

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

31 August 2021

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL – TREE CHARTER

To seek endorsement of the Tonbridge and Malling Tree Charter

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A Climate Change Strategy and Year 1 Climate Change Action Plan was approved by this Committee in 2020. The Year 2 Climate Change Action Plan was approved in June 2021 and within this was a target to bring forward a Tree Charter for the borough.

1.1.2 The Tree Charter is attached at Annex 1 of the report. The Tree Charter is aligned to the Climate Change Strategy and supports the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. It also supports the commitment to biodiversity protection and enhancement.

1.2 Benefits and Opportunities

1.2.1 The benefits of trees in relation to health and wellbeing, air quality, flood management and carbon capture are highlighted in the Tree Charter. Opportunities to improve native tree cover on the Council's own estate and the need to work with landowners, community groups and developers are also included.

1.2.2 There is also a commitment to undertake a review of land owned by the Council and for suitable sites to be identified for tree planting schemes. We will explore funding opportunities available through the Woodland Trust to enable community planting projects. This will also tie in with The Queens Green Canopy tree planting scheme to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee" through to the end of the Jubilee year in 2022. We will liaise with Parish Councils, other landowners and community groups to seek additional areas for planting.

1.2.3 Opportunities to promote tree planting on new developments through the review and refresh of the Local Plan and planning decisions will be considered. The

updated National Planning Policy Framework published by the Government in July 2021 stresses the importance of trees and their links with climate change:

“Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.”

- 1.2.4 In addition to the opportunities that exist via planning, it is also evident that funding opportunities will need to be explored. This will allow further planting of native species in appropriate settings, better management of existing stock and greater liaison with partners and landowners to help facilitate planting and woodland management across the borough.
- 1.2.5 The Tree Charter sets out the Council’s intent and recognises the importance of trees now and for future generations. Specific actions and targets in relation to tree planting and tree management will be incorporated into the Annual Climate Change Action Plans that are due to be endorsed by this Committee.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 None.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The Tree Charter is aligned to the Council’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Whilst there is no set budget to support this Charter, a reserve in the sum of £250,000 was established to support Climate Change initiatives. £3,000 from this reserve has been used to pay the consultants (Laser) to undertake the baseline carbon footprint work. £64,000 has been allocated towards the sustainable building features at the Leybourne Lakes Country Park facility.
- 1.4.2 There is an annual tree planting budget (to help manage the Council’s own trees and woodland) of £2,300. There is an additional health and safety budget for tree work that currently stands at £40,000 (the amount for H&S fluctuates year on year depending on the amount of work needed in any given year)
- 1.4.3 Additional grant funding opportunities will need to be explored to better manage and support trees and woodland across the Council’s estate.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 n/a

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 Asset Management

1.7.2 Biodiversity & Sustainability

1.7.3 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.7.4 Climate Change

1.7.5 Community

1.7.6 Healthy Lifestyles

1.8 Recommendations

That the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Tree Charter, as set out in Annex 1 of this report **BE ADOPTED**

That Members **ENDORSE** a proposed review of Council owned land to assess the potential for tree planting schemes.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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Chief Executive