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| Subject: | Biosphere Project Work Plan/ Engagement and Communication Plan | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 27 March 2012 | | |
| Report of: | Strategic Director Place | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Jan Jonker | Tel: 29-4722 |
| | Email: | jan.jonker@brighton-hove.gov.uk | |
| Key Decision: | No | | |
| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council is working with key partners towards becoming a UN Biosphere Reserve. Achieving this status is a priority in the Corporate Plan. This report sets out progress made towards this objective and seeks approval for the next stages of the work plan and engagement and communication plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the progress made on the project
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member approves the next key milestones in the work plan
- 2.3 That the Cabinet Member approves the communication and engagement plan

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) is developing a global network of Biosphere Reserves consisting of world class environments which promote a balanced relationship between people and nature.
- 3.2 The first Biospheres were developed in the 1970s and there are now 580 in 114 countries worldwide, eight of which are located in the UK.
- 3.3 UN Biosphere Reserves have three functions:
- **Conservation** of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic diversity both on a regional and global scale

- **Development** – economic and social development which is culturally and ecologically sustainable
 - **Knowledge** – environmental education, research and training to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to nature conservation and sustainable development
- 3.4 In and around Brighton & Hove there is a unique environment. The chalk grassland on the Downs provides a rare habitat of national and international importance. All of the city's drinking water is extracted from the chalk groundwater aquifer, its quality directly related to how the land is managed and quantity determined by how much is consumed. The South Downs National Park (SDNP) extends in to the city and we have an extensive coast line. Brighton and Hove is a densely populated city with a significant tourism industry and the quality of life in the city and the economy depend to a large degree on the quality of the environment.
- 3.5 The UK Man And the Biosphere Committee (UK MAB) consider that our environment has good potential to be classified as a UN Biosphere Reserve and are supporting the council and its partners in its candidate status to develop a formal application to UNESCO.
- 3.6 Achieving UN Biosphere designation for the area would result in:
- A more integrated approach to protecting and enhancing the environment across industry and businesses, public agencies, community and voluntary sector, and research and education areas
 - Greater national and international recognition and opportunities to promote the area, widening the attraction of Brighton and Hove as a destination.
 - Opportunities for economic development focusing on green industries in particular green tourism
 - Greater community involvement and pride in the local environment
 - More opportunities to promote local sustainable food production and consumption both from the land and the sea.
 - Improved opportunities to draw in external funding, some of which has already been realised as set out below.

Progress to Date

- 3.7 In the 2011/12 budget, funding was approved for a Biosphere Reserve Officer to help deliver the Biosphere project. The officer was appointed in September 2011 and since then the following progress has been made:
- Lewes District Council formally signed up as a project partner in November 2011
 - Adur District Council and Mid Sussex District Council are including the SDNP downland in the Biosphere proposal.
 - Discussions are on-going with Horsham District Council and the Inland Fisheries Conservation Association (IFCA) to help inform the final boundary of the proposed Biosphere Reserve
 - The Environment Agency (EA) has joined the steering group and opportunities for joint working have been identified, in particular in relation to the Water Framework Directive and Adur-Ouse pilot project. The EA has secured Defra funding to pilot measures to protect water resources in the Biosphere area. The scope of this work is yet to be finalised but will include things like working with

landowners to reduce groundwater pollution and working with residents to conserve water resources and tackling urban water pollution

- Officers have worked with the SDNP Authority on a funding bid for a Nature Improvement Area.
- A Communication and Engagement plan has been drafted, with a view to formally launching the project at the May Festival and hosting the annual UK MAB meeting in Brighton towards the end of May.

3.8 A summary of the Work Plan for the project outlining the main milestones is summarised below.

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| March 2012 | Approval of Work Plan/ Communication & Engagement Plan |
| May 2012 | Formal Launch of Biosphere Project |
| June 2012 – June 2013 | External Stakeholder Development of 5-10 year Biosphere Management Plan |
| July 2012 – December 2012 | Delivery of Engagement Plan |
| September 2013 | Submission of Biosphere Reserve Bid |
| Summer 2014 | UNESCO Formal decision on whether bid is successful |

3.9 The main component of the bid will be a detailed Biosphere Reserve Management Plan. This will set out in detail what each of the partners will do as part of the management of the Biosphere Reserve should our application be successful.

3.10 Brighton & Hove has already done a lot of work which complements the aspirations of the Biosphere Reserve. Therefore the management plan will build on existing work. Examples include:

- Community engagement work delivered through the Park Rangers
- Sheep grazing which has successfully been introduced to the city to help improve grassland habitats and which has proved very popular with local residents
- Extension of wildflower planting (eg Lewes Road)
- Maintaining Green Flag parks, placing greater emphasis on biodiversity and community engagement
- Stanmer Biosphere Festival (formerly Spring Watch)
- Consultation and engagement on specific projects such as Whitehawk Hill grazing
- Protection of sensitive species eg elm trees
- Establishing an orchard on Race Course Hill
- Development of a network of green spaces in the city through further habitat creation and restoration

3.11 Examples of new initiatives include:

- Pursuing funding to restore Stanmer Farm as a gateway to the South Downs National Park
- Improving management in Groundwater Source Protection Zones in partnership with Lewes District Council and the EA.
- Establish eco tourism opportunities as part of the Eco Tourism strategy

Biosphere Governance

3.12 The Biosphere project is led by a steering group consisting of the following key partners who have been instrumental to getting the project off the ground:

- The Arts Commission
- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Community and Voluntary Sector Forum
- Dorothy Stringer High School
- Environment Agency
- Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)
- Lewes District Council
- Natural England
- RSPB
- South Downs National Park Authority
- Sussex Wildlife Trust
- The National Trust

3.13 The group is currently chaired by the chair of the City Sustainability Partnership (CSP). It is likely that the membership of this group will change as the scope of the project widens and other partners are actively sought in key areas such as education, health, the marine environment, tourism and economic development. For Brighton and Hove the steering group reports in to the CSP. Any decisions which affects Brighton and Hove City Council will still be made by the council as required by its constitutional arrangements.

