

Ref:

Called in

Yes/No

THE THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET

Cabinet Member

Councillor Steve Albon

Relevant Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Date of Decision:

18 March 2021

Subject:

New Open Spaces grass cutting regime for pollinators

Key Decision

No

In Forward Plan

No

Brief summary of matter:

Pollinators are declining at a fast pace which will impact our food security and biodiversity with wide ranging consequences. One of the main reasons for this decline is the loss of wild areas and flowers providing insects with food and a place to live.

As we manage our open spaces in house, we can make changes to grass cutting regimes to help stop this decline. Not cutting in May (No mow May) as promoted by the charity Plantlife will increase the number of little flowers in parks. Also, changes to cutting in certain allocations along the seafront, as promoted by the Bumblebee Trust and Kent Wildlife Trust, will create wildflower grasslands and provide pollen for a wider range of bees and butterflies.

TDC called a climate and ecological emergency in July 2019 and this change in cutting regime is the one of the first steps taken to address the emergency. It is well documented that areas high in biodiversity improves wellbeing and has a positive effect on mental health, and so the benefits of this project will go beyond protecting beautiful butterflies and bees.

Decision made:

Cabinet agreed to approve the proposed trial change in grass cutting regimes based on the 4 levels of management for Open Spaces as described in the Cabinet report. Summary as follows:

1. Regular amenity cut in areas that need to be cut short
2. No Mow May in parks and some squares
3. Reduced cutting for pollinators in specific areas to create wildflower meadows.
4. Continue cut and collect, hay meadow management at Westbrook Undercliff and Foreness Point.

Cabinet also agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Operational Services, to approve minor amendments to the policy.

Reasons for decision:

The council declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019. This trial change in management forms part of the immediate action taken in support of that declaration. Not only will it be beneficial for pollinators, but the wild areas will also increase residents and visitors well being.

Alternatives considered and why rejected:

The report set out two further options as follows:

1. Do not pursue the proposal
2. Adopt the changes for some of the sites as determined by a proposal of Cabinet's choosing.

These options were rejected in favour of the decision.

Details of any conflict of interest declared by any executive Member who has been consulted and of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None.

Author of Officer report:

Dr Hannah Scott, Climate Change Officer

Background papers

New Open Spaces grass cutting regime for pollinators - Google Docs
Annex 1: No Mow images
Annex 2: Equality Impact Assessment
Annex 3: Minnis Bay_Cliff Road
Annex 4: Epple Bay section
Annex 5: Sunken Gardens section
Annex 6: Dane Valley section
Annex 7: Northdown House front
Annex 8: KGVI Park
Annex 9: Royal Esplanade
Annex 10: Nethercourt
Annex 11: Palm Bay section
Annex 12: No Mow May 2021

Statement if decision is an urgent one and therefore not subject to call-in:

Last date for call in:

26 March 2021