

Subject:	Arboriculture [tree] Strategy permission to go to public consultation		
Date of Meeting:	8 October 2019		
Report of:	Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Robert Walker	Tel: 01273 294349
	Email:	robert.walker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Committee are being asked to give permission for officers to put the attached Tree Strategy out for public consultation. This process will follow similar methodology to the highly successful engagement used in developing the Open Spaces strategy, which highlighted the need for a tree strategy. Following consultation, the intention is to bring the strategy back to committee for further consideration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees to the implementation of a new inspection regime for the City's parks and open spaces trees as set out in the strategy section 4.2 and appendix 2
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees that the attached strategy is put out for public consultation for all other aspects as set out in section 5, prior to returning the strategy to this committee for final approval and adoption.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The strategy identifies issues with our current arboricultural management the details of which are included within the document. The principal issues are listed below.
- 3.2 We are losing trees at a faster rate than we are replacing them on streets and that the ones that are replaced are potentially damaging the highway and obstructing the footways.
- 3.3 Our current tree inspection regime does not meet best practice in some areas. Short term action has already been taken to remedy this with this committee agreeing one off funding to deal with tree issues identified in the first round of park and open spaces inspections. Highway trees already have a reasonable inspection regime in place but park and open space tree inspection is inconsistent and not on a repeating programme

- 3.4 We have a number of disease tree disease threats and of particular current concern is Ash Die Back
- 3.5 There are many initiatives and strategies in place and being developed such as the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan [LCWIP] and the next Local Transport Plan to take into consideration when selecting planting sites, Consultation and collaboration with other council teams will ensure new trees align with and complement other strategies, plans and workstreams e.g. highway/transport projects.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The council has no obligation to maintain street tree numbers but it is an area where there is a lot of public support for planting. There is no immediate need to act on this however if the trend continues the spaces previously occupied by trees are likely to become occupied by services and street furniture and it will become increasingly difficult to replace trees.
- 4.1.1 We are obliged to have a reasonable inspection regime and although there is no frequency stipulated in law the consultant has based their recommendations on previous legal cases and the Council has no option but to introduce an acceptable inspection regime for parks and open spaces trees.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 At this stage most consultation has been with technical experts, committee are being asked to approve going out to wider public consultation
- 5.2 The consultation methods used would be similar to the methods used for the Open Spaces Strategy which had a very good response. This may involve:
- Working with 'Community Works' In order to contact hard to reach groups whose membership covers 450 third sector groups including: disability, special needs, the elderly and those less able to access the internet.
 - Attending public meetings to promote the Strategy, learning from the audience about their issues and concerns.
 - Arrange outreach sessions in public buildings
 - Distribute publicity material to suitable establishments and 'Friends of Parks' and community groups, and erect Publicity material in the parks.
 - Publicising via the Communications team putting out tweets from the main council account which has 45,000 followers, re-tweeting by other council departments, promotion on Facebook.
- 5.3 In order to elicit a high response rate which can be analysed we will be asking some specific questions including:
- Should a comprehensive Elm disease prevention Programme remain a priority?
 - Should street trees be replaced as a priority considering the cost implications of potentially losing car parking spaces and creating road build outs
 - Should we address our current net loss of trees by investing in a tree planting programme subject to funding:

- Should we seek to raise money for trees through an external charity body like a Park Foundation
- Which of the recommendations should we consider to take forward our Tree Donation Scheme?
- Do members of the public want to support our work in Pest and disease prevention by signing up to mobile apps and becoming voluntary tree wardens?

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is important that the council has a strategy outlining how we will manage our existing tree stock safely and effectively but also to plan for the future of the local authority owned trees and woodlands. Effective community engagement will help ensure that we develop a strategy that meets the future needs and wishes of residents of the city.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The financial implications of the issues identified in the strategy are set out in the attached document. Introduction of a new inspection regime can be delivered within existing budgets. It is likely that this will identify work that requires doing which may not be deliverable within existing budgets. £30,000 has already been allocated for the cost of ash die back at part of 2019/20 budget setting.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jess Laing

Date: 24/09/2019

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council's legal obligations in relation to the management of trees in its area are set out in Appendix 1 of the attached draft Tree Strategy.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 27/09/2019

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Poor selection of tree species, planting site and planting methods increases the problems experienced by people using the City's pavements this is particularly problematic for those with poor sight, mobility problems or with young children.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 These are set out within the strategy

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton and Hove City Council Draft Tree Strategy

Background Documents

None