

Mrs Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment	Ref No: ENV16 18/19
March 2019	Key Decision: No
Pollinator Action Plan for West Sussex County Council	Part I
Report by Executive Director, Economy Infrastructure and Environment and Director of Energy, Waste and Environment	Electoral Division(s): All
<p>Summary</p> <p>The report proposes that the County Council adopts a Pollinator Action Plan to support biodiversity, local food production, natural capital including flower-rich habitats and sustainable pollinator populations, as well as increasing the attractiveness of West Sussex as a place for people to live, work and visit.</p> <p>The plan is a local response to the Government's National Pollinator Strategy for England; a shared plan of action to meet the needs of pollinators through integrated land and habitat management.</p> <p>The Plan links in with our existing sustainability strategy, our Breathing Better (air quality) Plan, as well as our management plans for our own estate. It builds on the work we are already doing and helps meet our statutory duty to conserve biodiversity.</p> <p>The plan is built around 5 central aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy and guidance where relevant 2. To protect, increase and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in West Sussex and prevent any extinction and improve the status of any locally threatened species 3. To increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners 4. To increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of land under the ownership of, or managed by the County Council 5. To improve knowledge and understanding of pollinators in the local area. <p>A number of specific actions are identified under each aim and the County Council will work with its partners, contractors, schools, residents and businesses to deliver this plan. Progress on actions will be reported through the Sustainability Team's business planning process.</p>	
<p>West Sussex Plan: Policy Impact and Context</p> <p>One of the West Sussex Plan priorities is being a 'Strong, Safe and Sustainable Place'. The proposed commitment to pollinators contributes to looking after the environment and the beautiful outdoors and strengthening</p>	

communities' quality of life. Breathing Better (a partnership approach to improving air quality in West Sussex) highlights the co-benefits of improving pollinator friendly habitat and air quality. It states '*... in addition to improving air quality (they) are also shown to improve water quality, reduce flooding, improve health and wellbeing, increase property values, increase biodiversity and create a resilient environment*'. Furthermore, it delivers across all elements of the County Council's current Sustainability Strategy.

Financial Impact

No implications.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member for Environment commits to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators and approves the Pollinator Action Plan 2019 - 2022, attached as an appendix to the report.

PROPOSAL

1. Background and Context

- 1.1. The UK's native pollinators include bumblebees and other bees (250 species), butterflies and moths, flies, beetles and wasps. In all, there are over 4000 species of insect in the UK that carry out pollination of native wild plants and food crops. Insect pollination is extremely important to the UK economy, with estimated values of £691 million annually.
- 1.2. The UK is not exempt from global concern about the decline in insects. It is known that, across the UK, pollinators are in trouble. Of 27 native bumblebee species half are in decline and three are already extinct. Two-thirds of moth species and 71% of butterflies are in decline.
- 1.3. The Government's [National Pollinators Strategy](#) for England sets out a 10 year plan to help pollinating insects survive and thrive across England outlining actions to support and protect the many pollinating insects. It is a shared plan of action which looks to everyone to work together and ensure pollinators' needs are addressed as an integral part of land and habitat management.
- 1.4. In particular the Strategy asks local authorities to take a lead across many of their work areas and duties, including their role in local planning and also as managers of public and amenity spaces, brownfield sites, schools, car parks, roadside verges and roundabouts.
- 1.5. The West Sussex Plan already recognises the importance of the local environment, with the outcome of a sustainable environment. In the Plan, Cabinet members have stated the ambition to become the best guardians of the local environment, to ensure its beauty and prosperity for generations to come.

- 1.6. The County Council has a duty under s40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity when discharging its functions. The Act states that "conserving biodiversity" includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.
- 1.7. Supporting pollinators is one way the County Council can demonstrate commitment to both the West Sussex Plan and the statutory duty.

