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| Committee(s): | Dated: |
| Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee | 02/12/20 |
| Subject: Biodiversity Action Plan. Consultation process and timetable. | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 11, 12 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | N |
| If so, how much? | N/A |
| What is the source of Funding? | N/A |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | N/A |
| Report of: Colin Buttery | For Decision |
| Report author: Jake Tibbetts | |

Summary

This Committee approved the current version of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 2016. At that time the City Gardens team consulted a wide audience to guide the development of the plan.

A new five year plan is now required, commencing 2021 to continue improving biodiversity within the City and to meet the City Corporation's duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of our policy or decision making. Once again this will require consultation with a range of stakeholders, which must be undertaken prior to a final draft BAP being submitted to this committee in July 2021 for approval.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Approve the timetable of actions for the Biodiversity Action Plan consultation process, as set out in Table 1

Main Report

Background

1. The Open Spaces & City Gardens Committee approved the current version of the five year BAP in 2016. Community engagement, internal discussions and discourse with experts were key to the development of that plan.

2. A brief list of achievements during the period of the plan include:

- SINC review completed in preparation for adoption via the Local Plan
- Service Level Agreement with Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) agreed
- Biodiversity audit completed
- Bat surveys, talks and walks delivered
- Bat detection workshops delivered
- Barbican Wildlife Garden improvements to habitats, species monitoring and community activities and events
- Lunch 'n' learn events delivered to City Corporation staff
- Bird feeder cages installed
- Friends of City Gardens cleaning and monitoring of bird boxes initiated
- Annual participation in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch by volunteers
- Corporate volunteer support for habitat management and improvements

Current Position

3. In 2019 the UN launched the Global Assessment study of biodiversity, announcing that its findings put the world “on notice”. Highlighting the universal importance of biodiversity, the report brings to light the unprecedented loss of species over the past 50 years and warns that human activities “threaten more species now than ever before”
4. The BAP demonstrates that the City meets its obligations towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
5. The BAP provides a strategic focus for decision makers. Furthermore, the BAP ensures that a key aim of Corporate Plan; *‘To Shape Outstanding Environments’* is realised as well as the priority; *“We have clear air, land and water and a thriving sustainable natural environment.”*
6. The current BAP expires at the end of 2020. Therefore it is necessary to draft a replacement plan to cover the period 2021-2026.
7. An ecological consultant was commissioned to interrogate the species data that has been recorded over the last five years to identify key species and recommend objectives for the new BAP. These recommendations are being incorporated into the first draft of the new BAP.
8. The current actions have been updated and reviewed by internal stakeholders.

Consultation

9. Consultation is an essential part of the development of the BAP. During the development of the existing Plan a “Biodiversity Partnership Group” was created, which included internal and external stakeholders. This group will be reconvened and added to. The proposed membership of this group can be found in appendix 1.

10. The Biodiversity Partnership Group will be involved throughout the process and will be key to the development of the new action plan.

11. There will be four drafts of the plan produced during the consultation process and there will be a public consultation exercise during May 2021.

Committee Consultation

12. The second, third and final drafts of the BAP will be presented to the Open Spaces Committee.

13. The third and final drafts will be presented to Planning and Transportation Committee for information.

Proposals

14. To ensure appropriate governance, Members must be satisfied that they have suitable oversight of the development of the BAP. Table 1 below outlines the proposed consultation process.

Table 1

| DATES | ACTION/ EVENT |
|----------------------|---|
| 2nd Dec | Present Timetable to Committee |
| 17th Dec | First Draft of BAP circulated to Biodiversity Partnership Group |
| 14th Jan | City of London Biodiversity Group - Consultation meeting |
| 15th -29th Jan | Second Draft of BAP produced |
| 1st -15th Feb 2021 | Second draft circulated to Partnership Group for Further comments |
| 8th Feb | Second draft presented to Open Spaces Committee |
| 16th Feb -15th Mar | Third Draft of BAP Produced |
| 30th March | Third Draft of BAP presented to Planning & Transportation Committee |
| 27th April | Open Spaces Committee to sign off third draft of BAP |
| 3rd May -31st May | Public Consultation |
| 1st June - 15th June | Response to Public Consultation and Final draft Produced |
| 29th June | Final draft of BAP presented to Planning & Transportation Committee for Information |
| 13th July | Final draft of BAP presented to Open Spaces Committee for Decision |
| TBC | Launch |

