

A Tree and Woodland Framework for Telford and Wrekin

Connecting Communities with Trees and Woodlands

2016 – 2021

Customer, Neighbourhood and Well-Being

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1. Introduction

1.1 The need for a framework

This framework sets out guidelines for tree management in line with national legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework, national best practice and Telford and Wrekin Council local planning policy and other relevant council strategies. The Framework provides direction to Telford and Wrekin Council Neighbourhood Services -managed trees and woodlands in open spaces wherever they may be found throughout the borough. The framework also provides direction on working with other Service Areas within the Council to provide a coherent approach to tree and woodland management.

Proper care and management of Telford's urban forest requires a long-term vision and planned approach, in order to maximise its current values and future potential. A coherent framework, with balanced aims and policies will help to achieve this.

The great majority of the Council's trees and woodland are located within the built environments of Telford and, to a lesser extent, Newport. These trees, hedgerows and woodlands, together with the open 'greenspace' with which they are often associated, collectively constitute the design concept of an "urban forest". Within this urban forest, communities live, and work, and therefore the framework addresses the issue that managing Telford and Wrekin Council's trees and woodlands is as much about people and communities as it is about trees.

Trees growing within the borough are vital and important, yet at the same time can be seen as being highly emotive, both in terms of perceived nuisance and of the benefit they provide. The Council should work towards creating places where tree species can thrive and deliver their full range of benefits without causing harmful nuisance – "Right place – Right tree".

Trees are arguably the least transitory natural feature of a landscape scene and are dynamic and subject to constant change at an ever-increasing pace. They make a tremendous impact on visitors and residents alike, providing significant aesthetic, amenity and ecology benefits, and help to contribute to a healthier environment and healthy population. The Council takes great pride in ensuring the quality of our Arboricultural (tree) and Silviculture (woodland) heritage not only to enjoy the benefits now, but also help to pass on these benefits to future generations.

Many of the trees and woodlands in the borough are under public ownership, which are managed and cared for by the Council for the people of the locality. As a Council we are constantly dealing with tree and woodland related issues that can have either minor or more significant impacts on members of the general public.

The **Aims** of this framework are to:

- Set out a strategic vision that aims to ensure that trees and woodlands are maintained as an attractive, safe, healthy, community resource for future generations.
- Set out policies and standards to deliver a consistent approach, enabling the Council to care and manage the trees and woodland resource in a timely and efficient way.
- Ensures that clear information and coherent pathways are identified to support demand management from customers.

1.2 The Value of Trees and Woodland

Trees and woodlands within the borough are a huge asset; without doubt the trees, woodlands and other natural 'greenspace' have contributed hugely to the development of the borough.

It is nationally recognised that trees and woodland make a wide-ranging and positive contribution to the quality of modern life.

These are some of the diverse benefits that the trees and woodlands bring to the borough:

1.2.1 Environmental

As trees grow they make a local contribution to the world-wide problem of global warming, by taking carbon dioxide out of the air and 'locking it up' in their timber and acting as carbon stores.

Much of Britain's wildlife is derived from woodland and the borough's tree-rich landscape enhances biodiversity. The urban forest thus provides an opportunity for people to enjoy nature on their doorstep.

Summer shade and shelter from winter winds help reduce energy consumption in adjacent buildings. A woodland canopy intercepts rainfall and can slow down storm water run-off, reducing the risk of flooding. These contributions are likely to become more significant as global warming leads to more extreme weather patterns.

Tree belts enhance the built environment by screening intrusive developments and reducing the impact of noise from roads and factories.

1.2.2 Health

It is widely recognised that trees and woodlands can improve the health of communities notably by:

- Improving air quality

By absorbing pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone and cleaning and releasing oxygen into the air we breathe. These pollutants all affect the lungs and can exacerbate respiratory and heart diseases. Research has shown a clear correlation

between asthma and the levels of nitrogen oxide (NO₂) in air pollution caused by traffic near the home, which results in repeated hospital encounters.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (2010) identified that the largest cost associated with poor air quality is the adverse affect on human health. A study in East London in 2009, measured the effect of trees specifically within the East London green grid (now All London Green Grid). It showed that trees reduced hospital admissions each year.

