

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Executive Director (Neighbourhoods and Environment)

to

Cabinet

On

16 January 2020

Agenda
Item No.

Report prepared by: Paul Jenkinson Head of Parks and Open Spaces

Notice of Motion of Doubling Tree Cover in Southend-on-Sea

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Place Scrutiny

Cabinet Member: Cllr C Mulroney

Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Councillors of the draft results of the canopy cover assessment for the Borough.
- 1.2 To advise Councillors of the challenges associated with increasing the canopy cover in the Borough.
- 1.3 To confirm that tree canopy cover of the Borough will form part of the updated Tree and Woodland Policy.
- 1.4 To advise Councillors of the works being undertaken to educate and inform residents, businesses and charity and community groups about tree management in the borough and ways in which they can help.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Note the motion to double the tree cover of the Borough.**
- 2.2 **Agree to the management of the towns tree cover as an urban forest.**
- 2.3 **Acknowledge that tree canopy cover and an approach to planting will form part of the upcoming Tree and Woodland Policy.**
- 2.4 **Acknowledge the benefit that a mosaic of habitats and variety of green infrastructure can have on the environment and the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.**

- 2.5 Agree that the future of tree planting and the canopy cover within the Borough will be based on an approach to be outlined in the upcoming Tree and Woodland Policy.**
- 2.6 Acknowledge the ongoing work to help educate and inform residents about tree management in the Borough.**

3. Background

- 3.1 A Motion has been put forward to double the tree cover of the Borough, the detail of this motion are that:
- 3.2 Trees have a crucial role to play in tackling the climate emergency as part of an ambitious local Climate Action Plan, by drawing down carbon and locking it up in their wood.
- 3.3 Doubling tree cover across the UK could draw down 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, which is around 10% of current UK emissions.
- 3.4 Trees also provide additional benefits beyond their critical importance in reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions: trees create more space for nature, supporting hundreds of species of insects, birds and mammals. Trees are also great for public health, helping clean the air and providing access to nature that's important for
- 3.5 This Notice of Motion asks that Council to:
- 3.6 Double tree cover in Southend by 2045.
- 3.7 Double tree cover on council-owned land, by growing/planting more trees in public parks, council-owned land and green belt land within the Borough.
- 3.8 Update all Council strategies and local plans to incorporate this target.
- 3.9 Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is updating its Tree and Woodland Policy to set out its ongoing approach to the management and maintenance of its tree stock. The new policy will be based on current best practice and a canopy assessment that has been undertaken for the Borough.
- 3.10 Tree canopy cover, which is often also referred to as canopy cover and urban canopy cover, can be defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above.
- 3.11 Canopy cover is a two-dimensional assessment, indicating the spread of tree cover across an area. Quantifying the spatial extent of the urban forest is one of the first steps in managing this important resource and helps to answer the fundamental questions: 'What canopy cover have we got?' and 'Where is it?'

