

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

20 July 2020

CABINET
22 July 2020

TREE NURSERY

Report of the Strategic Lead for Environment

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Policy & Performance Scrutiny Panel:

- (1) note the contents of this report and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (2) approve the investment in the Tree Nursery with any resulting surplus being reinvested in delivery of proposals within the Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan;
 - (3) approve the development of the first phase of the sponsorship scheme to be launched during 2020/21
-

Summary

In February the Council committed to planting 160,000 trees in the borough by 2030 as part of its Climate and Environmental Emergency programme. This report seeks approval to launch a Tree Sponsorship scheme for Businesses this September and for the creation of a Council-operated Tree Nursery to ensure a sustainable supply of locally grown environmentally friendly trees for the remainder of the decade.

Statutory Powers

Local Government Act 2001

Strategic Implications

1. Climate breakdown and negative environmental impacts are the biggest challenge facing the long-term future of residents and businesses of Eastleigh. The Council's Tree planting programme will support environmental objectives

in particular those relating to creating an Excellent Environment for All and Green Infrastructure.

Introduction

2. This report sets out how the Council will meet its commitment to plant 160,000 new trees by 2030. Increasing the number of trees and the tree canopy within the Borough will significantly contribute toward achieving the commitment in the climate change declaration for the borough to become carbon neutral by 2030.
3. Alongside benefits associated to carbon sequestration, additional tree planting forms part of the Councils response to the changing climate, by preventing flooding, reducing urban temperatures, capturing pollution and supporting biodiversity.
4. In order to maximise local benefits to the planting initiative this report seeks approval for the creation of a Council owned and operated Tree Nursery. Appendix 2 sets out the costs associated with managing and operating this nursery; it has been projected that these costs will be recouped over the 10-year period through sponsorship schemes to be launched this autumn.

Background

5. Planting 160,000 new trees is a stretching target which will need to be delivered through several different initiatives over a ten-year period. In order to enable its delivery, there is a need to determine the most effective way of procuring the trees.
6. It is also necessary for the Council to agree its wider approach to trees for planning applications and more broadly, work is underway to develop a Tree Supplementary Planning Document and a Tree Strategy.
7. **Option 1 - Procurement of all Trees required**
8. Procuring the numbers required each year will present a significant challenge in identifying the species of trees required each year in enough time to go through a procurement process. Securing tens of thousands of trees annually will require the placement of orders to take place by 31 March each year to ensure availability for the following planting season.
9. Whilst there are several large growers within the UK who may be able to meet the Borough's needs in terms of the plant species, size, quality and staged deliveries, most of these nurseries are in Lincolnshire and the eastern counties of England. There are limited options in Hampshire and neighbouring counties for supply on the scale that the Council requires. There are other alternatives for external supply using growers in Holland where plant quality and volume is assured, however there are significant costs associated with transportation and the resultant environmental impact of transporting

trees which are being planted to assist in our commitment toward becoming carbon neutral.

10. Appendix 2 indicates that purchasing and significant overhead costs in order to maintain and facilitate the planting of all 160k trees is likely to cost £2.3m over the 10 year programme.

Option 2 - Creation of a Tree Nursery

11. Similar facilities to those required to manage the tree purchasing option will be required for the Nursery. Other than the first year, there will be no requirement to purchase any trees, therefore overall the scheme is projected to cost £1.632m over 10 years.
12. On balance, having considered costs and procurement issues, this report seeks approval for the Council to establish its own tree nursery within the Borough which will be owned and operated by the Council. The benefits to the Council of having its own nursery include the ability to grow targeted species, to grow locally from seed using the Council's own staff, the avoidance of transportation, and substantial cost savings relating to maintaining purchased trees prior to planting.

Location of the Tree Nursery

13. A 2.8 hectare site has been identified for the temporary Nursery as part of the One Horton Heath development (See Appendix 1). An area of land this size will be able to produce all the trees required to meet the Council's commitment over the ten-year period.
14. Once the project has commenced, the nursery is likely to be operational within a four-month period, with seedlings being planted in the Autumn/Winter of 2020/21. These saplings should then be ready for transplanting in late Autumn/Winter 2021/22.
15. The static nursery area required for the duration of scheme is approx. 0.8 Hectares. This will provide welfare facilities for staff working on site, storage for tools and materials, poly tunnels, power and water, preparation tables, seed beds and a covered working area, hardened access and parking, this area will also provide potential for an educational space.
16. As the identified site is already owned by the Council and is classified as agricultural it will not require additional land purchase or planning permissions.

Staffing Requirement

17. The Nursery will require the appointment of one full time member of staff, with the support of two new roles for apprentices who will be managed by the Streetscene Manager. It is also possible that the scheme will include voluntary sector support as a number of local community groups have already expressed an interest in being involved in the scheme.

Tree Sponsorship Schemes

18. It is proposed that the Council launch the Tree Sponsorship Programme this September, with the 20/21 Autumn/Winter planting season mainly focusing only on businesses and schools.
19. Staff have been in contact with several businesses in the area who are interested in partnering with the Council during Autumn/Winter 20/21 to plant trees as part of their environmental commitments.
20. Partnering with businesses during 20/21 will accelerate the tree planting programme and allow the Council to create a robust package before the scheme is broadened out to the public.
21. Once approved it will take several months for the Nursery to grow trees which can be planted out, meaning that Autumn/Winter 2021/22 will be the first planting season. Staff have identified procurement routes for the 1,500 trees which will be required to launch the business sponsorship scheme during 20/21.
22. A wider range of sponsorship models are being considered for subsequent years, and it is likely that the following will be launched in 21/22:
 - a. Individual Tree sponsorship (specimen trees 3-4m height)
 - b. 'One Tree per Child' - Residents, schools and businesses to sponsor the purchase and planting of a tree for a child (mainly saplings 0.8m height)
 - c. 'Employee Tree'- Businesses to sponsor the purchase and planting of a tree for every employee (mainly saplings 0.8m height)
 - d. Other initiatives will also be considered, such as supporting School Orchards, Memorials Volunteering programmes and planting "Tiny Forests".
23. The Sponsorship programme will be implemented in line with the Council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy.

Potential for expanding the Nursery

24. Whilst the initial focus of the Nursery will be on meeting the need for native broadleaf tree whips(as defined by the Woodland Trust), the nursery will be designed to have the capacity to produce hedging plants, fruiting trees and cultivate mature trees for use in public spaces and housing development sites.

Development of a Borough-Wide Tree Strategy

25. Ahead of a decision on this, work is underway to produce a Tree strategy for the Borough. This strategy is being designed to set out the Council's approach to:

- Maintaining and where possible enhance the borough-wide tree canopy
 - Improving biodiversity
 - Introducing trees to town and local centres in order to enhance the quality of place
 - Ensuring appropriate Health and Safety (and insurance issues)
 - Supporting objectives around carbon offsetting as part of the Climate and Environmental Emergency Programme.
26. The Tree Strategy will be produced with the support of key external partners, this report seeks approval to continue this work and to carry out any necessary public consultations.
27. The Tree Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration of adoption in the autumn.

Supplementary Planning Document

28. To support the Council's environmental and other objectives in relation to housing and development, work is underway to inform a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Trees.

Financial Implications

29. Appendix 2 details the budget and projections for Options 1 and 2. Option 2 creating a Tree Nursery indicates that it should result in a modest surplus of £33k within its initial 10 years of operation. The scheme will see an investment of £1.63M over 10 years, with a prudent estimate that it should lead to approximately £1.66M income over the same period. The alternative approach to purchase all of the trees is set out in Option 1 would require £2.3m investment and lead to a £1.133m net cost to the Council over this same period.
30. Costs associated with purchasing 1,500 trees ready to plant to launch the business sponsorship initiative during 20/21 have been factored into the wider Tree Nursery programme proposed budget.
31. The Business Sponsorship trees will initially cost £10 each, this will be reviewed as part of fees and charges periodically.
32. The scheme will be delivered without additional land purchase as the Nursery is to be temporarily sited on land already owned by the Council, which has been earmarked for future development.
33. The Tree SPD and associated consultation activity will be developed by the Planning Policy Team through existing budgets.
34. The Tree Strategy and associated consultation activity will be carried out through existing budgets.

Risk Assessment

35. All risks associated with setting up the new scheme will be managed through the Council's established project management process.
36. This activity will reduce some risks relating to the Council and Borough-wide Climate and Environment Emergency programme and support residents, businesses and the natural environment to adapt to the future climate.

Equality and Diversity Implications

37. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out to support this decision and is attached at Appendix 3. In summary the EqIA shows that it is unlikely the Tree Nursery will lead to discrimination and where possible opportunities to reduce existing inequality will be included in the design of the scheme.

Climate and Environment Implications

38. Climate and Environmental Emergency is relevant to the decision in this report as the decision relates to activities that have a net effect of removing Greenhouse Gases, offers resilience to environmental impacts and impacts positively on ecology.
39. The benefits trees have on our environment are well known, trees absorb carbon dioxide as they grow and the carbon that they store in their wood helps slow the rate of global warming. Following the Woodland Trust Guide it has been calculated that 100,000 trees will absorb 275 tonnes of CO2 each year.
40. This initiative is a crucial part of the Council's Climate and Environmental Emergency programme and is an integral part of the approved Action Plan. Considerable effort will be made to deliver the scheme in a way that minimises the impact and maximises opportunities to enhance the environment. These include:
 - Low energy and water use on site;
 - Locally produced trees will reduce transportation emissions;
 - 100% Biodegradable tree guards, stakes and pots;
 - Native and where possible local species;
 - Peat and pesticide free.

Conclusion

41. This report sets out a financial and environmentally sustainable approach to the Council delivering on its commitment to plant 160,000 trees by 2030.

JASON LIGHT
STRATEGIC PLANNING LEAD FOR ENVIRONMENT

Date: 2 July 2020
Contact Officer: Jason Light
Tel No: 023 8068 8077
e-mail: jason.light@eastleigh.gov.uk
Appendices: 3 - Proposed Site, Budget & EQiA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

[List Background Papers: Climate and Environment Strategy and Action Plan.](#)