

<b>Item No.</b> 12.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 29 January 2013	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Borough Wide Tree Management Strategy	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Transport, Environment and Recycling	

## **FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING**

I am very pleased to present Southwark Tree Management Strategy, which emerges from good quality public consultation. This our second attempt since 2010 at getting a Tree Strategy which we feel fully confident that residents and the public are supportive of. We were in fact ready to adopt an earlier version of this Strategy in 2011 but two inter-related factors at the time encouraged us to consult more widely and proactively. In December 2010 we had embarked on a pilot strategy on which we were consulting. It meant that the changes in management and maintenance practices were taking place and it soon became clear that members of the public and particularly residents with a particular interest in trees in the public realm, were not used to the more systematic tree management practices that the department was arranging to be carried out. Practices like pollarding; already pollarded trees and the felling of dead, dying or dangerous trees trigger some members of the public to protest and complain. Equally, for whatever reason, maybe partly as a result of the introduction of the pilot, there was a growing interest amongst residents about how we care for our trees in Southwark. In contrast as there was limited public feedback to the formal consultation in 2010-11 it was decided the council needed to explain to the public what we were doing, why we were doing it in the way we were and listen carefully to what they were saying to us with a view to where required, amending, adding to or changing our tree management strategy.

This document reflects the consultation which has meant there have been substantial improvements on the previous version of the strategy. For instance, there is now greater explanation about the challenges the council faces in managing trees in a constrained and busy urban environment. There is also an explicit commitment to a Tree Warden scheme with a time-frame included, as well as a new commitment to an Adopt a Tree scheme. Another instance of policy resulting from public feedback is that we now publish the annual tree works schedule on the council's website, and we now will be setting out very clearly in what circumstances we will be directly consulting with the public about specific tree works. A particular sign of how far we have come and how much we have responded to the public's concerns and suggestions is the commitment we are making to only pollard trees (those which have already previously been pollarded, which dictates that maintenance regime) during the winter months, so that there is not a stark removal of leaf cover causing a dramatic, albeit temporary loss of green aesthetic.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those members of the public who got involved in this consultation - those that attended the consultation events in Dulwich

Park and Southwark Park and those that sent in their email comments too. I sincerely believe we were able to give full consideration to the feedback received even if we were not able to incorporate every one of those suggestions.

In addition I'd like to express my fulsome gratitude to the Tree team in the Public Realm division of the department of Environment and Leisure who are not only responsible for the development of this excellent document but were also the outstanding face of the service when they so brilliantly engaged with the public during the public consultation. This has taught me that Southwark Council have a Tree team they can be justifiably be proud of.

So here it is... our Southwark Tree Management Strategy, a document for both practitioners and all our residents who care and want to know that we the council also care about the wonderful tree legacy we have in our borough today.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Cabinet notes the consultation process and subsequent revisions to the Tree Management Strategy.
2. That the Cabinet approves the revised Tree Management Strategy and the approach for adoption of the strategy.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. In order to manage trees consistently, transparently and in line with best practice, the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling agreed to pilot a Tree Strategy which was adopted in December 2010 with a review after 12 months.
4. During this period, tree management has improved through a proactive planned approach through surveying, prioritising tree maintenance operations, implementing a strategy for planting, and managing resident expectations. However, it was clear that there were still concerns regarding certain aspects of the management of trees, including decisions relating to the felling and pollarding of trees for safety reasons and the degree of community consultation on such decisions. In order to identify what further improvements needed to be made to tree management, a programme of community consultation was undertaken during Autumn 2012. This report brings forward a revised Tree Management Strategy and details the changes resulting from that public consultation.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

5. Although not a statutory requirement the adoption of a Tree Management Strategy is considered a key document for the Council. It sets out the vision and policy framework for the trees owned, managed and/or protected by the Council and explains how we will achieve this vision. It is a reference document for anyone with an interest in Southwark's trees and is aligned with the Council's commitment to be more accountable to residents and businesses on how services are delivered and to ensure that residents' views are taken into account when the Council takes decisions.

