

COUNCIL CABINET**19 October 2004**

Report of the Director of Commercial Services

INSPECTION OF TREES**RECOMMENDATION**

1. To support the actions taken and proposed for the inspection of trees and to advise the Planning and Environment Commission of this.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

2. The actions have been developed from a risk assessment approach to the management of trees.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Tree Management Policy is being reviewed by the Planning and Environment Commission. They have recommended that the Council Cabinet take action to put in place as soon as possible a risk based policy for the systematic inspection of the trees for which it is responsible.
- 3.2 There is not a systematic inspection of trees in place by arboricultural officers.
- 3.3 The risks associated with trees depends on a number of factors one of which is location. Highway trees represent the trees with the highest risk of harm to the public because of their proximity to footpaths and highways as well as the high level of footfall compared to trees on parks and open spaces.
- 3.4 The Highway Inspectors have been given basic training by the Senior Arboricultural Officer. In the course of their routine inspections of the highway, they will report any identified defects with trees. This will be reported to the Arboricultural Officers who will either inspect themselves or place work orders.
- 3.5 The Parks Section is currently reviewing the duties of the Park Rangers in order to incorporate the inspection of assets within parks and open spaces. This will include all trees but particularly those trees that represent a higher risk to the public and these will be close to footpaths or parking areas. The Rangers will also report on the condition of paths, buildings, play areas, signs and boundaries. Identified defects on trees will be reported to the Arboricultural Officers.

3.6 There are other trees in the Council's ownership mainly on school land or housing land where the Arboricultural Officers will carry out inspections when requested by the appropriate site managers.

3.7 The ideal situation would be a pre-inspection system by qualified arboricultural officers. This would be expensive and disproportionate to the level of risk and possibility of occurrence.

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Background papers: None

List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1.1 To implement a preventative programme of inspection of trees would increase expenditure on tree management by £250,000 a year for the first three years.

Legal

2.1 A local authority has had an improvement notice served on them by the Health and Safety Executive following a fatality caused by a falling tree. This required the council to implement an inspection programme for their trees.

Personnel

3.1 The current operation allows for the training of highway inspectors by arboricultural officers. It is planned to extend this training to the Park Rangers who will be undertaking inspections.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

4.1 The proposal comes under the Council's Objectives of **strong and positive neighbourhoods**.