

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	16 September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/211
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Steven Shaw
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1 & 1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks approval for the draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment to go out to public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 approves the draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan (Appendix A) and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment (Appendix B),
- 2.2 instructs the Chief Officer – Operations and Protective Services to carry out an 8-week public consultation on the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan and associated documentation, and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer - Operations and Protective Services, to report back to Operational Delivery Committee in January 2022 detailing.
- (a) The findings of the public consultation; and
 - (b) A final draft of Aberdeen City Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan for approval and publication.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council in preparing this Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan, sets out the vision, priorities and an action plan for the future stewardship and expansion of Aberdeen City's urban, street trees, rural trees, and woodlands. It provides a long-term framework for ensuring that their qualities are measurable, recognised, properly valued, protected, and permanently enshrined in the environmental fabric of the city.

The plan focuses strongly on implementation and helping to deliver against the City Council's other environmental strategies notably Goal 7 of Aberdeen Adapts and the ACC Open Space Strategy amongst others.

- 3.2 The production of such plans by local authorities has been encouraged by the Scottish Government via Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and supported by the FCS guidance document The Right Tree in the Right Place which has been used to help prepare the plan.
- 3.3 Under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018, FCS has since been replaced by Scottish Forestry as an executive agency of the Scottish Government, and Scottish Forestry will undertake the devolved regulatory responsibilities for forestry as previously carried out by FCS.
- 3.4 Under National Planning Framework (NPF) 3 the Scottish Government aims to increase the rate of woodland creation to deliver 100,000 hectares of new woodland over the next 10 years. NPF3 emphasises the importance of woodland as part of our cultural identity, as an essential contributor to well-being and as an economic opportunity alongside the role of woodlands in terms of climate change adaptation, biodiversity enhancement and natural flood management, all of which are identified in Aberdeen's Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan.
- 3.5 The draft plan sets out a vision, high-level themes and policy objectives for Aberdeen's tree and woodland resources and an overall framework for their management and future creation. It is a local expression, with a strongly urban emphasis, of the wider national objectives identified under the Scottish Government's "Scotland's Woodland Strategy 2019-29", covering issues and opportunities relating to climate change, biodiversity enhancement, health and well-being, timber production and business development, community engagement and other aspects of the environment. It includes issues relating to planning and development, as well as Council and privately-owned and managed woodlands.
- 3.6 The draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan Spatial Guidance Map is an important element of the plan as it identifies the general level of opportunity and preferred areas for new woodland creation within Aberdeen City. Importantly the map will assist Scottish Forestry in scoring applications for new woodland creation under the Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme application process and may result in a financial uplift to grant payments within such preferred areas.
- 3.7 The draft plan will go out to public consultation for a period of 8 weeks following approval by the Committee. A Strategic Environmental Assessment will be completed and will be consulted on during the same period.

3.8 Following the close of the consultation period, a revised version of the plan will be produced, and Committee will be provided with further opportunity for comment and give final approval.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Funding required to meet the plan's ambitions will be identified through commissioning intentions and the budget process. Funding opportunities will be explored through continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders.

4.2 Financial support for the preparation of the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan has been provided by Forestry Commission Scotland.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 A Strategic Environmental Assessment will be completed as required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Assessment findings are used to populate an Environmental Report. The report and the draft plan documents must be available for comment, at the same time, for a set period that must be agreed in advance with the Consultation Authorities and the Scottish Ministers. It is agreed in this case that the relevant documents be out for consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	The plan does not meet the legal requirements on the Planning Authority to form our Forest and Woodland Strategy.	H	The plan will link and align to a future ACC Forest and Woodland Strategy that meets all planning requirements.
Compliance	No significant risks.	L	Continue to monitor.
Operational	Suitable space for tree planting.	L	To work with internal and external partners to identify suitable spaces.
Financial	Lack of internal and external funding sources and the inability to fund the proposed programmes.	M	Build programme as part of commissioning intentions and budget process. Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders.

Reputational	Failure to fully support Aberdeen's tree planting programme identified through Climate Plan and LOIP.	M	The draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan goes out for consultation and then returns to committee for approval by early 2022. The plan's vision is taken forward and actioned.
Environment / Climate	Tree planting programmes identified through Climate Plan not realised.	M	The draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan goes out for consultation and then returns to committee for approval by early 2022 and its vision is taken forward in action.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	Supports the delivery of Aberdeen City Council Policy through the Council's commissioning intentions, aligned to the LOIP key drivers, and stretch outcomes.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 3. 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 8. Child friendly city where all decisions which impact on children and young people are informed by them by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Supports Outcome 13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. Supports Stretch Outcome 15. Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026.

<p>Regional and City Strategies</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support Council contribution to a wide number of regional and city strategies. Most specifically, Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 – outlining at the local level under its Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands). Aberdeen Adapts - the City's climate change adaptation strategy to enable Aberdeen to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather. Goal 7 (Healthy Trees and Woodlands).</p>
<p>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</p>	<p>The report is relevant to the Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 and the Climate Change Act 2008, The Plan is also relevant to a range of legislation, policy and programmes which is indicated in the drivers for the plan.</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required at this stage.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required at this stage.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NA

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Aberdeen City Council Tree and Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan.

Appendix B – Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Steven Shaw
Environmental Manager
stevens@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 38763