

CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 18 March 2020

Title: Tree Report

Contact Officer: Compliance and Environment Officer - Angus Whitburn

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this is to inform Councillors about potential projects that could be developed by Witney Town Council Officers to increase tree planting in Witney.

TREE SPONSORSHIP SCHEME

A tree sponsorship/donation scheme is a method to remove the barriers for residents wishing to donate trees to be planted on Witney Town Council land. This would not enable a resident to plant the tree themselves but instead, fund a tree getting planted. Witney Town Council would purchase, plant and maintain the tree still, but the initial cost of the tree would be funded by the resident or residents. This benefits residents by setting up a system for them to plant a tree in memory of loved ones, for their community or just to do their bit for the environment. The advantage to Witney Town Council is it increases our tree planting of established trees. A similar scheme is used by Norwich City Council and they have planted 26 trees extra trees as a result. Norwich City Council provide sponsors with a certificate and have a list of sponsors online.

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL TREE NURSERY

Currently, the Council only replaces trees that have been removed. The main reason for this is the current budget restricting planting additional trees. The cost of replacing these trees is a combination of planting a suitable size tree, installing a tree guard, insurance and ongoing maintenance.

To reduce the cost significantly we could look at developing a small tree nursery to raise trees from shoot to small trees. Protected land would have to be set aside, an outlay of cost for equipment and preparation works and staff hours invested in nurturing the trees. We would take shoots to a small-size tree (2-3 meters) that are normally bought for over £200.

TREE CHARTER DAY 2020/NATIONAL TREE WEEK

Tree Charter day marks the start of national tree week. Nationally tree planting takes place, from small community planting to large scale events planting thousands of trees. Through the tree charter trust, we can obtain free saplings to plant. These saplings can be planted in pre-defined areas by volunteers. Would the members of the council like to support our own planting project outside of these volunteer planting events?

A small area of land is available on Thorney Leys opposite Burwell park and across the road. The area of land would be ideal for planting trees along with no impact on residents or sporting grounds. It was not suitable for the tiny forest project due to its size and the grass mounds. Additionally it would in future provide a sound barrier from the dual carriageway to residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

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

There is a global campaign to increase tree planting, this enhances carbon capture helping to offset our carbon footprint. Witney Town Council although small with multiple low-cost tree projects could accumulatively increase tree coverage substantially in relevance to our size.

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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The projects proposed have all been developed to find a way to increase tree planting without increasing outlay on tree planting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Discuss tree sponsorship scheme and terms and conditions for applications
2. Commit officer hours being spent researching and planning a Witney Town Council Tree Nursery
3. Discuss tree planting plans for National Tree Week and if the area selected is acceptable or if additional/alternative location would be preferred.