

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 4 JANUARY 2024** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 7th December 2023.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 7 - 20)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and current Notice of Key Executive Decisions.
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

4. BIODIVERSITY FOR ALL - STRATEGIC OPEN SPACES (Pages 21 - 42)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Biodiversity For All – Strategic Open Spaces Report.

*Executive Councillors: Councillor L Davenport-Ray
Councillor S Taylor*

**Contact Officer: N Sloper
01480 388635**

5. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE (Pages 43 - 54)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Civil Parking Enforcement Update Report.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: G McDowell
01480 388386**

6. OPEN SPACES UPDATE

To receive a presentation providing an update on Open Spaces to the Panel.

Executive Councillor: S Taylor

**Contact Officer: N Sloper
01480 388635**

7. UPDATE ON REDUCING THE CARBON IMPACT OF COUNCIL FACILITIES

To receive a presentation updating the Panel on the work being done to reduce the carbon impact of Council facilities.

Executive Councillor: M Hassall

**Contact Officer: K Sutton
01480 387072**

21 day of December 2023

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests](#) is available in the Council's Constitution

Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7 December 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, M J Burke, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Criswell, J E Harvey, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe and D J Shaw.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S R McAdam.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S W Ferguson.

34. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel and the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st December 2023 to 31st March 2024 was noted.

37. NON-DOMESTIC RATES RURAL SETTLEMENTS LIST

By means of a report by the Revenue and Benefits Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Non-Domestic Rates Rural Settlements List was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that there were no changes to the list from last year. It was also clarified that the map areas highlighted in blue were parts of urban areas which had been designated as defined rural settlements in order to support local businesses.

Councillor Criswell observed that due to there having been no change from the previous year, it may be prudent to pursue an alternative method of publishing the document. The Executive Councillor confirmed to the Panel that there was an option to do this via a delegated responsibility and that this would be investigated.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations contained within the report.

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

Performance and Growth Agenda Items			
Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review	Task and Finish Groups Working Groups
3 rd January 2024		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan Update • Huntingdonshire Place Strategy Update 	
31 st January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final 2024/25 Budget and Medium - Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29) including Capital programme • 2024/25 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies • Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 Q3 		
6 th March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Towns Programme – Spring Update • Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Q3 • Corporate Plan Refresh • UK Shared Prosperity Funding Update 		
3 rd April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Allocation 		
5 th June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Towns Programme – Summer Update • Corporate Performance Report (2023/24) Quarter 4 • Finance Performance Report (2023/24) Quarter 4 • Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023/24 		

Unscheduled/Pending Further Details			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market Towns Programme Business Development
Environment, Communities and Partnerships Agenda Items			
Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review	Task and Finish Groups Working Groups
4 th January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPE Update Biodiversity – Strategic Sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Reducing the Carbon Impact of Council Facilities Parks and Environment Update 	
1 st February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Climate Emergency UK Report and Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on Alternative Land Management Scheme Support to the Financially Vulnerable Amendment to Partnership Arrangements with Citizen’s Advice Rural Cambridgeshire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Fen Flooding Management Update
7 th March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV Charging Strategy One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Report One Leisure Membership Architecture Review Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity for All Update HCP Investment Project Update Climate and Environment Portfolio Update 	
4 th April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPE Agency Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Leisure Annual Performance Review 	
6 th June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Climate Update 		
Unscheduled/ Pending Further Details		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GP Waiting Times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with Parish Councils and

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue of concrete affecting public buildings – specifically Hinchbrooke Hospital • Lack of NHS Dentists within the District • Corporate performance reports • Local Lettings Plan • SEUK Update 	<p>development of relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrogen Vehicles • Environmental impacts on planning – renewable energy, green spaces
--	--	---	--

Task and Finish Groups

Performance and Growth

Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations

Membership: Cllrs S Cawley, S J Corney, I D Gardener and S A Howell

Progress:

Summer 2022: Terms of Reference have been established. Questionnaire has been sent to all relevant boards and organisations. Regular meetings are established from September.

September 2022: Evidence and information gathering underway.

November 2022: Information gathering completed.

February 2023: Report presented to O&S Panel and Cabinet

March 2023: Cabinet response to the report received by the Panel.

July 2023: Communication to be sent to all Councillors who are representatives on outside organisations to advise the new reporting progress.

January 2024: Meeting scheduled

Next steps: Plan to regularly review and monitor implementation of recommendations.

Environment, Communities and Partnerships

Climate Working Group

Members: Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw

Lead Officer: Neil Sloper

Progress:

November 2022: Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group.

April 2023: Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed.
Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development.

December 2023: Meeting scheduled for the new year to discuss HVO Fuels project

Next Steps: Subgroup formed to develop the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy.
Ongoing dialogue with the team to developing proposed work plan.

Climate Sub Group

Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Members: Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw

Lead Officer: George McDowell

Progress:

February 2022: Initial meeting held

May 2023: Regular meetings established. Residents survey agreed.

July 2023: Meeting to review the outcome of the survey.

September 2023: Meeting to review applications for the EV pilot scheme

November 2023: Meeting to update on progress

December 2023: Meeting to finalise report detail

Next Steps: Final report anticipated for March 2024 cycle of meetings

NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Prepared by: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 19 December 2023
For Period: 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2024

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows: -

Councillor Details		Councillor Contact Details
Page 11 of 59	Councillor S J Conboy	Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place
		Cloudberry Cottage 9 Earning Street Godmanchester Huntingdon PE29 2JD Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208 E-mail: Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
	Councillor L Davenport-Ray	Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment
		73 Hogsden Leys St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD E-mail: Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
	Councillor S Ferguson	Executive Councillor for Customer Services
		9 Anderson Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN Tel: 07525 987460 E-mail: Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor M Hassall	Executive Councillor for Corporate & Shared Services	Care of Huntingdonshire District Council St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 07825 193572 E-mail: Martin.Hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor B Mickelburgh	Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources	2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor B Pitt	Executive Councillor for Community & Health	17 Day Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DF Tel: 07703 169273 E-mail: Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor T Sanderson	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning	29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Page 12 of 54

Councillor S Taylor	Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste & Street Scene	66 Wren Walk Eynesbury St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 2GE Tel: 07858 032076 E-mail: Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Wakeford	Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy, and Housing	4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Page 13 of 54

Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

Notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes: -
 - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

Page 14 of 54

- Notes: -
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
 - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
CPE Update	Cabinet	16 Jan 2024		George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel No: (01480) 388386 or Email: george.mcdowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Taylor	Environment, Communities and Partnerships
Biodiversity Strategic Sites	Cabinet	16 Jan 2024		Helen Lack, Development Manager Tel No: (01480) 388658 or Email: helen.lack@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities and Partnerships
Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	Cabinet	6 Feb 2024		Zoe Warren, Council Tax and Business Rates Manager - COO Division +44 1480 388461 zoe.warren@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth

Page 15 of 54

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29) including Capital Programme Page 16 of 54	Cabinet	6 Feb 2024		Karen Sutton, Director Finance and Corporate Services Tel No: (01480) 387072 or Email: karen.sutton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth
2024/25 Treasury Management, Capital, and Investment Strategies	Cabinet	6 Feb 2024		Karen Sutton, Director Finance and Corporate Services Tel No: (01480) 387072 or Email: karen.sutton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy	Cabinet	6 Feb 2024		Zoe Warren, Council Tax and Business Rates Manager - COO Division Email: Zoe.Warren@huntingdonshire.gov.uk (01480) 388461		S Ferguson	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Climate Emergency UK Report and Action Plan	Cabinet	Not before 6 Feb 2024		Corporate Director (Place)		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Market Towns Programme Spring Update	Cabinet	19 Mar 2024		Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk +44 1480 388486		S Wakeford	Performance & Growth

