

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to:	Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee – 9 January 2019
Subject:	Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan, including: Three year review of the Strategy; Annual update including a report back on Manchester in Bloom; Priorities for the Implementation Plan 2019 and Principles of Tree management
Report of:	Strategic Director, Development and Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

When Manchester's Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy, together with its Stakeholder Implementation Plan, was approved in July 2015 it was agreed that the Implementation Plan should be the subject of a three year review. This report brings the review to members, celebrating the achievements of the last three years, responding to key issues raised by members and highlighting those areas that still need to be focussed on. It provides an update on specific progress that has been made on the Implementation Plan over the last year, including a specific report back on Manchester in Bloom. It outlines the key priorities for the coming year. Finally, it brings the draft Principles of Tree Management to Scrutiny for comment. The development of this document was one of the key actions to be delivered as part of the Implementation Plan.

Recommendations

That Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note and comment on the progress that has been made towards achieving the objectives of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy as set out in the three year review in Appendix 1.
 2. Note and comment on the progress made by both the Council and external stakeholders in achieving the actions in the annual update of the Implementation Plan including progress on Manchester in Bloom, provided in Appendix 2.
 3. Consider and comment on the priorities for the Green & Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan set out for the coming year and contained within Appendix 3.
 4. Note and comment on the Principles of Tree Management (Appendix 4) which, as a document arising out of an approved Implementation Plan, will be subject to delegated approval by the Deputy Chief Executive.
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Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: report to Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee and Executive, July 2015, Manchester City Council

Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: July 2015

Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan: July 2015

Our Manchester 2015-25

- Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee January 2017
- Tree Action Plan update: Report to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee January 2017
- Manchester Residential Design Quality Guidance
- Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee January 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Our Manchester Strategy sets out the vision for a world class city with a dynamic economy, where residents from all backgrounds can live well. Attractive, multi-functional green and blue infrastructure is a key component of shaping and delivering the quality of life people expect and enhancing the city's global image as a place in which to live, work and invest. It also has a vital role to play in terms of sustaining a healthy and biodiverse city which is flood and climate resilient, has good air quality and accessible opportunities for recreation and exercise. Manchester's Great Outdoors – A Green & Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy for Manchester was developed and adopted in 2015 to ensure that the city as a whole, including the council, residents, the private and volunteer sectors, developers and other stakeholders could maximise opportunities to enhance the city's green and blue assets and improve the quality of life.
- 1.2 The G&BI Strategy is accompanied by a Stakeholder Implementation Plan. It was prepared and is jointly owned by the City Council and Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Group on behalf of the wider city. The last progress report was considered by this committee in January 2018.
- 1.3 In accordance with the mechanisms for monitoring agreed when the Strategy was approved in 2015, this year the report also provides a three year review of the progress that has been made in delivering Manchester's Great Outdoors G&BI Strategy. Highlights are provided in this report and the full three year review can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The report also provides the annual update on the G&BI Implementation Plan, which since 2017 has incorporated the Tree Action Plan. The report highlights key actions, with the details of progress made against each Headline Action provided in Appendix 2. It includes a more in depth look at Manchester in Bloom, setting out how the approach has changed over the years to facilitate successful community led projects. Members are asked to consider the priorities for the Implementation Plan over the coming year which are summarised with details provided in Appendix 3. Finally, the report also presents the draft Principles of Tree Management (Appendix 4), the preparation of which has been a key deliverable of the Tree Action Plan.

2.0 Background

The Strategy in brief

- 2.1 The vision and objectives of Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester are as follows:

By 2025 high quality, well maintained green and blue spaces will be an integral part of all neighbourhoods. The city's communities will be living healthy, fulfilled lives, enjoying access to parks and greenspaces and safe green routes for walking, cycling and exercise throughout the city. Green and blue infrastructure will be supporting Manchester's growth. Businesses will be

investing in areas with a high environmental quality and attractive surroundings, enjoying access to a healthy, talented workforce. New funding models will be in place, ensuring progress achieved by 2025 can be sustained and provide the platform for ongoing investment in the years to follow.

