

To: Cabinet
Date: 12 July 2023
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Biodiversity Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 27 June 2023 to consider a Biodiversity Update presentation. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy), Mai Jarvis (Environmental Sustainability Lead), Rose Dickinson (Carbon Reduction Team Manager), Tristan Carlyle (Ecology and Biodiversity Officer) and Matt Whitney (Local Nature Partnership Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Tristan Carlyle, Ecology and Biodiversity Officer delivered a presentation and highlighted that the narrative around the Council's thinking on biodiversity was unchanged, but the legislative framework was changing and so the Council was required to review resourcing and how it did things. The presentation spanned a number of key areas, including Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and implementation; the Environment Act 2021 and the enhanced biodiversity duty placed on local authorities; the Nature, Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; additional reporting requirements; the Local Nature Recovery Strategy; and the Biodiversity Strategy.
4. Matt Whitney, Local Nature Partnership Manager delivered a presentation giving an overview of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), progress to date and how the LNP interacts with the wider local strategic landscape.
5. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the enhanced biodiversity duty; identifying and measuring the efficacy of past actions to improve biodiversity; how the Council might seek to influence businesses and other partners in terms of their biodiversity commitment; how the Council might seek to influence biodiversity commitment in its role of landlord; best practice; and whether there was scope for the Council to be doing more in the biodiversity sphere.
6. In particular, the Panel considered the biodiversity baseline assessment that the Council was required to complete and the need to ensure that the 'Council as landlord' function was included in that process, both in terms of a residential and institutional (e.g. business and agriculture) landlord.

Recommendation 1: That the Council ensures the inclusion of its function as both a residential and institutional landlord within the biodiversity baseline assessment exercise.

7. The Panel discussed the Council's ability to influence other partners and local stakeholders in their commitment to biodiversity and considered that there were opportunities for the Council to collaborate and exchange knowledge with others across the City, including the NHS, universities and colleges, to mutual benefit. The Panel was of the view that these opportunities should be pursued and exploited in the interests of promoting biodiversity citywide.

Recommendation 2: That the Council seeks to collaborate and exchange knowledge with other local landowners and institutions in the interests of promoting biodiversity citywide.

8. The Panel noted that the most direct opportunity the Council currently had around specifically engaging with businesses on biodiversity was through the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP), however there was not a dedicated biodiversity workstream. While the Council was not in a position to decide to establish new ZCOP workstreams, as agreement from ZCOP members was required, the Panel considered that it would be appropriate for the Council to

suggest that a biodiversity workstream be added to ZCOP's existing workstreams.

Recommendation 3: That the Council suggests a dedicated biodiversity workstream be added to the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership's existing workstreams.

9. On the question relating to whether the Council could be doing more in the biodiversity sphere, the Panel agreed that the Council should ensure continual horizon scanning to ensure awareness of emerging and cutting-edge biodiversity best practice in other local authorities which could be implemented locally.

Recommendation 4: That the Council continues to seek out emerging biodiversity best practice in other local authorities.

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