

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 22 October 2010	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling
<b>Report title:</b>		Borough wide Tree Management Strategy	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Gill Davies, Strategic Director Environment and Housing	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling approves the Tree Management Strategy and the approach for the adoption of the strategy.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling agrees the following;
  - 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 all Parks 'friends' groups and voluntary sector partners
  - That the Tree Management Strategy be reviewed within 12 months and any comments on the strategy be considered as part of that review.
3. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling notes that current resources do not allow for full cyclical maintenance regimes for every tree and agrees the approach set out in Paragraph 22, to move to a regime based on condition.
4. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling notes the actions taken to address the recommendations arising from the Southwark Tree review undertaken by the Environment and Community Support scrutiny sub-committee attached at Appendix 1.
5. That the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling notes the service offer for trees and the areas of work we are unable to respond to within available resources as set out in Paragraph 27.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. In September 2008 the Executive considered the Environment and Community Support scrutiny sub-committee review of Southwark's Trees. That report recommended that a user friendly, easily accessible, tree strategy be published at the earliest opportunity. This report aims to meet this requirement
7. A new Arboricultural services Contract with Gristwood and Toms Limited commenced on the 1 September 2009 and is due for completion on the 30 March 2014 with provision for an extension of five years. The contract has implemented a number of key service improvements:-
  - Dedicated contract staff; management, administration and operational teams.
  - Pruning schedules published on web site.
  - Works notices posted prior to tree felling (5 Days).

- A new approach to customer service within the Customer Service Centre to enable residents to clearly identify problem trees and service outcomes that may be expected.
- A greater emphasis on planned preventative maintenance
- All green waste generated from the contract is recycled.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. The Tree Management Strategy, attached at Appendix 2, supports the new tree contract and together these aim to deliver an excellent, integrated tree service for the borough.
9. The objective of the Tree Management Strategy is to quantify and value the tree stock, set out how we manage trees operationally, how we plan for investment in the tree stock, coordinate resources and action respectively to achieve this aim over the next five years. The strategy is arranged in 5 sections;
  1. Vision and objectives
  2. Description of current stock
  3. How are trees managed and maintained
  4. How the community is engaged and involved in trees
  5. Actions and targets to achieve the vision

### Vision and objectives

10. That by 2015, Southwark's trees are well managed, protected and in a healthy and safe condition.
11. The Strategy has the following objectives;
  - 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 is easily accessible and comprehensible.
  - To ensure that all people and organisations with an interest in Southwark's trees are satisfied with the service provided
  - To improve the level of management information about the tree stock by increasing detailed surveying
  - To increase the amount of planned maintenance undertaken to 60% of works budget
  - To guide investment in the Borough's trees using the principle of 'right place, right tree'.

### Description of current stock

12. There are approximately 90,000 trees in Southwark. Southwark Council is responsible for the direct management, maintenance and care of over half (57,000) of the borough's tree population as follows;

Highways	15,000
Housing Estates	20,000
Parks & Open Spaces	20,000
Schools	2,000

13. The tree stock numbers provided above exclude woodland areas. There are currently insufficient funds to provide a full management regime for these trees, although a number of

woodlands are managed by community trusts. Woodland trees will continue to be managed on an adhoc basis prioritising health and safety issues only.

14. The remaining trees are located within residential gardens or on other private land and include trees managed by Transport for London.

### **How trees are managed and maintained**

15. The Public Realm Tree team directly manages all trees on Highways and in Parks, trees on Housing estates are managed via a Service Level Agreement. They also provide a rechargeable service to others including individual schools and Corporate facilities management. The management of Southwark's trees mainly involves the following categories of activity:

- Contract management
- Surveying and recording of information
- Routine/planned maintenance
- Reactive maintenance
- Planting
- Dealing with enquiries and insurance claims

### **Planning**

16. Tree elements of planning are managed by the Development Control team through the new Urban Forester post. This post is now responsible for all planning related tree enquiries and the management and maintenance of the Tree Preservation Order register. The Tree team will continue to provide support as necessary and provide a role of expert consultees as required.