The G&BI Strategy and Stakeholder Implementation Plan are based around the following four objectives:

1. Improving the quality and function of Green and Blue Infrastructure to maximise the benefits it delivers,
 2. Using appropriate Green and Blue Infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city's growth,
 3. Improving connectivity and accessibility to Green and Blue Infrastructure within the city and beyond, and
 4. Improving and promoting a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that Green and Blue Infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment.
- 2.2 Under each objective is a series of Headline Actions with associated projects and activities which are being delivered or investigated by the council and external stakeholders as part of the Implementation Plan.
- 2.3 The Stakeholder Implementation Plan is a live document which drives progress towards the objectives of the G&BI Strategy and the actions listed are not exhaustive. This approach provides the flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise, maximising resources available to allow focus to be given to projects that will have the greatest impact.
- 2.4 Progress against the Council actions is steered within the council by the G&BI Board which is chaired by the Strategic Director, Development and attended by relevant Heads of Service. This provides an opportunity to focus on the strategy objectives and add value to the way G&BI is delivered across the city. Ward Members and council officers are involved with many of the actions needed to deliver the G&BI Strategy. Ward members are often best placed to know their local community groups and understand their communities' needs and opportunities.
- 2.5 Case studies on successful projects have been developed and are available through the council website, so that Elected Members can be involved in supporting the spread of best practice and helping to encourage successful projects to be replicated across the city. Information is also circulated via ward coordination about local initiatives relating to G&BI and tree planting.

3.0 Working in Partnership

- 3.1 The ethos behind the delivery of the G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan, together with the Tree Action Plan, reflects the strength-based and collaborative approach that sits at the heart of Our Manchester. The Council has an essential and active role to play in setting the agenda, bringing

partners together and supporting and facilitating activity across the range of stakeholders. It continues to have a key role regarding the city's parks, public realm and street trees, and in negotiating developments, but external partners have a significant role to play in delivering and managing many green and blue assets across the City. Many of the projects listed are being undertaken by a range of agencies including public, private and academic organisations, as well as wide scale activity by community and voluntary groups.

- 3.2 The stakeholder group which partnered with the Council to produce the G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan is known as the Manchester G&BI Group (formerly MACF GI Sub group). It meets on a regular basis and is made up of a range of experienced practitioners and stakeholder organisations, including officers from the Council, Corridor Manchester, Manchester Climate Change Agency, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Registered Housing Providers, statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, environmental charities like Groundwork, City of Trees, the National Trust, Wildlife Trust and RSPB, and academics from the University of Manchester (UoM). It provides both a forum for sharing best practice and a catalyst for encouraging new partnerships for delivering action in line with the objectives of the G&BI Strategy.

4.0 Three year review

- 4.1 The three year review sets out the key links between Our Manchester and the delivery of good quality green and blue infrastructure. It highlights some of the key deliverables that have been achieved; 12,500 trees planted, £77million committed to G&BI projects, £800,000 worth of volunteer support, 1.7million people attending activities in our parks and open spaces. And these are only the numbers that we know about; there are many other community events and activities that take place around the city that are not formally recorded.
- 4.2 In the summer of 2018 the Manchester Great Outdoors, G&BI Strategy received the prestigious national award from the highly respected Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) for knowledge sharing. At the same time two schemes that were delivered as part of the G&BI Implementation Plan were highly commended by CIEEM – the Bridgewater Basin Floating Ecosystems, an innovative project delivered by the Council in partnership with a range of organisations, including the Friends of Rochdale 9 volunteer group, Building Design Partnership and the Bridgewater Hall and the Clean Streams Project which restored five urban watercourses across Manchester, in partnership with local residents and schools. The 'Tale of Two Cities' Project, previously reported on to committee also won the 2016 Royal Horticultural Society North West Biodiversity Award for Manchester's wildflower meadow planting. In addition, in 2018, 154 Manchester projects received awards through the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom, the largest number of any authority nationally. A group of 26 individual projects reached the prestigious Champion of Champions final.

