

REPORT TO CABINET

Title: **A 'TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY' FOR THE BOROUGH**

Date: 25 February 2010

Member Reporting: Councillor Mrs Knight

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Wards affected: All

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Trees and woodlands are a vital part of the Borough's environment, the management and protection of which is crucial to their sustainability. There is a need to establish a strategy and policies to set appropriate levels of resource to plan, develop and manage the tree populations. The direction for this is to be set in a tree and woodland strategy for the Borough.
- 1.2 The Draft Tree and Woodland Strategy sets out how the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead will deliver its Arboricultural Services (Appendix A). The strategy aligns with the manifesto commitment to plant more trees in the Borough. The full document, which contains Annex's 1 to 3, is available in the Group Rooms, Members Room, on the Council's Web Site, and from Democratic Services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That 'A Tree and Woodland Strategy' 2010 for the Borough be approved.

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
A more structured approach to the management and enhancement of the Borough's trees and woodlands resource will result. Residents will know clearly what the objectives of the Council are in managing the Boroughs trees and woodlands.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 Trees and woodlands are an essential part of the Borough's character and identity. They help to breathe life into the area, providing a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. They tell us of the seasons, and bring us into contact with nature. They remind us that where we now have towns and village, a vast and

ancient forest once existed. They provide shade on hot days, help mitigate flooding and the effects of climate change and help clean our polluted air.

- 3.2 Further to this, particular attention has been focused upon the role of trees by various Government Agencies. Through the England Forestry Forum the Government also endorsed the concept that every region in England should prepare regional expressions of the English Forestry Strategy officially known as 'Regional Forestry Frameworks'. Our strategy will address the protection, management and enhancement of the Borough's trees and woodlands over the next 10 years and will be reviewed after 5 years or as required, with a successional strategy produced in the tenth year.
- 3.3 Trees, because they play such a significant part in our environment in many different ways, need to be 'joined up' with wider economic, social and environmental objectives. The Tree and Woodland Strategy is therefore also developed within the wider context of other national, regional and local policy documents and in turn will help to inform those related policies which are being prepared now and in the future.
- 3.4 The Council (and other landowners) have legal obligations in respect to their trees and the strategy acknowledges these and the means to ensure compliance.
- 3.5 The draft Tree and Woodland Strategy can be found in Appendix A which has the following goals:
- 1) Maintaining and managing the existing stock of trees and woodlands to safeguard its value to the Borough both now and in the future.
 - 2) Increase awareness of the value of trees and woodlands to the health and well-being of all residents
 - 3) Maximise the contribution of trees and woodlands to the Borough's sustainability and quality of life.
 - 4) To encourage natural regeneration and new planting in appropriate locations to enhance the contribution of trees and woodlands to Borough life. This contributes to the manifesto commitment to plant more trees.
- 3.6 To achieve the Strategy's goals, four key aims have been identified that will act as a focus for the future:
- a) ensure trees and woodlands contribute to a high quality natural environment by e.g.:
 - safeguarding and improving the management of the Borough's trees and woodlands
 - plan for the impacts of climate change in managing and increasing the Borough's trees and woodlands
 - b) help shape the built environment and new development in a way that strengthens the attractive character and diversity of the borough by e.g.:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play
- Ensure the needs and impacts of trees and woodlands are properly addressed

c) to improve community and individual peoples well-being and social inclusion through peoples contact with trees and woodlands by e.g.:

- Enable residents to have a greater sense of ownership of their local trees and woodlands
- Improve the accessibility of the Borough’s woodlands for all

d) to support the borough’s economy by e.g.:

- Recognise and promote the contribution of trees and woodlands in providing attractive environments for leisure, tourism and business
- Support the use of local tree and woodland products as part of sustainable management of the resource

3.7 There are a number of objectives linked to the above aims which provide the detail as to how the aims can be achieved.

3.8 In producing the strategy it has been necessary to bring together the needs and wishes of residents, stakeholders, professionals and councillors to provide a Borough-wide strategy. Within this strategy, tree issues can be addressed and the tree stock given the consideration and management it deserves.

3.9 The Implementation Plan (list of actions) detailed in the strategy, is to be undertaken out of existing resources and by a matter of prioritisation. Progress made against each action will be summarised in a report at the end of each year.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Approve ‘A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the Borough’	To ensure a more co-ordinated and enhanced approach to the management and protection of trees and woodlands within the Borough. Recommended	Revenue - some objectives require long term commitment resulting in the need for additional resources. These can be brought in during the life span of the strategy, by the use of existing budgets and through the developing partnership funding, S106 Contributions and grant funding opportunities.

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
			<p>Capital – None specific but some may be required to support actions detailed in the objectives.</p> <p>(2009/2010 budget of £50k funding for planting new trees in the borough, which enabled the planting of over 2450 trees this winter)</p>
2.	Do not approved the 'A Tree and Woodland Strategy for the Borough'	Resources may not be used efficiently, no clear policy to support decisions and no clear guidance to the public on our future tree issues.	<p>Revenue – contained in existing budget</p> <p>Capital – contained in existing budget</p>

4.2 Risk assessment

Should a Tree and Woodland Strategy not be endorsed by Council, it will leave Officers, residents and other stakeholders without the necessary direction, policy will remain fragmented and legal obligations more difficult to comply with. The overall tree and woodland resource will become more vulnerable, diminishing more rapidly in its extent, to the detriment of those who live and work in the Borough as well as those who visit.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

A questionnaire was delivered to all residential properties in the Borough (circa 65,000) asking residents about the tree issues affecting them as well as what they think our priorities should be. We received 2,800 responses. We also produced an 'Issues and Options Paper' to tell residents about our ideas for developing the Tree and Woodland Strategy, which along with the questionnaire was made accessible on-line. Both the Issues and Options Paper and the questionnaire were promoted in an article in 'Around the Borough'. Key stakeholders were also consulted. A brief summary of this consultation is at Appendix B.

6. COMMENTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Members considered the report being submitted to Cabinet on 25 February 2010 on the 'Tree and Woodland Strategy' for the Royal Borough and it was noted there were 2800 responses to the recent consultation sent to all Borough residents about the tree

issues that affected them and what residents believe the Borough's priorities should be. During the ensuing discussion, the following points were noted –

- That funding was being sought externally and that Section 106 monies would assist in future tree planting.
- That a scheme of 'Adopt a Tree' had recently been launched.
- That there were no financial implications within the report and the Panel commented that financial implications should be included in the report.
- The trees along the River Thames were considered an important feature and should be included in the report.
- That landowners should be consulted more closely.
- That 40 trees had been planted along highways and that many more had been planted in parks and open spaces. It was also noted that there was an intention to plant trees along the Windsor Relief Road, but only after a full survey was completed showing that roots would not interfere with structure of the highway.
- That there would be trees planted in Maidenhead Town Centre.
- The Panel raised concern that no strategy was in place after 2020, and requested that the report include that the strategy would continue post-2020.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cabinet be advised that the Panel endorsed the report subject to the following amendments –

- **That the trees along the River Thames be named as an important feature in the report.**
- **That a tree strategy would continue post-2020.**
- **That financial implications be included in the report.**

IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Background Papers:

'Issues and Options Paper', 'Questionnaire' and 'Responses to Questionnaire'