

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Places Select Commission – 09 May 2023

**Report Title**

Tree Service Progress Report

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming and Engagement

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The report updates Improving Places Select Commission on the delivery of the Tree Management Protocol, the maintenance programme and tree planting programme.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Notes the content of the report.
2. Provides feedback on progress to date.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Tree Planting Consultation Protocol

**Background Papers**

[Tree Service Progress Update Report to Improving Places Select Commission 19 April 2022](#)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

N/A

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022, Members of Improving Places Select Commission received a report on the Tree Management Protocol and Guidance and progress on the Council's Tree Planting programme.
- 1.2 Members noted the report and made the following recommendations:
  - That the value of Member and resident consultation and feedback be reflected in the review and next iteration of the Tree Management Strategy
  - That the maintenance schedule of the Tree Service be further publicised
  - That equalities be considered in the prioritisation of tree planting in deprived areas of the borough
  - That opportunities for planting of fruit trees be prioritised for expansion

This report provides an update against each of the recommendations.

## **2. Key Issues**

### **2.1 Tree Management Protocol and member and resident feedback**

- 2.1.1 At the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022 Members welcomed the substantial level of tree planting that had taken place in the first year of the two-year programme and the benefits that this had brought to local residents. However, some Members raised concerns that they had not received sufficient consultation regarding tree planting locations. Members were keen to play a more active role in the engagement programmes related to planting schemes.
- 2.1.2 In response to the recommendations made at the previous IPSC meeting, the service developed a Tree Planting Consultation Protocol which now forms an Appendix to the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance. The Tree Planting Consultation Protocol can be found at Appendix 1 and offers greater transparency regarding how locations for tree planting are identified and opportunities for wider engagement in planting schemes.
- 2.1.3 The meeting in 2022 noted that there are a number of opportunities to work with third parties such as private landowners to identify additional locations for proactive planting, however this will always be at the discretion of, and the responsibility of, the landowner. Because of this, the new Tree Planting Consultation Protocol relates only to where trees are planted on Council land and the process for agreeing this.
- 2.1.4 In implementing the protocol, Ward Members have been consulted on proposals which are prepared by the Green Spaces service, taking into account the suitability and availability of land which was developed in consultation with the Cabinet Member. This process will continue to take place each season. At the point of consultation, Ward Members can decide to agree to the proposals or undertake a range of wider consultation options

with local residents. Following agreement of the locations, the Trees & Woodlands Engagement Officer makes contact with the Ward Members directly to discuss and agree opportunities for engagement in the planting programmes with local residents.

2.1.5 The new Tree Planting Consultation Protocol has supported decisions related to locations and engagement opportunities for the 2022/3 planting programme, which came to a close in March 2023 and resulted in the planting of 11,348 trees across the borough.

2.1.6 This brings the total number of trees planted across the two years of the Tree Planting Programme to 32,891.

## **2.2 Publication of the Maintenance Schedule**

2.2.1 The Tree Service offers a blend of reactive responses to service requests, either via Member casework, MP enquiries or customer service requests, and a proactive inspection schedule as outlined in the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance, which focuses on a planned schedule of inspections.

2.2.2 At the meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022, Members wanted greater transparency regarding the planned schedule of inspections. The service has looked at how best to achieve this recommendation in a way that is most accessible to residents. The existing work schedules for street trees are held within tree management software based on the pre-2021 ward boundaries. Whilst the information could be captured in a separate document, for a short-term solution, some work needs to take place to transfer information within the system to Rotherham's post-2021 ward boundaries.

2.2.3 In order to achieve more accurate and customer-friendly data regarding maintenance schedules the service has been exploring the adoption of a new data management system which is also being considered in other areas of the Council. The adoption of the new software for management of street scene assets, including trees, is expected by the end of the financial year and will allow maintenance schedules to be published on the Council's website.

2.2.4 In addition to procuring new software, work has also been undertaken to review the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance to ensure the prescribed maintenance schedules are appropriate and in line with national best practice.

