

TREE PLANTING FEES & CHARGES POLICY - 9 MONTH REVIEW

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Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Local authority fees & charges comparison table

Summary

This report provides a review of the delivery of the Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy.

The Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy was approved by the Committee on 23 January 2024, setting out a Council policy on determining applications for tree planting on land in the ownership of the Council, and the associated fees and charges.

It was agreed that the policy would be reviewed after 9 months and include a breakdown of the fees and charges and a comparison of fees and charges for similar policies adopted by other local authorities.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider and note the 9-month review of Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 This report provides a review of the delivery of the Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy. It was agreed by this Committee that the Policy would be reviewed after a 9-month period.

2 Background

Environment Committee

15 October 2024

2.1 The Council's Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy was approved by this Committee on 23 January 2024. It set a clear Policy for determining proposals made to the Council for tree planting on Council owned land and set the fees and charges associated, to facilitate the effective implementation of the Council's Tree Management Plan.

2.2 The Policy covered two types of planting request:

- Single Memorial tree planting requests on Council land to be delivered by the Council on behalf of the applicant,
- Tree planting requests on Council owned land to be delivered by a third party.

2.3 The fees and charges for 2023/24 and 24/25 were agreed as:

Type of request	Action	Fee
Single Memorial Tree – Council to plant	Admin fee	£50
	Planting fee (if site selected is agreed)	£500
Third-party tree planting	Admin fee	£150
	Planting fee	£350

2.4 Prior to the adoption of the Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy the Council had no agreed policy for which to assess tree planting requests against.

2.5 It was agreed that a 9-month review of the Policy would be provided to this Committee.

2.6 The Tree Management Plan was developed and approved by Committee on 21 March 2023. The plan sets the framework for how the Council manages its current tree stock, now and in the future, and how we will increase the tree cover in the borough, where appropriate, contributing to the commitments made in the Climate Change Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan.

3 Breakdown of fees & charges

3.1 The fee for single memorial tree planting is split between an administration (admin) fee and a planting fee.

Environment Committee

15 October 2024

- 3.2 The admin fee of £50 covers the officer time to review the application, correspondence with the applicant and processing of payment. The fee's relating to officer time have been set in consideration of the published fee schedule for the tree officers hourly rate which can be found on the Council website ([Pre-Applications | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council \(epsom-ewell.gov.uk\)](https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk)).
- 3.3 The planting fee of £500 covers the sourcing, planting and long-term aftercare of the tree. It is set in consideration of the Forestry Commission's (FC) standard cost for the supply, planting and 3 years aftercare of an advanced nursery stock tree (set out in the guidance for the Local Authority Treescapes Fund - [Local Authority Treescapes Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)).
- 3.4 The FC sets the standard tree supply and planting cost at £270.45 and 3 years of aftercare at £189, totalling £459.45. The Council planting fee includes an uplift for longer term maintenance beyond 3 years of aftercare.
- 3.5 The fee for third-party tree planting is split between an admin fee and a planting fee.
- 3.6 The admin fee of £150 covers the officer time for reviewing the application, correspondence with the applicant, undertaking a site visit, carrying out a service check and processing payment.
- 3.7 The planting fee of £350 covers the cost of a Council Officer being on site to supervise the agreed tree planting and check compliance with the original proposal.

4 Summary of tree planting requests

- 4.1 In the 9 months since the adoption of the Policy the Council has dealt with the following tree planting requests:
- 4.2 **Single memorial tree planting:** one application received, which was withdrawn prior to assessment.
- 4.3 **Third party tree planting:** one application received for planting a copse of trees at Alexandra Recreation Ground. The application was agreed and the associated fee paid. The planting has taken place, led by the Tree Advisory Board (TAB).
- 4.4 A second application was received prior to the agreement of the new policy but assessed post adoption. It was therefore not charged under the new fees and charges policy but has been agreed. This is for a 'Memorial Grove' at Long Grove Park, led by Age Concern and TAB. The planting has not taken place yet but is expected later this year (during the Nov-Mar planting season).

5 Comparison review of local authorities' tree planting fees & charges

- 5.1 A review exercise was undertaken of other local council fees and charges for tree planting requests as a comparison. This took the form of a desktop study on information published on a sample of local council websites.
- 5.2 One of the initial findings was that many Councils do not promote or actively offer memorial planting/tree planting request schemes on their land. Of the Surrey Borough Councils only Surrey Heath and Spelthorne actively stated options for memorial/sponsored trees on Council land, but they do not publish their fees for planting which are dependent on the type of request and tree to be planted.
- 5.3 Data was collated for 22 Councils that were found to publish fees and charges for tree planting (a summary table can be found in Appendix 1). From those sampled the key findings are set out below:
- Approaches to tree planting request schemes vary widely between local councils. Variations included:
 - type of scheme – whether single memorial tree only, or a tree sponsorship/donation scheme,
 - level of restriction in planting locations,
 - length of on-going tree maintenance,
 - whether plaques are or are not included,
 - set fee or varying fee structure.
 - The fees and charges vary widely between Councils. The lowest found was set at £190 (Rochford Council) and the highest £2,150 (Croydon Council).
 - Most of the Councils had a single set fee, but some had a fee range dependant on the type of tree chosen to be planted (for example Torbay Council had a fee range between £200-£2,000).
- 5.4 The wide variance in methods and fees used by other local authorities makes it difficult to make a straight comparison and suggests that there is no standard approach to the fees and charges set for tree planting requests.

6 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1.1 None arising from this report.

Environment Committee

15 October 2024

6.2 Crime & Disorder

6.2.1 There are no implications in terms of crime & disorder.

6.3 Safeguarding

6.3.1 None arising from this report.

6.4 Dependencies

6.4.1 None arising from this report.

6.5 Other

6.5.1 None arising from this report.

7 Financial Implications

7.1 Planting, establishing and maintaining trees can have significant financial implications. The Council is supportive of additional tree planting but requests from third parties do have resource implications for the Council. The fees and charges are intended to cover the costs to administer the applications received and cover the cost of any requested tree planting.

7.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are included in the body of the report.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 None arising from this report.

8.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report

9 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

9.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Green & vibrant

9.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

9.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

9.3.1 The policy supports objectives in the Biodiversity Action Plan, Climate Change Action Plan and Tree Management Plan, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and contributing to increased carbon sequestration and meeting the Council climate change targets.

9.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

Environment Committee

15 October 2024

9.4.1 No specific implications

9.5 **Partnerships:**

9.5.1 None

10 Background papers

10.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Environment Committee: Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy – 23 January 2024

Other papers:

- Environment & Safer Communities Committee: Tree Management Plan – 21 March 2023