

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.
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