

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	9 June 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/086
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Steven Shaw
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1 and 1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the final draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan, following a very positive public consultation on the draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Approves the final draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan (Appendix A).
- 2.2 Notes that the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan supports the Partnership's Policy document, and its ambition to promote and improve woodland in our city and in particular launch a "A Million Trees for Aberdeen" programme to plant, with partners, a further one million trees in Aberdeen by 2032 at minimal cost to the Council.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council in preparing this Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan, sets out the vision, priorities and an action plan 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.

3.2 The Tree and Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan will help support the Partnership's ambition through their policy document to build a greener and sustainable city. The Plan will link to many strands of the policy but in particular will champion the following:

- Working with communities, review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces.
- Protect and enhance Aberdeen's Green Belt, green spaces and open spaces so they can be enjoyed for purposes of leisure, sport and environmental wellbeing, and investigate the creation of new pocket parks.
- Promote and improve woodland in our city and in particular launch a "A Million Trees for Aberdeen" programme to plant, with partners, a further one million trees in Aberdeen by 2032 at minimal cost to the Council.
- Invest in Aberdeen's green future by maintaining and planting street trees and ensuring the right trees are planted in the right places.
- Develop a Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements.

3.3 The Tree and Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan has been named The Granite City Forest, and comprises the trees and woodland within the Aberdeen City administrative boundary; an ambitious vision has been adopted to deliver additional benefits to the forest in a strategic manner as follows:

"By 2070, Aberdeen City will have more trees and woodlands, sustainably managed and better integrated with the City's other land uses. These will provide a more resilient, adaptable resource with greater natural capital value that supports the local economy, an enhanced environment, and healthy communities across the city."

3.4 To support the delivery of this vision four strategic priorities have been identified:

1. Promoting the role of our trees and woodlands in mitigating and adapting to climate change.
2. Expanding and enhancing the Granite City Forest.
3. Protecting our trees and woodlands including their biodiversity.
4. Contributing to the City's green infrastructure and the well-being of our people.

3.5 To ensure that the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan is relevant and appropriate it has been updated according to comments received from the public and statutory consultees.

3.6 The public consultation gave support for the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan and some very positive comments were received. A summary of the comments is included in Appendix B.

- 3.7 Delivery of the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan will help to address the climate change and biodiversity loss crises through sustainable management and enhancement of the natural environment.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 A draft Strategic Environmental Assessment was provided during the consultation period for context. The Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan focuses strongly on implementation and in particular Goal 7 of Aberdeen Adapts which has already completed the Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 The draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation 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.
- 3.13 The 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.
- 3.14 The most exciting aspect about the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan is that it is about positive action with multiple benefits for all residents and visitors of Aberdeen. In particular it has the potential to have a positive impact on the future of our children and young people.

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 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Delivery of the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan will help to address the climate change and biodiversity loss crises through sustainable management of the natural environment.
- 6.2 In the specific context of its contribution to combatting climate change, the Granite City Forest has a vital role to play in contributing to the City's wider climate change resilience agenda. Every year its trees and woodlands intercept millions of litres of water, remove thousands of tonnes of airborne pollutants and remove or store thousands of tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.
- 6.2 The Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation 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.
- 6.3 Aberdeen Adapts, the City's climate change adaption strategy to enable Aberdeen to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather. Goal 7 (Healthy Trees and Woodlands) is particularly relevant and states that adaption will be undertaken by expanding tree coverage, planning green corridors, identifying, and prioritising a diverse selection of trees and by maintaining healthy street trees to reduce flood risk in urban areas.
- 6.4 Trees and woodlands help mitigate the impact of climate change by absorbing substantial amounts of carbon. It is estimated that in 2016, about 12 million tonnes of CO₂ was removed from the atmosphere by Scotland's trees and woodlands.

7. RISK

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	The plan does not meet the legal requirements on the Planning Authority to form our Forest and Woodland Strategy.	The plan will link and align to a future ACC Forest and Woodland Strategy that meets all planning requirements.	H	Yes
Compliance	No significant risks.	Continue to monitor.	L	Yes
Operational	Suitable space for tree planting.	To work with internal and external partners to identify suitable spaces.	L	Yes
Financial	Lack of internal and external funding sources and the inability to fund the proposed programmes.	Build programme as part of commissioning intentions and budget process. Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders.	M	Yes
Reputational	Failure to fully support Aberdeen's tree planting programme identified through Climate Plan and LOIP.	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.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Tree planting programmes identified	The draft Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan	M	Yes

	through Climate Plan not realised.	goes out for consultation and then returns to committee for approval by early 2022 and its vision is taken forward in action.		
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8. 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.
Regional and City Strategies	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 adaption 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>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>
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<p>Integrated Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>None</p>

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NA

11. APPENDICES

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

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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