

Report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Sport to the meeting of Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 28th February 2017

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Subject:

Woodland Strategy

Summary statement:

Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an annual progress report on the work programme for the approved Woodland Strategy for Bradford District.

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EWMOSC) requested an annual progress report on the work programme for the approved Woodland Strategy for Bradford District.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 31st March 2009 the EWMOSC resolved that the Council's Woodland Strategy be considered for inclusion in the work programme for the 2009/10 municipal year.
- 2.2 During December 2011 and January 2012 a consultation process was carried out and the strategy drafted. This was presented to EWMOSC in April 2012 and recommended to the Executive. A Woodland Strategy for Bradford District was formally adopted on 22nd June 2012.
- 2.3 The Committee requested an annual progress report
- 2.4 The Woodland Strategies five yearly review falls in 2017.

3 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS - DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

3.1 Underpinning Policy

The strategy identifies Planning, Resource Management and Participation as three key areas of work or approaches to secure the aspiration and aims as set out in the strategy. Ten policy areas were identified and these informed the ongoing projects and work streams

Policy Areas

1. Woodland Creation
2. Access
3. Landscape
4. Biodiversity
5. Climate Change
6. Participation
7. Wealth
8. Education
9. Recreation
10. Right Tree, Right Place

3.2 Headline Achievements

In 2016 a shift in operational focus from Woodland management to Tree management has necessarily been implemented. During 2017-18 and through to 2020 in response to resource constraints the focus is set to remain on Tree management in terms of safety inspection, recording and risk minimisation. However, woodland management continues. The overall balance between tree removal and tree planting remains heavily in favour of tree planting, despite the requirement to remove unsafe highway trees, which can attract a disproportionate amount of attention.

3.2.1 Woodland Creation

Woodland creation over the past year has been concentrated at the 11ha Dealburn Road site, Low Moor and 3ha of reinforcement planting and habitat protection at Railway Terrace/Bolland Street, Low Moor. Following the surrender of Riddlesden Golf Club lease, the land was registered for a "Woodland for Water" planting grant aimed at improving flood resilience, should no alternative use be forthcoming.

Running total of woodlands created will be 24ha by March 2017.

3.2.2 Woodland Management and Funding

Woodland Management Grant FSC Certification: The Council retained its Forestry Steward Ship Certification status and continues to manage its woodlands to the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard criteria. A further contribution of £14,888 towards management costs was received from the Forestry Commission.

Phytophthora ramorum, rhododendron clearance, St Ives: *P. ramorum* is the fungal blight causing widespread death in larch (a commercial crop), some oaks, sweet and horse chestnut and beech. The majority of outbreaks are to the north east of the district, however, Bradford falls in to Zone 1 (high) of the Forestry Commissions risk mapping. Evidence of infection has been found in rhododendron in St Ives. The Forestry Commission have agreed a grant of £115k to continue and complete the eradication of rhododendron ponticum across the estate over the next 2 years.

Tree and Woodland Development Fund: A capital account is being established to assemble funds for management and development of both trees and woodlands. For several years we have informally worked with individuals and groups to plant memorial trees and woodlands. A more formal scheme that includes commemorative trees and sponsorship of veteran trees and woodlands is being investigated.

3.2.3 Tree Management: Cyclical Inspection

2017 will be the third year of district wide cyclical safety inspections of the Councils tree and woodland estate. This now includes 18,000 highway trees on approximately 1,880 of streets and trees on 133 parks and recreation grounds, 24 cemeteries, 44 closed graveyards and 111 woodland sites.

Analysis of Highway tree works shows that, since 2010, 350 instructions to remove highway trees, estimated to be 400 individual trees, mainly due to poor condition have been issued at a total cost of £173,508. In approximately 30 cases it was possible to replant in the highway. Many more trees have been planted through section106 planning agreements, City Centre landscaping (City Park and Broadway) and in new woodlands (24ha hectares).

Reactive inspections and Emergency call out: In a 15 hour period beginning at 3:00am Wednesday 11th January Trees and Woodlands service with assistance from Area Parks staff, Countryside of way and local contractors responded to 125

tree failure incidents, including blocked roads, damage to buildings and vehicles. The post-storm clean up took 2 additional weeks.

Ash dieback, Chalara (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*): reports of Chalara have been made across the majority of the district. The fungal agent which causes Chalara affects ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) and is treated as a quarantine organism under national emergency measure and any suspected sighting must be reported via <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert> . However, the Council has not been served to date with any statutory Plant Health Notices requiring action, such as, removal. The main area of concern for the authority at present is the likely deterioration in condition and increased safety risk of infected trees as the disease reduces the vigour of the host.

3.2.4 **Community Collaboration:**

People Can: under the current funding settlement and budgets, community collaboration continues to play an increasingly important part in service provision and funding. Services now brought together in the Department of Place (Parks, Bereavement, Trees and Woodland, Countryside and Rights of Way, Neighbourhood Services) have collaborated with individuals and formal and informal community groups to manage and maintain both woodlands and other greenspaces. The effort during 2016-17 was largely carried out as part of the People Can initiative: a year long events driven campaign to develop collaborative practice. .

Community Asset Transfer: another strand to community participation and collaboration has started to emerge around greenspaces, including woodland. In some respects this is not an entirely new phenomenon as some woodland sites have been leased or managed by agreement for many years e.g. Low Wood - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Keighley Area Scouts; Ben Rhydding Gravel Pits - Wharfedale Naturalists. Some greenspace is now being disposed of through the formal Community Asset Transfer process, for example, Burley in Wharfedale Parish Council will manage green spaces within the parish from April 2017, with the exception of the tree stock at the present time. Community interest has been shown in Riddlesden Golf Club - Keighley Area Scouts and Buck Wood Cottages and Buck Wood - Inspired Neighbourhoods.

4. **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

By focusing on “core-business” and managing down customer service expectations, past budgets have been sufficient to sustain the service. 2017-18 budgets may require the service to absorb a saving of £40,000 or 10% of net budget. This undoubtedly presents a challenge to the service in terms of both reducing costs, managing down service provision and increasing revenue (charges, sales and grants).

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

Care needs to be exercised in ensuring that the level of budgetary savings offered up by the service do not prejudice the ability:-

- i) to maintain an adequate system of inspection and remedial action across the entire tree stock.
- ii) to deal with extreme weather conditions such as winter gales or floods

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

There are no legal issues specifically relating to this progress report.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

There are no Equality & Diversity Implications arising from this report

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Sustainability informs and underpins the entire Woodland Strategy

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Trees within woodlands, parks and recreation grounds provide communities with 'green lungs' which can naturally assist with the filtering of polluted air. Proactive maintenance of existing stock together with additional tree planting sequesters carbon as the woodlands matures.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union implications.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

This report is for information only

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to note the detail of the report and the actions taken to deliver the strategy during 2016-17.