

DECISION-MAKER:	Cabinet
SUBJECT:	Green Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan
DATE OF DECISION:	29 October 2024
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR SAVAGE CABINET MEMBER FOR GREEN CITY AND NET ZERO

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

NOT APPLICABLE

BRIEF SUMMARY

In order to deliver the commitments of the Corporate Plan and the Green City Plan and meet our enhanced Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act, 2021, SCC adopted two new strategies in January 2024, a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy and a Biodiversity Strategy.

Our GI and Biodiversity Strategies, together with our Climate Change and Net Zero Strategy, help address our aim for Southampton to be more resilient to the effects of climate change, the effects of which are particularly felt within a city setting with its hard landscape, sealed surfaces and higher temperatures. The main current drivers of GI loss in Southampton include pressure from increased development/sealed surfaces, absence of and/or poorly designed GI in new development, pollution, increased recreation/public access related pressure leading to erosion and damage, and, inappropriate/lack of management of habitats. Over time, the city's GI has become more fragmented. Small-scale, incremental encroachment on incidental spaces (such as road verges) is eroding the network.

These strategies outline how the council will play its part in transforming its own activities in terms of land management and spatial planning. They also set out how improved GI and biodiversity will make the city more resilient to the effects of climate change and improve the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Southampton. The strategies explain the importance of green and blue (waterbodies) infrastructure and biodiversity and set out objectives for improvement, timescales, and the expected outcomes.

To implement these two new strategies, Delivery Plans are needed. The Delivery Plans provide information on specific goals, the actions needed to achieve those goals, the lead officers responsible and the timeframes involved.

The GI Strategy Delivery Plan has been drafted and is now ready to be adopted. The Delivery Plan for the Biodiversity Strategy is still to be drafted; this will be in the form of an updated Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The expectation is that the BAP will be presented to Cabinet in 2025, for adoption.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	Adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan
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REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	<p>The GI Strategy, adopted in January 2024, addresses the Council’s existing commitments in the Green City Plan 2030 and the Corporate Plan 2022/30; it also sets out how SCC will meet its enhanced biodiversity duty and statutory obligations under the Environment Act, 2021.</p> <p>Adoption of the GI Strategy Delivery Plan will require collaborative working across the council and will encourage stakeholders, including business, conservation groups and public sector organisations to work together to deliver a shared outcome, making Southampton a cleaner, greener, healthier and a more sustainable environment for people and wildlife.</p> <p>The GI Strategy Delivery Plan is required to provide a clear set of goals, list the lead officers responsible in delivering those goals and set the timeframes we are working to. The plan will also enable us to monitor our progress on the implementation of the GI Strategy.</p>
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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2.	<p>In the absence of a GI Strategy Delivery Plan or where there is a delay in its introduction, the council will be unable to demonstrate how it intends to deliver the GI Strategy, the goals set out in the Corporate Plan or the Green City Plan and how it is meeting its enhanced biodiversity duty under the Environment Act, 2021. Penalties for failing to deliver on these plans and strategies are unknown, however, there is a risk of reputational damage in addition to incurring higher future costs in adapting to the impacts of climate change and coping with the continued loss of GI across the city.</p>
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3.	<p>Our GI and Biodiversity Strategies, together with our Climate Change and Net Zero Strategy, help address our aim for Southampton to be more resilient to the effects of climate change, the effects of which are particularly felt within a city setting with its hard landscape, sealed surfaces and higher temperatures. The main current drivers of GI loss in Southampton include pressure from increased development/sealed surfaces, absence of and/or poorly designed GI in new development, pollution, increased public pressure resulting in damage and erosion, and inappropriate management of habitats. Over time, the city’s GI has become more fragmented. Small-scale, incremental encroachment on incidental spaces for example road verges, is eroding the</p>
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	network. Equally, our network of semi-natural habitat is under threat through direct loss and degradation (Geodata, 2021).
4.	As a council, it is important that we understand the value of GI and the role it plays in providing a healthier, more resilient city. We need to ensure the city's existing GI is protected from further loss and that the quality and extent of our GI improves. The GI Strategy Delivery Plan sets out how we, as a council, can achieve these goals.
5.	The concept of a Green Grid (interconnected GI) for Southampton underwent external consultation in March 2022. The GI Strategy was subsequently developed and underwent internal and external consultation in 2023. The GI Strategy Delivery Plan has since been prepared following consultation from a number of council Service Areas including Commercial Services, Public Health, Highways, Transport, Planning, Environment & Sustainability and Estates & Assets and based on the feedback from external consultation. The process of internal consultation took place between January and June 2024 and ensured the relevant Service Leads understood the need for the GI Strategy, were happy with the goals and the actions needed, and that the GI Delivery Plan was achievable.
6.	<p>The Delivery Plan is split into three "Themes".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theme 1 – understanding the financial and environmental value of our green and blue assets, protecting those assets from inappropriately designed/ located development and ensuring our green and blue assets are managed as they should be. ▪ Theme 2 – improving and extending our green and blue infrastructure, making it more accessible for people, well maintained and offers the right facilities. Ensuring the city is adapting to climate change. ▪ Theme 3 –extending and creating more green infrastructure, re-connecting broken links in the Green Grid and working with Hampshire County Council on the Hampshire-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
7.	Implementation of the GI Strategy commenced soon after it was adopted in January 2024, but the GI Delivery Plan is the necessary document to provide a clear set of goals, list the lead officers responsible for delivering those goals and sets the timeframes we are working to. The plan will also enable us to develop KPI's and projects that are needed to help us monitor our progress.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
8.	The GI Strategy has already been adopted by the council and there are no additional financial implications in terms of developing the Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan has been produced in-house and does not, itself, generate a requirement for additional resources.
	Many of the actions in GI Strategy Delivery Plan do not pose any new financial commitments as they can be delivered within existing resources. The actions in the Delivery Plan will need to be implemented by different teams across the Council working together collaboratively. Some actions will require additional funding for example, new equipment to better manage GI or improved signage and facilities within greenspaces. As part of the delivery

