

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Planning		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	19 th October 2023 7.00pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Cllr Robert Douglas / Chief Officer David McGifford		
Agenda item	Planning Committees Tree Policy		
Background	<p>The positive impact of trees and shrubs on our environment and communities cannot be overstated and include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Countering climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide.• Trapping through their leaves toxic pollutants and microscopic particles.• Tempering severe weather with their capacity to attenuate heavy rains and floodwater.• Moderating temperatures with their ability to evaporate water, reflect sunlight and provide shade.• Helping prevent soil erosion through their intricate root systems which act as filters.• Reducing noise as they act as sound barriers.• Providing increased biodiversity by supporting many species of fungi, lichens, mosses and plants as well as birds, invertebrates and other animals. The nuts, seeds and fruits of our trees and shrubs are essential food sources for British wildlife. Many species of wildlife are threatened and becoming rarer.• Delivering a range of health benefits including improving the air for asthma sufferers, lowering the risk of skin cancer and creating positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. <p>In December 2022, a groundbreaking study by Forest Research and Defra as part of National Tree Week estimated the economic value of individual trees planted outside of our forests and woodlands at about £3.8 billion. By quantifying their significant value, this report helps incentivise councils, land managers and local communities to plant more trees outside of woodlands for the varied and numerous benefits which they provide.</p> <p>Congleton Town Council fully supports the project, Trees for Congleton, a group of volunteers. which aims to plant 30,000 trees in the Congleton area by the end of 2025. This small group was set up under the umbrella of the Congleton Sustainability Group with the support of Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the advice of an experienced landscape architect to plan and manage the project. Trees for Congleton are working with our Council's Streetscape team and with Congleton Rotary.</p>		

	<p>Congleton Town Council actively encourages our residents to protect our trees by obtaining a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), which protect all types of trees. Anyone can apply for a TPO and importantly, the applicant does not have to own the land upon which the tree is situated. There is no charge to apply for a TPO. Applications for a TPO in Cheshire East should be sent to PlanningTrees@cheshireeast.gov.uk with details of the tree(s), their location and why they should be considered for a TPO.</p> <p>There are special rules regarding the protection of trees in designated Conservation areas of which there are three in Congleton – Lawton Street/Moody Street, Park Lane and West Street.</p> <p>In view of their significant environmental and economic benefits, this Council urges those submitting planning applications for new developments to include as many additional trees and shrubs as is feasible.</p> <p>Felling any tree will have implications for people and wildlife and any decision to fell a tree should be a decision of last resort. Where tree(s) are causing a real problem, this Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about how to best manage a problem tree. This Council urges residents to find a quality assured tree surgeon if major work is to be carried out, such as pollarding and pruning which can remove dangerous hanging branches or reduce the weight or impact of a tree without killing it.</p> <p>However, sometimes it is necessary to fell a tree where a tree poses a risk to safety owing to its location or condition, or is shown to be damaging a property. In line with the recommendations of the Woodland Trust, this Council’s policy is for planting replacement trees at a ratio of at least three to one, but even at this replacement rate, it will take years for the replacement trees to match the benefits of a felled tree.</p> <p>Replacement trees should be native trees and the size of the replacement trees should reflect both the trees removed and the local ecosystem. This Council urges residents to talk to a tree adviser or consultant about the native trees best suited for their locality. Once established, native trees should require little maintenance or special treatment and they should thrive naturally if planted in favourable conditions. Furthermore, as native trees have adapted to our weather conditions, they require far less water.</p> <p>In the event that circumstances, such as a lack of space, prevent an applicant from replacing a felled tree at the ratio of three to one, this Council requests that the applicant gives the replacement trees that cannot be planted to the Trees for Congleton project so that they can be planted in a suitable alternative location.</p>
Environmental	Very Significantly favourable as detailed above.
Equality	Vulnerable groups such as those with breathing difficulties may particularly benefit from this proposal
Financial	None expected in respect of Congleton Town Council itself.

PROPOSAL :

That this Committee adopts this Tree Policy when considering planning applications and as a guide to our residents highlighting the significant contribution trees and shrubs bring to our environment and thereby encourage best practice to maximise the number of suitable trees and shrubs in our community.