

Environment Sub-Committee

7 October 2015

Present: Councillor B Burdis (Chair)
Councillors G Bell, L Bell, P Brooks, J Cassidy, E
Hodson, G Madden, P McIntyre and M Thirlaway.

E21/10/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors D Drummond and W Lott.

E22/10/15 Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported.

E23/10/15 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

E24/10/15 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2015 be confirmed.

E25/10/15 Tree Management Policy

Consideration was given to a presentation which provided an overview of the Authority's Tree Management Policy. It was explained that the original Tree Management Policy had been developed in 2009 and provided a framework which set out how it would protect and manage trees within North Tyneside. The Policy enabled a consistent approach to the management of trees within the borough and took account of the Biodiversity Action Plan and other sustainable development policies. It also set objectives for the management of trees in schools, parks and cemeteries.

The tree stock in North Tyneside amounted to approximately 140,000 trees of which around 40,000 were located on streets and the rest within woodlands, parks and cemeteries. The Authority employed an Arboricultural Officer and two dedicated tree maintenance teams to manage trees within the borough. The teams dealt with approximately 1,700 enquiries a year regarding trees and during 2013/14 had removed 121 trees and planted 608 new trees.

The Tree Management Policy had been reviewed and a draft was circulated for member's consideration. It was noted that the main changes to the Policy were that it was a more customer friendly document and had a new section on community involvement. The Policy also took account of tree planting in new developments and recommended tree species which would be appropriate to the location, such as at the coast. Another change to the Policy related to the planting of replacement trees, previously there had been a commitment to plant 1.5 replacement trees whereas under the new Policy this had been increased to 2 trees planted to replace every 1 removed.

Reference was made to trees planted within existing streets which appeared to be too large for their setting. Many residents wanted the trees to either be removed or cut back to reduce their height. It was explained that the Authority had a policy based on good arboricultural practice of not removing existing trees unless there were safety issues, such as the tree causing structural damage to a property or dropping branches on the street. Officers would however consider each request on its merits but it was explained that the teams did not have the budget or staffing to remove each tree requested. It was also explained that for every resident who wanted a particular tree removed or cut back there were others who did not.

Members commented that their experience of dealing with the officers within the tree teams had been very positive and that concerns regarding safety were responded to promptly. Members also welcomed the strict criteria adopted in relation to tree works and the wish to retain as many trees as possible in the borough.

It was **AGREED** that (1) the presentation be received; and (2) the refreshed North Tyneside Tree Management Policy be supported.