

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET 21st April 2016

TREE AND WOODLAND POLICY FRAMEWORK

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING
CABINET MEMBER CLLR SHAUN DAVIES CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS,
NEIGHBOURHOOD & CUSTOMER SERVICES**

(PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Tree and Woodland Framework will support Neighbourhood and Customer Services' going forward as a governing document that informs our strategy for dealing with a wide range of tree and woodland related customer enquiries and other issues. The framework provides a basis to deliver the Council's priorities, a direction for allocating tight resources within the Service area and prioritising work streams whilst continuing to meet the needs of the local community – it is very much focused on achieving Right Tree – Right Place.
- 1.2 Based upon three key themes: 1. Trees Policy & Plans; 2. Communities and Trees; and 3. Risk Management, the framework provides a set of aims and policies which will help develop a sustainably managed tree and woodlands resource, providing an accessible, healthy attractive and high quality environment for people and wildlife.
- 1.3 There are 12 policies providing clear parameters to work within (Appendix 1).

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS
That Cabinet**

- 2.1 **Approve The Tree and Woodland Framework for Telford & Wrekin – Connecting Communities with Trees and Woodlands 2016-2021 as a document setting out a clear policy for the Borough that will enable a better communication process with customers and provide a working document to manage trees and woodlands within the Borough.**
- 2.2 **Formally adopt the policies, findings and recommendations of the Tree and Woodland Framework for Telford & Wrekin – Connecting Communities with Trees and Woodlands 2016-2021 document.**

3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>As a Co-operative Council, we will work with our communities to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>The strategy provides guidelines and actions which will provide clear communication for residents and manage expectations more effectively.</i>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	<i>Formal adoption of the Strategy is required by end of March 2016. Actions to be progressed as a result of the Strategy will be delivered from April 2016 onwards.</i>	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR	Yes	Implementation and adoption of the Tree Policies 1-12 will be

MONEY IMPACT		met from within current resources across Arts & Recreation and Neighbourhood Management. TWS are contracted to provide this service within the additional works budget managed by Highways & Neighbourhood Management Services. (AM 23.02.16)
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Council is a significant landowner in the Borough and, as a consequence, owns and manages many trees and woodlands. In addition, it has a number of statutory powers and responsibilities which relate to trees and woodlands. These powers are outlined in The Tree and Woodland Framework for Telford & Wrekin – Connecting Communities with Trees and Woodlands 2016-2021 document.</p> <p>In particular, the Council as local planning authority can make and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and designate Conservation areas (CA's) within which certain established trees are protected. The local planning authority powers relating to the preservation of trees are not an executive function i.e. they cannot be exercised by Cabinet. However, Cabinet can encourage the exercise of these powers as set out in the Framework.</p> <p>The recommended Framework document is a response to these powers, duties and responsibilities. (IR – 23.03.16)</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES		
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	Borough wide

4. (PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4.1 Background

4.1.1. This Framework provides Neighbourhood & Customer Services with a way forward for dealing with a wide range of tree and woodland issues within the Service Areas responsibility. This resource is located primarily in public open spaces and forms the majority ownership of Council trees and woodlands, and therefore this Service Area receives the majority of tree related public enquiries.

However, there are other Council owned trees and woodlands which fall outside the remit of Neighbourhood & Customer Services, for example trees in school grounds. The approach to dealing with risk within these other areas will be incorporated within the emerging Corporate Tree Risk Strategy, which will address managing risk on all Council owned trees.

4.1.2. Trees and woodlands within the borough are a huge asset. The trees, woodlands and other natural 'greenspace' have contributed hugely to the development of the borough. This local significance is recognised in the Council's land management commitment to protect a number of green spaces from development under a Green Guarantee. These sites are within the Council's ownership and are managed for biodiversity, leisure and recreation and are valued by local communities. Trees and woodlands are significant features in the value of these sites.

