

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE WORKING GROUP ON 10 DECEMBER 2020

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: Arun District Council's Tree Planting Strategy 2021 - 2031

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EXTN: 37955

PORTFOLIO AREA: Neighbourhood Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A 10-year Tree Planting Strategy and associated planting plan 2021-2031 is being drafted in support of the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. The planting plan will be developed in full consideration of 'best practice' principles, local management knowledge and required resource. This will ensure future tree planting undertaken by the Council is carried out in a sustainable and considered way.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To recommend to Cabinet that Arun endorses a proposed Tree Planting Strategy 2021-2031 and the full development of an associated planting plan, based on the principles outlined in this report

1. Background:

1.1 Arun's Greenspace Service is experienced in the successful delivery and establishment of large-scale tree planting projects and arboricultural (tree) management. This includes;

Bersted Brooks 11,000 trees in 2006/2007

Brookfield Park 8,000 trees and 1999/2000

Worms Wood in partnership with the woodland trust 20,000 trees in 1999/2000

1.2 A Tree Planting Strategy 2021 - 2031 & associated planting plan is being developed in collaboration with officers from the Council's Greenspace Service with many years combined experience in the fields of arboriculture and green space management.

1.3 As a landowner there is significant opportunity to plant more trees over the next ten years, in order to support the Council's recent declaration of a climate emergency within Arun. Trees play a vital role in the sequestration of carbon and Arun must demonstrate resilience in response to increasing threats from climate change and the introduction of exotic pests and diseases.

1.4 It is imperative that all future planting is carried out in line with best industry practice and in a well-considered and planned way. This will ensure the best chance of

sustainability and long-term health of these trees and minimise future management liabilities of this newly planted tree stock. The Tree Planting Strategy 2021 – 2031 will provide a framework to ensure that this happens.

1.5 Arun will be one of the forerunners nationally in developing a tree planting strategy based on the availability of data from mapping existing canopy cover and best practice principles. A tree strategy for England is due to be published next year.

1.6 This report provides a succinct summary of the key elements and direction of the proposed Tree Planting Strategy and associated planting plan 2021-2031

2.0 Introduction

2.1 There is widespread appreciation of the increasing importance of trees in both our urban and rural communities. Our trees are public assets that provide both visual amenity and landscape value and are key components of the green infrastructure that is essential to maintain a healthy and attractive environment for current and future generations.

2.2 Careful selection and strategic placement of trees will provide enduring and notable benefits for our communities such as; summer shade, flood alleviation, mitigation of the effects from noise/traffic pollution, offering a positive psychological effect/sense of wellbeing and providing habitat and resource for our wildlife.

2.3 This ten-year strategy and planting plan will be led and driven by Arun District Council. Its primary focus will be supplementing and enhancing the existing tree cover and tree numbers on land under the ownership of the Council. This is because the Council will have direct control, management responsibility and liability moving forward.

2.4 The Council's aim is to ensure delivery of the strategy is collaborative. However, is vital that the delivery is coordinated through a considered planting plan and underpinned by the objectives and best practice as set out in this document.

2.5 Should organisations and respective landowners wish to expand the delivery of tree planting beyond land managed by Arun, it is suggested they follow the guiding principles of Arun's Tree Planting Strategy

2.6 The strategy will also be a useful tool in guiding tree planting within new development, where the Council would expect developers to follow best practice. This strategy will support the existing supplementary planning document and design guide for new development. This becomes even more important where there is potential for Arun to adopt open space and trees transferred by developers.

3.Aims & Objectives of the Tree Planting Strategy

Aims

- To provide clarity and consistency of purpose to our programmes of planting and establishment of new trees.
- To offer a sustainable approach to maximising resources in respect of tree planting and future maintenance requirements.

- To mitigate the long-term effects of climate change on our tree population and improve resistance to pests and disease.
- To diversify the tree stock through new plantings and appropriate species selection.
- To create a tree planting legacy in Arun for decades to come.

Objectives

- Develop a deliverable 10-year planting plan, underpinned by the best practice principles set out in this strategy
- Determine a target/outcome for the numbers of trees planted over the strategy period and the associated increase in canopy cover that this will deliver
- Encourage and support community involvement in delivery of our tree planting programme and especially with aftercare (watering, mulch application, reporting significant damage or disease), to increase the tree stock in a way that satisfies stakeholders and encourages a sense of ownership/guardianship.
- Promote the 'natural regeneration' of any existing tree resource at locations where this can be considered appropriate.
- Prioritise the use of native tree species in or adjoining areas of high conservation value.

4.Benefits of a well-considered strategy and planting plan based on best practice

4.1 Adherence to the principles outlined in the strategy will ensure;

- Excellent survival and establishment rates (>95%) – i.e. trees that are healthy, of good form and with successful root development
- Low maintenance requirements per tree and preservation of natural aesthetically pleasing form, throughout the tree's lifespan.
- Significantly reduced recourse to visually drastic, potentially harmful and costly pruning measures, e.g. pollarding, crown reduction.
- Reduced incidents of footway disruption and damage to light construction (e.g. hard landscape features, boundary walls, utility apparatus). Negligible amount of tree-root related damage events to private property and liability in the event of subsidence claims.
- A long-term increase in the quantity, amenity value and shared sense of ownership/guardianship of our tree stock.

5.Best practice principles

5.1 The full strategy identifies best practice in respect of the following themes, underpinned by;

- BS 8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations
- Tree Design and Action Group. Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure. Issue 1.3/2019. Hirons/Sjoman
- Planting Guide 2019 v6. A guide to tree longevity in the landscape. Barcham Trees

PLC.

