

Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	A memorial to Havering residents who have passed away due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
Cabinet Member:	<i>Cllr Damian White</i>
SLT Lead:	<i>Barry Francis, Director of Neighbourhoods</i>
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Max Graham max.graham@havering.gov.uk</i>
Policy context:	<p><i>There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a memorial to victims of the Covid-19 pandemic.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the Havering Plan 2019 to 2020 within the Places theme:</i></p> <p><i>Making sure that our neighbourhoods are a great place to live by investing in them and keeping them clean, green and safe with access to quality parks and leisure facilities</i></p> <p><i>Within this priority an outcome for parks is: Havering has excellent leisure facilities and award winning parks.</i></p>
Financial summary:	<i>No income generation. Planting and maintaining the trees will be funded by external funding providers and the Business Risk Reserve. This project is estimated to cost between £300,000 (£0.300m) and £350,000 (£0.350m).</i>
Relevant OSC:	<i>Neighbourhoods</i>

Non-key Executive Decision

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. The purpose of this report is to obtain approval to plant up to 5025 trees across the borough and create a new woodland in Hornchurch country Park featuring new pathways, benches and a central memorial as part of the council's Covid-19 memorial project.
2. This would include up to 5000 trees planted in Hornchurch Country Park as part of a new memorial woodland, dependant on final designs and specifications.
3. 25 trees will be planted in individual locations across the borough. One in each ward (18 wards) and one in each of the key sites listed below.
4. And, to agree that this will be overseen by the Director of Neighbourhoods.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Leader of the Council is responsible for arranging for the exercise of all executive functions and may exercise any Executive functions personally provided notice is given to the Proper Officer as necessary.

Part 3 of the Havering Council Constitution:

- Section 2.4. paragraph f (vi): taking responsibility for provision and upkeep of the Council's public parks, gardens, open spaces, allotments, cemeteries and burial grounds.
- Section 3.8.3, Street Care - paragraph (cc): To manage highway trees including determining requests for removal and/or replacement of trees
- Section 3.8.3, Parks and Environment, (a): To manage and control parks, open spaces and recreation and pleasure grounds including enforcing relevant byelaws.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

The Leader expressed a wish to plant trees in memory Havering resident that have fallen victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. When Councillor White originally announced this project at a full council session, this idea received praise and has since received bipartisan support from Group Leaders and councillors.

The timescale of the project is dependent on the tree planting season, which runs from November to March. However, additional preparatory works / groundworks / installations may be carried out prior to this. It is expected that up to 20% of trees installed could die in the immediate months and years following planting. As such, officers have recommended ordering extra trees to compensate for this expected loss.

Non-key Executive Decision

Initially, these trees were to be planted in a new memorial woodland, however, after deliberation with councillors, it has been decided that in addition to the memorial woodland that will be planted in Hornchurch Country Park, the Council will plant 25 individual trees in key sites across the borough: the Hospital, the Town Hall, the vaccination sites, the testing sites and one in each ward.

The Memorial Woodland in Hornchurch Country Park

The memorial woodland may have up to 5000 trees planted, dependant on final designs and specifications. This figure is broken down as 100 large trees, 200 medium trees and up to 4700 whips (smallest trees/shrubs). Officers recommend planting shrub whips in addition to tree whips to aid wildlife and biodiversity.

The site will adopt a hybrid approach to planting trees of different ages. While smaller trees are more likely to survive in the longer run, planting medium and large trees allows residents to have a memorial that already looks the part. Paths will lead from entrances and carparks to a central secluded opening where a monument and dedicated sponsored benches will be located. This area will be hidden by bends in the paths to allow the location to become a space for reflection and remembrance.

Hornchurch Country Park was chosen as the site for the memorial woodland as it met all the criteria: it is a good size for a new woodland, it has pre-existing suitable parking infrastructure in place, it is central to the borough, it has good transport connections and has a high footfall already in place.

The species of trees listed below have been chosen for the 300 large and medium trees that will surround the memorial as they have a superior visual impact, some of them flower and some produce berries which will create a nice environment surrounding the memorial centre.