4.3 Over the past three years, annual updates on the progress of the G&BI Strategy have been brought to this Scrutiny Committee. The key issues that Members have raised have related to:

- Trees – their planting, management and the need for more information concerning responsibilities.
- Development – the need to ensure that as far as possible developments include good quality green space, particularly in the context of an increasing population.
- Accessibility – along our waterways and by increasing walking and cycling to improve connections to the green space both in Manchester and beyond.
- Schools – the need to link schools into this agenda and engage with young people.
- Community involvement – the need to engage with residents across the city.

The way that Manchester's Great Outdoors, G&BI Strategy has been used to address these issues is shown through key projects delivered over the last three years and summarised below.

Trees

- 4.4 One of the G&BI Strategy's headline actions was to refresh the Tree Action Plan, this was approved by Executive in January 2017, following earlier public engagement. The Tree Action Plan is now an integral part of the G&BI Implementation Plan and progress against specific items is provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.5 In the refreshed Tree Action Plan, it was agreed that a document setting out the 'Principles of Tree Management', the first of its kind in Manchester, would be produced. The document has been drafted and is appended to this committee report. Further details on this are provided later in this report.
- 4.6 Over 8,500 trees have been planted in the city over the last three years as well as over 4,000 hedge trees and 43 community orchards. One of our stakeholders in this area, the City of Trees have been able to use both Manchester's Great Outdoors and the Tree Action Plan to secure funding for tree related practical projects in both east and south Manchester, bringing in an additional £250,000 of funding to the city.

Development

- 4.7 Manchester's Residential Quality Guidance was approved in March 2017 as interim planning guidance within the context of the Core Strategy (Manchester Local Plan). The document sets out key actions which developers must consider which link strongly to the objectives of the G&BI Strategy. These are:
1. Incorporate landscape
 2. Interact with the City's waterways

3. Protect and enhance biodiversity
 4. Introduce street trees
 5. Appreciate the microclimate, and
 6. Incorporate sustainable urban drainage
- 4.8 The Local Plan is to be reviewed and the RQG will be reflected in the new Local Plan and so become part of the statutory planning policy. In advance of that, consideration is being given to the RDG becoming a supplementary planning document which will further strengthen its role in influencing development.
- 4.9 During the last three years over 18 masterplans and strategic regeneration frameworks have gone through public consultation and/or have been approved. Virtually all of these have elements of improved public realm contained within them, including trees, green space, play areas, improved access to rivers and canals. Several of the schemes have significant green and blue components within them, including Mayfield on which the Council is working with partners to deliver a new 6 acre park and the Northern Gateway which includes proposals to integrate the River Irk and natural landscape into a new city river park. Whilst these two major schemes will be key to improving open space and access to the increasing population of an expanding city centre, there are many other developments which have been/are integrating improved GI such as the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems-enabled tree pits in St Peter's Square and the climate resilient sustainable public realm at NOMA.

Accessibility

- 4.10 A key objective of Manchester's Great Outdoors is to improve access and connectivity, including to open spaces within and beyond Manchester. During the past three years the Strategy has been used to capture and celebrate work being undertaken by partners. Over £1.2million has been sourced to improve 7.5km of towpath through Clayton, through Bradford and into the city centre. Similarly, in south Manchester £165,000 was spent improving Trans Pennine access along the River Mersey in Burnage and Didsbury, funded through the Cycle City Ambition Grant Phase 1.

Schools

- 4.11 Manchester's Great Outdoors has provided the back drop to supportive bids by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, RSPB and Groundwork, with over £250,000 committed to Forest schools and environmental education support across Manchester. It has also directly supported Groundwork's Protected Playgrounds programme which will look at using G&BI creatively around 3 schools in AQMAs and monitoring impact on air quality. The project will be worth in total around £190,000.

