



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

**Neighbourhoods Commission**  
**14 December 2011**

Report of the Strategic Director of  
Neighbourhoods

# ITEM 6

## REVIEW OF COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

### SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council's budget proposals for 2012-13 include a saving of £50,000 in the Arboricultural Section of Streetpride. The proposal is to amend the Council's Tree Management Policy to clarify the type of tree work that the Council will and will not carry out.
- 1.2 The section will save staff time in dealing with such requests. The officer time saved will allow them to carry out other public work and recover the £50,000 from other budgets.
- 1.3 A copy of the current Tree Management Policy is available on the Council Meeting Information System (CMIS)

### RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note amendments to the Tree Management Policy that will clarify the type of tree work that the Council will and will not carry out.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The changes to the Tree Management Policy will enable savings of £50,000 on the tree management budget and reduce the backlog of other higher priority tree works.
- 3.2 Often enquires can lead to work being carried out to trees that are the subject of the request though not solely to address the issues reported. Due to the backlog of works other trees close by are not worked upon and this creates further enquires regarding those trees creating more requests for reactive work.
- 3.3 Clarifying the policy will reduce these reactive works which are less economical and increase proactive works. This could in time enable a degree of non-essential cosmetic works to be carried out with the no additional resources as cyclical works are more efficient reducing in the long term the number of initial contacts from customers.
- 3.4 They will also remove any ambiguity from the policy, provide clarity to the public and save a great deal of staff and potentially elected member time in investigating requests for tree works.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4.1 Common reasons for the public requesting tree works include:

- To reduce leaf litter
- To improve television reception
- To increase light and reduce shading
- To remove branches overhanging private property
- To reduce bird droppings or aphid residue
- To remove trees to allow more light to solar panels

4.2 These requests are generally denied, sometimes for arboricultural reasons but generally because the available resources are needed for more essential works.

4.3 Between August 2010 and August 2011 there were approximately 1000 requests for tree works for one or more of the reasons listed above. The majority of these requests were denied, but not before a great deal of officer time was spent in investigating and responding to them.

4.4 Some of the requests were met and tree work was carried out but often at the expense of more essential work.

4.5 It is also not unusual for elected members to become embroiled in requests for tree works and a great deal of their time could also be saved by greater clarity within the Council policy from the start.

4.6 By declining requests for tree works based on the reasons listed above, greater priority can be given to a backlog of work that is needed for one or more of the following reasons:

- unsafe trees
- diseased and damaged trees
- trees obstructing footpaths or roads
- trees touching/damaging buildings
- trees obscuring street-lamps or road-signs.

4.7 There is currently a backlog of arboricultural work valued at approximately £500,000, much of which falls under one or more of the above categories.

4.8 It is proposed that the Council's Tree Management Policy is amended to make it clear that the Council will not carry out tree works purely to address any of the problems in the first list in the backgrounds section above. By doing so, the amount of requests should reduce and can be dealt with and closed off by Derby Direct at the first port of call.

4.9 The time saved will help to reduce a backlog of priority tree works and will allow the section to offer up budget savings of £50,000. The section can then recover the £50,000 by carrying out work for schools and other Council departments that has in the past been turned away due to a lack of resources.

- 4.10 Many other local authorities, including Nottingham, Leicestershire, Coventry, Walsall, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sheffield, Islington, Telford and Woking are clear that they will not carry out tree works for any of the listed reasons.

<b>OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED</b>
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- 5.1 If by December 2012 there is doubt as to whether the £50,000 income target can be met, the shortfall will be made up by reducing the amount of tree planting in the winter of 2012/13.

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b> <b>Other(s)</b>	
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<b>For more information contact:</b> <b>Background papers:</b> <b>List of appendices:</b>	Ian Wheatley 01332 641530 e-mail <a href="mailto:ian.wheatley@derby.gov.uk">ian.wheatley@derby.gov.uk</a> None Appendix 1 - Implications
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<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 Included in the budget proposals for 2012-13, is a saving of £50,000 by amending the tree management policy. If the recommendations included in this report are approved then the saving will be met.

**Legal**

- 2.1 All services affected are discretionary and there are therefore no legal implications of the changes.

**Personnel**

- 3.1 None identified.

**Equalities Impact**

- 4.1 None identified.

**Health and Safety**

- 5.1 The changes will enable officers to give greater priority to work that has health and safety implications.

**Carbon Commitment**

- 6.1 The changes will increase the Council's carbon commitment by minimising the removal of healthy trees that would only benefit individual, or a small group of individual householders.

**Value for Money**

- 7.1 The changes will offer greater value for money in that they will prioritise work that benefits the wider community rather than individual, or a small group of individual householders.

**Corporate Objectives and Priorities for Change**

- 8.1 Delivering value for money.