	<p>process, these actions will be subject to financial assessment to establish the costs and benefits. A finance plan will be developed to identify appropriate funding sources, including external funding opportunities. Where actions require funding from the Council, this will be built into the relevant service business plan and required budgets will be established through the standard budget planning process. This could be revenue or capital budgets depending on the requirements of the relevant action. Enclosure 3 highlights the actions that are likely to require additional funding. This will be sought from external funders where possible in the first instance.</p>
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Property/Other

9.	<p>The Strategy does not establish any new resource or financial commitments in relation to the actions that will subsequently need to be delivered. As part of the delivery process, those actions will be subject to the usual project management and decision-making process and include an assessment of costs and benefits. In many cases the measures being pursued promise to offer significant opportunities for both SCC and the city such as climate adaptation and a healthier city for wildlife and people.</p>
10.	<p>Successful delivery of the GI Strategy requires collaborative working across the council. Internal consultation has taken place with those service areas involved with delivery.</p>

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

11.	<p>s.1 Localism Act 2011 allows the Council to do anything deemed necessary or desirable to deliver or support its functions and duties providing that action is not otherwise prohibited by statute (the general power of competence). The preparation and delivery of the GI Strategy is authorised by virtue of s.1.</p>
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Other Legal Implications:

12.	<p>The GI Strategy Delivery Plan contains actions which will assist with the delivery Hampshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which is being developed by Hampshire County Council to meet the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty as part of the Environment Act, 2021.</p>
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RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

13.	<p>In the absence of a GI Strategy Delivery Plan or where there is a delay in its introduction, the council will be unable to demonstrate how it intends to meet its statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 (improving air and water quality, making space for nature), how it will implement its adopted GI Strategy, how it will meet the goals set out in the Corporate Plan and the Green City Plan. Failure to deliver on these plans and strategies also poses a risk to the council's reputation, in addition to, incurring higher future costs in adapting to the impacts of climate change and coping with the continued loss/degradation of green and blue infrastructure across the city.</p>
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POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

14.	<p>The GI Strategy Delivery Plan will assist with implementation of the Corporate Plan 2022/30 (updated in 2024) and satisfy actions identified in the Green City Plan. The GI Strategy will form part of an integrated policy framework that will ultimately replace the Green City Plan and ensure the council is able to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to addressing the challenges of</p>
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	climate change and loss of green infrastructure by creating a cleaner, greener, healthier and more sustainable city. The GI Strategy Delivery Plan will also contribute towards the delivery of other council strategies i.e. Climate Change and Net Zero Strategy.
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KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	ALL
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Green Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan
2.	Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No
Other Background Documents	
Other Background documents available for inspection at:	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	None