



To: Mark Berry
Head of Place Development
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

June 26, 2017

From: Mike Ford
Chairman, Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board
24 Copse Edge Avenue, Epsom, KT17 4HS

Re: 'Suggested Way Forward' on street tree planting

Dear Mark

Sorry for the delay responding to your email of June 7 – but we were keen to hold a special meeting of the Tree Advisory Board before replying. This we had last Thursday, so I am now in a position to report back.

First, we'd like to thank yourself and everyone else involved at the Council end for the extremely constructive way in which EEBC has responded to the Tree Advisory Board's concerns. We were particularly gratified to read, under the section headed '*The Borough's Objectives*' that the Council doesn't just want "*to ensure that the Borough remains green*" but that "*this is part of a key priority in the Corporate Plan*".

The proposals you have outlined are an extremely welcome demonstration of the Council's willingness to work in partnership with the Tree Advisory Board, and the wider community, to safeguard the Borough's trees, as our headed paper describes.

We totally agree with your assessment (in the draft '*Suggested Way Forward*' document) that Option 2 provides the best blueprint for what we are hoping to achieve.

While the unit cost of £251.95 is, indeed, higher than we would have ideally liked, we recognise many factors are in the mix.

We'd be pleased, however, to explore further the ideas you mentioned of reduced rates for multiple purchases and the option of aftercare being provided by TAB members. With regards to the latter, it seems to us that this could be one of the easiest ways of reducing the unit cost per tree – as we'd be prepared to take on all aftercare, including the maintenance of stakes and ties – as well as the 'aftercare formative prune'...which, according to the costings you have provided, would together strip out £47.50, or nearly a fifth, of the £251.95 per-tree cost.



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As I'm sure you understand, we need to ensure that we get the best value for money, as we are 100% dependent on voluntary donations. On behalf of the local community we want to produce a tree planting programme to be proud of, at a unit price that doesn't deter individuals and organisations from contributing.

Might a reduction be possible if we replace trees that have died under recent planting schemes? We're thinking, in particular, of trees from the last two planting seasons that have not survived for whatever reason. Obviously surveying of services and 'design' for those particular plantings has only very recently been done – especially with regards to the casualties amongst those trees that were planted this Spring – so is there any way this element of the 'admin' costs could be reduced?

We are expecting our major sources of funding to be:

- County Councillors
- Residents Associations
- Other local voluntary and environmental organisations, including the Civic Society
- Donations from community-minded business and individuals, that TAB will be soliciting

At present we are hoping to fund the planting of 50 trees in 2017-18 (though obviously the precise number depends on the money we raise and the unit price) so we'd like to finalise an agreed way forward as soon as possible. If we are to organise and plant between November and January (the optimal time to maximise survival rates) we will need to firm up various donation offers that we have already received, so hope that the draft plan can be placed before the Council at the earliest possible opportunity.

We look forward to your thoughts on all the issues we have raised – but, in the meantime, the Tree Advisory Board would like to thank you for your positive engagement on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Mike

Mike Ford



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