

Title of meeting:	Climate Change and Greening the City portfolio decision meeting
Date of meeting:	6 July 2023
Subject:	Portsmouth Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan
Report by:	Daniel Williams, Public Health Principal (Wider Determinants of Health)
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

To introduce the refreshed Portsmouth Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan, which serves to inform and set the Green & Healthy City work programme from mid-2023 onwards.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The portfolio holder for Climate Change and Greening the City portfolio is asked to approve the Strategy and Delivery Plan.

2.2 It is recognised that the greening agenda is broad, with significant activities being undertaken across Council services and by partner organisations in the city, which contribute to broader environmental aims. The portfolio holder is therefore asked to support presentation of the Strategy and Delivery Plan to Cabinet, where approval will also be sought.

3. Background

3.1 A Greening Portsmouth Strategy was originally considered and adopted by Cabinet in March 2020, and supports other programmes of work in the city, including the Climate Action Plan, Clean Air Zone, Air Quality Strategy, Local Transport Plan 4, emerging Local Plan and the Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3.2 The 2020 strategy had four main aims:

- Greening the public realm

- Greening private space
- Grassroots engagement
- Policy approach - how does the broad policy environment that the council sets support and improve green infrastructure in the city?

3.3 The strategy together with the appointment of a Green and Healthy City Co-ordinator has led to a range of greening initiatives being undertaken in the city since 2020, with both tree canopy cover and grassroots engagement increasing as a result. However, while successful on its own terms, the strategy lacked a wider focus on the increasing impact of the climate crisis on human health and biodiversity.

3.4 In October 2022 Public Health undertook a comprehensive evidence and policy review focussing on urban greening against the backdrop of the climate crisis, with a view to refreshing the Greening Strategy to better understand the best planting strategy for the city in terms of:

- Biodiversity
- Climate mitigation
- Flood mitigation
- Air pollution mitigation
- Other benefits of greening to physical and mental health

3.5 Public Health also formulated an integrated land use plan, producing maps of the city to allow the Council to prioritise greening initiatives according to need (in terms of existing green space against a range of factors) and develop a delivery plan.

3.6 The resulting comprehensive evidence review was drafted as a refreshed Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan (appendices 1 and 2). Legal Services note that this Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan is a strategy that the Council has created of its own volition, rather than through statutory requirement. To that extent, it must be understood that this policy is not a Development Plan in the sense of s.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, i.e. it is not a Development Plan strictly for Local Planning Authority use.

3.7 The Strategy states that for Portsmouth to improve its residents' health and adapt to changes in its climate, there is a requirement for a planned and managed green infrastructure programme. New, inclusive and equitable greenspace must be provided. Existing greenspace must be protected, improved and maintained. Further, if greening is going to achieve maximum impact in Portsmouth, a mix of approaches must be used.

3.8 The Strategy presents a high-level vision for a Greener Portsmouth:

- In conjunction with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 Portsmouth will develop into a climate resilient, healthy, active city.



- We will work to achieve cleaner air and cooler streets with access to green space for health, wellbeing and connecting with nature within easy walking distance of all resident's homes.
- Sustainable drainage systems will aid the city's flood defences and biodiversity will increase with the addition of wildlife corridors and nature areas.
- Active travel will become the easiest option within the city, with safe and clean routes between key sites.
- In achieving these goals, we will seek to reduce the inequalities faced by Portsmouth's residents and increase the standard of living for all.

3.9 The strategy sets out the benefits of green infrastructure according to the best available evidence:

- **Biodiversity** – wildlife corridors, green roofs or walls on buildings or other structures, wildflower meadows can all contribute to biodiversity.
- **Health and wellbeing** – access to green space improves physical and mental health, and this in turn underpins the theory and practice of green social prescribing; recent valuations have estimated that £2.1 billion per year could be saved in NHS health costs if everyone in England had good access to green space.
- **Community and tackling social inequalities** – there is evidence that green infrastructure interventions work to reduce inequalities, with benefits resulting from community activities in accessible green space, food growing, and improvements to the local environment and to the local economy.
- **Flood mitigation** – through interventions such as sustainable drainage systems and community de-paving projects, green infrastructure initiatives can reduce the pressure on sewer systems from surface water.
- **Air quality** – trees, green screens, hedges, and novel designs can all contribute to the redistribution of air pollution away from areas with vulnerable populations such as school playgrounds, health centres, and care homes. To a lesser degree, green infrastructure can also contribute to the removal of pollutants from the air.
- **Cooling** – tree canopy cover and other green infrastructure initiatives such as green walls and roofs can reduce the urban heat island effect.

3.10 Using the best available evidence and national policy drivers, the Strategy lists the following green infrastructure (GI) objectives:

1. **Create:** Install new multi-functional GI, prioritising those areas with the poorest access.
2. **Improve:** Improve and develop existing GI to better suit the needs of the population and wildlife.
3. **Protect:** prevent removal of or damage to existing GI during building works
4. **Maintain:** Ensure areas are well maintained and that plans are in place for effective funding, governance and stewardship of GI to enable long-term sustainability.



5. **Connect:** Improve connectivity of GI within Portsmouth, reducing habitat fragmentation and improving opportunities for active travel.
6. **Access:** Promote and provide healthy, accessible facilities across all social group and areas of the city.
7. **Active:** Increase use of GI by developing activity programmes and green social prescribing.
8. **Evaluate:** Ensure systems are in place for the evaluation of new GI projects so that benefits can be measured and informed decisions can be made in future.

