

<b>Committee(s):</b> Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee	<b>Date:</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Carbon Absorption and Reduction – Creation of Pine Tree Plantation	<b>Wards Affected:</b> All
<b>Report of:</b> Greg Campbell	<b>Public:</b> Yes
<b>Report Author/s:</b> Name: Greg Campbell Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: greg.campbell@brentwood.gov.uk	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

This report seeks approval for Brentwood Council officers to progress a business case to consider the development of a pine tree plantation in order to develop a commercial opportunity to sell locally produced and farmed Christmas trees.

### Recommendation(s)

#### **Members are asked:**

**R1.** That officers develop a business case to consider the creation of a pine tree plantation which would be used to provide locally sourced Christmas Trees.

**R2.** delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Director of Operations, Chair and Vice Chair of Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee to agree to progress the project if it delivers financial and environmental benefits.

### Main Report

#### **Introduction and Background**

1. Brentwood borough Council are committed to reducing negative effects on the environment. As such the Council are considering different projects to deliver carbon efficiencies including those related to carbon capture and encourage residents to use locally sourced products.
2. In considering different environmental projects the Council also consider the best and most cost-efficient way to make, create, develop and deliver them.

This report identifies a potential opportunity to grow a commercial Christmas trees plantation.

3. Real Christmas Trees are already sold throughout the Borough each year and many of these are sourced from outside the borough and transported in. Therefore, there is the opportunity to reduce the CO2 emissions by growing the trees here in Brentwood brings greater benefit.
4. This not only reduces the CO2 emissions by reducing the transport movements but also contributes to carbon capture as while the trees are growing they will contribute to this environmental improvement as well.
5. Christmas trees on average grow 20cm per year depending on species and conditions. In order to develop a harvest and ensure continued income and carbon capture a managed planting and harvest of the trees would need to be maintained.
6. Therefore, it is not a simple matter of planting pine trees, harvesting, selling and re-planting but understanding growth, natural environment and market. In order to understand the whole picture a detailed business case needs to be developed which will consider the complete life cycle and modelling of such a scheme.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

7. Demonstrates the Councils commitment to improving the environment by seeking to develop an opportunity to grow and sell locally produced pine trees for Christmas.

### **Consultation**

8. This will form part of the Business plan process

### **References to Corporate Plan**

9. Encourage more people to become involved in the environmental aspects of their community.
10. Develop new approaches to grant funding, and the use of community assets.
11. Consider how Council assets can be utilised to promote sustainable development in the Borough.

## **Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

**Name/Title: Phoebe Barnes, Corporate Finance Manager**

**Tel/Email: 01277 312 839/phoebe.barnes@brentwood.gov.uk**

12. Any costs associated with a consultation can be met within existing budgets.

13. The development of a business case is best practice for financial planning, the Council must take note that trading powers allow local authorities to trade commercially but there are strict requirements affecting the use of these. Section 95 of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Local Government (best Value Authorities) (Power to Trade) (England) order 2009 allow a local authority to do for commercial purposes anything which it has the power to do in carrying on any of its ordinary functions. However, the power must be exercised through a company. This must be considered when developing the business case.

14. Using discretionary fees and charges is one of the key income generating options available to local authorities. Section 93 of the 2003 Local Government Act allows authorities to charge for services that they have a power (not a duty) to provide. Income earned from these charges are restricted to the cost of providing them, there is no restriction on how these costs are calculated. Something that would have to be considered when developing the business case. Fees and charges offer a relatively quick and straightforward way to generate revenue, the operation of plantation needs to adhere to the Sections within the Local Government Act 2003, which will inform the business case that will be presented at a later date.

### **Legal Implications**

**Name & Title: Steve Summers, interim Monitoring Officer**

**Tel & Email: 01277 312 500/steve.summers@brentwood.gov.uk**

15. There are no legal implications arising from this report at this stage.

### **Economic Implications**

**Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning**

**Tel/Email: 01277 312610/philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk**

16. As part of the business case it is recommended that the wider economic implications for the borough are considered, for instance whether the Council

creating a pine tree plantation would compete with similar existing plantations elsewhere and negatively impact the local economy

**Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Appendices to this report**

None