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Contact: Annette Metcalfe

Committee Services

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15 February 2017

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD** to be held in Council Chamber, Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4BB on **THURSDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2017 at 7.00 pm.**

Yours faithfully

Sue Sturgeon  
Managing Director

**MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD**

Chairman: Councillor Adrian Chandler  
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Pauline Searle

Councillor Christian Holliday  
Councillor Liz Hooper  
Councillor Jennifer Jordan  
Councillor Nigel Kearse  
Councillor Dennis Paul

Councillor Tony Phillips  
Councillor David Quelch  
Councillor David Reeve  
Councillor James Walsh  
Councillor David Wright

**Authorised Substitute Members:**

Councillor Philip Brooker  
Councillor Nils Christiansen  
Councillor Colin Cross  
Councillor Andrew Gomm  
Councillor Angela Goodwin  
Councillor David Goodwin  
Councillor Angela Gunning  
Councillor Gillian Harwood  
Councillor Liz Hogger

Councillor Mike Hurdle  
Councillor Julia McShane  
Councillor Susan Parker  
Councillor Mike Parsons  
Councillor Mike Piper  
Councillor Jo Randall  
Councillor Caroline Reeves  
Councillor Jenny Wicks

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If you have any queries please contact Committee Services on 01483 444102.

**QUORUM: 4**



## THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### Vision – for the borough

For Guildford to be a town and rural borough that is the most desirable place to live, work and visit in South East England. A centre for education, healthcare, innovative cutting-edge businesses, high quality retail and wellbeing. A county town set in a vibrant rural environment, which balances the needs of urban and rural communities alike. Known for our outstanding urban planning and design, and with infrastructure that will properly cope with our needs.

### Five fundamental themes that support the achievement of our vision:

- **Our Borough** – ensuring that proportional and managed growth for future generations meets our community and economic needs
- **Our Economy** – improving prosperity for all by enabling a dynamic, productive and sustainable economy that provides jobs and homes for local people
- **Our Infrastructure** – working with partners to deliver the massive improvements needed in the next 20 years, including tackling congestion issues
- **Our Environment** – improving sustainability and protecting our countryside, balancing this with the needs of the rural and wider economy
- **Our Society** – believing that every person matters and concentrating on the needs of the less advantaged
- 

**Your Council** – working to ensure a sustainable financial future to deliver improved and innovative services

### Values for our residents

- We will strive to be the best Council.
- We will deliver quality and value for money services.
- We will help the vulnerable members of our community.
- We will be open and accountable.
- We will deliver improvements and enable change across the borough.

### Mission – for the Council

A forward looking, efficiently run Council, working in partnership with others and providing first class services that give the community value for money, now and in the future.

## AGENDA

### ITEM NO.

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**
- 2 **LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

In accordance with the revised local Code of Conduct, a councillor is required to disclose at the meeting any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) that they may have in respect of any matter for consideration on this agenda. Any councillor with a DPI must not participate in any discussion or vote regarding that matter and they must withdraw from the meeting immediately before consideration of the matter.

If that DPI has not been registered, the councillor must notify the Monitoring Officer of the details of the DPI within 28 days of the date of the meeting.
- 3 **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)

To confirm the minutes of the Executive Advisory Board meeting held on 05 January 2017
- 4 **HEALTH AND WELLBEING REVISED STRATEGY**

To receive a presentation.
- 5 **COUNTRYSIDE VISION DOCUMENT** (Pages 5 - 56)
- 6 **PROGRESS WITH ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE EAB**  
(Pages 57 - 64)
- 7 **EAB WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 65 - 66)

To consider and approve the EAB's draft work programme. Details of future Executive decisions are included.

**Please contact us to request this document in an  
alternative format**

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## SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

5 January 2017

\* Councillor Adrian Chandler (Chairman)  
Councillor Pauline Searle (Vice-Chairman)

- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| * Councillor Christian Holliday | * Councillor Tony Phillips |
| * Councillor Liz Hooper         | * Councillor David Quelch  |
| * Councillor Jennifer Jordan    | * Councillor David Reeve   |
| Councillor Nigel Kearse         | * Councillor James Walsh   |
| * Councillor Dennis Paul        | Councillor David Wright    |

\*Present

### **S37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Searle and Nigel Kearse. In accordance with procedure rule 23(j) Cllr Caroline Reeves attended on behalf of Councillor Searle.

Councillor Michael Illman, Lead Councillor for Finance and Councillor Tony Rooth, Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Welfare were also in attendance.

### **S38 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

### **S39 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2016 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **S40 GENERAL FUND AND HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMMES (2018-19 TO 2021-22)**

The Head of Financial Services was in attendance and the Board received a presentation from the Principal Accountant for Capital, Assets and Treasury setting out an overview of the committee report.

The Board was asked to review and comment on a draft report and recommendations that would be submitted to the Executive for consideration on 24 January 2017.

In a series of appendices, the report set out approved and existing schemes, but in the main detail of the report was a number of new capital bids for new schemes. The new schemes were either completely new projects, or had been on the Capital Vision list, or were updated bids for schemes already accepted on the provisional capital programme. The detailed bids supporting these schemes were in the appendices of the report. The Principal Accountant noted that further, more detailed business cases would be required to be presented to the Executive for the new schemes before any decision to implement the project and spend the budget is taken. Therefore, the capital programme report did not present these schemes with detailed cost commitments, instead it is more indicative of the overall general funding and borrowing requirements needed to achieve them. It was explained that should the new bids be approved there would be an increase in the underlying need to borrow of £125 Million. This would bring the total underlying need to borrow to £392 Million. However, once

cash reserves were included the underlying need to borrow was reduced to £337 Million. All projects and schemes would be funded by capital receipts where possible, then by contributions from reserves and finally by borrowing. The report set out the implications for reserves and for revenue and explained a number of prudential indicators that were used to calculate the impact and financing costs of borrowing.

It was noted council had an ambitious Corporate Plan some of which would be achieved by some of the capital schemes listed.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Joint Executive Advisory Board Budget Working Group (JEABBWG) had previously reviewed the new bids.

The Lead Councillor for Finance commended the officers on the report.

The Board made the following comments:

It was queried if the council would individually raise the entire funds for the schemes listed or if there would be scope for joint or partnership arrangements. It was noted that it was likely some of the larger schemes would attract joint funding and there could be grants through the Local Enterprise Partnership available or some other partnership funding. Such joint funding opportunities may apply to a number of the bids listed and would become apparent once more detailed costing was undertaken. It was explained that the Government has recently launched a new Infrastructure Fund which would enable councils to bid for an opportunity to borrow at a lower rate of interest.

Councillors queried, if all of the schemes went ahead, whether the council would actually need to borrow some £612 million and noted that in some cases, it was difficult to see the financial return from the expenditure. The HoFS and Principal Accountant clarified that page 200 of the agenda relating to the capital programme report showed a table which states the need to undertake new borrowing was £337 million not £612 million, the £612 million referred to by Councillors is shown in the table but is the capital financing requirement (CFR). The actual level of borrowing will be very unlikely to reach the level of the CFR. The total level of borrowing the Council is likely to have once, existing borrowing and the need to undertake new borrowing is taken into account, is shown by the liability benchmark in the table on page 200 of the agenda. This shows a total level of borrowing of around £500 million. It was noted that and some of the capital expenditure would be outside of the five-year span of the report and that some schemes do not necessarily generate a financial return. It was explained that in some cases the council had a duty to undertake some schemes as part of its responsibilities in relation to regeneration, and that there would always be a need to maintain assets and improve services, those schemes will not generate a financial return and therefore the revenue implications of the borrowing will fall on the council taxpayer.

Although councillors who were also members of the JEABBWG had reviewed the new bids previously and were provided with a summary sheet showing the total cost of the new bids, the review had been undertaken on an individual bid basis. The JEABBWG did not review the aggregate cost of the new bids together with the existing capital programme, as the report being considered by the Board was the first time officers had produced the information. It was commented that further information on the overall impact of the existing programme and the new bids, was contained in the Treasury Management Strategy report that is due to be presented to Corporate Governance and Standards Committee on 12 January 2017.

There was some criticism that the report itself did not provide more detailed information about returns on investment and capital receipts in the longer term. The Board heard that the

Borrowing Strategy was to go before the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee the following week and members were referred to that paper. In future it was agreed that liability benchmarks would be included in the report presented to the EAB.

#### **S41 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES 2017-18**

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Community Services setting out the main points in the Housing Revenue Account annual report.

It was explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was the 'landlord' account for the council. The council had around 5,000 rental properties and there was a Business Plan for the HRA.

The Board heard that the Government had scrapped the 'Pay to Stay' scheme. Under this scheme, it would have been mandatory for the council to charge varying rents dependent upon the income levels of tenants. Any additional rent collected through this proposed scheme would have had to have been paid to the Government. It had been described as heavily administrative.

There had been no update on the Government's Right to Buy scheme except that the council would not have to make a payment to the Government during 2017-18.

The Government imposed 1% rent reduction was good news for tenants but meant that income for the council was reduced. Most tenants would see a rent decrease of between £0-£1.49 per week.

It was noted that the cap on welfare benefits was increasing the number of tenants having trouble in paying their rent. It was also noted that there was a likelihood that the contribution from Surrey County Council would be significantly less or could be scrapped due to the pressure on Social Care budgets at the county level.

It was noted that the HRA had a debt of around £195 million. The Council had previously decided that this debt would be serviced but not repaid. The first tranche would need to be repaid or refinanced in six years' time, but it was likely that it would be refinanced dependent upon the budgetary position at that time. The interest rate was said to be manageable.

A significant amount of rent received went into reserves to fund new build or to maintain assets. The Kitchen and Bathroom project had received a lot of investment and spending in this area was now being scaled back. The new build programme included the Corporation Club site in Slyfield which was now underway. The Apple Tree site had been acquired and tenders would be sought to provide 18 affordable units. The development of former garage sites in Bushy Hill would provide 17 new units. The Homestead would provide four new units. Discussions with Surrey County Council had now concluded and the development of 12 units at 16-18 Ladymead would be taken back to the Planning Committee. The Guildford Park site had planning permission, but preparatory work had revealed a large water main that would need to be relocated at an estimated cost of around £1 Million. A number of the properties on this development would be sold at market price and these sales would contribute towards the cost of the new MSCP. The HRA spend on the development would be paid back over time from rental income. Investigation into a development of the Bright Hill site was continuing.

The Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Welfare said that the council was trying to invest in more affordable housing in Guildford and acknowledged the real difficulties for local people in securing a home.

The Board clarified that the use of the word 'depreciation' in the report referred to the depreciation of the council's assets (housing stock) and not to the value of the land.

The Housing Business Plan would not be updated this year, as there was considerable uncertainty over the Government's enforced sales scheme and also the contents of the forthcoming White Paper.

It was noted that although the Executive had vired funding in September 2016 to carry out further research into the Slyfield Area Regeneration Plan, the future schedule for the development remained uncertain. The Board heard that the council will do all it could to push the project forward, and further central Government funding would be sought if a suitable opportunity arose.

The Board heard from the Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Welfare that there would be no consideration given by the council to transfer the housing stock to the private sector in any way.

**S42      PROGRESS WITH MATTERS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE EAB**

The report was noted by the Board.

**S43      EAB WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was noted by the Board.

**S44      EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

In order to discuss the details of General Fund Capital Programme bid PR000348 the Board:

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of agenda item 9 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**S45      GENERAL FUND CAPITAL PROGRAMME BID NO. PR000348 - DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The Board noted the bid number PR000348.

The meeting finished at 8.37 pm

Signed .....

Chairman

Date .....



Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of Director of Environment

Author: Hendryk Jurk

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Date: 18.04.2017

## Countryside Vision

### Executive Summary

Officers recommend adopting the proposed Countryside Vision document as Strategy to deliver a landscape scale approach and partnership working in Countryside management.

Guildford Borough Council (GBC) owns and manages 52 sites as countryside sites covering an area of nearly 700ha, 2.5% of the Borough's land area. Guildford Borough Council also manages approximately 32km of rural road verges on behalf of Surrey County Council.

Within the GBC's countryside estate, two heathland sites (Bullswater Common and Pirbright Heath) are afforded strong protection through inclusion in the Thames Basin Heath SPA (Special Protection Area) and the Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Shalford Water Meadows is included in the Wey Valley Meadows SSSI. The Borough's countryside estate also includes five Local Nature Reserves, the highest protection Local Authorities can designate.

The Countryside Vision states the Council's ambition to deliver a long-term sustainable network of Countryside sites that provides safe access for recreation as well as a network of wildlife habitat that future generations can access and enjoy.

Guildford's Countryside Vision will:

- provide a framework to guide our long term site management and communicate our ambitions to Guildford's residents,
- guide allocation of current resources to prioritise strategic aims and legal obligations across the Countryside Estate,
- provide a landscape scale direction for habitat management that guides funding strategies,
- support the delivery of the Local Plan through the development of Suitable Alternative Natural Green spaces,
- communicate Guildford Borough's ambitions to partners and stakeholders,

provide assurance that external investments are in line with long term sustainable goals and

- align Guildford Council's countryside management with national and regional policy.

The alternative option would be not to adopt a strategic document and develop management plans for individual sites only.

### **Recommendation to Executive**

That the Executive reviews and approves the strategic policies in managing our countryside sites to inform detailed sites management plans and operations.

#### Reason(s) for Recommendation:

Adoption of the Strategy will provide a tool to

- inform and support landscape scale habitat and access management,
- support targeting of resources,
- enable partnership work and external funding

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Executive reviews and approves the strategic policies in managing our countryside sites to inform detailed sites management plans and management operations.
- 1.2 The Countryside Vision statement will provide a framework to enable proactive management of Guildford's Countryside and development of appropriate action plans for site management. The Countryside Vision aims to link into the delivery of wider strategies and partnerships to ensure a landscape scale approach to countryside management. This landscape scale approach supports the government's Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

## **2. Strategic Priorities**

- 2.1 The adoption of a strategic document to guide the long-term direction of Countryside Management will support the following strategic priorities:
  - Our Borough – The Countryside Vision will support sustainable provision of accessible greenspace and recreational activities including SANG sites.
  - Our Infrastructure - The delivery of SANGs and other Greenspaces will support sustainable delivery of local amenities.

- Our Environment - The Countryside Vision will guide the sustainable management and protection our countryside, specifically the corporate plan priorities of:

*'Work with partners to provide a high quality, diverse environment by ensuring sufficient and appropriate green, blue and open space and a resilient ecological network is maintained*

and

*'Support the River Wey Catchment Partnership to improve the water quality of the river and the management of its catchment*

- Our Society - The Countryside Vision will support sustainable provision of accessible greenspace to improve Health and Wellbeing.

### **3. Background**

#### *Guildford's Countryside sites*

- 3.1 This Countryside Vision statement will provide a framework to enable proactive management of Guildford's Countryside and development of appropriate action plans for site management.
- 3.2 Guildford Borough Council (GBC) owns and manages 52 sites as countryside sites covering an area of nearly 700ha, 2.5% of the Borough's land area. Guildford Borough Council also manages approximately 32km of rural road verges on behalf of Surrey County Council.
- 3.3 Within the GBC's countryside estate, two heathland sites (Bullswater Common and Pirbright Heath) are afforded strong protection through inclusion in the Thames Basin Heath SPA (Special Protection Area) and the Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Shalford Water Meadows is included in the Wey Valley Meadows SSSI. The Borough's countryside estate also includes five Local Nature Reserves, the highest protection Local Authorities can designate.
- 3.4 Guildford Borough's Countryside sites provide a range of eco system services. The benefits people obtain from functioning eco systems include provisioning services (wood fuel, grazing pasture, pollination of crops), regulating services (flood alleviation, water purification, carbon sequestration) and cultural services (recreation).

- 3.5 The sites contribute to a network of publicly accessible countryside as well as wildlife habitat managed by other landowners, such as Surrey County Council, National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust. In order to recognise the importance of working across landownership boundaries, GBC is represented in a number of landscape partnerships, including Surrey Nature Partnership, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership and the Surrey Heathland Project.
- 3.6 The proposed Vision document covers the countryside sites that Guildford Borough Council manages. It details how the Council aims to work in partnership with other organisations in order to achieve landscape scale management of green spaces within the Borough and Surrey.

*Aims of the Countryside Vision Document*

- 3.7 The aim of the Countryside Vision document is to provide a strategic direction for the management of the Council's Countryside Estate.
- 3.8 The documents links into the delivery of wider strategies and partnerships to ensure a landscape scale approach to countryside management that supports the objectives that are set out in the government's document "Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services".
- 3.9 Guildford's Countryside Vision will:
- set out a framework that guides our long term site management and communicate our ambitions to Guildford's residents,
  - guide allocation of current resources to prioritise strategic aims and legal obligations across the Countryside Estate,
  - provide a landscape scale direction for habitat management that guides funding strategies,
  - support the delivery of the Local Plan and the development of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANG),
  - communicate Guildford Borough's ambitions to partners and stakeholders and provide re-assurance that external investments are in line with long term sustainable goals and
  - align Guildford Council's countryside management with national and regional policy.
- 3.10 The Countryside Vision Document includes the following Vision Statement.
- Guildford Borough Council aims to manage its Countryside estate to maintain and enhance its landscape, natural capital and ecological value to continue providing benefits for future generations.
  - We will work in Partnership with residents and organisations to improve sustainability and to protect our countryside, whilst balancing this with the needs of the rural and wider economy.

- Guildford's natural environment and landscapes will form part of the overall provision of Surrey's ecosystem services, creating a coherent network, for people, recreation and wildlife, through supporting the implementation of traditional management.

- 3.11 The Countryside Vision document collates current legislation, national and regional and regional policies and regional partnership initiatives that guide the landscape scale approach in managing our Countryside.
- 3.12 Within the document, officers have grouped the Council's sites are into seven habitat types that each face similar issues and have developed management objectives that will inform the site management plans for each habitat type.
- 3.13 The Vision and Objectives for Guildford's Countryside sites are linked to the proposed Rural Strategy that covers further areas beyond land management, including strategies for the rural economy. Countryside Vision and Rural Strategy complement each other.
- 3.14 The Countryside Vision is supported by an action plan that outlines the overall direction of countryside management in the Borough.

#### **4. Consultations**

- 4.1 No formal consultations have been carried out on the document.

#### **5. Executive Advisory Board comment**

- 5.1 The report will progress to the society EAB.  
Recommendations will be confirmed.

#### **6. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The proposed strategy has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment screening. The assessment concludes that the proposed strategy does not have implications for equality and diversity.

#### **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The Countryside Vision document provides a framework for the delivery of the management of Guildford's Countryside Estate within the existing resources.
- 7.2 Specific projects and infrastructure repairs may require additional funding, for example through the Community Infrastructure Levy and the funding

mechanisms set out in the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy.

- 7.3 The Countryside Vision document provides a framework that allows external funders to assess the Council's ambitions and long-term strategies and thus provide assurance that external grants represent value for money. Funding examples include New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMs), Biodiversity offsetting, landfill tax funds and CIL.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The adoption and implementation of the Countryside Vision as strategic document has no legal implications. The document provides strategic guidance to enable the Council to fulfil its legal obligations in Countryside Management.

## **9. Human Resource Implications**

- 9.1 The adoption of the Countryside Vision will provide strategic guidance for the Countryside Team's workload. There are no additional resource implications.

## **10. Summary of Options**

- 10.1 Officers recommend that the Executive agree to adopt the Countryside Vision document as strategic document to guide the Council's approach to management of the public Countryside sites and SANG.
- 10.2 Adoption of the Strategy provides a tool that informs landscape scale habitat and access management, and will support targeting resources, external funding and partnership work.
- 10.3 The alternative option would be not to adopt a strategic document and develop management plans for individual sites only.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 Officers recommend adopting the proposed Countryside Vision document as Strategy to deliver a landscape scale approach and partnership working in Countryside management.
- 11.2 The Countryside Vision clearly states the Council's ambition to deliver a long-term sustainable network of Countryside sites that provides safe access for recreation as well as a network of wildlife habitat that future generations can access and enjoy. This document will support the Countryside Section to strategically prioritise resources and identify funding gaps.
- 11.3 The Document also provides clearly defined aims for the Guildford's Countryside estate and provides a statement to public, partner organisations and external funders the Countryside Services ambition to deliver value for money.

**12. Background Papers**

12.1 Countryside Vision Document.

**13. Appendices**

None.

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***A VISION FOR GUILDFORD'S  
COUNTRYSIDE  
2016 - 2026***

***DRAFT 25/01/2017***

**ADD FORWARD**

## **1. Background (Where we are)**

Guildford Borough Council (GBC) owns and manages 52 sites as countryside sites covering an area of nearly 700ha, 2.5% of the Borough's land area. Guildford Borough Council also manages approximately 32km of rural road verges on behalf of Surrey County Council.

