

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 28 March 2023
Title: Treescape Report
Contact Officer: Park Ranger - Carl Whitehead

Background

In July 2022 we were provided with a report from the Oxfordshire Treescape Project, this outlined a number of ways in which we could increase our natural capital and the areas in which this could be done (attached as an appendix to this report).

Current Situation

WTC at present, have all our green space mapped and assigned a title i.e. wood, hedge etc. and have regular reviews as to what we can do to improve and/or develop these areas to increase our natural capital. This is usually based on what the site has to offer (notable flora/fauna) and the impact of developing the site. There is as always an element of getting "best value" with budget we have and what affect it will have on the public.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

All decisions regarding changes to green spaces should only go ahead once it is known it will increase the biodiversity of that site.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Even if the site is improved it also could influence the public perception as, changing a field to a wildflower meadow increases biodiversity, it may also be seen to remove and play area for kids on bikes or a dog walking area. This must always be considered when deciding what action to take.

Financial implications

There will always be capital cost to developing a green space and an extra cost going forward as it often means that there needs to be extra resources needed to maintain an area that is of a higher biodiversity value.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. The need to look at each area on a “case by case “basis will allow us to best increase our natural capital while maintaining good will from the public we serve.
2. I have read through the document a number of times and while it shows clearly what could be done, I feel that the practicalities are harder to achieve in some areas. There are though, some good ideas that we can take forward and with the right support and resources we could maximise our potential to increase the natural capital of or green spaces.