

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

19 November 2014

LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES IN WINCHESTER TOWN

REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides a summary of the reasons for requesting a growth bid for Landscape and Open Spaces in Winchester town.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Winchester Town Forum:

1. Note the additional budget requirements (as detailed by WTF207) of £26,500 for 2014/15 and £22,000 for 2015/16.

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### LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES IN WINCHESTER TOWN

#### REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

##### DETAIL:

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 A request is being made for a budget growth within the Landscape and Open Spaces budget for:-
- a) Emergency tree works which are a legacy from the floods and storms in the winter of 2013/14.
  - b) Tree planting to replace trees lost from felling, disease or damage.
  - c) Managing shrubs and hedges which have been neglected for a number of years and which fall outside the current grounds maintenance contract.

#### 2 Emergency tree works – 2014/15

- 2.1 Winchester City experienced flooding and high winds over a prolonged period in the winter of 2013/14. During this period the City Council experienced significant storm damage to its trees, requiring considerable works to be undertaken across the City.
- 2.2 Although some works were undertaken within the 2013/14 financial year, some rolled over into 2014/15.
- 2.3 In addition, no essential tree works (ie works programmed annually to ensure the safe and effective management of our tree stock) were undertaken between October 2013 and March 2014, as all resources were directed to emergency work. Consequently, all outstanding work from that period was carried forward to 2014/15.
- 2.4 This has resulted in an overspend which, in conjunction with expected expenditure over the remainder of 2014/15, totals £26,500.

#### 3 Emergency tree works – 2015/16

- 3.1 The City Council is still dealing with a backlog of work following the storms of 2013/14 and a request is made for an additional £12,000 for 2015/16 to cover expected expenditure and to bring our essential tree works schedule back on track (assuming no significant winter storms in 2014/15).

3.2 It is recognised that in the short term it might be more cost prudent to carry out only urgent works such as the removal of “dangerous” trees or branches rather than undertake a regular programme of essential tree works. However, if only urgent actions are taken, the tree population is likely to reach a stage where trees have become so overcrowded/unviable that few or none are capable of standing alone when others are removed; and many will need to be replaced at the same time. At that point there is likely to be considerable expense involved in the removal of large numbers of trees, and also a significant loss of amenity and other benefits.

3.3 In addition, a reduction in essential tree works could lead to future tree safety issues and may result in significant cost at a later date.

#### 4 Tree Planting

4.1 Winchester is slowly losing trees as more are felled (due to disease and damage) than are being planted. For example tree records show that in September 2013, 68 trees were lost from WCC owned land and only 1 planted.

4.2 Trees are recognised within the Vision for Winchester Town 2012 – 2017 which states that “*A programme of planting to perpetuate the famously green character of the City (from within and without) and to enhance the enjoyment of walking and cycling*”.

4.3 There is currently no budget for tree planting and a growth bid of £5k per annum is requested to allow small amounts of appropriate tree planting to be undertaken.

#### 5 Grounds maintenance – reactive: hedges and shrubs

5.1 A request is made for a growth bid for grounds maintenance work – reactive: hedges and shrubs of £5k for 2015/16 onwards.

5.2 This year has seen a number of complaints and concerns about shrubs and hedges owned by WCC and managed as part of the current Grounds Maintenance Contract.

5.3 A number of shrubs and hedges were not included in the original schedule of works or were of such height and size that they did not meet with the contractors agree specification for management prior to commencement of the Contract.

5.4 Consequently a number have been left uncut and now need restoration work to bring them back to a size where they can be managed as part of the Grounds Maintenance Contract. A growth bid is therefore requested to help bring these hedges and shrubs back into appropriate management.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The additional budget requirement for 2014/15 in relation to extra tree care is £26,500.
- 6.2 The additional budget requirement for 2015/16 in relation to tree care, tree planting and management of overgrown hedges and shrubs is £22,000.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES:

None