2.2.5 An Independent Review & Benchmarking study was undertaken by specialist consultants, Treeconomics. This recommended that the Council adopts a risk-based approach to proactive maintenance schedules prioritising areas of greater Health & Safety risk such as main arterial routes, areas of greater residential density, and areas of high footfall such as destination parks.

The Tree Management Protocol & Guidance will be revised in line with the recommendations made as part of the Independent Review and

- 2.2.6 Benchmarking study and brought for further consultation with Members before adoption later this year.

### **Equalities and the prioritisation of tree planting in deprived areas of the borough**

- 2.3 At the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022 Members requested that areas of higher deprivation were considered for future tree planting programmes to help ensure a more equitable distribution of the benefits brought from tree planting.
- 2.3.1

The table below shows the distribution of tree planting by ward across the two-year programme:

- 2.3.2

| <b>Year 1 Tree Planting Programme 2021/22</b> |                         |                        |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Ward</b>                                   | <b>Type of Planting</b> | <b>Number of Trees</b> |
| Kilnhurst & Swinton East                      | Woodland                | 3887                   |
| Rotherham West                                | Woodland                | 7429                   |
| Anston & Woodsett                             | Woodland                | 2668                   |
| Wickersley North                              | Woodland                | 2415                   |
| Sitwell                                       | Woodland                | 4255                   |
| Greasborough                                  | Urban                   | 1100                   |
| Rotherham East                                | Urban                   | 8                      |
| Maltby East                                   | Urban                   | 70                     |
| Boston Castle                                 | Urban                   | 168                    |
| Wath  | Urban                   | 23                     |
| Brinsworth                                    | Urban                   | 116                    |
| <b>Total Trees Planted Year 1 (2021/22)</b>   |                         | <b>22,139</b>          |
| <b>Year 2 Tree Planting Programme 2022/23</b> |                         |                        |
| <b>Ward</b>                                   | <b>Type of Planting</b> | <b>Number of Trees</b> |
| Dinnington                                    | Woodland                | 7700                   |
| Sitwell                                       | Woodland                | 181                    |
| Wickersley North                              | Woodland                | 6                      |
| Dalton & Thrybergh                            | Woodland                | 6                      |
| Rotherham West                                | Woodland                | 301                    |
| Anston & Woodsett                             | Woodland                | 301                    |
| Keppel  | Woodland                | 425                    |
| Aston & Todwick                               | Urban                   | 13                     |
| Rother Vale                                   | Urban                   | 22                     |
| Wath  | Urban                   | 32                     |
| Dinnington                                    | Urban                   | 41                     |
| Rawmarsh West                                 | Urban                   | 98                     |

|   |       |               |
|---|-------|---------------|
| Boston Castle                               | Urban | 13            |
| Greasborough                                | Urban | 1508          |
| Aughton & Swallownest                       | Urban | 58            |
| Dalton & Thrybergh                          | Urban | 2             |
| Keppel                                      | Urban | 3             |
| Brinsworth                                  | Urban | 6             |
| Anston & Woodsett                           | Urban | 2             |
| Hooper                                      | Urban | 17            |
| Hellaby & Maltby West                       | Urban | 9             |
| Swinton & Rockingham                        | Urban | 8             |
| <b>Total Trees Planted Year 2 (2022/23)</b> |       | <b>10,752</b> |
| <b>TOTAL TREES PLANTED TO DATE</b>          |       | <b>32,891</b> |

The target for tree planting set by the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance is for 500 per year in urban settings.

