Transport and Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 13 January 2015

Tree for Every Child Scheme

Item number	7.15
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to respond to a request from the Transport and Environment Committee of 14 January 2014, in relation to the 'Trees in the City' Policy & Action Plan, and specifically the Tree for Every Child proposal.

Additional information requested by Committee on trees in proximity to housing, and the sustainable disposal of felled trees, is also contained within this report.

Links

Coalition pledges	P33, P48, P50
Council outcomes	CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1, SO2, SO4

Report

Tree for Every Child Scheme

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee notes;

1.1   the progress in developing the Tree for Every Child scheme; and

1.2   that a further update report will be brought back to the committee in Autumn 2015.

Background

2.1   At its meeting of 14 January 2014, the Transport and Environment Committee approved the 'Trees in the City' Policy and Action Plan.

2.2   The policies and actions within 'Trees in the City' aim to guide the management of public trees and woodlands in Edinburgh, and to prioritise resources towards key actions.

2.3   The consultation on the 'Trees in the City' Policy and Action Plan also considered the issues raised in a motion by Councillor Booth, approved by the Transport and Environment Committee at its meeting on 27 August 2013.

2.4   The following motion by Councillor Booth was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16:

"Committee:

a)   Notes that tree planting has educational, health, well-being and environmental benefits;

b)   Notes that every year many trees are lost due to development, disease and age; Transport and Environment Committee – 27 August 2013 Page 16 of 16

c)   Notes that according to information from the General Registers of Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Directorate, around 5,600 children are born or adopted in Edinburgh each year;

d)   Notes the success of "Plant a Tree for Every Child" schemes in many other parts of the world including in many towns and cities of the United States, as well as in towns and cities of Wales and England;

e)   Agrees to receive a report on the costs, benefits and feasibility of establishing a city-wide scheme to plant a tree for every child born or

adopted in Edinburgh each year, including the feasibility of partnership working to deliver this."

Decision;

    a) To approve the terms of the motion and that the issues raised would be considered as part of the overall consultation on the Tree and Woodland Action Plan.

    b) To note that a report would be submitted to the Committee in 2 cycles which would include details of associated revenue and capital costs."

2.5 The Report to Committee on 14 January 2014, 'Trees in the City - Finalised Policy and Action Plan', discharged the motion by including an analysis of the likely costs, benefits and delivery models of a 'Tree for Every Child' scheme.

2.6 At its meeting on 14 January 1014, Committee requested that:

- The Director of Services for Communities investigates the possibility of accessing external funding to implement a 'Tree for Every Child' scheme. and explore other options taking such a scheme forward;

- Contact is made with the Welsh Government to draw on their experience of setting up the Welsh 'Tree for Every Child' scheme;

- Agreement that revenue and capital funding for 'Tree for Every Child' scheme in Edinburgh be considered as part of the budget process;

- A further report identifying any particular areas of the city where problems have been identified in relation to trees in close proximity to housing;

- Officers to include in the action plan, reference to the sustainable disposal of felled trees.

2.7 This report provides an update on the progress of these investigations.

Main report

A Tree for Every Child

3.1 'A Tree for Every Child' involves the planting of a tree for every baby born in a particular city or part of the country, and is a variant of 'Plant a Tree' schemes. These have been growing in popularity in a number of different countries across the world as a means of raising awareness of climate change and combating carbon emissions. Many 'Plant a Tree' schemes operate on a self funding basis through donations and sponsorship.

3.2 There are a number of publicly funded 'Plant a Tree' schemes including the City of New York's 'Million Trees NYC' project. This aims to plant one million street trees through a combination of planting by the city authority, providing trees free of charge to owners to plant outside their properties, and through requiring developers to plant trees as part of any new development. In the UK, the Mayor

of London's office is running a scheme to plant 10,000 street trees in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and Groundwork London. The Welsh Government launched its 'Plant' scheme in 2008, which aims to create new woodlands and a national forest by planting a sapling for every new baby born or adopted in Wales.

3.3   A city's tree population is not static. Many publicly-owned trees have to be removed because they become decayed and are rendered unsafe. Edinburgh is still partially dependent on trees planted in Victorian times for its treescape, and these are becoming increasingly elderly.

3.4   New trees need to be planted every year to make good losses. At present, although planting is carried out on a site-by-site basis, funded from Parks and Greenspace Capital allocation (where possible), or as part of site management plans. There is currently no overarching approach or budget to support tree planting.

3.5   The total number of trees felled/removed over the past 4 years is 3,892; an average of 972 per year. The total number of trees planted over the same 4 year period is approximately 800.

3.6   Over the past three years the Council has planted an average of 268 trees per year, far fewer than the number of trees it fells. This number is likely to be further limited in future years due to significantly reduced capital and revenue budgets. As detailed in 'Trees in the City', urban trees are a key component of the sustainable city of the future, and it is appropriate that the planting of trees be linked symbolically with the birth of future citizens.

3.7   Around 5,600 children are born or adopted in Edinburgh each year, which would be an appropriate number of trees to be planted in the city each year to sustain current tree numbers.

