

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2528

### Title: Urban Tree Challenge Fund – London grant

#### Executive Summary:

In October 2019 the Forestry Commission (FC) confirmed that the GLA would be awarded a grant of up to £2.2m from the national Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf) to plant new street trees in London. This followed the GLA co-ordinating a bid to the fund from 20 London boroughs and the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone team. It was necessary for the GLA to co-ordinate the bid as the government was only accepting 'block grant' applications for funding over £500,000 which precluded boroughs from applying individually.

The FC grant requires match funding. The GLA will provide match funding of up to £1.2m (approved under cover of MD2141 and MD2285) from the Greener City Fund and the boroughs will provide match funding of up to £1.3m.

The combined funding from the UTCf, GLA and boroughs will enable the planting of 7691 new street trees. The street trees will be planted in 2019-20 and 2020-21, targeted in wards of low canopy cover and high deprivation. The FC grant will be paid in arrears to the GLA in 2019-20 and 2020-21 with further maintenance payments in 2021-22 and 2022-23. The GLA will be the accountable body for the FC funding in holding the grant funding and distributing it to boroughs.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor approves the GLA's receipt of up to £2.2m from the Forestry Commission; and expenditure of up to £3.4m (comprising the sums to be reimbursed from the Forestry Commission funding and up to £1.2m from the GLA's Greener City Fund) to deliver street tree planting through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

#### Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

28/10/19

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. London's urban forest forms a key part of the city's green infrastructure. Trees and woodlands cover around 21% of London, providing habitat for wildlife, and contributing to protecting London from the impacts of climate change and helping to improve London's air quality.
- 1.2. The London Environment Strategy set a target to increase London's tree cover by ten per cent by 2050 and committed the Mayor to develop programmes and deliver projects, including a major tree planting programme, to ensure that London's urban forest is maintained and expanded (Proposal 5.1.1.e). Planting more trees contributes to making London greener, healthier and wilder and supporting the capital's status as the world's first National Park City.
- 1.3. The Mayor approved (under cover of MD2141 (July 2017) and MD2285 (May 2018)) the budget for the £12m Greener City Fund for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21, including £4.5m for trees and woodlands. The £4.5m for trees and woodlands was to support a number of programmes including providing match funding for public realm tree planting in 2019-20 and 2020-21 (MD2285, para 2.11 and Table 2).
- 1.4. In May 2019 the government announced its Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf), a national fund of £10m to support a number of objectives in Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan and also contribute towards meeting the government's commitment to plant one million urban trees by 2022. The UTCf opened this summer for block bids of over £500,000 for tree planting projects in 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- 1.5. This national funding offered the opportunity to significantly increase the budget available in London for street tree planting. Many local authorities have had to reduce their budget for new street tree planting in recent years due to budget pressures. However, there is demand and need for additional street tree planting, particularly in areas of low canopy cover (see section 2 below).
- 1.6. Research the GLA commissioned from the London Tree Officers Association suggested that over £5m of funding is required to fill vacant tree pits alone, without considering the scope for new street tree locations. The funding required for street tree planting in London far exceeds that available through the Mayor's Greener City Fund. The UTCf provided an opportunity to increase funding available for street tree planting.
- 1.7. The FC hosted a national workshop about the funding (in January 2019) to which the GLA initially weren't invited. The GLA requested to attend and made the case for an application process suitable for cities. Shirley Rodrigues also wrote to the then Defra minister responsible for trees and woodlands to make London's case for a fair share of the funding. When applications opened it became clear that it would be necessary for the GLA to co-ordinate any London bid as the government were only accepting 'block grant' applications for funding over £500,000 which precluded boroughs from applying individually. The GLA worked with the London Tree Officers Association and invited all boroughs to submit expressions of interest to participate in the bid. Twenty boroughs expressed an interest in bidding and provided their planting requests to the GLA, who collated the bid. The bid was approved by Deputy Mayor Shirley Rodrigues and an update was given to CIB.
- 1.8. The GLA submitted an application at the end of August 2019 for £2.8m of government funding from the UTCf, and heard from the Forestry Commission at the start of October that it had been successful in being awarded £2.2m. This represents a fifth of the funding available nationally and demonstrates that we successfully made the case for the need for additional tree planting in London.
- 1.9. The UTCf grant requires match funding. The GLA will provide match funding to boroughs of up to £1.2m from the Greener City Fund (approved under MD2141 and MD2285). This will be paid to the

participating boroughs with the FC grant, meaning that the GLA will be awarding total grant funding of up to £3.4m. The boroughs will provide match funding of up to £1.3m. Note that the GLA Greener City Fund budget will not be providing match funding to the Royal Docks project, which will be matched from the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone budget. The FC grant funding for tree planting in the Royal Docks will be transferred to the GLA Royal Docks Enterprise Zone team budget once it has been received from the FC (see para 2.5).

## **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1. The combined funding from the UTCF, GLA and boroughs will enable the planting of up to 7691 new street trees across the 20 boroughs who chose to participate in the UTCF application: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Brent, Camden, Croydon, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Richmond-upon-Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster. The street trees will be planted in 2019-20 and 2020-21, targeted in wards of low canopy cover (below 20 per cent) and high deprivation.
- 2.2. The Mayor's ambition for London as the world's first National Park City is for the capital's network of green infrastructure, including trees, to benefit all Londoners. However, new detailed canopy cover maps<sup>1</sup> commissioned by the GLA have revealed that there is currently significant inequality in tree canopy cover across the capital. Canopy cover ranges from 58% to 2% across the city's 633 wards, with more than half falling below the Forestry Commission's recommended 20% canopy cover level for urban areas. This project uses this new data to help redress this imbalance by planting new street trees in low canopy cover wards. This inequality in canopy cover is strongly correlated with deprivation: 91% of the wards where trees will be planted contain Lower Super Output Areas (smaller areas within wards of around 1700 people, used to map census data) that are within the top 40% most deprived areas in England.
- 2.3. While a number of London boroughs have made recent commitments to increasing street tree planting, local authorities continue to lack resources to plant significant numbers of trees to help meet Mayoral and national policy objectives. Funding from the Greener City Fund will provide the GLA's contribution to this planting programme. This collaborative approach across the Forestry Commission, boroughs and GLA delivers excellent value for money, demonstrates a collaborative approach and enables far more street planting to take place.
- 2.4. Despite recent improvements, air pollution and the threats posed by climate change pose major risks to the wellbeing of Londoners. For example, over 9,000 people die early each year because of air pollution, and heatwave conditions are expected every summer by 2050. These environmental challenges are closely associated with social challenges: air pollution is on average 24% higher in the most deprived areas of the city than the least deprived, and lack green spaces and tree cover. Planting over 7500 street trees in areas of low canopy cover will deliver multiple environmental and social benefits to areas of high need, including improving air quality, reducing surface water flood risk, mitigating the urban heat island effect and creating a sense of place. Example planting locations include:
  - planting 712 trees in Royal Docks ward in Newham as part of a new place-making strategy for the area (current canopy cover 3.26% - the 5th lowest in London);
  - planting trees in the 3 most deprived wards in London: Northumberland Park (Haringey), Church Street (Westminster) and Lansbury (Tower Hamlets);
  - planting in 9 of the 10 most polluted wards in London (for NO2 pollution); and

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/trees-and-woodlands/tree-canopy-cover-map](https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/trees-and-woodlands/tree-canopy-cover-map)

- planting trees in the 5 wards with the worst urban heat island effect in London: Green Street East, Green Street West (Newham); Spitalfields & Banglatown, Bromley South, Whitechapel (Tower Hamlets).

