



NOTICE OF MEETING

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2022 AT 4.00 PM

**THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL,
PORTSMOUTH**

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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

Members of the public who wish to make a deputation, please see the appropriate agenda item marked with an asterisk.

Membership

Councillor Lee Mason (Chair)
Councillor Matthew Atkins
Councillor Stuart Brown

Councillor Hannah Brent (nee Hockaday)
Councillor Charlotte Gerada
Councillor Leo Madden

Standing Deputies

Councillor Simon Boshier
Councillor Ryan Brent
Councillor Graham Heaney
Councillor Ian Holder

Councillor Lee Hunt
Councillor Benedict Swann
Councillor Rob Wood

(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: www.portsmouth.gov.uk

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

5 Review into the enhancement of biodiversity in urban Portsmouth (Pages 3 - 90)

RECOMMENDED that the review into the enhancement of biodiversity in urban Portsmouth be signed off.

The report is now attached.

Members of the public are now permitted to use both audio visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting or records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

Agenda Item 5



Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

A REVIEW INTO BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT IN URBAN PORTSMOUTH

Date published: 22 March 2022

Under the terms of the Council's Constitution, reports prepared by a Scrutiny Panel should be considered formally by the Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member within a period of eight weeks, as required by Rule 11(a) of the Policy & Review Procedure Rules. However, due to purdah, consideration of this report will be deferred to the first Cabinet meeting in the new municipal year.

PREFACE

When the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel received the instruction from full council to perform this review we were very eager to get our teeth into it, though there were many who feared we wouldn't be able to complete it this year and so it risked being one of those ongoing reports that never reaches fruition. However, this was not the case and I'd like to thank my brilliant team of Councillors Matthew Atkins, Stuart Brown, Charlotte Gerada, Jo Hooper (until 30 November) who was replaced by Hannah Hockaday (from 14 December) and Leo Madden who have all left their politics at the door and really worked hard. At some points we were meeting weekly in order to get through all the information, and we also held a site visit around the city to see the areas of interest.

We had excellent levels of attendance, and when people couldn't make it, they sent in the standing deputies Councillors Ryan Brent, Graham Heaney and Judith Smyth who even took the minutes for our site visit and wrote them up for us to have as an appendix. This has been an excellent example of how cross-party working can benefit the city when we all pull together for a common cause.

This difficult challenge of course could not have been completed without diligent and intense officer support from Democratic Services and in particular Jane Di Dino who has worked hard to ensure that we have kept to schedule and turned around minutes and agendas at great speed.

I would like to thank all the officers, outside bodies, residents and others who have presented to us and you will find more details on them later in this report.

I highly commend this report to you and urge you to accept its recommendations that have been unanimously agreed by the committee and are essential for the current biodiversity emergency we are in.

.....
Councillor Lee Mason
Chair, Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

Date: 22 March 2022

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Appendix 1 – A list of meetings held by the panel and details of the written evidence received.

Appendix 2 - A glossary of terms used.

Appendix 3 - A list of wildflower meadows in Portsmouth

Appendix 4 - A summary of responses to the questionnaires sent to the Allotment Associations

Appendix 5 - notes from visits on 18 January 2022 to Portsdown Hill, Farlington Marshes, Milton Common, Eastney Beach and Tipner.

Appendix 6 - views received from Councillors, members of the public and organisations.

1. Purpose.

The purpose of this report is to present the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel following its review into biodiversity enhancement in urban Portsmouth.

2. Background.

On 13 October 2021 Full Council resolved to request that Scrutiny Management Panel and the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee:

- Reviews all relevant policies and practices on urban biodiversity that might harm or undermine local ecosystems, such as grass cutting across the city, re-wilding on allotment plots to improve habitats for insects, including bees. In general, approaches should aim to positively contribute to re-wilding and support other approaches to re "greening" Portsmouth.
- Seeks views from residents, interested community groups and ward councillors.
- Report back with recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

This review was undertaken by the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel, which comprised:

Councillor Lee Mason (Chair)
Matthew Atkins
Stuart Brown
Charlotte Gerada
Jo Hooper (16 November to 30 November)
Hannah Brent (from 14 December)
Leo Madden

The Standing Deputies were Councillors Simon Bosher, Ryan Brent, Graham Heaney, Ian Holder, Lee Hunt, Benedict Swann and Rob Wood.

At its meeting on 16 November 2021, the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel (henceforth referred to in this report as the panel) agreed the terms of reference for the review:

This study will review all relevant policies and practices on urban biodiversity that might harm or undermine local ecosystems, such as grass gutting across the city, re-wilding on allotment plots to improve habitats for insects, including bees. In general, approaches should aim to positively contribute to re-wilding and support other approaches to regreening Portsmouth.

The review will:

- Provide a strategic overview of the current level of biodiversity set out in the council's policies.
- Indicate areas where improvements are required.
- Make recommendations on future focus.

The panel met formally to discuss the review on seven occasions between 16 November 2021 and 22 March 2022.

A list of meetings held by the panel and details of the witnesses and the written evidence received can be found in *appendix one*. A glossary of terms used in this report is in *appendix two*. The minutes of the panel's meetings and the documentation reviewed by the panel are published on the council's website [Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meetings](#).

All Councillors were invited to write in with their views for this review. Written views were also welcomed from residents and community organisations.

3. Policies

The panel considered the following council documents:

Partnership for South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017-34.¹

Solent Mitigation Strategy 2017²

Wilder 2030: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust Strategy³

Portsmouth Local Plan and the biodiversity background paper - Biodiversity & Portsmouth (Portsmouth Local Plan 2038)⁴

Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2012-2022⁵

Greening Strategy ⁶

Greening Strategy Update⁷

Greening Strategy - Future Review & Delivery⁸

The Greening Strategy

Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness reported that he and the administration are very pleased that this review is being undertaken and considers it vital to achieving the council's goals. A significant amount has been achieved including planting, by late 2021:

- 33,300 plants, shrubs and hedges
- 671 trees
- 257,000 daffodil bulbs

The Head of Estate Services added that these figures are reflective of the Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services (HNBS) Green and Clean efforts only, not the council as a whole.

The Team Leader Landscape Architect explained that the council's Greening Strategy incorporates many different themes on what can be done in parks, streets and gardens etc. This was drafted two years ago and provides an overview for what is possible. However, the council is mostly reactive at the moment to requests for rewilding/ greening of areas and does not have a clear overarching vision with regard to improving biodiversity.

¹ [S Hants Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017-2034](#)

² [Solent-Recreation-Mitigation-Strategy-December-2017.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [HIWWT Wilder Portsmouth brochure](#)

⁴ [New local plan evidence - Portsmouth City Council](#)

⁵ [Parks & Open Spaces strategy 12-22](#)

⁶ [Greening Portsmouth Strategy - Cabinet 10 March 2010.](#)

⁷ [Greening Strategy Update - Cabinet 5 October 2010.](#)

⁸ [Greening Strategy - Future Review and Delivery - Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery 9 February 2022](#)

The Head of Estate Services added that speaking for his department, there is a written strategy under the heading of 'environment and sustainability'. That being - each Green & Clean area will produce a sustainable planting plan annually, to include: trees, shrubs, wild meadows and be open to ideas such as creating natural looking areas. The intention is to design planting improvements within the boundaries of the allocated budget or to seek out other funding routes such as CIL and grants. This has been the case since around 2017.

The approach includes:

- Removal of some of the large evergreen shrubs takes place across the estates to clear out mature plants that are past their best in terms of appearance and have little value in terms of visual appearance and landscape character. In many cases these shrubs have been heavily pruned around their base over the years, boxed into peculiar shapes, and have foliage growing around the top only, which looks unbalanced and unattractive.
- These plants provide little value for wildlife habitat (birds and insects, including bees) since they are non-native species.
- Our overall aim is to grass over most of these areas to open up visibility and make a smarter appearance, but we are also creating some wildflower areas and areas of spring bulb planting.
- There is an intention to replace some areas of planting with new shrubs and hedges where space allows or to make an attractive feature either using native hedge species against boundaries and fences, or using low-medium height mixed evergreen and herbaceous shrubs and perennials with colour and seasonal interest that will require less annual cutting and pruning than the existing large evergreen shrubs.
- Shrubs and hardy perennials are chosen for size, seasonal interest, textural and foliage character, flowering and colour. Though most of these are not native, many provide value for bees and insects throughout the year.
- Many trees are planted as part of these works. Trees offer long term habitat for birds and insects as well as all the other benefits to climate and healthy living. We aim to use a mix of native and non-native species to provide a range of tree sizes and qualities for the urban environment, some with flowering and leaf interest.
- These works require phasing to first clear and tidy, then plant up afterwards
- We believe this will create housing estates that feel fresher, lighter and more appealing to the residents.

As shown in the Greening Strategy, there are many means to improve biodiversity for example, introducing/ encouraging hedgerows, scrubland and woodlands. Fruit orchards have proved popular. These may not attract the most wildlife but encourage people to connect to nature, which is just as valuable.

The Green & Healthy Streets Coordinator explained the development of the Greening Strategy. In 2019 the Cabinet received reports on the development of Green Infrastructure for the city. At the same time, discussions around the

response to the climate emergency were developing; and the city was considering the responses to challenges around air quality.

It was therefore agreed that it would be sensible to develop a single approach to increasing the greenery in the city. The Greening Portsmouth strategy was approved in March 2020.

The focus of the work from the strategy has been to double canopy coverage in the city, 360 new trees in parks and open spaces, and 120 new street trees (net of replacements) every year need to be added for the next 25 years. However, the city is in the midst of a climate emergency and therefore planting has been significant over the past two years.

Housing has reported that over the last three years (not including this Winter's planting) they have planted 34,300 mixed plants, shrubs and 683 trees and 437,140 daffodil bulbs and wildflower meadows created across seven locations on housing land. Six wildflower meadows have been created on highways land. Parks and Open Spaces have reported that over the past three years 22 urban meadows/ wildflower meadows have been created and 13 areas of rewilding.

Over Winter 2021/2022, there are plans to plant 208 standard trees and 8,000 whips to create native hedges through the funding received from Forgotten Places and Trees for Cities. This is in addition to other planned programmes across directorates.

Therefore, planting has rapidly increased over a short period of time.

The council's Greening Strategy will naturally enhance the biodiversity of the city, but it isn't specific to this need and does not reflect on plant specific planting to protect and enhance the animals, insects and ecosystems.

However, we do know that the more plants and trees invested into the city of any kind, the more homes are created for a variety of insects and animal species. Creating greater biodiversity and a healthier ecosystem.

- As well as preserving trees and greenery in the city, the council needs to proactively take other measures such as enhancing lower-level planting (hedges and shrubbery).
- Private gardens can also be beneficial through helping to ensure that neighbourhoods are more resilient to some of the impacts of climate change, but also through the benefits they bring to local ecology and overall biodiversity in the area.
- It is recognised that some of the UK's declining wildlife species are now found more often in gardens than anywhere else. With gardens playing host to a range of species, they can be the main avenue through which people witness the natural environment day to day.
- A significant proportion of the city is covered by private gardens due to the highly built-up nature of Portsmouth, which equates to 17.7% of the entire area of the city.
- Many gardens are now completely paved over with artificial materials, and devoid of natural surfaces or vegetation such as trees and shrubs

The work plan in relation to greening and biodiversity includes the following:

- The council needs to continue developing a programme of communication and activity to make sure that everyone in the city understands the approach to trees and greenery and give people help and advice to play their own part.
- The team will consider how the information around the city about trees and greenery can be improved so that people can understand why these things are important and republish the Tree Charter for the city.
- A strong mechanism for gathering feedback will be created about where people think a "greening intervention" could be helpful and make sure that the council responds to ideas on a regular basis. This will help keep the action plan fresh and up to date.
- Our work with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the local community is helping us to support the community with our push to increase greenery, biodiversity and development of ecosystems.
- A dedicated senior communications officer is now in place who will lead on climate change/ green / carbon topics.
- The council has engaged St James hospital into a programme with Earth watch to plant trees and improve the biodiversity on their site.
- Our work with schools is also helping to increase greenery and education around biodiversity and ecosystems. Manor infant school is the latest project with a community planting day on Saturday 22 January - funded provided through our links with Trees for Cities.
- Our most recent project is to support new Horizons school with funding opportunities to create a greening project on their site, with landscape advice from Helen Bergin - Landscape architect.
- Our focus for Spring will be to engage more schools in greening and biodiversity. We are hoping to work in partnership with Trees for Cities who deliver an excellent funded schools' programme.

To measure success, the team will seek to baseline the council's current tree stock, greenery and open space, and reassess on an appropriate basis to benchmark:

- Number of trees
- Canopy cover
- Air quality
- Engagement levels
- Open space quality assessment

To further develop our duty to demonstrate our commitment to conserving and restoring biodiversity we can:

- Develop policies and strategies set out to work towards the council's declared Climate and Ecological Emergency and put them into practice - strategies that can be used and adopted by all directorates.
- Identify habitats and species in the city that are of national, regional and local importance and outline a plan of action for their protection, management and enhancement (some of this work has been done - geese at Great Salterns).

A clear biodiversity strategy would empower departments and ensure a consistent approach is applied so that all parts of the city receive support.

The grant for the planting of 208 standard trees and 8,000 whips year includes five years of watering and maintenance. After that time, a tree needs less frequent watering and is established. There will naturally be increased maintenance costs year on year. Service managers may need to discuss the budget needs with their directors and finance leads.

It is not yet known if the greening the city budget will continue each year. The focus will be on work that schools and communities can do to green their schools, gardens and outside spaces. Additional funding opportunities will continue to be sought.

Street trees are significantly more expensive to plant due to the costs through the Private Finance Initiative contract and due to the built-up urban areas, many trees do not survive unless the right type of tree pits are installed. Therefore, the focus is on areas where a significant difference can be made.

The council is working to encourage big landowners to take responsibility for greening their land. One example of this, is the hospital which has undertaken a successful greening project with support from the council.

Schools are supported to find funding opportunities. 600 whips have been planted at Manor Infant School. The council helped the school secure funding from the City Partnership Programme and the delivery is volunteer-led, and the school will maintain them. The Education Superzone Programme at Arundel Court School is a place-based approach to coordinated public policy and community action, aiming to reduce childhood obesity in one specific area. We are focusing on improving green spaces to encourage outdoor activity and safe spaces for children and families.

Redevelopment of Arundel Park was due to a safer streets initiative This project is a joint project with the police and crime commissioner with the goal of reducing crime and encouraging safety in the park, which aligns with the need to improve green space and support the superzone work.

A project is currently being explored where QR codes would be put up in parks linking to information about the plants and ecosystems.

The £35,950 funding from Forgotten Places included training development days for volunteers and free literature.

She would like to see improved communication with residents to encourage them to take ownership of greening their gardens or balconies or communal space. Wider education around that would make a significant difference. A fun and interactive Instagram campaign is currently being discussed that would show what steps you can take to make your garden more attractive to wildlife. This campaign and website pages with this information are being drawn up with the new Communications Officer.

Funding was applied for a joint project called The Journey of a Bee is underway with the University of Portsmouth to create a green wall on for Central Library. As bees need green areas to be close together in order to find enough food, this wall would be the starting point for a series of green areas throughout the city in areas with low air quality. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful, and the costs are huge, so other ideas will be explored. Rather having green walls, self-sustainable plants could be encouraged to climb naturally.

The Head of Estate Services added that there is potential for green roofs to be put on bin sheds and shed roofs on HNBS land.

Councillor Kimberly Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery explained that her role is different from other portfolios as it is more strategic which means that she is involved with other Cabinet Members' areas to discuss what they can do in terms of dealing with climate change and the green recovery. She finds this very interesting and helpful.

Although there is no budget for this portfolio, pots of funding pots are available. Anyone with an idea for a green project can apply for money from the Greening Funding pot.

When she took on this role, economic development and land use had changed and led to a decline in biodiversity. However, this situation has already improved with all the planting and initiatives that have been carried out since including:

- The planting of greenery and trees along the travel corridor in Southampton Road
- The development of an interactive green assets map
- Wildflower meadow planting
- The trialling of the first bio-retention facility (a rain garden) which is very low maintenance and attractive.

An update report on the Greening Strategy which came to her February portfolio meeting explained the council's clear ambition to improve the urban environment. One key target is increasing tree canopy cover by 400/500 per year for the next 25 years. Last year 1,600 trees were planted and even more should be planted this year. The strategy will be aligned with the emerging provision set out in the Environment Act 2021 and other relevant strategies including the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2020-2023 and the Portsmouth Local Plan (consultation will be carried out regarding regulation 18).

It is important that greening take place across the city, particularly in areas of high deprivation with not much green spaces. Health and the improving the environment go hand in hand.

She is open to suggestions on greening projects from residents and groups and acknowledged that the council can always do a bit better around community engagement. She has been speaking to Portsmouth Friends of the Earth and Portsmouth Climate Action Board to get an outside view.

Locations for planters are being sought in many areas including Eastney, Charles Dickens, Nelson and Fratton.

Biodiversity loss could be as harmful to our planet as climate change. She supports the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's suggestion that the council declare a Nature Emergency. The declaration of a Climate Emergency has had a very positive effect in terms of starting discussions across directorates and targets being set.

There is no one big thing that the council could do that would make a difference; there are many small actions that would add up to make a significant difference.