- Making us physically fitter and healthier

Woods are a great place to exercise which reduces heart disease, strokes and some cancers. Woodland with public access can increase the opportunities for people to engage in physical activity. A variety of research has shown that exercise in woodlands is actually of greater benefit than in other locations.

- Making our minds happy and healthier

Patient recovery rates improve when they can view trees from their hospital window. We get better faster, are less stressed and trees and woodlands can help with long term disorders. The evidence is so strong that hospitals and residential homes actively plant trees to green their estates.

It is often the emotional and mental well being conferred by the setting that has the greatest effect rather than the physical activity itself. In a study from 2011 called Mappiness, respondents were asked to report how happy they were at a given moment. The information was relayed via smart phone and their location pin pointed that woodland locations were the top 3 places where happiness scores increased.

- Social

People want to live and work in healthy, attractive, comfortable surroundings and trees, woodland and accessible greenspace are acknowledged by residents as indicators of a quality environment. Trees can help make a neighbourhood distinctive. 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 age and location.

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

Trees and woodland are fascinating living laboratories and can make inspiring outdoor classrooms. Most of Telford's schools are within easy reach of nearby woodland and are frequently used to facilitate Woodland School Projects.

This link between woodlands and child development is very important and the focus on children and their loss of nature and its effects was subject of an influential book in 2005 by Richard Louv called "Last Child in the Woods". The book linked the lack of nature in the lives of children today to some of the most disturbing childhood trends such as rise in obesity; attention disorders; and depression. Louv outlined a body of research which

indicated that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults.

- Economic

A tree-rich urban landscape is recognised as an important attraction for new businesses which, in turn, create employment. Research by The Woodland Trust showed that the benefits from accessible woodland in Great Britain were estimated to be £392m per year in 2003. Trees do not just attract tourists, people are willing to travel further, visit more frequently and pay, on average, 12% more for goods and services in commercial districts with trees.

Several studies have shown that house prices are higher in a 'well-treed' residential neighbourhood. In fact since the 1970s studies have found that trees can add between 4% and 7% to House Prices (Woodland Trust).

The borough's tree stock also has potential to produce timber and fuel wood for local markets when managed as a renewable resource.

Research carried out by the Woodland Trust in 2011 also shows that woodland is cheaper to maintain than amenity grassland.

1.3 The Policy Framework

It is important to be aware of the strategic context in which care and management of Trees and Woodlands operates. Maintenance of the Council's trees and woodland contributes to, or is affected by, a host of relevant strategies, policies and good practice documents.

These range from international commitments on global issues such as reduction of greenhouse gases determined by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – The Kyoto Protocol, 1997 updated in 2012-Doho Amendment and again amended in Paris 2015, and sustainable development discussed at the UNCED conference, Rio 1992 – The Earth Summit and Rio + 20 in 2012.

Government Policy is also important in framing work priorities as set out in such documents as the Government's policy paper, Forest and Woodlands 2010-2015, updated in May 2015, and the Natural Environment and Biodiversity White Paper.

Of course, the Council is also empowered by a number of Acts of Parliament and operates within the law relating to trees and woodland.

1.3.1 Legislation relating to Trees

Telford and Wrekin Council has a number of statutory duties and powers, both as a Local Authority and as owner and manager of trees and woodlands. A representative, but not exhaustive summary of tree and woodland related legislation is given below.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) the Council has powers to make and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and designate Conservation areas (CA's) within which all established trees are protected.

The Council also has to consider from time to time the use of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act. Within this act, the Council is entitled to make safe any tree it considers is sufficiently hazardous to warrant immediate attention, and charge back to the land owners the full cost of the operation.

