

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	Plan for Trees
Committee:	Cabinet
Date:	5th March 2019
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Dann
CMT Member:	Anthony Payne (Director for Place)
Author:	Kathryn Deeney, Head of Environmental Planning
Contact details	Tel: 01752 304351 email: Kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:	KD319
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

This report sets out the Council's commitment to working with partners across the City to promote, protect, care and enhance trees and woodlands to ensure they deliver the maximum benefits for communities and wildlife.

The purpose of the 'Plan for Trees' is to set out a new direction for tree management, protection, and enhancement and delivering a new approach to enable people to be more engaged with trees and woodlands across the City – recognising and maximising the benefits of trees in the city.

The fundamental principles in the Plan will provide the high level drivers to deliver the Plan for Trees. These principles have been developed further into a costed Delivery Programme that sets what all partners will do to work cooperatively with each other and the city's communities to achieve the aims of the Plan for Trees.

Corporate Plan:

The development of the Plan for Trees will support the aims of the Corporate Plan in the following ways.

Pioneering Plymouth – It will enable the Council to be accountable and environmentally responsible in the way it manages its own tree estate and how it works with partners to deliver a cohesive approach across the City.

Growing Plymouth – It will ensure the City is a great place to live for future generations and the natural environment is a valued part of the growth agenda.

Caring Plymouth – It will ensure a healthy natural environment for our residents, workers and visitors.

Confident Plymouth – It will enable Plymouth to demonstrate to a national audience the benefits, to growth and communities, that can be derived from a well-managed tree estate.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land:**

The Plan for Trees will result in the City Council changing the way it manages its own tree estate as well as how partners, organisations and individuals across Plymouth manage their trees. Existing Council budgets used to manage the PCC tree estate will be redirected to deliver the new approach but it is anticipated that further funding will be needed to meet all of the Plans aspirations. The first phase of the delivery programme is to be delivered through ensuring that existing resources are directed towards delivering the plans objectives and this places no further financial burden on any partner. This phase is costed at £1.06 million. Future phases combined, are currently costed at £1.94 million but further funding is required for these phases. This funding will be sought from S106 agreements, funding bids, and external organisations as well as other organisations within the City also redirecting their existing tree management budgets.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

It is anticipated that the new direction set out in the Plan for Trees will help to deliver a more sustainable and proactive approach to tree management on the PCC estate and across the City. This will reduce the number of trees that could in the future cause a health and safety issue or be highlighted as a risk.

The detail on how PCC will manage trees on Council land across the city to mitigate risk and maximise benefits, has been set out in the Tree Management Principles document.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No, The Plan for Trees sets out the fundamental principles that will drive work to promote, protect, care and enhance trees in the City. The Delivery Plan that will be developed to drive change on the ground will be subject to an EqIA.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

1. Approve the Plan for Trees.

Reason: To provide a focus for a fundamental change in tree promotion, protection, care and enhancement across the City that meets the commitments set out in the Plymouth Plan and Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan.

2. Approves the Plan for Trees Delivery Programme which has been produced with key partners and which sets out how the fundamental principles in the Plan for Trees will be achieved.

Reason: To ensure that the fundamental principles in the Plan can be delivered in a manner which is sustainable and will lead to a significant positive change for the City and its communities.

- Instructs officers to sign up to the Steering Group Agreement to become members of the Plymouth Plan for Trees Steering Group with partners and to act as secretariat as part of this membership. Supports a partnership approach to delivery, with City Council resources utilised to enable a collaborative delivery model to be developed.

Reason: To ensure that the Plan for Trees and the Delivery Programme are acted upon, monitored and driven forward to improve the management of the city’s trees and woods and achieve genuine benefits that this brings and which are set out in the Plan for Trees

- Notes the Tree Management Principles document that sets out the principles and approach that PCC will take to manage its trees and woods and confirms work to be completed for this to be formally adopted.

Reason: To ensure that the ambition of the Plan for Trees is delivered across the city and people in the city recognise the Council’s role in achieving this.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Do nothing – This would mean that the tree estate would not deliver the benefits it has the potential to deliver for the people of Plymouth. Along with this the condition of the trees and woods across the city would likely continue to erode and cause a greater maintenance and financial burden on already stretched services. Less benefit, more cost.

Only Focus on the PCC Estate – The tree estate across the City is in different land ownership and only focusing on the parts owned by Plymouth City Council would prevent the vision of the Plan from being achieved and bring limited benefits to communities. This option means that the financial burden falls wholly on the Council and does not bring in external partnership resources or funding. Less benefit, more cost.

Published work / information:

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Plymouth’s Plan for Trees	Yes								
Plymouth’s Plan for Trees – Delivery Programme 2019 - 2034	Yes								
Plymouth Tree Steering Group Agreement	Yes								
PCC Tree Management Principles	Yes								

Sign off:

Fin	Sa 18. 19.22 7- 21.02 .19	Leg	LS/3 1332 /JP/F eb19	Mon Off	NA	HR	NA	Assets	NA	IT	NA	Strat Proc	NA
Originating SMT Member Anthony Payne													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

1.0 Introduction

Trees are one of the most important aspects of the natural environment in terms of the services they can deliver for people. In particular, trees are important because they enhance and improve the urban environment by providing a wide range of benefits at relatively little cost. Trees improve health and wellbeing, store carbon, provide shade in hot weather, help manage surface water flooding during storm events and provide an attractive environment for people to live, work and invest in. The Government estimates that the nation's trees are worth an estimated £175 billion (Tree Health Resilience Strategy 2018).

