

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE - TREE PLANTING

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Stuart Hunt – Head of Green Spaces Sophie Coughlan- Arboricultural Manager
Papers with report	Nil
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Council's recent and future tree planting projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Residents' Services Select Committee:

- 1. Notes the Tree Planting update; and**
- 2. Suggests any specific areas/ locations where Members / residents would like to see more trees to be considered further.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Tree planting season runs between November and March each winter.

It is the Council's aim to plant more trees each year than are removed to ensure an overall net gain in Hillingdon's tree canopy cover. Where appropriate officers try and replant within the location a tree has been removed. Depending on why a tree has been removed this is not always possible but officers will then aim for the same street or leave the area vacant for a few years before a new tree is planted.

Table showing the total number of trees (Standards and Whips) planted and removed each financial year; the significant increase in numbers planted signifies the start of the Council's partnership with Trees for Cities.

Financial Year	Number of trees removed	Total trees planted (Standards and Whips)
18/19	160	601
19/20	186	469
20/21	213	14288
21/22	193	11655
22/23	90	17295
23/24	55	8378

Trees for Cities

The Council has a three-year partnership agreement with Trees for Cities (2023-26) - this is the second partnership agreement with them.

In the first partnership agreement (2020-23) officers planted a total of 23,429 standard trees and whips within eight sites

- 2020/21: £103,125: Of this, Hillingdon contributed £25,000 and Trees for Cities raised £78,125
- 2021/22: £186,379: Of this, Hillingdon contributed £85,000 and Trees for Cities raised £101,379

As part of this agreement the Council provides a list of sites it is felt would benefit from mass tree planting and Trees for Cities design a planting scheme, consult local residents, supply the trees and sundries required, carry out tree planting days with the local community and corporate volunteers, provide summer maintenance (watering) for the first three years and replace any that have failed.

The first partnership agreement was seen as a great success and as a result the second was signed with planting between 2023 and 2026.

In 2023/24 planting season officers focussed on two sites; Harvey Road Open Space, off West End Road and Court Park, with a total of 7,984 standard trees and whips planted.

Officers are currently assessing parks and open spaces for next winter's project and welcome Members' suggestions.

Trees for Streets

Launched on 1st September 2021 the Council's partnership agreement with Trees for Streets enables residents and companies to sponsor the planting of trees within Hillingdon's parks and streets.

Trees for Streets are asked to sponsor £230 or £320 depending on whether they wish to carry out the watering each summer. (These figures are based on the average cost from 2020 of planting within grass). The Council has had multiple requests for trees in hard areas (currently tarmac/ paving) and for these it covers the cost of the new tree pit (£283 per tree pit 2023/24).

Since its launch the Council has had sponsorships for 276 new trees from residents and companies spread throughout the Borough.

