

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
29 SEPTEMBER 2010	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Dalton, Cabinet Member for Environment Capital	
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CITY COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: UPDATE OF STRATEGY TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee	Deadline date :
That the Cabinet is recommended to:	
(i) endorse the Biodiversity Strategy prior to its consideration by Council as part of the major policy framework; and	
(ii) consider the requirement for additional resources during the development of the Council Budgets alongside other budget pressures.	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee Meeting of the 15th of July 2010.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the City Councils updated Biodiversity Strategy for the Cabinet to consider and if considered appropriate to refer it to Full Council for consideration as part of the major policy framework.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1, To take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council's Major Policy and Budget Framework and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	Yes	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	29 September 2010
Date for relevant Council meeting	13 October 2010	Date for submission to Government Dept <i>(please specify which Government Dept)</i>	N/A

4. PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCILS BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

4.1 The existing City Council Biodiversity Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in October 2004. The Vision Statement which forms part of the Strategy was subsequently considered and adopted by full Council at its November 2004 meeting where the following decision was made to:

“Adopt the Biodiversity vision statement as a guidance and reference document to officers and the executive when making decisions on biodiversity ensuring that the vision, objectives and targets are used in a flexible manner, within existing resources and subject to planning considerations”.

- 4.2 The proposed update of the Strategy has been produced by a working group of Officers and Councillors and is submitted to Cabinet following consideration by the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee. The working group was convened following a report to the then Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel in January 2008 with respect to the new biodiversity duty brought in by S40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:

“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of Conserving biodiversity”

S40 of the Act also clarifies that Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

An updated strategy and the wording of its adoption must be consistent with this legal duty.

- 4.3 The January 2008 report to the Scrutiny Panel concluded that the 2004 Strategy and the wording of its adoption by Council did not adequately reflect the requirements of the new Biodiversity Duty. The Scrutiny Panel endorsed the intent to update the Strategy to take into account the new biodiversity duty.
- 4.4 The key issues within the updated strategy include changes to land management practices, the ability of the Council to maintain existing resourcing and in some instances make other resources available. In many cases additional resources can be used to access external funding for restoration and creation of habitats. However routine management would generally have to be met by the Council’s own resources. The proposed update of the strategy consists of two elements which are included at appendices A and B.

Vision Statement

- 4.5 The working group has developed an updated vision of what the Council’s approach to Biodiversity should be. This replaces the vision statement from the original strategy and can be found in full at Appendix A.

Specific Actions to Achieve the Vision and Approach to Biodiversity

- 4.6 It is intended that opportunities will be exploited as they arise, however some specific actions and possible methods of delivery have been identified under the headings used in the vision statement. This replaces the key actions component of the original strategy and can be found in full at Appendix B.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the officers, groups and organisations which were consulted with respect to the original Biodiversity Strategy. Additional relevant organisations that have become known in the Peterborough area in the intervening time have also been included. Consultation has been undertaken with:

- British Trust for Conservation Volunteering (BTCV);
- Buglife;
- Consultation has also been undertaken with the Council’s Finance as well as Legal and Democratic Services;
- Council Officers within the update working group and Biodiversity Officer Working Group. This includes, Bereavement, Recreation, City and Education Services, tree and woodland team, Natural Environment Team. Landscape Architect, Transportation;

- Councillor representatives within the Working Group;
- Forestry Commission;
- Froglife;
- Natural England;
- Parish Councils;
- PECT;
- Peterborough Bird Club;
- Peterborough Conservation Volunteers;
- Peterborough Friends of the Earth;
- Planning Policy team;
- RSPB;
- The Landyke Trust;
- The Wildlife Trust;
- Woodland Trust;
- Greater Peterborough Partnership; and
- Opportunity Peterborough.

5.2 A table showing the results of the external consultation process and how this shaped the content of the strategy can be found at Appendix D.

5.3 Cllr Sandford as a member of the working group updating the strategy has indicated agreement with all the recommendations in the report with the exception of Appendix B, point 21 (pesticides). Cllr Sandford has indicated that this should go further to require a commitment to reducing usage of herbicide progressively over time, and felt that a commitment to review usage is not useful if it does not state any intention to do anything as a result. Cllr Sandford has indicated that previously there was a commitment to reduce herbicide usage in the Council's Environmental Strategy and for example organisations signing up to Forest Stewardship Council certification on sustainable tree/woodland management are required to make such a commitment.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

That Council adopts the Biodiversity Strategy as Part of the Major Policy Framework.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To update the City Councils Biodiversity Strategy to take account of the Biodiversity Duty introduced by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act S40 and Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Guidance to Local Authorities with respect to this Duty.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To retain the City Council's 2004 Biodiversity Strategy. This was rejected as it does not adequately reflect legislative requirements that have come into force since its adoption.

9. IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The incorporation of biodiversity into many of the Council's functions and services can be achieved within existing resources, providing that this is maintained. This is supported by the experience of the implementation of the 2004 Strategy.

9.2 However, the updating of the Strategy has identified that some additional resources would be required in order to comply with the legal duty the City Council now has with respect to Biodiversity. These are outlined in detail in Appendix C of this report. In some cases additional resource requirements can also be offset by seeking external funding, for example for restoration of degraded habitats. However, routine management could not generally be funded in this way. The net cost of management of the Boardwalks Local

Nature Reserve may also be less than outlined in Appendix C as this would be offset by the management costs currently incurred by Peterborough City Services.

- 9.3 This report has implications throughout the authority area where the Council is a Landowner or Manager.
- 9.4 The updated Strategy is directly linked to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and LAA via National Indicator 197 County Wildlife Sites and associated targets. It is more generally linked to the SCS and National Indicators via the Cleaner Greener sections of these documents.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40).
- Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty, Defra, May 2007.
- Peterborough City Council Approach to Biodiversity submitted to the Cabinet on 11 October 2004.
- Peterborough Sustainable Community Strategy (including Rural Vision Strategy and Environment Capital manifesto).