

Council
19 July 2021

QUESTION 1

Question from Councillor Julie Morris to the Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen.

Whilst many members are aware of the problems of securing permission from Surrey County Council for planting trees in highway verges, the Tree Advisory Board (TAB), our own voluntary group in Epsom & Ewell, has put several projects to EEBC over the past two years and has been unable to secure permission to proceed. TAB are willing to record all planting data in order that EEBC can update its records annually. Please could the Chairman explain why and hopefully provide a way forward.

Background Information

1. Auriol Park and Hook Road Arena. 2 mini-orchards are proposed comprising 12 and 18 old native stock fruit trees, apple and pear. Project plan, funding and aftercare all provided by TAB. Final approval still awaited.

2. Bourne Hall. PROBUS wish to plant a single tree to commemorate their 25 year anniversary. Funded by PROBUS. Planting plan, location and species put forward. No cost to EEBC. Refused permission.

3. Alexandra Recreation Ground. An ambitious planting scheme (refused permission) could be scaled down and resited if agreement can be given in principle.

4. Court Recreation Ground. A project on behalf of Friends of Court Rec to replace Prunus and restock on Oak (8 trees in total). Refused permission.

Reply from Councillor Dallen:

I would like to thank Councillor Morris for her question.

I agree that there are ongoing challenges with getting permission from SCC for the planting and replacement of highway trees and we are continuing to push SCC to be more accommodating. In particular the county has commenced work on a new Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) which promises to have significant elements driven by climate change and this council intends to discuss the prospects of street tree planting as part of our response to this work.

Regarding the four specific examples of tree planting on borough land I have some updates –

1. Orchards in Auriol Park and Hook Road Arena have been discussed. The locations fall under both the parks service and planning. The latest thinking is that Hook Road Arena is a preferred location to Auriol Park rather than orchards in both locations. A meeting is due to take place between officers later this week. Following that meeting TAB will be contacted for further discussions and agreement.
2. The PROBUS tree in Bourne Hall grounds has been approved and will again be planted either in the autumn this year or spring next year.

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3. The council is keen to support the large scale planting of trees in Alexandra Recreation Ground but a different location within the park needs to be agreed as the proposed location was too near the bowling green.
4. There will be some tree planting in Court recreation ground this year to replace those already removed. Further planting will take place in 2022/2023 following this year's three yearly tree hazard management exercise and the removal of the dead cherry trees.

The Council is currently working on a draft tree strategy for the borough which should be brought to LPP for consideration this autumn.

TAB will be consulted on the preparation of this strategy and a meeting has already been set up between TAB and the Director, and Head of Service, later this month.