These areas contribute to a network of publically accessible countryside as well as wildlife habitat managed by other landowners, such as Surrey County Council, National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust. In order to recognise the importance of working across landownership boundaries, GBC is represented in a number of landscape partnerships, including Surrey Nature Partnership, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership and the Surrey Heathland Project.

Within the GBC's countryside estate, two heathland sites (Bullswater Common and Pirbright Heath) are afforded strong protection through inclusion in the Thames Basin Heath SPA (Special Protection Area) and the Ash to Brookwood Heaths SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Shalford Water Meadows is included in the Wey Valley Meadows SSSI. The Borough's countryside estate also includes five Local Nature Reserves, the highest protection Local Authorities can designate. The designation of Riverside Nature Reserve that covers Abbotswood Paddock, Thorneycroft Wood, Weylea Farm, Stoke Water Meadows and Riverside recognises the connectivity of these areas as an ecological unit.

Guildford Borough Council's countryside sites provide opportunities for recreation, physical activity and access to nature. A significant proportion of site users visit the countryside to walk their dog. There is an increasing trend to visit open spaces in order to carry out physical activity and exercise. The education sector recognises the importance of outdoor education, for example in the growing trend of Forest Schools, and Guildford's countryside sites can provide opportunities for education events.

Visitor counters are installed at Chantry Wood and Riverside Nature Reserve, which show that visitor numbers have almost doubled between 2012 and 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Guildford Borough Council is covered by four National Landscape Character Areas (NCA); Thames Basin Heaths, Thames Basin Lowlands, North Downs and Wealden Green Sand.<sup>2</sup>

Natural England have, in line with Biodiversity 2020<sup>3</sup>, developed NCA profile documents for areas that share similar landscape characteristics to provide a decision making framework for the natural environment. They contain a number of statements of opportunity to maintain and enhance the landscape for a sustainable future.

87ha of Guildford's Countryside, mainly at Chantry Woods, lie within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

## 2. Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

The countryside sites provide a range of eco system services. Eco system services are the benefits people obtain from functioning eco systems. These include provisioning services (wood fuel, grazing pasture), regulating services (flood alleviation, water purification, carbon sequestration) and cultural services (recreation).

In addition, functioning habitats and ecosystems are necessary to enable the development of the ecosystem services, for example through water cycling, nutrient cycling, soil formation and biomass production.

Eco system services are not only provided by larger countryside sites. Small spaces such as road verges and the edges of common land provide opportunities to provide ecosystem services in the landscape.

To many people the landscape of the countryside also has an aesthetic and cultural value that is difficult to quantify, but contributes to the health and wellbeing in the community.

Increases in population densities in the Southeast, and the resulting increase in housing, reduce the availability of natural capital whilst increasing the demand on ecosystem services. It is therefore important that we manage the natural capital on our landholdings with the view to continue providing benefits for future generations.

In January 2015, the Natural Capital Committee published its third State of Natural Capital<sup>4</sup> report that sets out a number of recommendations for achieving the Government's vision, "to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than it inherited".

In its green growth agenda the Government plans to strengthen the green economy by growing sustainably, while reducing emissions, using natural resources effectively and becoming more resilient for long term economic benefit.<sup>5,6</sup>

The State of Natural Capital report highlights the importance of green spaces to our physical and mental health as well as importance for the economy. The Department of Health suggests that access to green space reduces national health care costs by £2billion/year, especially through the positive long-term effects on mental health.

It is understood that poor air quality affects the economy negatively, and this can be applied to an increased risk of flooding and reduced availability of fresh water.

The Government updated its Planning Practice Guidance in February 2016 and added further details on green infrastructure within the guidance's Natural Environment Section that include guidance on the need for long term planning for green infrastructure including its management and maintenance. The updates also include a clarification that the Community Infrastructure Levy can be used as funding mechanism.<sup>7</sup>

The Surrey Nature Partnership launched "Naturally Richer: A Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Surrey" in November 2015<sup>8</sup>. This document provides a targeted strategy to deliver its vision for a thriving, resilient and attractive county providing natural benefits to all

who live and work here. It highlights the value of nature for Surrey's people and economy, but also the pressures through unsustainable use of land and its resources. The strategy lists sustainable land management, smart economic growth and health, wellbeing and quality of life as strategic priorities and the principles and mechanism for delivery of these priorities. The Surrey Nature Partnership intends to develop an investment plan for Surrey's Natural Capital in 2017.

The Capital Investment Strategy is informed by the Valuing Surrey study<sup>9</sup> that the Surrey Nature Partnership commissioned in a first attempt to gather information about the County's natural capital asset and its link to local economic development. This study focussed on woodlands and the River Wey catchment. The value of Surrey's woodland areas is estimated at £90 million annually, providing a resource for 18 million visits, reduction of healthcare costs, carbon sequestration and to a small extent timber value. Scaling this estimate down, Guildford's woodlands would provide an approximate annual value of over £750,000 to society.

In 2014, Guildford Borough Council's cost related to flooding was £434,000, of which £74,000 is attributed to the loss of natural capital within the Wey flood zone in the past 20 years.

The Valuing Surrey study does not quantify all benefits derived from functioning healthy woodland and wetland habitat, nor does it include any other habitats that also deliver benefits. Therefore the economic value that all habitats can provide towards reducing health care costs and to the local economy is much greater than estimated.

### **3. Where do we want to be: Our Objectives**

We have developed objectives for our Countryside Sites that outline our ambitions of what we want our Countryside sites to deliver. These objectives are directed by legislation and national policies for the Countryside and Biodiversity.

National Policy aims to secure bigger and better habitats that are better connected in order to provide a sustainable future for our ecosystems and the services they provide to our residents.

Guildford's Countryside sites are part of this network of habitats. Our management objectives aim to contribute to the regional and national biodiversity targets.

As landowner, Guildford Borough Council has an obligation to protect and safeguard the Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and registered Commons for future generations<sup>10</sup>.

Funding programmes are available in order to support the implementation of national biodiversity targets. The Countryside Team holds a Higher Level Stewardship agreement (2009 – 2019) with Natural England that funds work towards our objectives. The agreement prescribes targets and management prescriptions for each site that aim to achieve ecological improvements<sup>11</sup>.

Our Objectives for Guildford's Countryside

- Guildford Borough Council provides an accessible, high quality and sustainable open space network, which ensures that the social, environmental and economic benefits of open spaces are enhanced for current and future generations of our community.
- Guildford Borough Council's Countryside sites contribute to the vision set out in the Governments' Natural Environment White Paper (The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, 2011) to create better, bigger and more connected wildlife habitat networks.
- Habitats are enhanced in line with the landscape character and habitat types, in order to create a resilient ecological network.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in favourable ecological condition.
- The River Wey and its catchment is a clean, valued and ecologically functioning river catchment area.
- GBC's Countryside Sites provide an outdoor recreation resource for sustainable and managed recreation activities outside the Thames Basin Heath SPA to ensure visitor pressure does not damage what we have.
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces reduce pressure on the Thames Basin Heath SPA without compromising nature conservation values of existing sites.
- Characteristic landscape features, archaeological areas and important views are enhanced and maintained in favourable condition.
- GBC's Countryside sites contribute to the provision of Eco System Services to benefit Guildford Borough's communities.
- Guildford Borough's Countryside sites are recognised as GBC owned green spaces and provide a safe and pleasant environment to visit.
- The management of GBC's Countryside engages the community by providing an educational resource and enabling and supporting volunteering.
- Guildford Borough Council plays an active role in working with partnerships towards achieving countryside management on a landscape scale.

#### **4. Purpose of this document**

This vision statement will provide a framework to enable proactive management of Guildford's Countryside and development of appropriate action plans for site management.

This vision covers the countryside sites that Guildford Borough Council manages. Works to implement this vision may cover additional areas in order to achieve landscape and habitat connectivity as well as provision for sustainable transport links. Similarly, there may be a need to control off-site influences that affect GBC's Countryside sites. However, this document does not represent or replace a strategy to improve and enhance the green infrastructure, landscape or biodiversity for the whole of GBC's administrative area.

We accept that achieving some aspects of the vision requires additional resources beyond the existing GBC Countryside Budget. This vision will enable a targeted process to establish partnerships and to secure external funds.

## 5. Vision statement

**Guildford Borough Council aims to manage its Countryside estate to maintain and enhance its landscape, natural capital and ecological value to continue providing benefits for future generations.**

**We will work in Partnership with residents and organisations to improve sustainability and to protect our countryside, whilst balancing this with the needs of the rural and wider economy.**

**Guildford's natural environment and landscapes will form part of the overall provision of Surrey's ecosystem services, creating a coherent network, for people, recreation and wildlife, through supporting the implementation of traditional management.**



## 6. Policies and Legislation

### 6.1 Legislation

- **The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2008 – Section 40** places a duty on Local Authorities to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity in carrying out their functions.
- **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)** protects animals, plants, and certain habitats in the UK.
- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** regulates public rights of way, protects SSSIs and AONBs, and strengthens wildlife enforcement.
- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010** place a duty on public bodies to have regard to the EC Habitats Directive in carrying out their function, which includes the protection of 'European sites', and 'European protected species'.
- The **Commons Act 2006** regulates the management of registered common land.

#### **The following legislation is relevant to site management activities:**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - Those who create risk as a result of work activity are responsible for the protection of workers and members of the public from any consequences
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) - This requires employers to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 - It is unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person
- Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 and 1984 - Sets out a duty of care to visitors – infrastructure must be 'safe'
- The Open Spaces Act 1906 - Defines open space and contains provisions for open spaces to be transferred to the Council's management

## 6.2 National policies

- **Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services:**  
This biodiversity strategy for England builds on the Natural Environment White Paper and sets out the strategic direction for national biodiversity policy to implement international and EU commitments.
- **The Natural Environment White Paper The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature** outlines the government's vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years.
- **National Character Areas:** NCA profiles are guidance documents for the delivery of Biodiversity 2020 to help communities to inform decision-making at a landscape scale
- **National ecosystems assessment**  
The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA) was the first comprehensive analysis of the UK's natural environment. Published in 2011 it concluded that the natural world and its ecosystems are important to our well-being and economic prosperity. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment Follow-on (UK NEAFO, 2014) provides new information and tools to help decision-makers understand the wider value of our ecosystems and the services they offer us.
- **Planning practice guidance**  
The Planning Practice Guidance supports the delivery of the National Planning Policy Framework in England and includes sections on Natural Environment which include Landscape, Biodiversity and ecosystems, Green Infrastructure and Brownfield land, soils and agricultural land

## 6.3 Regional policies

- **Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: The Surrey Nature Partnership** developed the BOA documents as local documents to inform the delivery of Biodiversity 2020's aspiration for the creation and restoration of 200,000ha of priority habitat.
- **Naturally Richer: A Natural Capital Investment Strategy for Surrey** developed by the Surrey Nature Partnership sets out initial priorities and mechanisms to develop an Investment Plan for Surrey's natural capital
- **Surrey Wildlife Trust's Living Landscapes Strategy** has been developed to provide a strategy for Surrey to implement Biodiversity 2020 on a regional level
- **Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan:** Local authorities have a duty of regard to the AONB designation.
- **Blackwater Valley Countryside Strategy** is implemented by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership to provide a unified approach towards a continuous green space along the Blackwater Valley.

- **River Wey Catchment Implementation Plan (CIP)** presents a prioritised programme of actions to achieve Good Ecological Status (GES) for the Wey catchment to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive. The Surrey Wildlife Trust Living Landscape Partnership on behalf of the Environment Agency hosts the CIP.

#### **6.4 Guildford Borough Council Policies:**

Guildford Borough Council's Corporate Plan covers six fundamental themes that support our vision:

- Our Borough - ensuring that proportional and managed growth for future generations meets our community and economic needs.
- Our Economy - improving prosperity for all by enabling a dynamic, productive and sustainable economy that provides jobs and homes for local people.
- Our Infrastructure - working with partners to deliver the massive improvements needed in the next 20 years, including changes to tackle congestion issues.
- Our Environment - improving sustainability and protecting our countryside, balancing this with the needs of the rural and wider economy.
- Our Society - believing that every person matters and concentrating on the needs of the less advantaged.
- Your Council - ensuring a sustainable financial future to deliver improved and innovative services.

The Corporate Plan includes the following priorities:

- Work with partners to provide a high quality, diverse environment by ensuring sufficient and appropriate green, blue and open space and a resilient ecological network is maintained
- Support the River Wey Catchment Partnership to improve the water quality of the river and the management of its catchment.

#### **Guildford Draft Local Plan**

The emerging Guildford local plan includes a vision of delivering sustainable growth. This includes the ambition of protecting and enhancing the environment and balancing the needs of all residents and visitors with the desired outcome of improved overall wellbeing. This ambition is supported by the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance our heritage assets and improve the quality of our built and natural environment.
- To protect those areas designated as Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty for their biodiversity and landscape characteristics.
- To ensure that new development is designed and located to minimise its impact on the environment and that it mitigates, and is adapted for, climate change.

The Parks and Leisure Service will work towards these objectives in their Countryside site management and will seek developer contributions, such as CIL and S106, where appropriate.

### **Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD**

The SPA Strategy sets out how development will be mitigated in the borough by identifying where SANGs are available to provide “avoidance” of negative visitor impact to the SPA.

### **Rural Economic Strategy**

The Council’s Rural Economic Strategy aims to develop sustainable rural communities and businesses. The strategy lists five policy priorities for the rural economy including:

- Priority 3: Landscape Management and Countryside Vision
- Priority 4: Green Space Health and Wellbeing for better Quality of Life

## **6.5 Local Partnerships and Initiatives**

- **Surrey Nature Partnership** is a statutory body formally recognised by central government. It is a key part of delivering the objectives of the Natural Environment White Paper linking business, nature and the economy in Surrey. Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) share equal status with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and both have a duty to work together.<sup>12</sup>
- The **Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project** monitors visitor numbers and bird species for the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and provides a rangers service as part of the mitigation measures to protect the Thames Basin Heaths from the impacts of new residential development. Natural England hosts the project.
- The **Wey Landscape Partnership** is administered by the Surrey Wildlife Trust and aims to improve our local waters in the Wey Catchment and achieve environmental goals under the European Water Framework Directive and Local Development Frameworks
- **The Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum (SCREF)** was established to provide opportunities in delivering key improvements and to develop a shared vision for countryside and rural initiatives in Surrey.
- The **Surrey Heathland Partnership** contract manages works on the Thames Basin Heaths on behalf of local authorities and other partners and provides a contact for the local communities.
- The **Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership** carries out works in the Blackwater Valley on behalf of the local authorities that border the Valley, including wildlife conservation and access improvements.

- The **Basingstoke Canal Partnership** is set up to manage the Basingstoke Canal SSSI for the benefit of Canal users and the wider community.
- The **Surrey Hills AONB** (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) **Enterprises** aims to promote the Surrey Hills, as a national asset for the benefit of local businesses, in order to enhance our community and conserve our unique heritage.
- **West Surrey Woodlands Project** is an initiative of the Surrey Hills Enterprises that aims to develop partnership work between woodland managers to improve economically viable woodland management for biodiversity and recreation, promote public support for woodland operations and develop community engagement.
- **Chilworth Together** are a group of Chilworth residents who aim to preserve, protect and enhance Chilworth village, the surrounding countryside and the unique heritage, especially the historic Gunpowder Mills.
- **Local Volunteer Groups** manage the Local Natures Reserves at Fox Corner and Snakey Lane on behalf of Guildford Borough Council. In addition, the Guildford Borough Council Countryside team works with Volunteer Groups at Pewley Downs, Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, Riverside Nature Reserve and Heathfield Nature Reserve.
- **Swingbridge** boats are run by the Surrey Care Trust to increase skills in young people through volunteering. Groups work on sites adjacent to the River Wey.

## 7. Issues (opportunities and challenges)

The following list identifies a number of factors and current trends that influence GBC's Countryside sites. GBC's Countryside Team will need to manage these influences in order to achieve the vision and objectives for the Countryside sites. Policies to manage these factors on specific habitats are detailed in section 8.

- **Legislation:** The site management objectives and operations are required to comply with current legislation.
- **Eco System Services and Green Infrastructure:** Countryside site management should maximise the benefits that GBC's Countryside sites can deliver for society and economy, for example flood alleviation, health benefits, wood fuel etc.
- **Social and economic costs:** Lack of investment in the provision of a healthy environment and well-kept accessible green spaces increases costs to public services, including health care and anti-social behaviour. A healthy environment is recognised to provide a positive contribution to local economic development.
- **Biodiversity loss and climate change:** Local Authorities have a role in halting biodiversity loss and ensure that habitats are resilient enough to adjust to climate change.
- **Visitor pressure:** Increasing visitor numbers, including dog walkers, is the biggest factor that influences the development of the Countryside sites. Site layout and provision of infrastructure need to consider current and future visitor management.
- **Inappropriate site uses:** Site management is influenced by the actions of site users, which requires both re-active and active approaches to ensure the sites deliver their intended functions and reduce antisocial behaviour and trespass.
- **Dog fouling and litter:** Impact on visitor experiences and on wildlife.
- **Conflicting uses:** Visitor management needs to address areas where site users impact on each other.
- **Developing usage trends:** Trends, such as the increase in visits to the Countryside for health reasons in the past five years, should be considered in the site management.
- **Car Parking and access to properties:** Car parking is becoming a significant issue in line with the increase in site visitors.
- **Shifting baseline syndrome:** Public perception of a healthy natural environment has significantly changed over the past decades. As a result, residents are less aware of biodiversity loss, and live and work in a poorer environment than our predecessors.
- **Habitat succession:** Left unmanaged habitats will change over time, usually through scrub development, resulting in biodiversity loss.

- Tree diseases: Tree stock management will need to take into account potential outbreak of diseases such as Ash die back or occurrence of pest species like Oak Processionary Moth.
- Non-native invasive species: Non-native species cause damage to natural habitats and control of some species is subject to legislation.
- Hydrology: On site drainage and water levels influence site management and access.
- Flood alleviation: Water meadows, Fen and Reed bed habitats can be used to store floodwater, which would also provide benefits for biodiversity.
- Biodiversity off-setting and mitigation: New schemes can influence habitat connectivity.
- Funding: There are limitations on existing budgets but also opportunities to secure external funding and partnership working.
- Neighbourhood Plans: Emerging local Neighbourhood Plans should fully consider the natural environment without resisting positive change in site management.

## **8. Habitat Policies:**

We have grouped Guildford's Countryside sites into the following habitat categories that will allow application of the same management policies to sites that experience similar issues and require similar management. Detailed policies are outlined in the following sections.

- a) Heathland
- b) Wey Valley Meadows
- c) Woodland
- d) Downland
- e) Open Commons
- f) Mixed Urban Fringe Habitat
- g) Conservation Road Verges

In developing the objectives in this Vision Guildford Borough Council aims to manage the Countryside sites in line with national and regional policies and guidance (Section 6) and obligations for the management of Special Protection Areas (SPA)<sup>13</sup>, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and registered Common Land (Appendix 1).



a. **Heathland**

**Habitat resource**

Lowland Heathland is an internationally rare and declining habitat. Bullswater and Pirbright Commons are designated as SSSI and afforded protection within the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), although the other Heathland sites also add to the SPA habitat network.

Habitats are dominated by *Calluna* heathland, small areas of sphagnum mosses and acid grassland that supports protected heathland bird species including the woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler. A colony of protected Silver Studded Blue butterflies, a species of principle importance under the NERC Act, is present at Dawney Hill. Areas of pine and birch have established, out-competing the heather communities. There are large areas of gorse that both provide habitat for heathland birds as well competing with the lower heather shrubs.

Sites: Bullswater Common, Pirbright Common, Chapel Lane, Dawney Hill, The Gardens, West Heath

**Issues**

- Habitat decline from lack of management and developing woodland
- Sites provide habitat for ground nesting birds and are sensitive to visitor pressure
- Lack of public understanding and public opposition to heathland restoration
- Fire risk
- Flood risk

**Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. Heathland SSSIs are in favourable condition, and other heathland sites fulfil favourable SSSI criteria
2. The heathland habitat is suitable for SPA bird species nightjar, wood lark and Dartford warbler
3. The heathland habitat supports silver studded blue and other specialist species
4. The heathlands fulfil a flood retention role
5. Heathland management utilises the opportunities of the wood fuel market
6. Members of the public understand the role of heathland as habitat resource, their sensitivity to disturbance and the need for management

**Heathland Policies:**

- We will restore and increase areas of open heathland for the benefit of the SPA bird species and heathland priority species
- We will prevent further woodland development on existing open heathland
- We will protect heathland sites from inappropriate uses that may cause damage to the integrity of the habitat
- We will maintain low key public access to our heathlands without encouraging increases in visitor numbers

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Implement the heathland restoration work in accordance with GBC's Higher Level Stewardship Agreement
2. Prevent scrub development on open heathland habitat
3. Maintain the Partnership with the Surrey Heathlands Project and Thames Basin Heath Project to improve, extend and connect habitat and manage visitors
4. Work with Natural England's Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project to provide a warden scheme on our SPA sites.
5. Use conservation grazing as the main heathland management tool
6. Use wood fuel opportunities to manage heathlands efficiently
7. Keep residents informed of major site works through education and interpretation
8. Maintain public rights of way and permissive access routes
9. Implement fire prevention plans for heathland sites

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Surrey Heathland Project, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Pirbright Parish Council, Pirbright Flood Forum, GBC Planning Policy Team

**b. Wey Valley Meadows**

**Habitat resource**

The River Wey floodplain widens when entering Guildford Borough, which has led to the establishment of wet meadow areas with naturally high ground water. Shalford Water Meadows is designated as SSSI. Reed beds and fen habitat are present as well as small areas of wet woodland. These habitats are important for wading birds such as lapwings (red list of conserving concern), reed bed bird species and owls as well as bats. All bats are European protected species. In combination with adjacent sites, the Wey Valley Meadows can potentially provide habitat for the priority species otter and water vole. Riverside Nature Reserve is an important stronghold for harvest mice.

Sites: Shalford Water Meadows, Woodbridge Meadows, Parsonage Water Meadows, Stoke Water Meadows, Riverside Nature Reserve, Burpham Court Farm, Weylea Farm

**Issues**

- Visitor pressure on habitat and ground nesting birds
- The need for SANG provision in the Wey Valley
- Management implications due to wetness of the sites
- Scrub development and natural succession changes the habitat and site character
- Invasive species
- Fishing
- Flooding preventing access
- Low water levels lead to drying out of fen habitat

**Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. Shalford Water Meadow SSSI is in favourable condition, and other wetland sites fulfil favourable SSSI criteria
2. The river and riparian habitat are in good ecological status as defined by the Water Framework Directive
3. Wetland bird species (e.g. lapwing, reed warbler) breed in the Wey Valley Meadows
4. The regionally important Harvest Mouse population at Riverside LNR and Burpham Court Farm is healthy and stable
5. The Wey Valley Meadows fulfil a flood alleviation role
6. The Wey Valley landscape character is maintained
7. Riverside Nature Reserve and Burpham Court Farm are regionally recognised flagship sites
8. People are aware of the significance of the Wey Valley Meadows and role they play in ecological and cultural landscape

**Wey Valley Meadow Policies:**

- We will maintain areas of open fen for the benefit of wetland priority species
- We will promote the existing SANG sites, access to them and the awareness of their importance as natural habitat. In order to achieve this we will manage public access to prevent deterioration of wetland habitat and protect associated priority species whilst improving access routes in less sensitive areas.
- We will protect our Wey Valley Meadow sites from inappropriate uses. Inappropriate uses differ from site to site with particular strong limitations at Shalford Watermeadows SSSI. We may introduce bye laws that will support this policy.
- We will maintain and where appropriate enhance the Wey Valley Meadows ability to function as flood storage areas

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Implement of the maintenance work specified in the Higher Level Stewardship Agreement
2. Carry out conservation grazing as main site maintenance tool
3. Establish conservation zones at Riverside Nature Reserve
4. Maintain openness of the wet meadows through tree and scrub management
5. Maintain public rights of way and permissive access routes
6. Manage water levels for positive ecological management and where necessary create new ditches and sluices
7. Eradicate invasive species
8. Work with Natural England, Environment Agency and GBC Strategic Planning to develop the SANG sites Riverside, Parsonage and Burpham Court Farm
9. Work with the Wey Valley Partnership towards implementation of the Wey Valley Catchment Plan, including fish passes
10. Work with the Environment Agency towards implementation of Water Framework Directive<sup>14</sup> targets
11. Work with partners to implement a surface water management plan that ensures the water quality in rivers and wetland habitats is improved.

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Natural England, Environment Agency, Wey Landscape Partnership, Strategic Planning Team, Engineer Team, Surrey Flood Risk Partnership

### c. Woodland

#### **Habitat resource**

Approximatively 380ha of GBC's Countryside land is woodland. Chantry Woods and Merrow Downs represent the largest woodland areas comprising a mix of hazel coppice, conifer plantations, and mixed deciduous woodland. Areas of Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands are present, the largest one in Thornycroft Wood. Shalford and Peasmarsh Commons and Chilworth Gunpowder Mills represent areas of wet woodland.

Sites: Chantry Wood, Merrow Downs Wood, Thornycroft Wood, Short Wood, Merrow Common Wood, Peasmarsh, The Mount (Henley Wood), Westborough Woods, Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, Newbridge Common, Moore Close, Speedwell Close (Merrow Common), Weybrook, Jubilee Wood

Woodland Areas of: Effingham Common, Shalford Common, Gosden Common, Compton Common, Lakeside LNR, Tytings Farm (SANG)

#### **Issues**

- Lack of management
- Lack of habitat variety, monoculture
- Development of wood fuel market in Surrey
- Public opposition to woodland management works
- Inappropriate uses
- Scheduled Ancient Monument at Chilworth Gunpowder Mills
- Tree diseases (Ash die back)
- Oak Processionary Moth
- Invasive species within wet woodland
- Flooding within wet woodland
- Tree fall from heavy wind

#### **Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. Woodlands are sustainably managed for both timber and habitat resource in line with the UK Forestry Standard
2. Chantry Woods functions effectively as SANG site
3. Woodland habitat contains a diverse range of habitat within the canopy, shrub and ground layers
4. Tree shelterbelts are maintained to complement the adjacent habitats
5. Ancient and Semi ancient woodland is protected and in good ecological condition
6. Dormice populations are healthy and stable (Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, Merrow Downs)
7. Public have an understanding of woodland as habitat resource and the need for management
8. The landscape character of the Surrey Hills AONB is preserved and views are maintained
9. Chilworth Gunpowder Mills is a flagship site in the Tillingbourne Valley

**Woodland Policies:**

- We will maintain woodland habitat for protected and priority species, including bats and dormice. Where appropriate we will carry out forestry operations to improve biodiversity in our woodlands
- We will manage public access to prevent conflict of uses through designation of walking, riding and cycling areas
- We will protect ancient and ancient semi natural woodland from inappropriate uses and inappropriate management
- We will maintain access to the Heritage Features at Chilworth Gunpowder Mills whilst at the same time improve the natural habitat

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Carry out woodland maintenance operations to develop understorey layers and to protect and improve ancient semi natural woodland.
2. Work with partner organisations to utilise the wood fuel market for woodland management
3. Create partnerships to enable sustainable coppice management
4. Raise awareness of management activities
5. Remove non-native invasive species
6. Manage woodlands in accordance with SAM Management Plan at Chilworth Gunpowder Mills and enhance interpretation of SAM features
7. Manage woodland access for recreation and management operations
8. Work in partnership with the Forestry Commission to achieve UK Forestry Standard
9. Work in Partnership with Surrey Hills AONB towards implementation of the AONB management plan and to co-ordinate recreational uses
10. Maintain public rights of way and permissive access routes
11. Carry out ditch maintenance to avoid flooding and manage habitats

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Natural England, Forestry Commission, AONB Office

#### **d. Downland**

##### **Habitat resource**

Downland is formed of the Chalk grassland areas of the North Downs with adjacent hedgerows and scrub areas. Chalk grassland habitat developed through sheep grazing on thin, free draining and nutrient poor soil. It is one of the most diverse wildlife habitats in Western Europe with up to 60 species per square metre. Many of the species that occur on chalk grassland are specialists that struggle to live in other habitats, including a variety of nationally rare and protected orchids. The rare and protected Small Blue butterfly and the Grizzled Skipper, both priority species under the NERC Act, occur at Pewley Downs together with another 24 species of butterfly.

It is estimated that up to 80% of chalk grassland habitat has been lost in the last century through development, change in land use and recreational pressure.

The fields at Chantry Woods, although on acidic soil, also form part of the rolling Downsland Landscape.

Sites: Pewley Downs, The Mount, Merrow Downs, Chantry Wood Fields (Acid Grassland), Tytings Farm

##### **Issues**

- Habitat decline from lack of management, nutrient enrichment and natural succession
- Habitat is sensitive to visitor pressure

##### **Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. Downland sites are in favourable condition with typical species present
2. The views and openness of the Downland landscape is maintained
3. Members of the public understand the importance and national context of Downsland habitat in the North Downs.

**Downland Policies:**

- We will maintain areas of open Downland for the benefit of chalk grassland priority species, including orchid and butterfly species
- We will manage public access to prevent deterioration of habitat and protect associated priority species

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Implement of the maintenance work specified in the Higher Level Stewardship Agreement
2. Maintain appropriate levels of scrub cover to maintain the grassland character of Downland sites and where necessary carry out works to restore grassland areas
3. Carry out conservation grazing as main site maintenance tool
4. Maintain views and openness of the Downland landscape
5. Manage sites to minimise impact on ground nesting birds
6. Maintain public rights of way and permissive access routes
7. Work with the Merrow Downs Golf Course to ensure sustainable Downland Management
8. Work with partners to implement landscape scale projects to target priority species

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Natural England, Guildford Golf Club, Butterfly Conservation, Pewley Down Volunteers



**e. Open Commons**

**Habitat resource**

Guildford owns several areas of Common Land that represent a mixed open habitat, usually heavily used and containing a variety of features ranging from long grass, scrub areas and ponds to amenity areas such as cricket and football fields. Most Commons include clearly defined woodland areas managed as woodland.

Sites: Effingham Common, Shalford Common, Compton Common, Peasmarsh Common (Shalford Common), St Catherine's Common (Shalford Common), Merrow Common (Kingfisher Drive)

**Issues**

- Common Legislation influences management operations and site uses
- Encroachments
- User conflicts, including horse riding
- Public events and sports facilities
- Perceived lack of management
- Habitat succession
- Invasive species
- Flooding
- Antisocial behaviour
- Fishing

**Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. The landscape character of our Common Land is enhanced
2. The natural habitat of the Commons is maintained and improving
3. Encroachment on Common Land is contained
4. The Commons provide a space for sustainable community uses, including fishing, sport, horse riding, walking
5. The open areas are free from inappropriate scrub development
6. Historic features are maintained and preserved

**Policies:**

- We will maintain character of open common land whilst improving meadow and road verge habitats
- We will enable public events and recreational activities that conform to Common Land legislation
- We will manage public access to prevent conflict of uses through designation of walking, riding and cycling areas
- We will protect habitat for priority species and where necessary put measures in place to manage visitors
- We will protect Common Land from illegal encroachment

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Implement management regimes that increase biodiversity and residents satisfaction
2. Communicate site management policies to stakeholders
3. Enable suitable community use of common land to raise income and discourage inappropriate behaviour. This includes, for example, public fairs, health activities and fishing.
4. Manage conflicting sites uses
5. Carry out management activities within legislative framework of Common Land
6. Maintain public rights of way and permissive access routes
7. Maintain network of ditches for drainage and habitat

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Parish Councils, Commoners, Open Space Society

**f. Mixed Urban Fringe Habitat**

**Habitat resource**

The mixed urban fringe habitat is represented by a number of sites that contain various small habitat types, and could be described as less formal local parks. Site features are ponds, meadows, scrub fringes and trees. Usually the site's amenity and wildlife value is this mix of features present.

Sites: Lakeside, Hollybush, Shaw Fields, Rowan Field, Abbotswood Paddock, Fox Corner Nature Reserve, Heathfield Nature Reserve, Snakey Lane Nature Reserve, The Villages Community Wildlife Area, Send Hill, Onslow Arboretum, Tongham Railway

**Issues**

- Fly tipping
- Inappropriate site uses
- Fishing
- Access to grazing sites
- Landscape Character Identity in the Blackwater Valley
- Flooding
- Invasive species
- Perceived lack of management
- Habitat succession
- Encroachment

**Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. The urban fringe habitat is preserved and improved
2. Lakeside Nature Reserve is a flagship site for residents in Ash
3. Local Volunteer and Community Groups are enabled to manage the Nature Reserves at Heathfield, Fox Corner and Snaky Lane

**Urban Fringe Habitat Policies:**

- We will maintain habitat diversity for protected and priority species.
- We will enable public events and recreational activities that do not conflict with other uses and protection of biodiversity
- We will support Local Volunteer Groups in the development of site management plans at Heathfield, Fox Corner and Snaky Lane LNRs in order to enable appropriate management

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Maintain the Partnership with the Blackwater Valley Partnership and Basingstoke Canal Authority to improve, extend and connect habitat and manage visitors
2. Support Local Groups in dealing with issues such as site safety, invasive species and tree management
3. Work in partnership with local Volunteer Groups at Heathfield, Fox Corner and Snaky Lane LNRs
4. Manage fishing licences
5. Use conservation grazing as management tool where appropriate
6. Enable and support local events at Lakeside Nature Reserve

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Local Volunteer Groups, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Blackwater Valley Partnership, Basingstoke Canal Authority, Natural England, Parish Councils

## **g. Conservation Road Verges**

### **Habitat resource**

Surrey County Council carried out a conservation verge mapping exercise that identified road verges with appropriate soils and sufficient existing seed banks that are large enough to support the local ecological network. Although affected by the impact of traffic, road verges rarely experience other disturbance. Roadside ditches provide habitat for the common toad and other amphibians. Guildford Borough Council manages approximately 32km of road verges as rural verges on behalf of Surrey County Council. These rural verges receive two cuts per annum and allow the vegetation to grow between cutting times. Most of these verges are part of our Countryside Sites.

Sites: A246 East Horsley to Merrow, A31- Hogsback – chalk grassland areas, A248 and A281 (Shalford Common), A25 (Stoke Park), The Mount

### **Issues**

- Litter
- Fly tipping
- Erosion of verge by car parking
- Site access
- Sight lines
- Inappropriate cutting regime or planting
- Flooding and ditch clearance
- Invasive species
- Perceived lack of management
- Habitat succession
- Contractor performance

### **Objectives: Where do we want to be?**

1. The habitat on the conservation road verges is preserved and improved
2. The establishment of conservation verges is supported by residents and road users

**Conservation Verge Policies:**

- We will maintain conservation road verges to provide habitat diversity
- We will maximise opportunities to establish conservation verges where appropriate
- We will manage our conservation road verges without compromising road safety requirements

**Actions: How do we get there?**

1. Identify and map conservation verges
2. Implement the conservation verge management through the Highways maintenance contract.
3. Work with partners such as the Surrey Biodiversity Partnership to identify new habitat creation opportunities, best practice for implementation and monitoring

**Stakeholders: Who is involved?**

Local residents, Highway Authority, Parish Councils, Surrey Biodiversity Partnership

## 9. Further Action/ Next steps

The table below outlines the major steps over the next three years towards implementing the Vision in this document. The implementation of the actions below will create the conditions to further review and improve the management of Guildford Borough Council's Countryside. This section will be reviewed in 2020.

#	Action	Responsible Officer	Target date
	<p>We will develop management plans for priority GBC Countryside sites (see Appendix 1) to implement the objectives of this vision statement taking into account the features presents on each site and external influences of their condition.</p> <p>The site management plans will detail the works necessary to fulfil GBC's statutory obligations, external agreements and to enhance the wider ecological network. This may include projects for which additional funding will need to be secured.</p>	Countryside Manager	2019
	<p>We will implement positive management on all our sites: Positive management (as defined in DEFRA's guidance for implementing the biodiversity duty and the Single data set 160-00)<sup>15,16</sup> means active management to maintain or improve the ecological value of the site. Priority sites for implementation are the designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and SANGs.</p>	Countryside Manager	2020
	<p>We will develop existing and new SANG sites with the aim to enhance the Borough's ecological network: This will include the development of spending plans to ensure sound financial management. Priority SANG sites are Effingham Common (Access , drainage and biodiversity improvements and Common Land permissions), Parsonage Watermeadows (Access creation), Tyting Farm (Masterplan), Burpham Court Farm (Masterplan)</p>	SANGs Officer	2020
	<p>We will develop a Woodland Strategy with the Forestry Commission: The woodland strategy will support the objectives of this vision statement to agree a woodland management programme on a landscape scale.</p>	Tree and Woodlands Officer	2018
	<p>Signage of sites: We will install corporate signage at site entrances to make the site recognisable as GBC Countryside site and provide adequate access points to sites.</p>	Countryside Manager	2019
	<p>Education/interpretation/events: We will improve interpretation to flagship countryside sites and encourage public events that improve understanding of the role the sites play to maintain a sustainable natural resource for our residents.</p>	Countryside Manager	2019
	<p>Partnerships and volunteers: We will work with others to develop partnerships to ensure GBCs site will link into a landscape scale site management approach for the benefit of nature conservation. See Section 5.4</p>	Countryside Manager	2020

## **10. Resources**

The Countryside team are a Countryside Manager, 1 Senior Countryside Warden, 3 Countryside Wardens, 1 Tree and Woodlands Officer, 1 Tree Inspector and 1 SANG Officer.

The resource requirements for implementation of this vision will be largely covered by the Countryside Section's core budget. Specific projects and infrastructure repairs may require additional funding, for example through the Community Infrastructure Levy or Guildford Borough Council's Capital Programme.

The Countryside Team holds a Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England that covers the period from 1/3/2009 until 28/2/2019. This agreement provides additional funding to carry out specific works for the improvement of natural habitats.

The development of sites as Suitable Alternative Green Space (SANG) is supported through the collection of a SANG tariff for development within the zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heath SPA. The zone of influence and tariff are outlined in the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD.

Further opportunities to fund habitat enhancement work may arise from the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMs), Biodiversity offsetting, landfill tax funds and the Community Infrastructure Levy.



**11. Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: List of Sites and designations**

**Appendix 2: Site Map**

**Appendix 3: Policy and Guidance Documents**

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**Appendix 1**

**A) List of Countryside Sites, Date: 26/01/2017**

No	Site Name	Area	Main habitat(s)	Designations	Grid Ref
1.	Abbotswood Paddock	1.5ha	Urban Fringe	LNR, SNCI	TQ 010 510
2.	Bullswater Common	26.6ha	Heathland	SSSI, SPA	SU 959 546
3.	Burpham Court Farm	39ha	Wey Valley Meadows	SNCI	TQ 006 528
4.	Chapel Lane	3.4ha	Heathland	SNCI	SU 945 562
5.	Chantry Wood	63.7ha	Woodland	AONB, SAM, SANG	TQ 020 054
6.	Chantry Wood Fields	14.1ha	Acid Grassland	AONB, SANG	TQ 016 480
7.	Chilworth Gunpowder Mills	11ha	Woodland	SAM	TQ 024 476
8.	Compton Common	13.9ha	Open Common (Woodland Area 7.7ha)	AONB	SU 964 094
9.	Dawney Hill	10ha	Heathland	SNCI	SU 945 563
10.	Effingham Common	34.5ha	Open Common (Woodland Area 5.2ha)	Registered Common, SANG	TQ 106 553
11.	Fox Corner Nature Reserve	6.3ha	Urban Fringe	LNR	SU 964 547
12.	The Gardens	11.5ha	Heathland	SNCI	SU 945 564
13.	Gosden Common (Shalford Common)	17.3ha	Woodland	SNCI, Registered Common	TQ 002 457
14.	Heathfield	1.9ha	Urban Fringe		TQ 023 558
15.	Hollybush	13.1ha	Urban Fringe		SU 885 519
16.	Lakeside Nature Reserve	15.5ha	Urban Fringe (Woodland 11ha)	LNR, SNCI, SANG	SU 889 519
17.	Merrow Common Wood, Merrow Lane	7.7ha	Woodland	SNCI, Registered Common	TQ 024 517
18.	Merrow Common, Speedwell Close	0.5ha	Woodland		TQ 019 515
19.	Merrow Common, Main Common	10.1ha	Open Common (Woodland 4ha)	Registered Common	TQ 024 518
20.	Merrow Downs Wood	78.7ha	Woodland	AONB, SNCI, Registered Common	TQ 042 500
21.	Merrow Downs, incl Golf Course	74.3ha	Downland	AONB, SNCI, Registered Common	TQ 023 499