Page 7 of 10

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy	Cabinet	19 Mar 2024		George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel: (01480) 388386 or Email: george.mcdowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Corporate Performance Report 2023/24, Quarter 3	Cabinet	Between 19 Mar 2024 and 16 Apr 2024		Dan Buckridge, Business Intelligence and Performance Manager +44 1480 388065 dan.buckridge@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		M Hassall	Performance & Growth
Corporate Plan Refresh	Cabinet	19 Mar 2024		Dan Buckridge, Business Intelligence and Performance Manager +44 1480 388065 dan.buckridge@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		M Hassall	Performance & Growth

Page 18 of 54

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Financial Performance Report 2023/24, Quarter 3	Cabinet	19 Mar 2024		Karen Sutton, Director Finance and Corporate Services Tel No: (01480) 387072 or Email: karen.sutton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth
Page 10 of 54 CPE Shared Prosperity Funding Update	Cabinet	Not before 19 Mar 2024		Pamela Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk - +44 1480 388486		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth
CPE Agency Agreement	Cabinet	16 Apr 2024		George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel No: (01480) 388386 or Email: george.mcdowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Subject/Matter for Decision	Decision/ recommendation to be made by	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Allocation	Cabinet	16 Apr 2024		Claire Burton, Implementation Team Leader Tel No: 01480 388274 or email: Claire.Burton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth

Public

Key Decision - Yes

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Biodiversity for All – Strategic Open Spaces
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Community and Partnerships) – 04/01/2024 Cabinet – 16/01/2024
Executive Portfolio:	Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray - LDR Cllr Simone Taylor - ST
Report by:	Nicholas Massey – Open Spaces Project Manager - NM
Ward(s) affected:	All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the recommendations for the Biodiversity For All – Strategic Open Spaces from the Cabinet report attached.

This page is intentionally left blank

Public
Key Decision - Yes
* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Biodiversity for All – Strategic Open Spaces

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 16/01/2024

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Lara Davenport-Ray - LDR
Cllr Simone Taylor - ST

Report by: Nicholas Massey – Open Spaces Project
Manager - NM

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report outlines the proposed plan to deliver biodiversity enhancement works on Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) strategic sites through the Biodiversity for All project.

This work plan is essential to meet the Council's obligation to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain under the [Environment Act 2021](#). This project directly links to the action in the [Corporate Plan](#), which commits to delivering the Plan for Nature and contributing to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to guide greater biodiversity and nature restoration in the district.

The project also directly links to the Council's [Climate Strategy](#), through the delivery of good quality and accessible open spaces and play facilities has a direct impact on:

- **Improving the quality of life for local people specifically improving happiness and wellbeing of residents**
- **Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations specifically lower carbon emissions**

The Corporate Plan recognises the importance of **enabling residents** and businesses to thrive by **listening and working with them**, opportunities to **collaborate in the effective and efficient delivery** of open spaces and nature-based activities a priority **to best meet the needs and wants** of our communities.

The corporate plan also highlights the importance of **influencing partner organisations and stakeholders** by creating a **shared vision** benefiting Huntingdonshire. By providing **evidence and sharing opportunity** we can influence the provision of the **right open spaces and play facilities** for our communities.

The Strategic Sites work plan is part of the broader Biodiversity for All programme and focuses on the sites we own or lease. This work plan, as set out in this report, is entirely separate to the Biodiversity for All Community Grant Scheme. The Community Grant Scheme is a different aspect of the overall project and will be accessible to external landowners.

This report is seeking approval from the Cabinet for the schedule of biodiversity improvement, leading to March 2025 and beyond, on HDC strategic sites. This report is also seeking endorsement of the commissioning of a delivery partner to progress works on the strategic sites.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

- 1) To approve of the following delivery schedule for planned biodiversity enhancement work for HDC strategic sites:

Short-term (Tranche 1) – 1 - 2 Years

- Hill Rise Park, St Ives
- Priors Park, St Neots
- Spring Common, Huntingdon

Medium-term (Tranche 2) – 3 – 5 Years

- Barford Road Pocket Park, St Neots
- Stukeley Meadows Nature Reserve, Huntingdon
- Sapley Playing Fields, Huntingdon

Long-term (Tranche 3) – 5 – 10 Years

- Hinchbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon
- Riverside Park, St Neots
- Oxmoor Urban Park, Huntingdon
- Berman Park, St Ives
- Paxton Pits, Little Paxton
- The Thicket, St Ives
- Holt Island, St Ives

- 2) To endorse the decision to commission a delivery partner to lead on the design, consultation and delivery of the work.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present the process for enhancing biodiversity on Council owned Strategic Parks and Open Spaces and endorse the short, medium and long-term goals for continued improvement in Biodiversity habitat on those sites in readiness for future funding opportunities.
- 1.2 As part of the Climate Strategy, adopted in February 2023, the Council has also committed to delivering a biodiversity programme across the District to include community and Council-owned Open Spaces.
- 1.3 This report seeks endorsement to plan to improve nature across the District and secure physical and mental health co-benefits for our residents.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February 2022, the Council successfully secured a multi-year £1.3million bid from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to accelerate the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 83% of respondents in a survey supporting the development of the Climate Strategy agreed that the Council should restore Nature and plant trees. Nature benefits health, as well as being a haven of biodiversity and important natural processes. Huntingdonshire has a wealth of green spaces and natural assets, rich in biodiversity, providing a home for many native species and a link to the natural environment for our residents.
- 2.3 The bid enabled the launch of the Biodiversity for All project and lays the foundations for a cleaner, greener, healthier Huntingdonshire. The specific elements of the Biodiversity for All project can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.4 The Biodiversity for All project supports the Council's priority in 'Creating a better Huntingdonshire for Future generations' by enabling community action and supporting the development of green skills. The project also supports the delivery of the Plan for Nature and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to guide greater biodiversity and nature restoration in the District.
- 2.5 The delivery of good quality and accessible open spaces and play facilities has a direct impact on:
 - Improving the quality of life for local people, specifically improving the happiness and well-being of residents
 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, specifically lower carbon emissions
- 2.6 The Biodiversity for All project builds opportunities to enable and influence our partners by leading by example and delivering measurable biodiversity improvements in the District. It is hoped that by delivering other thematic projects in the programme, including the Community Grant process, the

Council can make demonstrable changes to biodiversity beyond just the areas we are directly responsible for.

- 2.7 The project will respond to the significant impact on nature of the changing climate by calculating biodiversity and then working through options to enhance it through changes which are supported by our communities. The project includes our own land and supporting others to do the same.
- 2.8 The Vision for the **Biodiversity For All** project aims to 'accelerate the delivery of measurable biodiversity net gain in Huntingdonshire, delivering the aspiration of Doubling Nature through:
- faster and more direct action on our land, engaging the community.
 - pilot projects with parish councils and other landowners to roll out similar projects.
 - pilot projects with community organisations and groups to develop skills and community delivery models to enable the delivery of more biodiversity in the future.