The declaration of the Climate Emergency has triggered many important actions including the carbon audit and the carbon budget.

There are one or two officers in each department that she tends to approach in the first instance. If she were to have a wish list, having more officer time across all the departments and more funding would be high on it. She would also like more rain gardens and parklets.

An interactive map showing all the green infrastructure in the city is being developed.

The council will continue to lobby government explaining why Portsmouth must be treated differently because it has a high population density coupled with a high rate of long-term health conditions, poverty and deprivation so close working with public health is very important.

The process for responding to requests to green areas from community groups needs to be improved so that it is consistent regardless of which department owns the land.

Work has been done to ensure that the Local Plan has a strong policy regarding greening and health.

Planning.

The Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth explained that all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan and it is therefore that Plan, which is primarily made up of the Portsmouth Plan 2012, which dictates what can be required from developers. Policy PCS13 of the Plan requires all new development to ensure 'that development retains and protects the biodiversity value of the development site and produces a net gain in biodiversity wherever possible. Any unavoidable negative impacts on biodiversity as a result of development should be appropriately mitigated.' Greater protection and scrutiny is provided for proposed development on sites of local, national and international importance for nature conservation. This local policy ensures planning decisions meet the duty placed on all public authorities to have regard in exercising their function to the purpose of conserving biodiversity by s40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

This general duty is in addition to the duty imposed to comply with the 'Habitats Regulations' in respect of specific designated sites, such as the Solent Waters Special Protection Area (SPA). This regulatory requirement is that no planning permission can be granted for a scheme that is likely to have a significant effect on the designated site, whether alone or in combination with other projects unless it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of that designated site.

While strategic scale schemes, or developments in particular proximity to the SPA around Portsmouth, can have a direct 'likely significant effect' when considered on their own the requirement to consider all projects in combination with other projects has meant that Habitat Regulation Assessment is needed in respect of a large proportion of new development in Portsmouth. This applies primarily to residential development that increases the number of people living in proximity to the SPA.

When such development is combined this results in both increased recreational disturbance of wildfowl, including species for which the SPA is designated, and increased wastewater flowing into the SPA resulting in eutrophication and associated adverse impacts on the SPA and relevant species.

These significant effects therefore require mitigation before development can be granted planning permission and the cost of that mitigation is a requirement placed on developers. Recreational disturbance is managed through a range of mitigation measures collectively called the 'Bird Aware' programme, and eutrophication resulting from increased nitrates and phosphates is managed through the 'Interim Nutrient Neutral Mitigation Strategy'. Both these strategies require a financial contribution to developers to fund mitigation schemes to resolve the adverse effects resulting from the proposed development.

Finally, it can be noted that following the introduction of the Environment Act at the end of 2021, the government intends to change how biodiversity conservation and enhancement will be achieved through the planning system. Further secondary legislation is required before this new approach is introduced so full details are not yet known, but the Act makes provision for a requirement for a net gain in biodiversity to be a condition of all planning permission.

The Act also makes provision, subject to further legislation, for the general duty referred to above to be amended not just to conserve, but also enhance biodiversity and increase the obligations on local authorities to publish reports on biodiversity in their area. The regulatory and statutory regime for biodiversity within the planning process is therefore going through a very significant review and is likely to be significantly more beneficial to biodiversity and onerous on both developers and councils within the next few years.

The representative from the Portsmouth Climate Action Board (PCAB) explained that the Green Factor Scoring System holds developers to account to ensure they follow through with what they promise in their plans. This is being considered by other Planning Authorities.

The Wilder Communities Project Officer, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (the Wildlife Trust) has a dedicated team of experts who work with local authority planning officers. All new developments should have an Environmental Impact Assessment included in their applications. He does not know if they all do.

4. Allotments

The Allotments Manager explained that there are ten sites in the city and one outside, near Rowlands Castle used by Leigh Park area residents.

He feels that the council's policies regarding allotments are about right.

Regulations

The rules and guidance are set out on the allotments section of the council website. New allotment holders sign a written agreement and receive a full set of rules.

Rewilding of Sites.

Up to 25% of a plot may be uncultivated but it must be managed so as not to be a nuisance to the other plot holders. The 25% can also include space for a shed or seating area. The 25% uncultivated rule was determined by the council and is clearly explained in the rules.

Information about rewilding is available from organisations including the Royal Horticultural Society.

The Chair of the Cosham Allotment Association (AA) explained that three or five plots at this site have been left to go wild in part and the weeds are causing problems for the neighbouring plot holders.

Some allotment holders claim that they are rewilding part of their plot. It would be useful if there was a clear definition of the term to differentiate this from simple neglect. This definition could be used across all sites.

The Chair of the North Harbour AA explained that they do not believe allotments should be included in re-wilding as there are more than enough people on the waiting list for them to be used in this manner, and there is plenty of natural re-wilding taking place when plots are not re-let promptly causing other plot holders problems.

The Chair of Milton & Eastney AA felt that re-wilding/ re-greening does not and should not, be associated with allotments. By their nature, allotments are already green sites in that there are many different types of plants/ vegetables/ flowers grown on individual plots which, when considered collectively, contribute immensely to the provision of a bio-diverse environment. Encouraging plot-holders to re-wild (grow grasses, weeds, wildflowers) is the first step leading to a dirty plot. It is also very inconsiderate to adjacent plot-holders who have to deal with the issue of rapidly spreading weeds/ grasses etc from re-wilded / dirty plots.

They are not against biodiversity but believe that, in the case of allotment sites, biodiversity and rewilding/ re-greening are, and should be treated, as separate issues.

The Chair of Long Meadow AA felt that the problem with rewilding plots is that of a weed spreading problem caused by seeds spreading throughout the area. Plot holders have enough problems with this as is, often being accused of dirty plots because of fast growing weeds, without close by plots being turned into weed havens.

Inspections.

The Allotments Manager informed the panel that he carries out the inspections of all the allotment sites and the rules are uniformly applied. He has a background in horticulture and has his own plot and therefore can understand the challenges that plot holders face. He listens to people to understand what they are trying to achieve with their plots. Each case is determined on its own merits.

Inspections are carried out mainly during Summer, normally from mid-March. All the sites are visited. Any holders with an unworked plot, receive a Dirty Plot Notice (DPN). The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that he accompanies the Allotment Manager during the inspection of the Cosham site and sometimes, rather than issue a DPN, the inspector asks him to nudge the plot holder. The inspectors are very fair as far as he is aware and are quite lenient.

The Allotments Manager explained that the plot holders are given 28 days to correct issues or to explain any extenuating circumstances. A follow up inspection is carried out after this time has elapsed. If the issues have been corrected, the plot holder is told that if there any further issues in the following 12 months, they will be evicted. If the issue has not been rectified, they will receive a notice to quit letter. Their right to appeal is explained and they are given seven days to clear their property. The plot is then cleared and relet. He has a colleague who deals with the administration and Doug's team clears repossessed and vacated plots which is a big drain on resources.

Over the past three years 579 DPNs were issued, 92 plots were dispossessed from these and a further 59 were dispossessed for failing to work the plot properly within the following 12 months so total repossessions over the last 3 years were 151.

The issuing of DPNs was suspended during the pandemic due to shielding and restrictions between July 2020 and June 2021.

Pesticide Use.

The Allotments Manager explained that the use of pesticides on allotments is left to the individual. Slug pellets have been withdrawn now. People are expected to act responsibly and use as per the manufacturer's instructions. Pesticides sold to the public are premixed now which prevents some over-use. Most people only use them as a last resort. There are many more younger allotment holders now; they tend to be more ecologically responsible.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that most plots are gardened organically at this site. It is very environmentally friendly and has five active beehives.

He uses slug pellets on his plot as he has found the natural methods of discouraging slugs and snails to be ineffective. The strict rules regarding organic gardening are off-putting.

The Portsmouth Climate Action Board (PCAB) noted that gardeners are advised to create ponds for frogs and toads which will eat slugs. It was suggested that the council:

- Provide information to allotment holders (as part of their introduction pack) of the consequences for wildlife of using pesticides.
- Suggest alternative nature-based pest and disease control measures, including increasing habitat for frogs and toads (ponds).
- OR even better, introduce a wildlife-friendly policy on the allotments where only Soil Association approved herbicides/ pesticides are allowed.

Contaminants

The Allotment Manager informed the panel that tyres are sometimes used as planters and if they are left on vacated plots, the disposal is very expensive for the council. They should not be used for growing vegetables as there is a high risk that the tyre could break down and leach contaminants into the soil.

Demand

The three Milton sites	4.5 years
Hilsea Lane, Stamshaw	18 months- 2 years
Stamshaw & Tipner	2 years
Long Meadow	2 - 2.5 years
Moneyfields	2 - 2.5 years
Salisbury Road	2.5 years
North Harbour	18 months
Knowsley Road (7 plots)	24 people are on the waiting list.

Applicants indicate which site they would like; any/ all/ some or indicate their preferred plot. If they turn down an offer, they will be deferred on the list for 12 months, not just dropped to the bottom.

Demand for allotments has grown, particularly during the pandemic.

There is very limited scope for the creation on new sites. If one was identified, the water supply and facilities would need to be installed, the plots laid out and prepared. The costs would be very high. Much land has been contaminated in the past and so would not be suitable.

A 250m² plot will be divided into three when it is given back to the council. Smaller, more manageable plots are very popular with younger plot holders. The number of plots has increased from 1,600 (approximately 2010) to 1,800. Post meeting actual number is 1884 in Portsmouth plus 64 at Rowlands Castle.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that plots were originally approximately 10m x 20m and are now 10m x 12.5m. When they are given up, the council often splits them so that more people can have allotments. They cost approximately £65 per year.

Biodiversity

The Allotments Manager said that there is a lot of biodiversity on the allotments.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that the allotment holders at the Cosham site are receptive to rewilding and improving biodiversity but in his opinion, it is already very diverse.

The Chair of the North Harbour AA explained that members support biodiversity in principle and practice with many plots being totally organic and peat free. They have a healthy population of wildlife with a considerable number of birds and resident beehives on the site which belong to the Portsmouth Bee-Keepers Association. There is an abundance of other insect life on the plots and in some cases far too many blackflies and aphids.

They welcome the use of wildflower beds and landscaping in large green spaces like Port Solent Green where a good number could be introduced without detriment to the overall utility of the space and most beneficially on the "Motorway Hills" to the west of the M275. Consideration to regular grass cutting so that dog walkers can effectively clean up behind their dogs.

The Chair of Milton & Eastney AA explained that keen / experienced plot-holders are fully aware of the benefits associated with biodiverse environments and are quick to embrace new ideas from wherever they originate - be that TV, internet, books or magazine articles

The Chair of Long Meadow AA explained that many members already plant flowers on their plot to encourage bees, along with vegetables which require pollinating in order to produce i.e., beans, pumpkins, marrows and peas.

Some members encourage foxes to stay on site because of their catching and eating rats on site.

The Chair of Horsea Lane AA explained that quite a few allotments have ponds for frigs, newts, toads, dragonfly, damselfly. You can sit for hours and watch them dart about. We will be planting hawthorn on our perimeter to replace what the environment agency had cut down (1/4 mile of blackthorn, blackberry, hawthorn and elderberry trees and hedging).

A short questionnaire was sent to the city's allotment association Chairs to learn about members' views on biodiversity. Eastney & Milton, Horsea Lane and Long Meadow AAs responded (their responses are attached as appendix four). Their views can be summarised thus:

Some or most of their members took various measures on their plots to improve the soil, attract wildlife or improve biodiversity. In the communal area at Long Meadow, fences were used as frames for climbing plants.

In the communal areas of both sites, hedges were grown around the perimeter, the grass is only cut when it is more than 5cm long and left for more than two weeks in the summer. There is also a log pile in both sites' communal areas. There were no maintained wild areas nor any nesting boxes/ hedgehog houses.

Neither association was in favour of areas of rewilding on individual plots nor did they have any projects in mind to improve biodiversity of the site.

Both associations felt that there is a problem with dirty plots but would like more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity on their allotments and would like help/ advice or training on identifying biodiversity opportunities.

The Chair of the Cosham AA also explained that he would like to see food grown in communal spaces. This would make the city less reliant on imported food and be very good for the environment. A study carried out by Sheffield University concluded that if food was grown on community space, it would provide for 70% of the city's food requirements. He is a member of Incredible Edible online group where people grow fruit and vegetables in their own gardens and support each other.

He would like the council to plant wildflowers on roundabouts and verges.

5. Council Practices

Greening Initiatives

Councillor Cal Corkery explained that across the council estates in Charles Dickens ward there are lots of great examples of greening initiatives which promote biodiversity and tackle the climate and nature crises. Often these projects are led and maintained by the residents themselves resulting in a more locally rooted initiative with strong community buy in. For example, the Cornwallis Crescent community orchard and the Australia Close community garden. These kinds of projects should be supported and expanded where possible.

It is not always clear what residents are allowed to do and different advice seems to be given in different areas. He believes it would be useful to have clear and consistent guidance available to council tenants and leaseholders about exactly what they can do on their balconies and in other shared areas.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader noted that there are numerous initiatives being carried out and that bioersivity is at the forefront of many people's minds.

The landscaping team works very well with the Green & Clean Team within the Housing Department and the Parks Team in many areas. The teams are

very energetic and positive to requests from local people for greening projects.

Site Assessments.

Prior to development or greening of any area, he recommended that an assessment be carried out to consider:

- The needs of the location.
- The needs of the people and how they behave there.
- The possible negative impacts of the proposed measures on the existing ecology.
- The unique conditions and needs of the area and any mitigation measures that would be required.
- The size, aspect, wind conditions, sun exposure.
- The objective of the proposal.

Expectations must be managed from the start to avoid disappointment. For example, if more biodiversity were to be introduced on Southsea Common, it could change the character of the Common, and sometimes naturalised areas look quite messy, so this may not be desirable.

Native hedges, scrubland, woodland and wildflowers are not appropriate for all sites. They often need space to mature or fill out.

Councillor Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that planting the right plants, shrubs and trees for the right soil is essential so that they will thrive. Work needs to be done with the Planning Department to ensure the Local Plan clearly stipulates this.

Work With Schools

The Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education reported that where schools have engaged, it has been very well received. There is a lot of opportunity here and it fits in well with the curriculum and the work schools are doing to make children aware of their environment and climate change.

He recognised that schools are currently under a lot of pressure due to the impact of the pandemic and the number of children (and staff) who are absent, both in primary and secondary. This is the main barrier to engagement at the moment but hopefully this will improve as the peak of the latest wave of infections passes.

Some of the primary schools have very little space and no green space so this will limit their engagement. It does vary across the city.

The main point of contact will be the Headteacher, particularly in primary schools. There will not be a consistent approach due to the diverse mix of schools and Multi Academy Trusts that we have.

Communications have been good and the Education Service is more than happy to promote the work and support the engagement of schools through our weekly communications to schools (PEP bulletin and Friday message to Heads) and our monthly briefings with Headteachers.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that many schools are already looking at greening their grounds and the council is working with the Tree Council to supply trees.

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation noted that in Iceland, all pupils take part in the weeding of the verges near their schools. Getting young children between 5 and 7 involved in planting is essential to spark a lifelong passion.

The Wildlife Trust has a good relationship with maintained schools via the council. It has encountered some hurdles when trying to engage with academies. The Wilder Portsmouth Programme will target schools this year. He is currently working with 8 or 9 schools. Next year the trust hopes to hold an event where a teacher and 4 pupils from every school will come together to explain what they want to achieve at their schools in terms of increasing biodiversity and greening measures. These aspirations will feed into an action plan for the city.

Rewilding

The Landscape Architect Team Leader suggested that the panel may wish to consider teasing out the difference between an area maintained to encourage biodiversity and areas that become neglected in this review. They can become areas where rubbish is dumped, or where it feels very overgrown and even unsafe in some instances.

Rewilded sites need regular monitoring and maintenance to make sure they are not becoming neglected or unsafe.

Grass Cutting.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager explained that 280 hectares of council land is mown. There are different regimes depending on the location and type of grass. The frequency has decreased over the years; it was average of 16 per year and is now 9-12.

The grass in parks and cemeteries are mown fortnightly. Grass in sports fields is cut as and when in Winter and fortnightly during the rest of the year.

Reducing the frequency of mowing, saves money and carbon emissions and also increases biodiversity.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader noted that sometimes there are simple steps to improving biodiversity e.g., mowing grass less often or leaving the verges uncut.

Some areas can thrive from human interaction, for example Eastney beach where the shingle vegetation is trampled or battered by people walking on/through.

The PCAB suggested that larger trials be conducted in a trial area reducing the grass mowing in parks and cemeteries. Close and frequent mowing of grass areas means they can become parched in warm / dry weather leading to bare soil. We see this on Southsea Common every summer, when it turns

yellow. Bare soil leads to the emission of carbon. Allowing grass to grow longer before cutting (every 3 or 4 weeks?) would lessen the risk of this happening. Andy Ames, the Trust offered to help by consulting Wilder Portsmouth users for the wildflower trial.

Sea Defences.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that before sea defence work started at Hilsea Lines the importance of the area was investigated and how any impact on the ecosystem could be mitigated.

To meet the council's objectives regarding rewilding and improving biodiversity, more could be done to encourage departments and Colas to work together, in order to provide a more cohesive approach to biodiversity and greening.

