

Part 1 - Open to the Public Part 2 – Closed to the Public
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ITEM NO.

REPORT
FROM
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR PLACE

TO
LEAD MEMBER ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
ON

12th October 2020

TITLE: Urban Tree Challenge Grant

RECOMMENDATIONS: To give approval for the City Council to provide a grant of £159,951 match funding to City of Trees to deliver the DEFRA Urban Tree Challenge Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Urban Tree Challenge is a DEFRA funded grant to plant trees in urban areas. A successful partnership bid from City of Trees and Salford City Council secured funding to plant and maintain 489 trees in roadside verges and parks across the city.

The City Council has approved match funding of £159,951 from the Place Directorate Green City Capital Budget. The project is being managed and delivered by the Greenspace and Streetscene Team.

This report seeks approval to provide this funding, as a grant to 'Community Forest Trust T/A City of Trees' (CFT) which is the charitable organisation that supports the delivery of the City of Trees Movement.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

KEY DECISION: NO

DETAILS:

- 1.0 The Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) was developed in response to HM Treasury, releasing £10 million in the 2018 Autumn Budget announcement for planting at least 20,000 large trees and 110,000 small trees in urban areas in England.

The UTCF is managed by Forestry Commission and is open to anyone who wants to plant trees in urban or peri-urban areas who has full management control of the land.

- 2.0 The Urban Tree Challenge Fund provides 50% funding of standard costs for planting large trees and their establishment costs for 3 years following planting. The funding covers the cost of buying a tree, planting in grass, soil or leaf litter, the cost of basic protection and the labour required to plant it.

Establishment payments support the cost of weeding, watering and checking trees during multiple visits over a 3 year period. After this period the trees will be managed and maintained as part of the City Council's tree asset, through the revenue budget.

- 3.0 The remaining costs of planting and establishing trees supported under the UTCF must be met through match funding, either in the form of money or labour.

- 4.0 A successful bid to DEFRA in partnership with City of Trees (CoT) for £344,902.08 was made to plant 489 large trees at least 2 meters in height in road- side verges and parks across the city. 50% of this was received from the UTCF grant and this has been matched through £159,951 from the city councils Green City capital funding. The CoT have been successful in securing the remaining match through small grants and volunteer time.

- 5.0 The City Council contribution will be made available as a grant from SCC to Community Forest Trust.

- 6.0 The identified tree planting sites across the city include those with the least tree cover and where they can make the most significant impact wherever possible. There are significant limitations and complications planting trees in road-side verges due to the presence of underground services and highway sight lines so not all desirable locations are viable. Where this is the case, trees have been planted in neighbouring parks.

- 7.0 The capital funding was secured and approved as part of the Place Directorate Green City Fund managed by the regeneration team. As the greenspace and streetscene team are responsible for land management,

managing and delivering the project the capital funding has been transferred from the relevant budget cost centers.

KEY COUNCIL POLICIES:

Green City Programme
Salford Greenspace Strategy
Salford's climate change Strategy
Salford's carbon management plan

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS: N/A

ASSESSMENT OF RISK: LOW

All funding has been secured for the project will be delivered in 2020/21. Contractors have been appointed and community consultation undertaken.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Tony Hatton, Principal Solicitor, tel. 219 6323

Legally speaking it is important to remember that 'procurement' is a public authority acquiring specific goods, services or works through commissioning a third party to provide these on the Council's behalf under a contract. The delivery of these is usually measured against some form of service specification and key performance indicators (e.g. targets, outcomes, timescales etc), and the delivery of such works/services/goods is usually in exchange for payment (if the requirements of the contract are met). Usually a services contract will contain robust mechanisms to enforce the terms of the contract - e.g. if the service was underperforming, a review mechanism requiring the provider to address any shortcomings. This might make a services contract more favourable than a simple grant depending on what outcomes are being sought.

In contrast, grant funding can be used as a means of supporting the operations or objectives of third party organisations. This may in turn may supplement, compliment, develop or further the services and objectives of the Council, without directly commissioning that organisation under a services contract.

Grants are not subject to procurement rules so the Council is free to distribute grant monies directly to organisations fairly easily and flexibly (although being mindful of state aid rules). But the scope and drafting of the grant should be carefully considered to ensure that it is not just in fact a services contract in disguise (which

then may be in breach of procurement rules and provide the Council with less protection under the agreement). Under a grant, the Council can restrict the use of the monies to a particular purpose, or set time periods for when the grant can be used, and provide for refunding of the grant if used outside of the grant purpose.

The grant shouldn't be too prescriptive as to exactly how the organisation should spend the monies to further the grant purpose, or how the service should be delivered. For example, measures giving the Council a high degree of control or influence over how the service is designed or delivered would suggest it is commissioning the organisation to deliver a specific or bespoke service on its behalf, rather than providing money to support the ongoing aims of the organisation.

The Council should ensure that the terms of any grant funding agreements are adhered to in the event that clawback provisions may apply for non-compliance.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Alison Woods

Date: 23rd September 2020

There is an approved unsupported borrowing allocation within the Place Capital Programme for 2020/21, to allow for a grant payment of £159,951 by Salford City Council to Community Forest Trust, which will act as match funding towards the successful bid to DEFRA's Urban Tree Challenge Fund for £344,902.

PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Deborah Derbyshire

There are no procurement implications as grant funding is not subject to procurement rules, however before any monies are spent with the chosen provider it would make sense to review and assess the company.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Mike Hemingway

The proposed project to plant trees in highway verges supports the city wide programme to help mitigate and adapt to Climate Change.

HR IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: N/A

OTHER DIRECTORATES CONSULTED: No

CONTACT OFFICER: Annie Surtees

TEL NO: 0161 925 1153

WARDS TO WHICH REPORT RELATES: ALL