The Highways Act (1980), Section 96 empowers the Highways Authority to plant and maintain trees on the highway.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) places a duty on every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby, are not exposed to risks to their health and Safety.

Occupiers Liability Act (1957 and 1984) imposes a duty to take such care, as in all the circumstances of the case, as is reasonable to see that a visitor will be reasonably safe in using the premises for the purpose he is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations (2010), the Hedgerow Regulations (1997) and Protection of Badgers Act (1992) provide orders and guidance relating to management of wildlife and species associated with trees hedgerows and woodlands.

1.4 Defining our Vision

The borough's urban forest is a dynamic, living resource and it is approaching a pivotal stage in its development. Much of the massed structural planting undertaken by the Telford Development Corporation has reached 30-40 years of age. This is the phase at which a tree grows most rapidly and consequently the borough's trees and plantations are becoming ever more obvious to the public eye. This is particularly so within the built environment of Telford, and along the main transport corridors. Conversely, the older pit-mound plantings are slowing down in terms of growth rate and, in some cases, showing the early stages of decline.

The coming few years and decades are critical if the younger tree stock is to be effectively and properly managed, so as to maintain its health and vitality and allow it to fulfil its potential in the future. At the same time, steps must be taken to replenish the older tree stock by carefully phased felling and re-stocking. The approach is to sustainably manage the tree and woodland resource, maintaining and enhancing it for the benefit of current and future generations by developing the character and appearance of both the natural and built environments.

1.4.1 Current management and maintenance situation

Currently throughout the borough, Neighbourhood Services are responsible for street trees, trees and woodland on highway verges and in public open space. This tree and woodland resources covers in excess of 500 hectares.

Other significant landholdings containing trees are managed by different services areas, for example the trees located on school and academy grounds, which have their own guidelines in managing those assets.

In addition, there are other service areas within the Council who should be considered stakeholders in the urban forest, in that, whilst they do not have a landholding, their policies and activities have an impact on the borough's trees and woodlands. Chief amongst these are the service areas sitting within the -Business, Development & Employment section of the Council. There is also considerable amount of land owned by the Council, currently not actively managed by a designated Service Area.

In the longer term therefore, as an authority, a more comprehensive approach to tree and woodland management could be explored.

There are 2 Tree and Woodland Officers within the Neighbourhood Services who currently manage the tree and woodland resource with a budget in the region of 178k. This budget is part of the Environmental Services generic grounds maintenance and cleansing contract which was awarded to Telford & Wrekin Services (TWS).

TWS provide teams of fully trained operatives who are properly equipped to carry out Arboriculture (i.e. tree) and Silviculture (i.e. woodland) work. All tree and woodland maintenance is outside the generic grounds maintenance and cleansing contract and is carried out as additional works, under instruction from the Tree and Woodland Officers and following the guidance in BS 3998: *'2010 Tree work –Recommendations.'*

This 178k 'additional work' budget within Neighbourhood Services covers:

- Re-active Tree works
- Re-active Woodland works
- Proactive woodland works
- Proactive Tree works
- Traffic Management
- Street Lighting and Trees
- Proactive Tree Safety Survey
- Telford & Wrekin Council emergency call outs
- Non- Telford & Wrekin Council emergency call outs
- Parks trees

Much of the work of the Tree and Woodland Officers is carried out in response to the customer enquiries logged each year on the computerised customer enquiry system. On average over 160 tree enquiries are received every month. The volume of these enquiries and the amount of money available within the budget means that priorities are given to health and safety issues and tree welfare issues. However, where possible the Service is moving towards achieving a diverse, healthy population of trees of mixed age and species across the borough and ensuring appropriate canopy cover.

In terms of more proactive works a number of Woodlands within Telford and Wrekin have management plans (2012) which informs proactive woodland work covering 378 hectares of

woodland. Generally, the principles of continuous cover forestry, undertaking thinning and phased felling and restocking (through natural regeneration where feasible) of woodland is undertaken. Pit-mounds sites however are dominated by mature conifers and have cultural associations that require retention of exotic species. The Council will pursue multiple objectives in woodland management for the benefit of people, the environment, recreation, economy, heritage, wildlife and education and encourage the development of native broadleaves.

The Woodland Management Plans have been written to deliver four key objectives:

- Maintain and or improve amenity and biological value of woodlands
- Minimise cost and maximise revenues from work carried out.
- Maximise financial opportunity by production of quality timber and or by maximising potential volume production through species selection.
- Maintain or improve diversity in age and species.

1.4.2 A Co-operative Approach

A significant influence on how we will manage the tree and woodland resource is very much a co-operative approach. Being a Co-operative Council is about the Council working together with our residents, partners and local organisations to collectively deliver the best we can for Telford and Wrekin. The Council believes that how services are delivered is just as important as what the Council delivers - that is why the Council have adopted Cooperative Values.

These Values were developed by the Co-operative Commission and are based on what residents and Council employees told the Commission about the sort of Council and borough they would like to see in Telford and Wrekin.

The Council has adopted Cooperative Values at the heart of the organisation.

Openness & Honesty: To be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

Ownership: To be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

Fairness & Respect: To respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way to – respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals

Involvement: To work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas. We would like everyone to – work with and support others, get involved and share their views.

As people and budgets are limited and the majority of officer time is spent dealing with re-active issues; in order to achieve the aims of delivering a diverse tree and woodland resource this co-operative approach must be adopted to work with partners and the

community. The Council will, therefore, actively encourage community involvement and partnership working in tree and woodland management which is discussed under **Communities and Trees** theme. The Council will also actively work in partnerships to create external funding opportunities, to add value to the existing woodland budgets, to enable more pro-active tree and woodland management to be undertaken.

1.4.3 Moving Forward

Even though we have made considerable progress as a co-operative council we now need to take another big step in our transformation. We have adopted four core elements.

For our medium-term service and financial strategy to take the organisation forward and help to deliver the budget savings which are currently projected to be required over the medium term. These are:

- Focussing on solving problems and promoting social responsibility and action to manage and reduce demand for services
- Challenging and changing reviewing and re-imagining the way we do things
- Reducing our dependency on Government grants
- Being a modern organisation with modern practices and where we always get the basics right.

1.5 Vision and Themes

Our vision for our Tree and Woodlands:

A landscape rich in trees and woodland, 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 will be achieved through 3 key themes:

- **Trees, Policy and Plans** –This theme looks at all aspects relating to trees and woodlands, in the planning system, and key corporate policy and investment documents.
- **Communities and Trees** – This theme considers the interface between the urban forest and the people of the borough.
- **Risk Management** –This theme outlines our legal obligations relating to Health & Safety, the Highways Act and the Council's Duty of Care.

Each theme has a set of Aims associated with them from which develop a set of policies and operational tree standards, which will enable services to achieve the vision for the borough's tree and woodland resource.

2 Key Themes, Aims and Policies.

2.1 Trees, Policy and Plans

Aims

- *To adopt clear policies for the protection, care and planting of trees in the new Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (due for adoption in late 2016) and the Local Green Infrastructure Needs Study and the Green Infrastructure Framework.*
- *To create places where tree species can thrive and deliver their full range of benefits without causing harmful nuisance.*
- *To embed tree and woodland policies within key corporate policies and plans relating to health and economic growth.*

The social and environmental benefits of trees and woodlands (1.2) are detailed in the Local Plan as a key element of public open space and are also protected through the Trees, Hedgerows & Woodlands Policy NE2 in the publication version of the Local Plan. However, as trees grow and plantations mature they become more obvious to the public eye. Instances of direct conflict between people and trees are increasing and will continue to do so – issues of light, leaf-fall, TV reception, Solar Panels and other such matters will come to the fore. Also, risk management factors such as highway verge tree safety, root-induced building subsidence and footpath disruption are becoming increasingly important issues.

