

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
10 JANUARY 2018	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Simon Machen -Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Peter Hiller- Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning and Economic Development	
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PETERBOROUGH TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration	Deadline date: Cabinet meeting of 15 th January 2017
<p>It is recommended that the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider and make any recommendations in respect of the draft Trees and Woodland Strategy prior to its referral to Cabinet; any recommendations made by the Committee will be reported to Cabinet for its consideration. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 The existing Tree and Woodland Strategy recommends a review on a five yearly basis. As the current strategy was adopted in 2012 it is now considered time to update and refresh the strategy.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the City Council's draft Trees and Woodland Strategy (see Appendix B), and for the Scrutiny Committee to consider it prior to its referral to Cabinet and thereafter wider public consultation.

2.2 This report is for the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council : Environmental Capital.

2.3 This strategy helps to deliver the Environmental Capital agenda. Section 4 of this report details the contribution the council's tree resource makes to the Environmental Action Plan. Equally the strategy helps fulfil the council's desire to keep communities healthy by providing woodlands and treed open spaces that encourage outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles. In addition trees help minimise air pollution by trapping particulates; while they are proven to help relieve stress and provide a feeling of wellbeing.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	15 th Jan 2018
Date for relevant Council meeting	Late 2018 (date to be determined)	Date for submission to Government Dept.	n/a

4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Council adopted its current Tree and Woodland Strategy in 2012. That Strategy has been extremely effective in putting in place clear process and guidelines as to how the city council will not only discharge its statutory functions in relation to Trees and Woodland, but also its guidelines, or ‘service standards’, in respect of this important resource, a matter which is very ‘public facing’ service the council delivers.
- 4.2 It is, however, time to refresh that strategy, building on the success of the current strategy, but also providing further clarification on what service the council will offer (and importantly what it will not).
- 4.3 The draft strategy has been drafted taking account of the following key principles:
- fulfilling our statutory duties (including health and safety)
 - being as clear as possible where the council will and will not provide service.
 - recognition of the vital importance of trees and woodland to our communities, quality of life and ecosystems services.
 - our financial constraints.

Statutory duties

- 4.4 The City Council’s Trees and Woodland Strategy takes account of the legislative requirement introduced by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act S40 and The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature –Environment White Paper.
- 4.5 In addition it will help the Council facilitate compliance with:
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957 [revised 1984] which requires it “to take reasonable care” to maintain its trees and woods in a reasonably safe condition.
 - The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which requires the council to have a duty of care to employees and members of the public in respect to safety of the trees in its ownership.
- 4.6 The systems of health and safety checks on trees that have been developed are proposed to be maintained. The aim will be to continue to keep risks presented by trees as low as it is reasonably practicable to do so. In 2012 the Council’s contractors produced a Tree Risk Management Plan, now included within the revised strategy, which includes all the measures recommended in current guidance.

Service standards

- 4.7 As organisms of longevity and complexity, in order to manage trees sustainably, a strategic operational approach is essential. The understanding of the way pruning affects trees has evolved, but the basic premise has not changed: all tree surgery is not for the benefit of the tree, other than to enable it to continue to co-exist in an artificial human environment.
- 4.8 The analysis of enquiries received over the last five years of has enabled the Council to monitor customer concerns, prioritise work and establish best practice in the way that it is undertaken. Improved levels of consultation and communication have been developed. Equally, firmer policies have been developed, and proposed to be included in the new strategy, that inform residents of the Council’s actions in respect to common concerns. These policies are integral to

a more pro-active level of service delivered within financial constraints.

Importance of trees

- 4.9 Trees are the largest and oldest living organisms in our environment. Trees and woodlands are dominant features of the landscape and environment of Peterborough. Collectively they form one of its finest and most important features. However, they are not simply embellishments, but provide a range of important ecosystem services and contribute towards the sustainable future of the City. At appendix A, examples are given to illustrate the importance of some of the ecosystem services provided and how trees can help to deliver its Environment Action Plan (EAP) targets.

Financial constraints

- 4.10 In these challenging financial times the strategy has been written within the constraints of the current budgetary provision. No new financial demands are envisaged from the revised strategy however it does highlight the potential threats of major pest and disease that may in future impact financially on the council. It also highlights the need to retain existing resourcing chains to avoid existing problems getting worse to the point where the tree stock could be considered a negative asset.
- 4.11 Measures are also proposed to introduce mechanisation, such as a tractor mounted tree shears, where it is practicable to reduce the cost of selective woodland management. In addition to expanding tree and woodland cover through sustainable external funding sources.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Public consultation on the strategy is planned to commence post Cabinet approval. The responses received as part of the public consultation will be reviewed and fed into the documents as appropriate prior to consideration (and adoption) by Cabinet and Full Council later in 2018.
- 5.2 A range of local organisations will be invited to comment during this consultation period. These include:
- The Local Conservation Bodies
 - Peterborough Environment City Trust
 - Nene Park Trust
 - The Woodland Trust

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 It is anticipated that the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee will recommend to Cabinet that the Strategy goes out to public consultation.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Committee is recommended to comment and refer the Tree and Woodland Strategy to Cabinet. This is because the plans will help deliver the city's Environment Capital priority by providing clear strategic direction for the management of the council's tree resource and set targets with which the progress of the strategy will be measured. It will also ensure the council delivers best value for the budget set aside for Trees and Woodland.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The alternative option of not producing an updated strategy would mean that there would be no clear vision and targets associated with the management of the Council's Trees and Woodland, making progress difficult to monitor and the effective allocation of resources challenging. Therefore the alternative option of not updating the strategy was rejected.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications on the Council, as a result of the policies proposed in the draft strategy. Where applicable, all targets contained within the plans are currently planned to be achieved within existing resources.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 As detailed in section 4 above the strategy also ensures the council continues to fulfil its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Occupiers Liability Act.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 There are no anticipated equalities implications of this recommendation.

Rural Implications

- 9.4 The strategy is unitary wide with no specific rural implications.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A - The Ways in which Trees and Woodland Contribute to a Sustainable Future for Peterborough
Appendix B – Peterborough Tree and Woodland Strategy 2018-2028