



**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 8
DECEMBER 2022**

CABINET: 24 JANUARY 2023

Joint report of: Corporate Director of Place & Community and Legal & Democratic Services Manager

Relevant Portfolio Holders: Councillors J Wilkie, C Coughlan & V Cummins

Contact for further information: Gillian Wossick, (Ext. 3424)

E-mail: gillian.wossick@westlancs.gov.uk

Dan Massey (Ext. 5265)

Email: daniel.massey@westlancs.gov.uk

Helen Peek (Ext. 5168)

E-mail: helen.peek@westlancs.gov.uk

**SUBJECT: RECOMENDATIONS FROM COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING COMMUNITY ORCHARDS, TASK &
FINISH GROUP**

Wards affected: Skelmersdale, Burscough and Ormskirk

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To note the minutes of the Community Environmental Improvements, including Community Orchards, Task and Finish Group Meetings held 18 October 2022 (at Appendix 1) and minutes of meeting held 17 November 2022 (at Appendix 2), and to highlight areas recommended by Task & Finish Group for development of Community Orchards, and seek approval for Community Consultation around the areas identified, and approval for work to commence at sites which achieve 50%+ positive feedback from consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That the following minutes of the Community Environmental Improvements, Including Community Orchards, Task and Finish Group Meetings be noted:

- I. 18 October 2022 (Appendix 1)
- II. 17 November 2022 (Appendix 2)

- 2.2 That the areas recommended by the Task & Finish Group, for potential development of Community Orchards, set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report, be endorsed.
- 2.3 That approval from Cabinet be sought to carry out a Community Consultation around the shortlisted areas identified.
- 2.4 That approval from Cabinet be sought to give Delegate Powers to the Corporate Director of Place & Community, to commence work on those proposed Community Orchard Sites, that receive a 50%+ positive feedback from consultation to enable Planting to commence within the appropriate season.
- 2.5 That the principal of installing Information Boards at each of the Community Orchard sites, subject to budget provision, be endorsed.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That the recommendations from Community Environmental Improvements, including Community Orchards, Task and Finish Group to Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the potential development of Community Orchards at the sites detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the report, be approved.
- 3.2 That a 2 week consultation be undertaken within the areas of those sites identified as potential Community Orchards.
- 3.3 That delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director of Place & Community, to commence work on those proposed Community Orchard Sites that receive a 50%+ positive feedback following consultation, to enable Planting to commence within the appropriate season.
- 3.4 That the principal of installing Information Boards at each of the Community Orchard sites, subject to budget provision, be approved.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In November 2020, West Lancashire Borough Council (the Council) adopted a new 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2030' (Strategy) to assist in the delivery of the Council's aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030 at the latest, to be committed to climate action in other areas and to progress towards a low carbon West Lancashire.
- 4.2 The Strategy identified seven key priority areas for action, they are:
 - 1. Delivering a carbon neutral Council,
 - 2. Sustainable procurement,
 - 3. Transport and travel,
 - 4. Residential buildings,
 - 5. Commercial activity,
 - 6. Community action and the
 - 7. Natural environment.

The Community Orchards Project will directly assist the council to implement Priority 7: Natural Environment, and action: Protect and Promote Green Infrastructure.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

5.1 Councillors were invited to propose locations in the borough for community orchards. 11 sites were visited to assess their suitability, with the following sites short-listed:

1. The Community Garden in Elswick, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale.
2. Pocket greenspace in Tanhouse, Skelmersdale.
3. Kiln Lane playing fields in Greenhill, Skelmersdale.
4. Manor Road Estate play park and pocket greenspace, Burscough.
5. Thompson Avenue field, Ormskirk.
6. Pocket greenspace on Brookhouse Road and Cotton Drive, Ormskirk.

6.0 ISSUES

6.1 Some of the sites may have services under the ground which will need investigating prior to any planting. Investigations will run concurrently with the community consultation to ensure the planting window is not missed prior to March 2023.

6.2 The Task and Finish Group felt it important that in order to be informative, inclusive and educational for the Community, Information Boards should be installed at each Community Orchard, explaining what the sites are, who they are for, what has been planted, identify edible fruits, when they are ripe and can be harvested, and how the community can get involved. Further budget provision may be required, and if additional funding is required, this will be subject to a further report.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Task and Finish Group wishes to consult with the households in the immediate vicinity to the shortlisted sites. The consultation will seek to understand any potential issues relating to siting the orchards in those locations and if any residents wish to be involved in the project.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This project will have a positive impact on the local areas. They will help to mitigate climate change, will improve local air quality, provide a wildlife habitat and will help struggling pollinators.

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A budget of £6000 for Community Environmental Improvements, including Community Orchards is available to take forward this project, which could be used to fund the purchasing and planting of trees, and to investigate if services are underground at any of the proposed sites.

- 9.2 A costing exercise will need to be carried out for appropriate information signage boards and installation at each of the Community Orchard Sites, and if additional funding is required a report will be brought back to Cabinet/Council as appropriate.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant risk registers.

11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Tackling climate change and enabling a low carbon future has many links to health and well-being. The impacts of climate change include warming temperatures and increases in the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events such as heat waves, cold spells, storms and flooding. Such events can threaten our health (especially for the most vulnerable), the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.
- 11.2 Planting fruit trees in these communities will help to improve the health of the residents through the availability of free fresh fruit, providing shade during hot weather and improving green spaces that help to lower stress.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report. The results of the report and consultation results will be taken into consideration when planning the project.

Appendices

1. Minutes of Community Environmental Improvements, Including Community Orchards, Task & Finish Group meeting, held 18 October 2022.
2. Minutes of Community Environmental Improvements, Including Community Orchards, Task & Finish Group meeting, held 17 November 2022.
3. Equality Impact Assessment
4. Minute of Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 8 December 2022 (Cabinet only)