Many of these problems could have been avoided by greater attention to detail at the design and planning stage, particularly in terms of species choice and planting location. Therefore significant involvement is required in the Planning process, including embedding standards for trees and woodlands in strategic corporate documents.

In reviewing the planning strategies it is important to maintain policies which underpin robust landscape and design principles to achieve “Right place – Right tree”.

Currently planning policy OL11 provides an opportunity to assess the implications on existing trees, and the potential for new planting in connection with sites proposed for development. Once a Planning Application has been submitted comments on planting schemes should be made to ensure a sustainable planting scheme is implemented.

The publicising version of the new Telford & Wrekin Local Plan contains specific policies relating to the protection of trees, hedgerows and woodlands (NE2) and gives particular weight to irreplaceable habitats including veteran trees and ancient woodlands. The expectation is that trees are protected and retained in most circumstances and that loss of trees, with appropriate replacement, may be considered where the wider benefits of the proposed development outweighs the loss. The next step is for the Local Plan to be submitted to a Planning Inspector and to undergo an Examination in Public. This is expected to occur in summer/autumn 2016 and following that, provided that the plan is found ‘sound’, the plan will be formally adopted by the Council.

The Council has also made a 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 and management of Green Guarantee sites will be aimed at maintaining and improving their value for biodiversity, recreation and local communities while maintaining appropriate safety standards.

As the Local Planning Authority, the Council has a statutory duty to take steps to protect trees, which it believes makes an important contribution to the amenity of the area.

Even before a Planning Application is submitted potential development land can be surveyed and should any vegetation found be worthy of protection under the TPO legislation it can be protected well in advance of any development proposals being sought.

Currently Neighbourhood Services do not actively protect trees on Council land because they are regarded as not at risk. The Council is committed to green open space and there is an understanding that the Council should be custodians of the tree resource for future generations. As such there is a commitment from the Council's Estates & Investment Team to agree to notify the tree officers of any marketing of Council owned land i.e. any land which the Council proposes to sell and not undertake any tree works on Council owned land (including any highway land) without first notifying the tree officers and allowing them time to respond, and not to undertake any tree works until the tree officers have confirmed in writing that they do not want to protect the tree.

If the tree needs protecting Estates and Investment will allow that to take place and then comply with the consent-rules relating to protected trees. The planning process can ultimately override the protection of a tree if that is what the balance of planning considerations determines.

The Council will use its enforcement powers by bringing prosecutions against contraventions of Tree Preservation Orders and controls over trees in Conservation Areas in appropriate cases.

The Council will also monitor compliance with the requirements of planning conditions and Tree Preservation Orders during construction and after completion of development.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), the Council will use its statutory enforcement powers, when appropriate, including dealing with illegal felling of council owned trees and prosecuting people who wilfully damage or remove Council owned trees.

Policies

TP1 The Council will require the standard of information relating to tree, woodlands and hedgerows, on and adjacent to development sites, together with the appropriate protection measures as set out in detail in the current BS: 5837 or relevant national planning policies. These recommendations need to be submitted, at initial planning application stage.

TP2 The Council will promote and encourage the making of Tree Preservation Orders in order to secure the retention of existing trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the Borough where they are assessed to have amenity value and/or recognised potential amenity value, and Tree Preservation Orders will be made as a matter of urgency where the trees, groups of trees or woodlands are considered to be under threat

TP3 The Council will recognise the significance of Ancient and Veteran trees in the historical landscape and apply a recognised evaluation method to trees.

2.2 Communities and Trees

Aims:

- *To create an approach in managing trees and woodlands which addresses the community's relationship with trees*
- *To provide information and explain a rationale for our tree and woodland management decisions and actions.*

An intrinsic part of the management of trees and woodlands within the borough is the process through which the public is informed and engaged in this management. As previously mentioned the tree resource within Telford is at a crucial stage of management, and the number and age of trees located in heavily populated areas brings with it unique challenges.