The Coastal, Highways & Drainage Team Manager and the Head of Coastal Partnership submitted a handout that shows the enhancements in the flood defence schemes that support the environment and benefit the local community and explained that the Environment Agency is funding the defence work and it is incumbent upon the council to embed biodiversity improvement work in the business plans when submitting funding applications. It is not an add on. There are many aspects to this including tree replacement on a 4:1 basis, saltmarsh replanting, creating more than 60 tidepools at Southsea and North Portsea and the creation of a bird island in Langstone Harbour.

Although Southsea is not environmentally protected, it is still incumbent on us to minimise the impact of the works. There is a zero to waste target and 10,000s of lorry movements are saved.

There is tension regarding the need to control public access, especially when trying to combine increased public amenity and environmental improvements. They are working with PR to ensure they get it right when undertaking this work.

Opportunities to create wildlife corridors across the Solent are considered.

They are confident in being able to deliver the best scheme in not only Portsmouth but Gosport, Fareham and soon Chichester. This shows you can deliver an environmentally sound project of any size.

Textured Ecoformliner seawalls create habitat on the face of the seawall and is funded by the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Bee posts are being integrated into the landscape and experts are consulted to ensure that the appropriate maintenance regime is in place.

It is important to note that enhancement of the public realm is a cost met by the Capital Budget, but most ongoing maintenance is revenue cost.

Environmental improvements elsewhere have been carried out including putting in drainage along the football pitches.

The feedback from residents has been very positive with 30,000 people on social media saying the works were fantastic.

The tidepools near Southsea Castle will be at different levels to create different habitats with different species. Ready-colonised lumps of rocks will be taken from locations and placed into the new rock armour to encourage rapid colonisation. Green hay has been trialled and proven successful.

The new bird island will be built subject to securing funding using broken out concrete from the flood defence work which is then covered with shingle and silt. The funding bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership has not been successful, and the production of an overarching council policy would assist with funding applications. The policy would cover how works would attract biodiversity.

This flood defence scheme is at the forefront of environmental protection in the region at strategic, tactical and operational levels.

Approximately 1,200 historic coastal landfill sites on the English coastline are potentially at risk from coastal erosion over the next 50 years but at this time no national funding is allocated to reduce or manage this increasing risk with climate change.

The scheme carried out at Salterns Quay has enabled a failing asset to be removed, create a new habitat in the Harbour within the previous footprint and reduce the cost of the project to reduce flood risk at Milton Common and protect the PCC historic coastal landfill by reusing chalk fill material from the redundant quay.

Political commitment to collaborate more in partnership at strategic level is required to ensure we deliver outcomes greater than the sum its parts. There are several organisations working on various objectives within our harbours where it is proposed we should be “stacking benefits” and “blending funding”.

Farlington Marshes flood defences need refurbishing. The plans are in the early stages of scoping a preferred option. It is hoped that the business case will be presented at the Environment Agency approvals panel in December and the works will start in 2024. The value of the works is estimated to be approximately £19m.

Wildflower Meadows

Wildflowers thrive in poor soil but need regular maintenance including cutting back at least once a year and the removal of other plants such as pernicious weeds (brambles, thistles). They may also need to be overseeded after the first year if the take-up is poor, and they become overly dominated by the more competitive species in the mix.

The landscape architect team training includes identifying biodiversity opportunities and objectives in the planning stages of a project. This is brought up by the client or the architects at a very early stage of projects.

The Operations Manager, Colas explained that they are responsible for grass cutting on verges and care is taken to ensure that it does not block sight lines for traffic. and that the programme of wildflowers is expanding every year. Wildflower areas may cost more than grass to maintain because of the need to oversee them every year and inspect them regularly. The cost can also depend on the area.

He suggested that it would be a great idea to bring all parties together about greening, biodiversity and wildflowers. The activity is currently disjointed.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager explained that in the last 4-5 years, 24 meadow areas have been created with colourful wildflower mixes covering 2,500m². A list of the council's 13 urban meadow areas are in appendix three.

There are three types of wildflower meadow areas: the first type is annual cultivated urban meadows with the colourful displays the other two types are annual meadows with cultivated cycle associated with farming (annual sow, cut down harrow self-seed) and then perennial wildflowers.

There is no formal monitoring of the areas. There have been no complaints therefore other areas will be considered.

The creation of wildflower meadows is not part of a council strategy. It is simply ad hoc. There are no specific policies regarding rewilding or urban meadows.

They are aiming to have an even distribution of urban meadows across the city.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness stated that 4,220 m² wildflower meadows have been created in Lake Road, Princeton Road, Kingston Road and other areas.

PFOE noted that weeds, or wild plants, are important for biodiversity because they have evolved to support a broad range of native species. 75% of British insects can only feed on certain wild plants and if these not available the insects disappear.

The Portsmouth Tree Wardens (PTW) and Charles Dickens Community Orchards (CDCO) explained that perennial wildflowers suitable to the types of soil in our urban areas could be introduced. This would reduce mowing, energy costs and labour needed and create a more pleasant environment for local people.

Streets

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that streets in Portsmouth are underdeveloped in terms of biodiversity. There is one town in Germany, Freiburg, where many of the streets have trees in parking pays. It makes a huge green impact but is part of a much wider greening ethos. Most of the streets are wider than in Portsmouth, but not all of them.

Grass Areas.

Grass areas used for parking are not always the most effective because it is difficult for plants to grow through if they are heavily used or compacted. However, they can have a good effect on sustainable drainage because rainwater can penetrate its permeable surface and not run straight off into the drains.

Portsmouth Friends of the Earth (PFOE) stated that it would be hard to give a view on whether the plastic matting put on grass before areas are used for car parking are harmful to the soil. The national Wildlife Trust recommends the use of gravel, and the Royal Horticultural Society recommends that gaps are left and that cars are moved regularly. Generally, people want to do what is good for wildlife so ensuring information is easily available is crucial.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that some plants (shrubs and perennials) are not native but are good pollinators so can still have value to bees and insects.

On some sites the opportunities may be rather restricted, but it is about exploring the opportunities for biodiversity. For example, at King George V playing fields proposals include artificial grass pitches and a new pavilion. There are many mature trees around the edge and some bats roost in the building but currently the biodiversity is rather low. This can be improved by some wildflower planting on soil mounds that use the excavated soil. The site is mainly used as playing fields so the uses/ needs must be balanced out.

The PCAB suggested that climbing plants for the perimeter fences and the greening of the buildings' roofs could be considered there

The council cares very well for its green, open spaces. There is room for improvement, but the Parks Team and Green & Clean do a good job in trying new methods to improve biodiversity. Even Colas have been trialling wildflower areas. But it would be good to capture this all together and be working better towards a collective vision rather than working in silos.

Clear parameters are required to ensure that rewilded areas and neglected areas can be distinguished. Thorough assessments at the planning stage are essential to prevent unintentional consequences on the local ecosystem.

It is important that the council and Colas are clear regarding wilding projects and also the spraying of weedkiller which is sprayed on pavements and the walls of forecourts. The review must be strategic in its approach. Rewilding is not always the best option to improve biodiversity. It may be useful to identify the common themes where the council can work in a consistent way city-wide. The proposal for a parking space to be converted into a parklet in Southsea has been supported by local businesses. Although planting trees in streets is a great long-term objective, streets tend to be narrow and people want to be able to park near home.

Biodiversity

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that there is a clear distinction between biodiversity and greening. Both are important but

greening an area does not automatically lead to increased biodiversity. To increase biodiversity, the right conditions need to be created including ensuring that the soil is appropriate for the chosen plants.

She does not think the council does enough to create ecosystems.

The PCAB's view on biodiversity is that it is fundamental to us slowing down and being able to live with climate change. Biodiverse ecosystems are currently shielding us from many of the impacts of climate change in the future. In cities, this includes protecting us from flash flooding, the urban heat island and, of course, promoting our mental and physical health, making us more resilient. Ensuring cities are biodiverse is a win-win for any city.

The Wildlife Trust is asking all that Local Authorities including Portsmouth City Council declare a Nature Emergency Motion:

The council resolves to:

1. Declare that we are experiencing a nature emergency, recognising that:
 - a. Nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this.
 - b. A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society.
 - c. The nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.
2. Commit to embedding nature's recovery at the heart of all strategic plans, policy areas and decision-making processes.
3. Commit to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and investing in nature-based solutions to climate change.
4. Develop and agree on an evidence-based strategy and action plan for nature's recovery and report on the progress made. This could be part of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
5. Set clear strategic goals for nature's recovery by 2030, for example, covering the following areas:
 - a. Committing to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with national and international commitments to biodiversity.
 - b. Increasing space for wildlife and long-term maintenance and expansion of a Nature Recovery Network.
 - c. Reducing pressure on wildlife.
 - d. Improving doorstep access to nature, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - e. Supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to support nature's recovery.
6. Work with local communities and organisations to achieve the strategic goals, particularly engaging with disadvantaged and underrepresented sections of society.

Overall swift numbers have decreased but in some areas of the city they are doing well. We need to find out what they need and how we can provide that in the areas where their numbers are low. Bats are affected by light pollution and tend to be located in the East of the city. The council could consider using new streetlights that channel the light differently and makes it softer and so more bat friendly.

Wildlife areas could be tidy and have signs up explaining how important the patch is to wildlife, as clear messaging is vital to show positive changes and bring people on board.

He suggested that the Traffic & Transportation Liaison Group membership could be extended to various local green groups.

Councillor Hannah Brent explained that the immense greenery from our parks and tree lined roads provide a home to a range of insects which in turn feed a range of birds that will delight the ornithologist. The coastal landscape provides yet more sea life that need the range of conditions to survive and thrive, and in turn maintains a food chain leading up to the seals that we see sunbathing on the mud flats of Langstone Harbour.

The PTW and CDCO stated that rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution by removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators. Different types of habitats could be explored by introducing to some areas boggy areas or ponds creating a different habitat.

Road Verges.

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation requested that a continuous wildflower verge be created from the roundabout near Farlington Marshes to Milton. This could be created when the works to improve the shared pedestrian and cyclists' path has been completed. As part of this work to make the path safer, a hedge will be removed and in mitigation, a green fence will be erected in its place and more trees planted on the other side of the road.

Bus Shelters.

As old bus shelters are taken down, they will be replaced with new ones with green rooves as part of a rolling programme. The first ones will be installed in London Road. This is part of a rolling programme that will see bus shelters with green roofs installed all over the city.

The PCAB representative explained that green bus shelter roofs is her area of expertise and offered to help.

Planters

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation noted that in low traffic neighbourhoods, planters are used rather than bollards. The intention is to install planters in as many roads as possible.

Trees

The Sikh community recently planted hundreds of trees on the roundabout near Farlington Marshes.

She would like to see more trees along roads, but the maintenance cost is up to £5,000 per tree. Underground services cables and any possible nuisance from fallen leaves must also be considered.

It is important that the type of trees and their possible maximum height is considered before planting trees in residential roads to ensure that they do not block daylight.

A documentary called The Air We Breathe conducted an experiment where a busy road in Birmingham was closed for 24 hours and trees were brought in planters all along the road. Carbon dioxide levels reduced by approximately 58% and the trees had absorbed a significant quantity of particulates.

Weeds between paving stones along paths can be a trip hazard. The council is using less pesticides.

Rewilding generally is a great thing. In allotments, careful management is essential to prevent problems for neighbouring plots.

A new ecosystem could possibly be created in the road verge in the middle of the M27 near the port. It would require very little maintenance.

The large shadow that the new university building that will be built next to Victoria Park is a concern. Perhaps a woodland ecosystem could be created there that would thrive in the shade.

In Sydney, Australia there was a multistorey carpark with many plants hanging off the edges with a self-watering system. It was very attractive and absorbed lots of particulates.

The Operations Manager at Colas explained that they are responsible for all the infrastructure on the highway including trees. The trees are inspected every four years in accordance with the PFI contract to identify any issues including disease or overgrowing. Sometimes fallen fruit can cause issues for vehicles or pedestrians. Removal is always a last resort and replacements are planted between November and March. More care is taken to ensure that suitable tree species are planted in residential areas now.

Colas works closely with the council to ensure that clear information is sent to residents regarding trees and the way that they are managed. Many people think they have the right to light. Sometimes satellite television aerials are put up but have poor reception because of nearby trees. He offered to help support the council with any communication to the public. He is open to suggestions from the public which will be considered with the council's PFI team.

The PCAB noted that most cities are warmer than rural areas by 2-10 degrees. There can be a high mortality rate in summer especially during heat waves. Green spaces can help by releasing water which has a significant cooling impact which extends outside their boundaries.

Trees also provide shade and reflect light but need to be well-watered. Drought-resistant trees are being considered elsewhere but are not so good for biodiversity as they are not native. A mixture of species would be best.

PFOE suggested that the council should stop putting stop putting tarmac over street tree pits right up to the tree stump, remove tarmac from tree pits and stop killing weeds in tree pits unless an obvious trip hazard.

The PTW and CDCO explained that it would be good to stop tarmacking tree pits. During the last few years, we obtained permission to plant trees in tree pits and planted them. Shortly afterwards someone removed them and retarmacked. There needs to be greater communication between teams that carryout maintenance. The orchards have suffered some losses due to information not being passed from one team to another. When it should be recorded as part of the history of the area and subsequently passed on to the new team taking over. Whether it be a new contractor or otherwise.

Strimming around tree trunks should be carefully avoided, more damage is done by labourers doing this than anything else and this can set back trees many years. Greater care needs to be taken over strimming. The Head of Estate Services explained that this can be solved by the use of strimmer guards, installed on all the trees in HNBS. Strimming means no pesticide is used around the trees to kill grass and guards cost pennies each.

The PTW and CDCO explained that more native and heritage trees need to be planted in Portsmouth. A tree nursery to grow our own native trees in Portsmouth is needed. Propagating from our rare varieties.

We need to increase the tree canopy in Portsmouth we can do this by celebrating the Queen's platinum anniversary. More wildflowers on verges to encourage butterflies and birds. Great care should be taken in coming years to provide mulch for every tree planted so they can retain moisture and cope with the drier weather we are due because of climate change. A large pot of money needs to be put aside for future maintenance of all trees in Portsmouth. We need more tree canopy cover for future generations to survive in the coming years.

The National Tree Charter has become the Charter for Trees after 800 years. The PTW and CDCO have signed up to this agreement. It would be good if the council did this as well. The Local Portsmouth Tree Charter would need to include the Tree Wardens more in what is done and how communities of interest are kept informed of things like tree removals and tree preservation orders for our very rare trees.

Gardening competitions could be reintroduced into Housing services and across the city. Which helps people to take pride in where they live, improve the environment and keep people interested in wildlife.

Ownership of small micro plots by community groups to grow things in areas that are grassed currently would be a great idea. Removing some of the tarmac in urban areas will break up the landscape and allow the rain to soak away more readily, reducing flooding risk and urban runoff. Trees soak up water and pollution.

Biodiverse areas may look unmanaged because they are not trimmed and cut back as much as those neatly kept gardens some folks are used to. Perhaps some local guidance with the aid of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust and friends of the Earth could be made available to help with this.

The city should make more of valuing the trees and their contributions to the environment. Giving a listing and protection for the very rare varieties like the Black poplar we have in our city (there are only 7,000 in the country). The city could introduce trees which have add biodiversity and supply food for wildlife to the city. Such as Oak trees which support a large variety of wildlife. Also by having a variety fruiting trees or hedges. We also now have some very rare fruit trees incorporated in our orchard planting such as the Bardsey apple.

Larger trees should be valued more and have more protection such as (Tree protection orders) as they work harder for the environment. There could be designated community trees, orchards and fruiting hedges under these protection orders.

More could be made of the horticultural opportunities for careers in the city. Our very own National Tree Council Director of Science and Research, advisor to the Department for the Environment & Rural Affairs lives locally. More could be specifically offered through horticultural and national training with a career path into different areas.

The new Environment Bill November 2021 comes into effect shortly, so this will mean more people having to train in these areas so that Portsmouth city council will meet its legal obligations.

Above all we need to offer opportunities and incentives for residents in both private and rented accommodation to grow more trees at home. Perhaps free trees, resources and training working with the support of schools to help inform young people of the benefits to them in the future. Problems faced by residents and community groups are funding for trees, compost, mulch and moving large items from a delivery area to the site.

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The Arboriculture Officer explained that there are 27,000 trees on the system in many areas and come under different departments including cemeteries,

parks, asset management, property, social services, traffic & transportation and education (for schools with a Service Level Agreement with the council).

Most of the trees are inspected every four years; those in high-risk areas e.g., education sites are inspected every year. Any defects that are identified are actioned swiftly.

There has been a marked increase in people who are interested in tree planting.

The council's target is to plant 350 trees per year over 20 years. In the last two years, including this year, 4,000 trees have been planted. 1,600 of these were planted last year with help from Colas, the housing service and CDCO.

There is sufficient funding available for tree planting from the Trees for the City and the Tree Council. This money covers two years of watering which our contractors carry out. The Parks Team was awarded a considerable amount from the Tree Council which enabled the council to plant 400 whips on Great Salterns Field. He has engaged with the PTWs. The council is creating a corridor for nature from Baffins, Great Salterns and along the Eastern Road verges to Farlington. The Head of Estates Services explained that the Clean & Green have received approximately £70,000 for capital and revenue costs for trees planted on HNBS land.

