

## TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

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<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	None

### Summary

This report provides an update on the progress of delivering the Council's Tree Management Plan.

The Tree Management Plan was approved by the committee on 21 March 2023, setting out a framework for how the Council will manage its current tree population and where appropriate increase existing tree cover on land in the ownership of the Council.

The plan also sets out a process for dealing with tree planting and memorial planting requests. It was agreed that progress on the delivery of the plan would be reported annually.

Progress has been made in the delivery of the plan in the past year as set out in the following report.

Work will continue during 2024/25 to deliver, monitor and review the Tree Management Plan.

### Recommendation (s)

**The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Consider and note the progress made on the delivery of the Council's Tree Management Plan over the past 18 months.**

#### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 This report outlines the progress over the past 18 months in delivering the Council's Tree Management Plan (TMP).
- 1.2 The TMP was agreed as a living document that would be reviewed and progress reported annually.

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### 1.3 Key highlights of the past 18 months include:

- 101 trees planted on Council owned sites.
- 556 trees planted/facilitated by Surrey County Council in Epsom & Ewell.
- Submission of funding bids to the Local Authority Treescape Fund & Urban Tree Challenge Fund to cover the cost of planting and aftercare of 2,627 trees. Awaiting bid outcome.
- £19k successfully secured from the Surrey County Council Empty Homes Reallocation Fund for tree planting.
- Adoption of Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy
- Adoption of Ash Die Back Action Plan and setting up of Ash Dieback Management Group
- New 'Trees in Epsom & Ewell' section created on the Council website.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Council owns and manages substantial areas of land and estate across the borough and is responsible for the reasonable management of trees on its land, of which there are approximately 41,000.
- 2.2 The Council has committed to actions in the Climate Change Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan to increase tree cover in the borough and support and promote appropriate locations for tree planting.
- 2.3 A 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.
- 2.4 The TMP also sets out a process for dealing with tree planting and memorial planting requests.
- 2.5 The Council committed to an action in the Annual Plan 2023/24 to progress delivery of the TMP, including a target to plant 100 trees in the first year.
- 2.6 It was agreed that an annual update on the delivery of the TMP would be provided to this Committee each year. This is the first annual update.

### **Progress update on New Tree Establishment**

- 2.7 During 2023/24 the Annual Plan target was met with the planting of 101 trees at the following Council owned sites:

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- 49 at various Parks & Open Spaces (as part of gapping up).
  - 14 at Chamber Mead wetlands (Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve).
  - 34 at Alexandra Recreation Ground (extension of the Mike Ford Copse) in partnership with the Tree Advisory Board (TAB).
  - 4 Auriol Park (by Friends of Auriol Park).
- 2.8 In addition, Surrey County Council (SCC) have delivered or facilitated the planting of 556 trees in Epsom & Ewell during 2023/24:
- 425 at Cuddington Croft Primary School.
  - 131 at Highway locations.
- 2.9 SCC have also provided 100 tree saplings to Epsom & Ewell residents through events & giveaways.
- 2.10 The TMP sets out that opportunities to secure the funding necessary to enable the delivery of the larger scale planting plans would need to be explored. Identifying, and where appropriate applying for, funding to support the tree establishment plans has been a focus in the first year of the plan.
- 2.11 Two Government based funding schemes were identified as options for securing funding: The Local Authority Treescape Fund (LATF) and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf). Epsom & Ewell have applied to both schemes, as part of a collaborative funding bid led by Surrey County Council. The bid is seeking £75k of funding to cover the plans for the planting and early years maintenance of 2,627 trees across 6 Epsom & Ewell owned sites.
- 2.12 Planting plans have been developed for the 6 sites which include:
- Long Grove Park;
  - London Road Recreation Ground;
  - Manor Park;
  - Poole Road Recreation Ground;
  - Two separate sections of Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve (one by Ewell Court House and the other by Always Avenue).
- 2.13 The funding bids were submitted in early Summer 2024 and we expect the outcome to be known by mid-Autumn 2024. If successful, it would make a significant contribution to delivering the tree establishment plans and planting would take place over the following planting seasons.