- **Planting for pest & disease resilience**
- **Planting selection appropriate to site**
- **Procurement of tree stock**
- **Planting for climate change**
- **Planting methodology including aftercare**

5.2 Adhering to these principles of best practice is a key component of any planting project

6.Mapping using iTrees software

6.1 The i-Tree Canopy project run by Forestry Research, provides a scientifically robust and consistent approach to estimating canopy cover. Allowing a ward canopy cover assessment to be completed for all wards in Arun. A target of 20% tree canopy cover can be a good aspiration for towns and cities, with 15% for coastal settlements. It should be noted that many wards in Arun contain large areas of coastline, which impact to a significant extent on the current and potential future canopy cover.

6.2 These figures will be determined and set out in the full strategy and provide a base line to enable Arun to monitor any changes in the future. There will however not be a significant change in the short term as any trees planted under the strategy take many years to mature into a full canopy. The results are also used to quantify tree benefits such as air quality improvement, and carbon dioxide reduction.

7.Parameters/limitations

7.1 All measures and proposals identified in the strategy are necessary to ensure principles are adhered to and likelihood of outcomes achieved.

7.2 Whilst ambitious the planting plan must also be deliverable. There is no value in pushing boundaries and quantity of tree planting at the expense of best practice and quality.

7.3 Members are requested to note that available Arun controlled public open space varies hugely per ward. Throughout this process officers have tried to look at opportunities within each ward equally and without prejudice. However, the differing availability of suitable open space within wards determines what can realistically be achieved and therefore shapes our planting proposals.

7.4 Arun is not in a position to extend this strategy or action plan to privately owned land.

7.5 Proposals and requests from 3rd parties, including individuals, community groups, Town & parish Councils, or private enterprise, must align and directly contribute towards our identified planting plan. Following endorsement of this report, we will open a dialogue

with Town and Parish Councils, Ward Members and Community Groups to encourage involvement and seek input. In order to be considered for inclusion, planting proposals must align with the principles of the strategy and the Council's Arboricultural Officer will take the final decision on the inclusion and development of such proposals.

7.6 Financial and physical resources are a limiting factor. Once it is fully developed the planting plan will identify the resource requirement and total costs needed to deliver tree planting and aftercare in line with best practice. This will be largely facilitated through a commitment to fund from existing budgets and staff resource. However, as identified in 9.1 below, full delivery will be predicated on the opportunity to attain further support and resource from 3rd parties and external funding sources.

7.7 Given that a Tree Strategy for England is due to be published next year, there is likely to be considerable funding for climate change initiatives including the 'Nature for climate fund', therefore it is highly likely will be further opportunities for Arun to supplement its own financial commitment to this initiative. The Woodland Trust fare a known source of free trees for example.

8.Action/planting plan.

8.1 Approximately 80 public open space sites are currently identified as suitable for inclusion in the planting plan. Detailed planting proposals are being developed between officers pending further input from 3rd parties as outlined in 7.5 above. Therefore, on average approximately eight planting projects will be delivered annually over the course of the ten-year plan.

8.2 Estimated costs for delivery are somewhere in the region of 20-30k per year on average, which allows for all aftercare requirements. It is anticipated that around half of this cost could be covered by sponsorship, donations and grant funding.

8.3 During the course of the strategy & planting plan, one off opportunities or 3rd party requests may arise for further tree planting projects. Whilst generally not encouraged due to the planned approach outlined above, these will be considered on a case by case basis by the Council's Arboricultural Officer. In all cases proposals should be discussed with Arun officers at the earliest opportunity. If they can be supported this information will be captured as part of the overall figures associated with this strategy.

9.Delivery

9.1 The planting plan will be based on a phased approach to delivery, which will develop and increase over the ten-year duration of the plan. This will allow Arun time to consider and plan for partnership involvement, financial and resource contributions (including grant funding) and initiate the successful procurement of planting projects and aftercare needs as necessary.

9.2 Developing a well-considered Tree Planting Strategy and planting plan, which is endorsed by Members and collaborative, will put Arun in a strong position in applying for grant funding.

9.3 It is proposed that a further update report will be presented to members of the

Environment & Leisure Working Group/Committee in approximately 12 months to provide an update on the strategy and progress with the planting plan and partner engagement.

10. Outcomes

NB - These will be fully determined on development and completion of the planting plan

- 1) Approximate numbers of trees planted (whips/standards) based on planting plan.
- 2) Estimated increase in canopy cover as a % of the open space identified.
- 3) Public Open Space & Ward canopy increase -will be relatively minor to start but is a long-term investment.
- 4) Delivery of aims/objectives – far reaching and whilst not immediately apparent remain important.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

To endorse the proposed direction of the Tree Planting Strategy 2021-2031 and associated tree planting plan, so that it provides a framework for tree planting on Arun land over the next 10 years.

3. OPTIONS:

- a) To recommend to Cabinet that Arun endorses a proposed Tree Planting Strategy 2021-2031 and the full development of an associated planting plan, based on the principles outlined in this report
- b) Not to recommend to Cabinet that Arun endorses a proposed Tree Planting Strategy 2021-2031 and the full development of an associated planting plan, based on the principles outlined in this report

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council. Not at this stage but involvement of Town & Parish Councils will be taken forward following approval		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors Not at this stage but engagement with Ward Members will be taken forward following approval		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services Arun Officers as follows; Tree Officer	✓	

Tree & Landscape Manager Parks & Cemeteries Manager Community Parks Officers		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial	✓	
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability	✓	
Asset Management/Property/Land	✓	
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		
6. IMPLICATIONS: Financial – Funding commitment required to deliver the planting plan and aftercare Sustainability – Aligns with Arun’s commitment to tackling climate change Land – implications to the management of Arun owned land		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To ensure that future tree planting carried out by Arun District Council is done in a coordinated and considered way, in order to ensure the best chance of successful establishment and future maturity of trees.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Remember to list background papers and insert required links

None