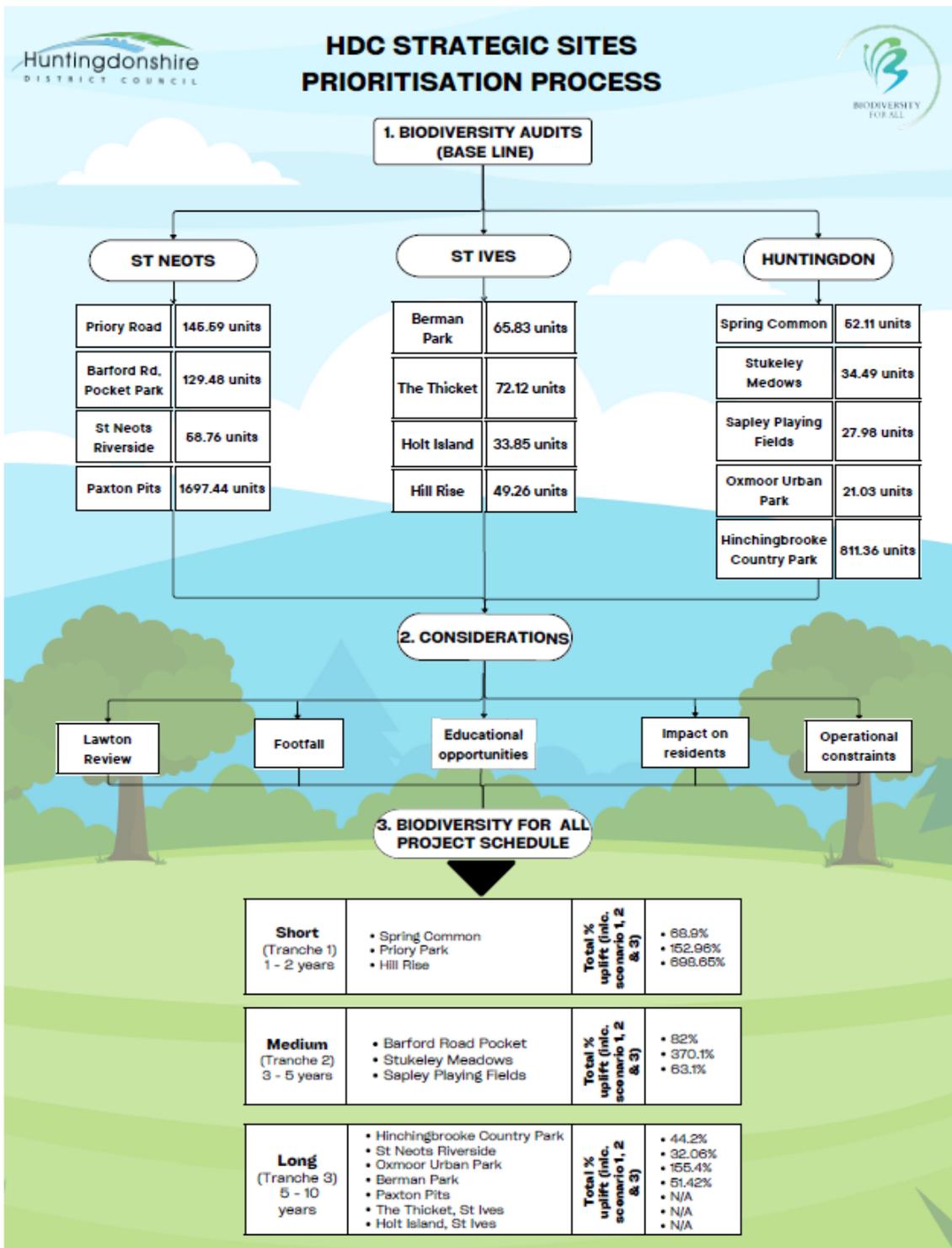
3. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT - Part of the Biodiversity for All project focuses on increasing biodiversity on council-owned and maintained strategic open space sites. Our strategic sites are defined as large areas of publicly accessible open spaces that are owned or leased by HDC, usually used by the community for events and recreation.
- 3.2 An independent ecology consultant has completed the initial baseline and auditing of the biodiversity and habitats on each strategic site. These audits have set out evidence-based recommendations for the development of habitats and biodiversity on each site (Appendix B). In the future, it is anticipated that an in-house Ecology resource will be able to perform this function and evaluate the ecological work that has been delivered.
- 3.3 Funding from the project has been allocated to the delivery of biodiversity enhancement works on the sites and will be monitored by Major Change Board. A project health check is being completed by the project team and Sponsor during Nov/Dec 2023 to ensure that project governance and delivery are on track.
- 3.4 All strategic sites have a comprehensive biodiversity assessment. However, due to the time limitations of the grant, it is anticipated that the project will deliver Biodiversity improvements across approximately three Priority strategic sites that will deliver the most qualitative ecological improvements, with completion expected in March 2025.
- 3.5 The priority sites have been identified through statistical analysis of the potential Biodiversity Net Gain improvements through short-term on-site actions.

- 3.6 For each of the priority strategic sites, a plan for the biodiversity improvements will be shaped by both the recommendations in the Biodiversity Audits and a comprehensive community engagement, which an appointed contractor will conduct. From this plan, the Council will commit to delivering biodiversity improvements that are practicable from the allocated project finances. For an example of what type of work can be delivered, see Appendix C.
- 3.7 PROJECT DELIVERY - The project will deliver short-term actions for Biodiversity improvements at the priority sites. In terms of the delivery of the medium- and long-term actions at these and the remaining strategic sites, the project will need to be scoped out and feasibility identified following completion of this project.
- 3.8 To complement the short-term action delivery, the Council has also partnered with GroundWork UK to deliver the Green Skills project across our Strategic Sites. Green Skills is a motivational project to support employability and develop construction and landscaping skills. Each Green Skills activity will deliver measurable biodiversity improvement and provide opportunities for local residents to connect and make a difference in our parks and open spaces.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The table at Appendix D summarises the outcomes from ecological audits of the strategic sites and formed part of the evidence base used to decide priority actions. It shows the current habitat status for biodiversity and the baseline units for the site. It also shows the potential increase in biodiversity units if scenario 1, 2 or 3 was delivered individually (please see Appendix E and F for the accumulative percentage uplift of units).
- 4.2 The project team has analysed each independently conducted biodiversity audit to prioritise the identified actions to secure the greatest potential for biodiversity unit increases for each site. Principles such as the Lawton Review¹, alongside footfall, opportunities for education and impact on residents, were considered in finalising the priority Strategic sites to be earmarked for delivery by the Biodiversity for All project.
- 4.3 The diagram below demonstrates the prioritisation process that has been undertaken and can also be found in Appendix G. The BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) units are used by Natural England and assist the project by providing a unit of measurement to aid practical options, inform the co-design element and to assess the impact of the project.



4.4 As a result of the prioritisation of strategic sites listed below were identified as priority sites to deliver work on in the short term (2-3 years).

