

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 9
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Report of the Commercial Services Director

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PETERBOROUGH TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a document that offers a strategy for directing the care of Peterborough's trees and woodlands. It updates the 1998 Tree & Woodland Strategy and accommodates the changes that have taken place over the last twelve years, including the influences of the Bio Diversity Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities scrutinises the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy and makes any recommendations as necessary.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 3.1 Trees are the largest single item within the landscape and therefore have impact. Woodlands are an invaluable resource and a superb educational opportunity and thus contribute to the agenda for learning and awareness of environmental issues. The SCS contains the priority for

“Making Peterborough cleaner and greener so that we become the UK’s greenest city with attractive neighbourhoods surrounded by thriving biodiversity”.

- 3.2 Directives within DEFRA have the stated aims of **“Helping to enhance the environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life”** and **“Supporting a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change”**.

- 3.3 Supporting the findings and issues within appendix 1 links to National Indicator 197 (Improved local biodiversity - active management of local sites) the rationale of this indicator being to “assess the performance of Local Authorities with regard to local sites and promoting them for educational purposes”.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This document represents an update of the 1998 Tree & woodland Strategy, the latter lacking contemporary impact as identified through time served observation and review.
- 4.2 This report was considered by the Environment Scrutiny Panel on the 4th November 2010 during which a number of matters were raised and a further meeting was set up with members of the committee to consider the points raised and for a comparison to be made between the current report and concerns that some matters had been omitted from an earlier draft as prepared by a trees and woodlands working group. The meeting took place on the 7th December 2010 and a number of matters raised at that meeting have been incorporated into the attached draft strategy.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 The first key issue for members to consider is the proposal to move away from response based reactive works to a programme of inspections followed by tree works based upon the findings, this also in demonstration of duty of care.

5.2 The next key issue is to look at the development of the right tree in the right place framework and the consideration of options to eventually reduce overcrowding within residential areas followed by a programme of replacing existing, inappropriate space demanding trees, with smaller alternatives.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are financial implications associated within the current draft to which reference is made within the text, notably planned inspections and programmes of works as directed by the findings.

6.2 Environmental implications include the potential loss of habitat, diminution of bio-diversity and depletion of trees and woodlands lost through neglect, overcrowding or senility through carrying on with current practices and emphasis on response based works to the detriment of planned works. The latter allows for promotion of habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement.

6.3 Pre-determined programmes for works to trees and woodlands demonstrate that the duty of care, has been given due consideration and this includes minimising damage to property from falling trees as well as that to foundations from subsidence.

6.4 Trees and woodlands are very much city wide and a major feature within all Wards of Peterborough.

6.5 Care of and selection of trees carries with it implications for community safety with considerations of potential tree collapse and shading of street lights.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 To date consultation has been confined to interdepartmental colleagues directly associated with the care of trees and open spaces and those with a planning related logistical responsibility. External consultation with associations, Ward Members, Parish Councils and community groups will commence post approval of the initial draft.

8. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

8.1 That Members consider and support the findings and issues addressed within the document, acknowledging the idea of time related alterations to the overall landscape.

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 Following completion of the consultation and consideration by the Committee referral will be made to the Cabinet for a decision.

9.2 Officers will continue to work on an allied action plan with options for tree works subject to availability of funding.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1
- Peterborough Tree And Woodlands Strategy, June 1998
 - Peterborough Open Space Report, June 2006
 - Biodiversity Strategy, June 2004