

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 10 June 2021

Title: Biodiversity Strategy

Report of: Tim Whelan, Director of Service Delivery

Cabinet member: Cllr Julie Carr, Cabinet member for recycling, waste and open spaces and Cllr Matthew Bird, Cabinet member for sustainability

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To introduce the Biodiversity Strategy and associated work plan

Decision type: Key

Officer recommendation(s): That Cabinet approves

(1) The Lewes District Council Biodiversity Strategy 2021-2025 set out in Appendix 1

(2) The associated Action Plan, set out in Appendix 2

Reasons for recommendations: To set out the principles and approach to supporting biodiversity and to provide a framework and work plan for Lewes District Council in its collaborative approach to protecting and enhancing natural assets

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The natural world is facing threats on an unprecedented scale with the known rates of biodiversity loss and disappearance of habitats and species attributed to ongoing human pressures.
- 1.2 In 2019, Lewes District Council committed to reduce council greenhouse gas emissions to net zero and to become fully climate resilient by 2030 and to address the ecological disaster (Feb 2021). Meaningful biodiverse and nature-based solutions are at the heart of these ambitions.
- 1.3 Across Lewes district work is aligned to climate resilience and improving local biodiversity, through:
- the adoption of a pollinator strategy and pesticide policy in 2019.
 - ongoing projects to increase valuable ecological habitats through better mowing regimes, tree and hedge planting where feasible.
 - continual reviews of management and contracts for council-owned land and property, as well as working closely with our town and parish councils where we provide contracted services.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 The purpose of this strategy is to set out ambitious yet achievable aims and actions in order to better tackle biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation through nature-based solutions across the district and the wider inter-connected landscape.
- 2.2 Our broad key aims can be summarised as follows:
- To seek nature-based solutions, ecosystem services and re-naturing or rewilding opportunities as guiding principles in all council and partnership endeavours.
 - To maintain and increase biodiversity on council-owned and managed land.
 - To engage and enable community-led nature-based projects and to be involved in partnerships that promote natural capital and biodiversity across the district.
 - To ensure that all developments maximise the opportunities for well-considered gains in biodiversity.

3 Outcome expected and performance management

- 3.1 As a custodian of land, by adopting these strategies the council can make a positive impact on the natural environment across the district and influence others where possible.

- 3.2 Biodiverse landscapes bring a multitude of benefits including:
- Carbon storage
 - Ecosystem function
 - Recreation and wellbeing
 - Food production
 - Adaptation to climate change
- 3.3 As an example of applying nature-based solutions to ecosystem services and our collaborative approach, Lewes District Council has provided funding to the Ouse and Adur River Trust, Sussex Flow Initiative, National Trust and landowners via the Sussex Wildlife Trust to deliver a wide range of natural flood management projects in the Ouse catchment and the upper eastern Adur to provide capacity to hold and manage the flow of water through the district. The project has delivered:
- Planting of small woodlands
 - Planting of hedgerows
 - New Storage Pond at Green Lane Ringmer
 - Many woody dams
 - Many swales
 - Working with partners, delivery of 200 hectare of the Ouse floodplain storage at Sheffield Park
 - Catchment mapping of the Bevern, Longford, Glynde and Plumpton Mill streams
 - Investigation of flood storage ponds in Wivelsfield and Ringmer at location where properties are at risk of flooding
- To date around 18 homes in the Ouse catchment have been protected by these works, properties that would be difficult to protect by conventional methods.
- 3.4 The visions and actions contained within the strategy have been developed in response to the urgency of the climate emergency being faced. The strategy will enable the council to work with the community to co-ordinate its response into meaningful and long-lasting action.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Residents were encouraged to take part in developing Lewes District Council's sustainability and climate change strategy through July – October 2020. People were invited to have their say on seven key areas: energy and the built environment, sustainable transport and air quality, biodiversity, agriculture and food, reducing waste, water, circular economy and community wealth.
- 4.2 Specialist advice was also sought as part of that process from a series of Expert Panels.

5 Corporate plan and council policies

- 5.1 The strategy aligns with and complements the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

6 Financial appraisal

- 6.1 The adoption of the strategy will not of itself have an immediate direct financial consequence, as the incorporation of biodiversity into many of the Council's functions and services can be achieved within existing resources, providing that this is maintained.
- 6.2 The strategy is a key component of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability commitments. The authority's capital programme makes sufficient provision for the delivery of these initiatives within its capital allocation for Regeneration. Any future revenue requirements will be assessed as part of the Council's service and financial planning processes.

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 Part 3 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 requires specified public bodies (including borough councils), in exercising their functions, to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. In this context, conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

Lawyer consulted 17.02.21

Legal ref: 009913-JOINT-OD

8 Risk management implications

- 8.1 Failure to agree and progress the strategy could impact upon the council achieving its ambitions to address the climate emergency.

9 Equality analysis

- 9.1 The Equality Act does not have key relevance to this strategy, which is chiefly aimed at land management and development considerations.

However, the Covid 19 pandemic has brought the subject of mental health and wellbeing to the fore, with access to nature paramount to healthy, thriving communities able to cope with such difficult times.

Statement agreed 06/05/2021

10 Environmental sustainability implications

- 10.1 The council is committed to supporting measures to help arrest biodiversity losses, restore habitats and species and work for climate resilience to promote healthy and thriving communities. This is recognised through this strategy, with the need to protect and maintain as well as enhance and increase biodiversity and nature across Lewes district.

11 Contribution to Community Wealth Building

- 11.1 The Corporate Plan prioritises Sustainability and Community Wealth Building. The council is considered 'an anchor institution' and can use its substantial

spending power and influence to drive investment in the local economy to enable a green economic recovery and local job creation and retention. Community wealth is a thread that runs through the overarching climate change and sustainability strategy particularly in relation to procurement but also training and skills.

12 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Lewes District Council Biodiversity Strategy 2021-25
- Appendix 2 – Biodiversity action plan

13 Background papers

- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021

<https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/resources/assets/inline/full/0/310115.pdf>