



To: Executive Councillor for City Centre and Public Places (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Carina O'Reilly

Report by: Alistair Wilson - Streets and Open Space Development Manager

Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny 8/10/2015

Wards affected: All - Abbey Arbury Castle Cherry Hinton Coleridge East Chesterton King's Hedges Market Newnham Petersfield Queen Edith's Romsey Trumpington West Chesterton

## **CITYWIDE TREE STRATEGY 2016 -2026**

### **Key Decision**

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#### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 This Strategy highlights the value and role of tree management and tree canopy cover within an urban forestry <sup>1</sup>context. It provides the Council with a strategic approach to the management of its tree assets for the period 2016 to 2026.
- 1.2 The strategy considers key national, regional as well as local influences and gives clarity on the complexities of managing trees as assets. By understanding these key requirements, the Council can prioritise service needs, improvements and investment.
- 1.3 The Strategy recommends the following vision:-  
  
*"To manage our City's trees so as to maximise the benefits they offer, whilst ensuring that the trees we leave for future generations, and the character they bring to our city, are better than those we have inherited."*
- 1.4 The Strategy as identified three key methods for working to achieve this vision:

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<sup>1</sup> An Urban Forestry is defined as the management of all the trees in an urban area regardless of ownership

- Tree protection included in Part 1 of the Strategy document.
- Canopy cover enhancement also in Part 1; and
- Sustainable and responsible management of the Council's own asset included in Part 2.

## 2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- a) Approve the strategy; and
- b) Instruct the Head of Streets and Open Space to create an action plan (Part 3) on how to achieve the stated objectives, targets and outcomes.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 A formal strategic direction for the Council's tree service has been absent since 2007, when the former Arboricultural Strategy (2004 – 2007) expired. Since then several high profile tree related issues have highlighted the need for a new strategy to be produced. This new strategy provides a revitalised approach, which confirms the Council's commitment to tree management and tree canopy cover within an urban forestry context.
- 3.2 In 2011, the Council launched a period of research and consultation to inform this new Strategy, which included a major open consultation event for internal and external stakeholders on proposed priorities. The event was also open to Councillors and internal Council staff involved in the drafting process.
- 3.3 A further period of public consultation was completed in July 2015 which covered a range of issues and options for the Strategy to cover. These issues and options originated from the 2011 consultation work. The 2015 work not only provided a logical follow up to earlier feedback, but also allowed for a refresh and recheck of the issues and options previously expressed and to test whether they were still pertinent and current.
- 3.4 The consultations results are available as background documents to the Strategy and have given significant steer and direction on topics such as:
  - Creating a vision;
  - Defining service priorities and policies;
  - Managing tree works and our tree retention policies;
  - Managing trees on behalf of the County Council and others;
  - Replacement planting;

- Trees on private land; and
- Engaging communities and individuals.

- 3.5 The proposed new Strategy provides a vision for the Council's role in the management of trees and the City's canopy cover. The Strategy clarifies why the Council should support an urban forestry approach to tree management and how to deliver on objectives such as:
- To sustainably manage the Council's own trees and those it manages by agreement;
  - To foster a resilient tree population that responds to the impacts of climate change and urban expansion;
  - To raise awareness of trees being a vital community asset, through promoting continued research, through education via the provision of advice and through partnership working; and
  - To make efficient and strategic use of the Council's regulatory powers for the protection of trees of current and future value.
- 3.6 The Strategy outlines how the Council's influence extends beyond its own direct provision through its regulatory powers and how to involve other public and private land owners, stakeholders and residents, who, collectively, are responsible for tree management. The Strategy identifies three key methods for working to achieve the vision:
- Tree protection (Part 1);
  - Canopy cover enhancement (Part 1); and
  - Sustainable and responsible management of the Council's own assets (Part 2).
- 3.7 The Strategy outlines four priority operational management changes in accordance with its strategic objectives:
- To enhance partnership working across the Council and with strategic stakeholders (Part 1);
  - To make public consultation more effective, based on where there is a need to better understand local opinion and genuine opportunity to influence decision-making (Part 2);
  - To remove Section 211<sup>2</sup> notification consultations (Part 1); and
  - To introduce tree subsidence claim protocols (Part 2).
- 3.8 The Management Policies in Part 2 of the Strategy detail how the Council will sustainably and responsibly manage its own tree stock.
- 3.9 An Action Plan (Part 3) will be completed after scrutiny and Executive Councillor Approval as set out in this reports recommendation.

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<sup>2</sup> A section 211 notice is a notice submitted to the local planning authority by landowners or their agents. It notifies the authority of proposed work on trees in a conservation area that are not subject to a Tree Preservation Order  
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## 4. Implications

(a) **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications with this Strategy.

(b) **Staffing Implications**

The recently completed review and then restructure of Streets and Open Spaces, has created capacity within the Arboricultural team to support the Strategy with the provision for 1 Senior Arboricultural Officer and 2 Arboricultural Officers. The line management of these posts was also considered in the review and line management provision is supported by the Streets and Open Space – Development Manager.

The Strategy has been written reflecting the capacity created by the recent restructure. The policies in Part 2 of the Strategy are intended to assist with managing the daily contacts from members of the public, but also to aide with the explanations to commonly recurring issues and topics.

(c) **Equality and Poverty Implications**

The completed EQIA has indicated positive impacts, namely engaging communities and individuals; delivering sustainable and responsible management of trees, with clear policies.

To ensure the individual policies contain within the strategy are not having a negative impact on the community, EQIAs shall be completed on individual policies that prompt complaint, to allow the opportunity to review, amend and modify current policy.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

The policies and objectives set out in this strategy have an overall medium positive impact.

(e) **Procurement**

No further requirements identified as all tree works are procured through Tree Maintenance Framework Contract.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

In developing this strategy, the Council has consulted extensively with the public, and with key stakeholder and interest groups, including private tree owners, environmental groups, and people with direct experience of problems regarding trees in their localities.

One of the aims of this consultation has been to explore perceptions of the Council's role and performance in managing, protecting and enhancing the city's tree stock; and to identify the issues that the strategy would need to address, and the challenges facing the city's trees that demand a strategic response from the authority.

**(g) Community Safety**

There are no direct community safety implications with this Strategy.

## **5. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Trees in Cambridge – Issues and Options, July 2015 by Phil Back Associates;
- Consultation on a Tree Strategy for Cambridge, Feedback from stakeholders and residents; April 2011 by Phil Back Associates.

## **6. Appendices**

- Appendix A - Citywide Tree Strategy 2016 – 2026 – Part 1
- Appendix B - Citywide Tree Strategy 2016 – 2026 – Part 2

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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