

<b>To:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Community Services</b>
<b>From:</b>	<b>Darren Lanes, Head of Street Scene &amp; Leisure</b>
<b>Director:</b>	<b>Robert Styles, Director of Street Scene, Leisure &amp; Technical Services</b>

**BRIEFING NOTE: EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION**

**APPROVAL TO EXTEND MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP (MVCP) UNTIL 2029.**

**Summary of Issue:**

**Extension of an existing agreement with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership until 03 April 2029.**

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that the Memorandum of Agreement with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership is extended until 03 April 2029.**

**1 Background**

1.1 MVCP was formed in 1988 to carry out practical conservation projects in the Medway catchment in the Boroughs of Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling. Its work contributes to four aims:

- Create, Sustain and Enhance Kent's Landscape & its wildlife
- Develop, Manage and Support community-based environmental initiatives
- Develop, and Promote life long outdoor learning
- Encourage and Enhance greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits.

1.2 The Council have supported and worked alongside the MVCP for a number of years and since 2005, has been a signatory member of a formal agreement to be a core funding member of the MVCP. As part of this agreement the Council contributes £6000 per annum toward the core funding of the partnership alongside Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and the Environment Agency. This funding is fixed and is not subject to inflationary increases.

1.3 The Councils contribution to core funding enables the Partnership to carry out specialist work across the Medway catchment, including:

- The control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), including Japanese knotweed and Giant Hogweed.
- Surveying programmes for Dormouse, Barn Owl and Great Crested Newts.
- Tree planting projects, including Kent Plan Tree
- Volunteer support in the form of Tuesday and Thursday Action Groups (TAG) days
- River Warden volunteers who supported the River Medway clean up in 2024.
- Wellbeing Walks
- Forest School

1.4 In addition to core funding, the Council also allocate £3000 of revenue budgets per annum for project funding. This funding is used to fund ad hoc support for Officers in projects such as delivery of TAG volunteer days and ecological surveying.

## **2 Main Issues**

- 2.1 The 2022 – 2024 Memorandum of Agreement between MVCP and TMBC is due to expire in December 2024.
- 2.2 Payment of core funding for the 2024/2025 financial year has already been made and the next payment would be required in April 2025.
- 2.3 Officers are seeking Cabinet Member Approval to extend the Memorandum of Agreement to 03 April 2029. The extension of the current agreement would remain on existing terms.

## **3 Legal Advice**

- 3.1 The matters set out in this briefing note are considered routine or uncontroversial.

## **4 Financial and Value for Money implications**

- 4.1 This will require a commitment from the Council to provide MVCP with £6000 per annum of core funding and £3000 per annum of project funding until April 2029 these figures fixed and are not subject to inflationary increases.
- 4.2. The works that MVCP carry out on behalf of the Council support Officers with day-to-day management of Parks and Public Open Spaces and also contribute towards strengthening and enhancing the protection of species, habitats and ecosystems which is identified as an objective within the Councils Climate Change Action Plan.
- 4.3 It is considered that this agreement would provide good value for money throughout the term of the agreement.

## **5 Risk Assessment**

5.1 The recommendation is not considered to present a risk to the Council.

## **6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

6.1 No impact.

## **7 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.1 We do not consider that this matter needs to be considered by O&S/ SSC before a decision is made.

## **8 Communications**

8.1 There are no communications considerations required.

## **9 Conclusion**

9.1 To support the recommendation above.

## **10 Annexes**

10.1 Annex 2: Medway Valley Countryside Partnership proposed Memorandum of Agreement 2024 – 2029.