

## **Executive Member Decision Session**

**8 September 2021**

Report of the Assistant Director of Policy and Strategy  
Portfolio of the Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Change

### **York Community Woodland final design, external capital funding source and delivery partner**

#### **Summary:**

1. The report sets out the recommended final woodland masterplan showing the suggested spatial layout and key features of York Community Woodland following public consultation and co-design. The masterplan is accompanied by indicative outline costs and a suggested phased implementation schedule.
2. The report also sets out options for the external capital funding source to support the physical creation of York Community Woodland and for appointing a woodland creation delivery partner to lead this work on behalf of City of York Council (“the council”).

#### **Recommendations:**

3. Approve the final woodland design masterplan as the basis for woodland creation and for submission to Forestry Commission for woodland approval and note the associated indicative outline costs and phased woodland creation implementation schedule.

**Reason/s:** The masterplan meets the design brief and will guide the creation of York Community Woodland and ensure it meets the community woodland vision, agreed project objectives and Forestry Commission regulatory requirements

4. Approve the recommendation to select Forestry England as the external capital funding source to support York Community

Woodland and act as the council's woodland creation delivery partner, based on the options appraisal set out in this report.

**Reason/s:** The external funder and woodland creation deliver partner will work with the council to create and manage the woodland in line with shared objectives, priorities and timescales. Approving the recommendation will enable the Director of Place in association with the Director of Governance and relevant officers to negotiate and enter into a formal lease agreement with Forestry England under Delegated Authority granted by the council's Executive on 26 August 2021.

5. Approve the publication of any necessary 'open space' disposal Notice under S.123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972. If any comments are received from the public in response to such Notice, these will be referred to the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change for consideration.

**Reason/s:** to ensure compliance with the Council's obligations pursuant to S.123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Background:**

6. Executive considered a report in August 2020 setting out the council's vision and objectives for York Community Woodland in pursuit of its ambition to reduce carbon emissions and plant 50,000 trees by 2023. The report paved the way for a significant land purchase to the west of York near Knapton village using c£1.61m capital funding from the council's £3m Northern Forest budget.
7. Project objectives include a nature based solution to climate change mitigation, a new amenity woodland connecting more people with nature to improve peoples' health and wellbeing, more diverse habitats to support wildlife and the recovery of threatened species and new green employment, volunteering and nature based learning opportunities.

8. Executive called on officers to minimise further call on the Northern Forest budget by securing as much external revenue and capital grants as possible to cover woodland design, woodland creation and ongoing management.
9. As part of the woodland community co-design process, a public consultation ran from 14<sup>th</sup> April – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The goal of this phase was to receive feedback on the vision, objectives and concept plans, and to guide the final stage of woodland design.
10. The consultation aimed to reach a wide and diverse audience from across the City of York. Access points were provided through an online survey, online meeting/webinars, postal surveys, school surveys and direct contact with a wide range of community & local interest groups, including parish councils, local ward councillors, local businesses, schools, colleges and universities.
11. The project's Stakeholder Advisory Group held its first meeting in March 2021. Made up of woodland experts, interest groups, local businesses, landowners and local members, the group provides advice and support for the co-design and overall project. An internal council officer group representing a wide range of service areas has also met regularly to help steer the project forward and ensure shared objectives are maximised.
12. Responses gathered through the community co-design process were analysed by the woodland design team (Pegasus Planning Ltd) appointed to produce the final woodland design and reported to Executive on 26 August 2021.
13. The council's Executive, at its meeting on 26 August 2021, granted Delegated Authority to the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change to approve the final woodland design for submission to Forestry England for woodland approval and to approve the selection of an external capital funding source and woodland creation delivery partner to support woodland creation and ongoing woodland management.
14. Executive also granted Delegated Authority to the council's Director of Place in association with the Director of Governance

and relevant officers to agree the appointment of a woodland delivery partner through open procurement or to negotiate and enter into a formal lease agreement with a funding and delivery partner once confirmed by the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change.