## **Consultation process and key outcomes**

6. Consultation on the tree strategy was undertaken in September and October 2012 to provide the opportunity for residents and partners to inform the revised Tree Management Strategy and included:-
  - Two public meetings at Dulwich and Southwark Parks
  - A web based consultation was held throughout October 2012 aimed at seeking views on a range of issues relating key elements of the strategy Appendix 3.
7. A total of 30 residents attended the public meetings and some 70 responses were received to the website consultation. The majority of respondents supported the existing Tree Management Strategy and some made detailed comments and suggestions for improvements. These are detailed in Appendix 2 of this report together with officers' responses.
8. Following the consultation the key changes to the strategy are;
  - Reformatting for legibility.
  - The Council's commitment to preserving the Council's trees has been clearly defined
  - Clearer setting out of what work we do and why
  - Commitment to pollard trees only in winter
  - Commitment to recognise trees of significance
  - Commitment to implement a Tree Warden programme
  - 3 year maintenance agreement for all new and replacement trees
  - Adoption of the Tree Pit Design Manual
  - Clearer explanation of when we will and will not consult
  - More detail about the challenges facing Southwark's trees (i.e. pests, street trees)

## **Revised tree management strategy**

9. In response to the consultation the Strategy is now arranged in the following sections
  1. Vision and objectives for Southwark Trees
  2. The Benefits of Trees
  3. Southwark's Tree Stock
  4. Challenges Facing Southwark's Trees
  5. How are Southwark's Trees Managed and Maintained
  6. Planting
  7. Our Commitment to Customer Service
  8. Insurance Claims
  9. Which organisations have an interest in trees
10. Paragraphs 11 to 30 below highlight the key elements of the strategy attached as Appendix 3 together with the changes in response to feedback during the consultation.

## **Vision and objectives**

11. Generally respondents felt that the vision and objectives of the strategy were satisfactory but that they would be strengthened by giving a clear commitment to protecting trees wherever possible. This being the case the vision for Southwark's Trees has been amended to:-

The Council recognises the positive impact that urban trees have on the environment and the lives of people in Southwark and aims to protect the current tree stock. By 2017 the Council aims to have a healthy, protected and sustainably managed tree stock that contributes significantly to the health safety and well being of Southwark residents

12. The vision is underpinned by the following objectives, these are unchanged from the original draft strategy with the exception of clarifying that the target for achieving a healthy and safe stock of trees relates to trees on highways, estates and parks, reflecting the fact that woodland trees are not subject to the same degree of active management;

- To ensure that the Council has a clear programme of tree maintenance, management and planting
- To ensure that the information people and organisations require about Southwark's tree stock and its management (including this strategy and management regimes for each service area) is easily accessible and comprehensible
- To increase community involvement and understanding of Southwark's trees
- To guide investment in the Borough's trees using the principle of 'right place, right tree
- To ensure that by 2017, 95% of Southwark's urban trees are healthy and in a safe condition

## **The benefits of trees?**

13. The original strategy set out the benefits of trees in an Appendix 3. Respondents felt that the strategy should give greater prominence to this and detail the importance and benefits of trees, to ensure that the strategy is focused on preserving the boroughs' trees. In response the strategy explains the benefits of trees in the beginning of the document before detailing how trees are managed and maintained.

## **Southwark's tree stock**

14. The strategy sets out how the CAVAT evaluation tool gives us a stock valuation. According to CAVAT the approximate value of Southwark's 90,000 trees is £440,675,529. Respondents asked whether the Council should use this valuation when considering the felling of trees. Having considered this request the Council considers it to be impractical to use this tool for the day to day management of the stock, given that only dead, dying and dangerous trees are felled. Accordingly the CAVAT evaluation will only be used as a planning tool and when there is a proposal to fell healthy trees as part of a development proposal.

15. In addition the development of woodland management plans is now included as an action within the revised strategy. The strategy also now includes an action to produce of a significant trees list for the preservation of the unique and historical trees within the borough.

