Tree Planting Update

Committee name	Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee
Officer reporting	Stuart Hunt – Green Spaces Service Manager
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The purpose of this report is to inform Members about tree planting within the borough.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee notes the update set out in the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Hillingdon – Tree City of the World

Hillingdon is one of only 9 other UK councils to receive Tree Cities of the World status, which recognises five high standards for urban forest management.

The prestigious international award will see Hillingdon join a new global network of cities spanning 17 countries across Europe, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand, dedicated to adopting the most successful approaches to managing urban trees and woodland.

Trees and woodlands

London's urban forest and woodlands should be protected and maintained, and new trees and woodlands should be planted in appropriate locations in order to increase the extent of London's urban forest – the area of London under the canopy of trees.

(London Plan 2021)

Trees in urban areas are known to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. The tree canopy can:

Reduce the urban heat island effect by shading and evapotranspiration

Reduce pollution by intercepting particulates and absorbing greenhouse gases

Reduce flooding by intercepting rainfall.

Trees in urban parks have been found to improve physical and mental human health, by

offering an environment for exercise and reducing levels of stress. Furthermore, the incorporation of trees into urban development plans can help to improve the aesthetics and environmental quality of an urban area which can lead to increased inward investment and the provision of jobs. **(Forest Research)**

Current Operational Guidelines – Tree Planting

Council initiated planting will prioritise larger growing shade providing trees scaling down to smaller ornamental trees where larger trees are not suitable. (Right Tree Right Place - London Trees and Woodland Framework). The council will establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and disease, and the effects of climate change that can threaten entire species. We aim to plant more trees than we remove on a yearly basis - with an emphasis on areas with lower canopy cover and higher NO2 levels.

To strive for the provision of space for planting trees on development and privately owned sites, selecting species for the site.

Number of trees planted:

Trees are currently planted to replace trees which must be removed and at the request of Members and residents. It is our aim as a minimum to plant at least one new tree for every tree removed. Members of the tree team and wider green spaces team also suggest locations within parks to enhance current tree stock.

2015/16 – 323

2016/17 – 445

2017/18 – 564

2018/19 – 601

2019/20 – 469 – Field End Recreation Ground - Woodland planting 4500 (Trees for cities*) 2020/21 - 601 - Standard tree planting in highways and parks - 1500 - Whips - New approach to highway tree belts - Long Lane (Trees for Cities*) 100 - Sukura Cherry Tree Project - 3000 - Whips - Colham Green (Trees for Cities*) 37 - Standards - Colham Green (Trees for Cities*) 12 Fruit tree orchard - Colham Green (Trees for Cities*) - 1000 trees provided for our residents to plant. **A total of 6250 trees planted with only 215 removed for various reasons (e.g. dead, dying or dangerous**)

*In 2020 Hillingdon entered into a strategic partnership with ‘Trees for Cities’ which proposes to provide a variety of community based tree planting and greening projects to increase engagement and volunteering from local communities to improve existing open spaces and encourage cleaner air. Through encouraging work via the Trees for Cities Corporate Volunteering Programme, this will provide support to the Green Spaces team with the management and maintenance of existing woodlands, parks and green spaces and help to support Hillingdon's Local Environmental Plan. With this multi-year agreement in place, it is expected that this will then increase opportunities for grant and corporate funding and leverage a further £75,000 (£25,000 per year) through Trees for Cities-led and joint approaches.

Free Trees

1000 free saplings have been made available for residents to plant in their own gardens and work places.

Pollution barriers at schools

A study by the Mayor of London reported on the pollution levels experienced at school premises throughout London and highlighted those where the levels of pollution were a concern. Air quality concern was defined as where modelling had indicated the playing areas within the school premises were above the limit value set to protect health ie 40ug/m3 annual mean nitrogen dioxide. None of the schools in Hillingdon were identified on this list in regards to being subjected to levels of pollution above the recognised health limits.

Whilst Hillingdon pupils, in terms of predicted levels of pollution within the outside playing areas, may not be in same situation imposed by the high levels of pollution as found in schools in places such as Inner London, reducing exposure to pollution in general has proven health benefits, especially for younger children. The REESPOC recommended that reducing public exposure, especially for children, should be a key priority of the Council's Air Quality Action Plan therefore the Council will continue to take action to further reduce exposure and improve air quality around our schools.

Working alongside other aspects such as the promotion of active travel for school children, the raising awareness of air pollution via the provision of education programmes and the implementation of no idling zones outside schools, the Council has undertaken to consider the installation of pollution barriers and to improve the coverage of green infrastructure, including the use of hedges and trees, to provide further protection from exposure to pollution at the school site itself and complement other measures being undertaken to help provide a healthier environment at the school premises.

