

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 24th FEBRUARY 2022

Item 6 – Draft Environment and Biodiversity Strategy

Purpose

To receive a proposed Environment and Biodiversity Strategy for the Council's Parks and Open Spaces for consideration and consultation.

Background

Council on 23rd September 2021 approved a Climate Change and Environmental Strategy (Council Minute 5966).

That Strategy contained a section “Protecting and Enhancing Green Spaces”. The overall objective being “to protect and enhance the town’s Green spaces, promote and encourage tree planting, and seek to increase and enrich biodiversity”.

The Town Council is responsible for most of the Town’s Parks and Open Spaces. These urban green spaces not only provide for sport, recreation and play but also for an enriched natural environment protecting the Town from and mitigating the effects of climate change and air pollution.

Therefore, as part of the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy, a commitment was made to “produce an Environment and Biodiversity Strategy for our Parks and Open Spaces, which will set out the Council’s approach to tree planting and maintenance, along with the Council’s commitment to enhancing and enriching biodiversity”.

Draft Environment and Biodiversity Strategy

Attached at Appendix 1 is a proposed draft Environment and Biodiversity Strategy for consideration and consultation with Councillors, staff, partners, stakeholders and residents.

The Foreword of the Strategy includes the link to the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy. There is a context chapter “The Journey to Date”, summarising key initiatives and projects supporting the environment and biodiversity agenda, which have already been delivered or are in the process of being delivered by the Council.

There is then a chapter for the key environment and biodiversity promises in the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy, namely *Tree Planting and Maintenance* and *Enhancing and Enriching Biodiversity*. A *Management of Land and Assets* chapter covers the remaining promises relating to water course management, play equipment, contracts and procurement. Finally, a chapter

summarises action planning, monitoring and review.

Consultation

Following the Committee's consideration of the draft, any comments and changes required will be accommodated in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader prior to the updated version being available for consultation.

It is proposed to make the proposed Strategy available for consultation for a minimum of six weeks during March and April 2022. During this time, the draft will be submitted to Citizens' Advisory Panel on 3rd March 2022.

The consultation will be open to anyone who wishes to comment; however, it is primarily aimed at Councillors, staff, partners, stakeholders and residents.

Adoption of Strategy

Policy & Resources Committee has delegated authority to "decide on all questions of policy in connection with the adoption and maintenance of Public Open Space" (delegation (i)). Therefore, the Committee will receive the consultation comments and responses, along with proposed revisions to the Strategy, at its meeting scheduled for 28th April 2022 for consideration and approval.

Delivering the Strategy

Chapter 6 of the Strategy sets out an annual action planning, monitoring and review process to deliver the Strategy's ambitions and objectives.

Recommendations

1. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to make modifications to the draft Environment and Biodiversity Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, in order to accommodate comments and changes required by the Committee; and
2. that, subject to 1 above, the draft Environment and Biodiversity Strategy be approved for consultation, as set out in the *Consultation* section of the report, with the post-consultation version being submitted to Policy & Resources Committee, scheduled for 28th April 2022, for consideration and adoption.

Reasons

1. To enable general comments and observations to be accommodated into the draft Strategy accordingly.
2. To ensure that the Strategy would be fit for purpose, would meet the needs and aspirations of residents', and would be deliverable.



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Parks & Open Spaces

Environment and Biodiversity Strategy

DRAFT 16th FEBRUARY 2022

DATE ADOPTED		FREQUENCY OF REVIEW	3 years or legislative changes
REVISED DATE/S			

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Parks & Open Spaces

Environment and Biodiversity Strategy

DRAFT

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1. FOREWORD

From the Leader of Braunstone Town Council

In 2019 the UN published the startling and troubling statistic that globally one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction. The report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services found that nature is declining at unprecedented rates and that this decline will have grave impacts worldwide as we destroy the very foundation of economies, livelihoods, food, health and quality of life. Nature is clearly at a crisis point and we all have a part to play in halting and reversing this trend.

Braunstone Town Council is responsible for most of the Town's Parks and Open Spaces. These urban green spaces not only provide for sport, recreation and play but also for an enriched natural environment protecting the Town from and mitigating the effects of climate change and air pollution. That is why the Town Council when adopting its Climate Change & Environmental Strategy in September 2021 devoted a Section to *Protecting and Enhancing Green Spaces*.

As part of adopting our Climate Change & Environmental Strategy, the Town Council committed to producing an Environment and Biodiversity Strategy for our Parks and Open Spaces, which will set out the Council's approach to tree planting and maintenance, along with the Council's commitment to enhancing and enriching biodiversity.

This Strategy provides the framework for the Town Council to:

- help fight pollution and climate change by planting trees on our parks;
- reuse more of the waste generated from the maintenance of our parks and open spaces (e.g. tree and hedge clippings and grass cuttings) to enhance the biodiversity and environmental aspects of our parks and open spaces;
- identify measures for the management of our land and assets, which reduce the likelihood of flooding and provide for a rolling programme of water course maintenance as part of the annual winter works programme;
- encourage the involvement of local residents, particularly young people and schools, in projects and initiatives to enhance the natural environment and biodiversity; and
- source materials, including play equipment, which is durable and long lasting, made from sustainable sources and compliments the natural environment.

In the medium term the Council will consider reviewing access to and provision of green space across the Town. In the long term the Council, in partnership with the District and County Councils, will need to develop plans to enhance the built environment across the Town, including tree planting, protecting hedgerows and encouraging wild flower and biodiversity.

*Councillor Nick Brown
Leader of Braunstone Town Council*

2. THE JOURNEY TO DATE

Due to the rapid and ongoing decline in nature and biodiversity, it is vitally important that the Town Council focuses its efforts and has a clear deliverable plan to respond. This Strategy provides that focus, recognising the Council already has a track record of delivering on the environment and therefore is able to build upon our achievements to date.

1. Creation of a community woodland at the rear of Mossdale Meadows adjacent to Meridian Leisure and Lubbesthorpe Way – to absorb carbon and other pollutants and provide a haven for nature and habitats.
2. Creation of a Community Orchard, including apple trees and pear trees, wildflower meadow and pond, utilising unused land. An annual community pruning day is undertaken in the Orchard by local volunteers.
3. Tree Planting – the Town Council continues to plant new trees on its parks and open spaces on an annual basis through its Winter Works Programme. Trees are obtained through organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts and Leicestershire County Council.
4. Installation of bonded rubber mulch – a durable, permeable and long lasting playground safety surface that is made from recycled rubber; Braunstone Town Council has installed these surfaces at:
 - Holmfield Park
 - Franklin Parkthe proposals for the refurbishment of Shakespeare Park Play area also include all safety surfaces being bonded rubber mulch; and as existing wet pour surfaces wear out, they are replaced with bonded rubber mulch.
5. Ongoing work with the Drummond Estate to design a new public park on unused land adjacent to Meridian Way, which will enhance nature and biodiversity as well as provide a local recreational amenity and screen residential properties from the M1 and Meridian Way Extension, reducing the impact of noise and pollution. This park will include new paths, landscaping woodlands, hedges and tree planting. Also included are drainage works including swales/channel and an attenuation pond.

3. TREE PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

OBJECTIVE: To help fight pollution and climate change by planting trees on our parks and open spaces.

“Trees are vital. As the biggest plants on the planet, they give us oxygen, store carbon, stabilise the soil and give life to the world’s wildlife. They also provide us with the materials for tools and shelter” (The Royal Parks).

The Council will continue to help fight pollution by protecting existing trees and planting new trees on our parks and open spaces by:

- (a) maintaining a clear policy position that trees will only be removed or cut back due to health & safety reasons, to maintain the health of the tree and for wider ecological and environmental benefits;
- (b) undertaking a rolling programme of tree health checks and where identified undertaking or commissioning tree maintenance works during the Winter Works Programme in order to maintain safe and healthy trees;
- (c) replacing trees, which die, are damaged or removed because the rolling programme of tree health checks identifies that the tree is not healthy nor safe;
- (d) commissioning advice and developing Management Plans to protect and enhance the ecological condition of our existing woodlands;
- (e) identifying land to grow wild, with minimum maintenance and cutting, thereby allowing trees and other plants and vegetation to grow naturally (natural colonisation);
- (f) planting trees or using natural colonisation along water courses and within the catchment area in order to enhance water quality, reduce the risk of flooding and enhance biodiversity;
- (g) identifying locations for new woodland and connecting existing woodlands;
- (h) connecting with organisations and identifying funding sources which provide support for planting trees and enhancing existing woodlands;
- (i) commissioning a study of the Council’s Parks & Open Spaces to assess opportunities for the expansion of tree provision, including recommendations on location, species and potential to enhance nature and biodiversity;
- (j) encouraging the involvement of local residents, particularly young people and schools, to come up with ideas and take part in projects and initiatives to plant trees and enhance woodland; and
- (k) setting aside funding to support local groups and schools with projects on the Council’s Parks and Open Spaces.

It should be noted that planting and retaining trees provide wider benefits than helping to fight pollution and climate change, including:

- providing cover from the heat of the sun in summer months;
- reducing and preventing soil erosion and flooding;
- enhancing wildlife and biodiversity;
- improving people’s health and well being; and
- enhancing the visual amenity of the built environment.

Braunstone Town Council will take into account the wider benefits as part of its tree planting and maintenance programmes.

4. ENHANCING AND ENRICHING BIODIVERSITY

OBJECTIVE: To both stop the loss of habitats and to protect and enhance both nature and biodiversity for future generations.