### **Challenges facing Southwark's trees**

16. This new section addresses three specific concerns raised during consultation. Firstly the management of the risk to highway infrastructure because of trees has been of significant concern since the original strategy. This section of the strategy has been reworked following consultation with other officers, to clearly set out the Council's approach to this problem, dealing with safety on the highway balanced against the desire to retain healthy trees.
17. Secondly damage to trees caused by dogs continues to be of significant concern to residents. The strategy has been amended to commit to guarding all new trees to protect against dog damage.
18. A new section has been created as a result of the consultation which explains how trees are protected through the Tree Preservation Order procedure.
19. Finally a new section has been created as a result of feedback from internal consultees as a response to recent concerns about Chalara (Ash dieback).

### **How are Southwark's trees managed and maintained**

20. This section clearly sets out what management and maintenance involves. In response to the consultation, this section has been amended stating that pollarding will only be undertaken in the winter unless works are required for insurance mitigation purposes. This approach will ensure that the visual amenity of the tree is retained for as long as possible throughout the year.
21. 71% of respondents supported the work priorities detailed in the existing strategy. However some responses stated that the planting of trees should be a treated as a high priority along with other included works and as a result planting has been incorporated in included works as per the lists below.
22. To ensure that current resources are utilised most effectively the following list defines included and excluded maintenance operations;

#### **Included works**

- Priority trees placed on appropriate maintenance cycles
- Undertake reactive work where there is an imminent safety hazard
- Replace trees that have been felled and plant new trees (where resources allow)
- Continue to provide an advisory service to various clients including schools and recharge accordingly

#### **Excluded works**

- Tree blocking light or creating shade
- Interference with TV or satellite dish reception
- Blocking or obscuring views

- Nuisance from Insects or other non hazardous wildlife
- Droppings from roosting birds, Honeydew sap, Leaf, fruit, seed fall and pollen
- Tree is considered too large by complainant
- Maintain trees in tenants front/rear gardens unless instructed by Housing

### **Tree planting**

23. The strategy clearly sets out that new planting (as opposed to replacement planting) can only be considered if sustainable maintenance budgets are made available and that new trees will only be planned for areas that have a deficiency in trees in accordance with the recommended tree coverage in the Biodiversity Action Plan i.e. Camberwell and Bankside areas.
24. A high number of respondents felt that the management of newly planted and replacement trees was not satisfactory. In response the strategy now implements a 3 year young tree maintenance programme which includes quarterly monitoring by the Tree Section of all planted trees to ensure their continued health and growth.

### **Our commitment to customer service**

25. A small number of respondents stated that the Council should consult on all works to trees. This would not be possible due to the high level of resource required to undertake this consultation. However in response to this request the strategy now states that consultation will be undertaken when works will have a significant impact on the immediate area. This could apply where a significant number of trees are being felled on a particular street, or where replacement trees are due to be planted and would have an impact on the character of the area.

### **Community engagement**

26. In response to the consultation, the Tree Management Strategy will continue to encourage greater community involvement in the care and management of Southwark's trees through a specific action to implement a Tree Warden programme.

### **Insurance claims**

27. To clearly set out the insurance claim processes and procedures, the insurance claims section is now located in the main body of the document as opposed to an appendix.

### **Which organisations have an interest in trees**

28. The section has been updated to reflect the changes in the trading names of some organisations.

### **Actions and targets**

29. Full details of the actions and targets are contained in Section 9 of the Tree Management Strategy. A summary of the actions is provided table 1 below.

30. Actions have been updated in response to the consultation and to recognise that some of the previous actions are no longer relevant. The key additional actions are: the development of woodland management plans, the introduction of a tree warden programme, the production of the Tree Pit Design Manual and significant tree list.

### Monitoring and review

31. The delivery of actions within the Tree Management Strategy will be monitored by the Parks and Open Spaces Manager who will report on the actions on an annual basis to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling.

