

# REPORT FOR: CABINET

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 March 2015
<b>Subject:</b>	Adoption of the Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Caroline Bruce, Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning and Regeneration
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1 - Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan Appendix 2 - Recommendation from LDF Panel – 29 January 2015

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report introduces the Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This is the second BAP it outlines how Harrow Council together with its partners will work to conserve, enhance, and promote biodiversity in Harrow from 2015 to 2020.

### Recommendations:

Cabinet adopt the Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan, attached as Appendix 1 in accordance with the LDF Panel's recommendation dated 29 January 2015.

### Reason: (For recommendation)

When adopted the Harrow BAP will become the Council's strategy for

managing Biodiversity in the Borough. It will form a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications both at planning committees and appeal proceedings. The BAP will also provide useful guidance to relevant Council departments when dealing with issues relating to nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainability.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

2.0 The adoption of the BAP will help the Council meet the following corporate priorities:

- Making a difference for families
- Making a difference for communities and local businesses

2.1 The Harrow Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been produced with the input and cooperation of a range of individuals, voluntary groups and other partners. It is the Borough's biodiversity strategy for the next five years – a process in which the Council will have a key leadership role. Following the BAP's action plans and strategy will result in an overall greener borough, with a more sustainable built environment, with linked hubs of biodiversity and a borough that is more adaptable to/and can ameliorate the impact of climate change. Access to high quality attractive greenspaces is also known to increase the general wellbeing of residents and users.

### **Options considered**

2.2 None, non adoption of the Biodiversity Action Plan would result in the Borough's Biodiversity being managed on an ad-hoc basis, and would reduce the likely success of Biodiversity improvements being obtained through new development. This is not considered a satisfactory way to improve Biodiversity in the Borough, and is thus rejected.

### **Background**

2.3 The first Harrow BAP was produced by the Council in 2007 and was operational from 2008 to 2013. This second BAP will update and supersede the previous version. It is intended to be operational between April 2015 and March 2020.

## *Why a Biodiversity Action Plan for Harrow*

2.4 The BAP provides guidance on the protection, enhancement and promotion of the natural environment. A BAP is material consideration, where relevant, in planning application decisions. The BAP helps meet legal commitments and contributes to targets set in national and regional plans for conserving biodiversity. Section 352(4) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the Mayor of London to ‘*have regard to any plans relating to biodiversity prepared by a London borough council*’ in preparing or revising the provisions of the London Environment Strategy dealing with biodiversity. The plan provides strategic direction for the departments responsible for the management of parks, water environment including river corridors and water bodies, and open spaces, and other facets of the public realm as well as partner organisations. Indicators taken from the Core Strategy set a specific target for improving biodiversity of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) over the duration of the Strategy (2012-2026).

## *What this plan contributes to in Harrow*

2.5 This BAP delivers biodiversity targets in accordance with national, regional and local policies and strategies. The list below indicates the Plan’s contribution to service delivery in the following areas:

- A material consideration, where relevant, in the determination of planning applications including the implementation of relevant planning policies and site allocations
- Contributes to Development Management Policies for environment
- Contributes to the delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy policies on biodiversity
- SINC management plans
- Contributes to education and life-long learning

2.6 This BAP will deliver significant outcomes and result in benefits for Harrow:

- More educational opportunities through events and training
- Better health and wellbeing through promotion of walks and volunteering activities
- A greener borough through habitat management and creation
- More cultural and leisure opportunities
- Improved environmental management
- Increased and improved awareness of wildlife and conservation
- Increased numbers of individuals in population of rare or notable species
- Improved building sustainability and built environment via living roofs and SuDS and protection of river corridors and water bodies

2.7 The BAP will guide and support the following aspects of ecological management provided by Harrow Council.

- Support the assessment of planning applications and advise on appropriate mitigation and ecological enhancement as required

- Maintain a database of species and habitats in Harrow
- Contribute to continuous improvement of Council service delivery.
- Provide performance scrutiny through annual review of the BAP
- Improve management through production of management plans for all the borough's SINCs
- Support planning policy in protecting and enhancing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

## **Implications of the Recommendation**

### **Performance Issues**

2.8 Following the BAP will have a positive impact on local and national performance indicators including the Authority's Monitoring Report which includes Local Plan performance targets for biodiversity and supplementary biodiversity statistics provided by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL). The habitat specific actions cited in the BAP will assist in achieving regional habitat creation targets quoted in the London Plan (2011). Following the BAP will also result in improve Single Data List ratings for Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in positive conservation management which are gathered nationally by Defra each year.

