

Title of Committee: Executive
Date of meeting: 1st October 2020

Title: Trees for our Future – Project Framework and Start-up

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Portfolio Holder: Cllr Alan Rhead, Environment; Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger, Neighbourhood

Public report / Confidential report: Public – not confidential

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: Yes

Key Decision: Yes

Included within the Forward Plan: Yes

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No. An EqIA will be undertaken, following the completion of the mapping stage of the project.

Consultation & Community Engagement: The project offers wide opportunities to engage with communities on the Climate Emergency Action Programme, including establishing new partnerships to enable tree planting, sustainable management of sites and enabling community action to plant trees.

Final Decision: No

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	14/09/2020	Dave Barber - Programme Director for Climate Change Bill Hunt - Deputy Chief Executive
Head of Service	14/09/2020	Dave Barber - Programme Director for Climate Change
CMT	14/09/2020	Chris Elliott - Chief Executive Andrew Jones - Deputy Chief Executive Bill Hunt - Deputy Chief Executive Dave Barber - Programme Director for Climate Change
Section 151 Officer	14/09/2020	Andrew Jones
Monitoring Officer	14/09/2020	Andrew Jones
Finance	14/09/2020	Mike Snow - Head of Finance
Portfolio Holder(s)	14/09/2020	Cllr Alan Rhead, Environment Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger, Neighbourhood

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out recommendations for the scope and delivery of the Trees for our Future planting project confirmed by the Council at its meeting on 12 February 2020.
- 1.2. The report is to agree mapping, delivery and monitoring processes for tree planting across the District. These will establish a basis for achieving the target of planting 160,000 trees in a sustainable and effective way.
- 1.3. The report is to agree initial project funding to ensure that the tree planting work commences for a period of 18 months. Further reports will be brought to the Executive following the initial phase.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Executive agrees the project targets 160,000 trees planted by 2030. This will be in accordance with the hierarchy of target types of planting (set out in Appendix 1 and 8.7).
- 2.2 The Executive agrees the project model, targeting some key sites owned by Warwick District Council, to lead the way in enabling a wide range of partners to undertake tree planting on sites in other ownership.
- 2.3 The Executive agrees up to £35,500 for the project for the remaining current financial year (2020/21) to be funded from the Contingency Reserve as set out in the table at para 3.12. The funding is to enable the project start-up and establishment of detailed project scope and delivery structure.
- 2.4 The Executive notes that the funding for work programmed for 2021/22 (as identified in 3.12) will be included in the Council's February 2021 budget report. This work is currently estimated at £82,500.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

Recommendation 2.1

- 3.1 The Climate Emergency Action Programme identifies the need to plant trees that will achieve a range of benefits set out in the background information shown at Section 8.
- 3.2 The timescale proposed allows for a range of differing types of tree planting to be established across the District. The approach will be sustainable, having allowed appropriate assessment of sites and their opportunities, alongside the longer term need for maintenance and care.
- 3.3 The recommendation targets early achievable planting that will be recognisable and pave the way for a measured approach of "the right tree in the right place" each year until 2030. Lessons can be learnt throughout the project period and methods refined.
- 3.4 An original target of 160,000 over the next four years was set in the Council's Business Strategy. The revised time period allows for sustainable and

appropriate tree planting that will bring long lasting impacts.

Recommendation 2.2

- 3.5 It is not possible to achieve the target only on land owned by Warwick District Council. The project is therefore structured to enable others to achieve the targets alongside the Council by offering advice, site assessments and signposting partners to available funding sources.
- 3.6 There are currently around eight sites that offer potential to plant immediately in the 2020/21 planting season from the autumn. These include seven owned by Warwick District Council and another owned by a parish council. These could lead the way in establishing the project more widely. Prioritising these sites, where the Council can directly influence success, will help establish the work.

