

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 17 June 2021

DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Report of the Ecologist

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that

The Committee provide feedback and comments on the general scope, directions and implications of the Biodiversity Strategy so it can be developed prior to future adoption.

Summary

The draft over-arching biodiversity strategy is presented for initial comments. The strategy highlights key issues facing biodiversity, why biodiversity is important, and presents a framework for delivery.

Focus for Scrutiny

- Does the strategy broadly cover the key areas of pressures and the principles needed to halt decline and begin restoration?
- What could we include that we have missed?
- Should the background information in **section one** be expanded and include more detail (i.e. full audit of biodiversity with associated maps etc) so that the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) can be much more about the technical delivery, monitoring and reporting? (at present the existing SPD and BAP both contain some elements of background)
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Statutory Powers

Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 (Power of Wellbeing)

Strategic Implications

1. The Strategy will contribute to creating a Green Borough by contributing to an excellent environment for all, developing our green infrastructure and by improving wellbeing through enhancement and access to nature.

Introduction

2. This briefing note accompanies the draft biodiversity strategy for Eastleigh – “Securing our Natural Environment” – which is presented in appendix one. The draft biodiversity strategy sets out a ten-year approach to biodiversity by including:
 - A broad description of the current state of knowledge on local biodiversity and identifying national, regional and local trends e.g. on habitat loss and deterioration, and species population decline and Natural Capital/Ecosystem Services;
 - A review of National Government and local Eastleigh Borough Council strategies, policies and priorities e.g. climate change, Environment Bill, A Green Future: Our 25 Year Environment Plan etc
 - A review of the critical factors that need to be addressed based on above analysis
 - A list of key aims and objectives for biodiversity conservation and broadly describing how and when they will be delivered and by whom
 - A framework for delivery of other associated biodiversity documents

Securing our Natural Environment

3. “Securing our Natural Environment” is intended to be the most accessible element for residents of the overall biodiversity strategy. It provides background and context, explains why nature is important and highlights the known pressures affecting our biodiversity. Section two introduces the main policy drivers and core principles that we will need to adopt and how we will deliver them through production of a new, revised BAP and Local Nature Recovery Strategy and new or revised SPDs for biodiversity and Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Financial Implications

4. There are no financial implications for this document at this stage, although taking this forward to adoption in a timely fashion assumes that the current ecology staffing resource remains the same. The wider strategy (i.e. further detailed documents) will identify financial implications as they are developed and these will be presented as required for scrutiny and comment.

Risk Assessment

5. The overall biodiversity strategy (including this document) assumes that the emerging Environment Bill and the associated obligations for biodiversity will become law. The strategy assumes that nature recovery within the Borough will continue to be a corporate priority and part of the response to the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency declaration.

Equality and Diversity Implications

6. We anticipate that the Equality Act is relevant to the strategy and a full EqIA will be developed prior to adoption. We would like to discuss the scope and implications for the EqIA with the committee prior to commencing work on it.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The Biodiversity Strategy is part of the Council's response to the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency declaration. The core principles and delivery mechanisms detailed within the biodiversity strategy (appendix one) will build climate resilience for biodiversity by creating more, better, joined up habitat which will have multiple associated benefits for climate amelioration (e.g. increased carbon storage through planting and habitat creation as well as through the safeguard of existing priority habitats).

Conclusion

8. "Securing our Natural Environment" is intended to set the framework for biodiversity recovery in Eastleigh primarily through the development of a revised Biodiversity Action Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents for biodiversity and drainage. It is also intended to put the biodiversity crisis into context and highlight why recovery is necessary.

PAUL HOWE, ECOLOGIST

Date: 02/06/21
Contact Officer: Paul Howe
Tel No: 07824 354397
e-mail: paul.howe@eastleigh.gov.uk
Appendices Attached: Appendix One, Draft Biodiversity Strategy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

* List Background Papers or state None.

