WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Executive Response to Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Nature Recovery Plan and Nature Recovery Officer.

Recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday 7 February 2024.

Context

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that more rural areas of the district could be disadvantaged, as opposed to more urban areas regarding the financial provision for an additional financial pot for finding nature recovery projects in rural areas that would struggle to provide match funding through WestHive.

Recommendations	Agree (Y / N)	Comment	Responsible Executive Members	Lead Officers
1. That engagement with towns and parish councils is more frequent than suggested in the report (i.e., events should be held at least annually).	Y	Annual events for the towns and parish councils will be held. This will be clarified on p17 and p21 of the Nature Recovery Plan (p74 and p78 of the report pack).	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change. Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member, Planning & Sustainable Development.	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainability.
2. That the Council takes a network approach to the facilitation of grassroots projects and getting people involved in nature recovery activities.	Y	Part of the Nature Recovery Officer's role will be to engage with and support grassroots, community-based projects. The Council will take learnings from the Eynsham Nature Recovery Network's approach and find ways of replicating	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change.	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Charlie Jackson – Assistant

		their success in other areas. Report to be amended to make this more explicit.	Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member, Planning & Sustainable Development.	Director, Planning and Sustainability.
3. That consideration is given to the need for an additional financial pot for funding nature recovery projects in rural areas that would struggle to provide match funding through WestHive.	N	Alongside the WestHive Community Crowdfunding Fund, which the Council can pledge up to £10,000, or a maximum of up to 40% of the project target, there is also the Community Infrastructure Fund for capital projects (part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund). Eligible projects for this fund can expect a pledge from the Council of up to £20,000 of capital or a maximum of up to 50% of the crowdfunding target. Nature recovery is an explicit outcome of both funds; therefore an eligible project could apply to both and potentially receive pledges up to £30,000 to a maximum of 90% of the project target. In addition, 3-year service level agreement grant funding, starting from April 2024, will be awarded to successful applicants shortly, as a key decision. Subject to call in, three projects, which directly align with nature recovery, will receive financial	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change. Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member, Planning & Sustainable Development.	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainability.

		support from the Council totalling £240,000 over the 3-year period. This represents just under 45% of the 3-year service level agreement grant funding available.		
4. That consideration is given to mitigating risks around the future funding for the new post and the reliance on external funding for projects, given that no capital allocation has been made for 2024/25.	Y	Consideration will be given to future officer funding and capital funding. Funds have been earmarked for some project delivery in 24/25 from the climate budget.	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change. Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member, Planning & Sustainable Development.	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainability.