
Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 06th September 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: Tremendous: Programme of Tree Establishment - Update

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Chief Officer: Colin Brand – Director of Environment & Public Protection

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on progress of the Programme of Tree Establishment. The stated goal of the project is to plant 5000 highway trees over a four year period. In July 2021, the Executive approved the allocation of funding of £1.35m from the Healthy Bromley Earmarked Reserve to support a four-year programme of planting new street trees and provision of tree aftercare (CSD21085)

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress made in the first year of the Tremendous tree establishment programme.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Improved health and wellbeing.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
3. Making Bromley Even Better Priority:
 - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: £1.35m
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Arboricultural Management
 4. Total current budget for this head: £732k
 5. Source of funding: Healthy Bromley Earmarked Reserve
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 7 FTEs
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 0.2 of each FTE
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: Information Only
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications:
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: None
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Tree planting makes a modest contribution to the delivery of the Council's Carbon Net Zero Action Plan.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Borough wide impact on businesses, residents and service users.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1 In July 2021, the Executive approved the creation of a tree establishment programme with the aim of planting an additional 1,250 trees annually over a four-year period (2021- 2025). In doing so, the Council is meeting a number of its strategy and policy objectives, but primarily the aim of the programme is to improve the health of residents.
- 3.2 The Executive approved the allocation of £1.35m from the Healthy Bromley Earmarked reserve to fund the purchase and planting of these additional trees, and a programme of aftercare for three years following planting.
- 3.3 It was always intended that the programme would be delivered in partnership with residents and local groups to support the successful establishment of newly planted trees, with support particularly focussed on aftercare: watering, monitoring and some basic maintenance.

Delivery in Year 1 (2021/22)

- 3.4 The Council publicly launched the programme in July 2021 under the name 'Treemendous' and started by asking that residents submit requests for replacement trees in vacant tree pits across the borough. A good response of 770 requests have been received to date; many of the requests included identification of multiple locations.
- 3.5 Council officers reviewed the requests and also identified other available locations during the course of undertaking cyclical tree inspections. In the course of the first year of planting, 1500 locations were identified with 1462 trees planted.
- 3.6 The council's contractor for tree maintenance in year 1 of the programme, Lloyds Tree Services, have been responsible for delivery aftercare to the newly planted trees.
- 3.7 Extreme weather conditions, including the hottest temperatures recorded in England and the subsequent drought conditions have presented an enormous challenge to the first year of tree maintenance and aftercare. Following some procurement and contractual issues which have since been resolved, the watering programme commenced in May 2022 and was due to run for a 16-week period. Due to the ongoing drought conditions and the effect on the newly planted trees.
- 3.8 At the time of reporting, of the trees planted in winter 21/22:
 - >80% are in a good condition
 - 17.5% are showing signs of stress
 - 2.5% in severe decline, dead or vandalised.

Taking all factors into account and as compared against a national average mortality rate for street trees as reported by the Forestry Commission of 30-50%, these statistics should make very encouraging reading. Actual mortality rates will be determined and reported on in spring 2023. Action is being taken to review those trees that look to be in distress or in severe decline with appropriate measures being taken to support the health of those trees.

Planned delivery in Year 2 (2022/23)

- 3.9 To date a list of 1253 planting locations have been identified and approved for the next planting season. Work continues to ensure the full allocation of 1567 locations (which includes the number of trees to be planted as part of business as usual tree replacement activity) are assessed and ready for planting from November 2022.
- 3.10 It is expected that as delivery of the tree establishment programme progresses, vacant tree pits and grass verge locations will reduce, and trees will be planted in new and historically unplanted locations.
- 3.11 Tender documents have been prepared to appoint a new contractor to deliver the planting and maintenance of trees associated to the project for Year 2 and onwards, with contract award due to be made in readiness for the 2022/23 planting season.
- 3.12 The order for the trees to be planted in year two of the project is now with Barchams, the chosen supplier. This order is for 1567 trees at value of £190k before VAT. Barchams have confirmed availability of a broad selection of species with a limited number of substitutions from the Council's original request. Officers are working to prepare orders for future years now which will enable us to secure stock of the most appropriate species.

Years 3 and onwards

- 3.13 In the November 2023 the Council will begin a new phase in the tree planting programme in terms of identifying appropriate locations for new planting. Consequently, the communications plan is to intensify engagement with residents' associations, friends' groups, the wider community, colleagues, and Members. The Council will seek to build upon the relationships developed over the first two years with a further push to identify locations where the creation of new tree pits can be undertaken on the public highway to best meet the stated objectives of the project.
- 3.14 This engagement (alongside the continued reporting on the achievements of the project) will be publicised via the Bromley Council website, Environment Matters newsletter, direct communication and information notices affixed to the newly planted trees.
- 3.15 In addition, the Council are currently expanding upon the provision and use of individual QR coded tags which are being fitted to the stake of each tree. The scope of this project is to provide a link to a page for the tree, giving information on species, benefits, environmental value (co2 etc.) and provide the function of allowing our contractors and residents to log incidents of watering viewable on a scale set against the benchmarked requirements of the tree, enabling us to best monitor and effectively assign resource to ensure successful establishment. There is scope to expand this element further to enhance the engagement experience if successfully adopted.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The tree establishment programme supports the delivery of ambition 4 in the Council's Corporate Strategy, Making Bromley Even Better, which is to:

'For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.'

Specifically, it supports the action to become a direct net zero Council and for a clean, green, and tidy environment continuing to improve the street scene across the borough and town centres for our residents and visitors.

4.2 A tree planting strategy that is integrated within all the other services provided by the Council's Tree Strategy is essential. It builds and complements or delivers policy set out in other Councils and Greater London strategies and plans including:

- Air Quality Improvement Statutory Compliance
- Bromley Carbon Net Zero Action Plan (2027)
- Greater London Climate Change Adaptation Plans
- London Urban Forest Partnership
- Bromley Biodiversity Plan
- Bromley Climate Change Adaptation including Sustainable Storm Water Management Suds Guidance
- London Sustainable Drainage Action Plan
- Bromley Healthy Living / Healthy People & Places Directorate Plans & Mandates

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Total funding of £1.350m from the Healthy Bromley Earmarked Reserve is available for this initiative as allocated by the Executive in July 2021.

5.2 Total costs of £289k were incurred in 2021/22, the first year of the programme.

6. CARBON REDUCTION AND SOCIAL VALUE

6.1 The tree establishment programme delivers against initiative 6 in the Council's 2027 Carbon Net Zero Action Plan which has the target for the establishment and/or enhancement of Council green spaces for natural carbon offsets and co-benefits. Whilst carbon sequestration benefits will be modest initially, there are longer term benefits, as well as the wider benefits to biodiversity and health.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Personnel Implications, IT and GDPR, Strategic Property Implications, Legal implications, Procurement i
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	CSD21085 – Aborticulture – Programme of Tree Establishment ES20130 – Arboriculture – Programme of Tree Establishment - Update