Within many parts of Telford people often live in close proximity to trees, these trees are either their own, their neighbours or may belong to the Council, and when they grow near their dwellings can cause inconvenience. There are a number of common sources of complaint received by Council's nationwide, including overhanging branches, shade, leaf, fruit fall, obstruction and interference to TV/satellite aerials, which can be highly emotive and upsetting for members of the public.

A dilemma often occurs when the tree makes an important contribution to the local environment but also causes inconvenience to those living nearby.

The Tree and Woodland Officers spend the majority of their time dealing with such re-active enquiries, over 160 enquiries a month, which reduces their time dealing with pro-active management of the tree and woodland resource. The number of these enquiries could be reduced by providing better information and guidelines, and having a process to deal with issues in a coherent and balanced manner.

In order to try and address the above, and target resources, clear policies have been developed in line with many other local authorities, and a suggested process for dealing with enquiries which will enable informed, consistent, and inclusive decision making.

For example, the Council will not undertake tree pruning or tree removal in direct response to any natural or seasonal phenomena for example:

- Falling leaves
- Sap exudation (honeydew)

- Falling fruits, nuts
- Bird droppings
- Blossom fall
- Shading and blocking daylight
- Overhanging branches

The above are generally considered minor inconveniences, as opposed to legally defined nuisance issues, over which the Council, or any tree manager, has little, if any, control over.

The Council will not remove trees that affect solar panel performance, as it is the installers' responsibility to assess the surrounding area before installing the solar panels. Tree pruning for loss or interference with TV or satellite signal reception will not be carried out either

The Council cannot get involved in private trees in neighbourhood disputes.

It is accepted that there may be circumstances on a local level regarding the extent to which people's health and well being are being affected, balanced against the health, well being and community value of the tree. At certain times when dealing with enquiries, based upon the above topics, a wider discussion around the issues sometimes needs to occur within this decision making process as to what works are undertaken upon the tree.

This wider stakeholder consultation needs to consider a variety of available information relating to the area within which the tree/woodland is located to inform the decision making process.

The following suggested criteria, can be followed to assess how trees can be treated within a wider context.

- History of Enquiries / Historical Spend

Historical spend needs to be considered based upon the enquiry system. Areas that have had historically high spend on particular tree issues, may be of lower priority to areas where little tree work has been undertaken.

- Tree Survey / Safety Survey Links

Trees within the geographical area may have been subject to a tree survey / safety survey. This information should inform a decision about what trees works could be undertaken, balanced against the amenity value of trees with risk, suitability of species for a specific area, the trees potential to create future insurance claims e.g. structural damage to buildings, and the longevity of the tree by undertaking a valuation of the tree.

- Managed Trees Next to Buildings

There are significant ongoing problems associated with Council trees next to private dwellings. The majority of the problems arise from the wrong tree species planted in close proximity to the property or inappropriate buildings being constructed.

- Key Priority Sites

Key Priority Work areas will vary ward by ward. High risk areas are where a significant number of vulnerable members of the community are affected e.g. sheltered housing.

The use of crime statistics should be fully considered when evaluating trees or groups of trees, and where hot spots are found, thinning, crown lifting or complete removal should be considered as a practical way of reducing crime or the fear of crime. A full assessment of the impact of trees canopies on the effectiveness of street lighting will be undertaken as part of the evaluation process for both Council trees and private trees, under the Highways Act.

- Bus Routes / Safe Routes to Schools

Liaison with Council Highways Team to identify problem trees or groups of trees along bus routes or safe routes to schools will be undertaken to encourage full use of these facilities e.g. fear of crime issues near bus stops etc.

- Car parking

On areas of communal parking where there are significant tree enquiries remedial action may be considered dependent upon tree species and available budget.

- Root Disruption

It is the owners' responsibility to deal with root disruption on their land, however on public land such as footpaths, curb edges and retaining walls, root disruption will be considered.

