

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Customer and Digital (Introduced by the Executive Member for Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services)	Executive Cabinet	15 November 2018

ADOPTION OF COUNCIL'S REVISED TREE POLICY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To seek approval for the adoption of the Council's revised Tree Policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- The policy is approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The purpose of the Tree Policy is to set out the council's risk based approach to the inspection and maintenance of trees on council owned land. The policy needs revising following the internal audit report of May 2016 and appointment of a new tree officer.
- The policy reflects best practise in managing trees and better management of risk associated with trees on council owned land. The policy will be available on our website and will be provided to our insurers.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Key Decision? Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Reason Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- To ensure the Council has a robust policy in place for the risk management of trees it is responsible for.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- To not adopt the revised policy would not comply with our audit requirements and potentially

leave the Council open to challenge.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities	√	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	

BACKGROUND

8. The Council current tree policy was approved in July 2013. The policy clarified the council's priorities for maintenance and is a public document. Apart from low level work all our tree work is carried out by specialised contractors following assessment from the council's tree officer.
9. The council received 754 requests concerning trees in 2017/18, with 656 requests in 2016/17. The annual budget spent on tree maintenance is £80,000; this is likely to increase as more inspections of our tree stock take place and more issues are identified. The tree stock across the Borough is maturing and this is likely to increase the number of requests received. Currently only our high risk trees have been identified e.g. those in parks, on car parks, in the cemeteries, adjacent to roads and are inspected regularly.

CHANGES TO NEW POLICY

10. The revised policy outlines in greater detail the council's responsibilities, the risk assessment process, frequency of inspection and a timescale for dealing with defects based on risk. The new frequency of inspection is realistic and reflects industry best practice. It addresses the issues raised in the internal audit report from May 2016.
11. Our current policy states the council will arrange for the necessary work to council owned trees overhanging private property. A landowner is within their rights to cut off any tree branches to their boundary at their expense. The Council will continue to carry out work to trees overhanging private property if requested subject to the work being unlikely to cause detrimental damage to the tree.
12. Currently the council will consider requests for work for other issues such as;
 - Sap falling from trees
 - Perceived damage to properties from tree roots
 - Reduced light level to property
 - Leaf fall
 - Poor TV reception

Trees in the past have been crown reduced or severely pruned following requests described above and unless the tree is diseased this is not best practice. It is also a poor use of the limited budget which is required for dealing with dead, diseased or dying trees and carrying out maintenance to prevent them falling into these categories. The council will no longer take action in relation the above issues unless the complaint relates to reduced light levels to the property where the council will consider works subject to budget and that the requested work is unlikely to cause detrimental impact upon the tree.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

13. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	√	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

RISK

A risk register has been completed	Yes	No
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COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

14. The annual tree maintenance budget has been £80,000 since 2013/14, with average expenditure over this period being £73,700, and £69, 400 over the last three years. This budget will be reviewed as part of the annual revenue budget setting process.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

15. No comments.

ASIM KHAN
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Tree Policy	October 2018		Attached

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jo Oliver	5737	12 October 2018	***