The Council also strategically recognises the importance of trees and woodlands and this framework links to the publicising version of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan and

particularly relates to policy NE2 Trees, Hedgerows & Woodlands and to policies NE3, NE4 and NE5 on Public Open Space.

It is also nationally recognised that trees and woodlands make a wide-ranging and positive contribution to the quality of modern life. They make a tremendous impact on visitors and residents alike, providing significant environmental, social, economic and health benefits.

4.1.3. **Environmental benefits include –**

Improving the air quality by trapping particulate pollution and absorbing noxious gases and by taking carbon dioxide out of the air and 'locking it up' in their timber and acting as carbon stores. The woodland canopy intercepts rainfall and can slow down storm water run-off, reducing the risk of flooding. Tree belts enhance the built environment by screening intrusive developments and reducing the impact of noise from roads and factories. Trees and woodland are fascinating living laboratories that can make inspiring outdoor classrooms, and increase the biodiversity of an area.

4.1.4. **Social benefits include -**

People want to live and work in healthy, attractive, comfortable surroundings, and trees, woodlands and accessible greenspace are acknowledged by residents as indicators of a quality environment.

They reinforce local character and can create a positive sense of place and create a sense of scale. Mature trees also provide a direct link with the past – the history of the landscape is revealed in their large age and location.

4.1.5. **Economic benefits include -**

A tree-rich urban landscape is recognised as an important attraction for new businesses which, in turn, create employment. Several studies have shown that house prices are higher in a 'well-treed' residential neighbourhood. The Borough's tree stock has potential to produce timber and fuel wood for local markets when managed as a renewable source.

4.1.6. **Health benefits include-**

Trees trap air pollutants which can affect the lungs and can exacerbate respiratory and heart diseases and patient recovery rates improve when they can view trees from their hospital window.

Woods are a great places to exercise which reduces heart disease, strokes and some cancers.

Trees and woodlands also provide a good setting for sociable recreational activities which can complement community cohesion.

4.1.7 However, the benefits of trees and woodland need to be balanced with the impact upon people's lives. People often live in close proximity to trees, particularly in an urban area. These trees are either their own, their neighbours or may belong to the council or be on private land. A dilemma often occurs when the tree makes an important contribution to the local environment but also causes inconvenience to those living nearby.

Within the older estates of Telford, for instance, this can be significant to residents as trees mature and become more prominent in their settings and environs. There is then a balance to be struck in terms of perceived nuisance and the benefits they provide.

The Council should work towards creating places and spaces in the community where tree species can thrive and deliver their full range of benefits without causing harmful nuisance – **"Right place – Right tree"**. This framework will work towards achieving this balance by balancing policy with a common sense approach.

4.2 **Key themes addressed within the framework.**

Our vision for trees and woodlands to acheive “ **Right Tree Right Place**” is:

“A landscape rich in trees and woodlands,diverse in age range and species, managed sustainably to provide an accessible,safe attractive and high quality environment for the people and wildlife of the borough.”

This vision can be addressed through 3 key themes:

- 4.2.1 **Tree policy and plans** - improved policies and forward planning should reduce issues for the future. The ‘Right Tree Right Place’ concept is consistent with the policy approach in the Local Plan and will be carried forward into any accompanying Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 4.2.2 **Communties and trees** - providing clear information and guidelines for the community and a framework to deal with enquiries in a fair and reasonable way.
- 4.2.3 **Risk management** –contributing towards a corporate Health and Safety of tree risk management policy, and dealing with insurance and subsidence claims in a proactive manner.

4.3 Policies and communication process

There are 12 very clear policies within the framework which will set out the principles and triggers for action within those service areas involved in managing the tree and woodland resource (Appendix 1). The policies create ground rules which enables greater consistency in tree works and an effective mechanism to manage public expectations. The framework policies, and accompanying communication process, will help create tree friendly places, where trees can thrive and deliver their full range of benefits without causing nuisance or harm.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Not applicable.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Not applicable.