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Appendix 2

No	Site Name	Area	Main habitat(s)	Designations	Grid Ref
22.	Moore Close	0.5ha	Woodland		SU 885 500
23.	The Mount	32ha	Downland (Henley Wood 1.3ha)	SNCI, AONB	SU 989 489
24.	Newbridge Common	5.3ha	Woodland		SU 946 550
25.	Onslow Arboretum	4.7ha	Urban Fringe		SU 977 491
26.	Parsonage Water Meadows	9.5ha	Wey Valley Meadows	SNCI, SANG	SU 997 511
27.	Peasmarsh (Shalford Common)	15.3ha	Woodland	Registered Common	SU 986 459
28.	Peasmarsh Green, Shalford Common	1.9ha	Open Common	Registered Common	SU 006 468
29.	Peasmarsh (Titham's Corner)	1.1ha	Woodland	Registered Common	SU 989 457
30.	Pewley Downs	9.5ha	Downland	AONB, SNCI, LNR	TQ 005 491
31.	Pirbright Common	26.27ha	Heathland	SSSI, SPA	SU 945 561
32.	Riverside LNR	33.3ha	Wye Valley Meadows	LNR, SNCI, SANG	TQ 011 526
33.	Rowan Field	4.9ha	Urban Fringe		SU 885 505
34.	Send Hill	1.1ha	Urban Fringe		TQ 023 549
35.	Shalford Common	40ha	Open Common (Woodland 12.8ha)	SNCI, Registered Common,	TQ 006 469
36.	Shalford Water Meadows	38.1ha	Wey Valley Meadows	SSSI,	SU 995 481
37.	Shaw Fields	3.5ha	Urban Fringe		SU 887 507
38.	Short Wood	5.2ha	Woodland		TQ 106 535
39.	Snakey Lane	2.7ha	Urban Fringe	LNR	SU 887 542
40.	St Catherine's Common	1.9ha	Open Common	Registered Common, SAM	SU 994 482
41.	Stoke Water Meadows	11.2ha	Wey Valley Meadows	LNR (Riverside), SNCI	SU 998 512
42.	Stoke Park, Jubilee Wood	0.7ha	Woodland		TQ 005 507
43.	Stoke Park, Peacock Wood (Wildwood)	1.2ha	Woodland		TQ 003 507
44.	Thornycroft Wood	10.7ha	Woodland	LNR (Riverside), SNCI	TQ 002 508
45.	Tongham Railway	8.3ha	Urban Fringe		SU 897 498

No	Site Name	Area	Main habitat(s)	Designations	Grid Ref
46.	Tyting Farm	46.9ha	Downland (Woodland 3ha)	SANG	TQ 027 487
47.	The Villages Community Wildlife Area	0.5ha	Urban Fringe		TQ 032 550
48.	West Heath	9.2ha	Heathland	SNCI	SU 938 559
49.	Westborough Woods	5.1ha	Woodland		SU 974 508
50.	Weybrook	1.7ha	Woodland		TQ 016 524
51.	Weylea Farm	6.8ha	Wey Valley Meadows	LNR (Riverside), SNCI	TQ 007 515
52.	Woodbridge Meadows	4.8ha	Wey Valley Meadows		SU 992 507
53.	Conservation Road Verges	32km	Road Verge	various	n/a

**B) Site designations:**

The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2008 – Section 40 places a duty on Local Authorities to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity in carrying out their functions. Effective protection and management of designated sites requires all parts of the Council to be aware of their location and extent and their designation.

The following designations apply to Guildford Borough Council’s Countryside Sites:

**1) SPA: Special Protection Areas**

The Special Protection Areas together with Special Areas of Conservation form the Natura 2000 network, the highest levels of protection under EU law. SPAs are classified by the UK Government under the EC Birds Directive as the most important habitat for rare and migratory birds within the European Union. The relevant national legislation is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 place a duty on public bodies to have regard to the EC Habitats Directive in carrying out their function, which includes the protection of ‘European sites’, and ‘European protected species’. The regulations also provide for the control of potentially damaging operations. Operations that require appropriate assessment include off site development and even Local Plans.

All SPAs are also notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England.

**2) SSSI:**

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) represent the best examples of our national wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. They are nationally important and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced improved provisions for the protection and management of SSSIs.

Local authorities own approximately 40,000ha of designated SSSIs, and therefore have a key role in contributing to the government's objective to bring SSSIs in favourable condition.

The notification of SSSI sites is a statutory protection for those sites and their features of interest. It includes a list of Operations Likely to Damage (OLDs) the features of special interest and which cannot be carried out without the written approval from Natural England.

Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act) requires local authorities to "take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of the authority's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features by reason of which the site is of special scientific interest". This duty applies to land managers as well as the planning authority.

A code of guidance to inform the management of SSSI sites has been published by Defra.

**3) LNR:**

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. LNRs may be declared by local authorities after consultation with Natural England. This is the highest level of protection that local authorities can afford to a site.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They are designated for both wildlife and people and provide opportunities for research and education.

In England there are 1280 LNRs covering some 40,000 hectares.

**4) SNCI:**

Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) are protected through the planning system. Different planning authorities use different terms and they are nationally referred to as Local Wildlife Sites.

The Planning Policy Framework provides the direction for local authorities to identify, map and protect Local Wildlife Sites through local plans. It also requires protection of Local Wildlife Sites to recognise the importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks, as stated in the Government's Natural Environment White Paper.

Local Wildlife Sites are selected by Local Nature Partnerships for their nature conservation value. The Local Nature Partnerships will work with planning authorities to ensure that SNCIs are considered in the Local Plans. SNCI designations are a material consideration when planning applications are being determined.

There are over 35,000 Local Sites in England.

**5) Registered Common:**

Registered Commons are land areas that are legally registered as Common Land in the Commons Register. This designation does not apply to unregistered areas that are called Common by name.

The term 'common' does not mean that it is in common ownership or that the public own it at all. Common Land refers to the "rights" which specific people have to products of the soil, not ownership of the land. The laws as applied to common land are often the same as for any other piece of private land, except for certain people who possess commoners' rights. Commoners' rights belong to individuals, not to everyone. The six types of Commoners' rights are pasture (the right to graze animals), pannage (the right to let your pigs go and eat acorns and beech mast), estovers ( the right to take fallen branches or bracken), turbary (the right to dig turf or peat for use as fuel or for thatching), piscary ( the right to take fish) and Common in the soil (the right to take stone, sand or minerals).

The Commons Act 2006 regulates the management of registered common land, and requires land managers to obtain approval from the Secretary of State to carry out certain works on the Common Land. Such works include for example installation of gates and fences, creation of ditches and change of surfaces. In addition, there are activities that are not compatible with Common Land.

Common land represents 3% of England's area (approximately 400,000ha).

Surrey County Council manages the Commons Register in Surrey.

**6) SANG:**

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provides mitigation or avoidance to reduce recreational use of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The purpose of SANGs is to provide alternative greenspace to attract visitors away from the Thames Basin Heath SPA.

SANGs are designated by the Local Planning Authority and approved by Natural England. The provision of SANG sites is required to enable the provision of housing within the 5km zone of influence on the Thames Basin Heath SPA.

Natural England has provided guidance that lists features that should be provided in order for a site to fulfil its purpose as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. The provision of SANG features should not negatively affect existing nature conservation value of a site.

A SANG site should have the following features:

- Natural greenspace with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and scrubs
- Perceived as semi-natural with few buildings or artificial structures
- Perceived as safe – no tree or scrub cover along parts of the walking routes
- Safe and easily accessible car parks
- Circular walk of 2.3 - 2.5km length

**7) SAM:**

Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) are 'nationally important' archaeological sites or historic buildings, that are protected against unauthorised change through the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The designating authority is the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Works that may impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument require consent from Heritage England.

**8) AONB:**

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are designated by Natural England under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 clarifies the procedure and purpose of designating AONBs. The purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve natural beauty, including wildlife, physiographic features and cultural heritage, whilst safeguarding agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities.



**Appendix 2: Studies and Guidance Documents:**

Referenced Sources in the main document:

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- 5) Enabling the Transition to a Green Economy: Government and business working together, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 2011  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enabling-the-transition-to-a-green-economy>
- 6) Going for Green Growth: The case for ambitious and immediate EU low carbon action, Department of Energy & Climate Change 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/going-for-green-growth-the-case-for-ambitious-and-immediate-eu-low-carbon-action>
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- 11) Higher Level Stewardship Agreement 2009 - 2019, Natural England and Guildford Borough Council
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16) Biodiversity duty: public authority duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity, Natural England and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 2014,  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity#your-duty-to-have-regard-for-conserving-biodiversity>

Further reference documents:

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17) State of UK Public Parks, Heritage Lottery Fund 2014 <http://www.hlf.org.uk/state-uk-public-parks>

**Riparian Ownership:**

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**SPA:**

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**Biodiversity:**

29) Management Planning for Protected Areas - a guide for practitioners and their bosses, Darwin Initiative, 2005

30) Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; Section 41: List of Species of Principal Importance in England <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/biodiversity/uk-biodiversity/uk-species/checklists/NHMSYS0020515439/index.html>

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- Scientific research into the effects of access on nature conservation: Part 2: access on bicycle and horseback (NECR013) <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/44006>

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**Eco System Services:**

34) TEEB (2011), The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity in National and International Policy Making. Edited by Patrick ten Brink. Earthscan, London and Washington.

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Appendix 3

37) Surrey Natural Capital Analyses May 2015 Economics for the environment Consultancy LTd. 2015

38) A Natural Resource Balance Sheet for Surrey, Bioregional 2015

**UPDATE/PROGRESS WITH MATTERS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT EAB**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Lead Councillor</b>	<b>Action Agreed</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>
7Jan 2016	Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2016-17	Philip O'Dwyer (Director of Community Services)	Councillor Tony Rooth	The Board approved the recommendations to the Executive (19/01/16), as submitted in the report.	The Council adopted the HRA budget for 2016-17 at the Budget Council meeting on 10 February 2016.
	General Fund Capital Programme (2016-17 to 2020-21)	Claire Morris (Head of Financial Services)	Cllr Nigel Manning (now Cllr Michael Illman)	<p>The Board advised the Executive</p> <p>(i) That external funding for Chilworth Gunpowder Mills and all appropriate projects be explored by officers.</p> <p>(ii) That annual forecast balances of the respective costs and benefits be included in capital expenditure proposals whenever possible.</p>	
	Service and Financial Planning - General Fund Budget 2016-17	Claire Morris (Head of Financial Services)	Cllr Nigel Manning (now Cllr Michael Illman)	Board members reiterated the need to be aware of the potential risks of capital programme debt given the position and outlook for the Council's revenue account.	The Council adopted the General Fund budget for 2016-17 at the Budget Council meeting on 10 February 2016.
25 Feb 2016	Procurement	Satish Mistry (Director of Corporate Services)	Councillor Matt Furniss	The Board agreed to invite officers back to a meeting in six to nine months, to report on what had been achieved and to provide new information regarding a targeted approach to cost savings.	Report back now scheduled for 23 February 2017
	Play Strategy	Jonathan Sewell (Leisure Services Manager)	Councillor Iseult Roche	The Board reviewed the objectives of the strategy, the preparation process and the policy decisions and were supportive of the content.	Executive adopted the Play Strategy on 19 April 2016