### **Environmental Impact**

2.9 The BAP has four key climate change and sustainability objectives:

1. To deliver ecological solutions to offset the impacts of climate change
2. To reduce the urban heat island effect and improve air and water quality
3. Control/management of invasive species as listed under the London Invasive Species initiative (LISI) and Schedule 9 Parts 1 and 2 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act ( as amended)
4. Minimise pollution of the environment and promote recycling

2.10 The BAP cites a number of actions designed to meet these objectives, which link in to the Borough's Climate Change Strategy. If undertaken a positive environmental impact would be expected

### **Risk Management Implications**

2.11 Separate risk register in place? No. There are no key risks as a result of adopting this Biodiversity Action Plan; all the actions within it will improve Biodiversity within the Borough.

### **Legal Implications**

2.12 Harrow Council has a number of statutory obligations in relation to conserving, enhancing and promoting biodiversity. As a public body, the Council must comply with the 'Biodiversity Duty' as set out in section 40 of the

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This means that biodiversity must be considered in all aspects of how the Council functions:

***The Biodiversity Duty 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”.***

The adoption of the BAP will help the Council to fulfil this duty.

## **Financial Implications**

2.13 The cost of publication of the BAP will be contained within the existing LDF and Planning service budget.

2.14 External funding is intended to cover most capital costs with other Capital coming from the current (agreed) Green Grid budget. There is a dependence on council officers to organise/deliver the themed actions recommended within the plan on a ‘business as usual’ basis. Significant parts of the plan will be delivered via cooperation with partner organisations chiefly from the third sector.

## **Equalities implications**

2.15 Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

2.16 The Biodiversity Action Plan promotes equality of opportunity by encouraging biodiversity improvements throughout the borough regardless of population makeup from one area to another. It promotes the Green Grid and sustainable links (which are DDA compliant, as well as walking and cycling routes) between public transport hubs thus improving access throughout the borough. It will also facilitate access to nature and open spaces for all groups (as well as the general population).

2.17 Moreover, improved ecosystem services such as air & water quality regulation, noise regulation, local climate regulation, flood regulation, more aesthetically pleasing surroundings and the benefits of green spaces on health and wellbeing will be apparent to all

2.18 As indicated above, these opportunities will benefit all, and so will help improve social inequality and thus assist in the reduction of discrimination and promote good relations between groups – a major cause of which is inequalities. No negative impacts on any group were found as a result of the EQIA screening process.

## **Council Priorities**

2.19 The decision sought will help the Council meet the priorities of a making a difference for communities and for businesses by helping ensure the attractiveness of the borough as a place to live and work, demonstrating that

the Council seeks and listens to the views of those concerned. The improvements in the biodiversity and quality of parks and other open spaces and the benefits for health and wellbeing these can bring, can make a difference for the sick, disabled and otherwise vulnerable. Under the BAP environmental outreach work will be conducted by our partners – this will make a difference to families in how they spend their leisure time. Overall, the Council and partners will be working together to make a (positive) difference in Harrow.

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name: Jessie Mann	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 17 February 2015		
Name: Katherine Hamilton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 17 February 2015		

<b>Ward Councillors notified:</b>	<b>NO.</b>
<b>EqIA carried out:</b>	<b>No, (see paragraphs 2.15 – 2.18 above)</b>
<b>EqIA cleared by:</b>	<b>N/A</b>

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Denis Vickers – Biodiversity Officer, 0208 736 6152  
denis.vickers@harrow.gov.uk

**Background Papers:** Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 (see enclosure – Appendix 1)

**Call-In Waived by the  
Chairman of Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

*[Call-in applies]*