

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 8 January 2024

Report to Cabinet 10 January 2024

Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy

Report of the Head of Community Services **HCS/069**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To endorse and approve the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy (as outlined in Appendix A) to provide a clear and consistent strategic approach the council will follow to support healthy and sustainable tree stock and tree canopy for future planting of its trees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2. To the Cabinet

- 2.3. The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy as set out in Appendix A.
- b) Delegate authority to the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, to review and make minor amendments to the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy as further changes to legislation and statutory guidance are introduced or following any review. (Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation).

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. The proposed Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A) has been created to guide and inform the Council's decisions to deliver a coherent approach for its tree planting, clearly outlining the standards for all tree planting, young tree maintenance and woodland sustainability. It identifies a clear approach for selecting tree species, location and a process for providing tree planting on council land across the town.
- 3.2. Crawley Borough Council declared a [climate emergency in 2019](#) and the associated action plan identified the need for a sustainable tree planting strategy to help tackle the effects of climate change. This strategy fulfils the response to this requirement whilst also delivering other tangible benefits that will assist officers in taking an agreed and consistent strategic approach for future planting of council trees across the Borough.

4. Background

- 4.1. This is the first proposed Tree Planting Strategy for the council (Appendix A).
- 4.2. Alongside fulfilling the council's requirement for a strategy as outlined in its climate change action plan the proposed strategy provides multiple benefits including:
 - 4.2.1. Developing and improving the local urban tree cover
 - 4.2.2. Increasing species diversity and resilience which ensures improved overall health of the tree stock.
 - 4.2.3. Sets the replacement programme for council trees that have been removed
 - 4.2.4. Embeds continuous improvement through requiring regular review of the practices to improve planting and aftercare, thus keeping up to date with modern practice.
 - 4.2.5. Supports the council in being open and transparent as to how it will manage future tree planting.

5. Description of Issue to be Resolved

- 5.1. The proposed Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A) fulfils the identified need for the council to have its own agreed strategic approach and methodology to achieve future maximum success for planting its own trees.
- 5.2. The Strategy provides a concise plan of the council's approach and protects future financial exposure through a clear planned and managed method for future tree requirements.
- 5.3. Having a clear and agreed Tree Planting Strategy will enable council officers to support and sustain local biosecurity in a responsible and sustainable manner, thereby protecting the health of our existing trees through planting trees from a known source, free from pest and diseases and that are in keeping with the local climate conditions
- 5.4. In response to increasing pressure on the availability of local open spaces, having a strategic and sustainable approach to tree planting by the council will assist stakeholders and residents to understand the rationale and principles that will be applied to ensure that new trees planted have the maximum opportunity to thrive and survive.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1. Adopting a Tree Planting Strategy for all future council trees provides multiple benefits in having a clear strategic and agreed methodology which officers can implement thus enabling a consistent and transparent response. It fulfils a climate change action plan requirement as outlined in the document. Furthermore, the Strategy ensures that the right trees are planted in the right place, assisting the council in mitigating future financial and health and safety risks.
- 6.2. Should the proposed Strategy not be approved, there will be continuation of ad-hoc council tree planting in the vacuum of agreed principles, posing levels of risk to the council including randomised planting, difficulty in ensuring effective aftercare, inappropriate selection of species that do not have maximum survival rates with the changing weather patterns as well financial and wellbeing considerations.
- 6.3. A public version of the Strategy is shown in Appendix B. This summarises the key points for residents and stakeholders in an engaging format and this publication will be available on the council's website.

6.4. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change has been consulted and is supportive of the proposed Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A).

7. Implications

7.1. Financial: there are designated and ringfenced section 106 funds to provide trees for planting on Crawley Borough Council land going forward and sufficient is in place for the duration of this Strategy. Therefore, there are no direct and / or adverse financial implications for the council.

7.2. Legal and Procurement: there are no legislative and /or regulatory requirements associated with the council adopting the proposed Tree Planting Strategy and this Strategy will only apply to council owned land. Formal procurement does not apply as future tree purchases are under the stated thresholds but the principle of value for money will be consistently applied for future purchases of stock.

7.3. Environmental: future planting of trees as outlined in the Strategy has clear environmental benefits including improving air quality, carbon absorption and offsetting carbon emissions, reducing the risk of flooding and increasing biodiversity and ecological habitats. On average, each tree absorbs around 10kg of carbon dioxide per year (dependent on the type and age of tree), making tree planting a good value strategy for carbon sequestration. Having a clear Strategy for tree planting will support the council to take advantage of this benefit.

7.4. Staffing: there are no known implications. The Strategy will be delivered by existing specialist council officers.

7.5. Equality Impact Assessment:

The Council must have regard to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under that Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and,
- foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:-
 - (i) tackle prejudice; and,
 - (ii) promote understanding.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and does not identify any implications and / or further action that needs to be taken as a result of the proposed Strategy plan.

8. Background Papers

[Crawley Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan Report PES/390](#)
[Crawley Borough Council Climate Change Core Principles for Action](#)
[Crawley Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)

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