

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
24 SEPTEMBER 2018	PUBLIC REPORT

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Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Peter Hiller - Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning and Economic Development	
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PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL’S 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: N/A
It is recommended that Cabinet recommends the Tree and Woodland Strategy to Full Council for approval.	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following consideration by the Growth, Environment and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2018 and Cabinet 15 January 2018, prior to four weeks public consultation from 2 March 2018 to 29 March 2018.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the City Council’s updated Tree and Woodland Strategy for the Cabinet to consider and if appropriate to refer it to Full Council for consideration as part of the major policy framework.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1, ‘To take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council’s Major Policy and Budget Framework and lead the Council’s overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services’.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	YES	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	24 September 2018
Date for relevant Council meeting	17 October 2018	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.

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).

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

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.

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.

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 practical to do so. In 2012 the Council's contractors produced a Tree Risk Management Plan, now included within the revised strategy, which includes measures recommended in current guidance.

Service standards

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.

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

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. Previously when referred to Cabinet the report illustrate the importance of some of the ecosystem services provided by trees and how they can help to deliver its Environment Action Plan (EAP) targets. As part of consultation feedback this evidence was further expanded by the commissioning of a i-Tree Eco v6 evaluation, used to describe the tree stock and quantify and value air pollution removal, carbon storage, carbon sequestration and reductions in surface water

runoff delivered by the trees (see consultation feedback below).

Financial constraints

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.

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 commenced for four weeks post Cabinet approval. A range of local organisations will be invited to comment during this consultation period. These included:
- The Local Conservation Bodies
 - Peterborough Environment City Trust
 - Nene Park Trust
 - The Woodland Trust
- 5.2 A total of 4 consultation responses were received. These comments and observations have been incorporated, where appropriate, within the revised Strategy presented. A summary of the consultation comments is included within Appendix A.
- 5.3 The recommended revisions are, on the whole, very limited and focused in very few areas of the Strategy. One comment raised by Scrutiny was its lack of evidence to support the positive benefits of the Council's tree resource. In order to address this a report was commissioned to present an evaluation of some of the benefits provided by Peterborough's council owned tree stock. This work, using i-Tree Eco v6, describes the tree stock and attempts to quantify and value air pollution removal, carbon storage, carbon sequestration and reductions in surface water runoff delivered by the trees. Amenity value of the tree stock was calculated using the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) quick method. This useful report has been added within Appendix 8 of the Trees & Woodland Strategy. In summary the report highlights that the council owned trees are providing significant benefits to society in the form of public services. Amenity value far outweighs the other benefits, with a total value of £2.9 billion, compared to a present value of £38.20 million over 80 years for all other benefits combined, plus total carbon storage value of £11.07 million. Interestingly the tree stock can be credited with offsetting 79.3% of the Council's emissions (data taken from the annual Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) figures 17-18).

It was noted by Cabinet, as well as a consultation comment, that ward boundary references were outdated and that canopy cover data did not relate to the most recent ward boundary changes. Subsequently, following consultation, the most upto date canopy cover data was prepared and spatially analysed against current ward boundaries. The resultant independent analysis showed some differences between those figures in the draft Strategy and the revised data. In summary the updated work has resulted in a new, higher quality, canopy cover data set, more accurately demonstrating the significant variance in ward areas, and is to be inserted into the Strategy.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 The proposed Strategy, if approved will be used in making decisions on the management of the Council's Trees and Woodland asset. The Strategy aims also to expand our knowledge of the competing pressures experienced in managing a sizeable maturing urban tree population.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The strategy 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.

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 new 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 4.2 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.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 10.1 Peterborough Tree and Woodland Strategy 2012
Environment Action Plan: Peterborough City Council 2017

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A - Trees and Woodland Strategy - Consultation Comments
Appendix B - Draft Trees and Woodland Strategy