## **Consultation**

15. This report has been developed in consultation with partners from within the White Rose Forest and Community Forest Trust. Extensive stakeholder and community consultation has shaped the final woodland design masterplan. Colleagues within the council's Legal, Property, Finance, Planning, Carbon Reduction and Procurement teams were consulted during the drafting of this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment relating to the woodland design has been completed in consultation with the Woodland Stakeholder Advisory Group.

## **Final woodland design, indicative outline cost and indicative phased implementation plan**

### Final woodland design masterplan

16. The recommended final woodland design masterplan is attached as Annex 1 (associated annexes at 1a, 1b and 1c show the masterplan explanatory notes, woodland mood board and woodland visualisation respectively). The masterplan delivers the woodland design brief (see below) and will be the basis of an application to the Forestry Commission for woodland approval as part of a Woodland Creation Planning Grant Stage 2 submission.
17. The woodland design brief specified that the woodland masterplan should:
  - Deliver the community woodland vision and project objectives, including carbon reduction, biodiversity net gain, active travel and leisure opportunities, green skills development and volunteering opportunities
  - Meet Forestry Commission United Kingdom Forestry Standard and Forestry Commission Environmental Impact Assessment requirements
  - Remain within external capital funding criteria

- Enable achievement of agreed project success measures

18. The woodland design masterplan achieves a new multi-functional, predominantly native mixed broadleaf woodland, comprising 65% tree canopy cover and 35% open space. It delivers the Council Plan commitment to plant 50,000 trees by 2023 and incorporates the following key features:

- New pond creation, wood meadow and wayleaves/rides to support wildlife and new habitats, increase biodiversity and the protection and enhancement of endangered species
- New tracks, trails (incl. horses) and cycle routes to enable public access and encourage leisure and active travel. The paths/trails will be of different lengths and surfaces to cater for all needs (incl. disabled provision) and colour coded/waymarked to encourage exploration
- Easy access from existing sustainable transport infrastructure such as the Knapton to Rufforth bridleway – and access points/linkages to surrounding settlements
- Forest school facilities and coppice areas to support nature based learning, education and green based skills development
- Wood/area names relating to existing field names to reflect local heritage
- Community agroforestry and foraging opportunities in the form of a community orchard
- Non-public wood and pond area to the south of the B1224 for wildlife
- Low key events space
- Commemorative / contemplative wood area
- Signage and interpretation, benches and seating

19. The woodland design masterplan includes the following mitigations in response to issues raised during project development and public consultation (see summary at Annex 2 – Community consultation feedback report):

- Provision for the potential future dualling of York Outer Ring Road at Knapton

- Future potential expansion of York Community Woodland westward to incorporate areas of the former Harewood Whin landfill site
  - Tree protection that avoids use of single-use and non-reusable plastics during the establishment phase
  - Access routes and car/bike parking provision, with an emphasis on sustainable transport modes in line with community feedback and expressed travel intentions
  - Tree planting scheme taking into account the nearby Rufforth airfield operations
  - Recommendations resulting from the following surveys and reports:
    - Site assessment and concept design report
    - Preliminary Ecological Assessment report
    - Archaeological survey (Phase 1) report<sup>1</sup>
    - Breeding bird survey report
    - eDNA (Great Crested newt) survey report
    - Interim Water vole and Himalayan Balsam mapping report
20. The design masterplan includes proposals for a visitor centre, cafe and associated car parking. These are indicative and subject to further development and any required planning approval. These features will be detailed as the woodland establishes and matures and when visitor demand can be better assessed.
21. The woodland design masterplan is subject to variation for operational purposes. Any variations will align with the design brief.
22. The Executive Member is recommended to approve the final woodland design masterplan to guide the physical creation of York Community Woodland and act as the basis of a Woodland Creation Planning Grant Stage 2 submission to Forestry Commission for woodland approval. The recommendation is in

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<sup>1</sup> The council is commencing a Phase 2 (final) archaeological survey in early September 2021 at points of interest in the south east of the site and further mitigations may be required should anything significant be found. Any required mitigations will not change the design masterplan in any significant way and resolved at a localised level.

accordance to the Delegated Authority granted to the Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Change by the council's Executive on 26 August 2021.

