

DECISION-MAKER:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR FITZHENRY
SUBJECT:	SOUTHAMPTON NATIONAL PARK CITY CHARTER
DATE OF DECISION:	25 APRIL 2022
REPORT OF:	INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BUSINESS AND CITY SERVICES

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
AUTHOR / DIRECTOR	Title	Interim Executive Director, Business & City Services	
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
At its meeting on 23 March 2022 Council supported a cross-party motion advocating the Southampton National Park City (SNPC) project and encouraging Cabinet to sign the SNPC Charter on behalf of the whole Council. This report provides background to the project and details how the Charter may be signed.	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
(i)	That the Leader representing Cabinet agrees to sign the Southampton National Park City Charter on behalf of the City Council.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	Council has encouraged Cabinet to sign the SNPC Charter.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
2.	Not to sign the SNPC Charter. Rejected as both political groups have agreed to support the Charter.
3.	To encourage signature by individual Councillors only rather than the Council as a whole. Rejected as both political groups have agreed to support the Charter.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
4.	The Southampton National Park City Project is a grassroots community initiative that seeks to “create more spaces that are safe to play in and where nature can flourish – a city where people, culture and nature work together.” It is affiliated to the National Park City Foundation, a global movement that aims to create 25 National Park Cities (NPCs) by 2025. The first National Park City in the world was London, which achieved the status in 2019, joined by Adelaide in 2021. A number of other cities around the UK including Glasgow and Newcastle are in discussions to try and achieve NPC status.

5.	Cities aiming to achieve NPC status have to follow a set process involving 10 steps and 23 criteria, with the ultimate decision being made by a peer review panel. Groups aiming to achieve NPC status can get support from the NPC Foundation in the form of extensive advice, including the NPC “Journey Book”, and also fundraising support.
6.	NPCs are not an urban version of statutory National Parks such as South Downs or New Forest, although in practice they share aims and expertise. They are also deliberately not led by local authorities or government agencies, but from the bottom up. NPCs are concerned with ensuring that the places where the majority of the population lives are green, healthy and active, and are intended to influence planning policy in favour of green infrastructure/green grid and natural/indigenous design rather than to frustrate or restrict development.
7.	In Southampton, the project is led by a grassroots group called Southampton National Park City (SNPC). The group has not yet formally registered as a charity or Community Interest Company, but it has developed a constitution and invited the City Council to sit on its committee. The group is non-political and is keen to gain the support of all Councillors and parties for its plans, which it sees as having generational impact long into the future. The cross-party and cross-city approach taken for the City of Culture bid is seen as a model.
8.	The aims of SNPC are well aligned to the Council’s Greener City Action Plan and historic action by administrations of all political persuasions to protect the city’s parks and green spaces. In its role as planning authority and landowner as well as civic leader, the Council is uniquely positioned to support and strengthen the project.
9.	A further reason to support SNPC is that, given the strong links between outdoor space and cultural activities such as music festivals, achievement of NPC status by 2025 would be a significant boost to the city’s intended year as City of Culture.
10.	NPC status would also be likely to increase inward investment into the city as it would be a signifier of a high quality of life, something that is of increasing importance in a world where people do not necessarily have to live wherever their employer happens to be based.
11.	SNPC is clear that it is not seeking financial support from the Council, nor a commitment to underwrite the project. It is likely that support would take other forms, some of which could have indirect costs; for example, help in identifying premises.
12.	An officer has been identified to attend SNPC Committee meetings and help develop its relationship with the City Council.
13.	As a first step, the City Council and all Councillors have been invited to sign the SNPC Charter . The Charter commits signatories to taking collective responsibility for achieving the SNPC objectives. The text of the Charter is attached as Appendix 1.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
14.	There are no direct financial implications from signing the charter as no financial commitment by SCC is required. A small amount of officer time will likely be required to support the project, which will be from existing resources. Any request by SNPC for financial assistance would be the subject of further reports in line with Council procedures.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
15.	SNPC has enquired about the use of vacant SCC properties, but none has so far been agreed.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
16.	There are no legal obstacles to Cabinet signing the SNPC Charter and supporting the project.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
17.	None.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
18.	If the Council signs the Charter and commits its support to SNPC, in all its dealings with the group SCC will need to strike a careful balance between being a leading supporter and accepting that the Council is only one of many partners in a grassroots initiative.
19.	While it is not anticipated that SNPC would diverge from their policy direction or do anything to bring the Council's support into doubt, an officer's presence on the Committee will serve to reduce these risks.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
20.	Achieving NPC status would align well with the Council's Greener City Plan and support the Economic Growth Strategy.

KEY DECISION?	Yes/No	
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All	
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>		
Appendices		
1.	Text of the Southampton National Park City Charter	
Documents In Members' Rooms		
1.	None	
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.		Yes/No
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.		Yes/No
Other Background Documents		
Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)	
1.	None	