



**CABINET**

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To: Councillors Miah (Leader), Hamilton (Deputy Leader), Ashcroft, Blackshaw, A. Gray, Jadeja and Tillotson (for attention)

All other members of the Council  
(for information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Cabinet to be held in Committee Room 1, at the Council Offices, Southfields, Loughborough on Thursday, 4th April 2024 at 6.00 pm for the following business.

Chief Executive

Southfields  
Loughborough

21st March 2024

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION REPORTS**

- |    |   |       |
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| 7. | <u>TOWARDS A CORPORATE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY</u>                  | 3 - 4 |
|    | A report of the Head of Planning and Growth.                      |       |
|    | <i>Key Decision</i>   |       |
| 8. | <u>BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENTS – CHANGES TO MOWING ARRANGEMENTS</u> | 5 - 6 |

A report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment.

*Key Decision*

9. ASSETS REVIEW 7 - 8

A report of the Director Commercial and Economic Development.

*Key Decision*

10. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 9 - 10

A report of the Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance.

## CABINET – 4TH APRIL 2024

### Report of the Scrutiny Commission

#### TOWARDS A CORPORATE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

##### Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the 'Towards a Corporate Biodiversity Strategy' report.

##### Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Growth.

##### Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

##### Meeting Discussion

- i. The council intended to use all of the £875k in offsetting payments secured under Section 106 legal agreements which were in the process of being disbursed for biodiversity projects. Some of this money had already been spent and officers at the council were leasing with parish and town councils to identify appropriate projects for the funding. It was expected that the funding would be exhausted and projects would be completed within 5 to 7 years. There was a risk that the money may not be spent if appropriate projects were not identified.
- ii. There was a significant amount of governance surrounding the use of Section 106 monies to ensure it was used towards the intended purpose. There were new legalities in place that meant that the council needed to employ new mechanisms in order to receive money from developers, which was anticipated to take some time.
- iii. There was an opportunity within parishes and towns to create new public open spaces and there was a degree of flexibility on the projects delivered. Members were encouraged highlight areas within their wards which could benefit from funding for projects to increase biodiversity.
- iv. It was suggested that the Communications team at the council could become involved in the promotion of the scheme, using a discrete and targeted approach to engage landowners in the borough.
- v. It was suggested that a peer to peer approach would be beneficial, to enable parish and town councils to discuss projects undertaken in their localities, the

challenges faced and best practice advice. This may encourage more participation into the scheme.

- vi. It was suggested that positive examples of the use of funding be communicated to parish and town councils to encourage further ideas or projects.
- vii. Schools within the borough could benefit from the funding available. There was often a significant amount of open space available on school premises and biodiversity was included on school curriculums.

#### Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Scrutiny Commission Procedure Rule 11.12 sets out the procedure by which a report of a Scrutiny Committee should be considered by Cabinet.

#### Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The information in this in the Cabinet report is not affected by the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

#### Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

#### *Financial Implications*

There are no further financial implications associated with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission.

#### *Risk Management*

There are no specific risks associated with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission.

Key Decision:	Yes
Background Paper:	Scrutiny Commission Minute 133 2023/24, 2nd April 2024.
Officer to Contact:	Sally Watson Democratic Services Officer (01509) 634969 Sally.watson@charnwood.gov.uk

## CABINET – 4TH APRIL 2024

### Report of the Scrutiny Commission

#### BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENTS – CHANGES TO MOWING ARRANGEMENTS

##### Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Biodiversity Improvements – Changes to Mowing Arrangements report.

##### Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Head of Contracts: Leisure, Waste and Environment.

##### Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

##### Meeting Discussion

- i. The pilot scheme would be run over a two year period in order to allow biodiversity to improve over time. It was expected that a one year pilot would not be a long enough time scale to allow biodiversity to improve. It was possible that the council could monitor the increase in biodiversity over the two year pilot period. Following the two year pilot period, it would possible that the council may decide to extend the initiative to further sites across the borough.
- ii. The council had an obligation to improve biodiversity and it was recognised that a balance was important. It was expected that the initial pilot scheme would not be favoured by some residents, but the council would communicate the purpose of the pilot scheme to residents and erect signage to re-establish the expectation of how open spaces were managed.
- iii. The council would ensure that the sites included in the pilot scheme were carefully managed, despite the reduction in mowing. It would be obvious to members of the public that the increase in vegetation was deliberate and site parameters would be maintained to ensure boundaries were not overgrown.
- iv. The pilot scheme would affect only a very small amount of open space owned by the council. It was recognised that the pilot scheme may deter people from using the open spaces as they had done before, although there were other areas within localities that members of the public could use instead.

- v. It was possible that the council could use a flowering lawn mix on the selected sites to improve the look of the sites, although this would have to be carefully considered as some flowering lawn mixes affect the quality of the grass.
- vi. The council had received funding to work with an ecology consultant. The sites were chosen based upon the advice of the ecology consultant, as these were considered to be the most appropriate sites.

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## CABINET – 4TH APRIL 2024

### Report of the Scrutiny Commission

#### ASSETS REVIEW

##### Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Assets Review.

##### Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Director of Commercial and Economic Development.

##### Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

##### Meeting Discussion

- i. The newer part of Southfields Offices had been constructed in the 1980s and initially had a life expectancy of approximately 25 years. This time frame had been surpassed due to the careful maintenance undertaken to preserve the building. It was anticipated that further updates and maintenance would prolong the building for another 25-30 years. The new build option that the council had previously considered would have a life expectancy of approximately 35-40 years, but would have costed the council significantly more.
- ii. The £500k requested would be used to facilitate the development and planning of the programme of works required. The full cost of the improvement programme would be known after a programme of works had been developed and would be subject to Cabinet and Council approval. It was expected that a budget of approximately £6m would be required.

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Key Decision: Yes

Background Paper: Scrutiny Commission Minute 130 2023/24, 2nd April 2024.

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Democratic Services Officer  
(01509) 634969  
Sally.watson@charnwood.gov.uk



## CABINET – 4TH APRIL 2024

### Report of the Scrutiny Commission

#### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

##### Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Workforce Development Strategy.

##### Recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission

That the Cabinet be informed that the Commission welcomes and supports the recommendations set out in the report of the Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance.

##### Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered and asked questions on the report felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

##### Meeting Discussion

- i. The council prioritised recruitment and retention of good officers. Salary benchmarking was undertaken with East Midlands Councils to ensure salaries were in line with those in similar local authorities in Leicestershire and surrounding areas. There was also a network of HR Managers that Charnwood was involved in in order to benchmark further. The council was actively promoting the benefits of working in local government and at Charnwood Borough Council specifically.
- ii. The council had introduced agile working plans which were unique to each service and team. Staff were engaged to discuss service delivery and how agile working could be done. There were some challenges associated with agile working but these were managed well by individual services. Following the introduction of agile working at the council, staff surveys had indicated that this way of working was preferred. It was also highlighted that agile working was a key factor in recruiting new staff as it was seen as a desirable advantage.
- iii. Staff vacancies affected some service areas more than others and the council was trying different initiatives to fill vacancies, including career grading posts and the offer of apprenticeships.

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