

Appendices

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Item No.



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title

Tree Maintenance - Response to O&S Recommendations

AGENDA STATUS PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	9 December 2015
Key Decision:	No
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Customers and Communities
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Alan Bottwood
Ward(s)	Non-specific

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To respond to the 10 recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet on 9th September, set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report, following a review it undertook in relation to tree maintenance.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agrees to approach Northamptonshire County Council and Northamptonshire borough and district councils to discuss how the use of the NBC app, 'Report It', might be widened across the county, *as per O&S recommendation 1*.
- 2.2 Agrees to use its best endeavours to try to implement *O&S recommendations 2-4*, in so far as it is so able.
- 2.3 Agrees to develop a revised corporate tree policy, including a detailed options appraisal, as per *O&S recommendation 7*, in order that a bid for additional funding can be made, at Cabinet's discretion and if deemed appropriate and affordable, as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process, to enable a response to *O&S recommendations 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9* to be implemented.

- 2.4 Accepts O&S recommendation 10.
- 2.5 Thanks Overview and Scrutiny Committee for undertaking a robust and detailed review of tree maintenance that has the potential to have a positive impact on Northampton for many years to come.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee made recommendations as follows to Cabinet on 9th September following a review it undertook in relation to tree maintenance:

3.1.1.1 Recommendation 1

In noting its effectiveness, the NBC app. – “Report It”, use is widened and developed so that there is preferably one reporting app. for the whole county or more realistically at least one reporting app. for NBC and NCC.

3.1.1.2 Recommendation 2

A presentation on the Northamptonshire County Council IT Programme regarding damage caused to street furniture, including trees, is given to all Councillors at Northampton Borough Council.

3.1.1.3 Recommendation 3

When the software that is being used in relation to the Tree Inspection Programme that is being piloted in Daventry is rolled out in Northampton and becomes available for use by NBC, it is used by NBC to record all trees and hedges on NBC and NPH managed land.

3.1.1.4 Recommendation 4

In the planning process consideration is given to the retention and planting of trees and hedges and the maintenance thereof, while affording the ongoing right to light to nearby properties. The Tree Planting and Retention Policy be detailed within the Joint Development Framework; with a view to delivering low on-going maintenance costs and that a Policy is adopted to ensure trees are not planted close to properties or in the vicinity of properties; alleviating problems encountered by residents as detailed in this report.

3.1.1.5 Recommendation 5

A Policy of thinning out trees in Parks and Open Space throughout the Borough is adopted and funded over a five year period to ensure that remaining trees are able to reach their full growth and maturity.

3.1.1.6 Recommendation 6

An on-going Forward Maintenance Plan for trees, recognising the right to light, is developed, funded and implemented over a five year period. This should be linked to the tree inspection software.

3.1.1.7 Recommendation 7

A revised Corporate Tree Policy, including a Tree Maintenance Policy and recognising the right to light, is developed and adopted. This should be in plain English. It should be an all embracing policy, making reference to relevant Planning, Highways and NPH policies.

3.1.1.8 Recommendation 8

Full consultation should be undertaken on the revised Corporate Tree Policy, including the Maintenance Policy therein.

3.1.1.9 Recommendation 9

Parish Councils should be consulted in developing the new Tree Policy and encouraged to adopt the policy in respect of land in their ownership.

3.1.1.10 Recommendation 10

A review of the effectiveness of the Corporate Tree Policy, including the Tree Maintenance policy therein, takes place within five years.

3.1.2 Building on the O&S review of Tree Maintenance, using specialist expertise, a review will be undertaken of the corporate tree policy during the period January to April 2016.

3.1.3 Flowing from the review of the corporate tree policy, a detailed options appraisal will be undertaken so that a range of prioritised and costed options can be produced, which will be considered by Cabinet and, at Cabinet's discretion and if deemed appropriate and affordable, can be used to inform a bid for additional funding as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process.

3.1.4 It is proposed that the review of the corporate tree policy will:

- Build on the existing tree policy
- Be relevant to and consistent with Planning, Highways and Northampton Partnership Homes policies
- Include proposals for tree thinning in parks and open spaces, to allow natural growth of remaining trees
- Include a maintenance plan that recognises residents' right to light
- Include a maintenance plan that follows best practice, but also identifies minimum requirements, to give the council options on the standard of maintenance it wishes to provide

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 This report includes a proposal to review the corporate tree policy.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The estimated cost of undertaking the review of the corporate tree policy is approximately £10,000. It is proposed that the review is funded from the Environmental Services reserve. This is the only direct cost arising from the recommendations of this report.
- 4.2.2 The implementation of O&S recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10 can be delivered from within existing resources and therefore creates no additional budget pressure.
- 4.2.3 A number of the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of Tree Maintenance could have very significant financial implications for years to come as there is massive potential for expenditure on tree maintenance across the borough.
- 4.2.3 A range of prioritised and costed options will be produced as part of the aforementioned review. Those, if any, that Cabinet wish to take forward having considered their appropriateness and affordability, will be fed into the 2017/18 budget setting process, to be implemented on or after 1st April 2017.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 There are no equality implications directly arising from this report.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 Extensive consultation has taken place as part of the Overview and Scrutiny review process. Due regard will be paid to this consultation in undertaking the review of the Corporate Tree Policy and in formulating the options that flow from the Corporate Tree Policy review.
- 4.5.2 Further consultation will be undertaken to inform the review of the corporate tree policy, including consultation with parish councils.

4.6 How the Report Delivers Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The Proposals contained in this report will contribute to the priority outcome of 'safer, greener and cleaner communities'.

Background Papers

Recommendations of Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Tree Maintenance (Sept 15)