

13th December 2021

Report of	Assistant Director of Place & Client Services	Author	Adam John ☎ 282472
Title	Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project Management Plan 2021-2026		
Wards affected	Rural North		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report concerns a requirement to compile and agree a Management Plan for the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 That the Local Plan Committee notes its obligation under Section 89 of Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, approves the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan covering the period 2021 to 2026

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 This report brings to the Local Plan Committee's attention the Council's responsibility as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 to prepare, publish and regularly review a Management Plan for the Dedham Vale AONB. Thereby demonstrating they "have regard" to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and have taken account of the AONB in their actions and decision making.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Members may consider not agreeing to the Memorandum of Understanding, thereby forfeiting the Council's membership of the Project. However, this option would have considerable financial implication to the Council, both when terminating our membership of the Project and when independently meeting our statutory obligations to independently produce a Management Plan for the AONB under the CROW Act.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project was instigated following designation of the AONB by Central Government in 1970. Local Authorities, including Colchester Borough Council, set up the Project in partnership with the then Countryside Commission to work with local bodies to address local concerns in order to help maintain the distinctive character and beauty of the area. A statutory duty exists for the council in the discharge of its planning functions to “have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty” (s.85(1) CROW Act 2000).
- 5.2 The project has been in operation since 1981 in the Dedham Vale and was extended to include the entire area of the Stour Valley in 1992.
- 5.3 The Project area covers the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, of 90 km², and includes the majority of the rest of the Stour Valley upstream of the AONB - giving a total project area of 300km². Under the requirements of the CROW Act 2000, local authorities that are within the AONB, including Colchester Borough Council, have charged the Project’s Joint Advisory Committee to produce a management strategy for the AONB. The resulting Dedham Vale (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan acts as a guiding framework for the partnership and stakeholders in maintaining the special qualities of the area, and its annual action plan sets targets for achievement.
- 5.4 On behalf of its local authority partners the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project’s Joint Advisory Committee/Partnership have prepared a Management Plan to replace the current one; it will have a lifetime of five years from 2021 to 2026.
- 5.5 The prepared Management Plan builds upon the success of the previous plan and includes a delivery plan of co-ordinated activity to maintain and enhance the quality of the area. It sits within and seeks to fit into the Council’s own framework of strategies and policies that impact on the AONB, being both informed by these and seeking to influence them, particularly the bespoke Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’s Local Development Policy DP22.
- 5.6 Colchester’s contribution to the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project is maintained at £5,175 per annum, whilst the Project has a projected budget of £247,000 for this financial year 2021/22. A cost ratio set against the requirement upon the Council to produce a Management Plan for the AONB, the liability for redundancies should the Project fail and the considerable success of the Project in attracting external funding. It should be noted that two of the Local Authorities within the upper reaches of the Stour Vale contribute to the Project but are located outside of the AONB, so do not have specific obligations to produce Management Plans for the area and could therefore consider withdrawal from the Partnership, but, following agreement of all its Members, the Project has submitted a formal application to Natural England to extend the area of the AONB to include these Authorities.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the Dedham Vale AONB in accordance with the Council’s guidelines and no adverse effect concluded; a copy of the EIA has been uploaded onto the Council’s website at [CBC - How The Council Works - Policy and Corporate Equality Impact Assessments - Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

7. Standard References

- 7.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

Background Papers

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan @ [Management-Plan-2021-26-Public-Consultation-Draft.pdf \(dedhamvalestourvalley.org\)](#)

Note: The style and layout of the final printed Management Plan document will echo the style of the consultation draft albeit in full colour this time, with high quality mapping and varied photography.