

Report of	Meeting	Date
<p>Director of Communities</p> <p>Introduced by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing)</p>	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Full Council</p>	<p>Wednesday, 13 July 2022</p> <p>Wednesday, 20 July 2022</p>

Biodiversity Strategy

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	No
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Purpose of the Report

- To seek Members approval and adoption of the draft Biodiversity Strategy for South Ribble.
- To seek approval and adoption of the Interim Biodiversity Action Plan.

Recommendations to Cabinet

- That the report be noted and presented for adoption at Full Council

Recommendations to Council

- That the report be noted, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Interim Action Plan are adopted.

Reasons for recommendations

- Across the world biodiversity is under threat, either from pollution, development or changes in the climate. The lives we currently lead compromises our biodiversity. Habitats are being lost or fragmented, isolating plant and animal communities into ever smaller areas.

6. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and recently updated by the Environment Act 2021 public authorities in England are under a legal duty to have due regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the exercise of its functions. Section 105 of the Environment Act 2021 requires local authorities to prepare a 'local nature recovery strategy'
7. Public bodies must also determine what action is required to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions and must determine such policies and objectives as appropriate to achieve this.
8. They must also publish biodiversity reports providing a summary of the action taken and planned and detailing the resulting biodiversity gains achieved.

Other options considered and rejected

9. Do nothing, this would negatively impact on the biodiversity of the borough and result in the council failing in its statutory duties to consider, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its duties.

Corporate priorities

10. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

11. Biodiversity is the term that describes the biological variety of our planet. It includes all plants and animals and the ecosystems that support them and us. It helps to shape the landscape of our area and our local distinctiveness and prosperity.
12. It contributes to good mental and physical health and wellbeing, and has a role to play in our response to Climate Change, Flooding, and issues relating to air, water and land quality.
13. Of those areas specifically identified as providing important biodiversity over 40% of are showing signs of declining. In addition, over 30% of priority species have also been identified as struggling. Given the importance of these action needs to be taken to protect them, and this is specifically identified within the legislation.
14. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 has recently been updated by the Environment Act 2021, reemphasising the Government's commitment to protection wildlife across the country.
15. The changes set requirements for public bodies and the wider population. These include:

- The Local Authority must publish a biodiversity report and update on actions,
 - Ensuring, by condition if required, a 10% net gain on biodiversity for all planning applications above a single dwelling.
16. The Environment Act 2021 received royal consent on 9th November 2021, Chapter 1 of which aims to 'Improve the Natural Environment', and introduces into law a number of requirements and the ability for the Secretary of State to set Regulations to achieve this aim.
 17. Following the enactment of the legislation a draft strategy was produced for public consultation and following confirmation from Cabinet in March 2022 the Council have undertaken a full public consultation of the strategy.
 18. The document has been updated following the responses received from the consultation and is included as Appendix A.
 19. Prior to developing a full Action Plan detailing how the Council will protect and improve the natural environment within the borough we first need to know the current baseline position.
 20. To this end the Interim Biodiversity Action Plan has been produced, Appendix B. This action plan, to last over the next 12-months, will help to provide the above-mentioned baseline information. The Council will utilise this information to carry out a full public consultation to develop a robust action plan detailing how the Council will move forward, protect and improve the boroughs natural environment.
 21. At this stage it is envisaged that the Action plan will eventually form part of the Climate Emergency and Air Quality Action Plans bring all three overlapping plans into one document which can then be easily referenced, updated and reported upon.

Climate change and air quality

22. This report impacts on the work being undertaken by the Council on the Climate Emergency Agenda, helping to strengthen and prioritise the actions being undertaken to improve the sustainability and biodiversity across the borough. While increasing engagement with the residents and businesses and help to achieve the overall aim of net carbon zero by 2030.

Equality and diversity

23. The biodiversity strategy and interim action plan have been developed following a full open consultation process and views received have been included. A further consultation process will be undertaken to produce the Action Plan and each action will be considered in turn with regard to equality and diversity.

Risk

24. The changes to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty upon the Local Authority to produce an action plan and apply set conditions to planning permissions granted by the authority.

25. Failure to undertake these duties would result in the Council failing to meet its statutory functions, potential bad publicity, and failure of the Council to achieve its corporate vision and priorities.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

26. There are no specific financial implications of this report although schemes contributing to this may form part of the capital and revenue budgets.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

27. The importance of these issues can hardly be over stated. What is proposed here is designed to comply with our statutory duties under various legislation including the Environment Act 2021. Doing nothing is simply not an option.

Background documents

Cabinet Report Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act 2021, 23rd March 2022
Environment Act 2021 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

Appendices

Draft Biodiversity Strategy 2022 (for adoption)
Draft Interim Biodiversity Action Plan 2022 (for adoption)

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