Priority Strategic Sites (Short Term)

- 1 Spring Common (Huntingdon),
- 2 Priory Park (St Neots), and
- 3 Hill Rise (St Ives)

- 4.5 In the medium term (3-5 year) the Council should deliver biodiversity enhancement work at Stukeley Meadows (Huntingdon), Sapley Playing fields (Huntingdon) and Barford Road Pocket Park (St Neots).
- 4.6 The remaining strategic sites include locations that already have delivered ecological development work, such as Oxmoor Urban Park and Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, which will be earmarked for long-term (5-10 year) actions. These actions include informing the management plans of the sites, so that there is a sustainable legacy to the Biodiversity for All project for HDC to manage.

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 5.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section before its consideration by the Cabinet.

6. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 6.1 Our Strategic Open Spaces are often well-loved and have protective and engaged stakeholders. In order to ensure that the actions that are taken forward on our Priority Sites, a robust engagement programme will be executed to ensure co-design for biodiversity improvement measures.

7. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 It is envisaged that the project for the development of biodiversity on the three priority sites will follow the below broad timeline.

1. Evidence Gathering & Interpretation –Jan 2024
2. Community Engagement & Education – Feb/Mar 2024
3. Co-Design with the community – Apr/May - 2024
4. Delivery & Integration - June to December 2024
5. Review – January to March 2025

- 7.2 In initial procurement, competition has been carried out to scope out delivery partners. This tender exercise closed in October 2023 with one delivery partner identified.

- 7.3 The delivery partner will manage the community engagement and the onsite delivery of biodiversity improvements and will begin in January 2024.

- 7.4 Further funding will continue to be sought and applied for to support the enhancements for the site identified in the medium and long-term priority lists.

8. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 8.1 Priority 1 - Improving quality of life for local people - This project will improve the happiness and well-being of the resident, as it is well-documented that access to nature has a positive effect on an individual's mental health². List out the benefits – nature and people.

- **Do** – We will increase the levels of biodiversity in HDC strategic sites, resulting in residents having access to a greater level of nature.
- **Enable** – We will enable residents to improve their quality of life by creating and maintaining areas for them to experience nature.
- **Influence** – We will influence others to create and maintain biodiverse areas by leading by example and educating the public of the benefits.

8.2 Priority 2 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations - Lowering carbon emissions.

- **Do** – We will increase the levels of biodiversity in HDC strategic sites. This will be by enhancing areas such as wood and shrubland and creating new habitats. These will have added carbon sequestration benefits³.
- **Enable** – We are enabling communities to have a say on what and how the levels of biodiversity will be enhanced.
- **Influence** – We will influence others by leading by example and educating the public of the benefits.

8.3 Climate Strategy - This is one of the three priority actions in the Climate Strategy. Specifically, this project will deliver on the positive example aspect of the nature theme in the councils Climate strategy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 The contract for the Biodiversity for All project with the CPCA was developed with 3C Legal Services.
- 9.3 All procurement is undertaken with the support of the Council's procurement Officer in line with Procurement Rules.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 As set out in the main body of the report the delivery of biodiversity enhancement work (Short term actions on HDC strategic sites will require a project team and the services of an external contractor to deliver the proposed works before the end of the project in March 2025).

10.2 The services required:

Service	Role
Open Spaces	Assessment of proposed benefits against community need and existing site benefits for the community Existing plans for the site
Ecology	Biodiversity value/opportunity on the site Any environmental designations
Grounds Maintenance	Consideration of current maintenance implications
Planning	Status of Site in relation to Neighbourhood/Local Plan Any linked S106 development agreements
Insurance	Any insurance/liability implications
Health & Safety	Any health and safety implications given nature of public open

	space/assets
Contractor	Delivery of public consultation phase and delivery of biodiversity enhancement works.

- 10.3 The costs of the proposed, short-term works will be project-managed and monitored by the Council's project governance.
- 10.4 The proposed priority sites will have a plan of work co-designed with stakeholders and the Biodiversity for All project team. In particular, when identifying biodiversity improvements to be delivered, our Operational teams will be engaged to ensure the practical, ongoing safety and financial maintenance of the deliverables. Collaboration across teams underpins out project team and their decision making.

11. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The provision of open spaces, managing them for the benefit of biodiversity, our environment and wellbeing benefits, is critical to delivering our Corporate Plan. Access to play for all ages and nature, which supports physical and mental health, are key components of the wider determinants of health which impact the long-term sustainability, health, and economy of our district.
- 11.2 The Council adopted a Healthy Open Spaces Strategy in 2020, which set out our key priorities and actions for 2030 to ensure Council open spaces are protected, that biodiversity and nature are enhanced and that they support healthy and active communities. 90% of our residents confirmed that greenspaces improved mental health and well-being with nature and wildlife being the most important aspects of greenspaces.

12. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Council adopted its Climate Strategy in February 2023 including an action plan for short, medium and long-term actions. Following engagement and an evidence review, the strategy identified increasing biodiversity and natural capital as one of the three district-wide climate priorities.

13. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 13.1 Improving the biodiversity of our sites delivers the key outcomes of the Corporate Plan in sections 1 and 2. It also delivers against the climate strategy by increasing biodiversity and natural capital as one of the three district-wide climate priorities. The project will also help the council achieve its objectives in the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy, leading to improved well-being and mental health outcomes for residents.
- 13.2 Due to funding constraints, an agreement of the approach we are taking is important to be able to prioritise the schedule of work on our sites and set out our plan for the short-term sites and seek future funding for the medium and long-term priority sites.

13.3 It is also vital to formally recognise the importance of consulting with residents and have an element of co-design in the project, to ensure community buy-in to what we are trying to achieve. To achieve all of our objectives, it is important to get an agreement to contract an external organisation to deliver this aspect of the Biodiversity for All project so that we can maximise the opportunity and deliver in a short space of time.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A - Elements of The Biodiversity for All Project
Appendix B - HDC Strategic Sites that have had Ecological Audits delivered.

Appendix C - Example of work set out in an MKA Audit

Appendix D - Summary Table from the MKA Audits

Appendix E – HDC Strategic Sites - Ecological Audits Delivered

Appendix F – Tranche 1 Strategic Sites (3 sites)

Appendix G - Medium & Long-Term Tranches

Appendix H - Strategic Site Prioritisation Process (diagram)

Appendix I - Glossary of Terms

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Healthy Open Spaces Strategy 2020-2030
- Climate Strategy
- Corporate Plan 2023-2028

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Nicholas Massey – Open Spaces Project Manager
Email: nick.massey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

References

1. [the-lawton-review-factsheet.pdf \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)
2. Maller, C., Townsend, M., St Leger, L., Henderson-Wilson, C., Pryor, A., Prosser, L. and Moore, M., 2009, January. Healthy parks, healthy people: The health benefits of contact with nature in a park context. In *The George Wright Forum* (Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 51-83). George Wright Society.
3. [The relationship between biodiversity, carbon storage and the provision of other ecosystem services \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix A – Elements of The Biodiversity for All Project

- **HDC Strategic Sites Biodiversity Development**
 - Baseline and Auditing each of HDC's Strategic Sites.
 - Tendering for a delivery partner to undertake the community engagement and co-design elements of the project.
 - Delivery of agreed biodiversity enhancement works.
- **Community Driven Delivery**
 - Pilot Grant Funding Round
 - HDC working with 10 identified Town and Parish Council partners.
 - Delivery of baselining and audits on identified non-HDC-owned sites.
 - Grant funding the Town and Parish Council Partners to deliver the recommended works based on the audits.
 - Full Community Biodiversity Grant Round
 - Developing on the learnings from the Pilot round.
 - Open to any landowner or manager who has permission to deliver works and allows public access.
 - Delivery of baselining and audits on 15 identified non-HDC-owned sites.
 - Grant funding at least 10 successful applicants to deliver the recommended works based on the audits.
- **Jobs and Skills**
 - Recruitment of two Graduate Ecologists to create an in-house ecological expertise capacity.
 - Delivery of the Green Skills / Green Recovery Project
 - Working with Groundworks East to deliver training and experience to individuals not in work education and employment. Helping them to achieve a City and Guilds Level 1 qualification in Horticulture.
 - Delivering evidence-based work on HDC-owned sites.
- **Mapping and Citizen Science**
 - Partnering and promoting the INaturalist Citizen Science app to enable mapping and community engagement to identify all the different elements of biodiversity in the district.