Planting locations would include streets, parks, gardens, schools, woodlands, and amenity land. The precise specification would vary from site to site, and the availability of sites will vary from year to year. For example, trees planted in parks tend to be larger and therefore more expensive at around £300 each. Street trees could cost substantially more depending on whether pavements need to be excavated, but a figure of £1000 per tree would be useful for budgeting. Trees planted in woodlands or schools would be smaller, costing less than £5 each, and are capable of being planted by adult volunteers, children, and young people.

3.8   An illustration of what could be achieved in a typical year is:

- 15 extra-heavy standard trees in parks and gardens – mixed species;
- 50 street trees – selected species and varieties;

- 5435 whips/saplings in woodlands, schools, gardens, and other green spaces – predominantly native trees.

3.9   Edinburgh's 'A Tree for Every Child' initiative could begin with an event coinciding with National Tree Week, with the participation of communities and the engagement of partners such as the Woodland Trust. National Tree Week is organised by the Tree Council and is celebrated across the UK. It provides a focus for communities and schools to organise their own planting events. Normally it is held during the last week of November each year.

3.10   It will not be feasible to have each tree tagged with a child's name or otherwise individually associated with a particular person. The administrative burden of managing such a scheme would be extremely onerous, and it would be impossible to offer certainty to parents or children on individual tree health or survival. If the scheme were to proceed, it is proposed that the tree planting is presented as a communal activity, in which the future benefits will be shared by all.

Possibilities for External Funding and Options for Taking the Scheme Forward

3.11   Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust has been asked to consider how a third-party fundraising initiative might operate, and has recommended that a professionally-branded campaign aimed at the general public with high visibility, and with a very clear Edinburgh focus, would be successful in encouraging businesses to offer financial backing. There would need to be a sliding scale of donation amounts / funding packages, and a very clear way that companies would be able to benefit in terms of publicity in return for their sponsorship.

3.12   In brief, the project would raise money for a dedicated fund for the 'Tree for Every Child' scheme, from which the Council (and others) could apply for resources to plant trees each year. The project would need a professional marketing campaign, requiring investment upfront. To this end, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust has already secured £15,000 to cover:

- Marketing and design costs to produce professional imagery, messages and branding that appeal to a corporate audience;
- Development of a business plan and marketing strategy;
- Website, social media and advertising;
- Engagement and networking with the target audience.

3.13   Proposed next steps are:

- Draw up a brief and commission a creative agency to devise the brand campaign material;
- Work up a business plan to finalise the costs and different prices of the packages offered;
- Work up a marketing strategy;

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- Set a high-profile launch – ideally by Spring 2015; and
- Plan some initial photo opportunities / media opportunities during the 2015 tree-planting season.

Experience of the Welsh Government

3.14 The initial idea for its scheme came from a schoolgirl who wrote a letter to her Welsh Assembly member. The assembly decided it was a good idea and launched the scheme on 1 January 2008.

3.15 Birth information is data protected so requires prior agreement to contact parents directly. The Welsh Government has an agreement in place with the Statistics Office which handles all the birth data for Wales each month. The Statistics Office runs checks on the data for the Welsh Government and then issues a standard letter and certificate directly from their reprographics department.

3.16 The average birth rate for Wales is currently 35,000 a year. This requires the Welsh Government to have sites available for planting this many trees each year. None of the trees are identified but parents are informed where the tree is planted, or will be planted.

3.17 The main objectives of the project are:
- Plant a tree for every child born or adopted in Wales;
- Send out a certificate and information about the tree and its location to parents;
- Allow open access to the new woodland sites for recreation; and
- Connect young children and families back to the environment.

3.18 The current overall budget for supporting the initiative is around £300,000 per year.

Agreement that funding be considered as part of the budget process

3.19 The 2014 – 2015 capital programme has been re-profiled and now includes £75,000 for tree planting on Council land (mainly Premier Parks). Any funding approved for 2015-16 and beyond will be allocated to the 'Tree for Every Child' proposal outlined in this report.

Identify particular areas of the city relating to tree problems in close proximity to housing

3.20 The process of identifying areas of the city with particular problems relating to trees in close proximity to houses was investigated. Several limitations were identified:

- The City of Edinburgh Council does not hold a full record of all trees within its ownership. The Council currently holds data for 55,000 individual trees;

- The Forestry Service database for recording trees, 'Ezytreev' does not record housing data and therefore cannot be interrogated to identify trees close to housing.

3.21　The number of enquiries received by the Forestry Service between October 2013 and October 2014 totalled 1,191. Further analysis of this figure shows that 760 of these related to light restriction, pruning requests and telephone, television and satellite interference. The largest number of enquiries (697) were for pruning. None of this data can be further interrogated to ascertain whether the request related to branches overhanging a road, cycle path etc. or whether the tree was in close proximity to a house.

3.22　The i-Tree Eco report 2011estimates that Edinburgh has a total of 638,000 trees, a large proportion of which are the direct responsibility of the Council. If the annual enquiry rate relating to light restriction, pruning request, telephone, TV and satellite interference was scaled up to take into account the total estimated tree stock likely to be in proximity to housing and other man-made structures, this would equate to the Forestry Service responding to some 1,935 enquiries per year.