- Prunus Avium (Wild/Sweet Cherry)
- Prunus Padus (Bird Cherry)
- Betula Pubescens (White Birch)
- Betula Pendula (Silver Birch)
- Crataegus Monogyna (Hawthorn)
- Acer Campestre (Field Maple)
- Sorbus Aria (Whitebeam)
- Sorbus Torminalis (Chequers)
- Sorbus Aucuparia (Rowan/Mountain Ash)
- Carpinus Betulus (Hornbeam)
- Corylus Avellana (none feathered) (Common Hazel)

Key Sites & Ward Memorial Trees

A memorial tree, along with a plaque, will be planted in each of the key locations that fought the pandemic throughout the borough, recognising the work and sacrifices of NHS staff and volunteers to test, treat and vaccinate Havering residents.

Non-key Executive Decision

Additionally, the Council will plant a tree in each ward of the borough to ensure that every resident is within reach of a memorial tree.

These locations will be:

Queen's Hospital
The Town Hall
Liberty Shopping centre (vaccination site)
Hornchurch Library (vaccination site)
Cherry Tree Lane car park (testing site)
Dorrington Gardens (testing site)
Dagnam Park Drive (testing site)

Brooklands: Cottons Park
Cranham: Cranham Playing Fields
Elm Park: Harrow Lodge Park
Emerson Park: Platford Swan Pond/Tyle Green
Gooshays: Dagnam Park
Hacton: Haction Parkway
Harold Wood: Harold Wood Park
Havering Park: Bedfords Park
Heaton: North Hill Rec
Hylands: Hylands Park
Mawneys: Lawns Park
Pettits: Raphael Park
Rainham and Wennington: Spring Farm Park
Romford Town: Lodge Farm Park
South Hornchurch: Bretons
Squirrel's Heath: Haynes Park
St Andrew's: Langtons Gardens
Upminster: Upminster Park

All of the key sites have agreed to plant a tree and a plaque on their grounds. The ward sites are the recommended locations from the Parks team, however, the specific location with the park of the ward trees will be chosen depending on suitability. These ward and key site plantings are only symbolic and does not significantly affect each ward.

The following species of trees will be used for this part of the project
Prunus Avium Plena (Wild/Sweet Cherry) (Double Flowering Variety)
Betula Jacquemontii (Himalayan Birch)

Aims and Objectives

- To provide a place for residents to grieve, reflect and remember on the impact of the pandemic in a new memorial woodland.
- To commemorate all the work and sacrifices of our NHS staff and volunteers throughout the pandemic.

Non-key Executive Decision

- To plant a tree in each of the key sites that fought the pandemic and in each ward to ensure that every residents has a memorial trees within reach of their home.

Funding

The project will be funded from the Business Risk Reserve and potentially from external funding providers if successful. Havering has, however, applied to three external funding providers and it is hoped that, if these applications are successful, the funding provided would cover the majority, if not the entire cost of the project. The cost of implementing this project is estimated to be between £300,000 (£0.300m) and £350,000 (£0.350m). This is based on the cost of the trees, planting them and watering the large trees for the first two years which costs roughly £50-60,000 (£0.050m - £0.060m). Other costs include installing pedestrian paths, estimated at £80,000 (£0.080m), site furniture and information signs, estimated at £15,000 (£0.015m), Planning / Landscape £160,000 (£0.160m), plaques £5,000 (£0.005m), consultants £10,000 (£0.010m) to aid in designing and surveying the site, the importation of soil to improve soil quality and a plinth £20,000 (£0.020m) for the memorial. Officers have spoken to woodland creation experts and the estimated cost of this project is based upon their advice.

Public engagement

Whilst there is no statutory obligation to conduct a public consultation, it was felt that due to the nature of the project that it would be appropriate to undertake one. Our engagement piece aimed to gather viewpoints from local residents and establish a list of volunteers who may wish to support the planting of the project. Utilising volunteers not only reduces the cost burden of this project to the Council but also allows residents who may have lost a loved one in the pandemic to play a part in creating the memorial. The engagement revealed a strong support for the project from within the community with 91.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'memorial tree planting is a suitable way to honour those who have suffered loss or were impacted because of Covid-19 and to honour the efforts of key workers'. 85% of residents agreed or strongly agreed that Hornchurch Country Park was a suitable location for the memorial woodland and a further 87.5% of residents agreed or strongly agreed with the plan to plant a memorial tree in each ward of the borough. 58 residents signed up to receive further updates on the progress of the memorial woodland and 28 residents volunteered to support the tree planting effort.

