

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 18 September 2023
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Highways, Environmental & Traded Services

Report Title

Tree Management Policy Approval

Summary

To approve the updated Tree Management Policy following public consultation that will be used to manage and maintain Trafford's tree stock.

Recommendation(s)

The Executive is recommended to:

Approve the proposed updated policy for the management and maintenance of trees in Trafford.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Sharon Walls
Extension: 4592

Background Papers:

Implications:

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report supports the Corporate Priorities: By effectively managing tree stock in our urban and rural environments this contributes to reducing health inequalities and also supporting people out of poverty by providing free access to nature that can support and exercise and improved mental health opportunities. The management and maintenance of tree stock directly supports the Climate Emergency
Relationship to GM Policy or	Management of trees fits with the GM 5-year

Strategy Framework	Environmental Plan
Financial	Tree management will be undertaken within existing resources. Future finances maybe required as a result of increased inspections of all council owned tree stock. This will be subject to future business case. Failure to comply with legal obligations can result in payment of damages.
Legal Implications:	By law, a local authority is required to manage and undertake work to any tree which constitutes a statutory nuisance and all local authorities are required to have a programme of inspection and tree maintenance works to not only protect local residents but to preserve and maintain a healthy tree population.
Equality/Diversity Implications	No implications
Sustainability Implications	Effective management of trees can have an impact on sustainability of across the Borough. There are no adverse effects on biodiversity or climate as a result of this report but seeks to enhance where possible
Resource Implications e.g., Staffing / ICT / Assets	None at present as a result of this policy however, as a result of increased statutory demand to inspect trees on other council land there is a review of staffing resource to be undertaken in 2023/24
Risk Management Implications	By not having an approved policy relating to management and maintenance of trees the authority could be at risk of increased demand to manage trees differently.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Trees can have positive benefits to peoples' health and wellbeing
Health and Safety Implications	By not managing trees effectively there could be Health and Safety implications resulting from poor management and maintenance of the tree stock in Trafford.
Carbon Reduction	Well maintained trees will directly contribute to carbon reduction by providing an efficient stock of trees supporting reductions in CO2 emissions and the effects of climate change.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council has an extensive tree stock across the Borough that requires a form of continuous management and maintenance. There are trees present on council land including 18,000 highway trees, with 40Ha of woodland with a variety of species and trees in parks, open spaces and schools and in residential areas.
- 1.2 Trafford's current Tree Policy has been in place for a number of years and requires updating to ensure it meets with current tree management and maintenance principles and best practice. The Council has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to have in place an effective system for managing trees that ensures trees do not present a risk to the public.

- 1.3 In addition to legislative requirements, a range of relevant guidance has been produced by various organisations, including the National Tree Safety Group, the Arboricultural Association, the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission. Their guidance provides advice to help duty holders such as Trafford to comply with legislation relevant to trees. However, it should be noted that the guidance represents 'best practice' guidance for managing trees and each Authority is expected to have their own effective system for managing trees relevant to their land ownership and tree stock profile.
- 1.4 The proposed updated Tree Management Policy 2023 (attached at Appendix 1 of this report) covers how the Council will manage the tree stock in addition to ensuring that it is safe. The document also identifies how the council will respond to tree planting, requests for tree pruning, tree removal and other impacts that trees can have on the public, land or highway and endorses best practice procedures that have already been implemented as required during the life of the previous agreed policy.
- 1.5 Consultation on an updated Tree Management Principles document was initially undertaken in June 2020 however, due to the timing of the consultation, which coincided with the onset of the pandemic, no substantive responses received at that time and as such, progress of the policy was halted. Since then, the policy has been further reviewed and updated and a further public consultation on the proposed policy was administered during May to August 2023..

2.0 Other Options

- 2.1 It is an option not to approve the proposed policy. This option would result in the continued use of the current policy. However, this is not considered to be a viable option as the existing policy does not address the current issues facing the longer-term management and maintenance of trees within a changing climate and represents a potential risk to the Council.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1 The Tree Management Policy was published for consultation following approval by the Executive Member from 30th May 2023 to the 14th of August 2023. A total of 70 responses were received. 56 (80%) were in support of the policy with 14 (20%) unsupportive. Appendix A contains the summary report associated with the consultation.
- 3.2 Overall 60 individuals responded with additional comments that respondents felt should be considered. Of the 20% not in support the comments that were made relative to this decision were on individual aspects of the policy that the respondents didn't agree with and focused around the following three main concerns:
- Concerns about **felling large trees and did not support the removal of any trees** particularly large established ones and wanted more Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)
 - Concerns about the amount of **leaf fall** and not removing the leaves often enough.

- **More maintenance needed to the tree stock** to reduce impacts on obstruction due to lighting and obstruction and damage of footways with large trees.

3.3 Consideration of the additional comments for consideration both from those in support and not in support of the policy various sections within the policy have been amended and updated to better reflect the approach that the council is taking regarding maintenance and inspection of the trees.

- Sections 4.1 and 4.4, to clarify and better explain the maintenance of trees in highway and on council land.
- Sections 5.3 and 5.5 have been amended that can present obstruction in footways and lighting.
- Section 5.15 has been updated and expanded to cover more on how the council handles leaf fall from trees.
- Expanded Section 7 on Removal of Trees and TPO's
- Updated Section 9 to reflect the council's commitment to biodiversity net gain to support the climate agenda.
- Inserted Section 11 on Looking After Trees.
- Various other grammatical and typographical errors have been corrected in the document and also (5.10) that clarifies when pruning can take place relative to nesting seasons.

3.4 Overall however, there was a support for the updated Tree Management Policy and with various comments now reflected and expanded upon within the final document the policy should therefore see effective management and maintenance of the tree stock across Trafford for the next 5years.


4.0 Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Approval of a new policy is sought as the existing tree policy is out of date and requires updating to reflect current issues surrounding the management and maintenance of trees.

Finance Officer Clearance *(type in initials)...DS.....*

Legal Officer Clearance *(type in initials)...PC.....*

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic)*



To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.