

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

10 MARCH 2020

PROPOSALS FOR TREE PLANTING

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Luke Taylor – Cabinet Member for Environment
Cllr Elizabeth Wainwright - Cabinet Member for Climate Change.

Responsible Officer: Andrew Busby – Group Manager Corporate Property and Commercial Assets.

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on progress with implementing Council Motion 559 to plant trees as appropriate, as a responsive action to the declared climate emergency.

RECOMMENDATION: For Members to note progress to date and endorse further work, adoption of site listings and plans and implementation.

Financial Implications: It is anticipated that the provision and planting of trees will largely be achieved free of direct cost by working with interest and other community groups. Creating additional accessibility where that may be necessary will be funded via s106 open space contributions.

Budget and Policy Framework: There is no budget impact anticipated and the report accords with established policy – including the Tree Policy. This is a priority action from the Environment Advisory Group.

Legal Implications: Tree planting gives rise to issues of future liability for accidents and damage caused by those trees –whether in respect of accidents caused by falling branches and trees or the damage caused by roots to the foundations of adjoining buildings or existing service media. The Council should ensure that these risks are adequately covered by its insurance policies and by a planned management programme. If planting takes place on third party land then the allocation of future responsibility with the landowner should be clearly established so as to avoid any uncertainty.

Risk Assessment: Planting appropriate trees in appropriate places will ensure any risk will be avoided.

Equality Impact Assessment: By consulting and appropriate design it is anticipated that where areas of woodland are created that they will be accessible by all where that is possible.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Planting trees supports the Council's Corporate Plan by contributing to carbon reduction (and in the aid of community well-being by enhancing open spaces).

Impact on Climate Change: Planting trees will have a positive impact to reduce the effects of climate change by offsetting carbon usage in the Council's intention to be carbon neutral by 2030.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This Report is prepared in response to Motion 559 to plant trees on appropriate Council owned land in response to the declared climate emergency.

2.0 Progress to date

- 2.1 An initial desk-top study has been undertaken to identify potentially suitable sites in Council ownership for further investigation and consultation where that is necessary. The list as it stands to date of sites is shown at Annex A. This covers land across General Fund and Housing Revenue Account ownership. The land includes general public open space/ amenity grass land, redundant play area sites and farm land.
- 2.2 Positive engagement has been made with the Tiverton Tree Group including the viewing of potential Council sites in Tiverton. This in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change.
- 2.3 There has been previous engagement with Sustainable Crediton and a small area of open space land is already let for their management for planting with pollinators to encourage bees into the urban area. Discussion is ongoing over other potential land for that project and also for tree planting.
- 2.4 Similar discussion in terms of land for planting and naturalisation have been had in Cullompton and Bradninch. That can be expanded to included trees.
- 2.5 Tiverton Tree Group is also working with private landowners toward obtaining and planting of trees on their land. There can be mutual support in enabling more of this.
- 2.6 It is anticipated that trees will be obtained from a number of sources free of charge. That may in some cases be dependent on the trees being planted in spaces that are publically accessible and not closed sites. It is anticipated that planting of the trees will be supported by interest and community groups and indeed the engagement of those groups along with schools will be part of the project.

3.0 Next steps

- 3.1 The Tree Group and Sustainability Groups will be able to support planting by giving advice (along with the Council's own Tree Officer and Open Spaces Officer) on appropriate species, community engagement and consultation. Where possible accessible spaces can be created for communities to embrace – community woodlands and orchards, simply adding to the street-scene or more dense woodland if appropriate. Funding for access works can be met from s106 open space contributions.
- 3.2 Areas of open space and amenity grass in many areas can accommodate some trees. Species and location will be dictated by proximity of dwellings to avoid potential future conflict and constraints such as public utilities

underground and overhead. The quantity of planting will be such to enhance the open space and amenity as well to provide additional trees.

- 3.3 In many cases this is operational work where proposals will be shared with Ward Members and Parish Councils. Project related work and change of land use will be brought to Members for approval as well as updates on progress generally. Larger sites identified for investigation to date include farmland at Peppins Howden Tiverton (this extends to some 12 hectares (30 acres)) and a riverside verge at Mountbatten Road Tiverton. Investigations are progressing with Peppins Howden.
- 3.4 Significant planting in this season has been missed although there may still be opportunity for something to be done and this could be in the redundant play area at Halsbury Road Tiverton.
- 3.5 Plans will be developed with interest groups ahead of the next planting season – autumn/winter 2020/21 (implemented with volunteers where that is possible). Those plans may include ongoing management in one form or another of spaces created.
- 3.6 The impact on grounds maintenance operations will need to be considered – ease of grass of cutting and other operational activities. Planting of trees is key and compromises will have to be made if necessary.

4.0 **Additional benefits**

- 4.1 In addition to the carbon reduction benefits of tree planting further trees will increase diversity of flora and fauna enhancing open space, aiding sense of well-being, reducing flood risk and can be an educational resource.

5.0 **Conclusion**

- 5.1 This demonstrates that work on this project has commenced and there is a proposal to commence implementation of tree planting in a managed way to complement and enhance open space, as well as supporting carbon reduction proposals in conjunction with interest groups. Implementation to commence at the next appropriate planting season.

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Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member, Leadership Team

List of Background Papers: Council 6 November 2019 - Motion 559 Cllr R Evans – 22 October 2019. Environment Policy Development Group 26 November 2019 - Motion 559 Cllr R Evans – 22 October 2019.

Attachments Annex A List of Potential Sites
 Annex B To be presented at the meeting.