Officers received 65 comments as part of the consultation, the majority of which were extremely positive. Please see some examples of comments below:

"Tears are rolling down my face with the idea of possibly see a tree planted in the memory of so many taken by this horrible pandemic."

"Planting trees is a good way to remember those who lost their lives through Covid-19 and a place for people to go."

"I think this is a great idea, I lost my husband to Covid on Easter Sunday 2020 he was 53 years old. And having a memorial for those lost to covid is amazing."

Non-key Executive Decision

Of the very few negative comments received, these were concerned with other council projects and trees located elsewhere in the borough.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

1. A series of smaller memorial woodlands spread across the borough was considered at an earlier stage. Officers spent a significant amount of time investigating potential sites for four memorial installations, each housing 300 trees, with one being located in each of the borough's settlements: Romford, Hornchurch, Upminster and Rainham. Ultimately, however, officers found that achieving this goal was impossible as the Council does not possess the land necessary for four sites housing 300 trees each, with one located in each of the four settlements. Officers determined that the only way to reach the target number of trees, spread across the four settlements, would require planting in fourteen different sites with the numbers of trees planted ranging from ten to two hundred. This would also involve encroaching upon multiple conservation areas and using local amenity grasslands that are often utilised for local sporting and summer events. When the conservation area and amenity grassland sites were discounted, sites were only located in Romford and Hornchurch and met only half the target number of trees.
2. Other locations were considered and ultimately rejected. These locations include: Bridport Avenue, Moor Lane, Rainham Wildspace, Abbey Wood Open Space, Cranham Brickfields, Gidea Park School Field, Harrow Lodge Park, Dagnam Country Park, Rush Green Open Space, Cornflower Way Open Space, Lilliput Road and Wingletye Lane. The reasons these sites were rejected include: size, deer populations, reserved for future development, conservation areas, local amenity grasslands, brownfield site and thus expensive preparatory works, power cables running overhead, pre-existing woodlands and flooding.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

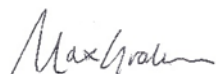
Discussion with the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and a public consultation.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Max Graham

Designation: National Management Trainee

Signature:



Date: 08/10/2021

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do, together with the power under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything conducive, incidental or ancillary to or which facilitates any of its functions. The Council undertakes a number of functions and these include being responsible for open spaces under public health & open spaces legislation and the Local Authorities (Miscellaneous Powers) Act 1976. The Council is also under a duty as the owner and operator of public space under the Occupier's Liability Act 1957 to take reasonable steps to ensure it is safe for visitors and others entering the land.

The Council is also under a Public Sector Equality duty to consider how its policies or decisions affect its residents with "protected characteristics" (i.e., age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) with the aim of eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not in the exercise of its duties or powers.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqHIA) attached to this report is designed to assess and ensure the Council's compliance with its Public Sector Equality duty so the Decision maker is assured that this has been taken into consideration before reaching a decision.

This project is concentrated in Hornchurch Country Park, Elm Park ward with only individual trees planted in each ward. As such, this project does not significantly affect more than one ward and is not a key decision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Where possible the project will be funded from external funding providers with any remaining costs up to the total project value of £0.350m funded by the Business Risk Reserve.

As is customary external funding will be utilised first before drawing on the Business Risk Reserve.

The cost of implementing this project is estimated to be between £0.300m and £0.350m. This is based on the following:

Non-key Executive Decision

Cost item	£m
Cost of trees, Planting, Watering the large trees for first couple of years	0.060
Installation pedestrian Paths	0.080
Consultants	0.010
Site furniture and information signs	0.015
Plaques	0.005
Plinth for Memorial	0.020
Planning and Landscaping	0.160
	<u>0.350</u>

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

A number of staff within the public realm team are actively working on this project. This will also add an additional area that needs to be maintained by the parks team.

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqHIA) attached to this report is designed to assess and ensure the Council's compliance with its Public Sector Equality duty so the Decision maker is assured that this has been taken into consideration before reaching a decision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Non-key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed 

Name: **Cllr Damian White (Leader of the Council)**

Cabinet Portfolio held: Regeneration & Leader of the Council

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: **28/10/2021**

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____