

REPORT TO: Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 15th February 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Community and Greenspace

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Working Party Review of Coppicing Works

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Board with an update on the outcome of the Working Party review of the Council's coppicing works programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) Members of the Board receive and comment upon the report, and;**
- 2) Members endorse that a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would display;**
 - i. General information on the principles of coppicing and the Council's coppicing work programme;**
 - ii. Timeline photographs of plantations subject to coppicing works by Council operatives, and;**
 - iii. Information on plantations that would be subject to up and coming coppicing works by Council operatives.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Coppicing is a pruning technique where a tree or shrub is cut to ground level, resulting in regeneration of new stems from the base. It is a popular conservation practice for the benefits it offers to wildlife and to the trees themselves. Trees naturally retrench (shedding their branches to extend their lifespan) and coppicing can be an excellent way of simulating this to increase the life of the tree. It also increases biodiversity, as greater amounts of light can reach the ground, allowing other species to grow there. Many of these species are food sources for butterflies and other insects, which in turn provide food for birds, bats and mammals.

- 3.2 Management of the Council's structure planting (tree and shrub plantations where the aforementioned coppice management is applied) is carried out in accordance with horticultural best practice standards and is a well-established operation that has been in place since the late 1990's.
- 3.3 In March 2022, it was agreed that a Working Party would be established to undertake a review of the Council's coppicing works programme. The Working Party consisted of Councillor Mike Fry as Chair, and Councillors Angela Ball, Tony McDermott, Bob Gilligan, Andrea Wall and Noel Hutchinson.
- 3.4 The first meeting of the Working Party took place on 12th July 2022 where the scope of the review was established. At the meeting, Paul Wright, Operational Director – Community & Greenspace, delivered a presentation to Members on structure planting. Members were provided with details of what constituted structure planting and how the Council manages its own plantations. Members were advised of the importance of managing structure planting, as if it was not managed, it would ultimately fail and die. Members were also advised of some of the issues that the Council faces as a result of its management of structure planting; including, but not limited to, public perception of works undertaken.
- 3.5 Following a general discussion on the Council's programme for the management of structure planting, and a number of matters raised by Members, it was agreed that the next step would be for a field study visit to be arranged for Members. The purpose of the field visit was to enable Members to observe previous structure planting works that had been carried out at a number of locations across the borough. As well as taking in sites that have had intervention at various stages over recent years, Members would be taken to sites where intervention was planned as part of the Council's 2022/23 works programme.
- 3.6 The field visit was undertaken on 26th September 2022. Accompanied by the Operational Director – Environment and Greenspace, the Environment Services Divisional Manager and the Operations Manager responsible for planning and managing the Council coppicing works programme, Members observed works undertaken at Bloomsbury Way, Old Upton Lane and McKinley Way; areas that had been subject to previous enquiries from members of the public following coppicing works.
- 3.7 At each of the locations visited Members were able to see, and were advised by Officers of, the different stages of growth following coppice management over a number of different years. Following on from the discussion at the previous Working Party meeting, Members and Officers discussed matters such as, but not limited to,

the benefits and reasons for coppice management, the function of structure planting, coppice rotation, wildlife displacement, final spacing and succession planting.

3.8 Members of the Working Party are thanked for their work on the review of the Council's coppicing works programme; the outcome of which is a recommendation by Members of the Working Party that a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would display;

- General information on the principles of coppicing and the Council's coppicing work programme;
- Timeline photographs of plantations subject to coppicing works. Such photographs to be taken before, after 6 months on, 1 year on and 2 years on, from coppicing works, and;
- Information on locations that would be subject to up and coming coppicing works.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Coppicing of trees and shrubs ensures that plants are healthy and robust which reduces the chances of failure and the risk of tree falls.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The coppice/thinning of the Council's areas of trees and shrubs has

a positive impact by ensuring a sustainable and visibly attractive landscape that makes the urban areas look more attractive.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure by the Council to carry out its coppicing works programme would have an adverse effect upon structure planting across the borough and wildlife reliant upon such associated plantations.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality or diversity issues as a result of this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council's coppicing works programme helps makes a positive contribution towards biodiversity; which has an overall positive impact upon climate change.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.