

Agenda Item No: 9

Report To: Cabinet



Date of Meeting: 24th September 2020

Report Title: Introduction of Tree Planting Schemes

Report Author & Job Title: Colin Munro, Grounds Maintenance, Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Manager
Tracey Butler, Head of Environment and Land Management

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Andrew Buchanan

Portfolio Holder for: Environment and Land Management

Summary: To implement a tree planting scheme and associated policy to enhance the amenity value of areas that have capacity for additional trees and to generate environmental benefit such as removal of carbon, reduction of flooding, enhanced air quality and provision of shade.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: all

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

I. Adopt the policy laid out in Appendix 1

Policy Overview:

Financial Implications:

Legal Implications:

Equalities Impact Assessment: Not required

Data Protection Impact Assessment: Not applicable

Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement): By the virtue that the costs for trees and planting will be recovered by the provision of the service and that there are multiple environmental benefits realised through this scheme, the risk of financial impact and negative publicity

	are minimal.
Sustainability Implications:	Positive - Government figures for the UK population and CO2 emissions suggest the average person has a carbon footprint of 5.5 tonnes of CO2 per year. On average, a Forest offsets 144.64 metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) per acre over 20 years on average a little more than a single persons estimated annual emissions (144.64/20=7.232). Planting is a great way to help sequester carbon emissions. Through photosynthesis trees absorb carbon dioxide to produce oxygen and wood. By ensuring that the trees planted are native broad leaf species the Council can help to preserve the UK's environment and biodiversity.
Other Material Implications:	
Exempt from Publication:	NO
Background Papers:	
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Report Title: Introduction of Tree Planting Scheme

Introduction and Background

1. Trees greatly benefit the people living around them by having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.
2. Trees also bring improved aesthetic benefits and improved environmental qualities such as carbon reduction and improved air quality.
3. As a council we recognise the importance and benefits of tree planting such as the improved amenity and environmental benefits, removal of carbon, reduction of flooding, enhanced air quality, provision of shade and positive impact on biodiversity.
4. Ashford Borough Council recognises that not all residents will have gardens nor the space to be able to plant trees. However, they may wish to contribute to the planting of a tree to enhance their local environment or to mark a family event.
5. There is an opportunity to introduce tree planting schemes for public open spaces owned by the council. Several service opportunities exist:
 - Promote the benefits of trees and the benefits of tree planting from a public perspective
 - Facilitate the planting of trees on behalf of residents that wish to contribute
 - Promote planting of trees to commemorate special occasions including Birthdays, anniversaries, weddings or as alternative environmental thank you gifts, as an option for making a carbon offsetting gesture, in addition to trees of remembrance for loved ones or pets.
6. The scheme will be self-sustaining, covering the cost associated with buying the trees, sundries, planting and reasonable maintenance. This will also provide income to support forward tree planting.

Proposal

7. It is proposed that the Environment and Land Management service become responsible for managing and administering tree planting schemes on public open spaces owned by Ashford Borough Council. Aspire Landscape Management will plant all trees.

8. Three schemes (outlined below) will initially be introduced, each appealing to a different budget or aspiration. The schemes will be available online, via the council's website.
9. The schemes will be subject to terms and conditions which have been included in the policy.
10. The detail of the three schemes and the associated costs are tabled below:

1. “Dedicate a Tree” Scheme
Overview
This scheme is aimed at residents who are looking to dedicate a tree, planted in a specific location. Residents will be able to specify their preferred location (subject to land ownership and site suitability). The tree species will be subject to site location and will be chosen by Environment and Land Management in consultation with the resident.
Location
The council will try to accommodate requests, subject to land ownership, suitability of the site and services. However, a suitable alternative nearby may be offered.
Tree Sizes
The size of the trees will be 10/12cmg or 12/14cmg dependant on species. The number represents the circumference of the main stem in centimetres at 1.5 metres from the ground.
Species
The council will choose a suitable species, subject to site approval (species dependant on location).
Timing of Planting
Trees will be planted between November and February, where orders are received prior to August. Orders received after August, will be added to the planting schedule for the following year.
Cost : £195 to £240 dependant on species
Cost will include
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tree• Stake

- Guard
- Mulch
- Compost
- Planting
- Annual maintenance visit for three years
- Replacement tree, should the tree fail within the first twelve months of planting
- Certificate of tree planting for the resident.

2. “Sponsor a Tree” Scheme

Overview

This scheme is aimed at residents who are looking to sponsor the planting of a tree, however do not have any preferred location in mind. Residents will be able to specify the type of tree they would like to plant from a selection of species.

Location

The council will choose the tree location based on species selected.

Tree Sizes

The size of the trees will be 6/8cmg or 8/10cmg dependant on species. The number represents the circumference of the main stem in centimetres at 1.5 metres from the ground.

Species

The species of tree will be chosen by the resident from a listing of approved and suitable species.

Timing of Planting

Trees will be planted between November and February, where orders are received prior to August. Orders received after August, will be added to the planting schedule for the following year.

Cost : £98.00

Cost will include

- Tree
- Stake
- Guard
- Compost
- Planting
- Maintenance for three years
- Certificate of tree planting for the resident.

3. “Plant a Woodland Tree” Scheme

Overview

This scheme is aimed at residents who are looking for a low cost opportunity to participate. Residents will be able purchase multiple saplings.

Location

The council will choose a suitable location. This may be an existing woodland areas in need of enhancement or new copse planting. Initially, trees planted under this scheme will be to enhance existing woodland. However, the longer term aim is to create new woodland sites.

Sizes

The size of the feather tree will be 80/100cms in height.

Species

The species will be mixed native.

Timing of Planting

Trees will be planted between November and February, where orders are received prior to August. Orders are received after August, will be added to the planting schedule for the following year.

Cost : £25.00

Cost will include

- Feathered Tree
- Stake
- Guard
- Compost
- Planting
- Maintenance for three years
- Certificate of tree planting for the resident.

11. The schemes will be subject to policy and agreement in line with the operating principles laid out in Appendix 1. The council reserves the right to refuse applications on the basis of suitability of location.
12. All tree planting will be carried out by Aspire Landscape Management, and tree planting will follow good horticultural practices at all times. However, it should be noted that as living organisms, trees are susceptible to pests, diseases and disorders which may lead to failure and no guarantee will be given beyond the twelve months stipulated in the dedicated tree scheme.
13. The cost of the scheme will be included in the council's list of fees and charges and will be subject to annual review.
14. The council may also chose to operate bespoke arrangements in locations falling outside the scope of this policy, subject to specific projects, for example, Victoria Park. These specific projects may offer different species options and pricing structure
15. To set our pricing structure we have reviewed the offering and pricing of other local authorities which is detailed below:

Local Authority	Cost	Details
Canterbury Council (cemeteries offering)	£419	Tree dedication memorial scheme – tree for 20 years.
Tunbridge Wells	£50 - £450 dependant on species	Tree and shrub donation scheme
South	£180 –	Dedicated tree scheme, residents can

Gloucestershire Council	£240 depending upon size, species	choose a location.
Medway Council	£200	Memorial tree to be planted in a country park

Equalities Impact Assessment

16. Not applicable

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

17. Not applicable

Other Options Considered

18. We could take no action and not suggest this scheme. However, without the costs being covered by sponsors, trees could only be planted as budgets allow. Additionally, this offers residents the opportunity to participate in the green development of the borough and have a stake in the future aesthetics of the borough. The scheme will help to positively contribute to our carbon agenda and enable our residents to feel empowered to contribute.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

19. The scheme will be self-sustaining, improving the aesthetic and amenity value of council owned land whilst offering environmental benefits and supporting the carbon neutral agenda.
20. The Council is seeking to deliver 2 new strategic parks (Conningbrook Country Park, Discovery Park) for the people of Ashford and these will be planted and opened up to the public in the coming years as various triggers are reached. The proposal is an opportunity for the public to support the creation of these spaces.

Next Steps in Process

21. Seek approval from Cabinet in respect of the policy laid out as Appendix 1.

Conclusion

22. In order to ensure that carbon neutral benefits are realised whilst offering financially sustainable tree planting, it is sensible to adopt this policy.

Portfolio Holder's Views

23. I am delighted to support these schemes which will help to empower our residents to support our carbon reduction agenda.

Contact and Email

24. Colin Munro – colin.munro@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Tree Planting Scheme Policy – Council Owned Land

Ashford Borough Council will facilitate the purchase, planting and reasonable maintenance of trees in public open spaces owned or managed by the Council.

Introduction

Trees are an important natural feature on many of the green assets owned by Ashford Borough Council; including open spaces, woodland, country parks, allotments, car parks, closed churchyards and cemeteries. Trees contribute to people's wellbeing and quality of life, providing additional amenity and ecological value to the landscape.

The Council receives occasional requests from members of the public who wish to plant a tree within a public open space or cemetery. These sites are often places with which individuals have a particular connection.

There is no legislative requirement for the provision of trees. However, it is accepted that they provide a useful and valued public amenity and offer significant environmental benefits.

The provision and management trees on all public open spaces owned or managed by the Council is the responsibility of the Environment and Land Management Service (specifically, Aspire). This policy covers the sponsored provision of trees in public open space which includes areas such as parks, countryside sites, and cemeteries.

The operating principles below will ensure that requests for trees are responded to in a consistent, efficient and helpful manner. It will result in appropriate tree species being purchased and planted in appropriate locations.

Data gathered during tree surveying and assessment exercises will be used (where available) alongside the assessment of suitable tree species acknowledging climate change, to determine suitable tree species for each council owned site. The council reserve the right to refuse a request to plant a tree on suitability grounds, for example, if a tree would not be suitable in a given location. Access, proximity to buildings and structures as well as ongoing maintenance will also be fully considered as part of determining the suitability of a site. If a requested site is not suitable, the nearest available site will be offered.

Operating Principles:

1. Only sites which do not already have a sufficient number of trees will be considered.
2. Only suitable tree species will be considered.
3. Trees will be planted between mid-November and mid-February.
4. Any tree ordered prior to the end of August will be planted during the winter period in that year (mid-November and mid-February). However, orders received after August will be planted in the following season.
5. Tree selections are subject to tree species availability.
6. The cost will include the purchase of the tree, materials for planting and reasonable maintenance for three years.
7. Costs will be subject to an annual review and will appear on the council's annual fees and charges.
8. The council will carry out all maintenance to trees. The purchaser of the trees is not permitted to carry out any maintenance. Additionally, no tributes or other items can be attached to, laid by or otherwise put beside trees.
9. In order to complete an online purchase of a tree, the customer will be required to confirm they have read and understood these terms and conditions and will be bound by them.
10. Where the relevant tree scheme allows for replacement of failed trees, this relates to trees that have been caused by the tree as a living organism and prevailing conditions drought or disease and excludes trees that have failed because of vandalism or accidental damage.

Tree Purchase Procedure

1. Member of the public uses the online application form to select the scheme that they wish to buy in to:
 - Plant a woodland tree scheme
 - Sponsor a tree scheme
 - Dedicate a tree scheme
2. Once payment has been made, customers buying into the plant a woodland tree scheme will have their tree(s) planted in a location determined by the council between November and February the same year when orders are placed prior to August and the following season for orders placed after August. Certificate of tree planting will be provided by the council once the tree(s) is planted.
3. Residents opting for the sponsor a tree scheme will select the species of tree that they wish to have planted. Once payment has been made, the enquiry will be allocated to a designated officer, who will determine a suitable location for the tree. Once a location has been determined, the resident will be notified and providing the order was placed prior to August, the tree will be planted by the council between November and February the same year. Where orders are placed after August, the tree will be planted the following season. Certificate of tree planting will be provided by the council once the tree(s) is planted.
4. The “dedicate a tree” scheme will require the applicant to select a piece of council owned land to plant a tree. Once received, a designated officer will decide upon the suitability of the site and specify an appropriate tree species. If the site is not suitable, the nearest available site will be offered. Once location and species have been agreed and payment has been made, the tree will be planted by the council between November and February the same year. Where orders are placed after August, the tree will be planted the following season. Certificate of tree planting will be provided by the council once the tree(s) is planted.

Summary of Tree Planting Schemes

“Dedicate a Tree” Scheme

Overview

This scheme is aimed at residents who are looking to dedicate a tree planting in a specific location. Residents will be able to specify their preferred location (subject to land ownership and site suitability). The tree species will be subject to site location and will be chosen by Environment and Land Management in consultation with the resident.

Location

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