



CABINET

22 JANUARY 2014

Subject Heading:

Havering Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Andrew Curtin

CMT Lead:

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Policy context:

"Living Ambition" / Culture Strategy

Financial summary:

Addressing the key issues identified within the Strategy can be contained within existing and planned revenue funding and all associated actions will be met from within existing revenue resources. Any actions requiring capital resources will be subject to separate decision making processes and will only proceed if additional capital funding, including external funding, is secured (which cannot be guaranteed at this juncture).

Is this a Key Decision?

No

When should this matter be reviewed?

November 2014

Reviewing OSC:

Towns and Communities

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

<i>Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough</i>	<i>[x]</i>
<i>Championing education and learning for all</i>	<i>[x]</i>
<i>Providing economic, social and cultural activity</i>	
<i>in thriving towns and villages</i>	<i>[x]</i>
<i>Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents</i>	<i>[x]</i>
<i>Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax</i>	<i>[x]</i>

SUMMARY

This report seeks Member approval for a Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy for Havering, which will provide a framework for the Council and its partners to progress nature conservation and biodiversity work in the borough for the next three years (2014-16).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To agree to the Havering Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy attached to this report as Appendix 1.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Havering's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is now over 10 years old and is in need of updating. This update should take account of the significant progress that has been made in promoting, protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the borough in the last decade, as well as the new challenges facing those involved in the delivery of the nature conservation agenda. The Havering Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy attached as Appendix 1 aims to provide that update.
2. The Strategy notes the Council has taken opportunities to increase the size of parks and green spaces over the years, recently adding approximately 80 hectares to Dagnam Park in 2013; confirming 55 hectares as Rainham Wildspace in 2012; identifying 23 acres to be managed by the Council as a new nature reserve (adjoining Wildspace); adopting Hornchurch Country Park in 1980; adopting Havering Country Park in 1986 and enhancing the nature conservation value of spaces in town centres, through initiatives such as the wild flower planting next to Central Library in Romford.

3. This Strategy concentrates on the many important species and habitats that are characteristic of Havering, as well the role that the Council and its partners can play in supporting them. The Strategy also provides a chance to take a more co-ordinated approach to addressing nature conservation and biodiversity issues, pulling together the work which has begun as a result of the BAP, ensuring co-ordination across services and through partnerships and grasping new opportunities that arise.
4. One of the themes of this strategy is to identify actions that will better connect Havering's town centres to their surrounding green spaces and countryside. This will benefit both the wildlife that need "green corridors" to move about and thrive and give people better opportunities to access, enjoy and protect the natural environment they live in.
5. The strategy is in line with and builds upon, local and regional planning policies which seek to protect and enhance nature conservation and biodiversity in the borough and recognises the important role that this has in generating a high quality of life for Havering residents.
6. Havering has wildlife and wild places to be proud of. As an outer London Borough encircled by Green Belt land, Havering is custodian of countryside and wildlife that is important not only for those that live and work in the borough but for many other Londoners as well. Even among the outer London boroughs, Havering's biodiversity is notable. Its historic parks, river valleys and Thames-side marshland hold a significant proportion of London's entire resource of some priority habitats. Its private gardens are home to a national priority species, the stag beetle, and Havering is also the stronghold in London for two other national priority species: water voles and great crested newts. Within Greater London, Havering has 56% of the grazing marsh, 31% of the reed beds, 31% of the floodplain grassland, 25% of the marshland and 19% of the lakes and ponds, in all cases more than any other London borough.
7. Over 50% of Havering is in the Green Belt which, apart from the south of the borough, almost entirely surrounds the built up areas of the borough separating it from the rest of London to the west and the built up areas of Essex to the north and east. The borough itself has over 100 parks and open spaces, including the two country parks, Havering Country Park and Hornchurch Country Park.
8. From a nature conservation point of view Havering is characterised by woodlands and unimproved grasslands in the north of the borough and reed beds and marshland in the south, each influenced by variations in soils, topography and land use. These habitats, in turn, support a variety of wildlife including those species associated with woodland and unimproved grassland for example veteran trees, bats, woodland birds and a number of uncommon plant species; to those associated with wetlands including water voles, bitterns and wading birds. The main rivers in Havering, the

Ingrebourne, Rom and Beam provide a green link from the north to the south of the borough supporting species such as kingfishers, whilst the many ponds provide a stronghold within greater London for great crested newts and a diversity of insect life. In addition to the variety of habitats found in the borough provide an environment that supports four native reptile species including adders, the slow worm, the common lizard and the grass snake.

9. Significant progress has been made in increasing access to and protecting the natural environment since the production of the last Biodiversity Action plan. This progress includes the delivery of Landscape scale projects, the introduction of Higher Level Stewardship schemes, the building of several new visitor centres, the creation of many new wildlife corridors, the creation of grass meadows in a number of parks and open spaces and the production of a number of strategically important documents.
10. The Strategy focuses on the work that the Council and the Havering Wildlife Project, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholder organisations and residents, can do to address 18 objectives key issues that are identified in the strategy (see appendix 1 to the strategy). An Action Plan is included to ensure that nature conservation and biodiversity work in Havering is significantly enhanced in the future.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

To provide a strategic framework for Havering Council and its partners to work within, in order to better address a number of nature conservation and biodiversity issues in the borough.

To help ensure that the Council considers biodiversity issues in exercising its functions, as required by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Other options considered:

The option of not providing a strategic framework was rejected as it would result in a diminution of the work that Havering Council and partners would be able progress, to address the nature conservation and biodiversity issues facing the borough.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

Addressing the key issues identified within the Strategy can be contained within existing and planned revenue funding and all associated actions will be met from within existing revenue resources. Any actions requiring capital resources will be subject to separate decision making processes and will only proceed if additional capital funding, including external funding, is secured (which cannot be guaranteed at this juncture).

Legal implications and risks:

There is no longer a requirement for the Council to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan (linked to a previous statutory duty that the Mayor of London had to produce a Biodiversity Strategy); but the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None specific to this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

None specific to this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Havering Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
Havering's Biodiversity Action Plan
Havering Wildlife Project's "Living Landscapes" report.
The London Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy (2002)
Havering's Local Development Framework
The London Mayor's London Plan (2011)
The Lawton report "Making Space for Nature"
Government White Paper "The Natural Choice" (2010)
The "State of Nature" report (2013)