3.11 To introduce the most appropriate type of green infrastructure in the most appropriate places, the Strategy stresses that it is important to understand the city's natural profile and characteristics. Assessments of current green infrastructure have been undertaken to provide mapping which allows for a better understanding of the quantity, quality, character and distribution of green space, including gaps in access across the city. Mapping of permeable and non-permeable surfaces suggests areas of action for flooding, while comparing green infrastructure with air quality mapping helps determine where interventions would be best suited to tackling local hotspots of poor air quality. From a biodiversity perspective, understanding the connectedness of green spaces and the position of any corridors is important in the aim of strengthening ecological networks and reducing habitat fragmentation.

3.12 The Strategy also compares access to quality green space with areas of deprivation, allowing us to target where the biggest benefits to health, wellbeing and community through the introduction of green infrastructure are likely to be achieved. This evidence-based analysis identifies the following as our key priority areas:

- Charles Dickens
- Nelson
- Cosham
- Central Southsea
- Fratton
- South West Copnor

3.13 The Strategy reports on evidence of good practice in initiating urban green space interventions from both the World Health Organisation and Natural England (an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs). This evidence also informs actions in the Delivery Plan section of the document.

3.14 The refreshed Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan builds on the community engagement aim of the 2020 Greening Portsmouth Strategy. Before each planned proposal can move forward, partnership working with a diverse and inclusive set of stakeholders must be established. Stakeholders must be identified and engaged early in the process. Existing partnerships and relationships will be used to advantage, while other potential groups with whom

to engage include those using the green space, organisations who manage or own greenspaces, and those who provide services on green spaces. It is important to share the whole process and motivate partners to implement the resulting policies collectively. Realistic expectations and clear boundaries must be set early in the process.

3.15 Green infrastructure cross-cuts many agendas and responsibilities. It is clear that in order to have the greatest effect, the Greening Strategy must link with other local strategies including the Local Transport Plan, the Air Quality Strategy, the Climate Action Plan, the new Local Plan (for which a Green Infrastructure Background Paper was published in February 2019), the Surface Water Management Plan, and the Health and Wellbeing strategy. Another key document is the Parks and Open Spaces strategy (currently in development). Consultation with both internal and external stakeholders is therefore vital.

3.16 To this end, the refreshed Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan has been circulated to and discussed by members of a new Greening Development Group, constituted as a sub-group of the Climate Programme Board from representatives across the Council to help guide the greening agenda. While a statutory consultation is not required, common law principles would apply to any future consultation the Council undertakes. Legal Services note that consultation should be cognisant of the common law *Gunning* principles, sometimes known as the 'Sedley' principles: First, that consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage. Second, the proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response. Third, adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Finally, the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any statutory proposals.

3.17 The Strategy concludes that green infrastructure is a vital tool for improving health, reducing social inequalities, increasing biodiversity and tackling climate change. It also contributes towards the goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030. There are many types of green infrastructure with different primary aims, but the majority of these can have multiple benefits in ways that other interventions do not.

3.18 Key to all interventions is multidisciplinary collaboration and stakeholder engagement, with community participation vital. Green infrastructure should be a consideration in all Local Plans and strategies moving forwards. Engagement between key stakeholders and sectors should ensure that green space and infrastructure usage can be maximised and beneficial to the city.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 The revised Greening Strategy provides evidence for updating policy around greening the city, while the Delivery Plan aligns with best practice for green infrastructure initiatives.

4.2 The co-benefits of greening projects are substantial, especially for our most vulnerable communities, addressing climate risks by reducing flooding and heat risk and increasing biodiversity; improving mental and physical health by promoting active travel and connecting people with nature; creating social capital; and promoting the economy through job creation. The added value of greening the city initiatives supports the aims of the Council and the City Vision for a green and healthy city with a thriving economy.

5. Integrated impact assessment

The Strategy itself does not require an Integrated Impact Assessment. As stated in the 'Reasons for recommendations' section above, the co-benefits of greening projects are substantial. Specific Integrated Impact Assessments will be undertaken for any significant green infrastructure and planting projects aligned with the Strategy's Delivery Plan.

6. Legal implications

The Legal team's comments have been sought and incorporated into the body of this report in consultation with them. The Cabinet Member has the authority to take the decisions recommended in this report, noting in particular the intention to refer the Strategy to Cabinet for further approval in any event.

7. Director of Finance's comments



The Strategy states that 'Green Infrastructure requires sustainable management and maintenance if it is to maintain its benefits long term. It is vital that funding arrangements are identified as early as possible and that costs of ongoing maintenance are factored into the design and implementation, balancing the costs with the benefits. Local community engagement can assist with management and tailoring provision to local needs.' Funding of £100,000 has been allocated within the Council's capital programme to support Greening the City initiatives, alongside which a number of successful grant applications have brought in additional funding. The Greening Strategy's Delivery Plan provides a framework for how these funds will be utilised to support greening opportunities. The Green and Healthy City Co-ordinator should put in place the necessary governance arrangements to ensure that projects are robustly evaluated and that all funds are appropriately utilised.

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Signed by: Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Appendix 1 - Portsmouth Greening Strategy and Delivery Plan (Word document)	 Portsmouth%20Greening%20Strategy%20
Appendix 2 - Green Infrastructure Evidence and Delivery Plan for Portsmouth (PowerPoint slides)	 Green%20Infrastructure%20Evidence%20

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: