



## **COMMITTEE TITLE – Clean and Green Committee**

**DATE – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	Clean and Green Rewilding Options and Trial Sites - Update
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Adam Aldridge, Corporate Manager - Green Spaces

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report provides revised options for sites bought forward by Clean and Green Committee for the trial of “rewilding” areas of parks and verges.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. To agree the revised trial sites detailed below for rewilding and to agree the change in management for these areas during the trial period.**

### **SUPPORT ING INFORMATION**

#### **1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 Officers have reviewed the sites bought to the committee by its members and have assessed the suitability of each site.
- 1.2 The below information sets out what is achievable at minimal cost with negligible impact on resource for the Green Spaces operational teams.
- 1.3 The below sites have been assessed in line with the proposal of natural rewilding methods where grasses and flora are left to regenerate natively. These proposed sites as bought forward by ward members do not account for cultivation of specific wild flora, which is out of scope of the trial.
- 1.4 It should be noted that these sites if accepted, can be easily reverted to formally mowed verges/greens using existing resource and machinery.

#### **2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 A report was presented to the Clean and Green Committee on the 11th of September 2023 to propose the plans for relaxed mowing in certain areas

within the borough. The management options for these sites included relaxed mowing, natural regeneration, tree planting and establishment of wildflowers.

- 2.2 To address concerns over rewilding in certain areas and as requested by members, certain sites are no longer deemed feasible as part of this trial. Should a further review be required at these sites, a further paper will be presented to Clean and Green Committee indicating a cost and resource implication, as these sites could not be reverted easily during a trial period.
- 2.3 To define the management type of each area, the table below provides some detail on how each management option could be implemented. It is important to note that options beyond Relaxed Mowing and match funded whip planting will bear a significant cost and resource implication to the Councils Green Spaces department:

Management Option	Detail	Implementation Period
Relaxed Mowing	<p>Area will be left to form a natural meadow.</p> <p>Area will receive a “mower width” perimeter cut as part of routine maintenance to ensure the area is presentable and intentional. This will include a regular cut of a “mower width” around and footpath, desire line, obstacles, or hard surfaced area.</p> <p>Naturalised area will be cut once per annum with a “cut and collect” machine or a flail machine where collection is not possible.</p>	<p>Immediate Implementation</p> <p>Establishment 1 year</p>
Tree Planting (Whips)	<p>A whip is an unbranched young tree approximately 50cm to 1m in size. These are low maintenance and would not require additional watering. Whips would be sourced from a sustainable source and be of a native variety.</p>	<p>Whip Planting November – February</p> <p>10 Years Establishment</p>

Tree Planting (Standards)	A standard tree is an established tree of a size greater than 2m in height. These would provide an “instant impact” but would require regular watering.	Standard Planting November – February  Immediate Establishment  3 Year Watering Program
Wildflower Meadow	An area will be cultivated in the Autumn months with a perennial wildflower mix	September – October Implementation  1-3 Year Establishment Period
Bulb Planting		October Implementation  Bulbs will flower each spring.

- 2.4 Officers have considered the practicality of the areas put forward by the Committee and have made recommendation for each area in the table below. Appendix A to this document is a list of maps detailing each area.
- 2.5 The tree planting initiative at Hutton Recreation ground as agreed has now been completed and was successfully funded by Thames Chase Community Forest.
- 2.6 There are currently no areas planned for Wildflower Meadow or Whip planting as these areas would not be easily reverted during a trial period. Wildflower meadow creation come at an inflated cost and labour, and we would want to be sure that these areas are to be managed long term before implementing.

<u>Site Location</u>	<u>Preferred Management Option</u>	<u>Map Reference</u>
Hutton Recreation Ground	Relaxed Mowing – <b>Deemed unsuitable.</b>  Tree Planting (Standards) – to commence in 2024 planting season if trial considered a success.  Tree Planting (Standards) - Avenue of 80 Trees – <b>Completed.</b>	Map 1
Greensward Elizabeth Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 2

Greensward Harewood Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 3
Elizabeth Road/Doddinghurst Road Junction	Tree Planting (Standards) Bulb Planting Relaxed Mowing	Map 4
Green Area between Days Lane, Crow Green and Ashwells Lane	Relaxed Mowing	Map 5
Greensward in Ongar Road	Relaxed Mowing	Map 6
Iris Close Community Green	Area not suitable due to public use of green. There would be difficulty maintaining this area as anything other than amenity grass.	N/A
Chelmsford Road	Verges would not be suitable due to small size. Area would be perceived as unkept as opposed to rewilded.	N/A
Hanging Hill Lane	Relaxed Mowing	Map 7
Wendover Gardens	Relaxed Mowing	Map 8

2.7 It should be considered that whilst relaxed mowing areas will be simple to revert to maintained grass in the first year, areas that are planted with trees are not easily reverted without potential reputational damage to the Council as this would involve the destruction of newly planted trees.

2.8 Areas left for rewilding for longer than one year, may require additional resource for cultivation, overseeding and watering if they were to revert to amenity grass after this period.

### **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

3.1 To continue to maintain areas as amenity grassland. This option has no impact.

### **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 4.1 Public perception of these areas may be seen as a “cost cutting” exercise and not that of biodiversity. It is recommended that Communications undertake targeted social media releases to the areas affected to educate residents.

## **5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Members of this committee have provided a low-key consultation with residents of affected areas. The general feedback is positive and in favour of re wilding these areas.
- 5.2 If these sites were perceived to be a success, it is the recommendation that a wider consultation process is created to understand the commitment of our residents for any potential wider rollout, borough wide.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

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## **7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

**Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance & Monitoring Officer**  
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## **8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful .
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic.

**Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure, and Health**

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## **9.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 These measures support improved biodiversity and reduced fuel usage.

**Name & Title: Henry Muss, Sustainability & Climate Officer**

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## **10.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no direct economic implications arising from this report

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### **REPORT AUTHOR:**

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A – Maps**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Briefing note**