

Committee(s): Community Environment and Enforcement	Date: 19 th December 2022
Subject: Tree Planting Scheme Update	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Marcus Hotten, Director of Environment	Public
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Summary

This report provides an update upon previous Council tree planting initiatives in Brentwood Borough over the past two years, and sets out the proposed tree-planting initiatives for the forthcoming winter season.

The success rate of the overall planting scheme is approximately 34%, which is lower than what would usually be anticipated. This was attributed to the severe drought conditions experienced this summer, and in the instance of St. Faiths Country Park, vandalism further exacerbated the situation.

Planting schemes for the winter of 2022/23 identify sites for approximately 14,500 trees, delivered through the Tree for Climate scheme, fully funded by central government. Funding, through the Urban Tree Challenge, for a further 167 larger street trees has been partly secured and requires a match funding commitment of £22,500 from the Council to deliver.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

R1. Note the planting scheme as outlined in paragraph 14, Table-2 of the report.

R2. Approve that match funding of £22,500 is considered in the budget setting process for MTFS 2023/24, which is subject to full council approval on 1st March 2023.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Table-1 below sets out tree-planting schemes that have been delivered by the Council in the previous two years, the number planted, and the survival rate of those trees planted. Upon inspection by Officers the survival rate of the overall planting scheme is estimated to be approximately 34%*, which is lower than would usually be anticipated (*This is not including deliberate vandalism).
2. It is however, not exceptional for up to 50% of ‘whips’ (small single-stem bare-root stock trees) to require replacement in the first two years of any planting scheme, with tree-planting projects allowing for re-stocking in this initial phase as a standard working practice. Given that the UK has recorded the worst drought condition, this summer, since the drought of 1976, then higher rates of tree mortality should be expected. Further, it should be noted that in discussion with other Essex authorities undertaking tree-planting schemes, anecdotally, a survival rate of 15% across Essex seemed fairly typical.
3. The approach to tree-planting at scale, using ‘whips’, is to accept that high rates of mortality may well occur, with repeat visits to re-stock where mortality has occurred, being the most cost-effective approach to long-term establishment of a plantation particularly in publicly accessible land which is more prone to compaction and physical damage.
4. The Table-1 below, however does reveal a variance in success rate across different planting schemes, this was not particularly related to the species planted, rather the quality of tree-planting undertaken. Specifically for St. Faiths Country Park, a high-level of vandalism was unfortunately experienced, this further lowered the success of the planting scheme.
5. Table 1 – Success Rate of Tree Planting Schemes Year 2020/21

Location	Species	Number	Survival Rate %	Notes
St. Faiths Country Park	Mixed Pine & Deciduous	4,500	9	Vandalism occurred to planting stock
Hatch Rd Country Park	Mixed pine & deciduous	1,500	34	
Childerditch & Bird Lane	Alder, bird cherry, oak	45	50	
Year 2021/22				
Location	Species	Number	Success Rate %	Notes

Ingrave – Middle Road	Alder, Sorbus	40	50	
Holly Trees School	Larch, Birch, Lime	250	35	
Hutton Polo Field	Thorn, Oak	20	95	

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

6. This winter's proposed tree planting projects reflects the two funding streams that they draw upon. These are: The Urban Tree Challenge Fund; and the Tree for Climate Fund.

Urban Tree Challenge Fund

7. A joint-bid, to the Forestry Commission, in partnership with the Essex Forest Initiative, secured funding £22,500 to provide 167 street trees within the urban areas of Brentwood Borough. These trees will be approximately 10 foot in height, and will be of species selected for their suitability for urban landscapes. Provision will be made to plant, stake and provide the necessary after-care such as pruning & watering for up to three years.
8. The funding requires that the trees are planted within an urban area. This is defined as a built-up area with a population of at least 2,000 people, and a buffer of 1km to account for peri-urban planting. Where areas comply with the urban definition (This covers the vast majority of the Borough) Ward Members will be contacted and invited to nominate locations that they wish to be considered. Officers will then decide upon final locations based on the nominations and suitability.
9. Equivalent match-funding of £22,500 will be required to be provided by the Council to ensure that this scheme is able to go ahead.

Trees for Climate

10. The programme is part of the national Government-led Nature for Climate fund and is being delivered by England's Community Forests, specifically in Brentwood Borough's case, the Thames Chase Community Forest.
11. This covers the majority of the proposed tree-planting that is to be undertaken, and is set out in Table-2 below. The proposed planting will consist of a mix of entirely new-planting schemes and re-placement trees for the existing on-going projects as listed in table 1 above.

12. The planting schemes are 100% funded through the Trees for Climate fund.

13. Table 2 – Proposed Planting Scheme 2022/23

Location	Species	Number	Notes
Warley Country Park	Beech, spruce, larch	1,000	
Hutton Country Park	Mixed Deciduous & conifer	10,000	
St Faith Country Park	Mixed Deciduous & conifer	2,500	Re-planting
Hutton polo field	Oak, batwillow	20	
Hatch Road Country Park		1,000	Re-planting
Urban Tree Planting	8-10 ft suitable sp. urban location	167	Precise locations to be decided
TOTAL		14,687	

Reasons for Recommendation

14. The proposed tree planting scheme is identified as a key deliverable in the draft 2022 Environment Strategy, and represents an opportunity to deliver on a significant number of tree planting at a low cost to the Council.

References to Corporate Plan

15. The proposed tree planting is identified as a key objective for 2021-22: '*Support and deliver the planting of 10,000 new trees*'; and aligns with the key priority: '*Promote the environment and recognise its importance in the decisions we make,*'

Implications

Financial Implications

Financial Implications: Tim Willis, Interim Director of Resources
Tel/Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

16. Approval of match funding of £22,500 to be considered in the budget setting process for MTFs 2023/24, which is subject to full council approval on 1st March 2023 will add a pressure to the budget. Officers will review the existing budget to consider any underspend that can be utilised to fund this budget.

Legal Implications

Andrew Hunkin, Interim Director of People and Governance
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17. The tree planting schemes must be undertaken in accordance with the requirement of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Tree for Climate Fund.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Place

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An important part of maintaining a prosperous local economy is the quality of environment in Brentwood borough and how that can attract people to live, work and visit. The tree planting scheme has indirect local economic benefits in this way for the borough. It also contributes to those businesses, organisations and jobs involved in the planting and upkeep of trees.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Name/Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager, Community Leisure and Health

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The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic and provides an enhancement to facilities for all residents to use.

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