



WORTHING BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committee
9 November 2023

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected: All
Cabinet Portfolio: Environment

Greening Principles - Approach to greening our spaces

Report by the Director for Place

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline the Council's approach to greening our spaces and to deliver the headline principles that guide the approach.
- 1.2. The key pillars of the Council's support of greening, across the borough, are taken from the administration's values to be **Fair, Green** and **Local**.
- 1.3. In recognising the breadth and passion of local residents, Friends of, and environmental associations and in understanding the administration's vision to be a 'Council for the Community' and in light of the Council's commitment to the climate and ecological emergencies, the report outlines the need for wider community participation and stewardship of our green spaces.
- 1.4. The paper sets out the commitment to make best use of council owned green space and the administration's stance on the need for

greening to align to urban regeneration, supporting the green infrastructure policies in the Worthing Local Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Affirm the emerging Greening Principles for Worthing and to adopt them for use across the council's practice.
- 2.2. To embed the emerging Greening Principles as foundation values within the new Parks & Open Spaces Management and Town Centre Management Plans.
- 2.3. To use the Greening Principles as core to the Greening Guide.
- 2.4. To endorse the Greening Principles as pivotal policy in all aspects of environmental growth and development.
- 2.5. To promote the Greening Principles as a way to harness community power and engagement in the fight against climate change and the ecological emergency.

3. Context

- 3.1. Climate change due to human influence (as described by the Department for Energy Security and New Zero) is 'unequivocal'. The average temperature at the Earth's surface show it has risen by approximately 1.1.C since the 1880s. Each of the last three decades have been hotter than the previous one and the seven warmest years on record have occurred between 2015 and 2021. However, in a poll conducted by the Office of National Statistics in April 2022, only six in 10 adults in the UK considered that raising temperatures would affect them by 2030.
- 3.2. Adur & Worthing Councils' declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and have committed to work toward becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The Councils also signed the UK100 Cities Pledge to achieve 100% clean energy by 2050. In support of this the Councils' adopted an ambitious programme of action on sustainably under SustainableAW.

- 3.3. The introduction of greening into urban landscapes has a myriad of benefits in the fight against climate change, community well-being and in the protection of wildlife. Urban greening and street trees improve air and water quality through the filtration of harmful pollutants and in cooling urban heat islands. In addition to our green spaces we improve biodiversity and ecological resilience, enable wildlife corridors, store carbon and help to prevent water run off. Green spaces also create a feeling of well-being and a sense of community investment.
- 3.4. The inclusion of green infrastructure (GI) in urban regeneration is heavily endorsed in the Council's Worthing Planning & Climate Change Checklist - December 2020.

“Major developments will be required to integrate elements of multi-functional Green Infrastructure (GI) onsite. Where possible this should create, protect and enhance wider green infrastructure assets and/or networks. Major developments should demonstrate at the planning application stage how the design of new development enhances existing wildlife habitats and provides new areas and opportunities for wildlife to achieve a net gain for biodiversity onsite. All new development should incorporate design measures to maximise opportunities for natural ventilation and summer cooling to avoid contributing to the urban heat island effect and reduce vulnerability to overheating, unless it conflicts with the need for noise mitigation. In all new developments there should be no net loss of trees and any trees removed should be replaced on a 1:1 basis to maintain current levels of canopy cover, and planting increased if possible. Major developments should integrate elements of multifunctional green infrastructure onsite to provide urban cooling and access to shady outdoor space.”

- 3.5. The Worthing Local Plan includes a green infrastructure policy (DM19, para 5.277). In order to support the creation and enhancement of new and existing greenspaces the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policy requires local authorities to develop a GI strategies and susquest delivery plans. The emerging Greening Principles predates the inclusion of a GI strategy until a formal review of the Worthing Local Plan 2023 and will act as complementary guides.
- 3.6. Worthing's current administration has pledged to address the climate emergency by creating the 'greenest town on the South Coast' and in doing so develop 'green corridors and projects which support nature and wildlife'.