The use of green infrastructure has been highlighted in a recent report published by the Mayor of London, namely 'Right green infrastructure, right place" (April 2019) which provides best practice on using green infrastructure to protect people from air pollution. The report states "there is no "one size fits all intervention" (and the effects are highly localised) but the right green infrastructure in the right place can reliably reduce exposure to air pollution". The key guidelines are:

a) A hedge or green wall between vehicles and people can as much as halve pollution in their immediate wake

b) A dense avenue of trees can provide effective protection from polluted air above and create a clean corridor for travellers; and

c) A combination of hedge and dense line of trees can provide a taller vegetation barrier, offering protection over a greater distance downwind.

Whilst the provision of pollution barriers themselves do not reduce pollution from the sources that cause the emissions eg road traffic, they can be relevant for consideration where school playgrounds/playing fields are in close proximity to pollution from roads. This is especially

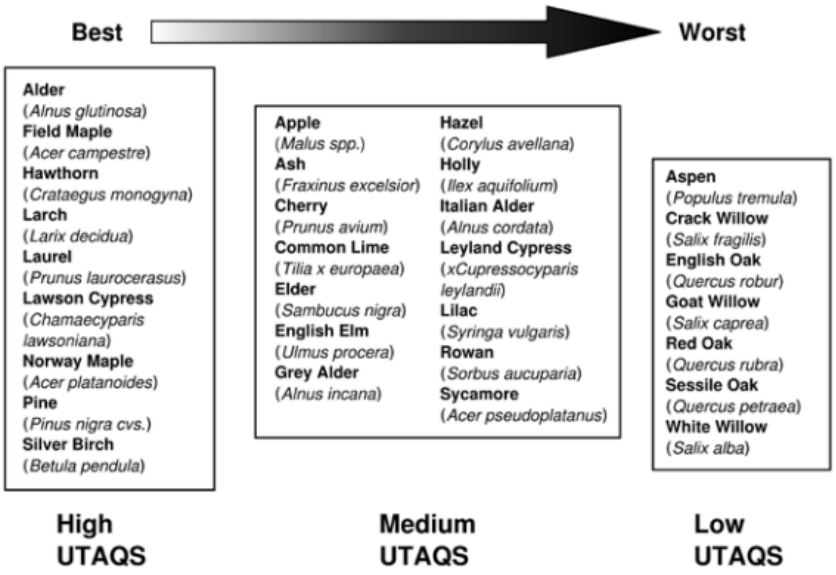
important at primary schools given the vulnerability of younger children to air pollution, therefore, even where schools are in generally less polluted areas there are benefits to be gained by reducing the exposure of young children during their recreational times to pollution from nearby traffic.

A study by King's College London found levels of nitrogen dioxide were reduced by 23 per cent when a green wall was placed between a busy road and a school playground.

The Council is currently undertaking a review of all schools to assess the potential for pollution barriers and the planting of more trees at school premises.

In regards to the specific use of tree species, the Council is guided by information such as "Urban Trees and Air Quality", (Woodland Trust). This document ranks tree species with an Urban Tree Air Quality Score (UTAQ) from high benefit to local air quality to lower benefit. As an example, a planting scheme undertaken at Cherry Lane Primary school includes the use of trees and those chosen were Hawthorn (Crataegus species) high UTAQ and Rowan (Sorbus species) medium UTAQ.

See below for the extract on the choice of trees.



Source - Trees Improve Urban Air Quality, Woodland Trust

Since the commencement of works we have now planted over 1800 hedge plants, 70 trees and over 500m of privacy screening across multiple schools.

Future Plans/Strategy

For the future, together with the Council's Planning Service we are looking at developing a Tree strategy linking to an urban forest plan and seeking opportunities to use S106 funding and other available grants to further increase the tree canopy in the borough.

Extract from Draft Strategic Climate Action Plan (March 2021 Cabinet)

The London Borough of Hillingdon is already one of the greenest boroughs in London. In terms of climate change these areas are of great importance. They act as carbon sinks. This means they take carbon dioxide and other nasty pollutants out of the air and replace it with clean air. They will continue to play a key role in helping us manage its carbon emissions. All natural vegetation performs a role as a carbon sink but trees are particularly important. The tree canopy coverage across London is continually under threat which is why we are seeking to protect our own trees where it can but also embark on a journey with large scale tree planting ambitions to increase the tree canopy coverage across the borough. This is not a long-term aspiration, this is already happening as demonstrated by our recent concerted tree planting campaign.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Tree planting and other landscaping planting delivers significant benefits to residents in terms of their mental health and improvements to air quality.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.