

2 November 2021

Agenda Item: 6

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, INVESTMENT AND GROWTH**

### **PROPOSED PURCHASE OF LAND FOR WOODLAND PLANTING**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to the purchase of land for the purposes of woodland planting.

#### **Information**

2. This report contains an exempt appendix, which is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (Information relating to any individual and the business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information). Having regard to the circumstances, on balance the public interest in disclosing the information does not outweigh the reason for exemption because divulging the information would significantly damage the Council's commercial position. The exempt information is set out in the exempt appendix, disclosure of this information would prejudice the parties commercial interests.
3. At its meeting in September 2020 Policy Committee received a report on the 'Trees for Climate' programme in Nottinghamshire and gave approval for Greenwood Community Forest to lead on the delivery of, and for the County Council to act as the accountable body for, the Trees for Climate programme in Nottinghamshire. In addition Committee gave in principle support to the purchase of land for tree planting schemes as one of a variety of actions to deliver more trees within the county.
4. Greenwood Community Forest, hosted by the Council's Conservation Team, is currently delivering the 'Trees for Climate' programme - a 5 year Defra-funded scheme to establish 6000ha of new woodland across England's 10 Community Forests, to benefit people and wildlife and to lock up carbon.
5. In Greenwood, we have committed to delivering 250ha of new woodland within that timeframe, with the Defra funding paying for all elements of the work (including additional staffing resource). This work will also contribute towards the target in the Corporate Environment Policy to plant 250,000 trees over seven years.
6. Woodland creation will be delivered on a range of public and private land, through direct delivery and grant schemes. As part of the programme, there is also an opportunity for land purchase to help deliver woodland creation, with funds allocated by Defra for this purpose. However, the allocation for land purchase is limited and competitive (between the 10 Community Forests).
7. Opportunity has now been identified to purchase land located (importantly) within the Greenwood Community Forest area (which is centred on the west of the county between

Nottingham and Mansfield). This land is available to purchase on the market and it has been identified as suitable for woodland planting.

8. Land acquisition will be essential if Greenwood Community Forest is to meet its obligations through the Trees for Climate programme to plant 250ha of new woodland (and if the Council is going to meet its 250,000 trees target), as opportunities on land that the Council already owns are more limited than had been anticipated.
9. Suitable opportunities for land purchase within the Greenwood Community Forest area seem to be very limited judging from what has been on the market over the last 12 months, and therefore negotiations have been entered into and terms agreed for the purchase of the land as outlined in the exempt appendix to this report.
10. The funding available for land purchase through the Trees for Climate programme is limited, and opportunities missed now may mean that all the funding is allocated elsewhere and that Greenwood misses out. The purchase will be funded through the Trees for Climate programme, with funding originating from Defra and the new woodland will deliver significant public benefits including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and public access. The grant does not cover all the costs of the proposed purchase and the Council will need to fund the balance of purchase price of £12,021.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. No suitable other significant scale opportunities have been identified in the search area.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

12. Purchase of the subject land will provide a site for the Council to plant woodland towards meeting the tree planting targets in the Environmental Policy.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

14. The purchase of the land will be to the most part funded through Defra funding. Options continue to be explored for funding for planting.

### **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

15. Tree planting plays a key role in the Environment Policy and purchase of this land and its subsequent planting will be a significant contribution towards meeting targets.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) It is recommended that Committee approve the purchase of land on the terms as outlined in the exempt appendices to this report.

**Matthew Neal**  
**Service Director, Investment and Growth**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Neil Gamble, Group Manager, Property Asset Management, Tel: 0115 9773045

### **Constitutional Comments (CJ 01/10/2021)**

16. The recommendation falls within the remit of Economic Development and Asset Management Committee under its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (GB 05/10/2021)**

17. It is proposed that this land purchase is funded from a combination of external funding received from the Trees for Climate Acquisition Fund and a contribution from the Conservation revenue budget. There is a requirement to vary the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee capital programme to reflect this acquisition. It is proposed that this approval will be sought from Finance Committee in November 2021.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Report to Policy Committee 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020 titled 'Delivery of Trees for Climate Programme in Nottinghamshire'.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- Greasley and Brinsley: Councillor Elizabeth Williamson