

Mayor and Cabinet		
Report Title	Response to the referral by the Sustainable Development Select Committee on the Biodiversity Action Plan	
Key Decision	No	Item No.
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Director Resources & Regeneration; Executive Director Customer Services	
Class	Part 1	Date: 29 June 2016

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Executive Director's response to the recommendations arising from the Sustainable Development Select Committee's consideration of 'A Natural Renaissance for Lewisham' Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020', which was presented at the Mayor and Cabinet meeting of 23rd March 2016.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 On the 8th March the Sustainable Development Select Committee (SDSC) considered 'A Natural Renaissance for Lewisham' Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020' and recommended that:
- That the Biodiversity Action Plan be approved
 - Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy money be allocated for a borough-wide survey of potential sites for additional street trees and ecological enhancements
 - That as part of the Digital Transformation Programme, consideration be given to how best to support the biodiversity action plan with improved use of IT
- 2.2 The purpose of this report is to set out the Executive Director's response to the recommendations arising from the SDSC consideration of the Lewisham Biodiversity Action Plan.

3. Recommendations

The Mayor is recommended to:

- 3.1 Approve the response from the Executive Director for Resource and Regeneration to the Sustainable Development Select Committee
- 3.2 Agree the content of this report and agree that the matters discussed in this report be reported back to the Sustainable Development Select Committee.

4. Policy Context

4.1 Shaping our future – the Council’s Sustainable Community Strategy includes the following priority outcomes

- Clean, green and liveable – where people live in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment
- Protect and enhance our parks, open spaces and local biodiversity.

4.2 The Council has outlined ten corporate priorities which enables the delivery of the Sustainable Community strategy.

- Priority number 3: Clean, green and liveable improving environmental management. The council is committed to protect and manage the environment and to aspire to a sustainable environment where people, have access to green spaces and take responsibility for their impact on the environment.

4.3 The decision to endorse ‘A Natural Renaissance for Lewisham’ is consistent with the Local Development Framework (June 2011): Core Strategy Objective 7: Open Space and environmental assets.

- This states that the important environmental, ecological and biodiversity features of Lewisham will be protected and capitalised to promote health and well-being by:

- a. protecting all open space including Metropolitan Open Land
- b. protecting Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and supporting and promoting local biodiversity
- c. requiring green roofs and walls where appropriate
- d. implementing the Street Tree Programme
- e. improving the quality of, and safeguarding access to, all public open space
- f. providing accessible and varied opportunities for health, leisure and recreational activities including the South East London Green Chain Walk, the Green Grid, the Waterlink Way and river and waterways network, and the Thames Path.

5 Background

5.1 On 8th March 2016, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered ‘A Natural Renaissance for Lewisham’ Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020’. Their recommendations are set out below.

6 Recommendation made by the SDSC

Recommendation 1

6.1 The Committee resolved to note that they considered the Biodiversity Action Plan to be excellent and recommended to Mayor and Cabinet “*that the Biodiversity Action Plan be approved.*”

Response:

6.2 Noted and agreed

Recommendation 2

6.3 *That Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy money be allocated for a borough-wide survey of potential sites for additional street trees and ecological enhancements.*

Response:

6.4 Street trees play an important role in London's environment, providing multiple physical and aesthetic benefits. London's street trees principle value is to reducing the impact of climate change on the capital. Trees increase shading, and cooling, they improve street environments and reduce noise and dust from road traffic. Crucially, they also mop up carbon emissions.

6.5 The Council recognises that Lewisham's trees are part of what makes the borough so green, compared to many other parts of London. Introducing new street trees can be challenging. With limited space available, it is also important to prioritise space for pedestrians and cyclists; visibility for drivers must be maintained; underground utilities can often make new trees too costly; and reducing revenue budgets can means that damaged trees aren't always maintained. Despite these challenges, the Council seeks to maintain, protect and increase the number and quality of trees in the borough through various measures.

6.6 Lewisham adopts a five-point approach to planning decisions for biodiversity, based on the five following principles – information, avoidance, mitigation, compensation and new benefits.

6.7 Where mitigation is required as a result of a planning application, this is routinely achieved by on site measures delivered as part of the scheme itself. These can include the installation of bat and bird boxes, the implementation of sympathetic landscaping and new tree planting and also other habitat creation enhancements such as, living roofs to benefit biodiversity. The majority of planning applications achieve a positive biodiversity enhancement from on site interventions that exceed what existed prior to development. Financial sums secured via a Section 106 agreement towards biodiversity measures are therefore rare as mitigation is nearly always achieved through on site measures.

6.8 In addition, as part of the Local Implementation Plan, all large transport projects aim to introduce street trees where feasible. Similarly, as major schemes and developments are brought forward officers continue to work with developers to ensure the delivery of high quality urban realm as part of their schemes, including the provision of new street trees in appropriate locations.

6.9 Funding received through s106 must be spent within the terms set out in the specific legal agreement with each contribution secured having to be necessary in relation to the impacts of the specific development. While the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a non-ring fenced fund that has a wider

scope, the council must spend the revenue generated on *“the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area”*. The Council can spend a small proportion of CIL revenue on *“anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area”*; this ‘local proportion’ of CIL however must be spent locally and in consultation with local communities (this process of identifying local priorities for spend of the local proportion is currently being developed).

- 6.10 At present the Council does not hold any s106 sums that could be spent on a Borough wide general survey for ecological enhancements. The Council is in receipt of s106 monies for ‘environmental improvements’. These sums are generally tied to a specific improvement (or type of improvement) to mitigate the impacts of a particular scheme and would not be able to be used for a Borough wide study. However, the use of these funds for enhancement works, including the provision of street trees will be investigated.

Recommendation 3

- 6.11 *That as part of the Digital Transformation Programme, consideration be given to how best to support the biodiversity action plan with improved use of IT.*

Response:

- 6.12 As part of wider plans to upgrade our IT infrastructure and the Sharepoint estate, officers will look at how to support better data management and sharing in both this area and across the whole Council.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The report sets out for approval the response from the Executive Director to the Sustainability Development Select Committee on matters raised, there are no legal implications on the responses.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report per se.

9 Equalities implications

- 9.1 Lewisham's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES) 2012-16 describes the Council's commitment to equality for citizens, service users and employees.

The CES is underpinned by a set of high level strategic objectives which incorporate the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- tackle victimisation, harassment and discrimination
- to improve access to services
- to close the gap in outcomes for citizens
- to increase understanding and mutual respect between communities to increase participation and engagement

9.2 All residents and visitors to the borough have a right to enjoy, learn about and make use of Lewisham's many and diverse wildlife habitats, species and landscapes, especially where access to and use of these resources is free throughout the year. Protecting Lewisham's biodiversity through the BAP process helps ensure this right of access and enjoyment is there for all cultures, ages and abilities and that information and knowledge about Lewisham's natural assets is promoted to the widest audience possible without preference, prejudice or prior assumption. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this response.

10 Environmental implications

10.1 There are no specific environmental implications from this report.

11 Conclusion

11.1 The recommendation referred to the Mayor from the Sustainable Development Select Committee has been answered in section 6 of this report and it is proposed that this response is referred back to the committee

12 Background documents and report author

- [Biodiversity Plan](#)
- [Report to M&C 23 March 2016](#)

12.1 If you have any queries on this report, please contact Emma Talbot, Head of Planning, 5th floor Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, Catford SE6 4RU – telephone 020 8314 9051 or Nick Pond, Ecological Regeneration Manager, 020 8314 2007.