- 3.7. The Council will apply fair, green and local administrative values to the emerging greening principles and in its approach to greening spaces.

Fair - Worthing Council believes free access to well-managed green space and the ability for the community to participate, co-create, and benefit from borough-wide greening is a basic right for all.

Green - The Council's green value sits at the heart of its emerging greening principles: the adoption of which aims to restrict carbon emissions and introduce green infrastructure initiatives at the heart of urban development and for community ownership. The Greening Guide will provide businesses, residents, stakeholders and institutions with the tools they need to increase greening in their respective areas.

Local - The council will work with local groups, green infrastructure providers and stakeholders to connect wider communities to nature, green spaces and the circular economy. The expertise and passion of our residents, environment focused groups including schools, can be a powerful collective community response to mitigate climate and ecological changes locally.

- 3.7. Urban greening plays a central role in national and regional place agendas, not only in the response to the climate emergency but as a regenerative tool for cities, town centres and local parades. This is evidenced in the move to sustainable/drought resistant, pollinator friendly planting in the council's town centre seasonal planting programme and through new public realm, such as design proposals for Montague Place.
- 3.8. Within environmental and community landscapes, greening can also be used in the provision of food. The Council is committed to enabling quality food provisions via its Community Food Network. Open space allotments and community orchards are one area of potential growth.
- 3.9 A Greening Guide (under development and with feedback from local environmental stakeholders and groups) will provide information on how the emerging Greening Principles can be applied across the community and by the council's partners. Suitable for use by a breadth of groups and individuals, the guide will give help and advice on how greening can be approached and developed in communities and urban landscapes.

4. Developing the Principles

- 4.1. The Council has undertaken the preparatory work to assist in the development of the emergent principles, as outlined in Section 5. This has involved a series of conversations, community presentations and a workshop which covered the following aspects:

Why are we doing this? This explores the rationale behind the council's decision to establish greening principles. Introducing a space where the council's approach to greening our spaces can be tested under peer review. The need to take active steps in addressing localised climate change is well established and is central to Worthing Council's corporate missions in "Our Plan".

- *Thriving Places* - Places are designed for people and nature; they are clean, safe and feel looked after. People feel a sense of belonging to places and communities. They can influence how places change.
- *Thriving Environment* - Action now achieves a fair transition to Net Zero Carbon by 2045, Resilience to climate change and increased biodiversity by restoring natural habitats

What are our assets? In assessing the physical, financial and human assets, the vast breadth of existing open spaces, public realm, street trees, verges, parks, foreshore flora, residential gardens, institutional estates, urban roofs & walls, and proximity to South Downs National Park, feature heavily. Councillor's and Sustainability and Place officers are informed, proactive and motivated to deliver and facilitate borough-wide greening. Local community and green groups specialise their fields and Worthing boasts many passionate environmental charities and networks. While financial resources remain a focus for the wider council, much can be achieved through community engagement and close working relationships with our commercial developers and external funding for public realm initiatives e.g. Levelling Up.

What are the opportunities? A number of opportunities exist through the development of authority policies and the emerging funding streams. The development of 'Council for our Community' in participative decision-making and co-designed projects is both timely and vital in the exploration of applied greening of our spaces.

What would we like to achieve? Ultimately the purpose of the emerging greening principles is to act as an enabler, facilitator and

exemplar; to act as a public declaration of the council's role in greening our spaces. In real terms the council seeks to give all who want them the guidance and tools to create their own green spaces, from window boxes to new community parks and from street trees to roof gardens.

- 4.2. The Greening Principles require testing and finessing by the community, environmental groups and commercial developers, prior to wider adoption.

5. Emergent Principles

- 5.1. The Council is committed to supporting greening. Whilst these headline principles have been developed they need further testing with the community and environmental partners.

- 5.2. The principles are intended to act as 'guardrails' to support the work in place, with the intention of a more comprehensive Worthing Borough Council Parks & Open Spaces Management Plan, Town Centres Management Plan and Greening Guide.

