

Cabinet report



Environmental Policy: Core Outcomes (Greenest City in the World: Physical & Natural Environment – Vision)

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Darlington Cabinet member for Public Realm
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Exempt / confidential / not for publication

No

Council Plan reference

Not in Council Plan

Wards affected

All wards

Executive summary

Biodiversity and natural processes are integral to life as we know it. Yet despite this biodiversity is in crisis on a local, national and global scale.

Our Sustainability Strategy (2019 – 2050) sets out a vision for Milton Keynes as becoming a world-leading sustainable city.

We already have a head start with corridors for biodiversity, linking key strategic reserves in the borough, are an integral part of the original design of the city.

In becoming the “Greenest City in the World” this document outlines Milton Keynes as an ambitious and innovative city, taking the action necessary to reduce this environmental crisis as we grow and this document sets a precedent for our peers and as the city of the future Milton Keynes must take the lead.

Background

Milton Keynes Council needs to set out a comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing the diversity of landscapes and habitats.

As the Local Authority we have access to land and the control to ensure it is managed and enhanced to promote the highest opportunities for biodiversity.

The park system provides more than an attractive amenity space; the linear park network provides connectivity for people, wildlife and hydrology, whilst the main transport corridors buffer neighbouring communities from visual and audible intrusion and provide a distinct welcoming character.

Milton Keynes is an ambitious and innovative city, the necessary action will be taken to reduce the environmental crisis and set a precedent for our peers. The climate future is uncertain, so a robust and resilient natural system will be vital if we are to maximise our options and achieving health and prosperity for ourselves and future generations. Thus growth of the city must be seen as an opportunity to deliver great design that ensures multiple benefits from our interaction with our environment.

Water, nature and trees have been identified as elements in their own right but managed holistically they will deliver a sustainable city. To deliver this, Council services will be integrated and will actively seek participation and support from other environmental organisations, communities and individuals in the aim of making Milton Keynes the Greenest City in the World.

1. Decision/s to be made

- 1.1 That the vision and of the Greenest City in the World – Core Policy Outcomes document be agreed.
- 1.2 That the draft strategy and action plan to deliver the principles set out in the vision be agreed.
- 1.3 To recognise that The Parks Trust and Parish and Town Councils be instrumental in the coproduction of this vision and act as a co-delivery body for the vision.
- 1.4 That the process for drafting the strategy will be to coordinate organisations relevant to the subject area, Town Council and Parishes, the Natural Environment Partnership, the Park Trusts and Milton Keynes Council through stakeholder workshops to identify and co-produce what our vision will look like “on the ground” and how it would be delivered, be agreed.
- 1.4 That the strategy and action plan to deliver the principles set out in the vision be submitted to Cabinet for March 2020.

2 Why is the decision needed?

The Governments A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan (2018), sets out a comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing the diversity of landscapes and habitats. The State of Nature report published in September

2019, shows that more species have shown strong or moderate decreases in abundance (41%) than increases (26%) since 1970.

Milton Keynes has always sought to be ahead of the curve in terms of environmental issues and these ambitions are captured within Plan MK which sets out a vision for Milton Keynes as a green and spacious city and the Sustainability Strategy (2019 – 2050) which confirms our aspiration to become a world-leading sustainable city. On the 19 December 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency recognising that climate change is real and the detrimental impact is being felt around the world.

Milton Keynes has a proud and pioneering record in environmental action and the Council believes that tackling climate change must seek to tackle wider sustainability issues such as the use and interaction of natural resources and biodiversity is key to a sustainable and liveable city.

Milton Keynes was designed with wildlife, protecting ancient woodland and developing a series of interconnecting corridors connecting nature and people.

In recognising these intrinsic values as part of the fibre of the borough, Milton Keynes must be the purveyor on demonstrating how to pass on the natural riches we have inherited to future generations and affirm its commitment to protecting, promoting and enhancing biodiversity in Milton Keynes, pledging to leave our natural environment in a better state than we found it.

The Greenest City in the World: Physical and Natural Environment Vision reinforces that the natural environment of Milton Keynes is fundamental to our well-being and health as well as being part of the identity of the city for the future.

The pressures will continue to increase and we need to learn how to manage these resources in ways which deliver multiple benefits and the best way to approach this is from a holistic perspective of integrating nature, water and trees into a single view.

This vision is explored through our Physical & Natural Environment 'Three Pillars' of nature, water and trees and reinforcing their interaction and how our approach as an authority should be integrated.

We recommend that this be underpinned by four golden thread objectives expressed within the vision:

- **Conserve** and protect existing sites of biodiversity, wildlife areas and the principles of linear parks, wildlife corridors and designated sites.
- **Restore** and manage species and habitats appropriate to Milton Keynes and its wider regional physical and geographical context to levels those are sustainable in a changing climate.

- **Create** and secure sustainable ecological and physical processes that underpin the way ecosystems work, thereby enhancing the capacity of our natural environment to provide ecosystem services.
- **Access** and engage natural environments rich in wildlife for people to enjoy and experience. This means not just the physical access but also the engagement and inclusivity of nature, regardless of age, race, ability or gender.

The vision will be to support and maintain what we have existing within the borough, to develop new habitats as linked creation of new habitats will also be linked to local priority species locally and regionally and to ensure these are linked together in terms of access for residents for wellbeing and health.

This will ensure that our vision is building on existing success while creating new opportunities for nature and interlinking both current and new opportunities with nature for our residents.

3 Implications of the decision

a) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from the composition of the vision document.

The budget for the hosting of the workshops and facilitating across the organisations relevant to the subject area, Town Council and Parishes, The Park Trusts and Milton Keynes Council will be met within the 2019/20 environment service budget.

The costs for delivery of the action plan and implementation of the strategy will be identified in the Cabinet Report submitted in March 2020.

b) Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising.

Financial	No	Human rights, equalities, diversity	No
Legal	No	Policies or Council Plan	Yes
Communication	Yes	Procurement	No
Energy Efficiency	Yes	Workforce (indirect)	No

4 Timetable for implementation

Following agreement of the Greenest City in the World: Physical and Natural Environment Outcomes vision document the Council will coordinate workshops to identify areas of collaborative working, expert advice and delivery opportunities.

The Parks Trust as a co-producer of the vision shall play a key role supporting the coordination of the action plan, together with Parish and Town Councils as will specialist organisations such as The Natural Environment Partnership, The Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and Canal & Rivers Trust who will act as critical friends for the respective ‘Three Pillars’ of nature, water and trees.

The feedback gained from this exercise will be used to draft a delivery strategy, detailing an action plan how we will work to deliver the vision and become the greenest city in the world. This more detailed document will be submitted to Cabinet for comment and approval in the spring of 2020 with work to commence in 2020/21.

	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Greenest City Vision Paper submitted to Cabinet						
"Nature" - Stakeholder Engagement Sessions						
"Water" - Stakeholder Engagement Sessions						
"Trees" - Stakeholder Engagement Sessions						
Draft Greenest City Delivery Action Plan						
Submit Delivery Action Plan to Cabinet						

List of annexes

Annex – Greenest City in the World: Physical & Natural Environment - Vision