- 2.3.3 Of the 32,891 new trees planted across the two-year programme 3,285 of these were in urban settings, which increases the contribution they make to carbon capture. The target for overall net gain in urban settings is 250 trees, taking into account trees that are felled or fallen or new planting which is damaged as not all new trees survive the natural environment. The service estimates that around 10% of new planting (3,289) will not survive. This gives an estimated overall net gain of 29,602 new trees across the programme and estimated net gain of 2,957 in urban settings.
- 2.3.4

- 2.3.5 The Tree Management Protocol and Strategy also set a target to dedicate a minimum of 5 hectares of land to woodland creation, either through planting or re-wilding, up to 2030. This will see the Council's woodlands estate increase in size by at least 10%. To date, the Council has already exceeded this target, planting 20 hectares of new woodland across the two year programme, of which around 4 hectares were planted by volunteers.

### **Opportunities for the planting of fruit trees**

- 2.4 The Tree Planting programme relies heavily on securing grant funding and is therefore subject to the terms and conditions of the funder. Although some planting of fruit trees has taken place within the programme this has been limited as funding for this variety of planting is very limited.
- 2.4.1

However, in response to requests from Members to consider a greater ratio of fruit trees within the programme, fruit tree planting including apple, pear and plum trees, has taken place at three sites:

- Six fruit trees were planted at Brecks Lane in the woodland creating a small Orchard.

- 2.4.2
- Four fruit trees were added to the fruit trees in Hope Fields at Thrybergh Country Park
  - Six fruit trees were planted in Brinsworth
  - 349 fruit trees were planted at Dinnington as part of the Queen's Green Canopy

### 3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 This report is for information only, however Members are invited to comment on its content and provide feedback.

### 4. Consultation on proposals

- 4.1 There are no specific proposals as the report is for information purposes. However, elements of the activities outlined in this report such as the location of future sites for tree planting will be consulted upon as they are identified utilising the Tree Planting Consultation Protocol outlined at section 2.

### 5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The timetable of next steps is outlined as follows:
- June 2023 – Engagement regarding revisions of the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance following recommendations from the Independent Review & Benchmarking Report
  - August 2023 – Consultation will begin for the 2023/4 Tree Planting Season will begin in line with the Tree Planting Consultation Protocol outlined at 2.1.
  - September 2023 – Adoption of updated Tree Management Protocol & Guidance
  - October 2023 – Initial trials of the new database management system to support the creation of proactive maintenance schedules.
  - October 2023 - Start of the 2023/24 Tree Planting Season
  - December 2023 – Full adoption of the new database management system
  - January 2024 – Publication of proactive maintenance schedules via the Council's website
  - March 2024 - End of 2023/4 Tree Planting Season

### 6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 External funding secured for tree planting to date is as follows:

| <b>Source</b>                   | <b>21/22</b> | <b>22/23</b> | <b>23/24 to date</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Urban Tree Challenge Fund       | £157,649     | £94,214      | £0                   |
| Local Authority Treescapes Fund | £77,145      | £0           | £0                   |

|  |                 |                 |                |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Woodland Accelerator                       | £0              | £53,500         | £53,500        |
| Grow Back Greener                          | £0              | £88,024         | £0             |
| South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority | £50,000         | £0              | £0             |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>£284,794</b> | <b>£235,738</b> | <b>£53,500</b> |

6.2 The Council has had the above grant applications approved, both capital and revenue as indicated above.

- Capital - The different funding streams are at various stages of being claimed, and not yet included within the approved capital programme.
- Revenue - The Woodland Accelerator funding for 2022/23 has been received and will be utilised in 2022/23.

6.3 In addition, the Council has approved an annual revenue investment of £50,000 for a Trees and Woodlands Engagement Officer. This is to support the £350,000 Council capital investment in the borough-wide tree planting programme.

## 7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct Legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

## 8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

## 9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 A recent evaluation report 'Children's Capital of Culture 2025: Starting the Conversation' found that almost a quarter of children and young people surveyed (24%) wanted to see programmes of activity that celebrate and encourage engagement with Rotherham's natural environment and Green Spaces.