- 5.3. The principles have been developed through an analysis of existing administration strategies and aims, building on the foundations established via Big Listen resident feedback and an assessment of similar ambitions in both coastal and urban communities.

- 5.4. The emerging principles are as follows:

- **A place where greening is accessible and applicable to all.**
- **A place where greening is adopted as a fundamental expectation.** Residents benefit from the right to nature.
- **A place which builds climate resilience.** Through improved green infrastructure and nature driven interventions.
- **A place which values nature in our public and open spaces.**
- **A place that is pioneering in approach, experimenting and supporting green initiatives utilising emerging science, technology and policy.**

- **A place where communities are empowered, through codesign, to create and nurture our green areas and urban spaces.**
- **A place where Worthing borough is a demonstrable example of best practice, upholding our own principles.**

6. Our Roadmap/Issues for consideration

6.1. In addition to the comments in section 5 we will also ensure our greening ambitions are positioned in a way that allows for delivery of these principles through the daily operations of the Council.

6.2. To ensure these principles and the WBC Greening Guide are sufficiently tested the aim is to consult with our partners for their feedback and to make amendments as necessary to reflect this critical input.

6.2. The emerging greening principles aligns to the Climate Principles.

6.3. It is envisaged that the Worthing Borough Council's "Greening Guide" will be completed and published by Winter 2023, supporting the Nature Strategy, due in Spring 2024.

6.4. It should be acknowledged that additional soft landscaping, green spaces and street trees in our town centres results in increased maintenance costs, either to the commercial developer or the council, depending upon the scheme. While sustainable planting and young trees are self-reliant after a period of time, initially there is a need for budgeted or volunteer care including the need for water sustainability.

7. Engagement and Communication

7.1. This document sets out plans to engage with the local organisations, venues and the wider community in order to develop the strategies and policies needed to respond to the principles and priorities laid out here.

7.2. A proposed Council for the Community roadmap, informed by the 'Nature Multidisciplinary Team' and environmental groups forum will shape the participation approach supported by the Council's sustainability, place, participation and communications teams.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The Council invests significantly in Parks and Open Spaces in Worthing which have an overall budget of £2.1m.
- 8.2. Contained within the report are the actions required to support and develop the approach to greening our services in Worthing. It is expected that the costs of this programme will be funded from our existing budgets or via external funding. However, if this is not possible then members will be consulted on the potential release of additional resources dependent on the priorities of the Council and funds available.
- 8.3. As outlined in Section 5, it's anticipated these principles will be led by the community, for the community, therefore the Council will play different roles in delivering the principles and the Plan, although this is initially seen in a supportive and facilitative role.

Finance Officer: Marie Maskell

Date: 1 November 2023

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 9.2 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 9.3 Section 1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the local authority to enter into a contract for the provision of making available of assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the local authority.
- 9.4 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 came into force on 27 June 2019 and increased the UK's 2050 net greenhouse gas emissions target under The Climate Change Act 2008 from 80% to 100%.

- 9.5 The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the government to set legally binding 'carbon budgets' to act as stepping stones to the 2050 target. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five year period.

Legal Officer: Andrew Mathias. Date: 1 November 2023.

Background Papers

- Adur & Worthing Councils - [Our Plan](#)
- Adur & Worthing Councils - [Planning & Climate Change Position Statement](#)
- WJSSC - [The Principles Governing Climate Emergency Action for Worthing](#)
- Adur & Worthing Councils - [Worthing Planning and Climate Change Interim Checklist - December 2020](#)
- [Adur & Worthing Sustainability Framework 2021-2023](#)
- [Worthing Local Plan 2023](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Linking to the Council's economic principles there exists opportunities for the development of green inward investment.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

There are multiple well-being benefits for the council's residents from increased greening of our spaces.

2.2 Equality Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

Improved stewardship of open spaces, urban regeneration and public realm reduces anti-social behaviour and helps to establish localised ownership and civic pride.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

Matter considered and no issues identified.

3. Environmental

The emerging greening principles focusses on both social value and to delivering environmental outcomes

4. Governance

Matter considered and no issues identified.