

Environment Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	16 July 2024
Report Title	Tree Maintenance Policy 2024 - 2028
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins - Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell - Head of Environment & Leisure
Lead Officer	Steven Gale – Green Space Amenities Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. Committee to approve the Tree Maintenance Policy 2024 -2028

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 This report outlines the steps taken to update the Council's Tree Maintenance Policy and identifies the key changes within the updated policy. The tree maintenance policy;

- Describes the process the Council will follow in order to manage their tree stock in an appropriate manner.
- Outlines Surveying methodology and frequency.
- Gives Information on the Council's responsibilities and how we will adhere to them.
- Sets out how the Council will respond to resident enquiries and what tree work residents can conduct themselves.

2 Background

2.1 The Tree Maintenance Policy 2024 - 2028 is an update and continuation of the 2019 - 2023 Tree Maintenance Policy.

2.2 The Council recognises the importance of responding to resident enquires but our responsibility is to ensure that our tree stock is reasonably and proportionally managed whilst presenting as low risk as practically possible. Significant issues can arise due to a lack of inspection and maintenance which could damage the Council's reputation and financial position. With an increasing number of storms and changing climate, trees could pose significantly higher risk than before if not managed appropriately. Regular inspection can also help reduce damage claims made against the Council.

2.3 Leisure and Technical currently have one Greenspace Amenities Officer who is responsible for the management of trees within open spaces, parks, woodlands and cemeteries. The Council has a tree work contract with Elite Arborists that

runs until December 2026 and provides tree work once a week, the annual value of this contract is £36,257.70 In addition to this there is there is a separate budget of £17,500.00 within the parks and open Spaces revenue budget for unscheduled works. The Council employs a Tree Preservation Officer within the Planning department who is available to offer specialist advice.

- 2.4 The policy provides clarity on all of the above and is intended to clearly set out how the Council manages its trees and how the Council intends to process any enquiries.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Committee to approve the drafted Tree Maintenance Policy 2024 – 2028
- 3.2 For the pre-existing policy on the Council's website to be replaced with the new one.
- 3.3 Core changes being proposed within the Draft 24/28 Policy include,
- Tree survey methodology: we have changed from a zoning approach to QTRA system (quantified tree risk assessment) which allows us to manage each tree as an individual risk and provides a risk factor rating based on several factors.
 - Work Prioritisation timeframes. There are now 5 categories ranging from immediate action to low priority.
 - The inclusion of how the Council will respond to resident enquiries relating to solar panels.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 To retain the existing policy for another four years. This was not viewed as appropriate. Whilst there was acknowledgement that the current Policy is robust and fit for purpose, changes made to the Council's surveying methodology and a more robust responses to residents' enquiries required a new Policy.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has been limited to internal discussions within the Greenspace team along with the planning Tree officer.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges.</p> <p>2.5 Work towards a cleaner borough where recycling remains a focus and to ensure that the council acts as an exemplar environmental steward, making space for nature wherever possible.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Tree Maintenance Resource 2024/25</p> <p>Tree maintenance contract budget £36,257.70</p> <p>Ad Hoc tree maintenance budget £17,500.00</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Section 5 of the policy identifies the Council's statutory legal obligations; this section of the policy also details tree risks and how we will manage / reduce them.</p> <p>The policy has no procurement specific issues.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>Tree maintenance does have a direct impact on some community safety issues – such as feelings of safety and also the usefulness of CCTV if areas are overgrown and reducing lighting. Tree vandalism, predominantly newly planted trees are also targeted in some areas.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>The benefits of trees are widely reported, environment benefits include rainwater capture, carbon sequestration, urban cooling, filtering pollution and providing cleaner air.</p> <p>Trees also provide vital habitats and eco systems which enhance local biodiversity. Birds, bats, squirrels and other wildlife benefit from significantly from areas of densely populated trees.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Trees within urban environments provide shade and urban cooling which reduces the likelihood of heat related illness. Trees remove pollutants and provide cleaner air which has been proven to improve health. Studies have also show that the presence of trees reduces stress levels and increases mental wellbeing. Access to local woodlands provide physical benefits through various means such as walking, community groups, volunteer events and many more.</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>The Policy provides detail of how we aim to reduce the risk trees can pose. There is nothing within the policy that directly relates to safeguarding.</p>

Risk Management and Health and Safety	Section 6 of the Policy details the Council's tree risk management process, including recorded visual tree assessments on all Council owned trees. The trees are given a tree risk rating as per the QTRA methodology. Where remedial works are recommended, these are categorised within 5 priority groups ranging from immediate work to low priority. The Policy states we will prioritise health and safety related work recommendations.
Equality and Diversity	Matters such as equality or diversity are not covered within the Policy.
Privacy and Data Protection	Tree surveying contractors have their own data protection policies in place which are vetted by the Council prior to the award of the tree surveying contract. The data they collect is not of a sensitive nature and no personal / private data is collected or stored as part of the tree surveying contract.

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 2024 - 2028

8 Background Papers

None