### **Tree maintenance budget**

17. The 2010/11 works budget for managing trees on streets, road verges, in parks and communal areas on housing estates totals £792K and includes provision for planned and reactive maintenance. This is allocated as set out in the table below;

Highways	£403, 795
Housing	£272, 362
Parks	£115,638
<b>Sub Total Works</b>	<b>£791,795</b>
Overheads (client costs)	£183,267
<b>Total</b>	<b>£975,062</b>

18. The Arboricultural Services Contract includes an agreed minimum Annual Purchasing Commitment (APC) of £727K which represents 92% of existing works budgets. A volume discount of 5% is applied to all spend in excess of the APC.

### **Planned Maintenance Cycles**

19. Southwark does not currently have a fixed maintenance cycle for trees other than a small number of trees identified as an insurance risk. Ideally each tree in Southwark would be placed on an appropriate maintenance cycle.

20. For illustrative purposes we have estimated the cost of maintenance cycles if each tree was placed on an ideal cycle based on current costs and existing tree stock. Using an average cost of £115.00 per tree the results are shown in the table below;

	Total Budget	% PPM	PPM budget	Unit cost	No. Trees	Ideal Cycle	Affordable Cycle	Budget Deficit
<b>Highways</b>	£403,795	60.00%	£242,277	£115.00	15,000	3	7.12	£332,723
<b>Housing</b>	£272,362	60.00%	£163,417	£115.00	20,000	3	14.07	£603,250
<b>Parks</b>	£115,638	60.00%	£69,383	£115.00	20,000	5	33.15	£390,617
								<b>£1,326,590</b>

21. The reality is that the existing resources do not allow for each tree to be placed in an ideal maintenance cycle. In any case the required maintenance cycle is likely to be different for each tree. In the case of Highways some trees need to be placed on an 18-24 month cycle due to Insurance claims, others due to their type, size and location may be more suited to a longer maintenance cycle eg. 5 years.
22. Ideally we would place every tree on the appropriate maintenance cycle however this is not affordable. It is therefore proposed to continue to undertake condition surveys on a rolling 3-5 year cycle to identify works and prioritise accordingly. We will also manage a programme of full surveys to identify priority trees for inclusion in a regular cyclical maintenance programme. A full survey of Highway trees is currently underway and due for completion by March 2011. The detailed results of the Highways survey will be available from April 2011. Further surveys are planned for Housing and Parks trees in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

### **Insurance mitigation**

23. The Tree team has agreed a joint mitigation protocol with the Council's insurance team to reduce claims arising from tree damage; identifying high risk areas and trees to mitigate future claims.

### **Tree planting**

24. Replacement tree planting will be undertaken to maintain the existing stock of trees. New planting distinct from replacement planting is not covered by exiting revenue budgets. The Council will consider carefully where, using the principle of 'right place, right tree' and when to plant new trees in order to manage the financial implications appropriately. Guidance for planting new trees including the criteria for selecting the right location is contained in Appendix 1 of the Tree Management Strategy.
25. Where Capital funding is made available for new planting schemes, the schemes will be assessed using the Tree Management Strategy and a minimum 3 year maintenance and defects liability period required.

### **Reactive Maintenance**

26. The Council receives nearly 3,000 enquires about trees per year. The majority are general pruning requests including; blocking light, encroachment, leaf and blossom drop, TV and Satellite reception, and overgrown trees.

### **Managing expectations**

27. The Tree Management Strategy sets out what we can and can not respond to within available resources.

**What we can do;**

- Identify priority trees and place on appropriate maintenance cycles
- Undertake reactive work where there is an imminent health and safety or public safety hazard eg Street Lighting.
- Introduce an 'adopt a tree' programme to minimise young tree maintenance costs
- Continue to provide an advisory service to various clients including Schools and recharge accordingly

**What we can't do;**

- Plant new trees unless capital funding is provided including maintenance costs
- Prune trees that are blocking light, views, affecting TV/Satellite reception, leaf drop, or pest control. (Info to be provided on web page, Oracle and Strategy)
- Maintain trees in tenants front/rear gardens
- Maintain tree pits (other than newly planted trees within the 2 year maintenance period)

**Community engagement**

28. Community involvement has the potential to provide additional resources for tree management and maintenance. Past planting projects in Southwark have demonstrated that, where local residents are involved in planting and maintenance, new plantings have a better survival rate, are less likely to be vandalised and give a sense of ownership to the local community.
29. The Tree Management Strategy will continue to encourage greater community involvement in the care and management of Southwark's trees through schemes such as community planting and adopt a tree programmes.

## Actions and targets

30. Full details of the actions and targets are contained in Section 6 of the Tree Management Strategy, a summary of the key actions is provided below;

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	November 2010	Tree team, E Comms
Consult on this strategy	Invite comments on published strategy from stakeholder groups and residents and review in 12 months.	November 2011	Tree Team, Cabinet member, E Comms
Introduce new approach to customer feedback and consultation	Publishing of schedules. Development of 'Oracle' – new call centre procedures.	May 2010 November 2010	Tree team, E Comms, CSC
Reduction in number of complaints received	Number of complaints received below 30 per annum	April 2011 onwards	Tree team
Develop policy for tree planting (right place, right tree)	Policy agreed	November 2010	Parks management, Public Realm Projects, Development Management
Implementation of strategy	60% of revenue budget expended on planned maintenance by 2012.	April 2012	Tree team/Contractor
Surveying	All publicly owned highways and housing trees in Southwark surveyed and mapped	2011/12	Tree team/Contractor
	All publicly owned parks trees in Southwark surveyed and mapped	2012/13	Tree team/Contractor
Valuing	Value of all publicly owned trees in Southwark assessed using CAVAT system.	2012/13	Tree team
Develop an accurate register of Tree Preservation Orders	All TPOs on register	Spring 2012	Development Management
Introduce new programme of proactive cyclical maintenance to Priority trees	Planned works scheduled annually as part of new Arboricultural term contract	2012/13	Tree team /Contractor
Implementation of the planned maintenance programme	95% of trees healthy and safe	2013/14	Tree team/Contractor

## Policy implications

31. 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.

### **Community Impact Statement**

32. 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.
33. 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 to all. Direct benefits are a well maintained tree stock 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.

### **Resource Implications**

34. The Strategy is based upon an assumption that existing revenue budgets will continue at current resource levels.

### **Financial implications**

35. The financial implications associated with the Strategy can be contained within the Public Realm Division's budget. This report identifies the financial constraints and how these will be managed. Current budgets do not allow for every tree to be placed on fixed maintenance cycles however full surveys will be carried out to identify priority trees for appropriate cyclical maintenance. Capital funding including maintenance costs is to be sought for all new tree planting. The existing budget requires the Council to focus on planned maintenance and reduce reactive works. The strategy makes provision for 60% of the budget to be allocated to planned priority works. The remaining budget will be allocated to priority reactive works including health and safety or public safety issues.
36. The Housing Finance Manager has confirmed that the costs of implementing this strategy need to be contained within the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budget envelopes remaining after any budget adjustments are implemented both for 2010/11 and for 2011/12 (NR – 5/10/10).

### **Legal Implications**

37. 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.
38. The Tree Management Strategy has identified key Legislation and Policy which govern and influence the way we manage Southwark's trees in Appendix 11. These include;
  - Town & Country Planning Acts - including Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation areas
  - The Wildlife & 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**

39. The draft Strategy has been circulated internally to the following for consultation:

- Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
  - Development Control
  - Planning Officers
- Housing Management
- Insurance Team
- Public Realm
  - Highway Officers
  - Ecology Officer
  - Cleaner Greener Safer Project Team

Feedback received and has been incorporated into the Strategy document.

40. The Strategy will be placed on the Council's web site and a range of key stakeholders will be notified. Any feedback received will be considered and the Tree Management Strategy renewed in 12 months.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance (KM/290910)**

41. There are no specific legal implications arising from this recommendation. The agreement of significant policy issues and the agreement of broad consultation arrangements in respect of their area of responsibility is a matter reserved for Individual Cabinet Member decision. The decision to approve the Tree management Strategy is therefore reserved to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling.

