

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 18 November 2021

DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Report of the Head of Environment

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that

- (1) The Panel provide feedback and comments on the content of the documents outlined to support the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy;
- (2) The Committee agree to forming a Task and Finish Group to assist Officers developing the documents

Summary

The outline content for additional documents to support the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy, 'the Strategy' are presented for initial comments on content and scope.

The Strategy was previously reported to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 17 June 2021 which highlighted the key issues facing biodiversity, why biodiversity is important, and a framework for delivery.

The additional documents presented, the revised Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy, revised and updated Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document and a new Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document will be the main drivers and policy instruments to help support successful implementation of the Strategy.

Focus for Scrutiny

- Do the documents sufficiently support the purpose of the strategy; to protect and enhance the biodiversity and the natural environment in the Borough?
- Specifically, as the core document supporting biodiversity conservation in the Borough, does the revised and refreshed **Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy** set appropriate priorities and targets for delivery?

- Does the revised **Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document** sufficiently set out detailed expectations with regards to biodiversity for planning applications and support Policy DM11, provide technical details about biodiversity net gain and compensation framework for offsite habitat provision; and
- Does the **Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document** provide adequate detailed technical guidance on the design and construction of SUDS for planning applications and support Policy DM6?
- Are all the documents sufficiently linked to the principles of the Climate and Environmental Emergency Strategy and Action Plan?

Statutory Powers

Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 (Power of Wellbeing)

Strategic Implications

1. The documents listed below (see paragraph 5) will support the delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy ('the Strategy') and will contribute to the Corporate Plan (2015-2025) objectives of creating a Green Borough by seeking to provide an Excellent Environment For All, help to develop our Green Infrastructure and will help to improve Wellbeing through enhancement and access to nature,

Introduction

2. The overarching Strategy was previously reported to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 17 June 2021. The Panel provided feedback and comments on the general scope, direction and implications of the Strategy so it can be developed prior to future adoption.
3. The draft Strategy is currently being amended based on the comments received and is scheduled to be reported to Cabinet on the 9th December 2021 for approval to go to public consultation, with an amended final document brought back for Cabinet adoption after the consultation period (to be confirmed).

Further policy development

4. In addition to providing the context, general scope, directions and implications of the Strategy, it was also reported to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 17 June 2021 that to support the implementation of the Strategy, three key documents will need to be developed.

5. These documents, which together provide the main drivers and policy instruments to help support successful implementation of the Strategy are:
 - i. A revised Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (presented in Appendix one);
 - ii. A revised and updated Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (presented in Appendix two); and
 - iii. A new Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document (presented in Appendix three).
6. Together, these documents aim to detail how the Council will seek to protect the area's biodiversity, reverse and restore declines, extend and expand our biodiversity, manage, maintain and monitor the current, and any future new sites and assets and outline how the Council plans to engage and actively involve residents in valuing the Borough's biodiversity, accessing nature and contributing to its biodiversity.
7. The draft content and scope for these documents are the focus for this Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel. Members of this Committee are asked to provide feedback and comments and are asked to agree to forming a Task and Finish Group to assist in the future development of the documents, as appropriate.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications for these documents at this stage, although taking them forward to adoption in a timely manner to support the Strategy assumes that the current Ecology staffing resource remains the same.
9. The further detailed documents will identify financial implications as they are developed, and these will be presented as required for scrutiny and comment.

Risk Assessment

10. The overall Strategy (including these documents) assumes that the emerging Environment Bill and the associated obligations for biodiversity will become law.
11. As 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, it is anticipated that there is a low risk of not adhering to future legislation and obligations.

Equality and Diversity Implications

12. The Equality Act is relevant to the Strategy and a full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be developed as part of the overarching Strategy prior to adoption.

13. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The 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 Strategy, and these additional documents will help build climate resilience for biodiversity by creating more, better, joined up habitat and will have multiple associated benefits for climate amelioration (e.g. increased carbon storage through planting and habitat creation as well as through the safeguarding of existing priority habitats).

Conclusion

14. These documents will help deliver the Strategy and ensure that its main purpose, to protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment in the Borough, is met.

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Appendices Attached:

Appendix One, Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Appendix Two, Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document

Appendix Three, Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document

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.

- Draft Biodiversity Strategy, Report to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel, 17 June 2021