

## **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.

### 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 132 2023/24, 2nd April 2024.
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