

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	09 November 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2320
TITLE:	West of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework	
WARD:	All	

AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

List of attachments to this report:

West Of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework:

<http://www.westofengland.org/media/216918/gi%20framework%20020611.pdf>

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 Like all forms of infrastructure, green infrastructure must be properly planned and coordinated if it is to function efficiently and deliver optimal benefits to society. This should be supported at a range of levels, including local, strategic and national.
- 1.2 The Council has been working collaboratively with West of England Partners, including The Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission to prepare a Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework to recognise cross boundary linkages and enable delivery of a coherent green Infrastructure network at the strategic level.
- 1.3 The Council is now seeking to approve the Framework document as an evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework and the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Bath & NE Somerset area.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet agrees that: The West of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework is approved as an evidence base that will inform the Councils Local Development Framework and in particular the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for the B&NES area.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Approval of the WEP GI Framework does not commit the council to any additional expenditure in the short term. Any future implications relating to developer contributions through S106 or the new Community Infrastructure Levy regulations will be developed as part of the emerging Bath & NE Somerset GI Strategy and you will be advised of these at that time.
- 3.2 The framework will be used to influence existing infrastructure delivery agents and partners to seek more sustainable solutions that will deliver green infrastructure outcomes, alongside existing agendas, thereby maximising the outcomes for the community, wildlife and the local economy.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Building communities where people feel safe and secure*
- *Sustainable growth*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*
- *Improving transport and the public realm*

5 THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 Green infrastructure is a planned network of green (and blue) spaces and corridors within, around and between towns and cities, which can be designed, maintained, and improved to meet the needs of local communities, wildlife and the environment.
- 5.2 Green infrastructure assets may be publicly or privately owned, may be with or without public access, and may be in urban and rural locations.
- 5.3 A network of green infrastructure offers multiple benefits, which are essential to the sustainable growth of communities and the economy. These include:
- Promoting economic growth, employment and skills improvement;
 - Supporting resilient ecosystems and biodiversity;
 - Mitigating and adapting the natural and built environment to climate change;
 - Recognising and enhancing a legible network of physical green spaces and corridors;
 - Reducing and managing flood risk;
 - Improving mental and physical health, and the cohesion of local communities;
 - Increasing sustainable food production;
 - Maintaining and enhancing cultural heritage, landscapes and natural resources.
- 5.4 The Coalition Government, which has committed to being the “greenest Government ever”, clearly recognises that economic prosperity and our natural environment are mutually interdependent. The natural environment across England has broader national value, underpinning our economic prosperity, health and ability to adapt to climate change. An understanding of the value of our natural resources must therefore be considered in decision making at all levels. This has recently been reconfirmed within the Natural Environment White Paper, which states:

“Around the country local partnerships are seeking to use green infrastructure to drive economic growth and regeneration and improve public health, wellbeing and quality of life. It can also support biodiversity and the functioning of natural systems such as rivers and flood plains and help reduce the negative impacts of climate change.”

The West of England GI Framework

5.5 The West of England authorities are developing Core Strategy and Development management policies on GI and Bath & NE Somerset and South Gloucestershire are in the process of developing specific Green Infrastructure Strategies to support these policies. This West of England Framework (appended) is complimentary to these policies and strategies, providing a strategic context for green infrastructure delivery, including opportunities for working across local authority boundaries.

5.6 The strategic overview provided by the Framework will promote a more consistent approach and better understanding of strategic green infrastructure across the partnership area. This will deliver the following benefits:

- An evidence base to support green infrastructure policy within emerging Core Strategies and Development Plan Documents;
- A better appreciation of the need to plan for green infrastructure at a strategic, as well as local scale;
- The protection and, where possible, expansion of the West of England green infrastructure network, in particular cross-boundary linkages;
- Co-ordination of resources and actions directed at green infrastructure by the authorities and their partner’s to achieve more cost effective outcomes, which support the delivery of sustainable growth.

5.7 The vision of the Framework is:

“By 2026 the West of England will have an enhanced and sustainable green infrastructure network consisting of a multifunctional, connected and legible network of strategic green sites and corridors that will be widely beneficial to communities, wildlife and the environment to support sustainable growth across the West of England.”

Process

5.8 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework has been jointly prepared by the members of the West of England Green Infrastructure Group (WEGIG), with draft versions taken to the West of England Partnership’s Planning, Housing and Communities Board (10th December 2010 & 4th March 2011) and the Joint Scrutiny Committee (7th January 2011). At its meeting on 4th March the Planning Housing and Communities Board it was noted that the Members present could not make a decision, due to the meeting being inquorate, but they offered their support for the GI Framework. Each authority is now taking the document thorough the relevant approval processes so that the document can be used as an evidence base to support their respective Local Development Framework (LDFs).

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The West of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework applies to all people regardless of sex, race, disability or other orientation. There are no specific impacts arising from the Strategic GI Framework and therefore a proportionate equalities impact assessment is not required.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The West of England GI Framework is complementary to the Councils Green Infrastructure policy and emerging GI strategy. It provides a clear strategic framework enabling cross boundary working and consistency of approach. Approval and publication of the West of England Strategic Green Infrastructure Framework will allow it to be considered and add value to the formulation and delivery of the Council's LDF.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 *Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer*

10.2 In March 2010 the WEGIG held an event for key partners with an interest in green infrastructure from across the West of England area. A key theme from one of the workshops held that day was the need to influence the West of England Partnership and for a succinct area wide GI strategy to be published. This theme set the context for the drafting of the Strategic GI Framework. The other outcomes from the event were summarised in a number of objectives and themes that were reflected upon when drafting the Strategic GI Framework.

10.3 The Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission have expressed their support for a collaborative approach to Green Infrastructure planning and delivery, and have been closely involved in the Strategic GI Framework's initiation and preparation.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 *Sustainability; Corporate;*

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	<i>Sue Murtagh 01225 477618</i>
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	<i>Councillor David Dixon</i>
Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	