“Beyond its intrinsic value, biodiversity is necessary to human survival. Ecosystem diversity is crucial to ecosystem integrity, which in turn enables our life support, giving us a liveable climate, breathable air, and drinkable water. Food-crop diversity and pollinating insects and bats allow agriculture to support our populations; when disease strikes a food crop, only diversity can save the system from collapse” (The Centre for Biological Diversity).

The Council will seek to play its part not only in reversing the biodiversity decline through enhancing and enriching biodiversity on its parks and open spaces by:

- (a) planting a variety of wildflowers and native plants to provide nectar that will bloom throughout the season, in order to attract pollinating insects;
- (b) installing boxes for native bees, bats and birds to make their home;
- (c) utilising the soil at the base of trees to grow some herbs, flowers or small shrubs;
- (d) identifying and implementing a management plan to provide “Wildlife Corridors”, across green spaces and between green spaces;
- (e) protecting existing hedgerows; limiting cutting to maintaining access, health and safety, and the life of the plant;
- (f) reducing dependence on chemicals and use organic maintenance methods; where it remains essential to use pesticides or herbicides, chemical treatments will be swapped for organic ones;
- (g) identifying locations for small water holes to encourage a variety of pond creatures and insects;
- (h) creating areas using tree and hedge clippings and grass cuttings to support hedge hogs and other creatures like stag beetles;
- (i) leaving fallen leaves where there is no risk to health and safety;
- (j) commissioning a study of the Council’s Parks & Open Spaces to assess their nature and biodiversity potential and make further recommendations;
- (k) encouraging the involvement of local residents, particularly young people and schools, to come up with ideas and take part in projects and initiatives to enhance the natural environment and biodiversity;
- (l) supporting the establishment and development of community gardens; and
- (m) setting aside funding to support local groups and schools with projects on the Council’s Parks and Open Spaces.

Braunstone Town Council will also seek to work with other principal authorities and partners to:

- i. enhance and protect biodiversity and nature across Braunstone Town, including tree planting, protecting hedgerows and encouraging wild flower; and
- ii. encourage and support residents to play their part at home and in their garden.

5. MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND ASSETS

OBJECTIVE: To provide and maintain parks and open spaces to a high standard; provide quality sports facilities to meet identified needs; and provide and maintain play equipment to a high and safe standard.

In support of the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy, and Sections 3, Tree Planting and Maintenance, and 4, Enhancing and Enriching Biodiversity, of this Strategy:

- (a) where we cannot reuse waste ourselves, develop arrangements where the waste could be reused by others, composted or recycled;
- (b) identify measures for the management of our land and assets, which reduce the likelihood of flooding and provide for a rolling programme of water course maintenance as part of the annual winter works programme;
- (c) source materials, including play equipment, which is durable and long lasting, made from sustainable sources and compliments the natural environment;
- (d) obtain best value in terms of all costs when implementing new contracts and selecting suppliers; this means balancing financial cost with the cost to the environment and the planet;
- (e) reduce our energy use and increase our energy efficiency;
- (f) reduce dependence on chemicals;
- (g) reduce dependence on carbon technology;
- (h) critically assess the short term, medium term and long term benefits of procuring new technologies;
- (i) source the provision of goods, services and works “locally” where possible;
- (j) use suppliers who source their products or goods “locally”; and
- (k) require the submission of an environmental statement when inviting tenders for the provision of goods, services and works in order to assess the overall impact on the environment in terms of carbon and waste.

6. ACTION PLANNING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Underpinning this strategy is the need to take action. The Council will need to consider the deliverability of each identified action and its impact, along with available resources, when deciding which actions will be a priority.

Upon adoption of this Strategy, proposals will be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee for a Summer Works Programme and a revised framework for the Winter Works Programme.

In approving both the Summer and Winter Works Programmes, Policy & Resources Committee may delegate responsibility for delivering and monitoring particular actions to either the Community Development Committee or the Planning & Environment Committee where the identified action falls within that Committee's Terms of Reference and delegated responsibility.

Policy & Resources Committee is responsible for the development of this Environment and Biodiversity Strategy, which includes ensuring that it is in line with the Council's wider Climate and Environmental Strategy as approved by Council. Policy & Resources Committee is also responsible for ensuring adequate input from Councillors, Staff, Partners, Stakeholders and Residents.

Most of the Council's policies are reviewed at least every three years with reviews earlier if there are legislative or other significant changes. It is intended that this Strategy will be adopted in 2022 and reviewed by Policy & Resources Committee at least every three years, which includes in 2025 and 2028. This is particularly important to ensure that the Council is on track to deliver its commitment for all its activities to be "carbon neutral" by 2030.

Most of the objectives in this Strategy be delivered through the Parks and Open Spaces annual Summer and Winter Works Programmes.

APPENDIX 1 – Parks and Open Spaces

