

## **Record of Executive Decision**

**5 March 2007 – Agenda Item 14(2)**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Community
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Land at Tips Copse, Stubbington</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Customer Services
<b>Strategy/Policy:</b>	Green Spaces Study Sustainability Strategy
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Protecting and Enhancing our Environment

**EXEMPT INFORMATION: Report and background papers exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.**

### **Purpose:**

The report advises the Executive that the Trustee for the Late M H N House Deceased, the Owner of Tips Copse has now been traced and that consideration is now required to determine whether the Council wishes to purchase this woodland, should it become available for sale.

Tips Copse is a linear piece of ancient woodland in Stubbington. It is 2.5ha in size and is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The woodland also has a Tree Preservation Order in place (TPO), although this is likely to be revoked if the Council should proceed with the acquisition of this land. A site plan is attached at Appendix A to the report.

The site is considered to have high Conservation Value as Fareham has little Ancient Woodland and Tips Copse exhibits good potential for a diverse flora with management input. As part of the Council's research work on the Green Space Study as part of the LDF, it was identified that there is a shortage of natural green spaces in the Stubbington area. By acquiring Tips Copse, the Council would ensure the continued enjoyment of it by members of the public rather than allowing it to be sold to a private owner where all existing access could cease. There is also an opportunity to re-establish a friends group and encourage local people to become involved in local conservation issues and the protection of important green spaces.

At its meeting on the 3 April 2006, the Executive received a report on Tips Copse which resulted in the following recommendations:

- (a) appropriate investigations be carried out by the Council to ascertain ownership of the land at Tips Copse, Stubbington,
- (b) if land ownership of the land at Tips Copse, Stubbington is ascertained, the Council to liaise with the owners to advise on management of the site and, subject to the owner's agreement, to progress a partnership/management agreement;
- (c) if it is not possible to establish land ownership, the Council to consider the acquisition of the land compulsorily;

Following an extensive search, the owner of the land has now been traced. As stated above, the land is owned by The Trustees of the Late M H N House Deceased.

At a meeting on 1 November 2006, with the Trustee, the Council was advised that the Trustee would not wish to enter into any partnership/management agreement for the site as there were no funds available for the upkeep of the woodland and any future liabilities, including public safety, fly tipping, motorbike access, etc. Therefore, the only option feasibly available to the Trustee was to offer the land up for sale on the open market.

The Council has since met with Ian Judd & Partners, Land Surveyors who are acting on behalf of the Trustee to discuss a possible sale. A price guide has been suggested, although no one can be certain of the value of this land due to it being a unique opportunity to purchase a piece of woodland in an urban area. The fact that there is no vehicular access to the woodland may reduce its value unless potential purchasers have existing land adjoining the site.

A sum has already be allocated in the capital programme should members wish to purchase this land. A further capital sum has also been allocated to undertake works such as fencing and path works. It was also previously agreed that an increase in the revenue budgets would be necessary for routine maintenance works, re-establishing the friends group, volunteer tasks/activities and regular inspections of the site.

**Options Considered:**

As recommendation.

Comments of Councillor K Mandry.

**Decision:**

That the Director of Finance and Resources be given delegated authority to negotiate the purchase of Tips Copse, Stubbington and that should the negotiated price be higher than the allocated budget the Executive Leader be authorised to approve additional expenditure.

**Reason for Decision:**

As part of the Council's research work on the Green Space Study, it was identified that there is a shortage of natural green spaces in the Stubbington Area and should the opportunity arise the Council should "Acquire the ownership of the Tips Copse site and enhance quality as an area of accessible natural green space".

**Confirmed as a true record:**

**Date:** 7 March 2007

Councillor S D T Woodward (Chairman)

**Note: this decision will come into force at the expiration of 7 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's 'call-in' provisions.**