. A statutory provision for local authorities to create public space strategies as an element of their spatial planning framework might offer the necessary incentive to deliver a more strategic and community-centred view of public space. Such strategies and plans should include a clear spatial vision for public (and private) space, as well as policies for the provision, design and long-term management of public spaces. They should provide the basis for more detailed public space maintenance plans to structure, coordinate, and resource the day-to-day delivery of public space maintenance.

4. ADAPT TO LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The research illustrated the importance of taking a coherent local view on public space management that adequately reflects the priorities of local populations. The aspiration should be that public spaces remain a matter of social and cultural interest in order that citizens are convinced that public spaces are necessary elements for the life and identity of