- 3.12 Measuring canopy cover help decision makers and communities to see trees and forests in a new way, focusing attention on green infrastructure as a key component of community planning, sustainability and resilience. It is an easy-to-understand concept that is useful in communicating messages about our urban forests.
- 3.13 The tree canopy assessment for Southend-on Sea, which is currently being reviewed, advises that the current canopy cover for the town is 12%.
- 3.14 Once evaluation of the report is complete a target for future canopy cover within the Borough will form part of the new Tree and Woodland Policy.
- 3.15 The target for future canopy cover for the Borough that will be set out within the Tree Policy will be based on the evidence within the canopy study and the opportunities for planting within council managed sites whilst still maintaining a mix of habitats and recreational opportunities.
- 3.16 When considering future canopy cover for a town or other locations it is best practice to base this on factual information and not on an arbitrary figure.
- 3.17 The Southend 2050 vision includes a number of outcomes in which green space and trees play a part.
- 3.18 The continuation of tree planting projects and the committing to and funding the planting of an additional 1,000 standards trees over three years not only reaffirms the council's commitment to maintaining tree canopy cover across the Borough but also delivers on 2050 outcomes in Pride and Joy and Safe and Well.
- 3.19 The Council is committed to informing and educating residents, business and charity and community groups about tree management in the borough and the role they can play in increasing canopy cover. An area of the council website is now dedicated to providing information on tree management, www.southend.gov.uk/welovetrees. This will continue to be developed alongside a campaign using a variety of media approaches.
- 3.20 As part of the campaign people will be encouraged to plant trees on land which they own, this will help enhance and maintain canopy cover across the Borough.
- 3.21 Trees are an important part of the Borough's green infrastructure. However, it is important that the Borough has a mosaic of habitats and grassland, shrubs and other planting have a role to play in a balanced and healthy environment. To help raise awareness of a mixed approach to green infrastructure the media campaign will also highlight the benefits of shrub planting and different approaches to land management.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 **To double the tree canopy as outlined in the motion.** This is not recommended as this approach is not based on a tree canopy assessment or other Borough specific study. A tree canopy cover of this level is likely to be unachievable and result in the loss of other important habitats and recreational opportunities.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 **Not agree the motion to double the tree cover of the Borough.** This will allow for a target to be set as part of the new Tree Policy, based on the canopy assessment and with consideration of available space, important habitats and recreational space.
- 5.2 **Agree to the management of the towns tree cover as an urban forest.** This will allow for the benefits of the towns tree population to be considered in a borough wide context.
- 5.3 **Acknowledge that a tree canopy cover and approach to planting will form part of the upcoming Tree and Woodland Policy.** This will allow for the benefits of the towns tree population to be considered in a borough wide context.
- 5.4 **Acknowledge the benefit that a mosaic of habitats and variety of green infrastructure can have on the environment and the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.** This will allow the ongoing protection of important habitats and the maintenance of existing or the creation of new green infrastructure in appropriate locations.
- 5.5 **Agree that the future of tree planting and the canopy cover within the Borough will be based on an approach to be outlined in the upcoming Tree and Woodland Policy.** This will allow the work on the Tree and Woodland Policy to be completed and an aspiration for tree canopy cover to be set with due consideration to the findings of the canopy assessment and the boroughs green infrastructure.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Pride and Joy. "Our Streets and Public Spaces are clean and inviting."
- 6.2 Safe and Well. "Green City - We act as a green city with outstanding examples of energy-efficient and carbon-neutral buildings, streets, transport and recycling".

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 A commitment to fund the planting of 1,000 trees over three planting seasons has already been agreed. The investment across revenue and capital is shown in the table below:

Description of works		No. of trees	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	23/24
			£(000)	£(000)	£(000)	£(000)	£(000)	£(000)
Purchase of standard trees	Capital	400	40					
		300		30	30			
Planting of standard trees		400	26					
		300		19.5	19.5			
Root barrier. Selected locations		*	9	7	7			
Total Capital - £188,000			75	56.5	56.5			
Watering	Revenue	300					16	
		400		22				
		600				32		
		700			38			
Maintenance		300						2
		400		3				
		600					4	
		700			5			
	1,000				7			
Total Revenue - £129,000				25	43	39	20	2

- 7.2 Additional tree planting beyond that set out above will require additional funding.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council has no obligation to plant trees. However, it has a duty of care to inspect and maintain trees under its control.
- 8.2 Not managing the Council's tree stock effectively could result in action being taken against the Council.

9. People Implications

- 9.1 No People implications have been identified at this time.

10. Property Implications

10.1 Not managing the Council's tree stock effectively could result in damage to Council assets or private property.

11. Consultation

11.1 No consultation has been undertaken at this time.

12. Equalities and Diversity Implications

12.1 An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken on the new Tree Policy.

13. Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Loss of important habitat due to the planting of trees in inappropriate locations.	Tree planting locations will be allocated taking in to account habitats and green infrastructure.
Loss of recreational opportunities affecting the health and wellbeing of residents due to the planting of trees in inappropriate locations.	Tree planting locations will be allocated taking in to account recreational facilities and green infrastructure.
Reputational loss by setting a level of canopy cover that is unrealistic for the borough and therefore not achieved.	Adopt a tree canopy level based on the recommendations in the upcoming tree and woodland policy.
Increase in misinformed or incorrect information being posted on social media	Communications team to monitor and respond to social media as required.

14. Value for Money

14.1 Any associated works will be procured in line with Council policies and procedures.

15. Community Safety Implications

15.1 No Community Safety Implications have been identified at this time.

16. Environmental Impact

16.1 A well maintained and managed tree stock enhances the environment and helps provide an attractive and pleasant place to live.

16.2 Urban trees provide the following benefits:

- Cool air by 2 °C to 8 °C.
- Reduce the need for air conditioning by 30% and save energy used for heating by 20 to 30%.
- Absorb up to 150kg of CO₂ per year and consequently help mitigate climate change.
- Urban trees can help filter urban pollution and fine particulates.
- Provide habitat, food and protection to plants and animals, increasing biodiversity.
- Improve physical and mental health.
- Increase property values by 20%.

17. Background Papers

17.1 Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Tree Policy 2003.

17.2 Southend-on-Sea Interim Tree Management Statement.

4 Appendices