Indicative outline costs:

23. Pegasus Planning Ltd has identified an indicative outline capital cost of woodland creation as set out in the design masterplan specification of c£1.74m. Removing later phase visitor centre/café/toilet structure costs brings this figure to c£1.17m. This overall cost is broken down into key components in Annex 3.
24. A modular approach will be adopted to developing the visitor centre and café facilities as the woodland matures and visitor numbers increase. Additional funding will be sought to support delivery, with provision being made for basic facilities to be included in Phase 1.
25. These indicative costs will form the basis of negotiations with external funding bodies to secure the required external capital funds and legal agreements to support implementation of the masterplan.
26. The Executive Member is recommended to note the indicative outline cost schedule to guide the physical creation of York Community Woodland and support external grant funding applications.

Indicative phased implementation plan:

27. Pegasus Planning Ltd produced an indicative woodland masterplan implementation schedule showing woodland creation over 3 key phases. (Annex 4). Phase 1 would commence in the 2021/22 tree planting season (October-March) and involves the planting of 36,000 trees. Phase 2 would commence in the 2022/23 tree planting season and involves planting 17,500 trees. These two phases combined would ensure the Council Plan commitment to plant 50,000 trees by 2023 is met. Phase 3 involves a further 26,500 trees to reach the plan total of 80,000. This indicative plan is subject to confirmation of Forestry

Commission woodland approval, external capital funding and appointment of a woodland delivery partner able to deliver within these broad timescales.

28. The schedule proposes subsequent phases based around delivery of the indicative forest school area, visitor centre/car park area and 'woodland entranceway' area from Knapton village via the underpass, subject to further development and required planning permissions.
29. The Executive Member is recommended to note the indicative phased implementation schedule to guide the physical creation of York Community Woodland and to support discussions with delivery partners.

### **External capital funding to support woodland creation and management, and selection of a woodland creation delivery partner**

30. Officers have pursued a number of capital funding opportunities to support woodland creation and ongoing woodland management. In May 2021, officers sent a Request for Information questionnaire to known funding bodies (Annex 5 provides a summary of responses).
31. Analysis of the responses enabled officers to undertake an initial evaluation of the funding opportunities against project objectives and timescales. Two funding sources offered the best alignment; the White Rose Forest Trees for Climate grant fund and the Forestry England Woodland Partnership 'offer'.<sup>2</sup> (Annex 6 provides a summary of the evaluation).
32. The funding opportunities represent two different propositions:
  - a) The Trees for Climate opportunity is a capital grant, funding 100% of woodland creation and 15 years' woodland management costs. It involves the council retaining full control and responsibility for procuring the services of a

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<sup>2</sup> Both funding opportunities are backed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 'Nature for Climate' fund to support the England Tree Strategy.

woodland creation delivery partner to physically create and then maintain the woodland on its behalf.

- The Forestry England Woodland Partnership offer involves Forestry England taking control and responsibility for woodland creation and ongoing management/maintenance to a design/specification agreed with the council through a long-term lease (60-120 years), for which the council would receive rental income.
33. The council has received 'in-principle' offers from both potential funding organisations. The offers are subject to final woodland design, Forestry Commission regulatory woodland approval and negotiated legal agreements.
34. Since the report to Executive on 26 August 2021, officers have completed a detailed options appraisal of these in-principle offers:

#### Option 1. White Rose Forest Trees for Climate fund

35. This offer is of a capital grant to support 100% woodland creation costs and 15 years' ongoing woodland management and maintenance. It would require the council to procure the services of a woodland creation and woodland management delivery partner(s) through open procurement and actively manage the contract(s).
36. White Rose Forest has indicated that Trees for Climate would fully support York Community Woodland project objectives, on the assumption that the list of eligible expenditure covers all the items featured in the woodland design masterplan. Trees for Climate objectives closely align to those for York Community Woodland, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity net gain, public access and engagement.
37. The list of eligible cost items under Trees for Climate allows for flexibility and should cover most expenditure directly linked to the delivery of the woodland design masterplan. In respect of tree

establishment and ongoing woodland management, Trees for Climate support is broken down into two main elements:

