

Agenda item 6

For Decision - Wild about Trees – Frome’s tree planting project

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Introduction

This report follows up on the wider tree report presented and discussed at the Council meeting on 25 September.

As agreed at that meeting, this report provides additional information about the Wild about Trees planting project; including known and estimated costings.

The most significant cost and implication of the project is the recruitment of a new member of staff on an initial 2-year contract April 2020.

This report also provides indicative costs for the project and these can be scaled to reflect the numbers of trees planted in the future.



Wild about Trees

The overview of the first three planting seasons for the project was agreed at the previous Council meeting in September and steps have already been taken and planned based on this.

Season one

- Planting: Between September 2019 and March 2020
- Financial year: up to 31 March 2020

FTC land:

Planting on Mary Baily; and planting 1,000 whips at Weylands and Birchill Lane

Elsewhere:

- Designing tree planting and tree care sheets for people to download and print
- Offering 200 smaller trees to residents, homeowners and businesses
- Talking to businesses to find out if they have land that they would like to see planted
- Contacting the managing committee about possible planting at Whatcombe Fields
- Talking to MDC about tree planting on their land, including closed churchyards; but focusing initially on the green spaces and verges off Brunel Way on Stonebridge
- Talking to SCC about planting street trees
- Talking to local churches about opportunities for planting in Frome's churchyards
- The possibility of tree planting as part of the Schools Travel Challenge
- Asking Councillors to identify planting opportunities at the same time as coding maps as part of the parking review

Season two

- Planting: Between October 2020 and March 2021
- Financial year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

FTC land:

Planting at Egford Lane; Tower View; and in Rodden Meadow

Elsewhere:

- Continuing to offer smaller trees to residents, homeowners and businesses (250 whips)
- Follow-up planting and projects from season one. Hopefully including planting on MDC land, SCC land and elsewhere
- Developing a scheme whereby businesses (and potentially residents) can make financial contributions or donations to offset their carbon - including quantifiable measures
- Inviting residents and businesses to suggest opportunities for planting

Season three

- Planting: Between October 2021 and March 2022
- Financial year: 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

FTC land:

Planting at North Parade; the Old Showfield; and in Victoria Park

Elsewhere:

- Continuing to offer smaller trees to residents, homeowners and businesses (250 whips)
- Follow-up planting and projects from seasons one and two

Costs

The following table details the expected costs of the project

Wild about Trees	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
What	£ 3,320	Trees		£36,740	Trees		£35,650	Trees	
Part-time Project officer (Salary for 22 hours)*	N/A			£ 14,500			£ 15,000		
Expected on-costs (Tax; NI)	N/A			£ 3,250			£ 3,500		
Allowance for new tools; PPE and uniform for officer	N/A			£ 1,000			£ 250		
Allowance for laptop	N/A			£ 750			£ -		
New (shared) FTC vehicle	N/A			£ 10,000			£ 10,000		
Legal fees (SCC; MDC; other)	£ -			£ 2,500			£ -		
Contingency	£ -			£ -			TBC		
Ranger support	£ -			£ -			£ -		
Community Development support	£ -			£ -			£ -		
Marketing & Communications support	£ -			£ -			£ -		
Volunteer planting sessions (per session at £2 per person)	£ 120			£ 240			£ 400		
Residents suggesting planting opportunities	£ -			£ -			£ -		
Councillors identifying planting opportunities	£ -			£ -			£ -		
Planting 1 whip (in partnership with the Woodland Trust)	£ 1	1000	£ 1,000	£ 1	250	£ 250	£ 1	250	£ 250
Planting 1 whip (without Woodland Trust support)	£ 10	0	£ -	£ 10	0	£ -	£ 10	0	£ -
Making whips available to residents and businesses	£ 1	200	£ 200	£ 1	250	£ 250	£ 1	250	£ 250
Planting a smaller tree (average cost for 1 tree)	£ 50	0	£ -	£ 50	0	£ -	£ 50	0	£ -
Planting a medium-sized tree (average cost for 1 tree)	£ 100	20	£ 2,000	£ 100	40	£ 4,000	£ 100	60	£ 6,000
Planting a larger tree (average cost for 1 tree)	£ 150	0	£ -	£ 150	0	£ -	£ 150	0	£ -

These costs will therefore be reflected in the Council's proposed budgets for next year (including the Salaries budget; the Trees budget; and the Equipment & Vehicle budgets)

Notes:

- The costs suggested for planting the different sizes of tree include things like stakes; guards and mulch
- There are 2 costs included for the price of whips to reflect the fact that – although hoped for – the Woodland Trust may not be in a position to supply free or very cheap whips for the duration of the project
- Importantly, the costs reflect the price for planting in grassed (or soft) landscapes. Planting in roads and pavements – if it happens – will inevitably be more complicated and more expensive
- More mature trees and specific species of tree will still invariably need to be sourced from dedicated, local nurseries
- Because of this, the table includes an average cost for sourcing smaller; medium-sized and larger trees
- Certain species may be more expensive again (rare landscape trees, for instance)
- At this juncture, we haven't reflected the potential for income relating to the project; either through a donation scheme or planting certain trees for future value. Exploring both these things is something that the Project Officer will do, however

Other costs & practicalities

The wider costs of planting also include staff time; and potentially professional fees and services:

- Existing staff time - primarily from the Marketing & Communications team; but also from the Finance & HR; Community and Resilience teams
- Soil tests
- Transport and travel
- Tools (for volunteers to use)
- Expert time and consultants' fees (potentially arborists and landscape architects)
- Service (utility) checks
- Design time (and printing costs) for a plant your tree guide and kit
- And the same for a care for your tree guide and kit

Again, these costs will be reflected in the Council's proposed budgets for next year.

Total costs

Factoring in the new part-time Project Officer to run the project, it's anticipated that the project will cost about £35k per year in the upcoming financial years.

This investment will see exciting and important things happen though: lots more trees will be planted across the entire town - improving the local and global environment and we'll build resilience, ownership and responsibility within the Frome community.

This winter and spring, we're aiming to plant over 1,000 new trees. The expectation after that is that tree planting becomes an essential and overlapping part of the Council's work.

Recommendations

1. Agree to proceed with the Wild about Trees project as described in the report
2. Agree to insert into next year's budget £36,740 identified in the report
3. Delegate to the Environment Manager the recruitment of a half time project officer starting in April 2020.