

Committee: Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee	Date: 13 th October 2020
Subject: Development of Woodland Initiatives	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Alan Marsh	Public
Report Author/s: Alan Marsh	For Decision

Summary

The following report identifies the sites that Brentwood Council will be seeking to plant woodlands and trees, and provides an overview of the different groups and organisations the Council is working with to identify and secure projects that will assist and develop more planting schemes across the borough in the future.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the present list of suggested tree planting sites as part of the beginning of tree planting in the borough (para 8)

R2. That funding for the woodlands or tree planting is met through identified grants or from existing budgets and/or future growth bids

R3. That the Chair, Vice Chair and Ward members are consulted on any scheme to be implemented within a ward

R4. Agree to continue to work with the Forestry Commission, Essex Forest initiative (EFI), Thames Chase, Woodland Trust, Natural England , RPA/DEFRA and local sector interests to identify and work up schemes to improve the environment within the borough through planting schemes or other projects that will support the environment

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Brentwood Council is committed to delivering some of the major environment and carbon reduction targets set locally, nationally and worldwide. The Council

is investigating projects and activities that will make a difference both locally and nationally to the environment.

2. As such tree planting and the creation of woodlands are considered a major contributor to carbon capture and delivering carbon reduction.
3. Tree planting and conservation is a major factor in the carbon sequestration programme for the planet. National targets of 30,000 Ha per year have been set. Brentwood is able to take its part in this initiative with a modest target of 20 Ha. Our schemes will maintain the balance for woodland and conservation grassland.
4. It also begins to start to meet some of the Corporate Strategy, key objectives set out last year (*Developing a clean and green environment for everyone to enjoy*).
5. Planting by Brentwood Council will be an important component of the Essex Forest Initiative (EFI) and Thames chase. Our contribution will add to the overall figures and targets set.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

6. To date planning of the planting areas has been progressing with Woodland Trust, EFI and forestry commission in terms of area and species choice to ensure the best carbon uptake and landscape improvement are achieved.
7. Local groups with whom officers are working include the countryside voluntary organisations, Essex amphibian and reptile group & Forest schools
8. The Council has already begun developing the Hutton Country Park Woodland project which will include the development of a pine forest. However other sites have also been identified and include so far:
 - St Faiths Country Park
 - Childerditch
 - Little Warley
 - Hatch Road Country Park
 - Merrymead Country Park, parkland restoration with specimen planting
 - Warely Country Park, woodland restoration and extensive planting

9. It is envisaged that working with groups identified within this report and other partners, that the Council can build upon its offering above and seek to increase the amount of planting undertaken in the future
10. The council will seek grant funding from the National Government through the Forestry commission and will seek to gain assistance from EFI, Woodland Trust and Thames Chase. It will also seek funding from other sources where possible

Reasons for Recommendation

11. Supports the Council's commitment to develop and consider projects to protect the environment.
12. Enables the Council to begin a programme of planting to support its environmental aspirations.
13. Enables the Council to work with other professional groups develop funding and a wider planting programme.
14. Enables the Council to fully integrate with the Community Forest and its partners, in turn giving direct access to all associated benefits

Consultation

15. The Forestry Commission, Essex County Council and Woodland Trust have been integral to the planning so far. Organisation to be consulted at a later time include Natural England and DEFRA.

References to Corporate Plan

16. Introduce innovative carbon reduction and absorption schemes (*Protect our Environment*).
17. Encourage the creation of local environmental partnerships (*Developing our Communities*).

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Director of Corporate Resources
Tel/Email: 01277 312500/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

Expenditure for woodlands or tree planting will have to be identified through Revenue expenditure within the General Fund. For 2020/21, this will have to be met from existing budgets; identified specific Grants or from the Council's Environmental Initiatives reserve. Any request for ongoing support will be considered as part of the 2021/22 budget and associated Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Director of Legal & Governance & Monitoring Officer

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The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced the ambition to reduce the carbon emissions in their areas by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050, the initiative of planting trees will go a long way to enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint, this is underpinned by the Government's commitment to planting 11 million trees by 2022. By planting more trees and creating new woodland, land managers also provide a range of other ecosystem benefits such as preventing flood risk, soil conservation and boosting biodiversity.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy

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There are no direct economic implications. However, schemes to maintain and improve the borough's environment can contribute to the corporate strategy objective of promoting Brentwood as a place to set up and do business from, part of growing our 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