Appendix B - HDC Strategic Sites that have had Ecological Audits delivered.

St Neots

- Priory Park*
- Barford Rd, Pocket Park
- St Neots Riverside
- Paxton Pits

St Ives

- Berman Park
- The Thicket
- Holt Island
- Hill Rise Park*

Huntingdon

- Spring Common*
- Stukeley Meadows
- Sapley Playing Fields
- Oxmoor Urban Park
- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

**Denotes Priority Strategic Site*

Appendix C – Example of work set out in an MKA Audit

Strategic Site

Spring Common

Overview of Site

A site located in the centre of Huntingdon, which supports various different habitat types, such as neutral grassland and wet woodland, as well as hedgerows, ditches and areas of scrub.

Examples of Biodiversity Enhancement Actions

- Management Plan Development to Enhance Habitats.
 - Updating management methods for improving grassland and other habitats will increase species diversity.
- Digging a new Pond to Create a New Aquatic Habitat.
 - Creation of a new pond in the wetland area to help with the water retention in the area.
- Additional Planting to Enhance Existing and Creating a New Habitat.
 - Planting mixed scrub at the boundaries of wet woodland to create a scalloped scrub woodland edge, which will benefit species such as bats and will improve the connection between different habitats.

Appendix D – Summary Table from the MKA Audits

Site	Area (h)	Current Status	Habitat Type Units	Linear Type Units	Hedgerow Type	River Type	Scenario One	Scenario Two	Scenario Three	Priority Habitats
St Neots										
Priory Park St Neots	32	Mostly Poor	145.59	15.56	0	0	34.70%	55.26%	63.00%	No
Barford Rd, Pocket Park St Neots	18	Mostly Moderate	129.48	5.6	0	0	14.00%	24.80%	43.20%	Yes
St Neots Riverside	29	Mostly Poor	58.76	0	0	6.48	Not provided in same format			Yes
Paxton Pits	131.6	Mostly Good	1697.44	0	33.16	12.77	Not provided as part of the study, due to Mgt Plan			Yes
St Ives										
Berman Park, St Ives	8.2	Moderate and Poor	65.83	0	0	0	9.92%	19.70%	21.80%	Yes
**The Thicket	500x75m	Good	72.12	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
**Holt Island	2.8	Mostly Good	33.85	0	0	0	2.16%	-30.00%		Yes
Hill Rise Park St Ives	6	Mostly Moderate	49.26	1.06	0	0	225.00%	235.50%	238.20%	Yes
Huntingdon										
Spring Common	5.26	Moderate and Good	52.11	6.94	0	0	11.80%	29.20%	27.90%	Yes
Stukeley Meadows	4.45	Mostly Moderate	34.49	0	0	0.92	32.40%	70.70%	267.00%	Yes
Sapley Playing Fields	7.3	Mostly Poor	27.98	14.71	0	0	11.80%	12.10%	39.20%	Yes
Oxmoor Urban Park	4	Mostly Moderate	21.03	4.14	0	0	67.00%	N/A	88.40%	Yes
Hinchingbrooke Country Park	65	Moderate and Good	811.36	0	0	0	3.60%	12.90%	27.70%	Yes

Appendix E – Tranche 1 Strategic Sites (3 sites)

Spring Common, Huntingdon (1 of 3)

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the neutral grassland to good condition. • Improve the swamp habitat to moderate condition. • Planting mixed scrub at the boundaries of wet woodland to create a scalloped scrub woodland edge. 	11.8%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the southwest section of the ditch to moderate condition. 	41%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a new pond in the wetland area. • Establishment of reedbed in the wetland area. • Restoration of the relic woodland pond. 	68.9%	

Priory Park, St Neots (2 of 3)

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and extend the wildflower meadow grassland at Priory. • Park by reseeding with a perennial wildflower grassland mix and • Adopting a sensitive management regime • Improve the condition of existing woodland habitats • Improve 50% of the tree lines in moderate condition to good condition 	34.70%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the extent of the west woodland belt • Restore the pond in the woodland pocket at the centre of the park • Designate the east section of the park as meadow grassland 	89.96%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild-scale conversion of Priory Park to parkland habitat 	152.96%	

Hill Rise, St Ives (3 of 3)

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the condition of the woodland from moderate to good. • Plant mixed scrubs along the woodland edge. • Increase the extent of species-rich neutral grassland to the north of the park. • Plant a species-rich native hedgerow to create a double hedgerow feature. 	225%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of species-rich grassland around the boundary of the park 	460.4%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Orchard Habitat 	698.6%	

Appendix F – Tranche 2 Strategic Sites

Sapley Playing Fields, Huntingdon

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of Amenity grassland borders to neutral wildflower grassland in moderate condition. • Creation of native scrub border in moderate condition along woodland boundary. • Enhancement of existing mixed scrub to moderate condition. 	11.8%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a 'biodiversity garden' centred around a wildlife pond with a wildflower grassland border. • Replace non-native ornamental hedgerow with a native species-rich hedgerow of at least twice the length 	23.9%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting a native line of trees along the south-western boundary. • Planting 320m of additional species-rich native hedgerow to the park boundaries. • Creation of a traditional-style orchard managed for wildlife 	63.1%	

Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the mixed scrub to good condition through invasive species removal and management. • Improve the neutral grassland habitats to good condition through management works tailored to specific grassland areas • Enable mixed scrub to develop into the areas of neutral grassland currently in poor condition. • Create an additional wildflower strip, sown with a perennial mix, of approximately 240m². 	32.40%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the woodland to good condition through a bespoke management regime. • Improve the condition of the main ditch channel without the need for extensive channel restoration works by installing floating vegetation rafts along the bank margins. 	103.10%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious ditch restoration project involving the removal of concrete reinforcement and re-meandering of the channel. 	370.10%	

