

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils' Biodiversity Task Force

Terms of Reference

1. Title of Task Force

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils' (BMSDC) Biodiversity Task Force.

2. Purpose

The Task Force has been convened in response to biodiversity motions passed by both Councils in 2019. Its role is to make recommendations to Cabinet(s) on opportunities and actions to protect and improve biodiversity, both in the way in which the Councils jointly carry out their own operations and initiatives, and through partnership working.

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils recognise that there is an urgent need for action.

Mid Suffolk – The council pledges that:

1. a task force reviews recognised and potential wildlife corridors in the District, and brings forward proposals to enhance these corridors.
2. additional arboricultural and bio-diversity advisory resources are made available, as necessary, to:
 - Support the task force
 - Provide more input to support planning officers
 - Strengthen the role of public realm team
 - Provide advice to parishes and other community landowners.
3. additional resources and biodiversity proposals during 2019/20 would need to be funded from the Growth and Efficiency Fund and then considered in preparing the budget for future years

Babergh – The council pledges that:

- 1 Creation and development of a Wildlife Network Map from which Wildlife Corridors will be identified and created. The map, available to the public, will assist the District to develop Eco Tourism, thereby attracting much needed tourist revenue to the region.
- 2 As part of our commitment to Biodiversity the Council will work closely with our existing Partners, the County Council and other NGO's involved in protecting our natural habitats.
- 3 Introduction of the 'Trees for Life' scheme in Babergh District. This offers every family with a new-born baby a tree to plant. The trees to be planted will be native trees and will be locally grown and sourced.
- 4 That additional biodiversity resources be provided as necessary, to:
 - Support the Task Force
 - Provide more input to support planning officers
 - Strengthen the role of public realm team
 - Provide advice to parishes and other community landowners
- 5 Any funding to maintain and improve the biodiversity of our area for 2019/20 will be recommended to Cabinet for approval. The task force would recommend the amount to be spent in future years in a report back to Cabinet by March 2020.

3. Rationale

The Councils along with Suffolk County Council and other local authorities recognise the need to act decisively to respond to the commitments they have made. One of the first steps must be to ensure that there is clarity about the current position and to understand where the most potential lies for improvement. This will enable resources to be prioritised to achieve maximum benefit. Further work, beyond the scope and term of this Task Force, will be required with partner organisations to improve biodiversity across Suffolk.

4. B&MSDC Priorities

The work of the Task Force provides the opportunity to contribute to all priority areas of the Corporate Plan:

- Economy
- Housing
- Communities

- Customers
- Environment
- Wellbeing

5. Sponsoring Cabinet Members and joint Chair of the Task Force

Councillor Elisabeth Malvisi

Councillor Jessica Fleming

6. Task Force Members

There will be three seats available on the Task Force for each Council additional to the cabinet members of each Council. These seats will be filled by invitation from the Chair only.

7. Lead Officer

Cassandra Clements - Assistant Director of Environment & Commercial Partnerships

8. Supporting Officers

Nominated officers from Countryside and Public Realm and Strategic Planning, and a Project and Research Officer.

9. Short description of issues to be covered

Meetings to cover (subject to amendment by the Task Force):

- Biodiversity mapping
- Management of the public realm, council-owned land and roadside verges - managing for the benefit of biodiversity
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity in planning and development
- Encouraging biodiversity on agricultural and private land
- Consideration of proposals for Cabinet.

10. Outcome

Recommended actions to avoid biodiversity loss, conserve and enhance existing habitats and species and achieve biodiversity net gain.

11. Outline Timescale

- Meetings to cover the issues shown in 9. above commencing July 2020 and completing by Autumn 2020.
- Presentation to Cabinet for approval expected in Winter 2020.

The Chairman and Supporting/Lead Officers may choose to set up a task and finish group to address specific areas of work. The composition of any such group would be at the respective Chairman's discretion and may involve members outside of the Task Force.

The Chairman and Supporting/ Lead Officer may invite guest speakers and/ or third parties to widen the expertise and advice available to the Task Force as the work of the group dictates. The Chairman and Supporting/Lead Officers must ensure the Panel adheres to all relevant dates in respect of submitting reports to Cabinet. This will include a date for Cabinet briefing of the draft final report and deadline for submission of the final report to Democratic Services. It will also include submission of the Key Decision Forward Plan Request.

12. Details of other parties that may be involved

Simone Bullion, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Sue Hooton, Principal Ecological Consultant at Place Services.