The Arboriculture Officer explained that tree maintenance may be an issue in the future if budgets remain at the same level. He is not able to say how much will be needed in 10-30 years' time.

His team manages the trees on the East of the highway on Eastern Road. The management of the trees along the sea defences, near the Eastern Road does not come under his remit so he could not say why that had been flailed.

Trees are only removed if there is a risk to the public or is causing structural damage.

Trees in parks are inspected every two to three years for issues such as disease. There are not many ash trees in the city and very few cases of Ash Dieback disease. The elms planted are resistant to Dutch elm disease.

For the Queens Canopy Project, people will be asked to plant a tree in their gardens if they can. The council has identified some public areas in case they are required for tree planting.

The council is trying to plant a mixture of tree species that can cope with different conditions.

There is a big Black Poplar at the front of Portsmouth Cathedral but not many have been planted over the years because they require a lot of space. The council is looking at restoring the dense line of poplars in Great Salterns field.

The council is working on a database of tree coverage. I-tree software is very good as it shows the changes over time. The PTWs use Treezilla to plot the trees they plant.

Education is key to empower people to plant the right trees in the right locations.

The council uses a local nursery to source its trees as it does not have the space nor manpower to grow its own trees.

Fruit Trees

At the request of the PTW, the Tree Council wrote to the panel to say that Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the UK. It has a relatively low number of trees per resident, something that the PTW have been trying to improve over the last 20 years. The project that has been developed by the PTW and the CDCO, is to my knowledge one of the most exciting community orchard projects in the UK, because of its aspiration to bring suitable fruit trees to residents throughout the city, which builds on the rich heritage of the city and its connections through Dickens to fruit trees.

The scale of the communities' efforts is amazing with 60 orchards being designated and planted and over 899 fruit trees having been planted throughout the city over the last five years.

Speaking as part of the National Orchard Group, we know orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. The reason they are special is that fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are "early senescent". This means they get 'old' relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs. These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle. It's not all about the decay either though, as fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Orchards can have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles. And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight which makes them particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

The orchards being created in Portsmouth also allows for community engagement with a huge range of people and communities, providing not only trees for biodiversity and climate change (both of which are vital), but also developing a source of free and community-based fruit available to anyone in the city. The natural bounty that is being created, has already been used to provide free food and fruit to foodbanks like Landport Larder, North End Pantry and community cafés.

The PTW and the CDCO stated that its groups and volunteers have been planting orchards and other trees in many different areas around the city. Planting fruit trees provides humans and animals alike with food and foraging opportunities, harvesting events and bringing the community together to learn

about and celebrate nature. As we have seen in the CDCO and Ark Dickens fruiting hedge. They give free fruit for local people will help those with a diminishing amount of finances to lead a healthier lifestyle. Where they can pick what they need from local trees. Communities will then invest themselves in looking after their local trees. When they can see what they will get out of it. Excess produce has been given out to the food banks and larders to help those most in need and provides an amazing source of support, which has been very appreciated.

Hedges.

The Wildlife Trust noted that hedge removal was highlighted as having a significant impact on the city's wildlife. Hedges absorb lots of carbon as well as been home to a wide variety of wildlife. Hedges and trees are both important. Many hedges were removed because they were considered untidy, or it was more convenient to build a wall instead. If we create the right environments, the wildlife will return

The PTW and CDCO stated that fruiting hedges should be allowed to grow 50cm per year until about 5' wide and allow the fruits to be harvested by animals and people. Not cut back harshly each year by the flail machine. There is a fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens which has been growing for 12 years. It is not treated as a fruiting hedge by Colas, it is harshly cut back and is never allowed to fruit. It is just treated as a normal hedge.

Parklets

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that parklets can bring lots of benefits to an area including increasing biodiversity and providing people with a green space to relax in. However, they can be very expensive.

Green Fences.

Green fences have wires to support the climbing plants and the one that will be erected on Eastern Road will help reduce the traffic noise for the residents at the caravan site. It will also give oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide and particulates.

Gardens and soil.

PFOE stated that according to the council's Assessment of Tree Cover, 31% of Portsmouth's trees are in private gardens. In some wards the percentage is even higher: Central Southsea 74%; Eastney & Craneswater 55%; St Jude's 49% and Drayton & Farlington 48%.

The council's policies and strategies need to acknowledge the important contribution of private gardens and streets for biodiversity in our city and celebrate the plants, insects and birds to be found in these spaces. Good practice information needs to be made readily available to Portsmouth residents and businesses because the choices made by individuals in their private space have an impact on our city's ecology

The importance of soils to biodiversity has been overlooked for far too long. Soil is home to 25% all living species on earth and improves drainage, acts as a carbon sink, and helps cool our city. PFOE suggests that very small

changes in forecourts and backyards, such as lifting one 60 cm x 60 cm paving slab to reveal the soil beneath and allowing plants to grow, will have a beneficial effect on biodiversity levels in Portsmouth. Removing the tarmac from around street tree-pits would also be beneficial. Many small changes add up.

PFOE suggested that a public communications strategy be developed to raise awareness about 'Natural Portsmouth.' Local residents and businesses need to understand the importance of our private garden forecourts and backyards for nature and the whole urban ecosystem in which we live. Where residents and businesses are considering whether to make changes to their forecourt, backyard or driveway surface, they should have easy access to information about (more) wildlife friendly approaches. If public transport and walking & cycling infrastructure were improved, car ownership would reduce, fewer front gardens would be paved over to make driveways and our city's ecosystem would benefit.

PFOE worked with schools and the Natural History Museum for its Bed & Breakfast for Bees campaign which encouraged people to:

- Have an untidy patch in their gardens for insects.
- Create a small pond with pebbles in it.
- Stop using pesticides.

An untidy area in your garden would be more beneficial to wildlife than a bee hotel. A small area in every garden would make a huge difference to the city's ecosystem.

The group has observed that the concreting over of front gardens has increased as has covering tree pits with tarmac right up to the tree trunk.

The Wildlife Trust explained that rather than telling people to remove their concrete driveways and plastic grass it is suggested that we need to look at what they could add to make the driveways etc better for them and for wildlife. More people connected to nature will mean more nature in our city which is not only good for nature but is good for the people who live here.

Hedgehogs are very rare now in Portsmouth. If you want a hedgehog in your garden, speak to your neighbours about everyone putting holes in your garden fences/ walls so hedgehogs can have a large territory to find food, water and shelter.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness reported that residents are encouraged to make their gardens more wildlife-friendly and be more self-sufficient.

The PCAB noted that would be interested in developing, in partnership with the council, the university and the Wildlife Trust, a wildlife garden advice/support team that can respond to resident requests for help creating wildlife friendly gardens / organic food growing/ de-paving. This could also be offered to schools.

This scheme could be means tested so that those on low incomes are helped for free, funded by wealthier residents who could be charged. Volunteer groups like the Green Gym/ Urbond are very willing to help do initial clearance work, and residents could be guided about and supported with what to plant, how to maintain the garden etc.

The PTW and CDCO suggested that people could be encouraged to plant trees in their gardens to feed birds and help our pollinators. Maybe people could be encouraged to have green space on roofs to help wildlife.

Rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution through removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators.

Removal of Paving Stones.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager noted that removing paving stones on some paths could be considered to create meadow pockets in paving subject to any funding.

PFOE suggested that when changes are made to street layouts, for example new modal filters or build outs, these changes provide an opportunity for leaving a small unpaved area which could be planted with shrubs and flowers. This decision needs to be made at the time the street layout is changed, so it is essential that Transport and Planning Officers liaise about this potential well in advance or opportunities to green our streets will be missed.

PFOE strongly supports an experimental approach to increasing biodiversity in our streets. We are pleased to see that Colas has agreed to experiment with removing occasional paving slabs to plant wildflowers where these would not be a trip hazard.

Community Engagement.

The PCAB reported that it had invited residents near Marine Court Green in Eastney to see if they wanted to enhance the flora and biodiversity of green spaces where they lived. Residents from Marine Court Green, Eastney got in touch and asked if they could add some wildflowers, raised beds and fruit trees to the site. Negotiations with the council took a while but eventually a planting plan was formed, and permission given. A number of community groups attended the first planting event in September. Since then, liaison with the council has been really quick and helpful in deciding how the site can be developed. Another event was held in December where 20 dwarf fruit trees were planted and adopted by residents to commemorate loved ones who had passed recently. The council's greening coordinator is working on a protocol to make it easier for community groups to carry out similar schemes, without such a long initial wait.

The Wildlife Trust felt that engagement with the community is vital but can be a little piecemeal.

The Countryside Officer explained that engagement with local community groups who would like to plant in an area would be best controlled by a central body liaising with the Countryside Officers. This would ensure that the impact of the proposed projects on existing green sites is understood. Their local knowledge about the flora and fauna could help ensure mistakes are not made.

6. Residents' Associations.

A short questionnaire was sent to representatives of council residents associations and blocks. Two questionnaires were returned; from the representatives of was from the representative of Cotswold House and the Australia Blocks residents associations who reported that:

The residents at Cotswold House do not engage in any of the following activities:

- Growing plants or vegetables in tubs, containers, hanging baskets of planters, window boxes on their patio or balcony.
- Providing a water source for wildlife.
- Providing nesting boxes/ insect hotels/ bee blocks/ bird feeders on their patio or balcony.

No measures have been taken to encourage biodiversity in the communal areas.

In the representative's view, although residents in this block are not at all concerned about biodiversity, they have raised the issue of improving biodiversity and that it would be helpful for residents to receive more information the role they can play in increasing biodiversity opportunities and would like help/ advice and training on identifying opportunities. They do not have any projects in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The representative commented that they had their own garden club that help with planting but got fed up with the council's garden team grass seeding the borders and cutting up the plants we planted. So, they decided to give up with planting the borders and wasting their time.

Some of the residents in the Australia blocks grow plants or vegetables in tubs, containers, hanging baskets or planters, window boxes on their patio or balcony, provide a water source, nesting boxes, insect hotels, bee blocks or bird feeders.

In the communal areas there is a space for residents to grow fruit and vegetables. There are also hedges and native tree or fruit trees and nesting boxes/ hedgehog houses/ insect hotels/ bat boxes or bird feeders. The grass is only cut when it is more than 5cm long and left for more than 2 weeks in the summer.

There is no maintained wild area for wildflowers or wild grasses and no log pile. Fences are not used as frames for climbers. They do not think about enhancing biodiversity when planting children's play areas.

The Chair felt that although residents have not raised the issue of improving biodiversity, they are quite concerned about it and it would be helpful for them to receive more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity in their outside spaces. They do not have any projects in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of the site.

7. Council Properties and Land

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness stated that his experience as champion for the CDCO project had seen him help them get permissions to plant on land owned by different parts of the Council. This is getting better due to the new appointments that encourage co-ordination. When appropriate, requests for areas on Housing land are agreed.

Housing Association tenants are not permitted to have mats or plant pots outside their front doors because of fire regulations.

In council blocks, a balanced approach is taken with regard to plants hanging over communal balconies; taking into account safety and whether there is a culture for planting in the block. A list stipulating exactly what is permitted would not be appropriate for all cases.

The council encourages residents to grow fruit and vegetables. It does not discourage people from taking ownership of some areas but does not proactively encourage them to do so. Cases are assessed on their individual circumstances.

Green walls in Grafton Street and Estella Road are being progressed. This is part of a wider plan to green key traffic corridors to cut air pollution. For example, trees and shrubs had been put into council blocks on Eastern Road Northern Parade, Kingston Road, Church Street, and various locations in Somerstown. Officers had also contacted Cosham councillors to discuss something similar on Southampton Row, as that is also a key traffic corridor. Councillors agreed to meet officers to discuss using Community Infrastructure Levy money, as had happened on Church Street in Charles Dickens ward.

The management of greening initiatives within Housing land falls within the Clean & Green Team.

As far as he is aware, a comparison of all local authority estates across the city in terms of greening has not been carried out and he is not sure the benefit it would bring, given the differences between estates. Housing Association properties have varying types of green measures and areas. Registered Social Landlords tend to be more remote since their operations were centralised.

Residents are encouraged to be more self-sufficient in terms of growing more fruit and vegetables which can be supported by the service Community Gardener role.

He is keen that living roofs be installed where possible.

In 2017 council officers changed their approach to planting e.g. planting long-term shrubs which has resulted in savings and requiring less maintenance.

Whilst the Leamington and Horatia Community Panel's aim is to ensure that the area is as green as possible whilst keeping the rents as low as possible, he recognised that this may not be feasible. York City Council has the largest Passive House Programme but is finding it difficult to fund that while delivering social rent levels.

The PassivHaus pilot in Havant runs alongside other measures to see if this type of design will work. He hoped it would, but wanted to be guided by the evidence.

The Head of Estate Services explained that the council supports residents having plants on balconies and outside their front doors where appropriate. There is no specific policy regarding this. Potential fire risks are considered and a 'managed use policy' is followed with each case being assessed on its own merits.

Where housing blocks have built in planters to communal balconies the service plants flowers in blocks - such as in Old Commercial Road where annual flowers are planted every year.

Wild meadows have been planted on housing land in various sites across the city by the service.

Most of the orchards and meadows are across the whole of the city.

He is very open to ideas for improving biodiversity in the city and installing beehives where possible. The first site is Gloucester Terrace, just off Kings Road, where the service is working with Portsmouth District Bee Keepers Association to build knowledge and experience before expanding further. Key considerations for additional beehives include risk associated to the bees swarming near houses / housing blocks, ASB risk, vandalism to the hive.

Green walls absorb carbon dioxide. Climbing plants have been planted on the garages in Graffton Street and Estella Road. It is important to mitigate the high levels of air pollution in this area with measures such as these. The carbon dioxide emissions will increase when the port becomes a free port. Air pollution affects the poorest people disproportionately.

Planting has been prioritised on key trunk roads throughout the city to improve air quality. Trees and shrubs have been planted along Eastern Road.

8 Areas in the City.

Portsmouth Hill

The panel considered the following management documents:

- Biodiversity on Portsmouth Hill.
- Portsmouth Hill Management Plan Non-Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) 2022- 2026.

- Portsdown Hill SSSI Plan 2021- 2025.

The Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer explained that he is responsible the management of Portsdown Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is around 55 ha (the size of 70 football pitches) and extends from east of Fort Widley to west of Fort Southwick. The aim is to maintain a continuous sheet of flower-rich grassland with a mix of scrub and other habitats in a mosaic. He shares the maintenance of a similar area of adjacent open space land with the Parks Grounds Maintenance Team. His management emphasis on this land is conservation management whilst parks colleagues attend to amenity issues.

A wildlife survey written in the 1970s described the area as having a rich insect and plant life, but it was a shattered relic compared to how it was a generation before. The site was then abandoned to misuse and invasive scrub encroachment before restoration began in the 1990s. Recent surveys show the site is recovering well.

Portsdown is good example of species-rich chalk grassland. It is a much-diminished habitat, very rich in biodiversity. It is an important habitat for pollinators and a great variety of plants which in turn are essential food plants for the larval stage of numerous insects, allowing many species to complete their life cycle.

The non-SSSI land contains former agricultural fields, amenity grasslands and chalk pits areas which are managed to complement the habitats on the SSSI as well as generic open space for people to enjoy. Habitat management to sites along the hill is important as they provide vital connectivity for biodiversity along the hill. Mowing regimes have been changed to cut and clear or haymaking on many areas that were formerly under amenity mowing, a process that began in the late 1990s. Grazing is used to restore a former arable site to species rich grassland.

Seeds and green hay from the flower rich SSSI have been transferred to land undergoing restoration to encourage the reversion to a desirable habitat with locally adapted plants. Trees and shrubs have been translocated from elsewhere on Portsdown to establish hedges and tree seeds sown to facilitate natural scrub and woodland regeneration.

Portsdown is an urban fringe site with associated problems including, littering, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour. Legitimate public usage is factored into the management. Attending to this is a drain on efforts to conserve the site.

Surveys show the hill is a biodiversity hotspot and compares well with similar sites, for example the National Nature reserves in the Meon Valley and adds to the offer of Portsmouth.

He engages with other agencies including Fareham Borough Council and the County Council and the Biodiversity Officer at Portsmouth Water about the managing adjacent land on Portsdown with a coordinated wildlife-sympathetic approach. Having an overarching plan for all the land including what is outside the Portsmouth boundary would have some mileage.

There is a healthy number of volunteers involved on this site, around 6,000 hrs of volunteers time a year. They are getting older, and it may be useful to encourage young people to join in. However, the number you can have working on tasks is limited to space, tools and the activity.

It should be a default that all land is managed for biodiversity and climate change mitigation unless there is a good reason for not doing so. It is important that the soil conditions on both the land and the adjacent areas are understood to provide an ecological overview of the whole area. There is good advice and case studies available, but the use of site-specific management options is necessary for the best outcome.

The Top Field at Portsdown Hill is a former arable site that is managed for conservation and public access. The soil is unproductive, thin and chalky and was chalk grassland in the 1960s. In 2010 when it was returned to the council's management, the soil conditions were evaluated, and it was found to be suitable for establishing species-rich grassland. Thus, it was eligible for Environmental Stewardship funding. Green hay and seeds from local plants were introduced, hedges and companion scrub blocks were planted in the same way. Owls, stonechats and skylarks occupy or use the site. Currently nine cattle graze the area a few weeks a year.

