

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Monday 11th January 2016

Report of: Service Director

Title: Tree Planting and Tree Management Service

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Richard Ennion, Environmental Improvement Manager and Guy Fishbourne, Commissioning Contracts Manager

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RECOMMENDATION

To note the report.

Summary

One Tree Per Child

The One Tree Per Child Bristol project is on track to deliver its tree planting and education targets by the end of the project in May 2016.

Other tree planting programmes

The council is delivering a citywide tree planting programme (outside One Tree Per Child) through the use of devolved Neighbourhood Partnership funds and corporate / private sponsorship.

Tree Management Service

The council's tree management service has been re-designed following budget reductions agreed in the 2013/ 14 medium term financial plan. The service is meeting its statutory duties where trees are being inspected. The risk management model is being reviewed to ensure that the service can meet its tree inspection targets. It is anticipated that this can be achieved within current resources.

The significant issues in the report are:

One Tree Per Child is planting 36,000 trees; one tree for every primary school aged child in the city. To date, 15,000 trees have been planted. Plans are in place to ensure that a further 21,000 trees will have been planted by the 31st March 2016.

One Tree Per Child has committed to educate all primary school aged children in Bristol about the benefits of trees. All 130 primary schools (public and independent schools) have committed to be part of the project and over 100 school assemblies have now taken place.

In addition to One Tree Per Child, over 60 trees citywide are due to be planted this winter in streets and green space funded by private and corporate sponsorship (noticeably a 3-year, £60k financial commitment from the University of Bristol).

The council has launched a new on-line tree sponsorship service which includes payment on-line; more than 50 trees have been sponsored through this scheme this year.

Several Neighbourhoods Partnerships have drawn down devolved s. 106 funds to allow community supported tree planting, including a £150k drawdown from Clifton, Cabot and Clifton East NP.

The council's tree management service has been re-organised in response to a £300k / year budget reduction in 2013/14. Through a range of measures, the council is meeting its statutory duties relating to the provision of trees, but further efficiencies are required if the service is to meet its targets for tree inspections. An alternative approach is due to be trialled in January 2016.

Policy

1. The relevant policy is the adopted Tree Management Policies which set out standards of service and tree-related statutory duties.

Consultation

2. Internal

None

3. External

None

Context

4. As per the section below.

Proposal

Tree Planting

5. The council is delivering the Mayoral initiative to plant one tree for every primary school child in Bristol to mark the city's status as European Green Capital 2015. One Tree Per Child Bristol is due to run until 31st May 2016. The project was formerly known as Tree Pips.
6. The project has committed to plant one tree for every primary school aged child in the city (4-11 years old): 36,000 children / 36,000 trees. Further, the project is teaching all primary school children about the importance of trees and involving them in tree planting, via organised events.
7. The project is on track to deliver the tree planting and education targets. 15,000 trees have been planted to date. 21,000 trees will be planted by the end of March 2016. The target is being reached through: distribution of free fruit trees (c. 13,000 will have been distributed); planting of woodland (c. 7 hectares / 17,000 trees); planting of specimen trees (2,015 trees) and hedgerow planting (making up the remaining numbers).
8. All 130 of Bristol's primary schools (state and independent) have agreed to be part of the project. Over 100 school assemblies have taken place and all schools will have received an education input / invitation to take part in tree planting by the end of March 2016.
9. The project has achieved significant input by partner organisations including: The Woodland Trust, Forest of Avon Trust, Avon Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSPB, TCV, Soil Association. Partners have taken the lead to deliver key tree planting events and subsidised / free trees and labour has been provided by The Woodland Trust and TCV (via Ovo) respectively.
10. The project has developed a significant volunteer input programme. Over 40 One Tree Per Child lead volunteers have been recruited, trained and each has committed up to 5-days of their time to the project. In addition, over 200 people have signed up as One Tree Per Child volunteers. The volunteer element of the project is being shared with the Cities of Service programme.

11. The project is actively involving business (local and national companies) in tree planting, attracting companies via their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. Examples include: Skanska, ASDA, Ovo, Raddison Blue, HSBC.
12. Over 50 tree planting events are planned through the period November to March 2016. Public events are being actively promoted. All events to date have been well supported and have been successful. The event on the 25th November in Whitchurch attracted significant national media appearing on BBC Breakfast, Sky New, ITN News and Made in Bristol, plus an article in the Bristol Post. A number of tree planting events are being highlighted by the BCC press team.
13. The project is working closely with John Dee the founder of One Tree Per Child and co-founder Olivia Newton-John. The aim of One Tree Per Child is to get millions of children planting millions of trees. A Bristol 'how to guide' has been circulated to UK leaders and OTPC is agreeing a strategy with the council to roll out an international movement based on the Bristol Model. Collaborative agreements have been signed with Chase Africa and Tree Aid (both having Bristol connections) taking OTPC to three African countries: Kenya, Mali and Ghana.
14. Discussions are ongoing to continue OTPC in Bristol beyond the current end date, which is May 2016. Subject to resources and acceptance a continuation project will engage all primary schools in education about trees, offer free fruit trees and plant trees with specific education year groups. The target is to plant 6,000 trees per year, essentially one tree for each child starting their school life each year.
15. In addition to One Tree Per Child, the council is delivering a citywide tree planting programme through use of devolved Neighbourhood Partnership funds and corporate / private sponsorship. A new on-line tree sponsorship service was launched in summer 2015 and has resulted in over 50 trees being sponsored at £295 / each. These are due to be planted this winter. In addition, the University of Bristol has committed £60k for tree planting in the city over the next three years', this represents the first significant organisational backing for tree planting and is a major success for the Tree Forum who brokered this arrangement. This funding will see 60 street trees planted this winter in six NP across the city.

Tree management

16. The council's tree management service was subject to a £300k / year budget reduction under the 2013/14 Medium Term Financial Plan. The

service was re-designed in response, including:

- Tree works limited to a statutory minimum service;
- A revised risk management and tree inspection strategy;
- Cost reductions achieved through a re-procured citywide arboricultural contract;
- Adoption of a unified and citywide tree management service, and
- Cessation in revenue funded tree planting.

17. The current citywide tree management budget is £500k / year, which is considered the minimum necessary for the council to maintain its statutory duties relating to the provision of trees.
18. The technical client staff consists of 6.5 fte officers (BG9-BG 11). One post is currently vacant and is being recruited.
19. Categories of council land included in the unified tree management service include trees in the Highway, Parks, Housing public space and Schools (via Trading with Schools as a consultancy service). SLAs / re-charge arrangements are in place to fund such arrangements. Negotiations are ongoing to incorporate other categories of trees within a unified service, principally trees within Cemeteries, Docks, City Development and the un-adopted highway. Such trees are currently managed on a reactive basis.
20. The risk management / tree inspection strategy introduced in 2014 is being reviewed to address slippage in the proportion of trees being inspected against target. A Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) approach is being trialled from January 2016. It is anticipated that with greater efficiency associated with this methodology it will be possible to meet targets for tree inspections within current resources.

Other Options Considered

21. None

Risk Assessment

22. The report is an update.