



CABINET – 15TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT: THE MANAGEMENT OF TREES

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 1.1 The attached report, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st November 2017, sought Members' views on current tree management arrangements, the formal adoption of a tree strategy and the current resources (staff and budget) linked to this function, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for consideration.
- 1.2 Members were reminded of the initial report detailing the management of trees and draft strategy, which was presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 13th December 2016. At that meeting, Members were supportive of the recommendations and agreed to consider resource requirements to ascertain if the draft strategy can be delivered before progressing further. Since that time, and following further examination of the strategy, Officers have made a slight amendment, which introduces a risk rating to underpin the inspection frequencies included in the original draft.
- 1.3 The latest report set out the position following a review of staff and budget resources, and outlined funding proposals to enable the safe management of its tree stock in line with the proposed Tree Strategy (set out in Appendix 1 of the report) and its resultant zones/inspection frequencies. Officers explained that due to the escalating number of service requests and the subsequent workload pressures, there is a need to employ an additional Arboricultural Officer and maintenance team to deal with tree inspections and maintenance work. There is also a requirement for additional funding to deal with highway tree maintenance on strategic routes. Also appended to the report was a list of the main legislation and guidance outlining land owners' responsibilities in relation to trees and duty of care.
- 1.4 Queries were received regarding the Council's policy in relation to highway obstructions, tree-related nuisance and leaf clearance. It was explained that trees obstructing the highway are addressed through normal highway safety processes as a matter of priority, whilst issues such as the obstruction of a window within a residential property would be approached through the proposed Tree Strategy. Members were advised that it is not feasible for the Council to clear leaves from steps and footpaths due to the enormity of the task, but that the Highways Department funds an additional sweeper through the autumn to clear leaves from gullies and minimise potential flooding.
- 1.5 A Member sought clarification on the process for reporting tree service requests on behalf of residents and suggested it would be useful for the reporting person to be kept informed of the request status. Officers provided details of the appropriate contact point and explained that view of the high volume of requests being received, arrangements are being made to expand the number of staff who can acknowledge such requests. Discussion took place regarding funding for the proposals and Officers outlined how this would be achieved through a combination of recharging measures for tree related surveys, inspections and works and a reprofiling of budgets within Community and Leisure Services. In response to a Member's query, Officers also outlined the health and safety investigations that would be undertaken in the event of a potentially dangerous tree failing.

- 1.6 Following consideration of the report the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein:-
- (i) the current tree management arrangements set out within the report be endorsed;
 - (ii) the proposed draft Tree Strategy at Appendix 1 and the frequency of proposed proactive inspections be endorsed;
 - (iii) the funding proposals set out in the report to meet the associated costs in delivering the tree strategy and complying with the Authority's Health and Safety liabilities be endorsed.

1.7 Members are asked to consider the recommendations.

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Appendices:
Appendix Report to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st October 2017 –
Agenda Item 8