The blocks of scrubs provide diverse habitats. Hedges were planted along two sides that border the busy roads. The public open space does not need as much management. The wildlife complements the wildlife in adjacent sites. It would be very helpful if this approach could be incorporated into the council's policies.

If biodiversity is to be increased, it would be helpful to record the presence and abundance of at least some species and store the data on publicly viewable platform along with changes to show the work is effective. Surveying and recording should form part of the process of enriching biodiversity.

Changing management may not be popular with all. For example, long grass in areas that have been mown short for years can be interpreted as neglect and attract complaints as well as wildlife.

Utility firms and other agencies regularly approach with a requirement to maintain or install new infrastructure on Portsdown. These can threaten habitats or with suitable mitigation possibly improve the situation, provided suitable advice is given and heeded.

Milton Common and Eastney Beach

The panel considered the Milton Common management plan and the Milton Common restoration & management framework.

The Countryside Officer explained that he is responsible for other sites dotted around the city; a mosaic of habitats: dry land, shingle beach, plus fresh and saltwater areas all on the fringe of urban life. Public safety is the highest priority and many paths have been put in over the last few years.

It is just him and his team of volunteers; the Parks Service has an input but this tends to be limited to amenity areas and access issues. His budget is very limited.

Although having more paths encourages visitors to keep away from vulnerable habitat, education is key.

The sites do suffer from some youth interference.

All the sites around the city would work better if they were linked up to form corridors rather than islands. More could be done to involve private landowners with this.

Engagement with local community groups who would like to plant in an area would be best controlled by a central body liaising with the Countryside Officers. This would ensure that the impact of the proposed projects on existing green sites is understood. Their local knowledge about the flora and fauna could help ensure mistakes are not made. They were not consulted before the trees were planted on Horsea Island which were sourced from Holland rather than local nurseries. They were asked for input about the planting at Horsea Island at the time but were told that no one in the UK could supply the quantity required). These could have been infected by Dutch Elm disease. Dutch Elm is not the best example as it is already endemic in the country. Please note that the importation of any living plants brings with it the chance to introduce plant diseases which could have a detrimental effect on native species.

Generally, it is better to carry out natural regeneration of plants rather than bring in seeds. The local ecosystem is already adapted to them, and they fit into the food chain.

He feels that they work under the radar and what they do is not flashy.

Farlington Marshes

The Reserves Officer, the Wildlife Trust explained that Farlington Marshes (FM) is a peninsular approximately 120 hectares of reclaimed land in the Northwest of Langstone Harbour. It is quite a rare site for coastal grazing.

It is the most important of the three hubs in the area for overwintering wildfowl and waders. Many birds move around the three hubs during the day but all of them come to FM at some point to forage and roost undisturbed.

There are approximately 5,000 brent geese in Langstone Harbour and there were 2,000-3,000 on FM just after Christmas. Although lapwings, avocets and redshanks numbers have declined nationally, FM is a stronghold locally and has the largest number of lapwings chicks in the Solent.

People enjoy visiting the site and that connection through nature is important.

He is part of a small team that manages ten sites in the Solent area. The management of FM is the most intensive as it is a complex site. The nesting sites are protected from ravens and buzzards between late February and

June. The main form of management is grazing with 140 cows grazing in mid-summer so that the grass is the optimal length for the brent geese to eat.

Volunteers are mostly the active retired people; they are trying to recruit younger people.

The birds use a vast array of sites in the harbour, but FM is the key hub as it is the biggest and undisturbed. The brent geese also use the football pitches on Eastern Road which is ideal for them with the open ground and short grass.

Shrub control is ongoing. It is useful for attracting wildlife but most is cut on rotation.

Tipner West.

The Senior Regeneration Manager explained that this is an environmentally protected area with important intertidal and shore habitats. Any planning applications for development would have to show proof that there would be a 10% net gain for wildlife onsite and compensation land would be provided elsewhere.

If the area were to be developed, it would be very difficult to increase the biodiversity of the area by 10%. DEFRA and Natural England would assess the council's plans to ensure that the proposed measures would be effective. There is a well-established technical methodology and valuation process, known as the 'DEFRA Metric', now on version 3.0.

This is consistent between all developments applying the metric and is in widespread use as a 'standard' assessment method. This would be assessed by the ecological consultees through a planning submission.

There are numerous opportunities for a new development to encourage wildlife including installing bee towers.

The project will incorporate location-specific ecological objectives that address features within and surrounding the current site, but also offers opportunities to encourage new species and create new niches within the site.

Habitats within the site can be carefully zoned and managed for compatibility with use by people, ensuring that conflicts (which are currently widespread around Portsmouth and the Solent, notably dogs off leads and coastal birds) are managed out at the design stage so people and nature can better co-exist.

The large-scale opportunities for the creation of compensation land could be amazing. Investigations have been carried out to assess the feasibility of building a new intertidal island in the north of Portsmouth harbour. Undisturbed land like this would be very beneficial to wildlife and provide a habitat that has long been lost from Portsmouth Harbour, is in high demand by the bird species present and could be managed in the face of further climate change losses of this within-harbour habitat.

The new Horsea Island Country Park that is being developed also presents a very good opportunity to encourage wildlife to the area and represents a newer, developing area of habitat that can target the provision of more diverse habitats locally.

The intertidal mud area that is so important to wildlife will be lost to rising sea levels if no action is taken and new flood defences to protect the existing land mass and wider area are installed.

There are ecologists in the team that push developers to do the best they can for wildlife.

All the above measures will mostly benefit not just from their creation or establishment, but by being brought into planned and funded management over the long term with specific, measurable biodiversity objectives, in a way that many local habitats would only have such objectives as informal or less targeted or committed objectives. This kind of management is essential to the long-term success of any biodiversity outcomes. This needs to recognise that the current management of the wider development site does not deliver this; the nature benefits of the site are residual/incidental; the development would bring this into a formal objective approach.

The Environment Act is helpful, and the council will ensure that its emerging policies and Supplementary Planning Documents take this into account. To a certain extent, we are playing catch up as this is the first Local Plan for seven years.

The council does a lot to improve its existing assets. A balance here between noting that PCC does its best, but that the current biodiversity within the site is apparently incidental, rather than planned land use management for biodiversity in any significant sense. The development would have a much stronger focus on management for biodiversity outcomes, following construction phase disruption.

Councillor Barrett added that they are pushing the planning department to influence developers and tell them the high standards that the council expects.

In response to questions, Tristan Samuels, Director for Regeneration added that the area created in compensation would be located between the harbour and Chichester. Arun is the furthest point we are currently surveying.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the council's response to climate change because it is not the responsibility of just one directorate; all of them do their bit. The directorates have different priorities.

When the Private Finance Initiative contract was set up with Colas 17 years ago, the Key Performance Indicators focussed on roads. The parks service's priority was that green spaces were safe for people to enjoy. A cultural change is happening to bring the focus to encouraging wildlife, but it will take time. This is not for the want of trying. This is a priority for directors but one of many.

9 How other organisations manage their land.

Portsmouth Hospitals' University NHS Trust.

The Head of Property & Capital Development, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust (the Trust) explained that:

The Trust commissioned council landscape architects to design and project manage the development of an area on the south side of the site which is now called the Garden of Life. This was an exemplar project that is well loved by staff and patients.

Following that success, the council's landscape architects' team was asked what the trust could do to increase biodiversity around the whole site. Many opportunities were identified planting trees, hedgerows, wildflowers, creating more green spaces, biodiversity, microhabitats, green walls and green rooves. These have informed a biodiversity and greening strategy for the QA hospital site.

The Trust is keen to recognise the health benefits associated with biodiversity and is considering how people use the area as it has a connection to the broader wellbeing agenda. The benefits of people having access to green spaces are significant and hospital medics have undertaken a literature review with the Public Health team to draw together evidence of this.

Discussions are taking place with the Trust Executive, the hospital charity, staff and volunteers to get them involved. Donations of seeds and bird boxes have been made and the Hospital Charity is looking to support.

An implementation plan is being drawn up for the Executive and includes both short-term and long-term projects.

The Trust recognises that greening does not respect boundaries and therefore have been talking to the Portsdown Hill Ranger about how staff could access this adjacent nature reserve more easily during their breaks.

He does not know the Grow Wymering group or have connections to St Peter & Pauls Church and Wymering Manor but the Trust is keen to consider planting fruiting trees on the site and recognises their value for biodiversity.

He is not aware of any council policies that are hindering the Trust's ambition. it recognises a number of synergies with the council particularly in relation to greening and sustainability. The relationship between the council and the trust has grown over the three years that he has been in post.

The Trust recognises its responsibilities towards its staff's wellbeing and the environment.

Public Health and medics at the Trust have published research showing the health benefits of biodiversity.

Discussions are taking place with the hospital's grounds maintenance contractors about changing the cutting regimes to improve biodiversity

including reducing the number of times greenery is cut back and the leaves swept.

The value and quality of existing trees has been assessed as part of the strategy by the council's landscape team. Some flowering cherry trees have had to be removed as they were not in great condition. Others will be planted elsewhere. The biodiversity strategy will help ensure that a mixture of trees are planted in the right locations and there is a succession, not static landscape.

Green walls look amazing but require a considerable amount of maintenance. The location must be carefully considered due to the potential fire risks. In a carpark in Liverpool, a fire took hold very quickly by racing across the green wall. The green wall that was being considered at a carpark at the hospital has been removed from the proposals.

The strategy identifies many possible measures that could be implemented around the site, but the Trust will be mindful of the ongoing cost burden. The strategy will be kept under review.

The designs for a sensory garden at the side of the new ward block (for stroke and neurophysical rehabilitation services) are being finalised now. This would include tactile paving, steps, a rail alongside planting beds and sensory borders to support patients' recovery and provide enjoyment while they stay. It is hoped to start work in Spring 2022. The Trust will be submitting a Neighbourhood CIL application to support this work.

Staff would benefit enormously from being able to access Portsdown Hill during their breaks. A gateway is being considered and it is hoped that this will open in Summer.

The trust enjoys a good working relationship with the council. St Mary's Community Hospital is managed by Solent NHS Trust.

The University of Portsmouth.

The Energy & Environment Manager at the university explained that the university's Biodiversity Action Plan was produced eight years ago by the Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It could be refreshed but the estate is mostly land-locked and so improving biodiversity and greening can be challenging.

The university is aiming to achieve BREEAM⁹ Sustainable Construction for design 'outstanding' rating for its new buildings which includes the biodiversity value of the space, the site selection, the impact of the building, the long-term eco management and other eco features. The design is assessed over the first year of the building in operation to confirm the rating.

In the park around Ravelin Sports Centre new planting includes wildflowers and herbs, 140 native trees plus bird & bat boxes and possibly beehives. The

⁹ Building research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method.

building's roof has wildflowers and solar panels. It is hoped that something similar can be included for the Victoria Building.

He works in energy, environment and waste management and has a good working relationship with the council. He would welcome working with the biodiversity team.

He was very receptive to the idea of students being involved in project work with the council including greening projects, a communication campaign or undertaking surveys. One such joint working that worked well was working with the council to improve street litter and recycling at student residences.

A section could be added to the digital student handbook about how they could manage their back gardens for wildlife (subject to approval) or contribute in other ways. Many staff also live in the city and therefore communication could also be targeted to them.

All unusable food waste at the university is sent for anaerobic digestion. All non-fresh products (tins, drinks) are given to the John Pound Centre for the 'food cycle' scheme. The university is always looking at ways to reduce food waste. Fresh food is packaged and provided to students in 'magic bags' via the 'too good to go' app at discounted prices.

Lakeside North Harbour

The panel considered the Lakeside North Harbour (LNH) Phase 1: Ecological Survey October 21 and the LNH Wildlife Pocket Map.

The LNH Asset Manager explained that the site was bought by the council in July 2019 and is an office campus with a hotel and car showroom. There are currently 55 companies leasing office space. The site is designated in the draft Local Plan for employment and potentially, where that is shown to be no longer viable, residential development. It incorporates four acres of land ready for development. It is an asset that creates an income for the council rather than a site for biodiversity. Its USP is that it is good for wellness and community. Its Corporate Social Responsibility/ Environmental, Social and Governance credentials are important for attracting companies. Campuses with blue and green space are in high demand by occupiers.

The ecological report stated that the site is a mixture of buildings, hardstanding, lake, semi-improved grassland, woodland, scrub, hedgerow and ditches with limited potential for species. The reality is that there is very little wildlife on site, mainly rabbits, bees (in ten hives) and geese. There are plans to put in a wildflower meadow, log piles, slatted compost areas, bird and bat boxes, insect hotels and more trees.

The border of the north carpark has hedgerows.

To the East, part of the development site has been bought by Guy Salmon to redevelop for a Land Rover dealership. In mitigation, 4.7 acres at the west end of the site is to be protected nature space, currently grass and scrub, is to be seeded with pale flax, managed and cut once a year.

The lake covers 19 acres and is fed by canals. An Archimedes screw pulls water to the ornamental lake on the north of the site. It is used for irrigation. The Portsmouth & District Angling Society manages the main lake, regularly monitoring salinity levels and fish stock. It is looking to introduce lilies, reeds and underwater cover that the fish can use as refuges.

The ecological report outlines what species could be introduced but the council is not necessarily looking to do that. The canals are considered too shallow and narrow for otters.

LNH is a Corporate Member of the Wildlife Trust.

These are some of the many initiatives that are organised:

- Walks in Spring and Autumn.
- Ten beehives which produce 110 pots of honey per year.
- The green waste is mostly composted.
- Signs will be introduced along the nature path informing people what animals they might see on their walk.
- Outdoor gym equipment.
- Vines to be planted in the Winter Garden - a south facing outside area surrounded on 3 sides by buildings.
- Green days where the tenants can join the landscape team in outside projects.
- They took part in the RSPB great big January birdwatch.
- Hedgehog hotels will be set up soon with two provided by the Eastleigh Men Shed Group.
- There will be tree planting to mark the Queens Green Canopy Jubilee celebrations in March.
- Presentations by the beekeeper in the schools' half term.
- The landscape contractors, Nurture, to give talks.
- The planting of a wildflower meadow on the Hillside scrubland with walks in May or June where occupiers can learn about the flora and fauna.
- Consideration is being given to applying for the Green Apple, Green Flag and Biodiversity Awards.

He reminded the panel that this is primarily an office campus which provides an income stream for the council and biodiversity is not a priority.

Many initiatives were in place before the council bought the site.

Campuses with blue and green space are in high demand by occupiers.

The day-to-day management is outsourced to Avison Young which has been commissioned to raise the profile of this campus. Nurture is the landscape contractors. It is the biggest single owned campus on the south coast.

It is not part of the public realm so linking it to green sites in the city would be difficult. It needs to be run separately.

The security of the site is an essential consideration for the occupiers and the gates are locked at night. They are mindful of possible access issues with

the travelling community. It is opened for park runs and the Victorious Festival etc.

The Director of Regeneration added that the management of LNH would comply with the council's policies for all council land. This would not cause a problem as it is already of a high standard that would be an example for others. It is grade A office space. The Civic Offices and Housing Offices are different commercial sites and are in different conditions. It is important that the council works all its assets wherever possible.

He agreed to investigate access for pedestrians from the footpaths where this had been limited by fencing during construction.

The land along the railway lines.

PFOE stated that the council would be in a strong position to liaise with Network Rail about the land along the railway lines. This corridor of land is very important to wildlife.

10 Conclusions

1. Portsmouth has a great wealth of biodiversity and is unusual for an urban authority in having 3 key areas of extremely high value habitat which are almost entirely unique in the UK:

Portsmouth Hill - one of the last areas of Chalk Down Grassland on the South Coast.

Farlington Marshes - managed like a low intensity marshland farm and nature reserve with areas of reed bed habitat, of essential value to the worldwide population of Brent Geese.

Eastney Beach (with potential expansion into the open space East of Fort Cumberland) - a surprisingly valuable and unusual area of vegetated shingle with a diverse range of native foreshore plants. The area East of Fort Cumberland is the last surviving section of foreshore scrubland on Portsea Island.

2. Additionally, the city's green spaces, although primarily amenity spaces, are in some cases well utilised and managed for biodiversity where possible. These number some 20 plus specific sites under the management of the City Ranger/Countryside Officer, many have specific management plans and have specific environmental challenges when balancing the needs of public amenity and biodiversity. Of particular interest are Milton Common and Hilsea Lines/Foxes Forest though many other sites have significant biodiversity enhancement potential if money, manpower and time were available. It should also be noted that the Coastal Defence works around the island have been at the cutting edge of biodiversity enhancement innovation on sea defences nationally and have enhanced Portsmouth foreshore areas with this work.

