

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy Public Consultation1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval to conduct a public consultation on the revised Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy in accordance with the Council's Corporate Plan Environment Objective: 'Protect the environment for the future'.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to consider the updated Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy and the associated consultation questions. Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that the public consultation on the Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy be approved.

3. Detail

The creation of the Council's first Green Infrastructure Strategy 2015-2030 was to provide a clear strategic pathway for the management and enhancement of the Borough's Green Infrastructure. It was also to be used to inform planning decisions, identify opportunities to improve the green corridors and to provide information on how the Borough's network contributed to the local, regional and national picture. This Strategy also aligned well with the Council's Corporate Plan Environment Objective which is to 'Protect the environment for the future'.

A review of the first Strategy in 2024, highlighted significant shifts in legislative direction since its adoption in 2015. In recognition of these developments, it was agreed at Cabinet on 12 March 2024 to appoint a consultant tasked with undertaking the necessary refresh.

The consultants commenced work in 2024/25 and have since conducted four workshops, involving a range of stakeholders from inside and outside of the Council to help inform the revised Strategy.

The revised Strategy's structure is based on the principles outlined within Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. The four themes are as follows:

- Thriving and prosperous.
- Nature rich and beautiful.
- Resilient and climate positive.
- Active and Healthy

An integral element of the Strategy is the blue infrastructure, which has been incorporated as a cross-cutting theme rather than a stand-alone section. This helps to underscore its importance across all four theme areas. This approach

reflects the Council's commitment to integrate the blue infrastructure within the Borough's broader sustainability agenda.

At this stage, all feedback on the Strategy and any proposed changes to the draft will be collated and considered following the completion of the public consultation process. This will allow for an efficient and comprehensive review prior to resubmission to the Policy Overview and Working Group and Cabinet later in the year.

Public consultation

A public consultation process on the draft Strategy is scheduled to take place in July/August this year, providing a further opportunity for input from residents and other stakeholders. The revised Strategy will be presented back to the Policy Overview and Working Group in October 2025, with a subsequent recommendation for approval to Cabinet in November 2025. A copy of the revised Strategy can be found in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

The public consultation process on the Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy will incorporate a variety of different methodologies to ensure maximum accessibility and participation. This will include:

- Posters featuring a QR code. These will be installed across our parks and open spaces.
- Online survey circulated using the Council's Social Media platforms.
- Paper copies of the document being made available at locations across the Borough.

A copy of the public consultation questions can be found in **Appendix 3**.

4. Key Decision

This report is not a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2011.

5. Updates from Scrutiny

Not applicable.

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Assistant Director Finance Services were as follows:

There are no additional financial implications to consider at this stage. Any significant budget implications in the future, over and above virement limits, would require approval by Cabinet.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Whilst there are no direct legal implications that arise from this report the Council has enabling powers to propose and advocate for Green Infrastructure Improvements and work across its own estate and on wider sites. It forms part of the Council's Local Plan evidence base and together with other evidence will help to ensure revised policies accord with the National Planning Policy Framework's tests of soundness.

8. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

9. Union Comments

Not applicable.

10. Climate Change Implications

Having an up-to-date and comprehensive Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy is important as it serves as a key foundation in supporting the Council's Climate Change ambitions. The revised Strategy not only recognises the critical role of nature and green spaces in mitigating climate change but also establishes a framework for integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of planning and development.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has been completed and is found in **Appendix 4**.

13. Background Papers

Nil.