- Community Views

In some cases the tree issue may become a wider community issue. In these cases, gathering local parish council and ward member view, and local people views become part of the decision making process and, maybe the solution to the problem. The work may be appropriate; however no resources are available to undertake the works. In such examples, the local community could contribute/ fund the works.

2.2.1 Communication and information

It is important that policies and process for dealing with tree enquires are communicated to residents, to develop an understanding about how and why tree and woodland work is being undertaken; and also why some residents requests for tree works aren't carried out.

With a view to improving demand management and managing enquiries effectively and efficiently the Council, has a key role to inform the residents of the Council's policies and working practices. A suggested communication process has been devised to pro-actively deal with enquiries, policies and information.

We will give our local community access to information and support needed to address trees on private land in their community and the Council's approach to tree and woodland management.

It has also been acknowledged that trees and woodlands can provide a great educational and healthy resource for communities, local organisations and schools. Working with local schools and conservation organisations, the Council will maximise the educational and healthy benefits of woodlands.

The Council will also proactively work with local people and organisations to undertake projects such as tree planting schemes, and encourage them to become involved in managing our woodlands.

POLICIES

TP4 The Council will develop and deliver a pro-active communication process and systems that address customer expectations.

TP5 Removal of any apparently healthy tree, or tree branches which are subject to a complaint, will be investigated and assessed for suitability and retained where appropriate.

TP6 Tree pruning, height reduction or removal of trees in direct response to any natural or seasonal phenomena will not be undertaken.

TP7 Tree pruning, height reduction or removal of trees directly attributable to: Loss or interference with TV or satellite signal reception will not be undertaken, or if attributable to efficiency of solar panels will not be undertaken.

2.3 Risk Management

Aims

- *To provide a safe tree and woodland environment for the people of the Borough.*
- *To have a consistent approach in dealing with insurance and subsidence claims.*
- *To ensure the Council meets it's legal and health and Safety duties in respect of tree and woodland management.*

Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline, collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate so they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fall in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases. Ancient and decaying trees are often beautiful and uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and, however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is only necessary where there is clearly unquantifiable risk to life or property. This might mean removing the whole tree, part of the tree, or reducing the level of public access in the vicinity.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) acknowledge that the overall risk to the public from falling trees and branches is low. However when injury occurs it is likely to result in a significant or serious injury. Considerable concern and uncertainty about managing trees for safety has risen in the last few years. This has largely been stimulated by a number of court

cases and other responses to rare incidents where falling trees or branches has killed or injured a person.

Addressing these concerns requires information about the real risk involved and the level of public concern. These can both be achieved by adopting a proactive approach to tree risk management. This approach involves basic elements of:

- Capturing baseline information (the survey) and storing on a specific tree risk management data programme
- Undertaking tree work as on the high risks
- Establishing a routine inspection programme and;
- Delivering remedial action.

To try and develop a proactive approach to tree risk management, in August 2009, Neighbourhood and Leisure Services undertook a pilot study in the Nedge ward of Telford. This area was chosen as it held a good cross section of land uses within the Borough. The survey was carried out by an independent consultant who completed a walk over, identified only those trees that posed an unreasonable threat to public health and safety, categorised each route using a traffic light system red, amber, green based upon target value.

The main strengths of this system were that it was very quick and easy to use. The level of data collected allows for management decisions to be made and identified work prioritised. It only took 5 days to walk the area.

It was suggested in 2009 to try and prioritise risks within an area and so reduce time, high priority routes could be recorded as red, for example winter maintenance routes, gritting routes and very busy roads, and should be reviewed every 12 to 18 months. Amber sites of high usage, e.g. parks cemeteries etc, should be reviewed every 5 years and green sites with very low risks, every 7 years. Since 2009 survey work has been undertaken, however this has been very localised, and has an updated risk rating and survey techniques.