### **Director of Finance (Env/ET/290910)**

42. The current 2010/11 base budget allocated for the service of £975k (as set out in paragraph 15 above) is sufficient to fund the proposed Tree Management Strategy. The Council will determine the level of resources as part of the budget-setting process, taking into account the specific priorities for that area of service. Since the current Arboricultural Services Contract includes an agreed minimum Annual Purchasing Commitment (APC) of £727K (representing 92% of existing works budgets), it is recommended that a further report be presented if budget setting process results in more than 8% reduction in resources available for the service.



## APPENDICES

Number	Title
1	Scrutiny Report
2	Tree Management Strategy

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Gill Davies, Strategic Director Environment and Housing		
<b>Report Author</b>	Rebecca Towers, Parks & Open Spaces Manager		
<b>Version</b>	Final		
<b>Dated</b>	22 October 2010		
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	<b>If yes, date appeared on forward plan</b>	March 2010
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>			
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>	
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes	
Finance Director	Yes	Yes	
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes	
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer</b>			22 October 2010

## **Borough wide Tree Management Strategy - IDM**

### **APPENDIX 1**

#### **Southwark Tree Review – Recommendations and actions**

**Recommendation 1: That a user friendly, easily accessible, tree strategy be published at the earliest opportunity.**

The new tree management strategy has been written to reflect the current priorities and available resources. The strategy establishes a sustainable strategic direction for the Arboricultural Service which will be made transparent to all stakeholders. The document will appear on the council's website in a simple intelligible form.

**Recommendation 2: That serious consideration is given to whether there are sufficient staffing levels to meet proper aspirations for tree management, maintenance and protection.**

The tree sections staffing structure has been reviewed and changes to improve the service have been actioned. A new Contract and Monitoring Officer post has been created to improve customer enquiry performance and general administration processes.

A new Urban Forester post has been created within the Planning Departments Development Control team. This post is now responsible for all planning related tree enquiries and the management and maintenance of the Tree Preservation Order register. The Tree team will continue to provide support as necessary and provide a role of expert consultees as required.

**Recommendation 3: That there is a best value comparison of whether tree maintenance is better outsourced or brought back in-house; the outcome to be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Arrangements for the delivery of tree maintenance needed to be made as a matter of priority. There was insufficient time, given the procurement deadlines that are legally imposed on the Council, to undertake a full best value comparison but the procurement approach was developed to allow as much comparison as possible. The option of bringing the service back in house was therefore not recommended.

The new Arboricultural services Contract with Gristwood and Toms Limited commenced on the 1st September 2009 and is due for completion on the 30 March 2014 with provision for an extension of five years. The contract has implemented a number of key service improvements:-

- Dedicated contract staff; management, administration and operational teams.
- Pruning schedules published on web site.
- Works notices posted prior to tree felling (5 Days).
- A new approach to customer service within the Customer Service Centre to enable residents to clearly identify problem trees and service outcomes that may be expected.
- A greater emphasis on planned preventative maintenance
- All green waste generated from the contract is recycled.

**Recommendations 4: That the tree team produce a comprehensive list of tree preservation orders (TPOs) to be made accessible to the public via the council's website. That following examples of best practice such as the Isle of Wight, Southwark publish on its website photographs, relevant details and the history of each TPO tree for the public to view.**

A dedicated Arboricultural Planning Officer post (Urban Forester) has been created within the Planning Departments Management team. The post was filled in March 2010 and is responsible for management and maintenance of the Council's Tree Preservation Order register.

The Development Management team are developing an accurate register of Tree Preservation Orders which will be published in Spring 2012.

**Recommendations 5: That the lack of tree management in schools be brought to the attention of the council's education department, highlighting the potential dangers. The sub-committee suggests that Southwark sends an annual letter to the LEA to ask them for information regarding the status of trees in school grounds.**

**That there is greater encouragement of co-operation between schools and the council's tree section, to foster awareness amongst schoolchildren of the need to care for, manage and monitor trees.**

The maintenance of trees in schools the responsibility of individual schools. The Council's Tree section does not currently provide a direct service to the Education Section of the Council or to individual schools.

The Tree section will contact Children's Services to arrange for an article to be published in the fortnightly schools newsletter offering a full tree management and maintenance service. In the meantime the Tree section will continue to offer an adhoc service on an individual basis when requested and recharge accordingly.