2. Proposal Details

2.1. It is proposed that the County Council commits to helping to conserve the UK's pollinators and:

- Considers the needs of pollinators in the delivery of its duties and work
- Seeks to protect and enhance the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage its greenspace to provide greater benefits for pollinators
- Ensures local people are provided with opportunities to make West Sussex more pollinator friendly

2.2. To deliver this the County Council will:

- Encourage local plans, policy and guidance to represent the needs of pollinators
- Protect and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in West Sussex to prevent extinctions and improve the status of any locally threatened species
- Improve knowledge and understanding of pollinators in the local area
- Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, businesses and other landowners
- Increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of land under the ownership of, or managed by, the County Council.

2.3. The Pollinator Action Plan is attached as an appendix.

FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

3. Consultation

- 3.1. The draft plan has been shared with the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC). The Manager of the SxBRC supports the proposal, particularly the Local Wildlife Sites Initiative and is encouraged to see the County Council's commitment towards a Pollinator Action Plan.
- 3.2. There has been an informal discussion between the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Director for Public Health. Observations included the benefits of partnership working, encouraging communities to adopt-a-verge or identify land that is un-loved, enabling neighbourhood plans to focus on green spaces, and approaching schools such as those in the Eco, Youth and Engaged (EYE) project.

- 3.3. Internal technical advice has been received from officers in Planning Services, Transport and Highways, Environment and Heritage, Countryside Services, Waste Management and Facilities Management. Their input and support contributed to the preparation of the Plan.

4. Financial (revenue and capital) and Resource Implications

- 4.1. Delivery of the plan will be met from within existing resources however grant funding may be sought where appropriate for specific projects.
- 4.2. Any projects/proposals identified will be completed through the use of the WSCC standard procurement routes and decision making processes.
- 4.3. There is no impact on Human Resources or IT systems. There will be beneficial impacts on corporate assets as this work improves their appeal to pollinators, as well as making them more attractive green spaces for people.

5. Legal Implications

There are no identifiable legal implications.

6. Risk / Opportunity Assessment

- 6.1. Although resources have been identified for the next financial year to deliver parts of the action plan, it is acknowledged that County Council resources are under constant pressure and priority assessment. There is a risk that there will be fewer resources available to take forward actions in future.
- 6.2. Additionally, while the management and delivery of the County Council's contracts are within its control, other potential partners may struggle with resources which may limit the opportunity for partnership working.
- 6.3. Councils such as Devon, Cornwall and Dorset benefit from positive public reaction to their adopted Pollinator Plans.
- 6.4. Progress on actions will reported through the business planning process, and where performance is slipping, this will be managed within the services.

7. Other Options Considered (and Reasons for not proposing)

- 7.1. The alternative option is not to create a Pollinator Plan. While this would not mean that all positive action by the County Council would cease, the plan provides focus and intent to promote pollinator friendly habitats. It also provides a framework for reporting on actions.
- 7.2. The resources required to deliver the actions are modest in relation to the co-benefits identified and there is likely to be public support around this area of work.

8. Equality and Human Rights Assessment

There are no identifiable equality or human rights implications.

9. Social Value and Sustainability Assessment

- 9.1. The adoption and delivery of the proposed Pollinator Action Plan will have multiple benefits in improving the environmental well-being of a local area.
- 9.2. The proposals in terms of environmental sustainability meet those set out in the County Council's Sustainability Strategy (2015-2019). Specifically, the proposal embeds sustainability within the County Council's business as it will ensure the corporate estate is managed appropriately and that new contracts specify the importance of management for the benefit of pollinators.
- 9.3. Pollinator-friendly habitats contribute to strengthening green infrastructure which values the place of West Sussex and will increase the ability to adapt to a changing climate.
- 9.4. Efficiency savings may be possible depending on how green space contracts in the future are managed in future.
- 9.5. Pollinator-friendly habitats do not exist in isolation and connected green spaces are much more beneficial for people and pollinators, so the County Council will work with and influence others to maximise the impact of our plan.

10. Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

There are no identifiable Crime and Disorder Act implications.

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Appendices

Pollination Action Plan

Background papers

None