



**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 14th
December 2023**

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing and Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holders: Councillor A Yates

Contact for further information: Dan Massey (Ext. 5265)

Email: daniel.massey@westlancs.gov.uk

Gillian Wossick, (Ext. 3424)

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

**SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS 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 provide an update to committee on the actions completed to plant the orchards at six sites in West Lancashire

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That the update be noted.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 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.

3.2 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 has directly assisted the council to implement Priority 7: Natural Environment, and action: Protect and Promote Green Infrastructure.

3.3 Councillors were invited to propose locations in the borough for community orchards. 11 sites were visited to assess their suitability, with 6 sites short-listed at:

1. The Community Garden in Elswick, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale.
2. Pocket greenspace in Eskdale, 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.

3.4 Cabinet approved a consultation be undertaken within the short-listed areas.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

5.1 Council officers conducted a community consultation with the communities surrounding the short-listed sites. The on-line survey went live on Friday 10th February 2023 and closed on Monday 27th February 2023. Approximately 260 letters and questionnaires were hand delivered to residents directly surrounding the proposed sites on Friday 10th February 2023 and postal responses were accepted until Wednesday 29th February 2023. Posters were displayed in the six areas to promote the consultation to residents from the wider area. The posters included a QR code to the online survey.

4.2 In addition, residents at the Brookhouse Road and Cotton Drive site, completed a longer questionnaire and were asked if they wanted wildflower in addition to fruit trees. To increase the response rate, the Community Connectors Team door knocked and completed the questionnaire with residents.

4.3 The consultation received 164 responses, of these:

- 124 were completed via 'Your Voice... West Lancashire'
- 27 postal responses for all sites but Brookhouse/Cotton, 3 did not give their consent.
- 13 postal responses for Brookhouse/Cotton (8 were received by the Community Connectors), 1 did not give their consent.
- 9 volunteering expressions of interest – 1 did not give their consent.

4.4 Overall, the responses were positive, with:

Location	In Favour	Unsure	Not in Favour
The Community Garden in Elswick, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale.	100%	0%	0%
Pocket greenspace in Eskdale, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale.	93%	7%	0%
Kiln Lane playing fields in Greenhill, Skelmersdale.	85%	10%	5%

Manor Road Estate play park and pocket greenspace, Burscough.	87%	0%	13%
Thompson Avenue field, Ormskirk.	88%	4%	8%
Pocket greenspace on Brookhouse Road and Cotton Drive, Ormskirk.	93%	0%	7%

- 4.5 Following a review of the concerns raised by residents and the ground utility surveys at all sites, changes were made to four of final orchard locations and wildflowers were not planted at Brookhouse Road/Cotton Drive.
- 4.6 The Community Orchards between April and June 2023 at the six sites.
- 4.7 As part of replanting proposals included in the forthcoming Tree Policy, fruit trees will be considered where appropriate.
- 4.8 Relating to the above, a site in Banks has been identified as suitable for 3 fruit trees to be planted, following the removal of three mature, diseased Elms.
- 4.9 The website is now live, however the QR codes are yet to be installed and are currently being printed, with a view to installation early in the new year, when any failed trees will also be replaced.

5.0 ISSUES

- 5.1 Due to the early summer, high temperatures and reported vandalism, some trees will be replaced. These have been identified and will be replaced when the QR codes are installed.
- 5.2 Due to competing work demands, the design and procurement of the QR codes was delayed, however they are now with the printers.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A budget of £6000 for Community Environmental Improvements, including Community Orchards was used to conduct the community consultation, purchase the trees. The remainder of the budget will be used to purchase QR code signs and to replace any damaged or dead trees.
- 7.2 Due to the high cost of the information signage boards, the Task and Finish group agreed to purchase and attach QR code signs to some of the tree stakes at each site. The QR code will link to a new Community Orchards webpage on the Council website.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 Officers completed and reviewed risk assessments prior to completing the consultation, utility surveys and tree planting.

9.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 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.

9.2 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

As part of the consultation, members of the public were asked if they had any concerns about the project and if they had any protected characteristics. No equality issues were raised.

Appendices

1.