- Woodland creation and establishment payment(s): Payments of Grant funding made under the scheme in respect of successful tree planting and tree establishment, as specified in the Offer Letter and Agreement Document. Inspection of the area may be required by the Local Community Forest or Authorised Representative before any payment is authorised. Tree planting means the physical planting of trees and shrubs into suitable ground conditions in order to facilitate the creation of new woodland. Tree establishment means successful growth and development of healthy trees and shrubs, with the achievement of the minimum stocking density stated in the Agreement. The establishment period is typically 3-5 years following tree planting.
- Woodland support payments: These would be made under the scheme in support of ongoing woodland maintenance operations and ongoing delivery of ecosystem services, as specified in the Agreement.

38. The council is able to specify woodland creation and management terms within its contract(s) with any woodland creation and woodland management delivery partner(s), enabling retention of benefits like carbon credits and any shared income from timber or other commercial activities put in place or subsequently developed. Community engagement, green skills development and volunteering opportunities would need to be specified and monitored as part of these arrangements.
39. Risk management would be a key feature within the contract(s) with any woodland creation and woodland management delivery partner(s), the council having opportunity to transfer elements of delivery risk but retaining the overall risks associated with woodland creation (subject to negotiation of terms). A major risk currently affecting the whole woodland creation industry is tree supply. Minimising exposure to this risk could be done through procurement and contract arrangements.

40. The grant funding can also be used for required officer capacity/resource associated with delivery.
41. On the assumption that the council agrees to the fully costed woodland design masterplan, Kirklees Council (the accountable body for White Rose Forest) could issue, under the Terms and Conditions of 'Nature for Climate' funding, an Offer Letter within 1-2 weeks. Any offer of grant funding is conditional on the council securing regulatory approval for woodland creation from the Forestry Commission.
42. Once all necessary approvals are completed, a procurement exercise would commence to secure the services of a woodland creation and management partner fully supported by Trees for Climate funding. This process could take several months and represents a risk to the delivery timeline.

#### Option 2. Forestry England Woodland Partnership offer

43. The Forestry England Woodland Partnership offer involves Forestry England taking full responsibility for woodland creation and ongoing management to a design/specification agreed with the council. Delivery and ongoing management requirements would be detailed in formal legal agreements to be negotiated between the Council and Forestry England, including a long-term lease (60-120 years) of the site to Forestry England, for which the council would receive an annual rental income assessed in the region of between c£10,000 - £12,500 per year (depending on the duration of lease).
44. The Forestry England Woodland Partnership offer fully supports council objectives for carbon sequestration, biodiversity net gain, public access and ongoing engagement and achievement of a predominantly native mixed broadleaf woodland. Eligible cost items are similar to Trees for Climate funding, including site infrastructure, trees and their protection, access and signage, wood meadow creation, open space and wet woodland. Officers have consulted Forestry England on the emerging woodland design masterplan and Forestry England has confirmed all items specified are eligible for 100% support.

