

16th September 2014

Environment Committee

Tree Warden Scheme

Report of: Roy Ormsby – Head of Street Scene

Wards Affected: All

This report is: Public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Tree Warden Scheme is a national network that enables people to play an active role in conserving and enhancing trees and woodlands in their local area. The scheme was founded by the Tree Council and is co-ordinated by them in partnership with Local Authorities.
- 1.2 Brentwood has been part of the current scheme since it was launched in 1990, and currently has eight active member's in various locations around the Borough, but it would be the intention of the Tree Officer to raise this to two per ward where possible.
- 1.3 The wardens are the 'eyes and ears' of the community in relation to trees, hedgerows and our woodlands, and report back issues locally that may otherwise be unnoticed by Council Officers.
- 1.4 It is important that the scheme is continually promoted in order to attract new volunteers, especially young people, who are the next generation that will manage and retain our environment in the future. These will also work closely with the current Countryside Volunteers.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Agree that Officers develop a promotional campaign to further develop the National Tree Warden Scheme across the Borough.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The Tree Warden Scheme is a national network that enables people to play an active role in conserving and enhancing trees and woodlands in

their local area. The scheme was founded by the Tree Council and is co-ordinated by them in partnership with Local Authorities.

- 3.2 Brentwood has been part of the current scheme since it was launched in 1990, and currently has eight active member's in various locations around the Borough, but it would be the intention of the Tree Officer to raise this to two per ward where possible.
- 3.3 There are many thousands of Tree Wardens in local networks throughout the UK, forming a volunteer force of immense value to the environment. It is estimated that together they devote nearly two million volunteer hours a year, time worth about £1.3 million.
- 3.4 Although there is an active Warden Scheme in the Borough, it is felt that there should be more promotion of the scheme to enhance the numbers, but more importantly to promote our woodlands.
- 3.5 The scheme gives people who feel that trees matter an opportunity to:
 - Champion their local trees and woods
 - Plant and care for trees
 - Carry out woodland management
 - Set up tree nurseries using seeds collected locally
 - Survey trees and gather information about them
 - Provide early warning of threats, disease, decay, or vandalism
 - Get together with like minded people for training and field trips
- 3.6 The volunteers will work closely with the Council's tree officer, and conservation bodies, who are key to the scheme's success. The scheme will be co-ordinated by the Council Tree Officer, who will arrange meetings, and training for the groups.
- 3.7 Where numbers permit, the volunteers will be encouraged to work together as a group, especially in Parish areas. Within the framework of the scheme they can decide their own priorities, when they meet, and what conservation activities they wish to promote.
- 3.8 However, all will be co-ordinated through the Council, and locally elected Members will be informed of any activities within their wards, and have the opportunity to make comments.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The scheme is a valuable asset to the Council, and has been neglected for a number of years. The current Tree Officer see's the scheme as an important role in the community, and will provide much needed support, which is due to the large number of trees across the Borough.
- 4.2 Although not currently an issue in the Borough, one of the key challenges facing our woodlands is that of Ash dieback. One of the roles of the volunteer's will be to identify any signs of the disease in the Borough, and inform the Tree Officer to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 Although the scheme has been in existence for a number of years, the value of it to our communities has not been recognised. This is an opportunity to reinvigorate the scheme and promote its value to the local area.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 There is no requirement for a formal consultation, as this is a volunteer scheme and the value of it will be promoted within the community when recruiting local people.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 The scheme is a valuable part of the Corporate Plan, as it will work with voluntary and community groups to raise awareness in their area about local activities.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Chris Potter, Monitoring Officer and Head of Support Services

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8.2 None

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

8.3 None

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - The Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme leaflet

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