- 2.5. The FC grant will be paid in arrears to the GLA in 2019-20 and 2020-21 with further maintenance payments in 2021-22 and 2022-23. We anticipate the process being: boroughs will make an annual grant claim to the GLA in arrears after the tree planting season each year, with evidence of expenditure and details of the trees planted. The GLA will then make its annual claim to the FC for the FC grant amount. Once the FC has paid the GLA's claim, the GLA will then use the FC funding and the GLA match to pay valid borough claims. The GLA has requested details from the FC of the precise grant monitoring and claims processes for the grant funding. These reporting and claim requirements will be incorporated into the GLA's grant agreements with boroughs.
- 2.6. The GLA match funding of up to £1.2m from the Greener City Fund (approved under MD2141 and MD2285) will form part of the grant awarded to boroughs in 2019-20 and 2020-21 and a condition of the award of funding to boroughs will be that they also provide their own match funding. The FC grant funding will cover all UTCF payments to boroughs in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- 2.7. The trees budget of the Greener City Fund requires re-profiling over 2019-20 and 2020-21 to align with the grant payments of the UTCF and also to reflect the grant profile of woodland creation projects (subject to a separate MD2529). See Table 1 for the current Greener City Fund tree delivery budget. Table 2 shows the proposed re-profiled trees budget line and Table 3 shows the tree delivery budget with the additional £2.2m income from the FC.

**2.8. Table 1 – Current profile of the Greener City Fund – Tree Delivery Budget**

	2019-20 (£000)	2020-21 (£000)	2021-22 (£000)	2022-23 (£000)	Total (£000)
<b>Greener City Fund Budget - Trees</b>	3,160	460	0	0	3,620

**2.9. Table 2 – Proposed re-profile of the Greener City Fund – Tree Delivery Budget**

	2019-20 (£000)	2020-21 (£000)	2021-22 (£000)	2022-23 (£000)	Total (£000)
<b>Greener City Fund Budget - Trees</b>	2,090	1,530	0	0	3,620

**2.10. Table 3- Proposed re-profile of the Greener City Fund – Tree Delivery Budget, including the additional income from the Forestry Commission**

	2019-20 (£000)	2020-21 (£000)	2021-22 (£000)	2022-21 (£000)	Total (£000)
<b>Trees (including additional FC income)</b>	2,697	2,111	499	478	5,785
<b>Forestry Commission income</b>	-607	-581	-499	-478	-2,165
<b>Total (£000)</b>	2,090	1,530	0	0	3,620

### 3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London must have 'due regard' of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The street tree planting project outlined in this MD forms part of the policies and proposals in the London Environment Strategy which has been informed by a full Integrated Impact Assessment, including consideration of equalities.<sup>2</sup> The Equalities Assessment Report for the London Environment Strategy noted that exposure to poor environmental conditions is much higher among the BAME population.
- 3.3. The locations for proposed street tree planting look to maximise the positive impact of planting for all Londoners by targeting the project at wards of low canopy cover and high social deprivation. Increased tree planting provides a number of benefits (outlined in section 2 above).

### 4. Other considerations

- 4.1. The key risks and issues are set out in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 – key risks and issues**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>RAG rating</b>
Boroughs do not plant the number of trees set out in their grant funding agreements	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A two year programme should enable any delays in year one to be addressed in year two</li><li>• Numbers of trees confirmed in grant agreements with boroughs are realistic and deliverable by their contractors</li><li>• Claim amounts will align with the number of trees planted in the foregoing year</li></ul>	Amber
Adverse weather affects tree planting	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A two year programme should enable any delays in year one to be addressed in year two</li><li>• The window for tree planting can be extended into March if necessary without impacting on grant claims</li></ul>	Green
Delivery programme Overspend	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding offers will be subject to execution of funding agreements capping GLA funding, payments will be made on achievement of milestones (and evidence of associated expenditure)</li><li>• Match-funding is a requirement</li></ul>	Green
Delivery programme Underspend	Medium	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The GLA match funding can be put towards other tree planting projects if street tree planting projects come in under budget</li></ul>	Green

<sup>2</sup> See all the Integrated Impact Assessment documents: [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/london-environment-strategy](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/london-environment-strategy)

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>RAG rating</b>
Projects delivered are of a poor quality or are poorly maintained	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding agreements will include clear milestones for payment</li> <li>• Boroughs are responsible for maintenance and receive maintenance payments in years 3 and 4 to support effective maintenance</li> <li>• Project monitoring will include detailed locations of planting, photographic evidence and there will be site visits to a proportion of projects to check on delivery</li> </ul>	Amber

#### *Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

4.3 The street tree planting project as part of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Mayor's Greener City Fund will contribute towards:

- meeting the London Environment Strategy proposal for a major tree planting programme, to ensure that London's urban forest is maintained and expanded (Proposal 5.1.1.e); and
- meeting the London Environment Strategy target to increase tree cover by 10% by 2050.

