

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> <b>21 April 2021</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund – Grant Award	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Steve Evans City Environment	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	No	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment	
<b>Originating service</b>	Planning/ Public Health	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Ric Bravery Tel Email	Strategic Health Lead (Planning) 07773 189238 <a href="mailto:Ric.Bravery@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Ric.Bravery@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	City Environment Leadership Team	13 April 2021

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**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Council accepting the grant offer under the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Director of Governance, to sign the Grant Agreement and any other required agreements to enable to grant to be accepted.
3. Approve establishment of a revenue budget of £129,500 for the project.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve acceptance of the grant offer of £129,500 from the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund to fund the planting of 10 hectares of woodland in the City Council's parks and open spaces during the 2021/2022 planting season.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Tree planting initiatives in the City support the aims of both Wolverhampton's Tree and Woodland Strategy, approved January 2020, and Climate Emergency Declaration, July 2019. Trees provide a broad range of health, environmental and other benefits including helping to combat climate change.
- 2.2 The Council has made a successful bid to the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund to plant 10 hectares of woodland in the City Council's parks and open spaces in winter 2021/2022. The award of £129,500 would be used to pay for the purchase of 20,000 trees, tree protection, tools and equipment, maintenance and the payment of contractors to plant nine hectares. The remaining one hectare, or two thousand trees, would be planted by volunteers from the community including ward councillors, school children, community groups and individuals, subject to COVID-19 regulations applicable at the time.
- 2.3 The bid was made as a result of a direct invitation from the Woodland Trust. The Grant Agreement places a restriction on the sites which are planted, preventing disposal and requiring the Council to retain the trees for that period. The exact length of that period is currently under negotiation but will be a maximum of 15 years. This restriction is considered reasonable as the Woodland Trust understandably wishes to fund the planting of trees which would be retained long-term and not removed after a few years.

## **3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.**

- 3.1 Work is ongoing to survey and identify the sites where planting would take place. The intention is to plant in blocks across six to eight parks and open spaces, with a focus on the parts of the City with lower tree cover, higher levels of deprivation and which would benefit most from tree planting.

## **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 Option one would be to not accept the grant and therefore not plant the 10 hectares of woodland. This would not incur any costs but equally would provide no benefits to the City. It would also not progress the aims and action plans of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy and Climate Emergency Declaration.
- 4.2 Option two would be to accept the grant and plant the 10 hectares of woodland. This would progress the aims and action plans of the Council's Tree and Woodland Strategy and Climate Emergency Declaration.

## **5.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

5.1 The benefits to the Council of participating in the project are:

- Climate change adaption and mitigation.
- Improved health and wellbeing of participants and local residents.
- Potential reduction in surface water flooding, noise and air pollution in the areas of planting.
- Improved biodiversity.
- Reputational gain from taking part in an innovative pilot project.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

6.1 The grant award is for the full revenue costs of the project of £129,500, including maintenance for the early years. Match funding will be provided through staff time in administering the project; this will be done within existing budgets. The costs of this service will be monitored as part of the Council's quarterly revenue budget monitoring and reporting processes.

[SB/06042021/K]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

7.1 Acceptance of the grant requires the Council to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Woodland Trust. The Council may be subject to clawback if it does not comply with the terms of the agreement, which requires a restriction on disposal of the sites for no more than 15 years after planting of the trees. The Council will also be required to enter into all necessary legal transactions including a back to back grant agreement with any contractor appointed to undertake the work.

[LMC/06042021/P]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

8.1 The planting will be focussed on the areas around the City with lower tree cover, higher levels of deprivation and which would benefit most from tree planting. The project will benefit some of the most disadvantaged groups in our community, including people with protected characteristics.

## **9.0 All other implications**

9.1 Planting will take place on designated open spaces that are managed by the Council for the long-term health and wellbeing of the City's residents. There will be a restriction in favour of The Woodland Trust placed on the site(s) where the tree planting has taken place but, on balance, the benefits to the community outweighs the risks in relation to the Council's operations or plans being restricted for the agreed period.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 [Wolverhampton Tree and Woodland Strategy](#) - Cabinet - 22 January 2020.