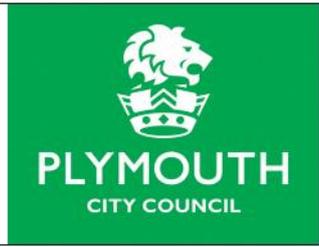


BRIEFING REPORT - PART I

Plan for Trees Investment Programme



I. INTRODUCTION

Plymouth currently has 394,000 trees which contribute £4.6m of annual benefits to the city through the Ecosystem Services that they provide, including £1.1 million of carbon storage and £2.9 million of pollution removal (i-Tree Eco survey 2020). Plymouth's Plan for Trees (adopted in March 2019), the Climate Emergency (CEAP Immediate Actions p, 39) and landscape situation mean that Plymouth needs to plant more trees to increase carbon capture, improve quality of living spaces, maximise the health and wellbeing benefits that amenity trees provide and mitigate for the impact that Ash Dieback and an ageing urban forest will bring.

To contribute to the Plan for Trees and through the Climate Emergency Action Plan we have objectives to acquire external funds to match with available PCC capital funds to deliver the Plan for Trees.

To facilitate the delivery of the *Protect, Promote, Care and Enhance* principles set out in the Plan for Trees we initiated the **#Plymouth Tree Challenge (PTC)**. In 2019 we were awarded £50k external funding from the Woodland Trust and People's Postcode Lottery to begin delivering the PTC and in order to fund additional elements of the PTC we have been working with the Plan for Trees Steering Group, including Plymouth Tree Partnership and Woodland Trust to secure further funding.

We have secured Urban Tree Challenge Funds (**£425k over 4 years**) to bring forward and fund 67 tree planting schemes across the city. This will lead to over 2,800 new trees being planted in priority places around the city to meet the objectives set out in Plymouth's Plan for Trees – enhancing the city's canopy cover by planting on areas and in neighbourhoods which have canopy cover lower than the city average. These areas also tend to be the socio-economically deprived areas of the city. Projects will be carefully considered and where appropriate through engagement with local communities. In this way we can ensure the Right Tree, Right Place, Right Care.

Additionally Ash Dieback presents significant risk to loss of trees in the city and Tree Council guidance is for authorities to establish ADB Action Plans to manage the risk around these. This project proposal will establish an ADB action plan and provide funds to manage the risks associated with ADB and for the first phases of re-planting required to mitigate the loss of trees resulting. PCC's response to Ash Dieback has initially been costed at around £1.3m over the next 3 years. This investment programme uses external funding to reduce these costs to PCC to the sum of £800k over this same period.

2. PROPOSAL

The proposal is to deliver a city wide community tree planting programme which will see the planting of 2,800 new trees across 67 planting schemes and related community engagement.

The total cost of delivering this project is £855k and we have secured £425k of external funds through the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund and £130k of additional match funding from project partners. We therefore are asking to commit £300k of service borrowing to the Plymouth Tree Challenge through the Plan for Trees Investment Programme to match the funding available (a requirement to secure this funding) and implement the schemes through a community focused programme of activities starting in Summer 2020 and running until Spring 2024. The project costs include the full cost of planting and establishing the trees over this period.

In addition to this to effectively manage the increased risk posed by ADB across the city we will commit an additional £500k of corporate borrowing to provide the resource to manage tree safety and produce the Plymouth ADB Action Plan.

These funds secure significant investment for the city in our natural infrastructure and heritage and guarantees successful project delivery and opportunity for growth. Securing this UTCF funding by using PCC funds as match will provide the best opportunity within the foreseeable future to fund the Plymouth Tree Challenge, the delivery of the City's Plan for Trees, meet Climate Emergency Action Plan objectives and manage the increased corporate risk presented through Ash Dieback.

This proposal supports the following Corporate objectives:

- a green sustainable city that cares about the environment
- a clean and tidy city
- a welcoming city

It also supports the delivery of the following JLP policies by ensuring that we make the most of one off funding opportunities to enhance the urban forest and green space of the city, engage communities with their local natural spaces and amenity trees whilst increasing the biodiversity value of trees throughout the city.

- DEV026 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation,
- DEV027 Green and play spaces,
- DEV028 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows

3. CONSULTATION & STAKEHOLDERS

Plan for Trees consultation took place in July 2018 and received over 1000 responses. Headline results were that 97% of people agreed that trees were an important part of the infrastructure of the city.

Partners & Stakeholders:

Plymouth Tree Partnership, National Trust, Plymouth Community Homes, POSN, Woodland Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Ash Dieback Resilience Forum, Residents and community groups ,Wider teams within PCC e.g. Transport, Homes, Street services, Arboriculture Team

4. OUTCOMES & BENEFITS

Financial

Natural capital of the city's urban forest increased – Plymouth's trees contribute £4.6 m of benefits to the city per year and provide £3.5 billion in amenity value.

Ecosystem services to the city increased and long term cost savings through; urban cooling, surface water attenuation, increased property values of tree lined streets, carbon capture and storage.

Non-financial

Risk management mitigation in the form of Ash Dieback Action Plan and additional resource to manage tree safety

Habitat for wildlife, improved aesthetics, benefits to mental health and wellbeing

Filtering and absorbing pollution, improving air quality and tackling climate change

Creates an attractive environment for those who want to invest in Plymouth

5. FINANCE

Total Project cost = £1.355million

External funding secured = £425k (Urban Tree Challenge Fund – Forestry Commission)

Match funding = £120k

Councillor Community Grant contributions - £10k

Service Borrowing at 2.75% over 20 years (PCC match funding requirement) = £300k

Corporate Borrowing - Health and Safety Provision Funding = £500k

The UTCF grant has secured a significant sum of investment for the city.

S106 funds are ineligible to match with the UTCF grant as per the Terms and conditions of the funding which is not to contribute to existing mitigations schemes but to enhance urban tree canopy cover in addition to this – achieving genuine net gain in canopy cover.

DEFRA Nature for Climate Fund also being explored with national partners. Early stages and we do not yet know if funds from this will be able to replace corporate borrowing but we will progress and update as this moves forward.

Additional years of Councillor contributions will also be sought for the project to reduce the need for Capital Borrowing

Procurement

The delivery of works will be procured through the council's procurement team in line with financial regulations.

We will establish framework contracts with key UK Nursery suppliers to enable effective delivery of the project and in line with British Standards. Using UK nurseries with UK grown stock.

In line with project ethos sustainability and local suppliers will be preferred where they deliver the correct level of specialist skills and products to the correct standard.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to:

- Approve the Business Case
- Allocate £1,235k for the project to the Capital Programme funded by £300k Service Borrowing, £500k corporate borrowing from the Council's health and safety provision, £425k by the Forestry Commission Urban Tree Challenge Fund and £10k from revenue contribution from the Councillor's Community Grant fund.
- Note £120k worth of additional works funded by in-kind contributions from project partners
- Authorises the procurement process
- Delegates the award of the contract to the Service Director for Street Services