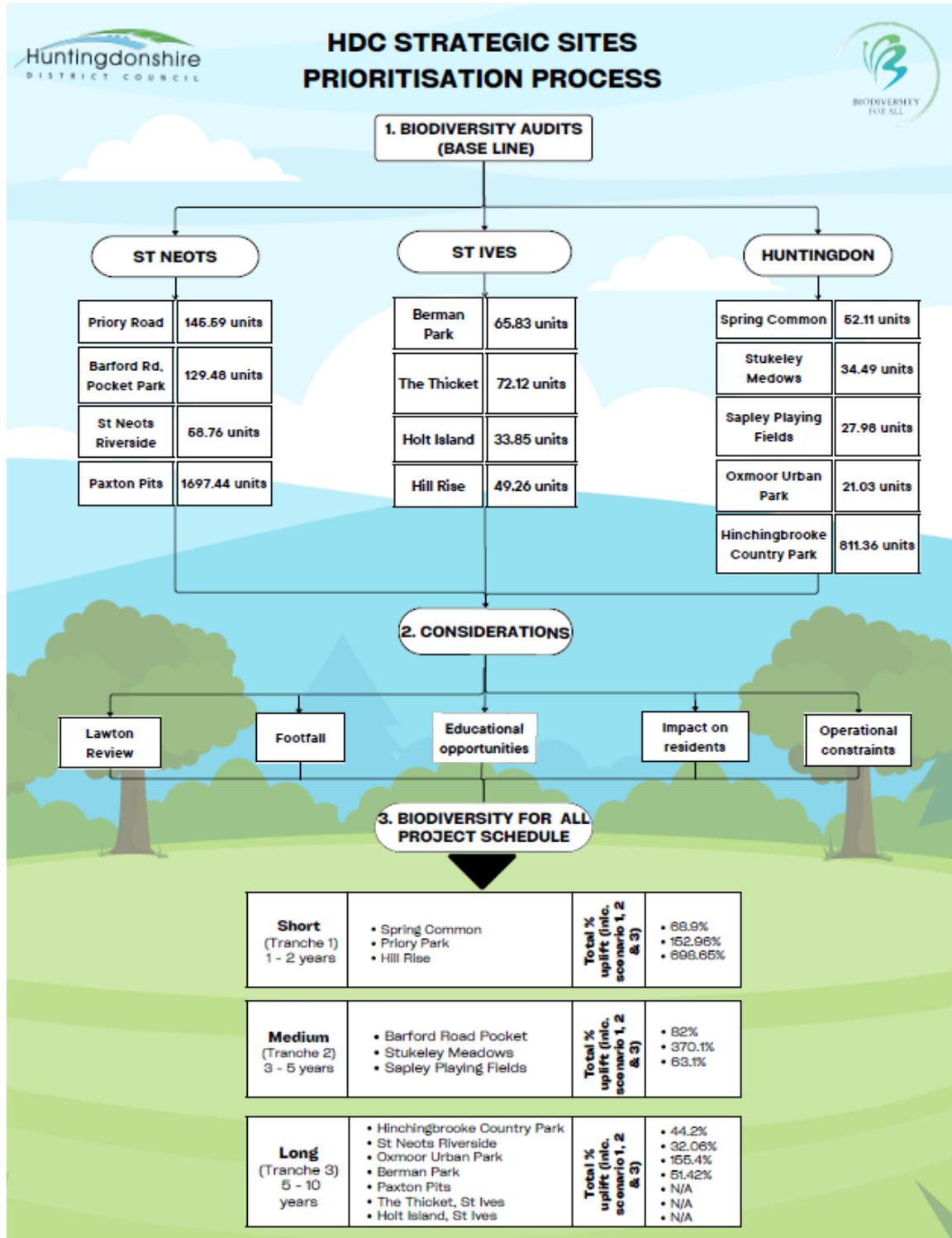
Barford Road Pocket, St Neots

Scenario	Actions	Total uplift	%
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of existing amenity grassland along the 'biodiversity walkway' to other neutral grassland in moderate condition. • Enhancement of neutral grassland from moderate to good condition. • Enhancement of neutral grassland to the south of the park from poor to moderate condition. 	14%	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the broadleaved woodland from moderate to good condition. • Enhance the wet woodland from moderate to good condition. • Enhance the woodland pond from poor to moderate condition. 	38.80%	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a line of willows along the bank of the River Great Ouse, with a pollarding management regime. • Creation of a small orchard to the north of the park, created and managed with support from Grow Wild St Neots. 	82%	

Appendix G - Tranche 3 Strategic Sites

- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park – Work delivered by Green Skills and management plan
- St Neots Riverside – Work delivered through Green Skills
- Oxmoor Urban Park – Work delivered by Open Spaces Team
- Berman Park – Work scheduled for Green Skills
- Paxton Pits – Work scheduled for Green Skills
- The Thicket, St Ives
- Holt Island, St Ives

Appendix H – Prioritisation Process



APPENDIX I - GLOSSARY

Biodiversity: The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat, region, or the world. High biodiversity is often considered to indicate a healthy ecosystem.

Biodiversity for All: The programme of activities funded through CPCA grant to deliver Biodiversity improvement in Huntingdonshire. [Biodiversity for All - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): An approach to development and land management that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Under Environment Act 2021, developers must ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced, with a 10% increase in habitat value for wildlife compared to pre-development.

Biodiversity Units: A measure used in biodiversity accounting to quantify changes in biodiversity as a result of development or conservation activities.

Climate Strategy: The Council's adopted strategy to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

CPCA (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority): The combined authority covering the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, focusing on local governance, economic growth, and development.

Corporate Plan: Our Corporate Plan provides a clear direction for what we are doing and why we are doing it. It sets out what we aim to achieve in addition to the provision of core statutory services and also provides the framework for evaluating the council's performance. The Corporate Plan is reviewed annually to ensure that the key activities and measures are still relevant and that we are continuing to achieve the targets we set ourselves. [Corporate Plan and Performance - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs): The UK government department responsible for environmental protection, food production and standards, agriculture, fisheries, and rural communities.

Ecology: The branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.

Environment Act 2021: A UK law focusing on environmental protection and recovery, including measures to improve air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, and protect biodiversity.

Green Skills Project: A motivational project run by GroundWork UK funded by part of the CPCA grant, that is often the final stepping stone into employment and offers a taster of the construction and landscaping industries [Green Skills - Groundwork](https://www.groundwork.org.uk)

HDC Strategic Sites: Refers to key locations identified by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) for significant development or conservation, playing a crucial role for Local Communities and biodiversity net gain.

Healthy Open Spaces Strategy: A strategy adopted to contribute to the health and well-being of the community, often including aspects like green spaces, parks, and recreational areas.

Lawton Review: A scientific review led by Professor Sir John Lawton, focusing on wildlife conservation in the UK. It emphasizes the need for more, bigger, better, and joined habitats.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: A plan or framework designed to drive local efforts for nature recovery, including restoring habitats and creating green spaces.

S106 (Section 106): Refers to a legal agreement under the UK's Town and Country Planning Act 1990, allowing local authorities to enter into a legally-binding agreement with a developer to mitigate the impacts of their development.

Public
Key Decision Yes*

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Civil Parking Enforcement Update

Meeting/Date: 4th January 2024: Overview & Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships)

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Simone Taylor Executive District Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene

Report by: Operations Manager (GM)
Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery (NS)

Ward(s) affected: All

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the recommendations made relating to both the 'Go Live & Warning Notice Approach' & 'CPE Stakeholder Briefing & Update Approach' from the Cabinet report attached.

This page is intentionally left blank

Public
Key Decision Yes*

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Civil Parking Enforcement Update

Meeting/Date: 16th January 2024: Cabinet

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Simone Taylor Executive District Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene

Report by: Operations Manager (GM)
Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery (NS)

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Civil Parking Enforcement is a legislative change which enables enforcement of number of on-street parking offences by the Highways Authority. In Huntingdonshire, the enforcement of these offences will be delegated by way of an Agency Agreement between the District and County.

This report provides an update the progress made on the delivery of Civil Parking Enforcement within Huntingdonshire.

