

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DECISION BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

SECTION A

DATE OF DECISION: 7 December 2023
PORTFOLIO AREA: Community and Leisure
SUBJECT TITLE: Local Authority Treescapes Fund Grant Award

It is considered that this report does/does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

SECTION B – IDENTITY OF THE “DECISION-MAKER”

Name of Officer: Andrew Ferrier
Title: Chief Executive

This decision is made pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of the “Delegations to Chief Executive” in Part 3 of the Constitution, namely:

“To do anything, in consultation with the Leader, which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of the Council’s functions subject to:

- (i) the matter being regarded as an emergency or urgent situation; and
- (ii) a report back to the Council, Cabinet or Committee concerned.

SECTION C – SUMMARY

An application was made in February 2023 to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund which is a grant fund available to local authorities for tree planting. The application sought to secure the funding for replacement planting of trees felled during 2022 due to risks posed by ash dieback disease. The council has been undertaking proactive survey of ash trees since 2020 to remove hazards and potential risks.

Permissions were achieved from the Forestry Commission in the form of felling licenses to remove diseased trees. These licenses allow the removal of significant amounts of timber, and have condition attached whereby landowners are duty bound to restock (replant) these sites post felling works.

Our successful grant application provides a total of £297,582.88 received in 5 staged payments between accepting the grant and March 2027 and cover the costs of trees, planting, and three years post planting maintenance to ensure establishment and a state of independence in the landscape. 254 standard trees will be planted in the North of the Borough and 113 standard trees in the South of the Borough totalling 367 standard trees.

Payment schedule is set out in table 1.

Table 1 – Grant claim schedule

Financial year	2023/24		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Claim schedule	Claim 1 (offer accepted)	Claim 2 (Mar-24)	Claim 3 (Mar-25)	Claim 4 (Mar-26)	Claim 5 (Mar-27)
Planting/capital costs (split 50%)	£46,596.62	£46,596.62	-	-	-
Maintenance costs	-	-	£68,129.88	£68,129.88	£68,129.88
Total	£46,596.62	£46,596.62	£68,129.88	£68,129.88	£68,129.88

The funding is available upon agreeing the conditions of the grant funding, the signing and return of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the receipt of funds via the Rural Payments Authority. The grant is being offered to TVBC on the basis that trees will be planted before the end of February 2024.

This grant is time sensitive due to multiple factors:

- The short notice of the confirmation of the funding which was only received by email on Tue 07/11/2023 13:40.
- The short planting season available to us whereby planting conditions are available until the end of February 2024.
- Securing the tree stock from the preselected supplier as set out in the grant application,
- Selection and availability of a suitably experienced contractor to plant trees
- Site preparation and delivery of the scheme to be able to begin irrigation and maintenance in the spring of 2024.

The value representing the first three claim for tree planting was added to the Asset Management Plan 2024/25 which was recommended to Council by Cabinet on 15th November 2023. Due to the limited window of opportunity for planting as set out, the need to make arrangements for the securing and purchase of trees and planting contract arrangements are required to be in place for commencement during December 2023. This is in advance of the approval of the 25/25 AMP plan by council on 17 January.

Confirmation, through this Decision, that purchase orders representing the first two claims as set out in Table 1 for tree stock and planting will enable planting to commence in compliance with the grant conditions.

SECTION D – THE DECISION

That authority is given to the Head of Community and Leisure:

In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Countryside; the Portfolio Holder for Community, Leisure, and Tourism to bring forward the procurement of trees and tree planting in accordance with the Local Authority Treescapes Fund as set out in table 1. Planting will be completed by the end of the current planting season between December and February in compliance with the Local Authority Treescapes Fund grant MOU.

SECTION E – REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The decision-maker’s reasons for making the decision recorded in Section D:

This decision will bring forward the ability to complete the tree planting works in accordance with the obligations set out in the memorandum of understanding for the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. In doing so, the Council and community will benefit from the grant award of £297,582.88 and planting of 367 trees across the borough.

SECTION F – DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The alternative option would be to wait until the 24/25 AMP is approved by council on 17th January 2024. This option has been rejected based on timing and compliance with the grant fund whereby the trees need to be planted by the end of the current planting season in February. This timescale would put in jeopardy our ability to complete this planting and therefore risk losing the external grant funding.

SECTION G – OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

SECTION H – BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were taken into consideration when making the decision:
LTFA fund application and memorandum of understanding.

SECTION I – Any Conflict of Interest Declared and Dispensation Granted

None

We certify that the decision this document records was made Pursuant to Delegated Powers as set out in paragraph (2) of "Delegations to Chief Executive" in Part 3 of the Constitution and is a true and accurate record or minute of that decision.

Chief Executive:



Dated:

7/12/23

The Leader of the Council:



Dated:

7/12/2023