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- 2.14 £19k of further funding has been secured for tree planting from the Surrey County Council Empty Homes Reallocation Fund (EHRF). The funding will be used to further support the tree planting plans under the LATF and UTCF, if successful, or a planting scheme at Long Grove Park.
- 2.15 The Empty Homes Reallocation Fund is a scheme where the County reallocates funding where a Borough Council has actively changed their Empty Property policy in order to reduce the number of empty properties in the area. Epsom & Ewell Borough Council changed our Empty Property policy in 2020 and so we are eligible to submit a funding bid for reallocated funding.

## **Tree Planting Policy, Ash Dieback & OPM update**

- 2.16 A Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy was developed and agreed at the January 2024 Environment Committee. This was to set a clear policy for determining proposals made to the Council for tree planting on Council owned land and to set the fees and charges associated, to facilitate the effective implementation of the TMP. A review of the policy is due to be considered by this committee in October.
- 2.17 The TMP highlighted that Ash Dieback is a significant issue for tree stocks in Epsom & Ewell and would need to be managed carefully with a risk-based approach. An Ash Dieback Action Plan has since been developed and was adopted at the October 2023 Environment Committee. An Officer Ash Dieback Management Group has now been set up to coordinate our actions to tackle the disease on trees and land that the Council maintain.
- 2.18 As set out in the TMP, Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) is widespread in Oaks in the Borough and a potential hazard to human and animal health. Ongoing monitoring at Epsom Common over the last year has shown no significant increase from previous years. This is a positive sign, and the current assumption is that a parasitic fly species along with native birds are reducing the level of infestation. Monitoring will continue in 2024/25.

## **Veteran Tree Mapping**

- 2.19 The importance of Veteran trees is recognised in the TMP due to their ecological and cultural value. Identifying and mapping their locations would have the benefit of supporting better management and preservation.
- 2.20 A limited amount of mapping to develop a register had taken place prior to 2024. The Countryside Team have worked with the Tree Advisory Board over this summer (2024) to train three small teams of volunteers who will be able to assist with progressing the veteran tree mapping work going forward.

### Communications

- 2.21 A new 'Access to Nature' section of the website has been created to bring together information on the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and on 'Trees in Epsom & Ewell'. The trees section is due to be developed further in late 2024, with a guide to community tree planting.
- 2.22 Promoting tree planting at home was included in our 'Rewild Your Garden' social media monthly theme, as part of our Climate Change & Biodiversity communications in Autumn 2023.



- 2.23 The Climate Change & Biodiversity communications plan for 2024/25 again includes themes to promote tree planting through 'Plant for the Planet' and 'Rewild Your Garden'.
- 2.24 Work will continue during 2024/25 to deliver, monitor and review the Tree Management Plan.

### 3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

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### 3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None arising from this report.

### 3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 There are no implications in terms of crime and disorder.

### 3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None arising from this report.

### 3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None arising from this report.

### 3.5 Other

3.5.1 None arising from this report.

## 4 Financial Implications

4.1 Planting and establishing trees can have significant financial implications. The Council will be exploring opportunities for external funding and support for tree planting schemes, along with actively encouraging community involvement.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Additional funding would need to be identified for any works arising over and above the existing tree maintenance contract budget.

## 5 Legal Implications

5.1 None arising from this report.

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from this report.

## 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

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

- Green & Vibrant and supports delivery of the Annual Plan.

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

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

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

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### 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

6.4.1 No specific implications

### 6.5 **Partnerships:**

6.5.1 None

## 7 **Background papers**

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

### **Previous reports:**

- Env Committee: Tree Management Plan – 21 March 2023

### **Other papers:**

- Env Committee: Ash Dieback Action Plan – 17 October 2023
- Env Committee: Tree Planting Fees & Charges Policy – 23 January 2024