

21 June 2016

Policy, Finance & Resources Committee

Woodland Management Plan

Report of: *Alan Marsh, Arboricultural Assistant*

Wards Affected: *None*

This report is *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report requires the committee to consider the opportunity for entering into a contract with the Forestry Commission for maintenance of the Council woodland areas and the development of business opportunities and generate income.
- 1.2 The Council currently owns a number of woodland areas within the borough that cover an area of approximately 108 hectares. These woodlands have not been maintained for a number of years and are in need of upkeep and improvement through management.
- 1.3 In addition the woodlands abut urban areas and a large number of complaints that derive from residents relate to overhanging branches, debris etc. These matters are currently addressed by the council on an individual basis.
- 1.4 A solution to these issues would be the development of a Woodland Management Plan that will future proof the woodland habitat and more engage those residents who abut the woodland.
- 1.5 To assist with the funding of such a plan would be the opportunity to obtain grant funding from the Forestry Commission under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- 1.6 In addition to the maintenance of the woodland areas there are opportunities to make use of the harvested produce from the woodland to generate a local woodland economy of which none currently exists. In addition there is the possibility to generate income through the improved use of the Hartwood Tip by either the council making use of the green waste facility or possibly leasing the premises to a contractor.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees to grant delegated authority to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with Group Leaders (or their nominated deputy) to enter into a contract with the Forestry Commission to provide a Woodland Management Plan and maintenance for 10 years, providing adherence to procurement rules of the Council are followed.**
- 2.2 That the Committee agree that further opportunities to generate business and income are developed by a detailed business plan.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 By the implementation of the proposed management plans the status of the woods will be improved in the habitats they provide, the health and disease resilience of the important tree stock will be enhanced and new planting will increase biodiversity across a range of species. The implementation of the plans will be used as an impetus to launch a locally based woodland produce based economy providing branded products for regional consumption, for example sustainable sourced oak beams and furniture to charcoal and firewood.
- 3.2 As set out in 1.3 above, the Council currently deals with the maintenance of trees next to the urban area on an individual basis. This results in an unsatisfactory solution with the council spending concluding in a degraded tree stock which will require further ad hoc expenditure to maintain an uneasy status quo. By having an agreed plan residents will be secure in the knowledge that works will be undertaken to benefit the woodland and provide an environment that they will be privileged to live adjacent to.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Works involved in the execution of the agreement will involve the adoption of established forestry principles such as coppice with standards, Halo thinning around veteran trees, fell and replant.
- 4.2 It will require the initial felling of tree cover to enable light penetration to the woodland floor to encourage regeneration of flora and hence increase in biodiversity.

- 4.3 Finance for the woods would be provided from an element of the existing tree budget, grant aid and produce sale. It is believed that the recreational use of the woodlands can be broadened and encouraged giving residents a greater opportunity for an enhanced experience.
- 4.4 The UK forest standard is nationally adopted and ensures that woodlands remain viable as ecological, historical and economic landscape units. A dynamic woodland structure better future proofs against climate change, pollution, disease, visual degradation and in many other ways enhances the world and human lives for example health improvement such as quicker recovery rates from surgery or illness.
- 4.5 The stimulation of a local woodland economy helps protect on a global scale against habitat destruction and CO2 emission.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To ensure that council assets are properly maintained and appropriate use is made for the benefit of residents and the environment.

6. References to Corporate Plan

- 6.1 Greater use of the Council's assets enables the Council to better deliver its corporate objectives.

7. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 6.1 Before entering into a contract that has financial implications a full business case will be undertaken that will inform any future action.

Legal Implications

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- 6.2 The Council must ensure compliance with the legal requirements for procurement and commissioning in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Contract Rules as set out in the Council's Constitution, and any State Aid requirements should these be applicable. Legal Services are available to advise and assist as further details of the contract become available including its estimated value, and levels of grant funding if applicable

- 8. **Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

8.1 None.

9. Appendices to this report

8.1 None.

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