

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Northstowe and New Communities Portfolio Holder 20 September 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - (a) Update the Portfolio Holder on the completion and publication of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and how the delivery of the Strategy will be overseen
 - (b) Seek the Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the final, published Strategy
2. This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District comprising all wards.

Recommendation

3. That the Portfolio Holder agrees to endorse the final Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To give the Council's formal approval and support for the Strategy and its delivery, alongside that of other Cambridgeshire local authorities.

Background

5. The first Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Cambridge Sub-region was developed in 2006 by The Landscape Partnership, on behalf of Cambridgeshire Horizons and partners. It was one of the first in the region and planned the delivery of Green Infrastructure for the next 20 years.
6. A review of this Strategy has been carried out and a new Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy completed and published (Appendix A). The new Strategy covers the whole of the county, provides a stronger evidence base benefiting from public consultation, is better able to support development planning and management, and can inform and more effectively gain Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and other sources of funding.
7. The revised Strategy includes a Strategic Network of Green Infrastructure for Cambridgeshire which provides the context for the planning and delivery of Green Infrastructure at sub-regional, local and community scales. It identifies the benefits that can be achieved from Green Infrastructure including for a broader set of issues.
8. The four objectives of the new Green Infrastructure Strategy are to:

- (a) Reverse the Decline in Biodiversity in Cambridgeshire
 - (b) Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change
 - (c) Promote Sustainable Growth and Economic Development
 - (d) Support Healthy Living and Wellbeing
9. The Strategy identifies six Strategic Areas, plus Target Areas and Projects. A large part of the District is covered by the Cambridge and Surrounding Areas Strategic Area, with Target Areas at Northstowe, Wicken Fen and Anglesey Abbey, Cambridge, Cambourne, Wimpole, and West Cambridgeshire Woodlands. The Great Ouse Strategic Area contains Fen Drayton (Lakes), which is identified as a Target Area.
10. The Strategy was prepared in partnership between Cambridgeshire Horizons, the local authorities, and other organisations with a key role to play in forming and delivering the Strategy including the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Considerations

Public Consultation and the completion of the Strategy

11. Public consultation by Cambridgeshire Horizons on the new draft Green Infrastructure Strategy was planned for the first part of 2010, and a report on the consultation draft was taken to the New Communities Portfolio Holder meeting on 2 March. This report gave background on Green Infrastructure, its benefits and policy context, and the existing Green Infrastructure Strategy. It described how the consultation draft had been prepared and improvements made during its development, and identified a number of areas where further improvements were needed. The Portfolio Holder agreed the Council's response to the consultation, which gave general support to the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy but noted that major changes would be required to make it acceptable. Council officers would work with other partners to achieve the necessary changes.
12. The public consultation was carried out between January and March 2010. The responses generally reflected that of the Council in supporting the principles and benefits of Green Infrastructure, and many elements of the consultation draft, but asking that significant changes be made. Following the consultation substantial work has been done to make the changes requested.
13. A second round of consultation was arranged on the revised version of the Strategy, given the major changes that had been made. Following the first round, it was considered particularly important that local authorities should be satisfied with the consultation draft, and would not need to raise more than relatively minor issues during the consultation.
14. A report on the development of the Strategy and the second round of consultation was taken to the New Communities Portfolio Holder meeting on 25 January 2011. The report noted that the Strategy had been greatly improved but listed some remaining areas where further work was needed. Delaying the planned consultation would, however, have serious implications. The Portfolio Holder agreed to support the broad approach of the Strategy and that further changes should be made to it before its publication for public consultation. The Corporate Manager was given delegated authority to endorse an acceptable revised version for public consultation with the Portfolio Holder, and the further changes to the Strategy required by this Council were made prior to the public consultation.

15. The second round of consultation took place between 3 March and 3 April this year. It received a lower number of responses than the first round, at least in part because the second draft had addressed comments made on the first draft, particularly in relation to the overall approach and structure of the Strategy. A number of the responses dealt with issues specific to particular areas and sites and some changes were made as a result. Following our input to the development of an acceptable public consultation draft we made no additional comments in response to the consultation. Overall, no substantial changes were made to the Strategy following the consultation.
16. The Cambridgeshire Horizons Board agreed to sign off the final Green Infrastructure Strategy for publication on 27 June 2011 and it was published in July. Local authorities have been endorsing the Strategy according to their different decision making procedures and timetables.

Delivery of the Strategy

17. In order to be successful the Strategy has to influence and support approaches and decision-making across a wide range of areas and, above all, achieve significant improvements on the ground.
18. The responsibilities for delivering the Strategy are spread across a number of organisations. Local authorities have a key role to play in securing Green Infrastructure through development planning and management, in managing existing and new Green Infrastructure, and in supporting and facilitating other organisations and communities to deliver the Strategy. The Strategy will form an evidence base for the review of the Local Development Framework.
19. The Green Infrastructure Officer post at Horizons made a major contribution to developing the Strategy, and co-ordinating and instigating the delivery of Green Infrastructure. The loss of this post means that other organisations will need to consider how their resources can best be used to ensure the implementation of the Strategy.
20. The Green Infrastructure Forum has been overseeing the development of the Strategy, chaired and supported by Horizons. Under a new Chairperson, the Green Infrastructure Forum will continue to operate following September 2011. The Forum will act as a central hub to co-ordinate and lead work on Green Infrastructure across Cambridgeshire, focusing particularly on delivery of Green Infrastructure projects. All of the organisations represented on the Forum have committed to this, recognising that in the current climate of reduced public sector funding, Green Infrastructure outcomes can best be achieved through this type of partnership working. The Forum also has a role in terms of responding to new initiatives and policies which effect and create opportunities for Green Infrastructure such as the Government's Local Nature Partnership proposals.

Options

21. Options available are to:
 - (a) Accept the recommendations of this report
 - (b) Decide not to endorse the final, published Green Infrastructure Strategy

Implications

22. Financial	Within existing budgets.
Legal	None.
Staffing	Staff will need to contribute to the delivery of the strategy.
Risk Management	There is no general risk in endorsing the Green Infrastructure Strategy on the basis that it has followed national policy and guidance and proper processes.
Equality and Diversity	Green infrastructure includes sustainable movement and other themes, which improve access, recreation and exercise for disabled people, and encourage wider involvement in and enjoyment of the heritage and the natural environment.
Climate Change	One of the four objectives of the Strategy is to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change, and climate change is a key theme of the Strategy.

Consultations

23. Two rounds of extensive public consultation have taken place in 2010 and 2011.

Consultation with Children and Young People

24. The public consultation was open to children and young people but these groups were not specifically targeted.

Effect on Strategic Aims

25. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is closely aligned with and will add to a wide range of Council Aims and Approaches.

Conclusions / Summary

26. The review of the Green Infrastructure Strategy has been completed following substantial development work and two rounds of public consultation. The Council has had an important role contributing information and helping to give direction and make improvements. The Council was satisfied with the Strategy that was the subject of a second round of consultation and no substantial changes have been made to it following the consultation. The Strategy has been endorsed by the Cambridgeshire Horizons Board and published, and is being endorsed by all the local authorities in the county. The report recommends that the Strategy be endorsed by this Council.
27. The report also provides an update on arrangements for co-ordinating the delivery of the Strategy through the Green Infrastructure Forum, with the end of Cambridgeshire Horizons.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Report to the Cambridgeshire Horizons Board on 27 June 2011

Contact Officer: David Bevan – Conservation & Design Manager
Telephone: (01954) 713177

Appendices

Appendix A: Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy