

6 December 2018		ITEM: 8
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Tree Planting Strategy		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Daren Spring, Assistant Director for Street Scene and Leisure		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines options for Cleaner, Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee consideration in response to a Motion which was raised at Full Council on 25th July 2018. The motion is as follows:

Motion 3 - Submitted by Councillor Redsell

This chamber recognises the valuable contribution that trees make to our local environment and calls on Cabinet and / or officers

- Where practicable to consult Members prior to the removal of trees from local authority land within their respective wards, and
- Where possible in accordance with the current budget to replace within a reasonable period all trees felled from local authority land including public areas; and
- To investigate availability of funding sources for the 2019 -20 budget to enable the Council to purchase replacement trees.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the options available and recommend to Cabinet option 1 outlined in this report (sections 6.1 and 6.2).

1.2 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider option 3 (section 6.4) and recommend to Cabinet for financial year 19/20, subject to capital funding approval.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The felling of trees in the borough is only used as a last resort. It is necessary however to remove trees for a variety of reasons. A full assessment of the tree is undertaken to establish the condition of the tree and the likelihood of its survival. The main concern when conducting this assessment is, does the tree pose a Health and Safety risk? Severe damage or severe decay to the tree can mean that the tree requires removal.
- 2.2 During 2016/17 26 trees were removed, in 2017/18 25 trees were removed and so far this calendar year 15 trees have been removed. The average number of trees removed over this three year period is therefore 22 trees per annum. There are many factors that could potentially increase this number in the future, for example:
- 2.3 Instances of disease are increasing in frequency throughout the UK, severe weather conditions can cause damage to trees at certain times and there are instances when trees are damaged in road traffic incidents and from acts of vandalism.
- 2.4 Over the past 3 – 4 years, when trees have required removing, no additional trees have been planted to replace them. There is currently no revenue budget provision to do so.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The motion at Full Council recommended that the Council, where practical, to consult Members prior to the removal of trees from local authority land within their respective wards. What is proposed is that when there are plans for a tree to be removed, an email containing the location and the reason why the tree requires removal, be sent to all of the local ward members, notifying them of the tree removal. There will be instances when a tree has to be removed urgently, when this occurs an email will be sent to the local ward members retrospectively.
- 3.2 Where possible the proposal is for a tree to be planted in the same position that the previous tree was removed from. However, this may not always be possible for example when a tree is cut down and the stump and roots cannot be dug up, a machine called a stump grinder has to be used to cut away the stump to below ground level. The lower part of the stump and root system remain below the ground and overtime die and rot. A new tree cannot therefore be planted in the same position. In these instances trees will be planted at the most suitable site as close to the previous trees location as possible.

4. Tree Species and Planting

- 4.1 Newly planted trees require additional maintenance to ensure their survival, this includes: -
 - Tree stakes for stability

- Tree guards
- Regular watering
- Future pruning

The average cost to purchase and plant a new tree is approximately £150.00.

- 4.2 All planting will follow current British Standards and industry best practice as a minimum standard. Native species will be utilised as appropriate without reducing the diversity of species in more formal locations.
- 4.3 Tree planting selection will be based on the minimisation of future risk. All decisions on planting will be based on achieving sustainable tree cover to benefit the Street Scene and Environment as a whole and minimise, through the use of appropriate tree species, the potential for future hazard and nuisances.
- 4.4 Tree selections must take into account the challenges that impact tree growth on verges and in open spaces. Some of the challenges are road traffic pollution, water/gas leaks and utility service maintenance. Another consideration is the hardening of surfaces in front gardens, leading to rain water surface run off which is a loss of water which previously would have soaked through the soil to be available for the trees.
- 4.5 In open spaces the challenges for trees come from footfall and maintenance leading to compaction of roots, along with competition for water with grass.
- 4.6 The impact of tree disease is another consideration. Some diseases are very new to the UK and it is essential that studies are considered and the most robust disease free species sought.
- 4.7 Tree selections have to reflect all the above aspects, along with the changing climate with hot summers and wet winters.
- 4.8 We live closely with our trees and they are essential to our environment, so it is imperative that we select species that do not have disadvantages e.g. surface roots can lift paving, a problem seen in cherries, which must in future be planted in large verges or parks. By way of another example, we need to select the non-sticky lime as replacements in our traditional lime avenues where aphids can cause a nuisance.
- 4.9 Every street and area will have its own character and constraints, for example a single species avenue or very narrow verges. Open spaces also may have high water levels where we must select the most water tolerant species.
- 4.10 Every tree must be selected individually for its location, one type of tree is not suitable for all locations. The tree selection must be based on the right tree for the right place.
- 4.11 The specialist nursery is at the forefront of research developing the best trees

and then ensuring that these newly planted trees flourish in their final locations, we follow carefully their planting specifications and recommendations.

5. The Tree Team

- 5.1 The Tree Team are passionate in Thurrock for the success of our trees, they want to plant for a greener future to ensure pleasant views, surroundings, good biodiversity and to encourage wildlife, enhancing our wellbeing.
- 5.2 Currently the tree maintenance team consists of one tree officer and two fully trained Arboriculture operatives (tree gang). The team is responsible for maintaining the 20,000 trees throughout the borough. Every effort has been made to try to recruit a third member of the tree gang but this has not been achieved due to strong industry competition, from tree contractors for trained arboriculture operatives. A third member of the team will provide more flexibility and capacity for the team. Large pruning and felling jobs are currently carried out by a contractor due to the reduced capacity of the team.
- 5.3 In order to address the capacity issues within the team, an Arborist Apprentice post has been created and a suitable candidate will be employed to be trained alongside the existing team.

6. Future Planting and Maintenance Options

- 6.1 **Option 1** (Recommended with Developer encouragement outlined in 6.2) – For every 1 tree removed, 1 tree will be replaced. Based on an average of 22 trees planted per year at the cost of £150.00 per tree the total cost would be £3,300, plus maintenance costs to ensure survival. This option is in line with the motion tabled, by keeping our tree stock levels at similar numbers in the future there will be limited impact on future maintenance costs or resources.
- 6.2 With the development of 32,000 houses over the next 20 years, this is an ideal opportunity to encourage developers to include in their design the planting of trees and shrubs and for their ongoing maintenance to be the responsibility of the management company. This would provide an increase of tree planting in the borough in future years without impacting resources and maintenance costs.
- 6.3 **Option 2** – For every 1 tree removed, 2 trees will be planted the total cost would be £6,600, plus maintenance costs to ensure survival. However if more trees were being planted than the number of trees being removed this would have an impact on future maintenance cost and resources.
- 6.4 **Option 3** - As no replacement trees have been planted during the past 3 – 4 years an option could be to for the first year only to plant 66 trees at a cost of £9,900, plus maintenance costs to ensure survival. The number of trees planted in future will depend on the number removed.

6.5 Capital funding has been requested for the purchase of new trees and for the additional maintenance, from April 2019.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

7.1 That Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny approve and recommend to Cabinet Option 1 of the tree planting proposals and request that developers include provision and ongoing maintenance of trees in future developments. This option conforms to the replanting section of Cllr Redsell's motion as well as having no impact on future maintenance or resources.

7.2 That Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny consider option 3 and recommend to Cabinet, subject to capital funding approval.

8. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

8.1 N/A

9. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

9.1 Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in.

10. Implications

10.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Carl Tomlinson**
Finance Manager – Management Accountant

The cost is expected to be in the region of £25k spread over a number years depending on the chosen option. Appropriate funding options are being considered.

10.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Assistant Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer

There may be implications if the tree which is being removed has a Tree Preservation Order, or if a tree is in a sight of special scientific interest.

10.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**

Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

There are no Diversity Implications arising from this report.

10.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

11. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- N/A

12. **Appendices to the report**

- N/A

Report Author:

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