3.23　It is estimated that this would result in a 40% increase in works orders created on a yearly basis, which would require an additional £265,000 budget to administer and carry out the related tree works generated.

Include in the action plan reference to the sustainable disposal of felled trees

3.24　Reference to the sustainable disposal of felled trees has been included in the final 'Trees in the City' action plan, as detailed below.

3.25　Policy 10: Where practicable, all arisings (logs, branches etc) from tree works in high amenity areas will be removed and used in an environmentally sustainable manner. In woodland situations however, standing dead wood, logs and chippings may often be left on site, where this can be done safely, to enhance biodiversity and increase wildlife habitats.

Measures of success

4.1　The principle measure of success would be the number of trees planted annually in relation the number of children born; currently estimated at 5600 per year. In reality, the actual number of trees planted would depend on the level of income secured annually from commercial sponsorship and other sources.

4.2　A further measure of success is that more trees are being planted within the City of Edinburgh, alleviating the net annual decline currently prevailing.

Financial impact

5.1   The original estimated capital cost for the 'Tree for Every Child' proposal was £100,000 per annum, a sum that was not currently budgeted for. However, discussions with the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust indicate that a scheme involving commercial sponsorship could be largely self-financing, and as such, be delivered at no additional cost to Council revenue or capital budgets.

5.2   Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust has estimated that it would welcome the City of Edinburgh Council providing around a 20%-25% "match" funding contribution. However, the Trust would not wish to see the scheme rejected on the grounds of Council contribution shortfall and would very much like to run the proposed initiative regardless, even at a reduced capacity.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

6.1   Given that future Council budgets may not provide sufficient resources to enable tree planting, there is a risk that without the existence of a "Tree for Every Child" (or similar) scheme, the city's tree stock will diminish, particularly in parks, public spaces and streets.

Equalities impact

7.1   The scheme will result in an increased level of tree planting within the city. Some planting may be carried out using professional contractors but is likely that the scheme will provide a range of opportunities for communities to get involved with tree planting activities directly. It will be important that the range of tree planting activities offered are accessible to people of all abilities and socio-economic circumstances. An equalities assessment will be carried out in relation to any scheme delivered by the Council or partner agencies.

7.2   The impact on neighbouring land managers and property owners will be considered in relation to individual tree planting schemes.

Sustainability impact

8.1   The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh by ensuring that tree planting is delivered at a sustainable rate, and that the city's valuable tree resource is maintained. This will ensure the benefits that they will provide, in terms of carbon storage, sequestration, and pollutants removal from the atmosphere, will be optimised.

8.2   The results of the i-Tree Eco study carried out in 2011 suggest that the urban forest of Edinburgh is made up of 638,000 trees, which provide a tree canopy cover of 17% of the total land area. The structural value of Edinburgh's tree population is valued at £382 million. The i-Tree Eco model estimated that

Edinburgh's trees remove a total of 100 metric tonnes per year of ozone (O_3), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), particulate matter of less than 10 microns (PM_{10}) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2). This represents an estimated value in 2011 of more than £2.3 million. Edinburgh trees were estimated to store carbon with a non-traded value of at least £14.9 million in 2011, and were providing £484,689 per annum of non-traded value through net carbon sequestration. Using the same scenario, the total value of carbon stored in Edinburgh's trees would accrue to £35 million by 2050.

Consultation and engagement

9.1 A public consultation took place prior to approval of the 'Trees in The City' Policy & Action Plan. Discussions were held with the Welsh Government with regard to its Plant a Tree scheme. The Forestry Commission was asked for thoughts on a Scotland wide 'Tree for Every Child' scheme. Discussions were held with Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust on the potential sustainable funding opportunities for setting up a 'Tree for Every Child' scheme.

Background reading/external references

1. 'Trees in the City' - report to the Transport and Environment Committee, 14 January 2014:
   http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/41874/item_no_76_-_trees_in_the_city_finalised_policy_and_action_plan

2. 'Trees in the City' - report to the Transport and Environment Committee 4 June 2013: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/39388/item_7_15-trees_in_the_city

3. 'Trees in Council Ownership' - report to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee 13 September 2012:
   http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/36449/item_no_6_2-management_of_trees_in_council_ownership

4. 'Edinburgh and Lothians Forestry and Woodland Strategy' – report to the Planning Committee 4 October 2012, and Edinburgh and Lothians Forestry and Woodland Strategy 2012 – 17 (as an appendix to the above report):
   http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/36731/item_10_e_and_l_forestry_and_woodlands_strategy_report

5. Scottish Forestry Strategy (Forestry Commission Scotland):
   http://www.forestry.gov.uk/sfs

6. Central Scotland Green Network: http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-82key5

7. National Tree Week: http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/community-action/national-tree-week

8. Link to the webpage on the Welsh Government website www.wales.gov.uk/plantatree

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Links

Coalition pledges	P33 - Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used
	P48 - Use Green Flag and other strategies to preserve our green spaces
	P50 - Meet greenhouse gas targets, including the national target of 42% by 2020
Council outcomes	CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
	SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health
	SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
Appendices	