

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 16 th January 2018
Report Subject	Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning & Environment)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy examines the opportunities for tree planting, how this will be done and provides a best practice approach to the management of existing urban trees and woodland, including community and partnership working in its delivery. The strategy will contribute towards the Welsh Government's goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the 2017/18 Council Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members agree the vision, objectives and actions set out in the Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE URBAN TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY
1.01	The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a specific duty on public bodies, including local authorities, to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience. More recently, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 has put in place the legislation needed to manage Wales' natural resources in a more proactive, sustainable and joined-up manner. One of the five key priorities for the Flintshire Council Plan is for a Green Council that enhances the natural environment and promotes access to green spaces.
1.02	The planting and sustainable management of urban trees clearly meets with the duties under these Acts and the Welsh Government's overarching goal of taking care of the environment. The Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy provides a method for managing trees and woodlands more sustainably to meet the Welsh Government's and Council's aspirations.
1.03	The strategy examines the opportunities for tree planting, how this will be done and provides a best practice approach to the management of existing trees.
1.04	The strategy sets out an integrated approach to tree planting on all types of council land and recognises that communities who make use of public land should be engaged in the decision making process, and have the opportunity to participate in tree planting. Through planning policies and working in partnership the council can also promote tree planting on land it does not own and where expedient, protect trees so that they cannot be removed. This is also covered in the strategy.
1.05	The strategy will last for 15 years and is the same length of time as that used for the emerging Flintshire Local Development Plan. Whilst it is a short period in terms of a tree's lifespan, it is sufficiently long enough for planted trees to become established and for their contribution to the urban landscape to be recognised.
1.06	The strategy's vision; <i>'To have a diverse and resilient tree canopy cover throughout Flintshire's towns that is appreciated, managed sustainably, provides multiple benefits to people and the environment, and enhances biodiversity.'</i>
1.07	To support this overarching vision the strategy sets out the following target <i>Strategy target - To increase urban canopy cover to 18% by 2032</i>
1.08	To deliver the vision, the strategic objectives are; 1. Increase the amount of tree planting 2. Manage trees sustainably 3. Manage the risks associated with trees

	4. Promote biodiversity 5. Work in partnership
1.09	The strategy provides a timetable for delivery.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Capital funding, through planning obligations, has been secured to carry out a programme of tree planting in the first three to five years of the strategy, in accordance with the strategy target and Objective 1. The capital funding is ring fenced and cannot be used for the ongoing management of the council's existing trees. The resources required to plan, consult and implement planting will be met using existing staff resources.
2.02	The various options for additional capital funding have been explored in Chapter 9 and could be met through grants and/or sponsorship. At the time of the strategy being in its final draft the Wales Government has announced funding under the Green Infrastructure Capital Fund for the period 2017-2021.
2.03	Ongoing maintenance will be met under the council's existing grounds maintenance budgets. The resource implications of managing young and early mature trees are comparable to managing mown grass, and in the case of woodland are lower.
2.04	Objectives 2 to 5 are policy orientated and do not require capital funding to be achieved although there will be resource implications for officers that will be met using existing resources.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Both documents have gone through an internal consultation with key officers, including the Chief Officer Team. Natural Resources Wales, which undertook the urban canopy cover study, on which the strategy is based, have also provided detailed comments and fully support it.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The strategy will contribute towards Welsh Government's well-being goals and no anti-poverty, environment or equality risks have been identified.
4.02	The strategy will be implemented by conservation staff however its success will be reliant on the support of other stakeholders, particularly the departments of the council that maintain land.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Urban Tree and Woodland Strategy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Tom Woodall, Access & Natural Environment Manager Telephone: 01352 703902 E-mail: tom.woodall@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body. NRW were formed in April 2013, largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions.