

**Report of Natural Environment Manager**

**Report to Chief Officer Parks and Countryside**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Subject: Creation of Posts for New Forestry Crew**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. There are around 4,500 new enquiries made each year of which 3,000 are estimated to be about Housing Leeds trees, 1,300 highway related and 200 relating to parks. Housing Leeds trees generate a high number of inspections which require a site visit and report in contrast to trees in parks and on the highway which need proportionately fewer inspections.
2. The overall cost of inspection is estimated at around £200k which is a cost covered by the general fund for inspecting and liaison officers in the forestry team. Housing Leeds inspections represent around two thirds of this type of work which therefore represents a subsidy to the housing revenue account of around £133k.
3. It is therefore proposed that commencing in 2018/19, £133k is identified from the housing revenue account to fund a new forestry crew (with associated plant, equipment and protective clothing).

**Recommendations**

The Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is recommended to approve the creation of one Chargehand / Forester post and two Forester / Arborist posts in the forestry team of Parks and Countryside.

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for allocating additional resources from the housing revenue account (HRA) to fund an additional forestry crew in order to provide additional capacity to manage risks associated with trees across the city.

## 2. Background information

- 2.1 The Council operates a robust system to ensure the health and wellbeing of the public as well as to meet statutory obligations regarding the management of its tree assets. This is based on an inspection and risk assessment approach which allocates a category to each tree assessed which defines the timescale applicable for any work that needs to be carried out. This in turn enables priorities to be determined in allocating resources to address issues identified. The categories and timescales, where applicable, are as follows:

Category	Designation	Description
1	Emergency	Complete within 24 Hours
2	Urgent	Complete within 7 Working Days
3A	Developing Risk	Complete within 6 Months
3B	Developing Risk	Complete within 18 Months
4	No Unreasonable Risks	No Mitigation Required
4A	Extreme Shade	Housing Leeds or at interested party's expense
4B	Unresolved interference with TV/Satellite Signal	Housing Leeds or at interested party's expense
Replant	1:1 replacement	Replant with appropriate species in most appropriate location

## 3. Main issues

- 3.1 There are around 4,500 new enquiries made each year and each one is examined to determine if there could be any cause for concern and therefore a priority for inspection. From these enquiries, 3,000 are estimated to be about Housing Leeds trees, 1,300 highway related and 200 relating to parks. As Housing Leeds trees are in tenant gardens they are often close to the property and problems associated with these trees are the subject of a considerable number of enquiries. This in turn leads to a referral to the forestry team with follow up tree inspections. This is in contrast to enquiries about trees in parks which are minimal with work mostly generated by parks staff. Similarly, there is a smaller proportion of enquiries relating to trees on the highway as they tend to be further away from dwellings and non-technical inspections form part of the inspection role undertaken by highway officers.
- 3.2 The overall cost of inspection is estimated at around £200k which is a cost covered by the general fund for inspecting and liaison officers in the forestry team. As indicated above, Housing Leeds inspections represent around two thirds of this type of work which therefore represents a subsidy to the housing revenue account of around £133k. As a result of having to cover housing inspections from the general fund this means that it is not possible to fund one of the crews required for the risk work. It is therefore proposed that commencing in 2018/19, £133k is identified from the housing revenue account to fund a new forestry crew (with associated plant,

equipment and protective clothing). This requires the creation of additional posts as follows:

- Chargehand Forester/Arborist x 1
- Forester / Arborist x 2

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 Issues relating to meeting demand for tree work have been discussed at the Environmental Champions meeting and have been the subject of a number of questions at council. This, coupled with enquiries and concerns raised by members of the public mean demonstrate a clear desire to increase the level of resources dedicated to dealing with tree issues.

### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 All aspects of Equality and Diversity, Cohesion and Integration have been considered

4.2.2 Attached Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening – Appendix 1

4.2.4 The posts will be sent to the Council's talent pool first and will therefore be matched to redeployees and those at risk of redundancy first of all. Consideration will also be given to using the flexibility protocol. If there are no suitable matches via these processes then the post will be released internally.

### **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

4.3.4 The new posts introduced and proposed under this report will be recruited in line with Council policy and current legislation. The proposals in this report support the Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 and in particular the aspiration that 'there are high quality buildings, places and green spaces, which are clean, looked after, and respect the city's heritage, including buildings, parks and the history of our communities' as part of the overall aim that 'all Leeds' communities will be successful'. The proposals contribute to the Best Council Plan outcomes to 'enjoy happy, healthy, active lives', and 'enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts' and also priority 20 'enhancing the quality of our public realm and green spaces'.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.4 The posts will be funded via £133k allocated in 2018/19 from the housing revenue account which also includes associated costs of plant, machinery and equipment.

### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.4 There are no legal issues identified with this report or with access to information.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.4 The allocation of an additional forestry crew will enable greater capacity to deal with tree risks identified above.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.2 The housing revenue account is currently subsidised by the general fund in relation to inspections on trees to assess any work requirements. The allocation of £133k should address this issue and enable the addition of a forestry crew to enable greater capacity to address issues identified.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.2 The Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is recommended to approve the creation of one Chargehand / Forester post and two Forester / Arborist posts in the forestry team of Parks and Countryside.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.2 Appendix 1 - EIA

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.