45. The woodland design masterplan shows plans for future inclusion of a visitor centre/café facility in later phases, as the woodland establishes and matures and visitor demand is better understood. These features are subject to any required planning permissions. Facilities will be developed on a modular basis as need develops with consideration for toilet facilities included in the initial phase. Forestry England has confirmed that visitor centre and café facilities often feature within their existing managed sites. Forestry England holds a central infrastructure funding pot (currently c£9m annually) that local woodland managers can apply to support the creation of features such as these, so long as a business case can be made. Forestry England's current model for such facilities is to sub-contract the running of cafés/shops to local suppliers and to specify the use of high quality local produce/goods.
46. Officers have commenced discussions with Forestry England regarding potential Heads of Terms and Legal/Lease Agreements to govern any contractual relationship between the council and Forestry England should this be the preferred funding source and delivery partner. These discussions are non-prejudicial and designed to shorten timescales. Discussions have centred around the use of formal legal agreements to ensure that the delivery of York Community Woodland is created to the design and specification agreed by the council.
47. Further control can be retained by the council through requirements set out within any legal agreement(s) entered into with Forestry England including (subject to negotiation with Forestry England):
- the council retaining all carbon credits for its own internal accounting purposes
  - the council retaining naming rights for the site
  - the council adopting and using the agreed community woodland vision and objectives to underpin project delivery and ongoing management
  - Avoidance of 'single-use' plastics wherever possible

- Ongoing community engagement to support and enable green skills development, nature based learning and community volunteering opportunities
  - Ongoing participation and representation from elected members to ensure the woodland's management reflects local views
48. Forestry England has indicated that, should they be chosen and confirmed as the council's delivery partner, they can move swiftly to put the required legal agreements, capacity and resources in place to commence woodland creation in line with the council's agreed woodland design masterplan and indicative implementation schedule, subject to the council securing Forestry Commission regulatory approval.

### **Options appraisal:**

49. Both in-principle funding offers would deliver the council's ambition for the woodland and provide preferable alternatives to the 'do nothing' position of using the Northern Forest budget for delivery. This option has not received further consideration in this report as it would fail to meet the requirement to minimise further calls on council budgets.
50. While there are similarities across the two offers, notably in the alignment with council objectives, a direct comparison is difficult due to the different nature of the propositions. There are, however, some important points of difference:
- White Rose Forest support the creation of new woodland through their Delivery Pathway; however, delivery is outsourced to an external organisation through an open procurement process. Forestry England are the largest forest managers in England and possess significant experience of woodland creation and land management. Delivery and management is locally led with Forestry England and the council entering into a long-term lease agreement.
  - The White Rose Forest (WRF) capital grant places responsibility for delivery and overall control with the council. Some of this responsibility and associated project risk could

be passed on to contractors/any woodland creation and woodland management delivery partner(s); however, the council would retain overall accountability. Alternatively, a lease to Forestry England could (subject to negotiation of terms) transfer significant responsibility and project risk to FE, while also transferring day-to-day control of the woodland. Important requirements of the Council could be specified in any lease to Forestry England (FE) (subject to negotiation of terms) and the council could have continued involvement through the management board.

- WRF capital grant covers maintenance costs for 15 years. This would be outsourced to a management partner but would need to be resourced by the council (either internally or through a management contract) at the end of this period. Under proposed lease to FE if their offer is chosen, FE would undertake all land management for the duration of the lease (60-120 years). At completion, the lease could be re-negotiated or the land transferred back to council control at which point continued management would need to be resourced by the council.
- WRF offer would cover 100% of the indicative costs, excluding the visitor centre and café facilities. Further potential expansion is also not included in the grant but could be eligible for separate grant applications. FE have a central pot of infrastructure funding that can be used to fund visitor centre/café facilities, subject to a business case.
- FE lease arrangement provides guaranteed rental income for the council of between £10,000-£12,500 per annum. FE would retain any income from commercial activity; however, they operate all their sites as not for profit undertakings meaning that any revenue is reinvested into the woodland. Through the WRF capital grant, the council would be free to negotiate a profit sharing agreement under a management contract for any commercial activity; however, this income is uncertain.