Community Involvement

- 4.12 The need to engage with residents and stakeholders across the city is vital to the delivery of Manchester's Great Outdoors. It was created collaboratively to provide a framework for all stakeholders to have a role in enhancing the city's green and blue infrastructure, in all its diverse forms and ownership. It has provided a focal point for capturing the work of the growing numbers of active groups in GI related activity such as Britain in Bloom, which is highlighted in greater detail later in this report. Much of the community engagement is done via the activities in parks and through the many 'Friends of' groups, now numbering 52. Over the last three years over 1.75 million people have visited/engaged with events at parks, over 57,000 volunteers have been engaged providing over 77,000 volunteer hours.
- 4.13 Last summer saw the beginning of a Manchester Festival of Nature. Nature based activities across the city were publicised under this banner to bring together support from community groups and residents across the city to begin to establish an annual festival. This is being achieved through a number of national and local environmental charities working together, with support from the council.

5.0 Key delivery highlights on progress in 2018

- 5.1 Progress on the full range of actions in the G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan is set out in the appendix but the key highlights during 2018 are covered below.
- 5.2 **Objective 1:** The first of the four objectives of the Strategy is **to improve the quality and functionality of G&BI across the city**. Since January 2018 projects have included the following:
- 5.3 The **Woodland Futures** project, led by leading environmental charity City of Trees, has been awarded a £182,900 National Lottery grant to restore and revitalise three important historic woodlands in Wythenshawe, just eight miles from the city centre. Over two years, the urban greening project will work in partnership with charity Back on Track and 100 volunteers to connect local communities to the natural heritage on their doorstep and provide opportunities for developing skills, improving confidence and general wellbeing.
- 5.4 Named after the nine canal locks from Piccadilly to Castlefield, the '**Friends of the Rochdale 9**' group, supported by the Canal and River Trust, was established in 2014 for people with a passion for waterways to get involved and help in not only cleaning the canal up, but making it accessible and beautiful too. There are now over 40 volunteers registered, with at least monthly clean ups undertaken in the City Centre, a lot of it done by boat, tackling littering. The Group have also helped deliver new floating ecosystems along the canal, and have recently installed environmental art along a section along the canal to raise interest and awareness.

- 5.5 **Major capital investment programme in Parks** - The Parks Investment Programme (£20.5m) focuses on three key objectives: specifically, the development of the Hall, Stables and Lake Hubs at Heaton Park, the development of Wythenshawe Park including restoration of the Hall, along with broader improvements to the quality of the community and local parks, greenspaces and allotments across Manchester.
- 5.6 The **GrowGreen** Project was officially launched in June 2017. GrowGreen is an 11 million Euro H2020 funded project that aims to demonstrate that the impacts of climate change can be mitigated using nature based solutions (NBS). The Council as the Project Coordinator, is working with local partners such as the Manchester Climate Change Agency, University of Manchester and the Guinness Partnership, other European cities and their university partners and also the Chinese city of Wuhan. Manchester's demonstration project is in West Gorton and is closely aligned with the housing and residential growth strategy for the area. During 2018 significant and extensive engagement with local residents and other stakeholders has taken place to inform master planning work. The project architects BDP have designed a series of interconnected green zones in the heart of the area. The overall aim of the project is to demonstrate that surface water run off can be managed by NBS such as swales, rain gardens and permeable surfacing rather than hard engineered solutions such as attenuation tanks. The project will also include some other co-benefits for the residents of West Gorton including an increase in biodiversity, improved social and play spaces and community growing areas. A planning application is anticipated early in 2019 with construction planned to start later in the year.
- 5.7 **Objective 2:** The Strategy and Implementation Plan's second objective is **to ensure that green and blue infrastructure is well integrated within new development**. This needs to happen at both the detailed, masterplan and strategic framework level.
- 5.8 A number of Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and masterplans with key elements of green and blue infrastructure have been progressed across the city. A major public consultation exercise for a draft Strategic Regeneration Framework for the **Northern Gateway** has recently concluded and a final version of the SRF will be taken to Executive shortly for approval. The SRF includes significant landscape proposals by Far East Consortium /Plan-it incorporating major integration of the River Irk and natural landscape into a new City River Park. Proposals will be subject to Housing Infrastructure Fund submission in 2019.
- 5.9 **Mayfield SRF** was approved in February 2018. The Council is working with partners to deliver a major new six 6 acre city centre park as part of these regeneration proposals. The Mayfield SRF area is adjacent to the North Campus area and will be easily accessible by those who live and work in the locality, providing an increase in quality open space to the increasing city centre population.