Recommendation 2.3

- 3.7 Initial work is required to underpin the ten-year period of planting schemes and ensure the benefits are sustainable for residents of the District. Over the first 18 months, an expert resource is needed to identify tree planting opportunities specifically for Warwick District. Data gathered by the Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership to which the Council belongs would be used to achieve this. Once the mapping and detailed proposals have been developed, refined proposals will be brought to the Executive.
- 3.8 There will be few opportunities to launch the project in 2020 because preparation work is likely to last beyond the earliest planting season (from autumn 2020). The eight identified sites present the possibility of immediately establishing a tangible presence of tree planting in the District that will lead the way to enable others to continue the work. Work is on-going to identify external funding sources that would reduce the overall costs.
- 3.9 The project offers the opportunity to communicate a wider understanding of the climate emergency and support the development of new projects under the Trees for our Future programme, as well as the direct benefits of tree planting within the District's communities.
- 3.10 Specialist forestry expertise is required, as sites come forward, to ensure that appropriate schemes happen. This work will entail a wide range of engagement with interested organisations and residents and will include advice and support on appropriate planting and accessing funding. In addition, sites need to be monitored throughout the duration of the project to ensure the number of trees planted and on-going maintenance and sustainability. Dialogue has indicated that two partners, the Heart of England Forest and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, would be prepared to offer relevant services from within their teams via a call-off arrangement, as well as work individually or together. Discussions continue with these partners.
- 3.11 Initial funds are required to enable 'early wins' and one-off opportunities as they come forward and to support the community in driving the project forward. This element of the project relates to more innovative and unanticipated proposals that would benefit the programme's delivery.

Recommendations 2.1-2.3

3.12 Indicative table of costs for the project initiation period

Proposal	Description	Indicative Total Cost (over initial 18 months)	2020/21	2021/22
Identification of a baseline for trees and woodland in the District	Mapping of the tree planting opportunities District-wide, using existing habitat data.	£2,200	£2,200	£0
Early establishment of trees on identified sites	Undertake immediate planting on WDC and Budbrooke Parish Council (BPC) to launch the programme.	WDC – up to £27,000* BPC – up to £5,800 max**	WDC - £17,000 BPC £5,800	WDC - £10,000 (if required) BPC £0
Commission expert advice	Specialist forestry expertise is required, as sites come forward, to ensure that appropriate schemes happen. This work will include partner engagement and funding advice for those who are considering taking part. In addition, sites need to be monitored throughout the duration of the project to ensure the number of trees planted and on-going maintenance and sustainability.	£27,500	£9,000	£18,500
Communications work in support of the project	The project offers the opportunity to communicate a wider understanding of the climate emergency and	£5,500	£1,500	£4,000

Proposal	Description	Indicative Total Cost (over initial 18 months)	2020/21	2021/22
	support the development of new projects under the Trees for our Future programme, as well as the direct benefits of tree planting within the District's communities.			
Provision of grant funding	This is for the Council to support community tree planting initiatives and other one-off opportunities directly, including in 2021/22 a contribution to Leamington Street Trees subject to further discussions	£50,000	£0	£50,000 ***
Total		£118,000	£35,500	£82,500

*Funding of approx. £10,000 may be available from Woodland Trust for these schemes.

**Budbrooke Parish Council have provisionally indicated the potential to provide an element of Parish Council funding towards planting.

***Consideration will be given to the funding of this work stream through the potential use of any RUCIS funding or future funding associated with the Climate Emergency Action Programme.

Recommendations 2.4

- 3.13 In light of the Council's current overall financial position it is recognised that it is necessary to split the funding of this work over the 18-month period. This will enable the Council to progress initial opportunities within the forthcoming planting session (November 2020 – February 2021). The funding required for next financial year (currently estimated at £82,500) will be identified through the February 2021 budget report, to enable the Council to consider the funding needed for this project against other corporate priorities.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

4.1.1. The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council's Key projects.

4.1.2. The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.2. FFF Strands

4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities - Planting schemes will enhance the amenity of the District, provide opportunities for greater health and well-being and offer communities the chance to get involved.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe - Tree planting directly addresses a carbon zero vision and supports improved open and public spaces.

Money - Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment - Some employment is anticipated through the use of local nurseries and workers to establish and maintain the sites.

4.2.2. Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – No impact

Services - Maintain or Improve Services - The project targets direct improvements in the environment for residents.

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term - The creation of initial mapping and monitoring frameworks will ensure that the delivery of tree planting will be most effective and target available grant funding opportunities.

4.3. Supporting Strategies

4.3.1. Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and the relevant one for this proposal is the Council's Business Strategy 2019-2023 that commits to achieving the planting of 160,000 trees within the District in support of the Climate Emergency Action Programme.

4.4. Changes to Existing Policies

4.4.1 None

4.5. Impact Assessments

4.5.1. None

5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1 It is recommended that funding for work targeted for the remainder of the current financial year (£35,500) is met from the Contingency Reserve, which currently has approximately £182,200 available.
- 5.2 Funding required for the remaining work in 2021/22, will be included within the February 2021 budget report. This is currently estimated at £82,500 and is subject to change dependent on the tree planting opportunities which arise through the mapping work.

6. Risks

- 6.1. The project may not reach the targeted number of trees planted by 2030. However, the timeframe could be extended. The framework approach to the project mitigates this through identifying a hierarchy of sites to prioritise and allows the opportunities to be maximised. Ultimately the time period would need to be extended should this not address the risk.
- 6.2. A risk to the project is that planted trees do not thrive or are not maintained. The project method of identifying opportunities via mapping means that this should offer the best habitat conditions for the success of the planted trees. Using a site assessment approach means that sustainability for the planting will also be taken into account via the site owner and maintenance budgets will be confirmed at the outset. The project proposal includes a monitoring resource that could ensure grant conditions relating to maintenance are kept.
- 6.3. A risk to project success is insufficient land supply in appropriate areas. This could be addressed by looking at the potential for land acquisition in areas shown on the mapping exercise. The introduction of new mechanisms to encourage further planting, such as short term grant funding being offered, could also be considered.
- 6.4. Risks to the project are insufficient available funding to achieve all the required planting and associated communications to bring forward the maximum benefits. These are being addressed by taking an "enabling" approach to achieving the project via sign posting to a range of potential grant funds for tree planting. Working with partners will also bring expertise, new funding and inform the site choices and management. By also bringing forward a focused communications strategy, the benefits of the project can be maximised.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1. Aiming to achieve all planting directly via the resources of the Council is an alternative option. Whilst it might provide the opportunity to strengthen community engagement in connection with the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan, this option would require additional financial and staff resources. It would also not maximise the potential to involve partners in the achievement of the targets. These partners may also be able to access additional grant funding themselves.
- 7.2. The variety and range of possibilities for tree planting is wide. An alternative option to address all of these as soon as they arise, without prioritising particular sites might return quick and visible results. However, experience from other programmes suggests that without following considered mapping and

planning for future site maintenance, those quick returns are unsustainable into the medium and longer term future. This could have negative repercussions on the benefits for the project.

8. Background

- 8.1 A tree planting project can help to address climate change and the decline of biodiversity. The benefits of tree planting are widely recognised. These include: visual enhancement of landscapes and benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing, flood alleviation, provision of sustainable building materials, cooler temperatures, absorption of carbon and other pollutants and reduction of soil erosion.
- 8.2 Linking to the Climate Emergency action plan, The Trees for our Future project is identified as an initiative within the Council's Business Strategy 2019 – 2023 and commits us to "Enable the planting of 160,000 trees over the next four years". The Council has a number of existing policies and strategies available which support the principle of the creation and protection of green space within the District. These policies are:
 - Local Plan 2019 - 2026
 - WDC Public Open Space Supplementary Planning Document 2019
 - Green Space Strategy 2012 – 26
 - Tree and Woodlands Strategy 1999 (review pending)
- 8.3 This project presents an opportunity to transform the District into a better place for both people and wildlife. To make best use of this opportunity, it is important to focus on an appropriate and sustainable local tree planting programme set against the wider context of the types of projects this could involve.
- 8.4 The government Committee on Climate Change has recommended that we should be aiming to plant around 30,000 hectares of new woodland in the UK every year. In recognition, Warwick District Council has launched its own tree planting initiative to enable a tree for every resident of the District.
- 8.5 Opportunities will continue to arise linked directly to the Council's operational activities and policy making, enabling tree planting. The project also provides an opportunity to harness increasing community interest and use this interest to deliver the tree planting collaboratively, alongside other climate emergency mitigation and delivery. A wide range of partners and land owners have the potential to make the project work, including the Warwickshire County Council initiative to plant more trees.
- 8.6 More tree cover is needed to combat climate change. The Government's Committee on Climate Change has set out a target of 17 – 19% tree/woodland cover if the UK is to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Currently the national average of tree cover is 13%. In Warwick District it is only 4%. This low coverage can also have an adverse impact on the District's biodiversity and air quality.
- 8.7 There are numerous types of planting set out below. It should however be acknowledged that trees have to be maintained and thinned. Part of the project would include communication around these issues. Within the project, the

following types of planting could be relevant:

- new plantations
- buffer zones – for built development and habitats
- connections between habitats
- street trees
- hedgerow planting
- infrastructure for new built developments
- natural regeneration (allowing spread of existing woodlands naturally through self-seeding etc.)
- other opportunities e.g. trialling new urban plantation methods, trialling of alternative tree species at particular sites (e.g. to address mitigation of tree disease)

8.8 An average indicator for planting would be to assume 1440 trees per hectare, requiring more than 111ha to achieve the target number of trees across the District. The final use of any timber would also have a bearing on the type of planting e.g. does it need to be to Forestry Stewardship Certification (FSC) standards? Not all sites are appropriate for tree planting. The appropriate habitat, landscape and physical infrastructure need to be taken into account. National policy for trees continues to be reviewed but the basic tenet is that there should be “the right tree, in the right place”. This would include consideration of locally sourced species of trees.

8.9 Bearing in mind the factors set out above, this implies that to ensure a sustainable impact in achieving the target number of trees to be planted across each of the years, a technical assessment of opportunity needs to be undertaken and matched to delivery. This exercise will need to take into account ongoing monitoring of success. The need to continue impetus and visible impact of the initiative until 2030 is important and a hierarchy of tree planting priorities is proposed and set out at Appendix 1.

8.10 There are a number of potential funding sources available from a range of funders. These funding opportunities will be explored for each of the planting opportunities and pursued as appropriate dependent on funding criteria for the fund in question.

The principal funders identified to date include:

- Defra
- Forestry Commission
- Woodland Trust
- Severn Trent
- HS2 Ltd
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- The Tree Council

Funding source*	Scheme name	Summary
Forestry Commission	Woodland Creation Planning Grant	Funding is to create a design plan. Available for large scale, multi-purpose, productive woodlands of 10 ha or more. Funding includes contribution towards specialist surveys.
Forestry Commission	HS2 Woodland Fund	For creation of restoration of ancient woodland sites within 25-mile route of

Funding source*	Scheme name	Summary
		HS2 route. Includes contribution towards maintenance
Forestry Commission	Urban Tree Challenge Fund	For planting of small and large trees in urban and peri-urban areas. Includes 3yrs establishment payments following planting. 50% match funding required
Forestry Commission	Woodland Carbon Fund	For creation of woodland for carbon sequestration.
Woodland Trust	Community Tree Packs	Available to community groups (not Councils) for tree packs of up to 240 whips. Excludes labour and future maintenance
Woodland Trust	Morewood	Up to 75% of costs for sites between 0.5 – 3 hectares.
Woodland Trust	Morehedges	Up to 75% of costs for 100 – 250 meters of hedging
Warwickshire Wildlife Trust	Dunsmore Living Landscape	Expires early 2021. Limited eligibility for WDC. Princethorpe area meets criteria
The Tree Council	Branching Out Fund	Available for community groups who can demonstrate ongoing involvement of young people within the scheme
Severn Trent Water	Bio-diversity Fund	Flexible criteria with requirement to evidence increase in bio-diversity as result of projects.
HS2	Community and Environment Fund	For based community projects to benefit communities disrupted by construction of route.
Defra	Green Recovery Challenge Fund	Using funding from Nature Recovery Fund and Nature for Climate Funding for shovel ready projects.

*Each fund has its own criteria in terms of who can apply, minimum area of land, match funding and availability funding for maintenance.

The potential to secure CIL funding for this project is also being pursued. Further work has also been initiated to explore the potential to secure biodiversity offsetting funds held by WCC from developer contributions.

Regular dialogue with the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust continues to ensure that the Council is able to capitalise on the support and funding available from these bodies, alongside the development of relationships with other potential funders such as HS2 Ltd and Severn Trent.

Appendix 1 – Hierarchy of tree planting priorities

Priority 1	To include:	Facilitated by:	Comments
Warwick District Council (WDC) – owned sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites within Warwick District Council ownership where planting can commence in the 2020/21 winter season. • Newbold Comyn • Tach Brook Country Park • Housing areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of other work • Opportunities to attract funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly accessible areas
WDC planning gains	Any opportunity via planning negotiations e.g. hedgerow extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WDC policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly achievable
Priority 2			
Partner-enabled delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sites owned by others e.g. local businesses • Sites owned by other organisations e.g. schools, parish councils, charities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available grant funding • Communications from WDC • WDC baseline mapping 	
Priority 3			
One-off partner project proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street trees • Pilot project ideas for case studies/trials • Unanticipated opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct grant offer from WDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria and assessment will need to be established. • These projects are more likely to be unique and innovative, requiring different effort to achieve.