

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

11 JUNE 2009

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Arts, Leisure & Culture – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Womphrey
Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Beaumont
Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cook

DRAFT STOCKTON-ON-TEES GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2009-2021

1. Summary

This report presents a draft Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees. Developed in consultation with a number of partner organisations, the Strategy sets out a vision for the future development and management of the Borough's green infrastructure, highlighting how this will contribute towards a wide range of environmental, social and economic objectives.

The Strategy identifies local priorities for enhancing the Borough's networks of green spaces, river corridors and countryside, while also supporting development of the strategic green infrastructure network identified at the sub-regional scale through the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008).

The final version of the Strategy will be accompanied by an Action Plan, setting out specific projects to be delivered by the Council and its partners. Policies within the Local Development Framework and other strategies and plans will also contribute towards its successful implementation.

2. Recommendations

1. The draft Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy is approved for public consultation.
2. A Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Task Group is established to oversee development and delivery of a Strategy Action Plan, and to input to any future review of the Strategy.
3. Delegation is given to the Chief Executive and Cabinet members for Arts, Leisure & Culture, Environment, and Regeneration & Transport to approve the final version of the Strategy and an associated Action Plan.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To agree the draft strategy, enabling work to commence on the development of a Strategy Action Plan, to be prepared by the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Task Group.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

1. This report presents a draft Green Infrastructure Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees. Developed in consultation with a number of partner organisations, the Strategy sets out a vision for the future development and management of the Borough's green infrastructure, highlighting how this will contribute towards a wide range of environmental, social and economic objectives.
2. The Strategy identifies local priorities for enhancing the Borough's networks of green spaces, river corridors and countryside, while also supporting development of the strategic green infrastructure network identified at the sub-regional scale through the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008).
3. The final version of the Strategy will be accompanied by an Action Plan, setting out specific projects to be delivered by the Council and its partners. Policies within the Local Development Framework and other strategies and plans will also contribute towards its successful implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The draft Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy is approved for public consultation.
2. A Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Task Group is established to oversee development and delivery of a Strategy Action Plan, and to input to any future review of the Strategy.
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DETAIL

1. Green infrastructure is the network of open spaces, countryside, rivers, lakes, ponds and street trees within and between our towns and villages. It includes land and other assets in both public and private ownership. When planned and managed as a network this green infrastructure performs many different functions, and in turn offers a great range of benefits for people, the local economy and the environment.
2. In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the value of planned, well-managed green infrastructure. This is reflected in policies within the North East Regional Spatial

Strategy, which support the establishment of strategic networks of green infrastructure in the region's city regions. The Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008) provides the overarching vision for the development of such a network across the sub-region.

3. The Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy will provide a framework for the planning and management of green infrastructure at the Borough and neighbourhood scale, complimenting the Tees Valley Strategy. The draft Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1**, with the associated plans attached at **Appendices 2 and 3**.
4. The Strategy sets out a vision for a well-developed green infrastructure network covering all parts of the Borough:
 - providing a diverse, rich, locally distinctive, high quality environment;
 - delivering essential 'ecosystem services';
 - promoting enjoyment, health and well-being; and
 - making a significant contribution to the regeneration of Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Tees Valley.
5. It seeks to achieve this vision by focusing on ten key themes, setting out aims and key ambitions for each:
 - Image and green settings for new development
 - Natural systems to combat climate change
 - Local greenspaces for enjoyment, health and well-being
 - Destinations for recreation and tourism
 - Biodiversity, air and water quality
 - Routes for sustainable travel and recreation
 - Landscape and heritage
 - Productive landscapes
 - Promoting understanding and community involvement
 - Skills, training and employment
6. The Strategy proposes a hierarchy of green infrastructure corridors and local 'green grids', forming an integrated network across the whole Borough. This network comprises three tiers:
 - A 'primary' green infrastructure network: a series of corridors identified through the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008) and of significance up to the sub-regional scale.
 - A 'secondary' green infrastructure network: corridors identified as part of this Strategy and of significance up to the Borough scale.
 - Urban and rural 'green grids': local green networks of particular significance at the neighbourhood scale.
7. Priorities for each corridor and for the urban and rural green grids are identified, which will inform the development of rolling three-year Action Plan. This will incorporate on-going initiatives such as the Borough Council's Park Regeneration and Spaces for Play Programmes. Policies within the Local Development Framework and other strategies and plans will also contribute towards the successful implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.
8. The Strategy Action Plan will also be informed by recent and future community consultation work and research. For example, this includes:
 - A community consultation on local greenspaces (April to June 2009) and associated 'GreenStat' surveys.
 - The Borough-wide Recreation and Leisure Survey, completed in March 2008.
 - Viewpoint Surveys and the Stockton-on-Tees Residents Survey.

- An assessment of open space provision recently undertaken to inform development of the Borough's Open Space, Recreation and Landscaping Supplementary Planning Document.
 - A review of the Borough's Local Wildlife Sites, completed in 2009.
 - A new Landscape Character Assessment.
9. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with a number of partner organisations, and given that the delivery of the Strategy will also be based on a partnership approach it is proposed that a Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Task Group be established. This group would oversee development the Action Plan, coordinate its delivery, and input to any future review of the Strategy. Membership of this group might include:
- Environment Agency
 - Natural England
 - Forestry Commission
 - Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA)
 - Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
 - Groundwork North East
 - Representatives from Stockton Renaissance
 - Stockton Borough Council officers
10. Progress reports on delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan would be provided to the Environment Partnership and the other thematic and area partnership boards under Stockton Renaissance, and to Cabinet as appropriate.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. Projects for delivery under the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy have yet to be finalised. The proposed Action Plan will set out a wide range of projects, identifying lead delivery partners and potential sources of funding. Stockton Council is likely to be able to support delivery of the Strategy through some of its planned projects and programmes. External funding and/or Stockton Council funding may be sought for other projects in the future.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no legal implications at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. The development and delivery of this Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

14. The Strategy will contribute towards delivery of all the key themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2021):

Economic Regeneration and Transport, e.g.

- Stimulating inward investment by creating attractive environments and improving image
- Nature and activity-based tourism
- Sustainable transport networks
- Encouraging better use of the River Tees

Environment and Housing, e.g.

- Creating better parks and open spaces

- Tackling climate change
- Improving design quality
- Conserving our natural resources including biodiversity

Community Safety, e.g.

- Reducing crime and the fear of crime through well-designed and well-used greenspaces

Children and Young People, e.g.

- Involving children and young people in shaping their environment
- Providing safe and stimulating spaces to play

Healthier Communities and Adults, e.g.

- Promoting healthy lifestyles, including walking, cycling and active recreation

Stronger Communities, e.g.

- Providing opportunities for community involvement in the management and development of greenspaces, increasing pride in the local area.

Older Adults. e.g.

- Providing leisure and recreational opportunities

Arts, Leisure and Culture, e.g.

- Conserving and celebrating local heritage
- Providing settings for cultural events and sport

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15. An Equality Impact Assessment is being carried out on the draft Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. This Strategy has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. Presentations on the proposed Strategy were given to the various thematic and area partnership boards within Stockton Renaissance. Numerous partners have contributed to the Strategy including the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), Natural England, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, the Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA) and representatives of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Steering Group.
17. This draft version will be subject to a period of public consultation, with Ward Councillors, Renaissance Partnership Boards and Town/Parish Councils invited comment as part of that process.

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Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not applicable

Property

Not applicable