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
7 April 2016	The Future of the Electric Theatre	James Whiteman (Director of Environment)	Cllr Geoff Davis (now Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith)	<p>The Board fully supported the recommendations for Executive's consideration.</p> <p>The Board suggested that detailed specifications for community use of the Electric Theatre, as well as a break clause, should be included when setting out the terms and conditions as part of the procurement exercise</p>	<p>On 19 April 2016, the Executive authorised the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Lead Councillor, the Director of Corporate Services and the Electric Theatre and Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Working Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To agree the precise form of the procurement exercise</li> <li>b) To agree the criteria to be used in the procurement exercise (including the nature and extent of the community use to be secured)</li> <li>c) To agree the nature and form of any disposal of The Electric Theatre pursuant to the procurement exercise</li> <li>d) To carry out the procurement exercise</li> <li>e) To report back to the Executive at the conclusion of the above and prior to the award of any contract and/or disposal of The Electric Theatre</li> </ul> <p>On 3 January 2017, the Executive will consider a confidential report on the outcome of the procurement exercise referred to above and award a lease to a new operator.</p>
26 May 2016	Business Rates Discretionary Rate Review	Steve White (Director of Resources)	Councillor Michael Illman	<p>The Board indicated that the application process should encourage the dual-use of properties, as well as offering incentives for pursuits that may complement local authority activity.</p> <p>The Board suggested that the Executive should receive an explanation of what each organisation</p>	<p>On 19 July 2016, the Executive agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) to make no changes to the discretionary rate relief scheme, but noted that there will be an increase in cost over the next three years;</li> <li>(2) to review the scheme again in 2019 when there will be more information available about both future funding and</li> </ul>

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
				in receipt of rate relief offered to the community.	the health of the high street.
	Business Planning: Assumptions, Priorities and Deficit Reduction	Claire Morris (Head of Financial Services)	Councillor Michael Illman	<p>The Board suggested that the public should be consulted before the transformation of any Council services.</p> <p>The Board recommended that the Executive consider adopting a mixed economy of the organisational models described in the report for the medium term financial strategy.</p>	On 19 July 2016, the Executive agreed the various budget assumptions, but decided that the Council should adopt an 'Entrepreneurial Council' model for the medium term financial strategy.
14 July 2016	Arts Development Strategy	Jonathan Sewell (Leisure Services Manager)	Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith	<p>The Board suggested that a review should be carried out to identify any missed opportunities due to a lack of resources and to determine how additional funding could be used to enhance the arts development provision in the Borough.</p> <p>The Board resolved that the officers and the lead councillor review the budget for the Arts Development Service.</p>	
8 September 2016	Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017-18	Steve White (Director of Resources)	Councillor Tony Rooth/Councillor Michael Illman	The Board recommended that no changes be made to the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme, subject to the feedback the Council would receive from stakeholder consultation.	This was considered by the Executive at their meeting on 29 November, and Full Council at the meeting on 6 December.
	Website Development Project	Jenifer Davis (Web Programme Manager)	Councillor Paul Spooner	The Board suggested that as both Councillors and residents used Modern.Gov and the search system for planning applications regularly, it	<p>Council agreed to make no changes.</p> <p>This project is progressing well and all set to be delivered before Christmas.</p> <p>The actions arising from the meeting referred</p>

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
				<p>was important that they functioned properly and should be included in the project.</p>	<p>to two specific areas where the website is integrated to internal systems – the planning system (Idox) and Modern.Gov, which the committee services team use for managing and publishing committee information.</p> <p>As part of the website development project we are working with Modern.Gov to ensure a consistent look and feel across the two areas, we are also looking at the way that the information is presented to simplify the user journey. Additionally, by introducing a “Council and Democracy” area on the site, we hope to make this type of information more easily accessible to all.</p> <p>The action to look at the planning application searches is more complex, as the system for the storage and retrieval of planning applications is provided by Idox and the roadmap to deliver upgrades and improvements needs to be agreed with them directly. We are working with them to determine whether we can change the look and feel of the area, and can make requests for functional changes, but, as part of a large group of customers using the same system, we are not able to determine the timescale or priority for any functional development or implementation. The planning team work directly with Idox and will continue to ensure the system meets our customer needs. We will report back to EAB once progress is made with Idox. The new website went live as planned in December 2016.</p>



Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
20 October 2016	Smart Cities: An Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability Perspective		Councillor Nikki Nelson-Smith	The Board asked the Lead Councillor to consider the matters discussed at the meeting with the other members of the Executive at the relevant time.	
21 November 2016	Proposed Leisure Strategy	Jonathan Sewell (Leisure Services Manager)	Councillor Richard Billington	The Board agreed that the development of a facilities led Leisure Strategy should be dependent on the outcome of the public consultation on the feasibility of a new sports and entertainment venue and the non-user survey being commissioned by Freedom Leisure.	
	Business Planning – General Fund Outline Budget 2017-18	Claire Morris (Head of Financial Services)	Councillor Michael Illman	<p>The Board submitted the following comments to the Executive:</p> <p>(a) no comment on the medium term financial strategy</p> <p>(b) In relation to the variances in section 11 and Appendix 3 between the 2016-17 budget and the 2017-18 outline budget, the Board expressed concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• over the inference from paragraph 11.10 of the report that the Council is pushing the solution to the funding gap into the future by identifying the necessary savings of around £5m over the five-year period to 2020-21;</li> <li>• that some of the potential actions for reducing the funding gap listed (a) to (h) in paragraph 11.17, for example, adjusting some of the assumptions, do not give the impression that real savings will be achieved. Officers responded by</li> </ul>	The General Fund Budget will be considered by the Executive on 24 January and full Council at the budget meeting on 8 February 2017.

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
				<p>acknowledging that the funding gap is being addressed by the Council's transformation programme but that proposals arising inevitably take time to introduce. The Lead Councillor for Finance accepted the need to face up to the significant financial challenges facing the Council in the future.</p> <p>(c) The Board supported the proposed growth bids and proposals for savings or income</p> <p>(d) The Board supported the proposed use of the new homes bonus, business rates equalisation and budget pressures reserves as described in the report</p> <p>(e) In relation to the suggested ways, outlined in paragraph 11.17 that officers proposed to balance the budget for 2017-18, the Board expressed concern that some of the potential actions for reducing the funding gap listed (a) to (h) in paragraph 11.17, for example, adjusting some of the assumptions, did not give the impression that real savings would be achieved.</p> <p>(f) In relation to the proposed fees and charges, the Board expressed concern that the proposed increase in burial charge for an earthen grave 6ft x 3 ft (children's section) was 10.6% (£85), the highest percentage increase in all the proposed cemetery charges.</p>	
5 January 2017	General Fund and HRA Capital	Claire Morris	Cllr Michael Illman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board clarified certain aspects in respect of the borrowing figures presented.</li> </ul>	The recommendations were subsequently approved by both the Executive and full Council.

Date of Meeting	Item	Lead Officer	Lead Councillor	Action Agreed	Progress to date
	Programmes (2018-19 to 2012-22)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caution was advised with regard to capital borrowing in the uncertain environment created by 'Brexit'</li> <li>• It was agreed that liability benchmarks would be included in future reports to the EAB</li> </ul>	
	Housing Revenue Account Estimates (2017-18)	Philip O'Dwyer	Cllr Tony Rooth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policies of Central Government would have a great impact on social housing in Guildford. The 1% enforced rent reduction for social housing was in place.</li> <li>• The Board received an update on the plans for provision of additional social housing. This remained a priority for the council.</li> <li>• It was explained that the Housing Business Plan would not be updated until the intentions of Central Government were fully understood. A White Paper was to be forthcoming which, it was hoped, would provide clarity.</li> </ul>	The recommendations were subsequently approved by both the Executive and full Council.

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## EAB WORK PROGRAMMES

Corporate Plan items are intended to give the EABs an early opportunity to consider major policies or projects.

### BOROUGH, ECONOMY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE EAB

Item	Additional information	Corporate Plan Priority?	Relevant Lead Councillor(s)	Lead officer	Target completion
<b>3 APRIL 2017</b>					
Item	Additional information	Corporate Plan Priority?	Relevant Lead Councillor(s)	Lead officer	Target completion
LEP's wider picture/Ensuring a sustainable economy	Co-ordinate the LEP relationship and maximise funding opportunities to support Guildford as a smart growth hub	Yes	Cllr Paul Spooner	Local Economy Manager	2020
Business Improvement District	Objectives for next five years of the BID	No	Cllr David Bilbé	Local Economy Manager	
<b>SPECIAL MEETING - 20 APRIL 2017</b>					
Item	Additional information	Corporate Plan Priority	Relevant Councillor(s)	Lead officer	Target completion
Local Plan	To consider and recommend to Executive and Council to formally approve the Local Plan to go to consultation under Regulation 19 effective from 12 June 2017 for six weeks.	Yes	Cllr Paul Spooner	Planning Policy Manager	2017
<b>22 MAY 2017</b>					
Item	Additional Information	Corporate Plan Priority	Relevant Councillor(s)	Lead officer	Target completion
Update on the Future of Guildford Museum	Update on the Fundraising Strategy Committee and its work in terms of identifying and securing external grants and funding improvements for the museum.	Yes	Cllr Nikki Nelson-Smith	Jill Draper, Heritage Manager	Ongoing

**EAB WORK PROGRAMMES**

**SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT EAB**

<b>6 APRIL 2017</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Priority?</b>	<b>Relevant Lead Councillor(s)</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Target completion</b>
Recycling Improvements/ Review of refuse and recycling service	(a) Review core recycling services to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose  (b) Carry out doorstep surveys in 2017 and 2019 to identify residents' views on current and future recycling services	Yes	Cllr Matt Furniss	Fleet and Waste Services Manager	(a) December 2018 (b) December 2019
Shared and Traded services, and income generation	Develop business cases for new traded services to increase commercial income	Yes	Cllr Michael Illman	Head of Financial Services	2020

**Unscheduled items**

**Borough EAB**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Priority?</b>	<b>Relevant Lead Councillor(s)</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Target completion</b>
None	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Society EAB**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Corporate Plan Priority?</b>	<b>Relevant Lead Councillor(s)</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Target completion</b>
Sustainability Issues (including eco-living options and the impact of/adapting to climate change)	Ensure that Council decisions include an impact assessment on whole life energy costs, environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change and that appropriate planning for adaption measures in undertaken	Yes	Cllr David Bilbé	Energy Management and Sustainability Officer	May 2017

**Others (suitability for EABs?)** (1) Implications of the UK leaving the European Union - 'Brexit' (2) Community Right to Bid