Cabinet Member Briefing

Leisure Directorate – Tree Management Policy consultation

Cllr Lury - 23 Oct 2019

1   Summary

The briefing is an update following the consultation of the new Tree Management Policy (TMP) and Tree Risk Management Strategy (TRMS). It presents the outcomes of the consultation and amendments made to the draft documents.

2   Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

- notes the content of the report
- notes the amendments made to the draft documents following the consultation
- notes the Tree Management Policy and associated appendices be brought to Cabinet December 2019.

3   Background

A new Tree Management Policy was drafted in March 2019 which aims to ensure the protection and enhancement of the borough's trees. A public consultation ran from 6 August 2019 and 27 September 2019 to gather the public's view on the new policy along with feedback from local partners. The findings of the consultation and feedback from local organisations are detailed in this report.

4   Key issues

The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and vowed to "*do all it can to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030.*"A draft report has been written which sets out the plan for the emerging Southwark Climate Strategy 2020-2030 which suggests approaches to support the Council and communities to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Tree Management is part of the emerging Southwark Climate Strategy and as such an effective Tree Management Policy is vital.

The proposed new Tree Management Policy aims to:

- Promote awareness of the value of trees in our environment.
- Interpret the policy framework on trees at a European, national, regional and local level.
- Set out the Council's policies to enable us to protect and enhance Southwark's treescape.

5   Policy consultation

The first stages of the consultation plan were undertaken by contacting internal departments seeking comments on the draft documents. Useful feedback was received and amendments were worked into the documents prior to seeking comments from third sector partners and members of the public.

The following third sector partners were contacted seeking their technical comments and asking them to encourage participation of their visitors in the forthcoming online public consultation:
- o   Quadron Idverde
- o   London Wildlife Trust
- o   Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST)
- o   The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- o   Friends of Groups and residents associations

During the public consultation period four drop in sessions were attended by officers at Dulwich Park, Southwark Park, Burgess Park and Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park (GMH). The key areas of discussion during the sessions were:

- ○ ambitious tree planting programs to tackle air pollution and climate change
- ○ community groups set up to help officers care for trees in street and parks
- ○ greater protection for trees in proposed developments
- ○ enhanced scrutiny of young tree maintenance
- ○ greater consultation with stakeholder groups for tree maintenance programs

Officers also attended Peckham Rye Park Fete in order to encourage participation in the online consultation and a presentation of the proposed policy document was given to Dulwich Village and Dulwich Wood Forum meeting as part of engagement with Empowering Communities.

An online consultation was undertaken using the Southwark Consultation hub website to allow residents and the wider community to have their say on the draft Southwark Tree Management Policy. The online consultation ran between 6 August 2019 and 27 September 2019 and 242 residents responded.

6   Consultation results

Please see Appendix 1 for the consultation questions and responses.

The majority of respondents strongly agree with Southwark Council's vision and long term objectives, our assessment of the benefits of trees, the assertion that trees have an important role to play in tackling climate change and that it is necessary to protect Southwark's treescape.

- **88%** of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with Southwark's vision and long term objectives in the Tree Management Policy.
- **96%** of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with Southwark's assessment of the benefits of trees.
- **95%** of respondents either agreed or strong agreed that trees have an important role to play in tackling climate change.
- **94%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is necessary to protect Southwark's treescape

Respondents supported a wide range of methods to communicate the benefits of trees; the most popular methods were social media messaging and community events.

The most popular areas respondents wanted Southwark to focus on in terms of managing its urban treescape were tree planting, tree protection and climate change.

Many respondents provided additional comments on the policy; the key findings have been summarised below:

- Increase the number of trees planted.

- Engage with community groups e.g. involve communities in tree planting programmes to encourage a sense of ownership.

- Engage effectively with partner organisations e.g. London Wildlife Trust, Bankside Open Spaces Trust, 'Friends of' groups etc.

- Work with schools to ensure children understand the importance of trees.

- Ensure all new developments are designed and built around current trees. The greening of the environment must be an essential part of any new development (rather than something desirable).

- Pollarding should not take place during the spring/summer as this is when the urban canopy is most needed.

- Additional checks should be undertaken on trees in residential areas to ensure the health and safety of residents.

- Trees that are felled should be replaced in the same area.

- The policy should reference woodlands e.g. the Great North Wood, and it should set out how the Council intends to support and enhance such areas.

- The document should expand on how the tree management policies could improve biodiversity.

- Educational signs could be added to new trees that are planted.

Demographic of respondents

The majority of respondents were aged between 45 – 64 years olds. Most respondents are above the average age in Southwark which is 32.9 years. [1]

The majority of respondents (56.61%) are White British. Just over half (54%) of Southwark's population is of White ethnicity, a quarter (25%) are Black and a third (11%) are Asian or other (10%) ethnicities. [2]

The majority of respondents are from the north of the borough.

7   Feedback from partner organisations

Friends of Burgess Park, London Wildlife Trust, Friends of Sunray Gardens and Woodland Trust all provided feedback on the new Tree Management Policy. Please see Appendix 2 for their full responses. They are in general agreement with the policy and welcome its development. A summary of their key suggestions are listed below:

- A distinction should be made between the management of street trees and trees in parks.
- Trees should be given the same status as existing buildings.
- Statements such as 'desirable', 'right tree, right place', 'in accordance with good arboricultural practice' should be defined as they are open to different interpretations.
- The impact and value of partnerships should be referenced in the document.
- A commitment should be made to prevent the loss of woodland habitat and to increase woodland cover in the borough. The Great North Wood should also be mentioned.
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) should be referenced.
- 'Adopt a Tree' and 'Memorial Tree' initiatives should be implemented.
- Additional tree planting should be added as a further objective.
- Local stakeholders should be informed of any proposed tree removals.

---

[1] https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/5718/JSNA-Factsheet-2017-Protected-Characteristics-20171130.pdf
[2] https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/7379/JSNA-Factsheet-2018-19-Demography-20180725.pdf

8   Proposed changes to the Tree Management Policy

Outcomes

The following key amendments have been made to the draft policy documents as an outcome of the consultation. Please see Appendix 3 for the updated draft policy document.

1. A greater emphasis made to the contribution and potential of woodlands and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's) throughout the document.
2. Policy 2 Tree removal - Extending the notice period for removing trees from 10-15 days.
3. Policy 3 Tree Planting – (page 10), Replacement Tree Planting, Changing the tree planting commitment from: "The Council will seek to plant at least one tree for every tree it removes" to "The Council will plant at least one tree for every tree it removes."
4. Policy 1 Tree pruning - (page 8), Reference the importance of retaining the natural form of trees when undertaking pruning operations.
5. Policy 3 Tree Planting – (page 10), reference the use of eco-system service reports analysis.
6. Policy 3 Tree Planting – (page 10), reference woodland and orchard creation.
7. Policy 3 Tree Planting – (page 10), utilisation of a wide range of species in order to build in future resilience to specific tree related pests and diseases.
8. Policy 10 Tree protection – (page 13) distinction made between legal protection for privately owned trees and Council protection of Southwark owned trees.

All of the significant recommendations have been worked in to the policy documents (Appendix 3 with highlighted changes).

Following the adoption of the TMP further work will undertaken in association with the proposed tree planting programme in terms of engaging and managing a network of tree community groups and working with schools in order to communicate the benefits of trees to children across the borough.

9   Next steps

A cabinet report will be presented at CMB on 6th November 2019.