51. The White Rose Forest Trees for Climate offer has been evaluated to include the following potential benefits:

- a) Aligns well with the council's aims and objectives

- b) Eligible items within the recommended woodland design masterplan funded at 100% rate
- c) the council retains primary ownership and full control of the woodland, ensuring local accountability to residents and retaining a key say in how the woodland develops and is managed over time
- d) the council retains all carbon credits
- e) the council can access potential income from timber production (from thinnings etc.) and other commercial operations, so long as specified in woodland management contract(s)
- f) the council would work with the White Rose Forest Partnership on a flagship woodland creation scheme for York and the region, and to reap reputational benefits from this direct association

52. White Rose Forest Trees for Climate offer has been evaluated to include the following potential disadvantages:

- a) Full responsibility for woodland creation and management sits with the council. This responsibility can be mitigated in some way through our ongoing partnership with White Rose Forest (drawing on the resources and expertise they provide) and through the contract/procurement of a woodland creation delivery and management partner, working to clear contract specifications. However, this process comes with additional risks and responsibilities:
  - i. Requires the council to get the contract specification right, in order to secure the desired outcomes and timescales. It could be challenging to anticipate every eventuality up-front given woodland creation is a very long-term undertaking (contract review clauses could be factored in to address this)
  - ii. Procurement of a delivery partner can take time and the council is not guaranteed to secure the quality and pace it requires to hit project outputs and timescales
  - iii. Procurement timescales pose a real risk to tight project deadlines
  - iv. Tree supply would remain a key project risk
- b) Responsibility of the council to manage delivery and maintenance contracts (requiring staff resourcing). Although

costs of doing so covered for the first 15 years by Trees for Climate funding, this would require significant resourcing beyond that period.

- c) Large-scale woodland creation and management is not a current area of expertise for the council or part of operation.
- d) Development of any future visitor centre/cafe/toilet facilities would be the council's responsibility to finance and manage
- e) No regular income through rents

53. Forestry England funding and delivery offer has been evaluated to include the following potential benefits:

- a) Responsibility and risk for woodland creation and management transfers to Forestry England via a partnership (lease) arrangement with the council
- b) Reduces risks associated with procurement and tree supply as Forestry England have access to their own tree nurseries
- c) Minimises ongoing resourcing requirement for the council to low level contract management (currently a standard function of Property Services)
- d) Guaranteed annual income to the council of c£10,000 to c£12,500 per annum (Retail Price Index linked) depending on length/duration of lease
- e) Forestry England would adopt the agreed community woodland vision, objectives and woodland name. The woodland would benefit from co-branding of both FE and CYC
- f) the council to retain all carbon credits
- g) Ability to deliver at pace backed by significant organisational expertise and in-house resources
- h) Agreement from Forestry England to adopt project timescales, including commencing tree planting this winter and delivering minimum 50,000 trees by 2023, in line with Council Plan commitments
- i) Forestry England would deliver the agreed woodland design masterplan and key feature as specified and agreed (and specified in the lease agreement subject to negotiation of terms)
- j) Potential for future infrastructure and expansion to be financed through Forestry England capital funding resource

- k) Organisational commitment and expertise, as demonstrated through Forestry England woodland sites across the country, to community engagement, nature based learning and volunteering opportunities
- l) Potential for additional Forestry England recreation and leisure facilities and activities
- m) Willingness for Forestry England to consider, within legal framework, ongoing role of local representatives in woodland management
- n) Extensive volunteer network and opportunities for community participation in woodland delivery and management
- o) Forestry England's strong, high-profile reputation as a trusted brand

54. Forestry England funding and delivery offer has been evaluated to include the following potential disadvantages:

- a) the council effectively passes control (and responsibility) to Forestry England, with Forestry England becoming the day-to-day operator. Elements of control can be retained through the lease agreement
- b) Long tenancy with no break (early termination) clause – subject to terms of the lease
- c) All income from commercialisation of the space will belong to Forestry England. However, Forestry England operate their woodlands as not for profit and any surplus income is re-invested back into the site
- d) Forestry England brand could dominate and detract from the woodland's local connection. This could be mitigated through lease terms requiring ongoing co-branding (subject to negotiation with Forestry England)
- e) Minimal rental income for the council in relative terms
- f) Under the terms of the transfer deed pursuant to which the Council bought (part of) the proposed woodland site last year, the consent would need the written consent of the seller/former owner to grant a lease to Forestry England – albeit they are obliged by the transfer deed's provisions to give such consent.

