

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Planning & Environment Committee

Hedgerow and Tree Planting

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 In October 2019, this Committee received a report regarding tree planting opportunities and agreed to form a working party to identify sites and a strategy for tree planting. Due to a range of other priorities, this has not been established. Recently, Cllr Mary Martin has highlighted resident interest in planting and investing in hedgerows and Cllr Mike Burtenshaw has requested that the commitment for tree planting be reviewed.
- 1.2 The Parish Council is not the landowner and will always need to heed any restrictions to tree planting proposed by Swindon Borough Council.

2. Options:

- 2.1.. An important contribution to climate change is in the growth of UK-wide patchwork of trees and woods – not just by planting, but also through natural regeneration. The woods, hedges and green spaces create buffers to existing habitats, tackle climate change and reverse wildlife decline – all at the same time. Hedges are a really important habitat. Many native trees work well as hedge plants – hazel, hawthorn, beech, hornbeam, blackthorn, and field maple.
- 2.2. The Parish Council has supported community groups in West Swindon to take care of parks and copse areas and some of the volunteers have invested in small amounts of planting. The Council has established its Commemorative Scheme which will promote further small amounts of planting however there is scope for a larger commitment (subject to Swindon Borough Council approval).
- 2.3. The Parish Council can also review its open spaces and add new plants in trees and hedgerows where possible and appropriate. Current locations identified with potential include
- hedgerows along Tregoze Way/Hay Lane
 - hedgerows within Shaw Ridge Linear Park
 - tree and hedgerow planting across the larger parks, backlands, main roads e.g. Tewkesbury Way, Whitehill Way
- 2.4. The Woodland Trust offer free trees at various times of the year. Applications are open. Eligible groups can apply online for trees for despatch in March 2021.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 New tree planting will have resource implications in terms of initial planting and ongoing maintenance. The Parish Council already cares for 69,143 linear metres of hedge. To reduce new maintenance costs, the Parish Council could seek to plant only in existing hedgerows where there has been thinning or gaps.
- 3.2 If the Parish Council is unsuccessful in securing free tree packs it can potentially purchase at a low cost or subsidised price depending on the volume requested. There are potential financial implications if the Parish Council was minded to purchase new trees to support the Big Climate Fightback. The tree/hedge maintenance budget was removed for 2020-21 however there is a remaining sum in floral planting around £500.00 which could be allocated to trees and tree maintenance. If local volunteer groups wish to participate, they could use their volunteer clean and green fund resources to assist.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Committee note the report and consider approval of one or more options set out in the report.

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager