

EXECUTIVE

25th August 2022

Report Title	Pollinator Strategy
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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

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Strategy document in **Appendix A**, 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 Strategy.
- 2.2 The Strategy 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.

- 2.3 The detailed Strategy is provided in the **Appendix A**. It is intended that the Strategy will be published on the Council's website once it is adopted, along with promotion with residents in North Northamptonshire via the engagement approach detailed in the Strategy.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive approve the Pollinator Strategy at **Appendix A**.

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation are:

- The Strategy 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 Strategy provides the basis for unifying and building on the varying practices adopted by the legacy councils.
- The Strategy supports the council's key commitments to a greener, sustainable environment.
- The Strategy provides a clear statement to residents of how the council is seeking to improve habitats for pollinator species (and other wildlife) in its 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 not considered 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, woodland and nature reserves. Following Local Government Reorganisation, the Council has been working towards integrating working practices and systems. This Strategy 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 overwhelmingly favourable.
- 4.3 The return of the grounds services in the Wellingborough area to direct Council management provides a good opportunity for the Council to extend and develop this kind of approach in line with the principles outlined in the strategy.
- 4.4 The principles contained in the document in **Appendix A** have been drawn up following internal consultation, and from the principles identified in the National Pollinator Strategy. They are broken down in the strategy 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 Strategy 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. 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, showing that if the reasons for the change are understood, 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 space was considered but not considered in keeping with the Council’s duties towards nature recovery. A mixture of short and long grass areas will be built into the management plans for our green space to support both different habitat needs and public access to the green space.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 To formally adopt the Strategy and implement its use through the following action plan:
- Publish the Strategy on the Council’s website

- Identify further areas for natural regeneration with a phased plan for introduction
- Review the use of pesticides across the Council and identify areas of efficiency that will reduce environment impact and reduce cost
- Review bedding plant purchases – ensuring they are pollinator friendly
- Develop a business case for obtaining specialised equipment such as reciprocal mowers for long grass mowing etc.
- Training and development of grounds staff
- Implement a publicity campaign – including social media -Spring 2023
- Introduce new mowing regimes. Deliver habitat improvement works from Spring 2023 using ‘feed the bees’ signage – Spring 2023
- 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 strategy 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 Adoption of the Policy is an Executive function.
- 7.2.2 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.
- 7.2.3 Part 3 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 requires specified public bodies in exercising their functions, to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

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

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed strategy. 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 The draft strategy was considered at the Executive Advisory Panel Climate Change, Environment and Growth on 11th July and 4th August 2022. The Panel endorsed the strategy and provided valuable feedback on the content and opportunities to implement the strategy, including providing clarity on the consideration of firebreaks for adjoining properties from rewilded areas with long grass, and confirming that any anti-social behaviour issues will not always require the removal of rewilded areas, with a continued multi-agency approach to finding practical solutions to problems. This feedback has been incorporated within the strategy.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

- 7.7.1 This strategy can be considered by the Scrutiny Commission as part of their work programme.

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 and Environment 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 work in the 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 strategy document and appendices refer to external legislation and website available to support applicants.