

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	20 th March 2019
Report Title	Tree Maintenance Policy 2019 - 2023
Cabinet Member	Cllr David Simmons , Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Mike Marsh. Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. Cabinet to approve the Tree Maintenance Policy 2019-2023 as drafted.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 The report identifies the process undertaken to update the Council Tree Policy which:

- Sets out the services and advice that the Council provides in managing its trees across Swale.
- Is clear about what we will do/won't do in managing our 4,765 trees within the resources allocated.
- Identifies the Council's responsibilities.
- Advises what residents are able to do for themselves.

2 Background

2.1 The Tree Maintenance Policy 2019-2023 (hereafter the 'Policy') is an update of the 2015-2019 Tree Policy which identified the need for regular review.

2.2 The policy describes the value of trees, the Council's obligations and risk management, how we inspect along with who undertakes this and how residents can contact us or get involved.

2.3 In a recent internal Leisure services review, the need to amend and update the document was identified, as the range and number of queries we get was unmanageable. The aim was to ensure there was less ambiguity and greater clarity in the new policy so that officers, Members and residents understood the processes and limits of the Council's responsibilities for its trees. This would help to improve response times to public enquires and provide a more efficient service.

2.4 The resulting policy therefore makes it clearer how we prioritise works to our trees and how we will respond the types of queries that we receive.

3 Proposals

3.1 Cabinet to approve the Tree Maintenance Policy 2019-2023 as drafted.

3.2 The policy will be added to the Council's website as an easy to read 'guidance summary' will be created for the Trees page.

4 Alternative Options

4.1 Retain the existing tree policy for another 4 years. This would be contrary to the recommendations of the service review and would not make it clearer for all parties involved, resulting in continued over demand for services.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 The draft policy was considered by PDRC on the 27th November 2018. Members raised a wide range of comments, leading to the Chairman requesting that an updated policy be brought back to PDRC which took place on the 12th February. It was apparent that some members were seeking a compendium of tree services and advice covering all trees in the Borough, whereas the Tree Policy is designed to set out the Council's responsibilities only for the trees it owns and maintains in open spaces, woodlands etc.

5.2 Amendments were made to make it clearer where residents can go for more specific planning advice or for the legal position relating to trees owned by other parties.

5.3 There has also been clarifications added for what happens after severe 'weather events', communication arrangements for significant tree works, poisonous fruits and berries, subsidence damage process, hedge row and artificial turf surfaces.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Priority 2: Delivering improved quality of life 2.1 Keep the borough clean and well-maintained, and continue to provide excellent environmental stewardship.
Financial, Resource and Property	Tree Maintenance Resources: 2018/19 Tree Maintenance budget £17,500.00 Tree Maintenance Contract Variations £11,300.00 Perry Wood £10,960.00 Milton Creek Country Park £4,200.00*

	<p>Nursery Stock £3,500.00*</p> <p>*Average spend on tree maintenance from general maintenance budget</p> <p>Officer Resource – responsibility for this sits in Leisure and Technical Services and more specifically Greenspaces Officer. Estimate 50% of full time role. Tree Preservation Officer (Planning) – Part time one day per week</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Section 5 in the Policy sets out statutory legal obligations and risk.</p> <p>There are no procurement specific issues relating to the policy.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>The primary crime issue is acts of vandalism resulting in damage to trees.</p>
Environment and Sustainability	<p>The provision of trees encourages important habitat and biodiversity. Open Spaces and woodland reduce CO2 emissions, improving air quality and are particularly important for protected species including migrating birds.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>The provision of woodland and open spaces provides proven health benefits for both physical and mental well-being. There are a wide array of community groups accessing woodland including educational visits</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>Section 6 in the policy sets out the Council's approach to tree risk management, which has included a comprehensive assessment survey of all Council trees to categorise trees from no action to immediate action and by low to high risk zones.</p>
Equality and Diversity	<p>There are no differential equality issues raised by the proposals in this report.</p>
Privacy and Data Protection	<p>The tree service is compliant with data protection legislation and individuals' expectation of privacy more generally.</p>

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Tree Maintenance Policy 2019-2023

8 Background Papers

None