

Committee(s): Environment, Enforcement & Housing	Date: 14 th January 2020
Subject: Carbon Reduction - Reduction by using locally sourced timber	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Greg Campbell	Public: Yes
Report Author/s: Name: Greg Campbell Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: greg.campbell@brentwood.gov.uk	For: Decision

Summary

This report seeks approval for Brentwood Council officers to progress a business case to consider using locally sourced timber to enable positive environmental and financial outcomes through carbon absorption, carbon reduction, the sale of harvest timber and use of timber for local projects.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

R1. agree to the development of a business case to consider the need, the market and the benefits both environmentally and economically on progressing a scheme to utilise locally sourced timber for use in local projects, timber sale and other timber sales (off cuts/wood chip)

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 to utilise locally sourced timber.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Brentwood Borough Council are committed to reducing negative effects on the environment. As such the Council are seeking projects and schemes which will assist with carbon absorption and carbon reduction. The following report identifies a potential project that will enable both to be delivered.

2. Brentwood have a number of woodlands and forests which it manages and in the past, we have paid contractors to manage these areas via coppicing and also through removal of unwanted or dangerous trees. The timber from these trees has then been used by the contractors to sell on or use themselves.
3. Further there is a potential for Brentwood Borough Council to use timber in some of its constructions that may need to be replaced. This was recently demonstrated when the Council replaced a bench in Shenfield High Street using locally sourced timber. Previously the Council would have had to purchase and transport timber from outside of the region to deliver such projects.
4. The use of our own timber could therefore be an opportunity which this report begins to explore.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

5. Following a recent project where a timber seated bench was replaced with Brentwood sourced wood provided from a Brentwood forest it became clear that there could be an opportunity for Brentwood to explore.
6. Brentwood has a number of woodlands and forests in Brentwood which require regular attention. The work to these areas is undertaken by private firms and the arboricultural officer has demonstrated extensive cost saving in recent operations in Warley country park and Hutton Poplars by the sale of forest produce.
7. The timber in question could be used three-fold:
 - To build or replace Council structures
 - Sold as good quality timber
 - Sold as 'off cuts', wood chip for burners etc
8. The full extent of these markets is not understood as yet however what we can agree is that sourcing wood locally would provide some environmental benefits. These include ceasing the use of external markets where timber is shipped from abroad which in turn will, in a small way, assist with reducing deforestation and carbon absorption and further reduce carbon emissions through reduced transportation

9. The opportunities and possibilities need to be worked up and it may not necessarily be a single option but a mixture of options that create an environmentally and financially beneficial outcome.
10. Therefore, it is recommended to progress to the development of a business case to consider the need, the market and the benefits both environmentally and economically on progressing such schemes.

Reasons for Recommendation

11. Supports the Council's commitment to develop and consider projects to protect the environment. Through the harvesting of timber from Brentwood owned woodlands in order to reduce the borough's reliance on imported tree related products. The Council's own timber has already been used in the refurbishment of a prominent bench in Shenfield High Street. Such incentives contribute to reducing the carbon footprint by the authority. A business case would develop these opportunities into viable solutions which can then be implemented.

Consultation

12. No consultation has so far taken place.
13. This would form part of the business case

References to Corporate Plan

14. Encourage more people to become involved in the environmental aspects of their community.
15. Develop new approaches for the use of community assets.
16. Consider how Council assets can be utilised to promote sustainable development in the Borough.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Phoebe Barnes, Corporate finance Manager

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17. The development of the business case will need to consider the powers a local authority can operate in when charging for non discretionary services. 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. The business case would need to calculate these costs.

18. Currently the development of this business case is not expected to incur any budget pressures. All resources should be met within existing budgets.
19. Outcomes of the business case will need to aligned with the Councils Medium Term Financial Plan.
20. This development may generate a minimal to zero direct financial impact to the Council, however the other environmental aspects of this scheme would be considered in reviewing the value for money associated with implementation of this scheme. Until the business case is developed no finances can be quantified at this point in time.

Legal Implications

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21. This initiative will help to secure compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and Government policy.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning

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22. The economic implications are to be considered in the business case for locally sourced timber, as set out in the recommendation. This is important to understand the wider economy and market for timber supplies to be used in local development projects.

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