

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| TO: MSDC Cabinet BDC Cabinet | REPORT NUMBER: MCa/18/57 |
| FROM: David Burn / Christina Campbell Cabinet Members for the Environment | DATE OF MEETING: 7 January 2019 10 January 2019 |
| OFFICER: Peter Garrett, Corporate Manager for Countryside and Public Realm | KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB42 |

THE ADOPTION OF A SET OF PRINCIPLES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL OWNED TREES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to agree a set of principles that will better guide the management of Council owned trees.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Both Councils have the option of not agreeing a set of principles or agreeing an amended set of principles subject to the direction of Cabinet.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Cabinet approves the set of principles for the management of Council owned trees (Appendix A).
- 3.2 That the Cabinet recommends the increase in operational budgets outlined in 6.3.

REASON FOR DECISION

The decision to agree the principles will allow the Councils to adopt a fair and consistent approach to the management of Council owned trees enabling clear guidance on how the tree resource is to be more sustainably managed.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils own a combined number of 20,000 recorded trees and considerably more, not individually recorded in, for example, shelter belts, woodlands and landscape amenity areas.
- 4.2 Using the examples of the two most urban areas in each District. Sudbury has a recorded individual tree stock of 2,350 trees consisting of 40 different species but predominantly Norway Maple, Rowan, Whitebeam, Sycamore, Cherry, Ash, Birch and Hawthorn. Stowmarket has 378 recorded trees, consisting of 26 different species but predominantly Oak, Alder, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Ash, Lime and Cherry.

- 4.3 Neither Council has ever agreed a set of principles that govern and influence the management of the tree stock in Council owned areas of land. As a result, officers have had to make decisions, primarily based on issues of safety, without the comfort that there is a set of guiding principles or policies that support that decision making.
- 4.4 The decisions on how to manage trees are still made using best arboricultural practice and within the legislative framework that exists, however from time to time requests are made to the Council to complete works resulting from, for example, leaf and fruit fall, that would benefit from a set of principles that act as a guide to what works the Council may or may not consider.
- 4.5 Neither Council has any guidance on the planting of new or replacement trees and this is an area addressed in the draft principles.
- 4.6 This was a topic area considered by the all party Public Realm Task and Finish Group and the principles have been developed following presentations given to the group by neighbouring authorities and looking at best practice in other local authorities across the UK.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 There are links to managing our corporate assets more effectively as well as the emerging environment agenda in the JSP.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Historically budgets have been relatively small for tree works meaning the Councils have had to adopt a largely reactive programme of works.

- 6.2 Operational budgets for tree work currently stand at:

Babergh General Fund: £22,000; HRA: £14,600; Total £36,600

Mid Suffolk General Fund: £ 5,500; HRA: £6,000: Total £11,500

- 6.3 Officers estimate that to move towards a more proactive approach to the management of Council owned trees the following budgets would be required:

Babergh General Fund: £46,000; HRA: £24,000; Total £70,000

Mid Suffolk General Fund: £20,000; HRA: £20,000; Total £40,000

- 6.4 These budgets would allow a more programmed work approach. For example, dealing with groups of trees in area on a crown lifting programme thus avoiding more expensive work in the future undertaken on individual trees. They would also allow greater resources to be made available to deal with the increased incidence of storm events that currently divert money away from other maintenance priorities. Both Councils would be able to plant more trees, engaging better with local communities to support the improvement of Council owned parks and open spaces.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Councils already manage the existing tree stock within the legislative framework that applies to the management of trees.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate Risk Register that contains the following with respect to trees.

| Risk Description | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation Measures |
|---|------------|--------|--|
| RISK: Trees may become dangerous for many reasons including decay, disease, accidental damage or as a consequence of severe weather events. A tree maybe perceived as dangerous because of its size or proximity to a house or road or the public highway. | minor | minor | MITIGATION: The Council's first priority will be an assessment of public safety and the Council operates a 24/7 emergency service to assess and make safe trees owned by ourselves. |

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 This work has been further developed from work the Councils completed in 2017 when Public Realm services were reviewed. There was extensive consultation with stakeholders at that time that fed back the value of trees. Members of the task and finish group have also studied this theme and helped to work up the set of principles.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 There are no equality issues associated with this report so an equality impact assessment is not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are implications for the management and enjoyment of the local environment contained within the key principles. A well managed stock of trees offers great opportunity to enhance the environment including protecting biodiversity and offsetting climate change. A more extensive list of benefits is included in the principles paper.

12. APPENDICES

| Title | Location |
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| A - Draft Tree Principles for Council Owned Trees | Attached |