- 5.10 In addition, Manchester was instrumental in a successful GM bid for £5 million from the Urban Innovative Action fund. This project **IGNITION** is to establish innovative funding mechanisms and a pipeline of projects with the aim of increasing urban green infrastructure across GM by 10% and in so doing to reduce flooding incidents and alleviate heat stress into the future. A component of this work will look at the feasibility of incorporating affordable sustainable urban drainage in schools.
- 5.11 **Objective 3:** The third overall objective of the G&BI Strategy is **to improve accessibility to green space within and beyond Manchester**. Improvements to the transport network are helping towards achieving better accessibility across the city and out from the city centre, creating better links with the city's existing parks and open spaces.
- 5.12 £160million has been allocated over the next 5 years from the Mayor's Transforming Cities funding to develop '**Beelines**' a cycling and walking network across Greater Manchester. The aim of the network is to promote more sustainable travel choices with walking and cycling being promoted as the natural choice for shorter journeys. A number of projects are being considered for the submission for funding through this scheme.
- 5.13 Consultation commenced at the end of November on the **Chorlton Cycleway**. The proposal is for a largely segregated cycleway between Hardy Lane / Chorlton and the City Centre to provide quality cycling facilities. This will improve access from the City Centre to the Mersey Valley and the TPT through the Hardy Lane corridor. Work on the scheme is proposed to begin in early 2020 with completion in mid-2021. This a £12-13million scheme is being funded through both the City Cycling Ambition Fund and the Mayor's Challenge Fund.
- 5.14 A key focus of the work in Manchester will seek to re-animate and promote **Manchester's Green Trail Walking Route** (previously called Manchester's Green Corridor). Separate, but complementary to the 'Beeline' network, the Green Trail is a walking circuit made of 14 routes which connects many of the City's parks, woodlands and open spaces and is the first project of its kind in the UK. The project is being delivered through a partnership of Manchester City Council, City of Trees, the Ramblers Association, Living Streets and TfGM, with funding through TfGM and City of Trees. The aim is to create a high quality walking route across the City of Manchester via its parks and open spaces that will:
- increase usage of the parks, woodlands and open spaces, making them livelier and as a consequence safer sustainable and more inviting places for people to visit and
 - encourage healthier lifestyles and reduce car usage by promoting walking routes that are accessible to everyone.
- 5.15 **Objective 4:** The fourth objective is **to promote a wider understanding of the benefits that G&BI bring to residents, the economy and the local environment**.

- 5.16 During 2018 the Wildlife Trust, with support from the council, successfully bid for funding from the Esmée Fairburn foundation. This is enabling **My Wild City**, an exciting four year partnership between the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside and Manchester City Council and its partners. My Wild City will inspire and engage people – children, students and adults to get involved in practical actions in their gardens, parks and key wildlife corridors to improve the wildlife value of the entire city. The project will lead to a greater understanding of the city's wildlife, along with more nature reserves being designated, better land management for wildlife and greater access to nature for local people. The public will be invited to get involved, in events and on social media. Activities will be delivered in response to people's thoughts on urban nature in Manchester. Some of the results will feature in a new, bold strategy for biodiversity in Manchester and a **Manchester Festival of Nature** in Heaton Park, next year. The Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan will also be refreshed in 2018. The aim is for a strategy and implementation plan to be prepared with increased stakeholder ownership and buy-in supporting the Our Manchester approach to strategy development.
- 5.17 Air pollution is recognised as a serious problem nationally and locally. The Clean Air Plan, being developed across Greater Manchester and subject to a report elsewhere on the agenda, sets out a strategy for tackling air pollution and achieve legal compliance with national legislation. Air pollution is a particular problem when school playgrounds are adjacent to major roads with nothing but mesh fencing as a barrier against traffic generated air pollution. Groundwork Manchester, with support from the University of Lancaster, has begun a £190,000 project '**Protecting Playgrounds**' to investigate the optimum vegetation structure for trapping airborne pollution before it reaches playgrounds and potentially harms the health of our children. The aim of this project, the first of its kind in the UK, is to design and test the use of instant evergreen hedges with different species mix, density, height, and leaf shape in order to find the most effective, green infrastructure barrier for school boundaries. The approach will be tested by Groundwork, backed up by state of the art monitoring and evaluation, in 3 primary schools in Manchester.
- 5.18 Work has begun on the production of a **Tree & Woodland Strategy for Greater Manchester**, which will provide a higher level framework for managing and increasing the tree stock across the ten districts. The GM level strategy will include a detailed audit of tree stock across all districts. For the first time, an approximate monetary valuation of the services and benefits that trees provide to the City will be available, as well as an improved understanding of species composition. The Strategy is expected to be completed in 2019.

