

<b>Committee(s):</b> Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee	<b>Date:</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Carbon Absorption – Creation of Woodland at Hutton Country Park.	<b>Wards Affected:</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Greg Campbell	<b>Public</b>
<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 create a new woodland through planting trees in part of Hutton country park to create a woodland for residents and increase carbon capture

### Recommendation(s)

**Members are asked to agree:**

**R1.** to the development of a business case which will consider the development of a woodland at Hutton Park including consultation.

**R2.** That a public consultation be undertaken as part of the business case development

### Main Report

#### **Introduction and Background**

1. Brentwood borough Council are committed to reducing negative effects on the environment. As such the Council are considering the Forestry Commissions offer to local authorities to assist in funding the implementation of tree planting to improve carbon capture and reduce greenhouse gases.
2. The governments Committee for Climate Change recommends 30,000 hectares of woodland should be planted annually and may need to increase to 50,000 hectares to achieve cutting greenhouse gases by 2050.

3. Defra have reduced the minimum planting size from 30 hectares to 10 hectares to encourage more applications for the funding. Each hectare will be able to receive circa 2000 planted trees
4. Brentwood is a priority area as defined by the government, as it is classified as a peri urban area (*It can be described as the landscape interface between town and country, or also as the rural—urban transition zone where urban and rural uses mix and often clash*)
5. The Borough of Brentwood has a reasonable amount of open spaces and country parks that could be used for the planting of trees. The funding is currently £6,800 per hectare for individual applications and up to £8,500 per hectare for sites offering public access
6. Newly created woodlands are also eligible for substantial maintenance payments of either £200 per hectare each year for 10 years or a £1000 per hectare in year 5 following successful establishment of woodlands.

### **Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

7. Brentwood have considered potential sites to plant trees under the proposed scheme offered. One potential site is Hutton Country Park with an area of circa. 25 hectares, within which the minimum 10 hectares plantation to fulfil the grant condition is easily accommodated
8. Appendix A outlines the suggested plantation scheme within Hutton Country park
9. At present the site is used by dogwalkers and walkers generally and before the area is turned into a wood a consultation on the scheme needs to be carried out.
10. The planting of trees will contribute to flood attenuation as well as delivering benefits to the environment in terms of carbon reduction. Tree planting will encourage greater bio-diversity within the site and the wider Hutton area.
11. It is therefore proposed to develop a business case which will consider the development of a woodland at Hutton Park including consultation with residents and stakeholders.

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

12. Demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving the environment by seeking to develop environmentally beneficial projects. Further that the woodland project could be mainly grant funded so it appears there could be little impact to the budget.

## **Consultation**

13. At present there has been no consultation with local members or stakeholders including residents. Consultation would form part of the business case which would be developed if agreed to approve the recommendation of this report.

## **References to Corporate Plan**

14. Encourage more people to become involved in the environmental aspects of their community.
15. Encourage residents to work with us to take responsibility for the environment.
16. Develop new approaches to grant funding, and the use of community assets.
17. 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 312839/ phoebe.barnes@brentwood.gov.uk**

18. In developing the business case a public consultation is required, the costs associated with this consultation can be met from within existing budgets.
19. The business case will capture all the financial costs associated with creating a new woodland plus the ongoing maintenance costs required. These costs will need to be compared to the existing budgets with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and any budget pressures or savings captured through the budget setting process.
20. Currently, the government is offering funding of £6,800 per hectare for individual applications and up to £8,500 per hectare for sites offering public access as well as ongoing maintenance payments of £200 per hectare each year for 10 years or a £1000 per hectare in year 5 following successful establishment of woodlands. The Council would look to maximise this potential funding to reduce any budget risk to the Medium Term Financial plan. Therefore, as the business case is developed the Council must ensure this

funding or any revision to the funding and its criteria is captured within the business case.

### **Legal Implications**

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

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

### **Economic Implications**

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

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22. The business case should consider wider economic implications. However, it is considered that efforts to improve and enhance the borough's environment by creating new areas of woodland could contribute to various benefits, including the wellbeing of residents and an improved borough reputation regarding environmental quality. By extension, these benefits can contribute to the local economy and inward investment.

**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**

Appendix A: Woodland Plan