

Oxford City Council Climate and Environment Panel Scoping Template

Topic	Tree Planting and Maintenance
Chair / lead member	Cllr Alex Hollingsworth (Chair, Climate and Environment Panel)
Other Standing Panel Members	Cllr Paula Dunne, Cllr Emily Kerr, Cllr Katherine Miles
Background and rationale	<p>The Climate and Environment Panel selected a number of Scrutiny-commissioned items to consider during the 2023/24 municipal year – one of which related to tree planting and maintenance.</p> <p>The Council’s current Tree Management Policy was last reviewed in October 2016; this pre-dates several important developments which have taken place since the Policy’s publication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council declaring a climate emergency on 28 January 2019 • The launch of Oxford Direct Services Ltd as a wholly owned Council company delivering direct services operations • The passing of the Environment Act 2021, which places a duty on local authorities to conserve <u>and enhance</u> biodiversity <p>The Climate and Environment Panel noted that issues such as climate change (mentioned only once in the introduction) and climate mitigation (not mentioned) are not covered in the current Policy, as these are terms which came into wider general use after the Policy was last approved. In addition, the Panel noted varying experiences in the maintenance, felling and replacement of existing trees; and difficulty in the process around planting new trees. The Panel also noted a lack of clarity in terms of accountability for tree planting and maintenance between the City Council, County Council and Oxford Direct Services – and the remit and responsibilities of each of those bodies.</p> <p>Recent consideration has been given to updating the Tree Management Policy by ODS (which manages the policy), making this piece of work timely.</p> <p>Trees form an important part of local communities and ecosystems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat for wildlife; enhance biodiversity • Improved aesthetics of urban areas • Improve air quality by absorbing pollutants • Carbon storage • Noise reduction • Physical health benefits (e.g. stress and blood pressure

	<p>reduction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature regulation and provision of shade • Flood mitigation <p>Ensuring a Tree Management Policy which is fit for purpose and framed by the relatively recent developments in climate and environmental policy and legislation will help to further Oxford City Council's net zero ambitions set out in the Council Strategy 2020-24.</p> <p>Oxford City Council published its Urban Forest Strategy in September 2021 which seeks to 'set a direction for Oxford, as a city, to protect and manage, grow and expand our urban forest to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies that we face'. The document is a long term masterplan to 2050 which sets a framework for action, and the document sets out that the strategy will be reviewed every 10 years. While an in-depth review of the strategy document itself is out of scope for this particular piece of work, a broad understanding of the strategy will assist the Panel in ascertaining alignment with the Tree Management Policy.</p>
Purpose / Objective	<p>To review the Council's existing Tree Management Policy and assist in the development of an updated Policy. Key lines of inquiry to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the existing policy fit for purpose, or what changes are required? • Is the policy framed by current thinking and language around climate and environment, or in need of updating? • Does the current policy align with what happens in practice? • Are lines of responsibility/accountability clear? • How does the Council work with other organisations (e.g. Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford Direct Services) to deliver tree services? • How does Oxford City Council's policy compare to that of neighbouring and comparator local authorities? Is there any best practice which can be utilised?
Indicators of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide and constructive engagement with officers, stakeholders and experts • The production of a final report and recommendations • The majority of recommendations are agreed and implemented in a revised Tree Management Policy • Positive feedback from Members, officers and witnesses • Processes and lines of responsibility/accountability in respect of tree planting and maintenance are clear and understood.
Out of scope	In-depth review of the Council's Urban Forest Strategy is out of

	scope of this piece of work, though it may still act as a useful reference document to frame some discussion.
Methodology/ Approach	<p>Evidence gathering could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting written and / or verbal evidence from Council officers, key stakeholders and expert witnesses; • Considering what can be learnt from other local authorities; • Desk research / literature review.
Witnesses/ Experts	<p>Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy Laura Harlock, Parks and Open Spaces Manager (ODS)</p>
Specify Evidence Sources for Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford City Council Tree Management Policy • Oxford City Council Urban Forest Strategy (reference document only) • Relevant Council data on tree planting, maintenance and felling • Oxford City Council Service Level Agreements (or similar) with Oxford Direct Services and Oxfordshire County Council for tree planting and maintenance • Similar policies from neighbouring and comparator authorities
Panel meetings	1-2 meetings – date(s) tbc

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