Currently the Council are working on a corporate Tree Safety Management Policy, addressing all the trees and woodlands managed by various Service Areas within the Council. This policy is looking at zoning the areas into high medium and low risks, how this zones will then be surveyed, how the data is then stored, and how the council delivers this programme. Neighbourhood and Leisure Services are an active Service Area involved in producing this Tree Safety Policy and delivery programme.

Above and beyond a proactive tree risk survey, the Council has a legal obligation to clear a public highway immediately if blocked by a fallen tree. Currently, during times of high winds, excessive rain etc dealing with such blockages becomes a priority whether the tree is Council owned or privately owned. If privately owned, the Council will make the highway accessible and invoice the owner of the tree where work has been undertaken, to cover the costs of the contractor and cover the costs for Officer time in dealing with the incident. The Council needs to review this charge and the information communicated to residents.

2.3.1 Subsidence and Insurance claims.

There are a variety of factors involved that could be responsible for subsidence to a building: Inadequate foundation design; major works to adjacent properties; general

structure failure, previous internal alterations; nearby excavations; mineshafts, re-profiled ground, climatic changes; different foundations between buildings and extensions; land slip; change in building use, use of mortar without lime, change in surface material in close proximity to trees and buildings, seepage from broken or poorly maintained water pipes and drains.

The relationship between trees and buildings is a very complex one. Trees can damage buildings when their roots extract moisture from the clay sub-soil on which the buildings foundations are laid, and the footprint of the building. When this clay shrinks, movement can occur in the building which can then produces visible signs of cracking through brickwork and internal plaster. Different trees remove water at different rates.

In recent years, local authorities have come under increasing pressure insurance claims.

With the variable information outlined above it is important that each subsidence case is treated individually, with a consistent approach adopted in the type of information gathered, and identification of responsible parties for gathering all the evidence. In addition, the Local Planning Authority needs to ensure sufficient foundations are in place as per Chapter 4.2, NHBC guidelines.

2.3.2 Disease of Trees

When trees become diseased, various risks are created including- greater potential for the tree to have a structural failure and possible elimination of a species of tree. To mitigate these risks and to try and ensure a healthy, safe tree and woodland resource the Authority is in regularly contact with the Forestry Authorities Advice service regarding tree diseases. This information and advice service was established as part of the Governments Tree Health Management Plan (2014) and the Plant Bio Security Strategy. The aim is to build resilience of the country's tree population and tackle such diseases as Chalara, Phytophthora ramoura and Oak Processionary moth – pests and diseases which have devastated tree populations in certain parts of the Country.

Policies

- TP8 To follow the Council's tree safety policy and guidance in order to ensure the elimination of high risk trees, and that a sustainable approach is developed to ensure a healthy tree stock is maintained.
- TP9 The Council will foremost consider its obligation to ensure the health and safety of both people and property when undertaking management decisions in relation to trees and encourage other landowners to do the same.
- TP10 In times of high winds and storms, the Council will make safe as soon as possible any dangerous trees on public land, and also privately owned trees, where these are endangering highways. Costs will be recovered from the landowner.
- TP11 Under the Miscellaneous Provisions Act, where an immediately dangerous tree is present on private land and landowners cannot be immediately traced, work will be undertaken by the Council on that tree and costs recovered from the landowner.

TP12 Has clear procedures for dealing with insurance and subsidence claims.

3. Monitoring and review of the Framework

3.1 Monitoring

Some of the policies within this Framework stand alone and which Customer, Neighbourhood and Wellbeing Services will adopt, whereas others require action plans for their delivery. If the framework is to be successfully implemented, then the action plans must be carried out within an appropriate timescale. Periodic monitoring is therefore required to check progress against targets.

It is therefore proposed to produce an Action Plan as a supporting document to this framework which will be updated annually.

3.2 Review

There is also a need to review the framework itself, to check that the policies and standards it contains are still relevant and consistent, in light of any new legislation or changes to government, regional, or corporate strategies and priorities.

It is therefore proposed that this framework be reviewed in 5 years time.