Table 1 Tree strategy action:

Action	Target	Timeframe	Responsibility
Make strategy and management regimes available to stakeholders	This strategy and new management regimes for each service area available through the Council's website	Feb 2013	Tree Section Communications Team
Surveying	All publicly owned highways housing and parks trees in Southwark surveyed and mapped every 3-5 years	Ongoing	Tree Section
Develop planning guidance	Supplementary Planning Document (s) for Trees and landscaping, Green Infrastructure	April 2014	Development Management Planning Policy
Woodland Management	Woodland Management Plans for all woodland sites in the borough produced	April 2015	Tree Section, Ecology Officer, External Consultant
Implement a Significant Trees list for the borough	All trees on publicised register	April 2014	Tree Section
Produce a Tree Pit Design Manual for new Highways planting	Production and issue of guide	April 2013	Parks Mgmt, Public Realm Projects, Tree Sect, Development Mgmt
Maintain high level customer service and share information	Publishing schedules and review customer service procedures	Ongoing	Tree Section Communications Team
Reduction in complaints received	Number of complaints received below 30 per annum	Ongoing	Tree Section
Introduce a Tree Warden programme	Implemented programme and wardens reporting issues to the Tree Section	April 2013	Tree Section
Introduce a pilot Adopt a Tree Programme	10% of all newly planted trees maintained by residents	April 2014	Tree section

## Policy implications

32. The Tree Management Strategy supports the following Council priorities as identified in the 'Southwark 2016' 10-year plan for the borough:
- **Making Southwark a place for people, which has a good environment:**  
Through regular tree care, which is more environmentally and economically efficient. Regular maintenance and recycling of tree waste equates to a cleaner, greener, safer borough.
  - **Making Southwark a place for people, through a 'liveable' public realm:**  
Regular maintenance of trees helps improve the quality rating for streets, estates and parks which contributes to the number Green Flag awards received.
  - **Improve people's lives, helping them to be healthy:**  
Having a well-maintained and healthy tree population contributes to the reduction of climate change and pollution, flooding and other environmental factors such as carbon sequestration, absorption of carbon dioxide, filtering of atmospheric pollution, production of oxygen.
  - **Improve people's lives, helping them to be safe:**  
Regular tree maintenance helps to increase the benefit of public lighting in hours of darkness, therefore making the borough safer at night. The perceived risk of crime is also decreased. Well-maintained trees allow for unrestricted access and movement for all on public footpaths and carriageways.
33. The actions in the Tree Management Strategy contribute to the delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan through protecting and maintaining tree stock, and adapting to climate change
34. The actions in the Tree Management Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the draft Open Spaces Strategy through the effective management of a healthy and safe tree stock which contributes to the provision of high quality open space and improving access to nature. .
35. Trees and Urban Design – over recent years many trees have been planted in inappropriate and poorly designed tree pits with the effect of limiting the lifespan of the trees and damaging infrastructure. Whilst such tree pits could be considered to maximise the potential for new planting this approach is not sustainable. As a result officers are working towards agreeing a design for tree pits which is sustainable and affordable.

## Community impact statement

36. The Tree Management strategy is a borough wide strategy. It is concerned with planned and responsive tree care and seeks to improve the delivery and quality of the arboricultural service.
37. The impact of the strategy will affect all communities/groups, residents, businesses, visitors and those that pass through the borough and will in turn improve the quality of life for all. Direct benefits are a well maintained tree stock that makes an important contribution to the safety of all. Continued emphasis on maintenance will especially benefit the most vulnerable members of the community i.e. the elderly, the disabled and young children.



38. An equalities impact assessment was undertaken and the Tree Strategy impacts on people with disabilities as it aims to ensure accessibility through the effective management of the tree stock on the highway.

### **Resource implications**

39. Work associated with the delivery of the Tree Management Strategy will be delivered by the Tree Section, an existing resource funded by existing revenue budgets.

