

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 10 June 2024

Title: Mayor's Tree Planting Policy

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk/Operations Manager

Background

At the Town Council's Community Services Committee meeting held on 10 November 2015, it was agreed that each municipal year, a tree should be planted to mark the incumbent Mayor's year in office. *'The trees should be a native species able to survive in the conditions and should be spread throughout the town council wards.'* In most instances, a plaque was installed to advise of the planting.

Current Situation

Mayoral trees have been planted each year since 2015 with varying degrees of success. The table below shows the years, Mayor, locations and current health of the trees planted.

Year	Mayor	Location	Comments
2015/16	Clr JKing	West Witney roundabout	Tree deceased, removed
2016/17	Clr CHolliday	Madley Park amenity land outside of Madley Park Hall	Healthy
2017/18	Clr CWoodward	Burwell Field	Healthy
2018/19	Clr BChurchill	Welch Way roundabout	Tree not healthy
2019/20	Clr DEnright	King George V Field	Replaced once due to vandalism, replacement not healthy
2020/21	Clr JAitman	Eton Close Recreation Ground	Tree not healthy
2021/22	"		
2022/23	Clr LDuncan	Park Road Play Area	Healthy
2023/24	Clr OCollins	no planting	
2024/25	"		

Trees planted in smaller green spaces such as on or near roundabouts appear to have fared less well than those in larger open spaces. Other trees have failed due to the ground conditions and/or the species of tree in them. There has also been repeated vandalism to the trees in some cases.

Members are asked to review this policy and resolve whether to continue with this scheme. If agreed, the Council should decide on whether they are replaced (and how many times), if they are damaged, vandalised or decay.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Trees improve soil health and prevent soil erosion, provide oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide, as well as providing homes for wildlife.

As previously discussed at the Council's Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee trees must be the right species and planted in the right spaces for them to thrive.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There is a financial risk if further trees are planted and do not take or are vandalised.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Trees boost health and wellbeing and improve the look and feel of urban spaces.

Financial implications

- The cost of a Mayoral tree this year is approximately £300.
- The cost of a plaque for a Mayoral tree is approximately £55

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Whether to continue with planting a mayoral tree annually (or when a new Mayor is elected),
2. If yes, to consider planting all trees in a naturally good area for tree growth, rather than in electoral wards.
3. Whether to replace deceased or unhealthy trees already planted
4. If yes, whether this should be limited to one replacement and/or whether they should be placed in a different naturally good area for tree growth.