

Planning & Environment Committee

Date:	5 November 2013
Title:	Free Trees Scheme
Purpose of Report:	To consider whether to apply for Free Trees in 2014
Contact Officer:	Helen Stewart, Town Clerk

Background Information

Twice a year the Woodland Trust gives away free trees to community groups, youth groups and schools in an effort to create more woodland throughout the UK. The Trust reports that the UK has just 11.8% of tree cover, one of the lowest in Europe, and wants to change that by creating a UK rich in native woods and trees relatively quickly as saplings planted today will take 12 years to flourish into young woods.

Groups can apply for any of the following tree packs:

- a. Pack of 30 - perfect as a starter pack for creating a small copse or short hedgerow.
- b. Pack of 105 - ideal for planting either in small groups of trees or as a hedge (approx. 30m). If planted as a block of trees coverage is approx. a quarter of an acre.
- c. Pack of 420 trees - great for creating a long hedge (approx. 120m), or divide up and plant in groups of trees (planted as a block of trees, there are enough for approx. one acre of land).

All packs come in a choice of themes – in 2013 the themes were small copse, small hedge, wildlife, year-round colour, wild harvest, wetland and wood fuel all designed to help groups choose the right species mix for their local area.

Any not-for-profit group may apply as long as the trees are planted on a publicly accessible site (with permission from the legal landowner), with support from the community where the trees are to be planted and there is community involvement in the project.

Past applicants in the local area have included Barley Hill School, Shabbingdon Jubilee Committee and Benson Parish Council who planted 25 trees to fill gaps in the hedge around the Sunnyside Play Area.

Resource Appraisal

The Woodland Trust recommends that newly planted saplings be protected by canes and spirals, the cost per pack of 30 is £25.00. Maintenance staff time required after initial planting for watering until saplings are established and in the future to prune and maintain trees once fully matured.

Legal Powers: Open Spaces Act 1906, ss 9 and 10

Recommendation:

The Committee is recommended:

- i) To consider applying for free trees in 2014 and to suggest suitable planting areas in Thame.***