9.2 The Trees & Woodland Engagement Officer has led a number of engagement programmes with children and young people over the last 12 months including:

- Redscope School has been supported to develop its mini forest project through the provision of biodegradable tree guards to protect new trees, alongside comparison experiments for class on plastic and biodegradable tree guards.
- Laughton All Saints Primary School has been very active in the Queen Elizabeth II Community Woodland (now officially part of the

Queen's Green Canopy) helping to prepare the site with litter-picking and tree planting. There were also three community planting days where members of the public including families joined in.

- The service also led engagement programme with residents from the White Bear Estate in Wath working closely with Flux Rotherham to involve local community groups. The project included working with local schools to make nature art with artist James Brunt while the trees were being planted on site.
- The community involvement at Dinnington has continued with an environmental day with the local schools planting more bulbs around the trees planted last season (21/22) and learning about bees and their importance. There is soon to be another day with the local schools in Dinnington around the Coronation to celebrate the fruit trees that have been planted to mark the occasion activities on this day will be around the trees and the King's Coronation.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implication**

- 10.1 The service is committed to ensuring equal access to its trees and woodlands. The service undertakes specific Equality Impact Assessments relating to its activities as required and hosts regular consultation sessions working with a diverse range of groups with protected characteristics. An Equalities Impact Screening undertaken for the publication of the Tree Management Protocol & Guidance found that the service offers universal benefit, however engagement programmes can be tailored to support under-represented groups.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 Trees play a vital role in supporting action against Climate Change through sequestration of carbon and harmful emissions.
- 11.2 The commitments outlined in the guidance to increase the net total of its tree stock by 250 trees per year over the next ten years and to dedicate a minimum of 5 hectares of land to new woodland creation are clear and measurable contributions to reducing the impact of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 At the time of the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2022 it was the intention of the service to develop a Tree Planting Strategy for Rotherham, which would seek to identify key landowners and local stakeholders to support and influence tree planting in areas outside of the Council's control. At the meeting suggestions were made including schools and Parish Councils and some work has taken place at an informal level to engage these groups, however due to staffing issues within the team this work has not progressed and we will be revisited later in the year when a new Tree Service Manager is appointed.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 Competition for funds: In the short term, funding for new tree planting and management of existing woodlands has been available from a number of external funding bodies and a number of successful bids has allowed the service to overachieve on its early forecasts and targets as described in section 6.1 above. However, longer term funding for tree planting and woodland creation is uncertain and could reduce the Council's capacity to continue to increase woodland cover at the current scale in the medium and long term.
- 13.2 Damage to new planting schemes: A minority of planting schemes have seen some early resistance from individuals or have fallen foul of vandalism and have suffered damage to or complete removal of newly planted trees. The current level of damage and early loss is within the 10% expected and is sustainable within the schemes overall objectives but will remain a risk if damage or removal increases. Involving communities in the planting of new trees also helps to reduce the potential for damage from vandalism.
- 13.3 Identification of suitable land for planting: As many local authorities seek to combat the Climate Emergency through tree planting programmes, identifying suitable land for planting can be challenging as this is a finite resource. In addition to tree planting other pressures for land include new homes, green energy production and recreation. In future the service hopes to be able to work more with private landowners to provide space for trees. To this end it is starting to make these links with larger landowning bodies such as Wentworth Estates, Parish Councils and Schools. This links will be revisited on the appointment of the new Tree Service Manager.

**Accountable Officer(s)**

Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming and Engagement  
 Andy Lee, Green Spaces Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

|   | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Date</b>                 |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Chief Executive   |  | Click here to enter a date. |
| Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer) | Named officer  | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)         | Named officer  | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)            |  | Click here to enter a date. |
| Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)                          |  | Click here to enter a date. |
| The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report        | Paul Woodcock,<br>Strategic Director<br>of Regeneration<br>and Environment | 02/05/23                    |
| Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member          | Cabinet Member<br>for Social   | 03/05/23                    |

|  |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
|  | Inclusion -<br>Councillor<br>Shepherd |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|

*Report Author: Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming and Engagement*

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