

Report of the Executive Director

FREE TREES1. Purpose of report

To advise Members of updates relating to the scheme to provide free trees to Broxtowe residents.

2. Background and detail

At the meeting of this Committee on 22 November 2021 Members noted the success of the 2021 scheme to provide 500 native trees as part of the target to plant 2,500 trees across the borough in line with the tree planting strand in the Climate Change Strategy and Green Futures Programme. The scheme has been running for 3 years with details of the previous schemes provided in the Appendix. Given the success of the scheme members asked for a report to explore how the ongoing demand for trees could be met in 2022/23.

3. Financial implications

The cost to increase the number of free trees provided from 500 to 750 native trees is £3,562.50. The estimated cost of distributing the trees on 3 days in January 2023 is £2,925. This total cost of £6,487.50 can be contained in the 2022/23 revenue budget allocated for Tree Management.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that 750 native trees be provided and that options for sponsorship of the scheme be explored.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Previous Years Schemes

YEAR	THEME	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	COMMENTS
Autumn 2019	Fruit Trees	882	First year of the scheme. This together with the fruit tree concept led to a big demand. The advertising campaign for the scheme ran for 2 weeks to try and get an even distribution of applications across the Borough. We were offering 250 trees for collection in the North and 250 in the South of the Borough, before it was closed to new applicants
Autumn 2020	Ornamental Trees	1036	The scheme was again very popular. The scheme ran for 3 weeks for applications before it was closed for new applicants, hence the increased numbers
Autumn 2021	Native Trees	577	To avoid the disappointment of unsuccessful applicants once the 500 tree target had been met the scheme was closed. This was in 10 days

From this it can be seen that there is a strong demand for “free” trees with all tree themes being popular.

One suggestion made by Members was that rather than provide free trees, residents be asked to provide a part payment contribution. Given that the trees cost between £4.75 and £8.75 depending on the type of tree, the administration costs involved in recovering relatively small part payments from residents could not be justified. It is also considered that by taking away the “free” element of the scheme its popularity may be diluted.

As an alternative to charging for the trees and help maximise the budget available then the possibility of sponsoring the scheme could be explored. Options would include local garden centres and large corporate companies keen to promote their “green” credentials.

In order to maximise the number of free trees available the most cost effective approach is to provide native trees as opposed to fruit trees or ornamental trees.

Cost per Tree

Fruit tree £7.25

Ornamental tree £8.75

Native tree £4.75

All trees are approximately 1.2m tall. At this size the trees create immediate impact and quickly grow on. This size has proven to be well received. Anything smaller loses its impact, anything larger becomes significantly more expensive and creates issues with delivery and storage.

The revenue budget for tree planting was increased in 2020/21 by £11,500 to help achieve the tree planting target. This budget has been used to fund the Free Tree Scheme.

The table below provides costs for the 2022/23 Free Tree Scheme.

	Projected 2022 cost per tree	Number of free trees to be offered
		750
Fruit trees	£7.25	£5,437.50
Ornamental trees	£8.75	£6,562.50
Native trees	£4.75	£3,562.50

In addition to the cost of the trees there is the cost to deliver these to residents. This has been estimated at £2,925.00 for 750 trees

These costs can be contained within the revenue budget for tree planting.

Way Forward

To increase the number of trees offered and maximise the use of the budget allocation it is proposed that in 2022/23 there is an allocation of 750 native trees for the Free Tree Scheme. This will cost £6,487.50 including delivery. This is an increase of £2,137.50 on the current year's scheme. To help offset this cost the possibility of obtaining sponsorship for the Free Tree Scheme will be explored. In addition, to emphasise how the scheme links to the Climate Change Strategy and Green Futures Programme, options to link applications for free trees as an incentive to join the Green Rewards scheme will be developed. As part of the publicity for the scheme, residents will be encouraged to plant trees in their own gardens irrespective of their success in obtaining a free tree. The importance of the collective approach to Climate Change and the benefits that new tree planting brings will be emphasised.