6.0 Manchester in Bloom – A new way of community working

- 6.1 One of the Headline Actions under Objective one of the Implementation Plan is to promote community greening and Manchester in Bloom is an important part of this. Until the mid-1990's, Manchester undertook an extensive annual programme of seasonal spring and summer planting. In the city's parks and

gardens this took the form of floral bedding displays. In the city centre and district centres this was mainly in the form of the provision of floral planters and hanging baskets. Much of the bedding material was home grown being produced in nurseries at Wythenshawe and Heaton Parks.

- 6.2 In the late 1990's responding to budget pressures and new emerging environment practices planting in parks was refocussed to ensure increased levels of sustainability and improved biodiversity value. The nurseries were closed and the quantity of seasonal bedding planting was significantly reduced, and in its place a new focus emerged on the delivery of spring and summer bulb planting; more interesting shrub and tree species planting; introduction of fruit trees; the introduction of wild flowers; and where practical, different land management techniques. Differential grass cutting was also introduced. All of which were undertaken in partnership with the emerging 'Friends of' parks groups. Manchester in Bloom continued to invest in the city centre and district centre floral planters and hanging baskets programmes.

Manchester in Bloom, a new direction

- 6.3 In 2011/12 as a result of reductions in Government funding to the Council, the Manchester in Bloom budget was reduced. As a result, a number of the historical planting programmes, including the mass deployment of hanging baskets became uneconomical to continue. Recognising the budget pressures and the changing nature of street planting, it was agreed to completely refocus Bloom from one that delivered large scale planting programmes, to one that focussed on working with residents to support them to better achieve their local bloom aspirations. Engagement was then undertaken and a greater understanding was developed of how the city could support residents in a practical way to deliver their aspirations for bloom on their street, in their park or garden. When developing the support mechanism, systems were loosely designed, recognising that the makeup of individual residents' groups, and their requirement of the city support would vary greatly depending on what they were trying to achieve and how mature the group was. However, there was, and remains a common understanding that the City will continue to work closely to support communities to best achieve their bloom ambition.
- 6.4 Manchester as part of its transformation of neighbourhoods programme continues to actively encourage a wide variety of community and Friends groups to participate in improving their neighbourhood through a range of interventions including horticulture. Bloom is a focus for this approach.

What is Bloom the Award?

- 6.5 Manchester in Bloom forms part of the wider national Britain in Bloom programme, which is administered by the Royal Horticultural Society. It is a year round competition, whose aim is to encourage the local community to participate in transforming their neighbourhoods through horticultural activity and community participation. Awards are given to each project across a range of categories, at local, regional and national levels. Bloom is marked, 30% for horticultural achievement, 40% for resident's involvement, 30% environmental

practices. There are five levels of Bloom entry starting with new projects at the beginning, through to the Champion of Champions competition and the Entente Florale. Projects in Manchester vary in size from; the maintenance and management and design of street planters, through to the part maintenance of larger parks and the development of new facilities.

Progress to Date

- 6.6 In 2005, 10 Britain in Bloom awards were given to groups in the city, in 2018 this figure has risen to an impressive 154 awards as shown in the table below. The drop in numbers between 2017 and 2018 was due to the hot, dry weather conditions which adversely affected some of the displays and caused some groups to pull out of the competition. The 154 awards given was still the largest number of any authority nationally. Awards made in the City were across all categories, including national categories, including Didsbury in Bloom a group of 26 individual projects reaching the prestigious Champion of Champions final.

Year	Number of Britain in Bloom awards citywide
2015	130
2016	126
2017	166
2018	154

- 6.7 The Bloom project, and its multitude of resident led schemes, whilst all being different all contribute significantly to the improved attractiveness and desirability of the city. The total number of hours employed, and monetary value of the work undertaken by the volunteers is of significant value to the City. The working practices showcase the Our Manchester Values, the programme improves the aesthetic of local neighbourhoods, and the planting programme increases biodiversity, the project supports local community cohesion and reduces resident's dependency on the City. Bloom in the community continues to develop and strengthen, with more groups joining the programme, more projects have become self-sufficient. The Bloom lead, working closely with neighbourhood teams and other partners, have refined and improved the citywide support mechanisms, which range from supplying plants, tools, technical expertise, and signposting voluntary labour. These improvements have been achieved with a reduced budget of £30k per year.

6.8 Manchester in Bloom – Two local case studies:

- **Didsbury Planters** – A reduction in the available Street Scene planting budget, meant that the 34 planters in the Didsbury District Centre were to be removed. After discussion with locals, it was agreed that the planters would remain. Plants were to be supplied by the city, the responsibility for each planter's maintenance, planting and watering would then pass to local groups. The planters continue to be managed in this way. Currently they are adopted by individual families, traders and even the local scout group. Today there are a total of twenty six individual projects that make up Bloom in Didsbury, the projects are supported, but many are self-sustaining. The large number of volunteers involved in the Didsbury in Bloom projects not

only improve their neighbourhood through horticulture, but also undertake a number of other community led activities, such as the delivery of events and litter picking. The groups have expanded and now undertake various elements of the maintenance and improvement of the city's parks and gardens, including works to the Parsonage Gardens, Didsbury Park, Fletcher Moss Gardens, and Marie Louise Gardens.

- **Mirfield Avenue** - Community Allotment, Blackley - Local residents have been instrumental in transforming a former derelict garage site in Blackley into an urban oasis. Over the last decade they have developed a fantastic grow your own project, supporting educational environmental programmes and engaging further with local residents, distributing produce when available to the local community. The council continues to supply a number of plants to improve the appearance of the site. The group also holds a hanging basket day, when local residents can come and make up a hanging basket, which they take away and maintain in their local community. In November the project was awarded the Manchester City Council, Be Proud, Blossoming Communities award.

7.0 Future Priorities

7.1 Work will continue on delivering the four objectives of Manchester's Great Outdoors as shown in Appendix 4. Projects involve work undertaken by the council, by the council in collaboration with its many stakeholders and projects that are delivered directly and independently by those stakeholders. The key priorities in 2019 will be on the following:

- The physical delivery of nature based solutions in West Gorton as part of GrowGreen.
- Engaging with schools and residents around biodiversity as part of the 'My Wild City' programme led by the Wildlife Trust.
- Continued progress towards enhancing the quality of GI within new developments through the planning process and the ongoing delivery of SRFs, particularly Mayfield, the Northern Gateway, Eastern Gateway and Medieval Quarter.
- Opportunities for tree planting in City Centre, through City of Trees working collaboratively with developers and land owners.
- Establishing a mechanism to facilitate the integration of sustainable urban drainage system as part of schools grounds, through the GM IGNITION project.
- Partnership working between the council, TfGM, CoT and other stakeholders on the delivery of new improved walking and cycle routes through the Green Connections programme and 'Beelines' to enable people to connect with green spaces and parks within Manchester and beyond.
- Initial work on refreshing the Biodiversity Action Plan with the council and Wildlife Trust working in partnership and building on the results of the public engagement.