15. The developing BAP will be presented to this Committee for comment and amendment according to table 1.

16. A final version of the BAP will be submitted to this committee in July 2021 for approval.

17. The design and format of the BAP will closely follow that of the previous document.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

18. The BAP ensures that a key aim of Corporate Plan; *‘To Shape Outstanding Environments’* is realised as well as the priority; *“We have clear air, land and water and a thriving sustainable natural environment.”*

19. Under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 states that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.

20. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to their Local Plans by planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks for biodiversity and green infrastructure.

21. The London Environment Strategy 2017 of which conserving and enhancing wildlife and natural habitats is a key element of the strategy, which recognises that important social, health and economic benefits result from greening the city.

22. The Intended Draft London Plan Policy G6: Biodiversity and access to nature reads:

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) should be protected.

Boroughs, in developing Development Plans, should:

- 1) use up-to-date information about the natural environment and the relevant procedures to identify SINCs and ecological corridors to identify coherent ecological networks
- 2) identify areas of deficiency in access to nature (i.e. areas that are more than 1km walking distance from an accessible Metropolitan or Borough SINC) and seek opportunities to address them
- 3) support the protection and conservation of priority species and habitats that sit outside the SINC network, and promote opportunities for enhancing them using Biodiversity Action Plans
- 4) seek opportunities to create other habitats, or features such as artificial nest sites, that are of particular relevance and benefit in an urban context
- 5) ensure designated sites of European or national nature conservation importance are clearly identified and impacts assessed in accordance with legislative requirements.

23. The Draft City Plan 2036 Policy OS3: Biodiversity reads:

Development should aim to secure net gains for biodiversity where possible by incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity, including:

- retention and enhancement of habitats within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), including the River Thames
- measures recommended in the City of London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in relation to particular species or habitats
- green roofs and walls, gardens and terraces, soft landscaping and trees
- green corridors and biodiversity links
- wildlife-friendly features, such as nesting or roosting boxes and bee habitats
- a planting mix and variation in vegetation types to encourage biodiversity
- planting which will be resilient to a range of climate conditions, with a high proportion of native plants
- a lighting scheme designed to minimise impacts on biodiversity.

Legal implications

24. There would be risk of non-compliance of policy should the City not have an up to date BAP in place. Any BAP should meet the policy requirements as set out above.

Risk implications

25. There is a reputational risk of not having a current BAP as the Corporation has obligations towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

Climate implications

26. It is widely recognised that Biodiversity and Climate change are interconnected. Protecting and restoring ecosystems can help us reduce the extent of climate change and cope with its impact.

Conclusion

27. A new BAP and associated consultation is required to ensure that the City Corporation continues to meet its obligations in regard to biodiversity.

28. Table 1 provides a timetable for the development of that BAP.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Membership of the Biodiversity Partnership Group

Report author

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Appendix 1 – Membership of the Biodiversity Partnership Group

City of London Corporation

- City Gardens, Open Spaces Department
- Planning Services & Development, Department of Built Environment
- Policy & Performance, Department of Built Environment
- City Public Realm, Department of Built Environment
- Corporate Property Group, City Surveyor's Department
- Barbican Estate, Community & Children's Services
- Port Health & Public Protection, Markets & Consumer Protection
- City Procurement, Chamberlain's Department

City landowners/managers

- Diocese of London
- The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple
- The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple
- The Worshipful Company of Plaisterers
- The Worshipful Company of Barbers
- Nomura International plc.
- British Land & Broadgate Estates
- Schroders plc

Community and resident groups

- Friends of City Gardens
- Barbican Wildlife Group
- Petticoat Square Gardening Club
- Golden Lane Estate Allotment Group

Organisations

- Natural England
- Greenspace Information for Greater London
- Api:Cultural
- The Green Infrastructure Consultancy
- ANS Global
- Pollinating London Together
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- The Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers