

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

Date: Thursday 7 September 2023

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

Title: TREMENDOUS: YEAR 2 UPDATE

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Chief Officer: Director of Environment and Public Protection

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for decision/report and options

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the delivery of the Council's Tremendous tree planting programme following the second year of delivery.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress made in the second year of the Tremendous tree planting programme and the revised communications programme to encourage more community led watering.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The health benefits provided by trees are particularly important for adults and young children suffering from mental illness or respiratory disease.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (*delete as appropriate*):

(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: £1.916m
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost
 3. Budget head/performance centre: N/A
 4. Total current budget for this head: £N/A
 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: 1 FTE
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: For information only
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Tree planting makes a modest contribution towards the delivery of the Council's Carbon Net Zero Action Plan under initiative 6: Woodlands, Parks, and Greenspaces
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Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: The economic benefits of trees are set out in the Tree Management Strategy.
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Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: Trees provide many benefits to health and wellbeing, with this being the primary reason for the Treemendous project: to improve the health of residents.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (*current and projected*): N/A
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Ward Councillor Views

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

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1 On 15th July 2021, the Executive approved a four-year programme to plant an additional 5000 street trees, and to provide tree aftercare (**CSD21085**). This tree establishment programme was agreed to support several strategic and policy objectives, but primarily to improve the health of residents.
- 3.2 It was always intended that the programme would be delivered in partnership with residents to support the successful establishment of newly planted trees, with communities being empowered to support the aftercare of newly planted trees through watering and monitoring as well as some basic maintenance activities.
- 3.3 In November 2021, the Environment & Community Services PDS reviewed the proposed programme of work for delivery from 2021. It was noted that the risk around costs of future maintenance would be minimised by choosing resilient species for planting and locating these in lower risk locations (**ES20130**).
- 3.4 Progress on the first year of the programme was reported to the Environment & Community Services PDS in September 2022 (**ES20209**). It was noted that 1462 trees were ordered and planted in Year 1 of the programme. The drought conditions experienced last summer did present challenges for aftercare, which extended the watering programme in this year.

Delivery in Year 2 (2022/23)

- 3.5 A tender was completed to appoint a contractor for tree planting and aftercare services for the remainder of the programme, with Gristwood and Toms being awarded the contract for delivery. Following this tender, amendments to the project budget and the planned aftercare programme were approved by the Executive in July 2023 (**ES20282**).
- 3.6 In total, 1590 trees were ordered and planted during the 2022/23 planting season, of which 1,250 were additional and funded by the Treemendous programme. The remaining 340 were planted to replace trees that had been necessarily removed, in accordance with policy 4 of the Tree Management Strategy 2023 – 2027. Of the additional trees, 231 were planted in locations that had been identified by residents or their councillors.
- 3.7 An aftercare programme for these newly planted trees commenced in May 2023, with trees receiving 50 litres of watering on a weekly basis for 15 weeks under the Council's contract with Gristwood & Toms.
- 3.8 To support this watering programme, the Council has also undertaken a communications campaign to encourage residents to help care for newly planted trees, and especially to supplement the watering provided by the Council. This included:
 - Writing to 3000 residents living adjacent to a newly planted tree to encourage them to support watering activities
 - Press releases, accompanied by instructional videos on how to water trees
 - Launching a Tree Friends toolkit on the Council website
 - Social media comms, including targeted social media advertising, to encourage participation in tree watering
 - Direct communications with registered Tree Friends and Resident Associations

- Promoting the programme in Council publications.
- 3.9 It is difficult to accurately report tree establishment and mortality rates until three years after trees have been planted, however, it can be noted that for those trees planted in 2021/22, the mortality rate is currently reported at 10% (144 trees). Of these, 12 trees died due to vandalism. At the time of writing this report, the mortality rate of trees planted in 2022/23 is at <1% (2 trees), one of which is due to vandalism.
- 3.10 In addition, of the trees planted in 2022/23, 14 are currently reported to be in distress or decline (<1%). A survey of the trees planted in 2021/22 conducted in July 2023 has identified 145 trees that are in distress or decline (10%). Additional watering was arranged for these trees during the second season to support their establishment.
- 3.11 Compared against the national average mortality rate for street trees as reported by the Forestry Commission at 30%, and considering the challenging drought conditions last summer, these statistics are promising. Mortality rates and tree health will be assessed and reviewed again in Spring 2024.

Planned delivery for Year 3

- 3.12 1486 trees are to be planted in Year 3, which includes another 1,250 additional trees. Species have been selected in accordance with the relevant policies set out in the Tree Management Strategy and for resilience.
- 3.13 There have been 740 tree planting locations suggested by residents since April 2022. These are being assessed for suitability with many already identified as locations for planting in Year 3. Suggestions for tree locations continue to be welcomed from residents and stakeholders, with information on how to submit potential locations at www.bromley.gov.uk/treemendous

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 There are several health benefits associated with trees as referred to in section 9, which are of particular importance to those adults and young people suffering with poor mental health and respiratory illness. Research indicates that spending time around trees reduces depression and anxiety, especially when combined with exercise.

5. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Treemendous programme supports the delivery of the ambitions within the Corporate Strategy: Making Bromley Even Better, with the most direct impact on ambition 4 – for residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean, and green environment great for today and a sustainable for the future.
- 5.2 The programme also supports the delivery of the aims and objectives established in the Council's Tree Management Strategy 2023 – 2027 which aims *to ensure that trees are planted ... in accordance with good arboricultural practice, with regard to their contribution to amenity and the landscape for the benefit of both current and future generations.*
- 5.3 The Treemendous tree planting programme also delivers against commitments in the Air Quality Action Plan, Bromley Net Zero Carbon Action Plan, and the Bromley Biodiversity Action Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Total funding of £1.916m from the Healthy Bromley Earmarked Reserve has been made available for this initiative as allocated by the Executive in July 2021 and July 2023.
- 6.2 Total costs of £754k were incurred in 2021/22 and 2022/23, although it should be noted that some planting costs for the 2022/23 planting season were incurred in the 2023/24 budget year, and all year 2 watering costs are incurred in the 2023/24 budget year:

Treemendous Budget		
		£,000
Total budget allocation		1,916
Spend 2021/22		232
Spend 2022/23		522
Total spend		754
Balance remaining in budget		1,162

- 6.3 The estimated cost of the planting and watering for year 2 of the programme as incurred in 2023/24 budget year is £208k.

7. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The tree establishment programme delivers against initiative 6 in the Council's Carbon Net Zero Action Plan which targets the establishment or enhancement of the Council's green spaces for natural carbon off-sets and co-benefits through tree planting.
- 7.2 Street tree planting will also support further carbon sequestration in the borough and improve green infrastructure which has associated health benefits – these were all set out in the original business case (**CSD21085**). Whilst carbon sequestration benefits will be modest initially, there are longer term benefits as well as the wider biodiversity benefits.

8. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 8.1 The economic benefits of well-managed trees are set out in the Council's Tree Management Strategy 2023 – 2027, and include supporting property values, extending visit duration in town centres, and supporting productivity.

9. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 9.1 The primary aim of the Treemendous tree planting programme was to improve the health of residents, recognising that trees have demonstrable benefits for physical and mental health, including disease reduction.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Personnel Implications, Legal Implications, Procurement Implications, Property Implications, Customer Impact, Ward Councillor Views.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	CSD21085 Arboriculture – Programme of Tree Establishment ES20130 Arboriculture – Programme of Tree Establishment Update ES20292 Delivery of Arboricultural Services (Part 1) Tree Management Strategy 2023 – 2027