

Cabinet Member for Policing & Equalities

21 March 2022

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities - Councillor A S Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Draft Urban Forestry Strategy

Is this a key decision?

No - Although the matters within the report affect all wards in the city, it is not anticipated that the impact will be significant

Executive Summary:

To inform the Cabinet Member of the progress being made in the development of the City Councils Urban Forestry Strategy. A copy of the draft Strategy is attached as an Appendix to the report.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- a) Note progress in the development of the Urban Forestry Strategy through two phases of consultation, detailed within the report.
- b) Support the proposal to undertake public consultation.

List of Appendices included:

A: Draft Urban Forestry Strategy

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No - The draft Urban Forestry Strategy was considered by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Board at their meeting on the 6th November 2019 as part of the initial

consultation stage. The Scrutiny Board made several recommendations detailed in section 3.

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In 2015/2016 the newly formed citywide Urban Forestry Team, started to work with the Forestry Team at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) on a project of combining our services to provide efficiencies. One of the joint working projects was the production of a combined Urban Forestry Strategy and RedKite were employed by SMBC to draft one.
- 1.2 During 2017, it became apparent that the tree surgery contractor delivering the combined service for SMBC and Coventry City Council was not suitable for working in Coventry and the relationship with SMBC was ended. However, the project to draft the Urban Forestry Strategy continued, but the strategy would focus on Coventry only. SMBC have also received a dedicated Urban Forestry Strategy, just for Solihull. This resulted in a delay in the development of the strategy. The draft Coventry Urban Forestry Strategy outlines the current condition and state of the urban forestry.
- 1.3 The drafting of the Urban Forestry Strategy included two workshops with elected members and the Coventry Tree Warden Network, to allow for ideas and aspirations to be included.
- 1.4 Subsequently two phases of consultation have been undertaken. The first with internal departments and the second with key stakeholders and partners. The information received has been translated into the detailed action plan which supports this report.
- 1.5 The draft document recognises the value and importance of the urban forest particularly in mitigating pollution, heat, flooding and wind as well as its value towards biodiversity, wildlife, the community's health and wellbeing, overall quality of the urban environment and economic value.
- 1.6 A number of challenges and opportunities are discussed within the document. Reductions in government spending has led to a decreased spend in greenspaces, as a result lack of funding has been identified as a main constraint in both improving and maintaining the tree stock. Focus should be made in maximising funding through S106 agreements, exploiting opportunities arising from Regeneration and Business Improvement Districts in establishing sustainable urban forests along with establishing effective partnerships with developers and landowners.
- 1.7 The importance of strategically managing the urban forest is highlighted and the document makes reference to a number of Coventry City Council Policies which touch the City's urban forest including the Coventry City Council Area Action Plan, Development Strategy and the recently adopted Greenspace Strategy.
- 1.8 The draft strategy acknowledges the significant work done by Coventry's Urban Forestry team to explore new ways of working and provide better value for money in tree maintenance. A number of aspects are recognised as significant including the management of all street trees, the adoption of Tree Risk management processes and procedures to ensure the establishment of new trees.
- 1.9 Although measures are in place at Coventry to protect urban trees the strategy suggests that the need to communicate the benefits of trees as well as enforcement is important and identify a number of issues for consideration including policies which take into consideration the life cycle of the tree and its value to the environment, strong policies on enforcement and sustainable compensation measures and the protection of ancient woodlands and veteran trees
- 1.10 The need to develop a resilient and sustainable urban forest is highlighted and which should be directed by strong policies to establish wide ranging tree sizes and species distributions. A number of aspects are seen as important in achieving this such as tree mapping to identify gaps and establish population improvements, achieving a balance of

numbers and genetic diversity, aiming to plant more and fell less, developing a species mix to protect against the impacts of disease and pathogens.

1.11 The draft Strategy contains Themes and Key actions on:

- Planning: ensuring we have robust and relevant urban forest policies and technical guidance to facilitate high quality design and development.
- Protection: putting biodiversity and the health of trees at the heart of all our work.
- Procedures: ensuring we have appropriate operational plans and processes that are regularly monitored and reviewed.
- Projects: developing and creating long term projects for the management and enhancement of the urban forest in Coventry.
- Prosperity: making the link with the urban forest and natural capital for sustainable economic regeneration.
- Promotion: having a presence and getting the message across to all our stakeholders and customers.
- Partnerships: building on existing and facilitating new working relationships for the benefit of the urban forest in Coventry.
- Profile: having a presence and influencing colleagues, stakeholders and professional networks in decision making.
- Pioneering: using technology and new ways of working to create innovation and efficient working.

1.12 This document is now at a final draft stage and ready to go out to public consultation. The outcome of the consultation will be presented to full Cabinet for consideration and adoption.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Option 1 - The option to do nothing and not develop and implement a strategy for the future management and development of the City's urban forest has been considered and rejected.
- 2.2 Option 2 - The City Council requires an Urban Forestry Strategy in order to develop a resilient and sustainable urban forest achieving a balance of numbers and genetic diversity, aiming to plant more and fell less, developing a species mix to protect against the impacts of disease and pathogens. The option that the draft strategy is progressed to public consultation is recommended.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 In the drafting of the Urban Forestry Strategy two workshops were held with both elected Members and the Coventry Tree Warden Network, to allow for ideas and aspirations to be included.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Member for City Services, Councillor P Hetheron, has been kept informed of the development of the proposal as her portfolio responsibilities include trees on public

highways

3.3 This report recommends that the draft Strategy is now put to public consultation.

3.4 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered a draft of the Urban Forestry Strategy at their meeting on the 6th November 2019. They made the following recommendations:

- a) Supports the proposal to undertake further consultation.
- b) Recommends that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities considers the inclusion of the following in the Urban Forestry Strategy:
 - i) the architectural benefits of urban forestry and green space, especially in the City Centre.
 - ii) the City's aspirations and vision for tree planting, to bring it into line with the Green Space Strategy.
- c) Agrees that an update and Action Plan arising from the Urban Forestry Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report.

5 Comments from the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry and contribute greatly to improving the quality of life to those that live and work in the City, help address health inequalities and provides valuable wildlife habitats

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Continued maintenance of the urban forest will be delivered using existing resources.

6.4 Equalities / EIA Implications

No equality impact assessments have been undertaken.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

Trees can help mitigate the effects of climate by removing carbon dioxide from the air, storing carbon in the trees and soil, and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. They can also have a positive impact in reducing the impact of flooding and soil erosion brought about by the changing climate.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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