

North Tyneside Council Report to Cabinet Date: 14 January 2016

ITEM 7(a)

Title: Review of North
Tyneside's Tree
Management Policy

Portfolio(s): Environment	Cabinet Member(s): Councillor John Stirling
Report from Service Area:	Environment, Housing and Leisure
Responsible Officer:	Phil Scott, Head of Environment, Housing and Leisure Tel: (0191) 6437295
Wards affected:	All wards

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

Trees are an important part of the North Tyneside landscape but are also a sensitive and sometimes emotive asset to manage.

In March 2015, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Transport asked the Environment Sub Committee to undertake a review of the Council's Tree Management Policy (last reviewed in 2010).

On 4th October 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Environment Sub Committee, concluded their review and changes to the policy, and recommended that Cabinet consider the revised policy.

The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet's approval to adopt the revised Tree Management Policy.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the revised Tree Management Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 9th November 2015.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report is relevant to the following priorities set out in the Our North Tyneside Plan 2014 - 2018:

- **Our Places**
Be places that people like living in and will attract others to either visit or live.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

- 1.5.2 Our green spaces provide important recreational areas for communities to enjoy. Trees in particular bring benefits for physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- 1.5.3 Trees and woodland areas play a crucial role in the carbon cycle, acting as sinks (absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere) and stores (retaining carbon in trees and soils) helping to improve air quality and reduce the impact of flash flooding. They also protect soil from erosion and reduce sediment run-off.
- 1.5.4 Trees are an important part of the borough's landscape and are a sensitive and sometimes emotive issue to manage. The Authority has responsibility for the management and maintenance of approximately 140,000 trees across the borough. This includes trees in open spaces, parks, cemeteries and woodland areas, and every year the Authority receives thousands of tree related enquiries relating to requests for pruning, tree removal, tree planting and the removal of leaf litter.
- 1.5.5 In 2009, the Authority introduced a Tree Management Policy. The policy is a framework which sets out how the Authority protects and manages its trees. It is also a reference point to enable a consistent approach towards tree management.
- 1.5.6 The Policy takes into consideration the Authority's Biodiversity Action Plan. In relation to biodiversity, trees provide a stable eco-system where wildlife such as birds, animals, insects and plants thrive. The Policy also takes into consideration other sustainable development policies, which sets out management objectives for managing specific areas such as open spaces, schools, cemeteries, housing estates and parks.
- 1.5.7 The Policy was last reviewed in 2010, to take into consideration quality of life issues.
- 1.5.8 On 11th March 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Environment Sub Committee asked officers to carry out a review of the Policy.
- 1.5.9 A review was subsequently carried out and at a meeting on 4th October this year the Environment Sub Committee recommended that Cabinet approve the attached revised Policy. The main changes include the format and content of the Policy. The Policy also now includes a comprehensive list of tree species recommended for specific land types or locations.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet may approve the revised Tree Management Policy.

Option 2

Cabinet may not approve the revised the Tree Management Policy.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

- The format and content of the policy is more user friendly
- The policy includes a new section, signposting residents to the appropriate departments for further advice/information
- There is a new section on community involvement
- The policy takes into consideration tree planting in new developments
- The policy provides for an increase in the number of trees planted for every one tree removed, for example two trees will be planted for every tree removed (this has increased from one and a half trees planted for every tree removed)
- The most significant change to the policy is the inclusion of a comprehensive list of tree species recommended for specific land types or locations.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: North Tyneside Council's revised Tree Management Policy 2015

1.9 Contact officers:

Phil Scott, Head of Environment, Housing and Leisure, tel (0191) 643 7295

Sam Dand, Senior Manager, Local Environmental Services, tel (0191) 643 7294

Jerry Dronsfield, Horticulture and Parks Manager, tel (0191) 643 7432

Alison Campbell, Senior Business Partner, (0191) 643 7038

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Tree Management Policy 2010
- (2) Equality impact assessment

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

The Authority already plants two trees for each tree removed so there are no additional financial implications arising from the Tree Management Policy 2015 being approved. Costs of tree management and maintenance are funded from the Street Environment budget within Local Environmental Services.

2.2 Legal

Changes proposed to the Policy have been made in conjunction with appropriate legislation including the Highways Act 1980, tree conservation and tree preservation orders, and health and safety legislation.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

Environment Sub Committee, Elected Members and Senior Officers have been consulted for their views.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

In reviewing the policy, we have taken into consideration members enquiries, feedback from residents and engagement with 'our friends of groups' relating to the management of the borough's trees.

We have also considered guidance from a number of external agencies including:

Defra:

- The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework
- A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests 2001
- Urban Tree Strategies

Forestry Commission:

- Borough Tree Strategies – The London Tree and Woodland framework 2008
- The case for trees in development and the urban environment 2010

Trees and Design Action Group:

- Trees in the Townscape 2012

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights issues directly arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

An equality impact assessment has been carried out. A key action from the EIA includes the introduction of an improved feedback mechanism.

2.6 Risk management

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime or disorder implications directly arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

Sustainable tree planting will be carried out in line with the revised policy.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Deputy Chief Executive
- Head(s) of Service
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)
- Chief Finance Officer
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of Corporate Strategy