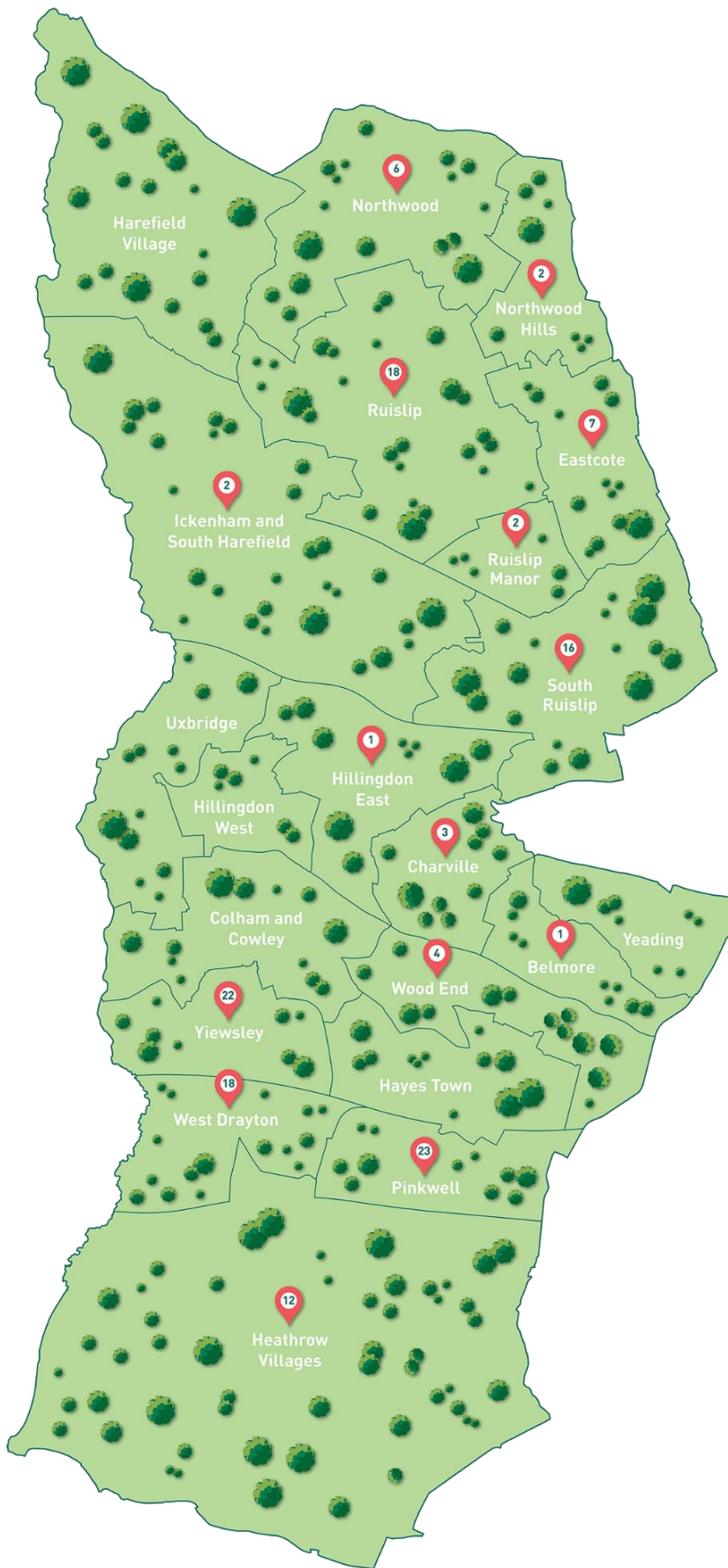


Figure 1: sponsorship distribution in 2022/23

Grounds Maintenance

The Council's in house Grounds Maintenance team plant on average 500 trees each winter. This consists of replacement and new locations, Trees for Streets sponsors and in house projects (e.g. Chrysalis).

Officers have been planting with the assistance of Grounds Maintenance now for four winters and find that this provides more control in terms of quality of tree stock, planting standards and flexibility on planting dates compared to using the Council's term tree contractor. It also enables the term tree contractor to focus on the tree maintenance work.

This summer was the first year officers also brought the summer maintenance in house. They are always looking for ways to improve and streamline the tree planting process. To this end they are investigating whether it will be feasible and cost effective to train staff to create the new tree pits within Hard Standing instead of the Council's Highways contractors completing the work.

Tree Species

Officers work on the principle of "Right Tree, Right Place", this means that smaller species are planted in narrow roads where space is limited and larger species where space allows, for example in parks. Officers aim for a diverse mixture and this year planted 45 different species. They plant staples such as Cherry and Field Maples which do well, and residents enjoy the cherry blossom. However, each year officers also choose a few different species that other London Boroughs or research has suggested will do well in the changing urban environment, such as Hibiscus. These are monitored to see how well they establish before a decision is made as to whether these should be planted again.

Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF)

Officers were successful in their bid to the WCAF. This is revenue support for additional staff / consultants required to accelerate plans for tree planting providing funding for 2023-2025.

Officers are using the first lot of money to complete a project with Trees for Cities and Treeconomics to map the current canopy cover and identify sites for new highways trees in areas of low canopy cover, high deprivation and poor air quality. This when completed will provide officers with a greater understanding of the spread of trees throughout the Borough and can be used as evidence when applying for other grants. It will also enable officers to have a more focussed new location planting plan.

Other Funding

Currently other funding sources are underutilised due to staff resources; now with two tree officers there are more resources to fully explore these options.