#### *Conflicts of interest*

4.4 GLA officers are not aware that anyone involved in the drafting or clearance of this form has any conflicts of interest with the projects it is proposed to fund with the London boroughs. It is possible that GLA officers live in areas where street trees are due to be planted. However, planting locations were selected by London boroughs based on areas of low canopy cover and high deprivation and GLA officers were not involved in selecting planting locations.

## **5. Financial comments**

5.1 Approval is being sought to receive and spend a grant of up to £2.2m from the Forestry Commission to plant street trees in London. In addition, this decision is also seeking permission to provide match funding of up to £1.2m to further enhance this project, which will be funded from within the Environment Programme budget, specifically the GLA's Greener City revenue budget. This budget will require re-profiling as noted within the main body of the report to ensure it is in-line with the proposed deliverables of the programme.

5.2 As the GLA acted as intermediary to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, all grant monies will be administered to participating boroughs accordingly, making the Authority responsible for up to £3.4m of this project.

5.3 It should be noted that the Forestry Commission's grant is to be transferred to the GLA as capital grant. However, as the GLA accounts for tree planting as revenue expenditure (in line with previous tree planting programmes), the grant of £2.2m will be subject to a capital/ revenue swap via the Authority's Capital Programme Reserve.

## **6. Legal comments**

6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:

- 6.1.1 the decisions requested of the Mayor fall within the exercise of the GLA's general statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and

6.1.2 in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- (a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
- (b) consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom; and
- (c) consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty - namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

6.3 Should the Mayor be minded to make the decisions sought officers must ensure that they:

6.3.1 are content that the GLA can comply fully with the conditions of the Urban Tree Challenge Funding;

6.3.2 do not place any reliance upon the Urban Tree Challenge Funding until the GLA and Forestry Commission have entered into and executed the Urban Tree Challenge Funding agreement; and

6.3.3 enter into and execute grant funding agreements with the participating boroughs before committing to the provision of the funding proposed.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
GLA sign funding agreement with the Forestry Commission to accept the grant funding	End of October 2019
GLA sign grant agreements with 20 boroughs + Royal Docks to award the FC funding	By end of November 2019
Announcement of grant funding	November/December TBC by Forestry Commission
Tree Planting Delivery 2019-20: year one	November 2019-Feb 2020
Year one monitoring and grant claim from FC; grant payments to boroughs	March 2020
Tree Planting Delivery 2020-21: year two	November 2020-Feb 2021
Year two monitoring and grant claim from FC; grant payments to boroughs	March 2021
Delivery End Date	April 2021
Year 3 maintenance payments	TBC 2021-22
Year 4 maintenance payments	TBC 2022-23
Final evaluation start and finish (external)	TBC by Forestry Commission
Project Closure	April 2023

### Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

### Part 1 - Deferral

#### Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: Until the funding agreements have been signed between the GLA, the Forestry Commission and the participating boroughs and the FC have announced the grant awards. Publication at this point would prejudice the GLA's ability to manage the efficient entry into funding agreements with the participating boroughs.

Until what date: 2 December 2019

### Part 2 - Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form - NO

### ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

#### Drafting officer:

Katrina Ramsey has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

#### Sponsoring Director:

Debbie Jackson has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities. ✓

#### Mayoral Adviser:

Shirley Rodrigues has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations. ✓

#### Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal. ✓

#### Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 28 October 2019.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

Date 28.10.19

SM MIDDLETOWN on BEHALF OF MARTIN CLARKE

### CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature

Date 28/10/2019