3. One anomaly in the city's green spaces is Tipner West on the site of the old firing range. This site, although subject to limited management, may arguably be among the most valuable biodiversity sites in the city, after the 'Top 3'. The shallow, sheltered bay and foreshore area on the south of the peninsula are extensively used by waders and Brent Geese traversing the Solent between feeding grounds. The grassy areas, are themselves used by the Geese for feeding. Unusual species such as the common lizard and at least one species of owl are found on the site and, due to an imported chalky outcrop of rock, there is even a population of rare bee orchids, among other natural wildflowers.
4. The above green sites in Portsmouth are all exceptionally well managed on a day-to-day level and congratulations should be given to the team at the Hampshire and Isle of Wildlife Trust responsible for Farlington Marshes, led by Chris Lycett, the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer Richard Jones, and the City Ranger, Pete Roberts for their exceptional work and expertise in managing the sites. We should especially offer the thanks of the council to the small teams of volunteers from across the city that help with the management and maintenance of these sites - especially in the area of biodiversity enhancement.
5. We are pleased to note the amount of positive action that had been taken across the city in addition to our core green sites including but not limited to, tree planting, the creation of wildflower meadows and the work to support local groups in their greening projects.
6. Throughout the review the panel has been extremely impressed with the work, initiative and enthusiasm of officers across the council working in this area. It is clear that there is wealth of expertise and experience in the council that is ready to be used to maximise diversity gains in the city. In addition to those above, we particularly note the work of Vincent Mount and the Landscape Architects team, Ashley Humphrey the Allotments Manager, Lyall Cairns, Guy Mason and the Coastal Partnership for their work on the sea defences, Doug Gray and the Grounds Maintenance Team, Zoe White the Clean & Healthy Streets Coordinator, Phillip Bentley and the Neighbourhood services team, the Green & Clean team, Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager, Simon Pearce, Arboriculture Officer and many more. Further thanks is given to all those who submitted evidence for the review and all of the fantastic individuals working and volunteering across the city in roles that make our city a greener and more biodiverse place to live.
7. On a council level, credit should be given to the members of the council across all parties for launching a variety of schemes across the city that aim to enhance biodiversity and for building on the work of the previous member, as well as acting on ideas provided by Ward Councillors. The panel is pleased to note the new Environment Act 2021 passed by parliament. This legislation aims to protect and enhance our environment and includes a range of new measures to increase biodiversity.
8. However, the panel heard repeatedly throughout the evidence gathering process that the main flaw with the current approach of the council is that

work is 'siloed' and too reactive. Biodiversity at Portsmouth City Council represents a patchwork of separate initiatives of differing value and impact. In particular, that different departments in the council rarely communicate their plans for biodiversity enhancement to one another or share ideas or best practice. Where there is cross-departmental cooperation it is often down to individual officers and not a deliberate part of the process of planning biodiversity enhancements. The Landscape Architects team do offer invaluable advice on biodiversity when schemes go through planning, but it is very rare for anyone to consult, for example the City Ranger, or the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer, both of whom are experienced ecologists, on schemes which might have species crossover with our existing site-specific management plans.

9. As a consequence, there is some work and some schemes being delivered across the city which may not achieve best value for money or deliver the biodiversity enhancement sought. It was repeatedly emphasized to us that every potential site for biodiversity enhancement is different and there must be clear plan about what the goal of any new project is, and how it fits within the wider context of the city's natural habitats and species mix. Concern was raised about not always using native species. Best success for each site, even small-scale planting, will be achieved when its specific features are considered for how they most contribute to the overall habitat mix in the city and enhancements are planned based on how the site will interact with other nearby sites.
10. This issue of siloed working is also found in City Council engagement with private sector and third-party partners across the city. There are some excellent examples of best practice, such as the work of the Landscape Architects team in partnership with Trevor Mose the Head of Property at the Queen Alexandra Hospital on the hospital's new sensory garden. Together this kind of work can bring private realm land into wider biodiversity plans and 'multiply' the gains achieved. In contrast, the significant biodiversity work at Lakeside, despite it being a council owned corporate entity, seemed to be largely planned without any communication with council officers in order to incorporate it into wider plans for the city. Similarly, there seemed to be little evidence of the council engaging with either the Navy or University to try and involve those organisations and major landowners in citywide biodiversity planning.
11. The panel also has concerns that many residents are choosing to pave over or AstroTurf both front and back gardens and may not be aware of alternatives available.
12. The specific remit of the panel was to review council policy to ensure it was promoting biodiversity as far as possible and not obstructing it in specific cases. As will be seen in our recommendations, we did not find many specific issues with existing policy, though some recommendations are made in relation to the local plan and greening strategy, rather the problems we found related to a lack of policy and lack of overreaching strategy when it came to biodiversity in the city. At times there was also a lack of communication with residents about what they can do in their area to enhance biodiversity, as well as a lack of policy to respond to proposals

put forward by residents which identify specific spaces as candidates for greening and biodiversity enhancement.

13. Many respondents to the panel therefore felt that an over-arching biodiversity strategy would assist Portsmouth City Council, residents and residents groups and third party organisations in coordinating their efforts.
14. The specific issues which triggered this review - grass cutting programs and allotment rules on rewilding were not ultimately found to be significantly problematic, and therefore only limited recommendations are made on those points. Some issues were found with Colas mowing and pruning programmes, recognising that a one-size fits all is not appropriate for every site and needs to be altered to reflect the needs of the local community.
15. Grass mowing schedules are being kept under regular review by the Parks and Maintenance team, and they are experimenting with re-wilding in trial areas, however, this is potentially one of the examples where an over-arching strategy with a clear plan to enhance biodiversity is needed, rather than simply leaving large areas to grow wild.¹⁰ Mowing and verge maintenance around roads is the responsibility of Colas, and having a more clearly defined working relationship and a future plan to move towards economically efficient biodiversity initiatives with the city contractor is among the panel's recommendations.
16. Existing allotments appear to largely be functioning well. It is the view of the panel that the range of growing activity on allotments already contributes significantly to biodiversity in the city, as well as to health, amenity and local food sourcing, among many other community benefits. The panel is concerned that the demand for Allotment land far exceeds the supply. Therefore, it is not the view of the panel that rewilding of whole area of allotments is desirable - however it is clear and there could be better education and communication around how effective the use of specific biodiversity enhancement areas can be to allotments within the allowed 25% non-cultivated area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy and Communications:

1. **A Biodiversity Strategy be developed to cover all areas of the council's operations and the whole city.** An overarching policy be drafted and enacted that sets out the gestalt Biodiversity Vision & Mission for Portsmouth, with guidelines for best practice in city areas, streets and housing areas for biodiversity enhancement. A single strategy would encourage more joint working and also enables autonomous work to contribute to a common plan for a biodiverse city. The Biodiversity Strategy should contain plans for connecting green spaces and individual

¹⁰ It is not suggested this is happening at all at present - the point is that areas of unmanaged scrubland largely need to be avoided in Portsmouth as they tend to turn to bramble or similar monocultures with little biodiversity value.

initiatives through 'green corridors' to allow wildlife to move across the city.

- 2. Give a single officer responsibility for coordinating biodiversity programmes across the council in accordance with the biodiversity strategy.** Cllr Kimberley Barratt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Green Recovery, seemed supportive of this idea and as it fits within the purpose of her portfolio we suggest that perhaps a senior strategy officer within that portfolio might be sensible choice. In future recommendations we will refer to this officer as the Biodiversity Strategy Officer.
- 3. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Liaison Group in the council comprising representative officers with responsibility for biodiversity projects across each of the different departments.** The terms of reference would include meetings held in person at least quarterly, as the panel feels this will best enhance knowledge sharing, best practice and coordinated working. We recommend that where possible, the Chief Executive attend along with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Green Recovery and opposition party spokespeople. The minutes should be shared with all Councillors.
- 4. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Public Forum to allow representatives from residents groups and third party organisations to meet and discuss ways to contribute to the city's biodiversity strategy.** This also could fall under the Climate Change and Green Recovery Portfolio and be coordinated by the Biodiversity Strategy Officer. This body would meet at least bi-annually and allow the public, volunteer groups and charities to engage with the work of the City Council.
- 5. Develop a Biodiversity Public Communications Strategy to encourage residents to take action on biodiversity at home.** This will ensure the public receive consistent advice about how to contribute to the city's Biodiversity Strategy and also should be designed to encourage wider public engagement with biodiversity enhancement. It could include a range of members such social media campaigns, online education materials on how to enhance biodiversity in forecourts, gardens and balconies (perhaps even with links included in householder first contacts such as council tax or electoral role registrations), sharing examples of resident projects on the big screen in Guildhall Square and even competitions and incentives to encourage biodiversity enhancements at home.

6. **Consider the feasibility of establishing a central biodiversity database to register, monitor and assess biodiversity in the city.**

Allotments

7. **The subdivision of plots can continue where appropriate but should not be relied on as the sole strategy to create new allotments. Due to the health, community and social benefits, the council identify new sites where possible.**
8. **Develop an online Allotment Education portal for new plot holders to provide information to allotment holders on biodiversity enhancement on allotments, the use of pesticide alternative and on re-wilding part of their plot.** The education and provided by individual allotment associations is excellent but we believe a central source of information would assist less experience plot holders. Clear guidance on the important difference between a wild, overgrown plot, and a well-managed biodiversity focused 'wild' area of well cultivated plot would also assist in plot management. As would clear guidance on the use of environment-friendly pesticide-free alternatives for managing pests on allotments. The Allotment Manager is responsible for all allotments in the city so clearly there is not time within his role to do this work but there would be value in doing the work. Experienced volunteer officers of Allotment Associations emphasised their willingness to help educate new plot holders.
9. **Pesticide use be banned on council allotments.** We feel the impact on pollinators and neighbouring plot holders is too high and therefore pesticide use should be prohibited.

Joint Working

10. **Work with Colas to create a clear plan to update the city maintenance contract in relation to the care of verges, trees, bushes and other green areas so that opportunities can be found to both enhance biodiversity and make savings.** For example, to review grass cutting, de-weeding, the use of pesticides and approach to planting and maintaining greening to ensure it priorities supporting biodiversity. Representatives of Colas were open to this but felt the current approach was rather ad hoc and could be more coordinated.
11. **Continue to involve the public, schools, tenants, outside organisations and businesses in promoting biodiversity in the city and also to explore the possibility for suitable partnerships as appropriate.**
12. **Develop a clear and simple policy approach and a line of contact for residents of council Housing who wish to pursue greening and biodiversity projects in council owned communal areas around their homes.** Housing should display this policy on information boards in apartment blocks with information for tenants and leaseholders on what

steps they may take on their balconies and shared areas. Streamlining existing policies as needed.

- 13. Take a proactive approach to encouraging large private landowners in the City such as the Navy, the NHS and the University to work closely with the city council on how they can make biodiversity enhancements on their land as part of the city strategy.**
- 14. Engage neighbouring authorities in biodiversity planning on a regional level to maximise biodiversity gains across the Solent area.**

Streets, Planters and Trees

- 15. Phase out the use of pesticides and encourage businesses, residents and organisations to do the same too.** Evidence was given that pesticide use by the council was not excessive or extensive but the panel believe a continuing ambition of reduce it to zero is desirable. The programme for doing so should be reported to the appropriate Cabinet Member on an annual basis.
- 16. Pursue and encourage more on street greening as this is one of the best actions to take to enhance urban biodiversity.**
- 17. Ensure that greening goes beyond tree coverage and includes shrubbery, hedgerows wildflowers etc. as these diverse forms of planting have considerable impact on reducing carbon emissions and supporting biodiversity.**
- 18. Planting should prioritise native wildflowers, shrubs and trees in its parks, open spaces and any greening or biodiversity projects as this will help better support local ecosystems.**
- 19. When tree planting the council should have regard to native species, biodiversity and funding the lifetime maintenance of the tree, as well as resident concerns over street placement.** Trees are an important part of the biodiversity mix but are expensive. Copses of trees and a mixture of trees and hedgerows is also needed. Regard should be had to the value of small native species, and the removal and replacement of trees in alternative locations should be subject to clear and simple policy for concerned residents. Trees with shorter lifespans can provide valuable carbon capture. The council should adopt a flexible and practical policy on tree planting.
- 20. When planting new street trees, soil or the most appropriate permeable surface should be used at the base rather than tarmac, with wildflowers planted.**
- 21. Tarmac bases around trees should be removed from around tree pits and if replaced, replaced with a tree-friendly surface or let it go fallow.**

22. **Consideration should be given to signing up to the National Tree Charter.**
23. **Establish a plan for hedge planting and restoration around the city - working in partnership with schools and community groups where appropriate.**

Funding and Support

24. **Continued support should be given to the excellent work of frontline officers using their expertise to identify and trial biodiversity projects.** Nothing in this report should be taken as a substitute for the hard work and expertise of those officers working on the ground on Portsmouth's green sites.
25. **Consider raising the budgets of the City Ranger and the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer and offering volunteer recruitment support and publicity if required.** Both of these roles operate on extremely small budgets and even small amounts of extra funding would allow them to make significant progress and trial new schemes in their areas of expertise.
26. **Consider the establishment of a support programme for residents groups wishing to set up community gardens and other gardening schemes e.g. Charles Dickens Community Orchard and Green Wymering.**

Greening Strategy and the Local Plan

27. **The renewed Greening Strategy planned for later this year should include express consideration of how greening projects should embed biodiversity enhancement as a key objective of all new schemes.** In future consideration should be given to how the Greening Strategy and the proposed Biodiversity strategy would interact and whether they should be combined into a single strategy or maintain separate but complimentary identities.
28. **The planning service should maximise ability of the new Local Plan to require biodiversity gains in new developments in line with the new Environment Act.**
29. **Include a policy in the new local plan to require developers to include flexible growing spaces in communal areas of land from residents of flats and apartments.**

Tipner West

30. **Consideration should be given to a significant reduction in housing proposed for the site, with no housing sited on the southern shore and bay area and the grassland areas of the site.** The habitat loss involved in even limited development will inevitably and irreparably harm biodiversity in that area, and it is not clear to the panel that this harm can

be mitigated or compensated. If necessary, then the city council should apply to the Secretary of State for a reduction in housing target as a result - and for a revision of the terms of the City Deal bid awarded for that area to reflect newer recent understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the damage of habitat loss.

- 31. Consider establishing a new wildlife reserve on Tipner West peninsula for the benefit and education of city residents, and the protection of wildlife in the city.**

Horsea Country Park

- 32. A biodiversity strategy be developed for Horsea Country Park (Nature Reserve) to fit in with the citywide strategy and this be disseminated to all Councillors.**

- 33. Council-owned sites in Portsmouth and Hampshire which have been procured for commercial purpose i.e. Lakeside North Harbour must still comply with both the letter and spirit of the council's policies and strategies on biodiversity and should ensure public access to areas of biodiversity on the sites.**

Future Ambitions

- 34. Consider how future plans for the city can work towards ambitious street greening with as many residential streets as possible containing green spaces and verges, as well as extensive tree planting and use of planter.** One respondent described to us the work in the German City of Freiberg to become 'Green City', making the most of its forest location. While parking and housing pressure may make this difficult in Portsmouth, the panel views this as a desirable long-term ambition, and recognises there are roads in Portsmouth where this can be pursued - contributing to green corridors in the city.

- 35. Biodiversity enhancement in the open space behind Eastney Beach at Fort Cumberland.** This area has the potential to be combined with the valuable area of shingle foreshore that forms part of the SSSI to maximise biodiversity gains and create a linked habitat of both foreshore and coastal scrubland.

- 36. Plan for the creation of a breeding and roosting island for waterfowl in Portsmouth Harbour.** These are expensive but can be a valuable way of providing habitat for birds in wetland areas and protect them from disturbance and predation.