This report seeks endorsement for the recommendations below and presents the reason for these recommended approaches.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet/Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the work undertaken to date and the preparedness of HDC and CCC to apply for Decriminalisation of Parking in Huntingdonshire against the previously approved timescales.
- b) Note the new expected go live date as determined by the Department for Transport's capacity constraints outside of the control of both CCC and HDC.
- c) Endorse the proposal set out in Section 4.4 for 'Go Live & Warning Notice Approach'.
- d) Endorse the proposal set out in Section 4.5 for 'CPE Stakeholder Briefing & Update Approach'.
- e) Endorse the signing of the PATROL agreement as set out in Section 4.6 by the Assistant Director (Strategic Insight & Delivery).

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made on the delivery of Civil Parking Enforcement within Huntingdonshire. This report provides an update in relation to the delivery timescales and makes a recommendation for the approach to 'go live' and 'Stakeholder briefing & updates'.

2. BACKGROUND TO CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT - IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1. Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) is the outcome of a process that decriminalises a number of on-street parking offences enabling them to be enforced as a civil matter by a Local Authority. This represents a significant change to the current position whereby these offences may only be enforced by the Police.
- 2.2. Until the transition to Civil Parking Enforcement takes effect, the enforcement of on-street parking matters remains a function of the Police. HDC are not able to support enforcement due to legislative restrictions.
- 2.3. The process being undertaken (often referred to as decriminalisation of parking) will see the establishment of a Civil Enforcement Area (CEA) in Huntingdonshire. This is a statutory process that will see the Highways Authority (Cambridgeshire County Council) make an application to the Department for Transport (DfT) for the CEA. Following a DfT review, the application will be laid before Parliament for approval.
- 2.4. Ordinarily the adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement would be pursued by the Highways Authority, however previous independent assessments concluded that whilst CPE could be implemented, it was not financially viable to do so.
- 2.5. A report brought before Cabinet (11th Feb 2021) saw approval given to pursue 'Civil Parking Enforcement' in Huntingdonshire. This would utilise a HDC budget provision made towards the implementation and ongoing associated revenue implications.
- 2.6. Officers of Cambridgeshire County Council & Huntingdonshire District Council are working collaboratively to deliver this outcome for Huntingdonshire.

3. BACKGROUND TO CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT - OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1. Huntingdonshire District Council will undertake the ongoing on-street enforcement of Civil Parking including charge notice progression. The annual anticipated budget deficit (~60k p/a) created by the operation of Civil Parking is within the Council MTFS. This takes into consideration a number of changes including an increased number of enforcement staff (recruitment to be undertaken ahead of 'go live').
- 3.2. Huntingdonshire District Council will contribute towards the on-street remedial works costs required to uplift the current standard of 'signs & lines' associated with on-street parking restrictions. Budget is allowed for within the MTFS.

3.3. Cambridgeshire County Council will retain all other responsibilities as the Highways Authority. As such, responsibility for new on-street parking restrictions and scheme implementations will remain with CCC. More information on improvement schemes including the process of application can be found at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway>

3.4. Cambridgeshire County Council will retain responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of 'sign & lines' when the operation of Civil Parking Enforcement commences.

3.5. The Councils will work jointly to delegate other associated elements as appropriate to facilitate the delivery and ongoing enforcement of Civil Parking.

3.6. It should be noted that the Police will still retain enforcement powers for:

- Dangerous and obstructive parking
- Vehicles parked on pedestrian crossings and zig zag lines.
- Moving traffic offences e.g., speeding and passing through 'no entry' zones

The above is the current position in other LA areas and may change subject to decisions to be made by CCC on county wide policy and legislative changes.

4. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT – WORKS COMPLETED

4.1.1. The delivery of Civil Parking Enforcement in Huntingdonshire requires significant undertaking of works to enable delivery. Key areas of work include:

- Traffic Regulation Order Review
- Sign & Line remedials
- Back-office enforcement systems preparation
- Department for Transport Application
- Development of an Agency Agreement

4.1.2. Traffic Regulation Order Review Works:

- Onsite review and mapping of all on-street restrictions district wide has been completed.
- Mapping will be used for the preparation of CPE Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's)
- Review/mapping has been used to identify currently non-compliant sign & line elements.
- A review of off-street parking orders has been undertaken to prepare a CPE ready order.

4.1.3. Sign & Line remedials:

- A design works package is being created for all identified non-compliant sign & line elements. This works package provides detailed information required for the completion of remedial works.

- Once complete, the works packages will be used for the procurement of the works.

4.1.4. Back-office enforcement systems preparation:

- We are reviewing the available systems for enforcement of parking and associated functions. We have spoken with other LA's who have recently adopted civil parking to understand any system shortfalls they may have identified. This will be used to inform our system specification.
- We submitted our application to Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC) and received our charge notice prefix. This step is required for all authorities undertaking civil parking enforcement. TEC is effectively a registration point for unpaid parking tickets/ penalty charge notices, which enables the LA to enforce as if a County Court Order for debt recovery.

4.1.5. Department for Transport Application:

- CCC have undertaken the required consultation steps to date ahead of application submissions.
- Both authorities have provided information required for the application process.
- The application will be submitted by CCC.

4.1.6. Development of an Agency Agreement

- The agency agreement between CCC & HDC details the relationship and delegated responsibility. A draft is being progressed to reflect the processes required to be in place, the funding sources and any other required information.
- The final draft will be brought to Cabinet via O&S for comment.

4.2. **IMPLEMENTATION – SIGNS & LINES**

4.2.1. The implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement will require significant work to address highways sign & lines issues to ensure that they are compliant with the required standards. The review and mapping of all signs/lines within the district boundaries has enabled the development of a remedial works list in collaboration with CCC.

4.2.2. Having reviewed the CCC framework contract, the estimated total value of these works would exceed the budget allocated towards the delivery of Civil Parking.

4.2.3. We have taken a proactive step to control the budget by undertaking soft market testing with an alternate provider which brings estimate back in line with the allocated funds.

4.2.4. Whilst the original project did plan to utilise the CCC contract, the project will now include a competitive market tender. This has been discussed and has the support of CCC officers.

4.2.5. We are currently undertaking further on-site surveys of items on the remedial works list compiled to look to remove items where CCC works have already been undertaken since the onsite surveys completed 2022.

4.3. IMPLEMENTATION – CHANGE TO DELIVERY TIMELINE

4.3.1. The process being undertaken to achieve the establishment of a Civil Enforcement Area (CEA) in Huntingdonshire is ‘decriminalisation’ which is a statutory process leading up to the application to the Department for Transport (DfT). Following DfT review, the application must be laid before parliament for parliamentary approval (DfT to Parliament).

4.3.2. The CPE project currently has a ‘go live’ date for enforcement of October 2024 based on the application to the Department for Transport (DfT) being made by CCC in April 2024 (the window provided by DfT).

4.3.3. CCC received information from DfT on 09/10/2023 during the SCDC application process that the timescales from submission to ‘go live’ have increased due to parliamentary delays. We will now likely receive the approval from DfT in January 2025. No date has been provided for within January 2025. HDC has no influence over this approval timeline.

4.3.4. This change is reflected in our recommendation in Section 4.4

4.4. GO LIVE & WARNING NOTICE APPROACH

4.4.1. It is normal practice for a Local Authority to have a period of ‘warning notice’ issued at the commencement of Civil Parking Enforcement.