Biosphere Boundary

3.14 To achieve UN Biosphere designation an area needs to form an ecological and cultural unit which in this case is the chalk block which extends from the River Adur in the west to the River Ouse in the east, the chalk 'scarp' to the north and the marine environment to the south. The 'Core Area' has to include internationally recognised sites which are Castle Hill and Lewes Downs. The area that is being considered is shown in Appendix 1.

3.15 The final area that is submitted as part of the bid is dependent on the relevant local authorities the SDNP and ideally IFCA signing up to the project. To date we have formal sign up from the SDNP, the National Trust (who own sites including Devils Dyke and Ditchling Beacon) the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Lewes District Council. Adur and Mid Sussex District Council propose to include their land that falls within the SDNP in the Biosphere.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 The success of the Biosphere Project depends to a large extent on consulting and engaging effectively with organisations, stakeholders, communities and residents. The objectives of the communication and engagement are to:

- Raise the profile of the environment, the benefits it brings and encourage residents and communities to become more actively involved in their local area
- Get key partners on board to help deliver the Biosphere objectives. A lot of progress has already been made in this area as set out in previous sections of this report
- Integrate Biosphere objectives in to the work already being done eg work with Friends of Groups to improve biodiversity of parks and open spaces
- Help inform the Biosphere management plan which will set out in detail what actions we will be delivering towards the Biosphere objectives.

4.2 Key elements of the communication and engagement plan for Brighton & Hove are summarised below. The plan is a live document which will be developed as the project progresses. It will consist of specific activities organised for the Biosphere, although most of the work will link in to existing events. A workshop has been held with the Arts Commission to draw up ways in which the Biosphere can be incorporated in to the city's cultural calendar.

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| April 2012 |
| Two Workshops with community groups connected to green spaces |
| May 2012 |
| Launch of Biosphere Project at May Festival |
| Series of Fringe Events culminating on large event on National Biodiversity day |
| Bates Estate Family Fun Day |
| Moulsecoomb Family Funday |
| June 2012 |
| Kemptown Carnival |
| Blakers Park Picnic in the Park |
| Easthill Park Picnic and Play in the Park |
| Stanmer Festival (formerly Spring Watch) which will focus on the Biosphere |
| July 2012 |
| PatchFest |
| Patcham Community Fete |
| Saunders Park Fun Day |
| Blakers Park School's Out for Summer |
| Bevendean Fun Day |
| Poets Corner Summer Fair Stoneham Park |
| Brunswick Lawns Peace Picnic |
| People's Day |
| Cultural Olympiad National Trust Devils Dyke |
| Butterfly Count |
| Rottingdean Village Fair |
| St Annes Well Gardens Rural Day & Scruffs |
| Brunswick Festival |
| PrestFest |
| 21 – 29 Love Parks Week |
| September 2012 |
| Tarner Park Tarner Festival |
| Stanmer Park Apple Day |

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| Digital Festival |
| White Night |
| Pride |
| October 2012 |
| Photo biennial |
| Photo fringe |
| Novemeber 2012 |
| Cine City |
| December 2012 |
| Burning of the clocks |
| May 2013 |
| Children's Parade |
| June 2013 |
| Nature Festival Round up of engagement |
| July 2013 |
| People's Day Feed back of engagement |

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Biosphere Reserve Officer post is funded, and supported by the work of the parks rangers who are also funded. The project aims to draw in external funding to help deliver its objectives and a joint Nature Improvement Area bid with the National Park has secured £116k to the project.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Karen Brookshaw Date: 16/02/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report

Lawyer Consulted :Elizabeth Culbert Date: 21/02/12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Biosphere project aims to improve access and the number of people who make use of their local environment. The activities detailed in the communication and engagement plan will be actively targeted at under represented groups. The concept of the Biosphere is being presented at to The Fed and the Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership in March 2012 with a view to developing ways to target engagement and communication. The management plan submitted as part of the bid will be subject to an EIA.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Biosphere Project objectives are to protect the environment and encourage sustainable development. It will provide an overarching framework and a robust management plan to help deliver the council's sustainability objectives.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications. The project may generate opportunities to reduce crime and disorder by encouraging greater community involvement in the management and enjoyment of the environment.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The risks associated with the Biosphere project are limited. The project does not require additional expenditure. Funding for delivery will either be through external funding or through work which is already funded eg the Ranger Service. The project can realise benefits of improved partnership working with key partners like the Environment Agency, neighbouring authorities, the National Park and many others irrespective of whether Biosphere Reserve Status is ultimately achieved.
- 5.7 Officers are working closely with the UK MAB Committee who will make recommendations to UNESCO when the bid is submitted.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.8 The Biosphere Reserve has the potential to positively impact on public health (both in terms of physical and mental health) by encouraging more people to go out in to their local environment and improving access. It also seeks to improve the environment (eg by improving the quality of drinking water) to improve human health.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 Achieving Biosphere Reserve status is set out as a priority in the 2011 – 2015 Corporate Plan. The project will cover the whole of the city with the objectives set out in the main body of this report.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations seek approval for the next stages of the project which is a corporate priority.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Map showing area of search for Biosphere Boundary

