

**Executive Advisory Panel
Climate Change Environment and Growth
Thursday 4th August 2022**

Report Title	Pollinator Policy
Report Author	George Candler, Executive Director for Place & Economy and Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member	Councillor Harriet Pentland, Executive Member for Climate & the Green Environment

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Pollinator Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To introduce a North Northamptonshire wide Pollinator Strategy for review and approval by the Executive Advisory Panel.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Policy document in Appendix 1, outlines the operational principles to be adopted in the management of North Northamptonshire's parks, green spaces and selected highways verges, to improve habitats for pollinator species through implementing the key actions to implement the policy.
- 2.2 The policy has been developed with consideration of the council's obligations under the Environment Act 2021, which includes provisions to strengthen and improve the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy by the end of 2023, and so will be compatible with these duties.
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2.3 The detailed Strategy is provided in the appendix A. It is intended that the policies in this document will be published on the council's website once it is adopted, along with promotion with residents in North Northamptonshire via the engagement strategy detailed in the policy.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive Advisory Panel consider and provide feedback on the Pollinator Policy at **Appendix A**.

3.2 The reasons for the recommendation are:

- The policy establishes guiding principles relevant to the operational management of the council's parks and open spaces services and helps meet the council's obligations under the Environment Act 2021, which includes provisions to strengthen and improve the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy by the end of 2023.
- The policy provides the basis for unifying and building on the varying practices adopted by the legacy councils.
- The policy supports the Council's key commitments to a greener, sustainable environment.
- The policy provides a clear statement to residents of how the council is seeking to improve habitats for pollinator species (and other wildlife) in their parks and open spaces.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- The option of continuing historic land management approaches such as 'short mowing' large areas of green spaces was considered but not believed to be in keeping with the council's duties towards nature recovery.
- The option to not have a pollinator strategy and to continue with management of parks and open spaces under the principles devised by the individual officers in the parks and green spaces was rejected in favour of establishing guiding principles for the council's land managers.

4. Report Background

4.1 The Council directly manages a wide range of public parks and open spaces, including urban parks, informal green spaces, country parks, woodlands and nature reserves. The responsibility for managing these areas now sits largely in the Place and Economy Directorate. In advance of any formal service re-structure, the different parks/greenspace teams from the legacy councils are in the process of integrating working practices and systems and this policy provides a unifying set of principles in relation to improving habitats for pollinator species such as bees and butterflies etc.

- 4.2 Some very successful pilot work improving urban green spaces for pollinators has already been undertaken through the ‘Pardon the weeds we are feeding the bees’ initiative in the Kettering/Corby area, which received international recognition and was shared widely on social media. This has seen many areas of formerly short mown grass on parks, green space and verges etc to grow being allowed flower. The associated ‘we are feeding the bees’ signs put up locally helped explain to residents why the look of their green spaces is changing, and the public response has been largely favourable.
- 4.3 The return of the grounds services in the Wellingborough area to direct NNC management provides a good opportunity for the council to extend and develop this kind of approach in line with the principles outlined in the policy.
- 4.4 The principles contained in the document in appendix 1 have been drawn up following internal consultation, and are drawn from the principles identified in the National Pollinator Strategy and are broken down in the policy into four themes:
1. Increase forage resources for pollinator species.
 2. Improve habitats for nesting and overwintering pollinators.
 3. Reduce Pesticide use.
 4. Participate in pollinator projects and action.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The key issues in relation to the implementation of this policy are that the kinds of changes to land management proposed will change the look of the landscape and lead to a more natural look for the areas where, for example, longer grass is to be maintained. However, these changes involve ‘soft landscaping’ and are therefore easily reversible and changeable. Also, areas will be carefully selected and balanced against the need to maintain sufficient short mown open space for recreation – picnics, informal games, dog exercise etc. The success of the ‘feed the bees’ campaign and signage in Kettering & Corby has demonstrated widespread public support for this if the reasons for the change are understood and they are not perceived as cost cutting or neglect.
- 5.2 The option of continuing historic land management approaches such as ‘short mowing’ large areas of green spaces was considered but not considered in keeping with the council’s duties towards nature recovery.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 To formally adopt the policy and implement its use, including the following action plan:
- Publish on the Council website and distribute pollinator policy
 - Identify further areas for natural regeneration with a phased plan for introduction – using ‘feed the bees’ signage
 - Review use of pesticides across the Council and identify areas of efficiency that will reduce environment impact and provide cost benefits to the council’s land management.

- Develop business case for specialised equipment – reciprocal mowers for mowing long grass mowing equipment
- Review bedding plant purchases – ensuring pollinator friendly
- Training and development of grounds staff
- Deliver habitat works Support local community involvement and initiatives where practical and meet objectives
- Review bedding plant purchases – ensuring pollinator friendly
- Deliver habitat works
- Implement performance monitoring from Spring 2023
- Support local community involvement and initiatives where practical and meet objectives

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1 There are no direct financial or transformation implications from the policy beyond the existing obligations already placed on the Council as landowner by law.
- 7.1.2 Much of the change in land management will be implemented by change in practice through use of existing resources. Any requirement for bespoke equipment will be considered, following the council's governance process for securing finances.

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 There are no governance implications in relation to this policy. The legal implications relate to the council's obligations under the Environment Act 2021, which includes provisions to strengthen and improve the duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy by the end of 2023, and so will be compatible with these duties.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 The adoption of this policy supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority of Greener, sustainable environment.

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed policy. Cutting of vegetation associated with highways visibility splays and to promote community safety will continue.

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 Statutory consultation is not required. Internal consultation has been undertaken with the relevant departments, including Planning officers and the Council's ecologist.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

- 7.6.1 Any comments from the Executive Advisory Panel Climate Change are to be shared at the meeting.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 7.7.1 This policy affects more than two wards and will be eligible for call in by Scrutiny Commission.

7.8 Equality Implications

- 7.8.1 An Equality Screening Assessment has not identified any adverse impact on individuals with protected characteristics.

7.9 Climate Impact

- 7.9.1 This proposal will have positive benefits for both reducing CO2 emissions resulting from a reduction in the frequency of mechanical mowing in Council parks and green spaces. It will also increase the amount of carbon stored in the form of longer vegetation, shrubs and trees.

7.10 Community Impact

- 7.10.1 The community impact is expected to be positive resulting in more interesting, varied and wildlife rich green spaces accessible to local people as evidenced by the trial in Kettering/Corby area.

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.11.1 There are no Crime and Disorder issues arising directly from this report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 The Policy document and appendices refer to external legislation and website available to support applicants.