4.4.2. A warning notice is issued in place of change notice. It advises that the circumstances observed would normally be an offence, however no further action will be taken on this occasion which will be made clear on the notice.

4.4.3. These warning facilitate the public’s adjustment in adhering to highways restrictions in place that may not have been enforced for a number of years. The warning notice period serves an additional purpose in providing a live test phase before the ‘chargeable notice’ enforcement commences.

4.4.4. Whilst it is permissible for no warning notice period, this period is ordinarily for a minimum period of 4 weeks.

4.4.5. We have been advised of the expected delays (section 4.3.3) and that we will likely receive approval in January 2025. No date has been provided for within January.

4.4.6. We therefore recommend that the following approach is adopted:

- Commencement of enforcement with payable notices is 3rd March 2025.

- Warning notice period will be issued at least throughout February 2025. We will be flexible in this period overall duration commencing in January from the point authorised by DfT and Parliament.

4.4.7. This flexible warning notice approach allows us to specify the go live date in advance which:

- supports the ability to communicate to the public the date of enforcement change, and;
- reduces the risk of impact upon this date impacted should approval from DfT and parliament not be received until late January 2025.

4.5. STAKEHOLDER BRIEFING & UPDATE APPROACH

4.5.1. Civil Parking Enforcement represents a legislative charge impacting all wards within the District. We therefore feel it is appropriate to ensure that clear information is made available that:

- Confirms to Parish and Town Councils the extents of Civil Parking Enforceable offences and what remains within the Police remit.
- Recognises the interest of Parish and Town Councils and provides updates on progress made towards the delivery.

In addition to the above we feel it is important to provide our own Cllrs the opportunity to ask questions around the scope of Civil Parking prior to 'Go Live' regarding HDC's remit.

4.5.2. To achieve these objectives, we recommend the following approach is adopted:

- **HDC Cllrs:**
 - *To host an afternoon drop-in session consisting of a repeated presentation and opportunity for questions to be asked of officers. This will include information on the charge notice process and member involvement.*
- **Parish Councils:**
 - *To host an afternoon drop-in session consisting of a repeated presentation and opportunity for questions to be asked of officers. We will suggest that a Parish nominate 2 persons to attend the session on their behalf.*
- **Town Councils:**
 - *To host a session per Councils consisting of a presentation and opportunity for questions to be asked of officers. We suggest this invitation is extended to the Mayor and Clerk with the opportunity to bring up to 5 persons in total.*
 - In addition to the above, in the drop-in sessions we will encourage HDC Cllrs, Parish and Town Councils to refer to our website for updates on Civil Parking Enforcement. We will ensure that the HDC website on Civil Parking Enforcement is kept up to date with any significant changes and advise HDC Cllrs when updates are made via the weekly member email.

4.6. PATROL/TPT Delegated Authority for Signing

- 4.6.1. The Council currently operates its car parks under Parking Orders made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984. Charge notice appeals received are reviewed by officers of the Council. Should the charge notice remain unpaid, the matter is progressed to the Magistrates Court.
- 4.6.2. Following the adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement, the Magistrates Court is no longer involved in the progression of charge notices. CPE Matters are referred to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT) to provide independent adjudication.
- 4.6.3. TPT is a function of PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London). PATROL has a statutory duty to make provision for the independent adjudication of parking and traffic penalties issued under the Traffic Management Act 2004.
- 4.6.4. To facilitate the operation of CPE, the Council must enter into an operational arrangement with PATROL. It is recommended that members endorse the Assistant Director (Strategic Insight & Delivery) to sign this agreement to enable our future use of the statutory services when required for the progression of parking matters.

4.7. FUTURE REPORTING

- 4.7.1. As the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement is progressed, officers will bring forward reports relating to the Agency Agreement & HDC Parking Enforcement Principles.
- 4.7.2. Agency Agreement: Development of the Agency Agreement and a summary of its content can be found in Section 4.1.6. There are elements of the AA that are still under discussion. We anticipate this report will be available in April 2024.
- 4.7.3. HDC Parking Enforcement Principles: This will look at the 'Principles & Priorities of Enforcement' for HDC with recognising our priorities and aims with enforcement resource available. We anticipate this report will be available in summer 2024.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. HDC have allocated capital to the value of £364,500 towards the implementation of civil parking enforcement.
- 5.2. CCC have allocated £150,000 per District pursuing Civil Parking Enforcement. This allows for an allocation of £50k to be retained by CCC for Traffic Regulation Order review/advertising and officer time allocated towards civil parking implementation. The remaining £100k was to be allocated by towards 'remedial design works'. As agreed with CCC, an alternate provider may be appointed by HDC from HDC budget to undertake this work. The remaining £100k of CCC funding has been agreed to be reallocated to be combined with HDC's funding to support the on-street sign and line works.

5.3. This provides a total budget of £464,500. Within this, expenditure will be made for HDC Enforcement hardware; HDC off-street signage updates and remedials; on-street remedial works (signs & lines).

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6.1. This paper will be presented at Overview & Scrutiny on 4th January 2024. The comments of O&S will be inserted prior to the Cabinet meeting.

7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. The Council remains committed to delivery of Civil Parking Enforcement as evidenced by the progression made towards implementation through the works delivered so far in pursuit.

7.2. We are recommending a go live approach that supports a warning notice period as this is normal practice. The approach we have recommended also recognises local circumstances relating to a non-fixed DfT notification date.

7.3. We recognise the importance of CPE and member interest. The approach set out recognises this level of interest and aims to provide both updates and details of what this significant change will represent to enforcement.

7.4. PATROL has a statutory duty to make provision for the independent adjudication. CPE requires providing the opportunity for independent adjudication. No alternate option for this function is available to the Council.

8. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

8.1. Implementation Date: We will receive the approval from DfT in January 2025. A parliamentary election must be held before the end of January 2025. This has the potential for further impact on parliamentary approval and is not currently included within the Jan 25 position. If an election is announced this could lead to a congestion of Parliamentary time. An update will be provided to Cabinet to note any impact on delivery timescales.

8.2. Agency Agreement: HDC need to have in place an Agency Agreement with CCC in order to have powers delegated to enable the ability to enforce Civil Parking. Should the Councils not reach a position of agreeable terms; or it is considered the terms of the agreement then CPE may either not progress, or the application to the DfT will be delayed.

8.3. The soft market testing undertaken for the remedial works required represented a significant reduction in costs vs utilisation of CCC's appointed highways contractor. It should be noted that this returned figure was an estimate and is unconfirmed until the completion of the procurement exercise.

8.4. The delays to the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement will mean a longer dependency on the Police to undertake on-street enforcement.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet 11 Feb 2021 – Decriminalised Parking

<https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s114049/Item%206%20-%20Civil%20Parking%20Enforcement%20Report.pdf>

Overview and Scrutiny (Customers and Partnerships) – 4 Feb 2021

<https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s114030/OS%20Covering%20Report.pdf>

Cabinet 18 Oct 2018 - Off Street Parking Strategy

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=256&MId=7393>

Overview and Scrutiny (Economy and Growth) 16 Jan 2018 - Decriminalised Parking Presentation

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=10212&MId=7285>

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

Operations Manager (GM)

Assistant Director Strategic Insight & Delivery (NS)

This page is intentionally left blank