12 BUDGETARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.

The following table highlights the budgetary and policy implications of the recommendations being presented by the panel:

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
1. A Biodiversity Strategy be developed to cover all areas of the council's operations and the whole city.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Link to existing, including Greening & Health Strategy. New policy.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. New post, funding to be identified.
2. Give a single officer responsibility for coordinating biodiversity programmes across the council in accordance with the biodiversity strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with existing cross-council programmes - Greening & Health, Carbon Management & Climate Change for example. New policy and within the existing policy framework.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. Staff time across council departments.
3. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Liaison Group in the council comprising representative officers with responsibility for biodiversity projects across each of the different departments.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with existing cross-council forums - Virtual Green Team for example. Within existing policy framework	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. Staff time across council departments.
4. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Public Forum to allow representatives from residents groups and third party organisations to meet and discuss ways to contribute to the city's biodiversity strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer. HNBS	Needs to be created. Housing Green & Clean Service promote to the council housing residents via HouseTalk and existing forums.	Will require additional resource

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
5. Develop a Biodiversity Public Communications Strategy to encourage residents to take action on biodiversity at home.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with newly established communications framework for Climate Action and Greening.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise.
6. Consider the feasibility of establishing a central biodiversity database to register, monitor and assess biodiversity in the city.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Existing Green Asset Register	Potential resource implications if existing databases were to expand.
7. The subdivision of plots can continue where appropriate but should not be relied on as the sole strategy to create new allotments. Due to the health, community and social benefits, the council identify new sites where possible.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Capital funding will be required to establish additional allotment sites
8. Develop an online Allotment Education portal for new plot holders to provide information to allotment holders on biodiversity enhancement on allotments, the use of pesticide alternative and on re-wilding part of their plot.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework.	Staff time.
9. Pesticide use be banned on council allotments.	CL&RS	New policy.	Staff time to administer, additional staff resource required to undertake alternative maintenance practices where pesticides are currently used.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
10. Work with Colas to create a clear plan to update the city maintenance contract in relation to the care of verges, trees, bushes and other green areas so that opportunities can be found to both enhance biodiversity and make savings.	Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme	Additional expertise would be required to provide biodiversity input.
11. Continue to involve the public, schools, tenants, outside organisations and businesses in promoting biodiversity in the city and also to explore the possibility for suitable partnerships as appropriate.	Across council (inc. CL&RS, HNB and Regeneration.	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Single point of contact for community groups across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only. Staff time.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
12. Develop a clear and simple policy approach and a line of contact for residents of council Housing who wish to pursue greening and biodiversity projects in council owned communal areas around their homes.	Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	<p>Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme</p> <p>Single point of contact for community groups across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk</p> <p>Within existing framework Housing Green & Clean Services for council housing tenants.</p>	<p>None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed.</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only.</p>
13. Take a proactive approach to encouraging large private landowners in the city such as the Navy, the NHS and the University to work closely with the city council on how they can make biodiversity enhancements on their land as part of the city strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	<p>Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team</p> <p>Single point of contact for external organisations across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk</p>	<p>None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed.</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only.</p>

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
14. Engage neighbouring authorities in biodiversity planning on a regional level to maximise biodiversity gains across the Solent area.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Emerging policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Defra).	Resources may be required.
15. Phase out the use of pesticides and encourage businesses, residents and organisations to do the same too.	CL+RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Within existing policy framework	Additional funding required where alternative maintenance practices are more costly, less effective (and require repeat treatment) and/or more time consuming.
16. Pursue and encourage more on street greening as this is one of the best actions to take to enhance urban biodiversity.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
17.Ensure that greening goes beyond tree coverage and includes shrubbery, hedgerows wildflowers etc. as these diverse forms of planting have considerable impact on reducing carbon emissions and supporting biodiversity.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Green Asset Register captures planting data with a view to measure impact and carbon sequestration. Within existing policy framework	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed term only. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
18.Planting should prioritise native wildflowers, shrubs and trees in its parks, open spaces and any greening or biodiversity projects as this will help better support local ecosystems.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Within existing policy framework	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
19. When tree planting the council should have regard to native species, biodiversity and funding the lifetime maintenance of the tree, as well as resident concerns over street placement.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Within existing policy framework	Resource implications likely with regard lifetime maintenance for specific PCC services. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants
20. When planting new street trees, soil or the most appropriate permeable surface should be used at the base rather than tarmac, with wildflowers planted.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
21. Tarmac bases around trees should be removed from around tree pits and if replaced, replaced with a tree-friendly surface or let it go fallow.	Green & healthy street coordinator.	Greening strategy	Additional resources would need to be identified.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
22. Consideration should be given to signing up to the National Tree Charter.	CL&RS,	Greening Strategy Application made to become Tree City of the Work through the Arbor Day foundation. Signing up to National Tree Charter on Green & Healthy City work programme Within existing policy framework	Staff time.
23. Establish a plan for hedge planting and restoration around the city - working in partnership with schools and community groups where appropriate.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Additional capital and revenue funding will be required (to offset hedge removals accepted as budget savings).
24. Continued support should be given to the excellent work of frontline officers using their expertise to identify and trial biodiversity projects.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Staff time. Projects funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
25. Consider raising the budgets of the City Ranger and the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer and offering volunteer recruitment support and publicity if required.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Additional capital and revenue funding will be required (to offset hedge removals accepted as budget savings)

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
26. Consider the establishment of a support programme for residents groups wishing to set up community gardens and other gardening schemes e.g. Charles Dickens Community Orchard and Green Wymering.	HNB Biodiversity Strategy Officer	Housing Green & Clean Services - building on the work of the Community Gardening role. Greening Strategy. Green & Health City work programme. Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team. Within existing policy framework.	Potentially requires additional resource if community gardens expand.
27. The renewed Greening Strategy planned for later this year should include express consideration of how greening projects should embed biodiversity enhancement as a key objective of all new schemes.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Greening Strategy	Additional biodiversity expertise will be required to provide appropriate input.
28. The planning service should maximise ability of the new Local Plan to require biodiversity gains in new developments in line with the new Environment Act.	Regeneration Directorate: Planning Services.	Biodiversity Net Gain is already included in current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan.	No additional resource implications

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
29. Include a policy in the new local plan to require developers to include flexible growing spaces in communal areas of land from residents of flats and apartments.	Regeneration Directorate: Planning Services	Allotments, as part of Green Infrastructure provision are already encouraged in the current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan any required increase in this type of open space would be a revision to the current draft	If an increase in open space is required this will require additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs.
30. Consideration should be given to a significant reduction in housing proposed for the Tipner West site with no housing sited on the southern shore and bay area and the grassland areas of the site.	Regeneration Directorate	The future development options for the Tipner West site will be set within the emerging Local Plan. Large areas of undeveloped or grass land are not included within current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan, current 2012 Development Plan, or 2013 City Deal	If areas of Tipner West are excluded from housing delivery this will require further additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs
31. Consider establishing a new wildlife reserve on Tipner West peninsula for the benefit and education of city residents, and the protection of wildlife in the city.	Regeneration Directorate	The future development options for the Tipner West site will be set within the emerging Local Plan. A wildlife reserve is not included within current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan, current 2012 Development Plan, or 2013 City Deal	If further areas of Tipner West are excluded from housing delivery this will require further additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
32.A biodiversity strategy be developed for Horsea Country Park (Nature Reserve) to fit in with the citywide strategy and this be disseminated to all Councillors.	HNB, CL&RS, Regeneration	Within existing framework - Waste Management & Parks Services.	None
33.Council-owned sites in Portsmouth and Hampshire which have been procured for commercial purpose i.e. Lakeside North Harbour must still comply with both the letter and spirit of the council's policies and strategies on biodiversity and should ensure public access to areas of biodiversity on the sites.	Regeneration Directorate: Property Services	All assets of the Council are managed in accordance with its adopted policies and strategies. Any changes to applicable strategies would be dependent and consequent on whatever biodiversity strategy that may arise from recommendation 1.	Any change in public access or land use within this commercial asset will likely have significant impact on the income that can be generated from it and the potential for the site to provide new development. Public access needs to be restricted to protect the commercial operations of the assets. Where public access will have a negative affect on the commercial operation of the site access will be restricted. Increasing and managing public access would most likely increase operational costs.
34.Consider how future plans for the city can work towards ambitious street greening with as many residential streets as possible containing green spaces and verges, as well	Green & Healthy Streets Coordinator	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme via Virtual Green Team	None

as extensive tree planting and use of planter.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.		
35. Biodiversity enhancement in the open space behind Eastney Beach at Fort Cumberland.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Enhancements funded through new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants
36. Plan for the creation of a breeding and roosting island for waterfowl in Portsmouth Harbour.		The waters below the mean high water level in Portsmouth Harbour are not in the control, either by ownership or regulatory oversight, of Portsmouth City Council. Development within these areas cannot therefore be included in any policy framework.	Additional resources, in officer time for partnership working, as well as any proposed capital projects and revenue implications would be required.

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Received.
<u>16 November 2021</u>	Vincent Mount, Landscape Architect	<p>Scoping document.</p> <p>Links to a range of policy documents.</p> <p>Written submissions from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Cal Corkery • Councillor Robert New • Councillor Terry Norton • Councillor Hannah Hockaday
<u>30 November</u>	<p>Trevor Mose, Head of Property & Capital Development, Portsmouth Hospitals' University NHS Trust.</p> <p>Goff Gleadle, Chair of the Cosham Allotment Association.</p>	
<u>14 December</u>	<p>Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation.</p> <p>Doug Gray, Grounds Maintenance Manager.</p> <p>Ashley Humphrey, Allotments Manager.</p>	<p>Views from Mathilde Chanvin, Portsmouth resident.</p> <p>A list of the council's urban meadow areas (attached to this report as appendix three).</p>
<u>11 January</u>	<p>Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness.</p> <p>Ian McCormack, Energy & Environment Manager, University of Portsmouth</p> <p>Zoe White, Green and Healthy Streets Co-ordinator</p> <p>Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</p>	<p>The council's Greening Strategy and subsequent update that was considered at Cabinet on 5 October 2021.</p> <p>Allotment Dirty Plot Letter.</p> <p>Portsmouth Allotments & Leisure Gardens Rules.</p> <p>Allotment notice to quit template.</p> <p>North Harbour Allotment Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Long Meadow Allotments' Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Cotswold House Residents' Association views.</p>

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Received.
18 January	<p>Site visits:</p> <p>Portsdown Hill with Richard Jones Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer</p> <p>Farlington Marshes with Chris Lycett, Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Officer</p> <p>Eastney Beach with Pete Roberts Hilsea Lines Ranger.</p> <p>Milton Common with Peter Roberts, Hilsea Lines Ranger.</p> <p>Tipner with Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager and Owen Peat, Associate, Ecology, WSP.</p>	
<u>25 January</u>	<p>Rachel Hudson Portsmouth Friends of the Earth.</p> <p>Andy Ames, Wilder Communities Project Officer, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust</p> <p>Dr Hannah Rumble, Portsmouth Climate Action Board</p> <p>Steve White, Operations Manager, Colas</p> <p>Simon Pearce, Arboriculture Officer.</p>	<p>Information regarding the planning regulations from the Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth.</p> <p>Eastney & Milton Allotment Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Views from Jane Shepherd, resident.</p> <p>Plus attached to the 25 January 2022 minutes as appendices (circulated on the day) views from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portsmouth Friends of the Earth • Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (Nature Emergency Motion) • Portsmouth Climate Action Board
1 February	<p>Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery.</p> <p>Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration</p> <p>Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager</p> <p>Richard Jones, Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer</p> <p>Chris Lycett, Reserves Officers, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.</p>	<p>Portsdown Hill - biodiversity.</p> <p>Portsdown Hill Management Plan non SSS8 2022- 2026.</p> <p>Portsdown Hill SSSI Plan 2021- 2025.</p> <p>Milton Common Management Plan</p> <p>Milton Common Restoration & Management Framework</p> <p>Eastney Beach & Milton Common Information</p> <p>Information regarding support for schools</p> <p>The Australia Blocks residents'</p>

	<p>Pete Roberts, Ranger Simon Bateman, Lakeside Asset Manager</p> <p>Guy Mason, Coastal, Highways and Drainage Team Manager</p> <p>Lyll Cairns, Head of Coastal Partnership</p> <p>Andy Ames, Wilder Communities Project Officer, Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.</p>	<p>associations - completed questionnaire</p> <p>Plus attached to the minutes, the following additional information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood defences. • Bee posts - maintenance, food sources, nesting habitat, the benefits of pollinators and the Nest Pollinator Strategy.
<p>22 March</p>	<p>Report signed off by the panel.</p>	<p>Views from T Jones, resident</p> <p>Views submitted by the Portsmouth Tree Wardens & the Charles Dickens Community Orchard.</p> <p>Views submitted by the Tree Council.</p> <p>Information regarding driveways from the Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth.</p> <p>The Greening Strategy - Future Review & Delivery report that was considered at the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery's meeting on 9 February 2022.</p> <p>Questionnaire from Horsea Lane Allotments Association.</p>

GLOSSARY

Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services	HNBS
Special Protection Area	SPA
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust	The Wildlife Trust
Allotments Association	AA
Dirty Plot Notices	DPN
Portsmouth Climate Action Board	PCAN
Portsmouth Tree Wardens	PTW
Charles Dickens Community Orchard	CDCO
Portsmouth Friends of the Earth	PFOE
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust	The Trust
Lakeside North Harbour	LNH
Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services directorate.	CL&RS

APPENDIX THREE

List of the council's urban meadow areas.

Site	Pockets	Total areas
College Pk - NE corner circle bds	2	28
Althorpe Drive - grassed areas crossing point - 4 sections	4	114
Copnor Bridge Shrub Bed 2 beds south side of the bridge	2	91
Prison Corner	1	22
Tamworth Park + 20sqm memorial planting	3	46
Hempstead Green	8	299
Portsmouth Road, Cosham	2	150
Bransbury Park 20m2 memorial planting	3	20
Zetland Field - Zetland/ Fitzherbert Rd mound	1	20
Bransbury Grds	2	110
Clarendon Gardens, Southsea	3	75
Western Prd	4	189
Pembroke Triangle - vandalised memorial	1	3
Pier Rd RAB planters	7	5
Rock Garden Frontage	5	123
Southsea Castle - Moat (Create wildflower area to left of bridge in moat).	1	60
Ladies Mile - western strip length of wall (3 colour mix cosmos with height)	1	97.5
Canoe Lake 'dig for victory' bed area 2019	1	36
St James Green	1	395
Kingston Recreation Ground - Play area (perennials)	3	0
Lake Road, Buckland	4	288
Mills Road, Stamshaw	2	108
Milton Pk (within West contract)	2	175
Queen Street, Portsea	1	245
2,399.5m		

Responses to the questionnaires sent to Chairs of Allotment Associations.

In your experience what proportion of allotment holder members of your association:

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Add compost to soil (helping to increase earthworm activity and improve soil life)	Most	Most	Most
Rotate vegetable crops (to maintain nutrient balance)	Most	Most	Most
Grow a range of fruit, vegetables and herbs (to offer nectar to bees/ other insects throughout the seasons)	Most	Most	Some
Have fruit/ orchard trees on their allotment (to offer nectar to bees/ other pollinators)	Some	Most	Some
Grow companion plants (to reduce disease and increase pollination)	Some	Some	Some
Include a pond/ pond in a pot to provide shallow water (for wildlife)	Some	Some	Some

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Provide food and shelter for wildlife in autumn (e.g. leaves raked into netted container)	Some	Most	Some
Avoid the use of chemicals and pesticides	Most	Some	Some
Provide nesting boxes/ insect hotels/ bee blocks/ bird feeders	Some	Most	Some
Avoid the use of peat-based compost	Some	Most	Some
Have a log pile or bug houses (to provide a home to insects/wildlife)	Some	Most	Some
Include a maintained wild area within their allotment for wildflowers and/ or wild grasses?	Some	Most	Some

In Communal Areas.

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Use fences as frames for climbers/ ivy (to create wildlife havens)?	No	Yes	Yes

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Grow hedges around the perimeter of the site?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cut grass only when it is 5cm+ long (leaving it for more than 2 weeks in summer)?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have a maintained wild area?	No	No	No
Have a log pile?	Yes	No	Yes
Provide nesting boxes / hedgehog houses?	No	Yes	No

Thinking about your association and its allotment holder members.

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Is your Association in favour of areas of rewilding on individual plots?	No	No	No
Do you feel that there is a problem with dirty plots?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you think it would be helpful for your members to receive more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity on their allotment?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Would you like help/ advice/ training on identifying biodiversity opportunities?	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Are there any projects you have in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of your site?	No	Yes	No

Notes taken during the visit to countryside sites by the panel on 18 January 2022 by Councillor Judith Smyth.

In attendance Cllr. Lee Mason, Cllr. Matt Atkins, Cllr. Hannah Hockaday, Cllr. Judith Smyth, Cllr. Leo Madden (until lunch time)

1. **Portsdown Hill** – 500 ha of which 110 ha is managed as PCC open space. Richard Jones who manages the team at Portsdown hill, took us to see three specific environments and explained the opportunities and challenges of the site. It is a SSSI and one of very few chalk grasslands left in the UK. 60 notable plants including orchids and gentians. Birds and slow worms. Infestation by scrub, holm oak, cotoneaster is removed. Annual grazing by horses or cattle helpful. Regular grass cutting and fertilisation of the soil is being reduced (e.g. top field). Neighbouring landowners could do more to improve their chalk grassland but do not affect the site adversely. Site popular with dog walkers and families. Mostly keeping to the paths. Occasional challenges of fly tipping.
2. **Farlington Marshes** - 120ha. Chris Lycett manager employed by the RSPB met us and took us for a walk to the lake and told us about the site. Purpose of the SSSI is to maintain role as the biggest overwintering and transit site for water and wading birds. Grazing marshes have to be 'farmed' to keep them open. No 'wilding'. Flat grassland preferred by Brent geese, curlew etc. Cattle grazing in summer months. Keeping scrub at bay. Mammals discouraged as they eat eggs. Ravens eat chicks. Huge drop in Lapwing and Curlew – being built up again.
3. **Milton common**. Peter Roberts manager of countryside services (22 sites) took us for a short walk explaining that Milton common was the city tip and still characterised by lumps and bumps from cars, machines and concrete not far below the surface. Public encouraged to keep to pathways. Contrasting grass cutting regimes clearly showed the different approaches of the parks team and countryside teams. A variety of wildlife and sea birds, species rich. New sea defences being constructed along the coast. New paths created to discourage so many people to use the coastal path where they disturb wildlife. Have to control spread of bramble scrub, not enough depth of soil to grow good trees, methane fires from time to time.
4. **Eastney beach** - Peter Roberts explained the importance of this place. Very wide shingle bank (hence delay in need to build sea defences). There is a slow increase of vegetation among the shingle especially towards the west. Protected sea kale, sea holly, red valerian. Not much work to do apart from annual removal of holm oak seedlings, brambles and invasive species growing just below the sea wall by the road where rubbish can accumulate. Fort Cumberland area is an important remnant of coastal heathland and will need some protection when and if redevelopment of the fort is started. This is a fragile environment and could be destroyed by over

intensive use for example it is not a suitable place to locate a marine activity centre and any major extensions to the caravan park should be resisted.

