

**COMMENTS FROM THE ENVIROMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL ON 8<sup>TH</sup>  
OCTOBER 2024 TO CABINET ON THE 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

EC41: **CABINET REPORT- GAMBLING ACT- STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

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The Licensing Service Manager presented the report.

She outlined to the Panel the Gambling Act, Statement of Principles was a statutory requirement to be published every three years, in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005. She highlighted to the Committee the policy was drawn up in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Gambling Commission and would come into effect from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

The Licensing Service Manager highlighted without the Statement of Principles being adopted the Borough Councill would not be able to conduct any statutory functions such as issue licenses, permits and enforcements.

She brought to the Panel's attention appendix A which was the list of prescribed consultees and explained the consultation ended on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2024. She advised from the consultation; South Wootton Parish Council had given support to the Statement of Principles.

The Licensing Service Manager highlighted to the Panel the wording changes included in the report.

The Chair thanked the Licensing Service Manager for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Kemp thank the Licensing Service Manager for the report and sought clarification that the Gambling policy was working and protecting the vulnerable both online and in shops.

The Licensing Service Manager clarified the Statement of Principles regulated Gambling Premises and not Gambling online. She confirmed there had been no incidents reported which indicates the policy was effective.

Councillor Devulapalli referred to page 33, the Public Health and Gambling section and asked if there was an input from Public Health.

The Licensing Service Manager confirmed Public Health was on the prescribed list of consultees however there had been no response and therefore no direct input to the Statement of Principles.

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendation to Cabinet as set out below:

That the Council be invited to adopt the Statement of Principles in accordance with the requirements of the Gambling Act 2005.

EC42: **CABINET REPORT- RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BIODIVERSITY TASK GROUP**

[Click here to view the recording of the item on YouTube.](#)

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning presented the report.

He provided the background to the Biodiversity Task Group which was created because of the notice of motion in 2020. He added the Task Group had met on 5 occasions and section 2 of the report outlined what was discussed during those meetings.

He added Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) had come into force as part of Planning and advised of the responsibility the Council had as part of the Environment Act 2021. He brought to the Panel's attention as part of the Biodiversity Task Group the idea of a community competition came forward.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning outlined the recommendations to the Panel. He highlighted to the Panel the second recommendation specified the appointment of the Biodiversity Project Officer for a fixed period of two years with funding from the climate change budget. The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained to the Panel the requirement for resource was identified and current officers did not have the capacity to fulfil the Biodiversity Project Officer role.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Heneghan sought clarification that current Officers did not specialise in Biodiversity.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning highlighted the Borough Council had an Ecologist within planning however they did not have capacity or resource to take on additional work therefore the Biodiversity Project Officer was required.

Councillor Heneghan commented further the Biodiversity Project Officer was an essential role and asked if the Officer would help plan more effectively on where plants and trees were planted.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained the role would include a wide range of responsibilities and could be described as a Ranger who would liaise with the Ecologist and the Public Open Space Team. He added the Officer would also implement the recommendations from the Urban Wildlife Group.

Councillor Kemp commented that promoting wildlife needed to be done as there had been loss of wildlife in previous years. She asked if there was potential for Councillors to go into Schools with a birdbox to educate and encourage children to engage and respect nature. She added was this something which could be done now or would the Biodiversity Project Officer be able to help when appointed.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning referred to 2.3 of the report and the recommendations from the Urban Wildlife which included promoting urban wildlife in wards and parishes. He added if Councillors wished to do this already then-, they could ahead of Biodiversity Project Officer being appointed.

Councillor Bullen commented further that Schools were already engaging and provided an example of Nelson Academy in Downham Market. He acknowledges the good work and enthusiasm which had been carried out by the Open Spaces Team.

Councillor Devulapalli commented she welcomed the role of the Biodiversity Project Officer and sought clarification on how this role would fit in with existing Officers role and asked if the Ecologist and the Biodiversity Project Officer role would liaise together.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning advised the Biodiversity Project Officer would work closely with the Public Open Spaces Team and liaise with the Ecologist.

Councillor Devulapalli suggested the responsibilities of these Officers would need to be clarified to Councillors.

Councillor Colwell refer to page 86, and highlighted the typo and should be A149. He referred to the 2.3 of the report which highlighted encouraging the use of bird boxes and bat boxes and referred to 2.6 of the report which stated engaged with local groups to participate in urban wildlife. He added his support for this and commented the concept was brilliant and hoped it was expanded to other communities' groups.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity thanked the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning for the report and the Officers for working with the Biodiversity Task Group.

Councillor Heneghan asked if private homeowners and other residents would be worked with as well as community groups and educated on what should be planted in their gardens and signified that green space is valuable habitat.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning commented there was lots of information available already, but it could be signposted to residents.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity added residents would be advised through the planning process and the new Biodiversity Project Officer would help educate residents.

Councillor Kunes agreed with Councillor Heneghan's comments and suggested communicating with residents, that having pots and plants in front gardens are ways of encouraging wildlife.

Councillor De Whalley, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity advised this information would be communicated as part of the communication strategy review to educate residents.

In response to Councillor Devulapalli question, the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning explained a policy on requirements for developers which was coming

forward as part of the Local Plan which was due to be adopted by the end of March 2025.

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below;

1 To accept the recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group as set out in paragraph 2.3, although recommendation 8 requiring a budget for delivery of the proposals would be covered separately through the creation of the two-year fixed-term biodiversity project officer role.

2 To agree to the appointment of a Biodiversity project officer, for a fixed period of two years, with funding coming from the climate change budget.

3 That the council adopts the biodiversity policies and specific objectives set out in appendix 1. 65

4 To agree the creation of a Pollinator Action Plan, on the basis of the draft, with the final wording to be agreed with the Assistant Directors for Environment and Planning and Operations and Commercial, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Climate Change and Biodiversity.

5 That the community biodiversity competition initiative, detailed in the report, is supported by the council.

EC47: **EXEMPT- CABINET REPORT- DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT FRAMEWORK**

The Care and Repair Service Manager presented the report to the Panel.

The Chair thanked Officers for the Report and invited questions and comments from the Panel.

Councillor Rust, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities commented on the report to the Panel.

The Care and Repair Service Manager answered questions from the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** The Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below;

1. Cabinet approves the signing of the framework agreements with the contractors named in this report, subject to completion of due diligence checks on these businesses.

2. Cabinet approve authority for the Assistant Director Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People & Communities to substitute alternative contractors for any listed that ultimately fail the due diligence checks.