- Delivery of Manchester Festival of Nature, led by the Wildlife Trust, working with RSPB, CoT, National Trust and other local environmental groups charities.
- Consideration of how the G&BI Strategy links with wider Council priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan.

8.0 The Principles of Tree Management

- 8.1 This report also brings the Principles of Tree Management to Scrutiny for comment. In January 2017 the Tree Action Plan (TAP) was endorsed as an integral part of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan. A priority action, under the objective of Managing Trees Sustainably, was the preparation of the Principles of Tree Management in order to facilitate a consistent approach to tree management in the City. This document has now been prepared and is appended to this report (Appendix 4). Having arisen from an implementation plan that was approved by Executive, the Principles of Tree Management will be subject to delegated approval by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 8.2 The council's existing tree management practices form the basis for the document. Its production has been overseen by the council's Green & Blue Infrastructure Board and it has been written in close collaboration with the council's tree officers. Relevant sections across the council have also been consulted including highways, flood risk and planning and legal. The approaches used in tree management advice produced by other cities across the UK have also been considered and the best practice from these examples have influenced the approach taken. A member workshop was held early in the development of the document to enable consideration of the most appropriate approach for Manchester. The draft document was considered to be very useful with the main comment being that it should have a positive and easy to read style. This approach has been adopted in producing the final draft document which is divided into two sections. The first considers the wider issues around the management of Manchester's tree assets and the second section looks in more detail at specific issues that can arise.
- 8.3 The aim of the Principles of Tree Management for Manchester is to provide an easy point of reference for members of the public, councillors and council officers regarding the council's practice around tree management. It also provides clarity about where responsibilities lie for trees in public or private ownership. It should act as a first point of call for queries and requests for action relating to trees across the city. It is intended that this will enable a consistent approach to dealing with the many queries received and will release tree officers' time to deal with more complex tree management activity.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 This report has set out the achievements of Manchester's Great Outdoors G&BI Strategy over the last three years and the specific progress that has taken place during 2018. It has highlighted the successful change to the way Manchester in Bloom is engaged with by communities across the city and has

brought the Principles of Tree Management, one of the key actions of the Tree Action Plan, to committee. The improvement of green and blue infrastructure is recognised as a vital component of the Our Manchester Strategy which seeks to promote Manchester as a city known for its high quality of life. As shown by the three year review and the projects going forward, the vision of Manchester and Manchester's green and blue assets is being delivered through collaboration across both the council and the many external delivery partners; from large national bodies to individuals and small 'Friends of' Groups. Through Manchester's Great Outdoors G&BI Strategy, much progress has been and continues to be made on improving the quality, accessibility and understanding of our green and blue infrastructure across the city, within existing parks and open spaces and by embedding new areas and elements of GI within new development.

- 9.2 Many of the actions listed in the Implementation Plan have been and are continuing to be progressed, from smaller scale initiatives such as the Didsbury planters to the work towards the delivery of a six acre open space as part of the Mayfield SRF; from local community focussed actions such as the Ramblers Association helping to monitor local footpaths, to working with stakeholders across Greater Manchester to improve access to open spaces within and beyond Manchester by cycling and walking. There are many actions taking place across the city that are not recorded within the Implementation Plan but that are nonetheless adding value to the neighbourhood in which they are located. Going forward collaborative projects such as Manchester Festival of Nature and My Wild City will provide opportunities to engage and inspire individuals and communities still further.
- 9.3 The Council has worked on this agenda for many years but a key quantifiable indicator of the benefit of Manchester's Great Outdoors is demonstrated by the £32 million committed to G&BI projects that has been levered into the city's green and blue infrastructure over the last three years in addition to council spend. This, together with the many volunteer hours, has been directly influenced by the Strategy and the commitment of all the stakeholders that own it. Going forward it is this ongoing collaborative work which brings together the energy, ideas, resources and expertise that will continue to be crucial to the success of Manchester's Great Outdoors.

10.0 Recommendations

- 10.1 Recommendations appear at the front of the report.