### **Financial implications**

40. The financial implications associated with the Tree Management Strategy can be contained within the Public Realm Division's budget. Current resources and budgets does not allow for every tree to be placed on a fixed maintenance cycle however full surveys will be carried out regularly and an inspection regime has been implemented (every 3 years for highways and housing and 5 years for parks trees) to identify priority trees for appropriate cyclical maintenance. This approach was confirmed by responses to the consultation.
41. For the current financial year 2012/13, there is a revenue budget of £836k for tree term contractor, of which Housing Revenue Account (HRA) contributes £247k. In addition the HRA contributes £70k for 2 members of staff. Subject to approval, this budget will remain the same for the financial year 2013/14.
42. The costs as a result of implementing the proposed strategy will be contained within this existing budget.
43. The latest approved Council Capital Programme does not have any provision for tree planting or similar works. However a bid will be submitted at the next available Capital Refresh opportunity.

### **Legal implications**

44. The council has a 'Duty of Care' to maintain trees in a safe and healthy condition and to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to minimise the risk of injury to people and damage to property by undertaking regular inspection and carrying out appropriate works.
45. The Tree Management Strategy has identified key Legislation and Policy which govern and influence the way we manage Southwark's trees in Appendix 3. These include;
- Town and Country Planning Acts – including Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation areas
  - The Wildlife and Countryside Act – affords protection to nesting birds and roosting bats
  - The Health and Safety at Work Act
  - Highways Act – to ensure that overhanging vegetation does not create obstruction or nuisance and that dangerous trees are made safe.
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Act – includes powers to deal with complaints in respect of high hedges

- Common Law – relating to ownership, hazardous trees and nuisance

### **Consultation**

46. Consultation was undertaken in September and October 2012 through 2 public meetings and a web based questions. Results are detailed in Appendix 2.
47. The strategy was consulted on internally with the following;
- Chief Executives Department
    - Planning
    - Regeneration
  - Housing & Community services
  - Director of Resources (Insurance Team)
  - Public Realm
    - Highway Officers
    - Ecology officer
    - Parks & Open Spaces

Feedback has been received and has been incorporated into the strategy document

### **Dissemination and review**

48. Should this report and the revised strategy be agreed by the Cabinet the following methods would be employed for dissemination and review:
- The Tree Management Strategy is published on the website
  - The Tree Management Strategy is disseminated through the appropriate mechanisms to tenants and leaseholders by Housing Management
  - The Tree Management Strategy website link is e-mailed to Parks 'friends' groups and voluntary sector partners
  - That the Tree Management Strategy be reviewed within 5 years and any comments on the strategy be considered as part of that review

### **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

#### **Director of Legal Services**

49. The report refers at paragraph 45 to the various statutes which influence the management of trees within the Borough. There are no other legal issues arising from this report apart from the acknowledgement of the duty of care which is set out in paragraph 44.

#### **Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (FC13/002)**

50. The Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services notes that this report requests approval to the revised Tree Management Strategy and the approach for adoption of the strategy. There is funding within the current revenue budget of £836k to meet the tree maintenance costs.

51. The Council's capital programme does not have any provision for tree planting or similar works at present. The Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services notes that a bid will be submitted at the next available capital refresh opportunity. If a bid is unsuccessful alternative funding will need to be secured in order to fully implement this strategy.
52. The costs of implementing this strategy will be contained within the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, after any budget adjustments are implemented. Officer time to effect the recommendations will be contained within existing budgeted revenue resources.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Borough wide Tree Strategy – Draft for Consultation – IDM October 2010	160 Tooley Street, London SE1  <a href="http://modern.gov.southwarksites.com/ie/DecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1613">http://modern.gov.southwarksites.com/ie/DecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1613</a>	Rebecca Towers 020 7525 2388

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Web Questionnaire (circulated separately and available on the council's website)
Appendix B	Tree Strategy Consultation Results (circulated separately and available on the council's website)
Appendix C	Tree Management Strategy 2013 (circulated separately and available on the council's website)

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Transport, Environment and Recycling	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure	
<b>Report Author</b>	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm,	
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<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	18 January 2013	