

To: City Executive Board

Date: 13 October 2016

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Tree Management Policy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on the Council's draft Tree Management Policy

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Andrew Gant

Executive lead member: Councillor Linda Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the 3 recommendations set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the draft Tree Management Policy at its meeting on 6 October 2016. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport, the Head of Direct Services and the Parks and Open Spaces Manager for presenting the report and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport introduced the report and said that the policy had been written with a friendlier tone and focused on what the Council would do rather than what it would not do. The draft policy contains a more extensive arbitration and review section to assist customers who are unhappy with decisions. Officers reminded the Committee that the policy only extends to the management and maintenance of Council owned trees.

3. The Committee discussed the issue of trees blocking light and what the Tree team would do in these cases. The Parks and Open Spaces Manager explained to the Committee that there is no legal right to light but there is an obligation to keep the lamp posts clear. The Tree team considers each case on an individual basis.
4. The cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock was discussed and officers explained that with over 100,000 Council trees in the city there are considerable budgetary pressures on the service. The tree team trades externally to subsidise these costs.
5. The Committee noted a number of minor amendments to the report which the Board Member and Officers agreed to correct (although the paperwork for the City Executive Board had already been published).

Recommendation 1: That the following amendments are made to the Policy:

- a) **The phrase 'perceived to be causing medical issues' in the bullet points at the top of page 5 of the Policy is replaced with 'undocumented medical conditions'.**
 - b) **Explanation is added that challenges under the arbitration and review process will be assessed against the Policy.**
 - c) **The statement that 'every tree felled should be replaced' on page 8 of the Policy is strengthened to say that 'every tree felled will be replaced'.**
6. The Committee favoured the idea of fruit trees being planted in Council parks and asked for fruiting trees to be included in the tree planting list as an option for parks and for the policy to say that people can help themselves to the fruit off these trees.

Recommendation 2: That fruit trees are listed in the tree planting guide as an option for parks and that the policy mentions that people can help themselves to fruit from the fruit trees in Council parks.

7. The Committee agreed with the creation of a Customer Advice Guide and suggested a number of issues to be included.
8. The Committee asked that the Tree Planting Guide provide more information on the common trees listed and how they meet the requirements of the policy. They also asked for the planting guide to list which trees could be pollarded; and for more information on which species are pollinators (specifically bee pollinators). The Committee also requested that a new section on trees that could be planted in parks (most notably fruit trees) be added.

Recommendation 3: That the following are included in the Tree Planting Guide or the Customer Advice Guide, as appropriate:

- a) **How the common trees meet the requirement of the policy.**
- b) **Which trees could be pollarded.**
- c) **Which trees are pollinators.**
- d) **A new section listing (fruit) trees that are suitable for parks.**

- e) **General advice to householders on what trees are appropriate for planting in gardens.**
- f) **Guidance on which trees are suitable for planting in future council sites.**

9. The Committee raised concerns with the narrow focus of the policy in that it did not mention enough about the role of planning or the highways authority in tree management. Many tree issues faced by members of the public are the responsibility of other authorities and are not covered by this policy. To improve public understanding, the Committee requested that officers include a section at the front of the policy which highlighted what the policy covers and where people can find additional information on trees from the planning and highways authority.

Recommendation 4: That the Tree Management Policy includes a clearer section at the start that highlights what the policy covers and what it does not cover, as well as signposting to where people can find additional information on trees from the City Council’s Planning Department and Highways Authority.

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List of background papers: None

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