Plymouth contains a diversity of trees including over 30,000 street trees, 100's of hectares of woodlands including ancient woodlands and many veteran trees. Plymouth's recent Tree Canopy Cover Study revealed that the city has 17 per cent cover but that this canopy cover is not equal with some wards having as little as 3% cover and others having more than 30%. This inequality of quantity must be addressed as the wards with low canopy cover will not be experiencing the benefits trees can provide.

To deliver the maximum benefits trees can provide for the people of Plymouth they need to be managed sustainably in a coordinated manner and communities need to be engaged with the trees and woodlands where they live. To ensure that the trees in the City support communities and the City's growth aspirations now and for future generations a Plan for Trees has been developed.

2.0 The Plan

To enable Plymouth's trees to be an asset for communities and the growth of the City a coordinated plan for the promotion, protection, care and enhancement of these features is required. This will enable trees across the city to be viewed holistically, without the limits of landownership. The impacts and benefits that current trees have on communities have been fully taken into account in developing the principles that will drive change across the City.

The Plan will drive changes to the current tree estate to ensure it is a benefit to the communities it supports as well as planning for the future tree landscape. Principles such as ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place and has the right care will be at the forefront of ensuring that going forward trees in the city deliver their maximum benefits, add value to communities and do not negatively impact any individuals.

Planning for the future tree landscape for the city will enable the current generation to positively plan for the tree estate that future generations will inherit. Innovative approaches to planting, species choice and maintenance regimes will ensure that going forward trees can contribute to the solutions to issues such as the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

The Plan for Trees will drive this forward looking approach to the tree estate as well as meeting current challenges and opportunities.

3.0 Plan for Trees Engagement

Trees can have a big impact on communities. There are many very positive benefits trees can provide for people and the right tree in the right place with the right care can enhance communities significantly. However, in some circumstances, particularly where a tree has been planted in an inappropriate location for its size and shape trees can impact negatively on individuals. Due to the slow growing nature of trees it is also important that the City's current generation have their say and shape the City future tree landscape.

For these reasons it has been essential to gain communities views on trees and how they should be promoted, protected cared for and enhanced now and for future generations. The engagement exercise took place between the 20th August and the 16th September and 1105 people provided their views via the tree survey. A summary of the comments are as follows:

- How strongly do you agree or disagree that trees are an important feature of the city?: *96.82% strongly agree, or agree*
- How important are trees in helping to provide a sense of pride in the city?: *94.25% strongly agree, or agree*
- What aspects of trees do you value the most? Top three results: *Home to wildlife, Improving air quality and Aesthetics/beauty*
- Have you experienced issues/concerns with trees in the city?: *65% said no*
- What were those issues? Top three results: *Trees too close to/block buildings/roads/footpaths, Damage to buildings/roads/footpaths, Height/size*
- A key proposed part of the Plan is the idea of getting the 'right tree in the right place with the right care'. Do you agree with this principle?: *90.98% agree*
- To ensure the right tree is in the right place, some trees may need to be felled and replaced. Do you agree with this principle?: *52.16% agree*
- Do you agree that the plan for trees should look forward to the future and the generations to come?: *98.26% agree*

These comments have been used to inform the Plan for Trees and will also be embedded within the actions set out in the Delivery Plan.

4.0 Partnership Development and Delivery

The Plan for Trees covers all trees and woodlands in Plymouth and we want to ensure that a holistic and coordinated approach is taken which is not limited by land ownership. The Plan for Trees has therefore been developed in collaboration with the Woodland Trust, Plymouth Community Homes, Plymouth Tree Partnership, Plymouth Open Space Network and the Tree Council. All these partners endorse the Plan for Trees and have committed to signing up to the Plymouth Tree Steering Group Agreement to proactively take forward the strategic responsibility for monitoring and delivering the Delivery Programme.

5.0 Delivering the Plan for Trees

The approval of the Plan for Trees will provide the strategic direction for the tree estate across the City going forward. To ensure that the Plan is taken forward in an effective, timely and coordinated manner a Delivery Programme has been developed collaboratively with partners over the last 2 years to drive change on the ground and achieve the objectives of the Plan. The Delivery Programme is fully costed, sets out timeframes for the delivery of key actions and will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Plymouth Tree Steering Group.

The first phase of the delivery programme is to be delivered through ensuring that existing resources are directed towards delivering the plans objectives and this places no further financial burden on any partner. This phase is costed at £1.06 million and will be delivered by April 2020.

Future phases combined, are currently costed at £1.94 million but further funding is required for these phases. This funding will be sought from S106 agreements, funding bids, and external organisations as well as other organisations within the City also redirecting their existing tree management budgets.