The street leader team is developing a tree monitoring scheme and has undertaken a pilot with two local schools, Riverside and Langbourne. Pupils will be advised on what to look for by our Arboricultural team and commenced audits from late March 2009.

**Recommendation 6: That there is an investigation of the possibility of a tree warden scheme in Southwark, either as a stand-alone venture or in collaboration with current street leaders and friends of parks schemes.**

The Council is developing an "adopt a tree" programme whereby residents are asked to contribute to the maintenance of newly planted trees in their street including, watering and tree pit maintenance.

**That there is early decision on implementing a programme of selective removal and replacement of problem trees.**

The Tree section already identifies 'problem trees' through its survey process and trees that are diseased or dying or that constitute any threat to life, limb or property are removed. In addition, works are carried in response to subsidence claims in order to contain any claims against the Council. The circumstances describing where and why trees may be removed are covered by the Tree Management Strategy.

**Recommendation 7: That there is a switch to the selective use of synthetic materials instead of salt for gritting at the base of trees. To be implemented in late 2008.**

This is something that the Council has investigated, however due to significant cost implications has not been pursued at this time.

Guidance on the application of gritting salt to avoid damage to trees has been issued to all gritting staff. The Council is also reviewing the material used around tree basis to provide greater protection to trees. The Tree section has modified the young tree pit design to include self binding gravel in all new tree pits to minimise the affect of leaching.

**Recommendation 8: That the tree team reviews the existing Supplementary Planning Document so that initiatives such as tree cover for car-parks in Southwark can be planned in the future.**

The recently adopted SPD on Sustainable Design and construction includes significant elements to protect and enhance the tree stock within the Borough including:-

- A section on adapting to climate change which includes landscaping to reduce heat island effect as far as our current policies permit.
- A section on biodiversity which outlines the important duties on land owners to protect habitat, which includes trees. The also includes guidance and standards for protecting trees on development sites on construction and ensuring the design of new development is sensitive to new trees
- Requiring tree reports to be submitted when trees are near or on a site, and there is a checklist of what needs to go into one of these reports

**Recommendation 9: That a dedicated tree budget is identified.**

The Tree Section's budget has been restructured, including the separation of works budgets from overheads (salaries and section running costs). The Tree Section prioritises spend in accordance with available budgets including the budget provided by the Housing Revenue Account. Details on work prioritisation are included within the Tree Management Strategy.

The extent to which a tree planting budget can be established is constrained by existing budgets and priorities. However the Council is committed to a replacement planting programme to maintain existing stock wherever possible.

New planting distinct from replacement planting is not covered by exiting revenue budgets. The Council will consider carefully where, using the principle of 'right place, right tree' and when to plant new trees in order to manage the financial implications appropriately. Guidance for planting new trees including the criteria for selecting the right location is contained in the Tree Management Strategy.

Where Capital funding is made available for new planting schemes, the schemes will be assessed using the Tree Management Strategy and a minimum 3 year maintenance and defects liability period required. Existing capital schemes include the Mayor's priority tree programme and the Cleaner Greener Safer programme.

**Recommendation 10: That thorough consideration is given to the added value of tree planting whilst highway work is being carried out.**

Opportunities for the planting new street trees where appropriate are now considered in all planned public realm improvement schemes.

**Recommendation 11: That the development of a proper and consistent systematic response be developed, with clear instructions setting out how members of the public can contact the council in the event of witnessing vandalism or reporting the results of vandalism.**

The Customer Service Centre is the Council's current method for reporting acts of Enviro-crime and their telephone number is well advertised. Acts of vandalism are monitored and the Council has taken action to prevent further damage (for instance, in respect of damage caused to trees in the vicinity of advertising hoardings).

**Recommendation 12: That there is more work and discussion on the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) so that the council can take a firmer line with developers and utility companies who do not engage with the council. There also needed to be stronger and more strategic practical leadership in the department for the tree team to be truly effective.**

This recommendation has been covered in the response to recommendation 8. Further details of the Council's planning policies in relation to trees is included in the Tree Management Strategy.

The management of the Tree Section has been transferred to the Parks and Open Spaces business unit due to the obvious synergies between open space and tree management and because the Parks department has an excellent record in developing and managing the externally borough-wide grounds maintenance contract.