## **Conclusion and recommendation**

55. Overall, the Forestry England offer appears to provide most significant benefit with minimal disadvantages. For this reason, the recommendation to the Executive Member is to approve Option 2 and select the Forestry England offer as the primary funder and delivery partner for York Community Woodland creation and ongoing woodland management.
56. The Forestry England offer will meet our delivery timescales, reduce project risk and liability for the council, create an exciting new partnership between Forestry England and the council for the benefit of local people and provide the council with a guaranteed (small) annual income for the duration of any lease.
57. York Community Woodland is one of only nine woodland creation schemes nationally to be offered Forestry England Woodland Partnership support and Forestry England has confirmed it is by far the most advanced project they are working on. The Forestry England approach is for the national team to initially develop and support the project and then, after three years of woodland establishment, transfer the woodland to the Yorkshire regional area team.
58. Following approval, the Director of Place, in association with the Director of Governance and relevant officers, will begin negotiations and agree a formal lease agreement with Forestry England under Delegated Authority granted by the council's Executive on 26 August 2021

## **Council Plan**

59. The project accords with the Council Plan 2019-2023 in regard to the following core outcomes of the Plan:
  - A greener and cleaner city – Carbon sequestration and amenity green space
  - Getting around sustainably – New pedestrian and cycle routes

- Good health and wellbeing – Creation of new open spaces to support healthy lifestyles for residents, businesses and visitors.
- Safe communities and culture for all – A range of leisure opportunities for residents
- Well paid jobs and an inclusive economy – Green skills development

## Implications

- **Financial** – The council funded the land purchase cost of £1.61m in 2020/21. Accessing external grant to fully fund the capital costs of woodland creation and ongoing woodland management will meet the council's objective to minimise call on the City of York Council capital budgets. The two funding offers being considered for woodland creation and management means the project can continue without council subsidy.
- **Human Resources** – Appointment of Forestry England as the woodland delivery partner may require an assessment of current staff resourcing dedicated to the project.
- **Equalities** – An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the woodland masterplan and is attached as Annex 7. The key conclusions arising from the assessment are:
  - The EIA has not found any negative impacts and has been designed to have a positive impact on several protected groups
  - The Woodland is an ongoing project and will continue to assess impacts and effects as the project progresses
- **Legal** – Detailed negotiations will be required to agree terms of any lease or other contracts/legal agreements with third parties to enable the council to ensure woodland delivery and management remains in accordance with agreed plans and timescales.
- **Crime and Disorder** – Consideration need to be given to the ongoing security and surveillance of the site to avoid instances of anti-social behaviour. This will need to be incorporated into the lease agreement.

- **Information Technology** – Consideration will be given to connectivity requirements for any future visitor centre and cafe facilities. This will be elaborated at the planning stage.
- **Property** – Property implications are contained within this report
- **Other** – None associated directly with this report

## Risk Management

60. The various funding streams featured in this report involve different levels of project risk with the Forestry England offer assessed as delivering the lowest woodland creation and ongoing management risks. The requirements for legal agreements to underpin the proposed woodland partnership with Forestry England could take time to put in place, with potential risks to project timescales.

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 27/08/2021

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*Title: Director of Governance*

### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)** *List information for all*

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**Wards Affected: All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:**

- Creating a new woodland stray for York – Executive report 27 August 2020
- York Community Woodland community co-design vision and process for selecting capital funding and delivery partner – Executive report 26 August 2021

**Annexes**

- Annex 1: Woodland design masterplan
- Annex 1a: Woodland design explanatory notes
- Annex 1b: Woodland design mood board
- Annex 1c: Woodland design visualisation
- Annex 2: Community and stakeholder consultation feedback report
- Annex 3: Indicative outline costs
- Annex 4: Indicative implementation schedule
- Annex 5: Summary of responses to funders' questionnaire
- Annex 6: Initial evaluation exercise
- Annex 7: Equalities Impact Assessment