

## REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - 15 JUNE 2022

### ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL POLLINATOR ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

#### 1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 The Environment Team is seeking approval of the Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2022-2027. The Action Plan is a cross-Service document which identifies the action the Council will take to protect, enhance, and promote pollinator populations in Aberdeenshire.

#### 1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

**1.2.1 Approve the Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2022-2027; and**

**1.2.2 Instruct the Head of Planning & Economy to report annually on the progress of the Action Plan.**

#### 2 Decision-Making Route

2.1 The draft Pollinator Action Plan was discussed at the Planning & Economy Member Officer Working Group on 1 December 2021 and supportive comments were provided. No changes to the Action Plan were requested.

2.2 Comments on the draft Action Plan were sought from all Area Committees in January 2022. Comments received and the steps taken to address them are presented in **Appendix 1**.

#### 3 Discussion

3.1 Aberdeenshire Council was one of the first local authorities in Scotland to produce a Pollinator Action Plan in 2015. This Plan elapsed in 2017 and was subsequently followed by the 2019 to 2021 Action Plan. These action plans set out the work the Council would undertake to protect, promote and enhance pollinator populations. They recognise the need for urgent action.

3.2 Pollinating insects are essential to healthy, functioning ecosystems as they have a key role in the reproduction of many plant species. They are also important to humans - fertilising crops, providing food and pollinating plants in our gardens.

3.3 Pollinator populations have generally been declining over the last 50 years. There are known to be multiple pressures including pesticide use, changes in land use resulting in patchy distribution of natural and semi-natural habitats, and disease. Population impacts linked to climate change are also likely.

3.4 See **Appendix 2** for the draft Action Plan.

- 3.5 In preparation for a new Pollinator Action Plan, the Environment Team carried out a review of the 2019 - 2021 Plan. A Report on the review is provided in **Appendix 3**.
- 3.6 The review found that the majority of actions in the Plan had been completed despite the obvious impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The Action Plan structured and catalysed work to protect and enhance pollinator populations and also provided a means to promote the work of the Council. It was concluded that there was a strong value in having the Action Plan.
- 3.7 The review did note that many of the actions captured were essentially on-going and, while they are very worthwhile to identify, the new Action Plan should also aim to introduce more measurable, time limited actions. This has been addressed in the draft 2022-2027 plan with the introduction of measurable 'Key Priorities'.
- 3.8 The review also indicated that the time period covered by the Action Plan should be extended. It was felt that a longer time period would be beneficial so that the revision/renewal process does not get in the way of action. The new Action Plan has been drafted to match the period remaining on the National Pollinator Action Plan hence running up to 2027. However, a yearly monitoring process will be carried out to ensure the actions are on track, but also remain current and relevant. We will report yearly on Action Plan progress to the Sustainability Committee.
- 3.9 The 2022-2027 Action Plan is a cross Service document with key actions for the Ranger Service, the North East Biological Records Centre (NESBReC), Landscape Services, and Education & Children's Services in addition to the Environment Team. Actions are also identified for the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership of which the Council is a partner. As with previous plans, it presents the work of Aberdeenshire Council to protect, enhance, and promote pollinator populations. A number of key priorities are proposed, including:
- At least 10% of public greenspace to be enhanced and managed for pollinators;
  - 80 school grounds to provide habitat for pollinators;
  - A pilot project on the River Don to explore pollinator habitat enhancement;
  - 150 Ranger Service sessions per year with schools, groups, and communities to raise awareness of pollinators;
  - A yearly NESBReC training course on pollinator identification.

#### **4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk**

- 4.1 The proposals in this Report helps to deliver strategic priorities:
- This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority "Resilient Communities" within the Pillar "Our Environment", by addressing the impacts and

mitigating the effects of climate change and improving sustainability through protection and enhancement of natural heritage.

4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the Action Plan is agreed.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Financial	<b>X</b>		
Staffing		<b>X</b>	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Climate Change and Sustainability	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Health and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Town Centre First		IIA attached as Appendix 4	

4.3 There are financial implications resulting from agreement to progress a number of the actions in the Plan. For example, changes to the management of public greenspace will have cost implications. However, the Action Plan captures on-going work to both cost and implement changes across Aberdeenshire with the aim of an overall reduction in costs over time. All other projects in the Action Plan have been costed and are considered deliverable based on current budgets. No staffing implications are predicted.

4.4 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 4**. No negative impacts were identified. There are positive impacts in the following areas:

- 'Children's Rights and Wellbeing', 'Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty' and 'Health Inequalities' through the provision of high quality, attractive, interesting, biodiverse greenspaces which provide places for communities and people of all ages to be active and learn and thus promote physical and mental health
- 'Sustainability and Climate Change' by protecting and enhancement pollinator habitat and populations thus improving the quality of the environment, reducing carbon emissions from grass cutting activities and planting trees which will sequester carbon.

4.5 No Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level.

4.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- Directly contributes to mitigation of Infrastructure Services Risk 005 'Open spaces that encourage active, healthy lifestyles' by identifying and focusing measures to aid delivery of the Greenspaces project to increase biodiversity across the public owned spaces in Aberdeenshire.
- Directly contributes to the mitigation of Infrastructure Services Risk 007 'Safeguard the built and natural environment' by focusing, structuring, and monitoring delivery of a range of work which will benefit public greenspace, pollinators, biodiversity, and & the natural environment.

## **5 Scheme of Governance**

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section S.1.1a of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as the request is to approve, review the Council's work in respect of an aspect of sustainable development.

**Alan Wood**  
**Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by James Davidson, Environment Planner  
 Date: 19 April 2022

### **List of Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 - Area Committee Comments on draft Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2022-2027
- Appendix 2 - Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2022-2027
- Appendix 3 - Review of Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan 2019-2021
- Appendix 4 - Integrated Impact Assessment