5. **Tipner firing range-** Megan Carter and her colleague (ecologist from WS Atkins) met us and took us for a walk round to the eastern point. Not yet officially part of the coast path but used by dog walkers etc. The intertidal creek just south of the peninsula is very special ecologically with several layers of different organisms and needs to be protected and preserved. The intertidal area varies considerably around the site. We talked about the possible extent of housing and the development of a green marine industrial estate using deep water accessible to the north of the peninsula. Megan explained the investigations that had been done into the feasibility of building a new intertidal island in the north of Portsmouth harbour to replace the environment that would have been lost if the extended Lennox point scheme were to be built. It was acknowledged that some wildlife – hares and foxes would be lost if there were houses built on the firing range.

Comments received from Councillors, members of the public and organisations.Hilsea

Councillor Robert New informed the panel that the Hilsea Lines and north Portsea sea defences are home to some of the city's finest bio-diversity and habitats from the tall trees of foxes forest to the rushes and coastal habitats.

Copnor

He added that Copnor is home to unique soft marsh-like settings and hidden lakes, providing further large green spaces. College Park contains many bee-friendly plantings and is a much-loved green space on the east side of the city, along with other large green spaces in nearby Baffins.

The new linear park that Penny Mordaunt MP secured funding for will be the biggest linear park of its kind and will further enhance, protect and connect our communities with the natural world. The opportunities to enhance our biodiversity with this project has huge potential, scope and scale. If Portsmouth City Council gets it right. It is my hope that they will consult with all members throughout the project life: from the current proposals to boots on the ground.

Cosham

Councillor Hannah Brent sent in her views before she joined the panel, to state that Cosham has an abundance of nature for residents to enjoy such as forest walks close by at Foxes forest / Hilsea Lines, a variety of stunning habitats at Farlington Marshes, and local parks providing not only green space for exercisers, dog walkers and children.

The ponds beneath the chalk cliffs are a rare home for protected newts. A great environment around Lakeside with the marshier environment encouraging more life.

Green areas have been enhanced in Cosham and around the city with the planting of wildflowers, and cherry trees in Cosham Park which help the pollinators and bees that humanity wouldn't survive without. These aspects are not only important for nature to thrive but for people to appreciate in the surrounding area of their homes. They also provide a vital soak away to reduce the prevalence of flooding and any loss of the green environment that is so vital impacts that and creates further risk of flooding of homes.

Drayton & Farlington

Councillor Terry Norton explained that biodiversity is one of the most precious and important things we have. In Portsmouth we tend to think of it as something that's just nice to look at, and enjoy spending time in, but it's so much more. Nature means a lot to the residents of Drayton and Farlington (the greenest ward in the city with 1.8 trees per resident) for us it provides more than scenery. Our community value the natural ecosystems around us and encourage the development of Biodiverse practices. One area of interest for the ward is bees who are vital to bio diversity. There are 130,000 plants for

example for which bees are essential to pollination. We therefore support the inclusion of wildflower meadows within our community. A resident recently stated "Bees are more important than poultry in terms of human nutrition" an interesting point."

Portsmouth Hill

Councillor Hannah Brent noted that the view of Portsmouth Hill whilst great hides a far more important gem. The unique conditions are why much of it is SSSI, with the mixed habitat providing a home for many lifeforms. It highlights how bio-diverse our wonderful city is, the carefully managed environment and mix of uses ensure a wide range of environments and therefore species. If it was all left to turn to gorse or forest this unique environment that has developed since humans first inhabited the land would be lost.

Views from T Jones, resident

I would just like to say that I think it is important to increase communication with people about the importance of trees whether these are in a back garden or in a park or on the streets. I see so many being cut down in peoples gardens, maybe because people think they have a negative impact on buildings or walls, but this may not be the case, if people knew how important trees are then maybe they would be willing to live with them more rather than cut them down.

We really need to look after and protect the trees we already have for so many reasons, including biodiversity. And its important to plant new ones and have really good after care so they survive.

Also, I see that alongside the railway lines the greenery is being cut down....and wondered why this is? This area is so important for wildlife. Is there some way the council can work with the railways to protect these habitats?

And I wanted to say I believe all spraying of pesticides should stop, I have heard that the council sprays the paths and areas of the allotments, which I believe should stop.

Information submitted by Jon Stokes, Director of Trees, Science & Research, Tree Council.

At the request of the Portsmouth Tree Wardens, I am sending you some information about how The Tree Council regards the fruit tree planting that is happening in Portsmouth.

Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the UK. It also has a relatively low number of trees per resident, something that the Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens have been trying to improve over the last 20 years. The project that has been developed by the Tree Wardens and The Charles Dickens Community Orchards, is to my knowledge one of the most exciting community orchard projects in the UK, because of its aspiration to bring suitable fruit trees to residents throughout the city, which builds on the rich heritage of the city and its connections through Dickens to fruit trees.

The scale of the communities efforts are amazing – with now 60 orchards being designated and planted and over 899 fruit trees having been planted throughout the City over the last 5 years.

Speaking as part of the National Orchard Group, we know orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. The reason they are special is that fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are "early senescent". This means they get 'old' relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs. These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle. It's not all about the decay either though, as fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Orchards can have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles. And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight which makes them particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

The orchards being created in Portsmouth also allows for community engagement with a huge range of people and communities, providing not only trees for biodiversity and climate change (both of which are vital), but also developing a source of free and community-based fruit available to anyone in the city. The natural bounty that is being created, has already been used to provide free food and fruit to foodbanks like Landport Larder, North End Pantry and community cafés.

I hope this information is useful in helping you to develop your biodiversity and other strategies over the next few years, and on behalf of The Tree Council I would like to express our enthusiasm for the work that is being carried out in the city to bring people, wildlife and trees together through the exemplary use of orchards. Long may it continue and we will continue to support wherever we can.

Views from the Tree Wardens for Portsmouth & Southsea and the Charles Dickens Community Orchards.

Our groups and volunteers have been planting orchards and other trees in many different areas around the city. We have noticed a lack of wildlife corridors in some areas particularly in the North End area where it is densely populated. Some areas lack the easily accessible local park or small green areas others have. This leads to a lack of wildlife corridors. Maybe some thought could be given to finding some disused land or brownfield site in North End that could be changed into a local amenity. With wildlife at the heart of it.

On occasions we have seen the removal of large shrubs which provide a habitat to the local birds and wild animals that enables them to thrive and shelter in cold weather.

Planting fruit trees provides humans and animals alike with food and foraging opportunities, harvesting events and bringing the community together to learn about and celebrate nature. As we have seen in the Charles Dickens Centre

orchards and Ark Dickens fruiting hedge. They give free fruit for local people will help those with a diminishing amount of finances to lead a healthier lifestyle. Where they can pick what they need from local trees. Communities will then invest themselves in looking after their local trees. they can see what they will get out of it. Excess produce has been given out to the food banks and larders to help those most in need and provides an amazing source of support, which has been very appreciated.

Perhaps people could be encouraged to plant trees in their gardens to feed birds and help our pollinators. Maybe people could be encouraged to have green space on roofs to help wildlife.

Rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution through removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators.

Different types of habitats could be explored by introducing to some areas boggy areas or ponds creating a different habitat. Perennial wildflowers suitable to the types of soil in our urban areas could be introduced. This would reduce mowing, energy costs and labour needed and create a more pleasant environment for local people. More wildflowers on verges please.

Fruiting hedges should be allowed to grow 50cm per year until about 5' wide and allow the fruits to be harvested by animals and people. Not cut back harshly each year by the flail machine. There is a fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens which has been growing for 12 years. It is not treated as a fruiting hedge by Colas, it is harshly cut back and is never allowed to fruit. It's just treated as a normal hedge.

Resident initiatives should be given priority and supported to encourage ownership of their local environment and community trees.

It would be good to stop tarmacking tree pits. During the last few years, we obtained permission to plant trees in tree pits and planted them. Shortly afterwards someone removed them and retarmacked. There needs to be greater communication between teams that carryout maintenance. The Charles Dickens community orchards have suffered some losses due to information not being passed from one team to another. When it should be recorded as part of the history of the area and subsequently passed on to the new team taking over. Whether it be a new contractor or otherwise.

Strimming around tree trunks should be carefully avoided, more damage is done by labourers doing this than anything else and this can set back trees many years. Greater care needs to be taken over strimming.

More native and heritage trees need to be planted in Portsmouth.

A tree nursery to grow our own native trees in Portsmouth is needed. Propagating from our rare varieties.

We need to increase the tree canopy in Portsmouth we can do this by celebrating the Queen's platinum anniversary. More wildflowers on verges to encourage butterflies and birds.

The reduction of pesticides in the city would be good and perhaps use some other chemicals that biodegrade quickly such as industrial vinegar and bicarbonate of soda. Which is far less harmful to the environment.

Great care should be taken in coming years to provide mulch for every tree planted so they can retain moisture and cope with the drier weather we are due because of climate change.

A large pot of money needs to be put aside for future maintenance of all trees in Portsmouth. We need more tree canopy cover for future generations to survive in the coming years.

The National Tree Charter has become the Charter for Trees after 800 years. The Tree Wardens and the Charles Dickens Community Orchards have signed up to this agreement. It would be good if Portsmouth City Council did this as well, declaring how the council means to go on. The Local Portsmouth Tree Charter will need to include the Tree Wardens more in what is done and how communities of interest are kept informed of things like tree removals and tree preservation orders for our very rare trees.

Gardening competitions could be reintroduced into Housing services and across the city. Which helps people to take pride in where they live, improve the environment and keep people interested in wildlife.

Ownership of small micro plots by community groups to grow things in areas that are grassed currently would be a great idea. Removing some of the tarmac in urban areas will break up the landscape and allow the rain to soak away more readily, reducing flooding risk and urban run off. Trees soak up water and pollution.

Biodiverse areas may look unmanaged because they are not trimmed and cut back as much as those neatly kept gardens some folks are used to. Perhaps some local guidance with the aid of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust and friends of the Earth could be made available to help with this.

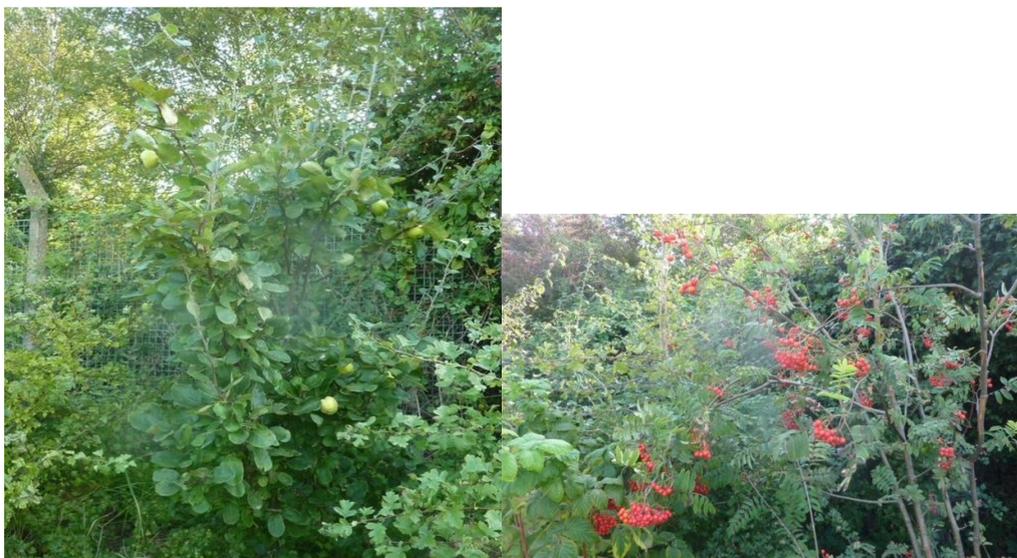
The city should make more of valuing the trees and their contributions to the environment. Giving a listing and protection for the very rare varieties like the Black poplar we have in our city (there are only 7,000 in the country). The city could introduce trees which have add biodiversity and supply food for wildlife to the city. Such as Oak trees which support a large variety of wildlife. Also by having a variety fruiting trees or hedges. We also now have some very rare fruit trees incorporated in our orchard planting such as the Bardsey apple. Larger trees should be valued more and have more protection such as (Tree protection orders) as they work harder for the environment. There could be designated community trees, orchards and fruiting hedges under these protection orders.

More could be made of the horticultural opportunities for careers in the city. Our very own National Tree Council Director of Science and Research, advisor to DEFRA lives locally. More could be specifically offered through horticultural and national training with a career path into different areas.

The new Environment Bill November 2021 comes into effect shortly, so this will mean more people having to train in these areas so that Portsmouth city council will meet its legal obligations.

Above all we need to offer opportunities and incentives for residents in both private and rented accommodation to grow more trees at home. Perhaps free trees, resources and training working with the support of schools to help inform young people of the benefits to them in the future. Problems faced by residents and community groups are funding for trees, compost, mulch and moving large items from a delivery area to the site.

I have included some pictures of the fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens. The pictures below demonstrate the damage done by the flailing machine to the fruiting hedge.





Views from Jane Shepherd, resident.

There are green spaces and places for trees that are going unidentified. The Council has an open invitation for residents to suggest places for trees but they don't seem to have planted many and it's going at a snail's pace. For many of us it's easy to forget that we can suggest spots for trees or wilding, life gets in the way and there's no quick mechanism to feedback. My idea would be to have volunteer biodiversity scouts in each ward who can look out for opportunities and feedback to the council. They could have some basic training or info sheets, and do an audit of their patch.

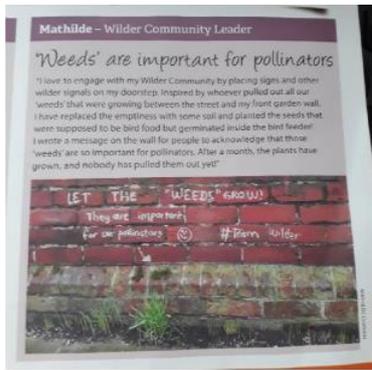
Views from Mathilde Chanvin, Portsmouth

Please find my personal views about the current policies around greening in Portsmouth for the meeting held on Tuesday 14th December 2021.

I am a resident of Portsmouth since 2012 and I call this place Home. As a nature lover and an active member of various local environmental groups (Portsmouth and Southsea Wildlife Watch, Zero Waste Portsmouth, Wilder Portsmouth, and rewilding Brambles school and nursery), I have witnessed an increase / took part in amazing local actions and initiatives to improve/create green spaces and enhance biodiversity protection across the city. These initiatives, combined with the progress made by the City Council on various occasions (beautiful wildflower beds in Milton or Bransbury parks, new trees planted across the City) are to be celebrated.

There is an improvement, but I personally believe that more can be done, and especially with companies working with PCC about managing our green spaces. We are in desperate need of more green spaces in Portsmouth. We need more verges, grass, wildflower, and green corridors for bees and butterflies and other wildlife to thrive. Any action counts if we want to stop the disastrous effect of climate change on biodiversity.

I would like the panel, and especially Colas, to listen to local communities when they complain about the verges being cut in the parks and our "weeds" being cut and spread right in our front door (it happens every time in front of my house (especially on Earth Day in 2021!) although I have put a sign to leave it! – see pictures below), the grass being mown in cemeteries. I feel really concerned about the weed cutting and whether pesticides are used to get rid of the plants in our streets. Pesticides are harmful to us, wildlife (especially pollinators) and plants and I hope there is a way to stop using it all together.



My front wall with “weed growing” space and sign featured in the Wild Life magazine (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust). – March 2021



My front wall empty of grass and soil due to Colas’s intervention – April 2021. There is nothing more beautiful than a poppy growing and blossoming within the crack of a street pavement. Such a pleasure for our eyes and a fantastic pit stop for a bee. Here are some poppies flowering in Spring time in my street.



Having green bus shelters, more trees and wild planted in the streets, wildflowers beds in streets, each roundabout or across cemeteries, or letting the flowers and “weeds” grow wherever it is possible (street and allotments) would be such an improvement to make our city, my home, a better place to live, breath and walk, and for biodiversity to thrive.

I wish that Colas would just leave the weed growing if people wish to keep them thanks to signs. Local communities, groups, councillors, employers, we all need to be on board to protect the existing and increase biodiversity space across Portsmouth. Let’s work and collaborate together for a Wilder Portsmouth.

Chair of North Harbour Allotment Association.

1. We support Biodiversity in principle and practice with many plots being totally organic and peat free.
2. We have a healthy population of wildlife with a considerable number of birds, we also have resident beehives on the site which belong to the Portsmouth Bee-Keepers Association.
3. There is an abundance of other insect life on the plots and in some cases far too many blackflies and aphids.
4. We do not believe that allotments should be included in Re-wilding as there are more than enough people on the waiting list for them to be used in this manner, and there is plenty of natural re-wilding taking place when plots are not re-let promptly causing other plot holders problems.
5. We welcome the use of wildflower beds and landscaping in appropriate place large green spaces like Port Solent Green where a good number could be introduced without detriment to the overall utility of the space and most beneficially on the "Motorway Hills "to the west of the M275.
6. Consideration to regular grass cutting so that Dog Walkers can effectively clean up behind their dogs.
7. Finally, I wrote a considerable time ago about the restricted access to Port Solent Green Space for Wheelchair users and less able walkers who cannot climb over stiles and the reclamation of the area which was fenced off to enable the MOD Fence to be renewed and as far as I am aware has not been restore to the original boundary.

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