

TREE STRATEGY 2021-2031

Cabinet - 14 October 2021

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer, Finance & Trading

Status: For Decision

Also Considered by: Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 12 October 2021

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report sets a draft 10-year Tree Management Strategy for the Council.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Making Sevenoaks District to be a place where people can enjoy clean and high quality urban and rural environments.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Cllr. Margot McArthur

Contact Officer: Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

Trevor Kennett, Ext. 7407

Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee: That the draft 10-year Tree Strategy 2021-2031, be considered, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet and be approved.

Recommendation to Cabinet: That the draft 10-year Tree Strategy 2021-2031 along with any proposals submitted by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be considered and approved.

Reason for recommendation: The Council currently does not have a comprehensive Tree Strategy.

Introduction

- 1 The aim of this tree strategy is to assist and inform residents, Council officers and Councillors of the council's responsibilities and strategy regarding its own tree stock.
- 2 This strategy links strongly to the Council's Plan, Net Zero 2030 commitment and the Council's Local Plan in promoting a cleaner, greener, eco-friendly environment.
- 3 The full draft strategy is in Appendix A.

A 10-year Tree Strategy

- 4 The value of trees cannot be overemphasised. They provide numerous environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits; however, strong consideration on these benefits before any tree works is undertaken.
- 5 These benefits include:
 - Environmental
 - Social
 - Cultural
 - Economic
- 6 The importance of providing open spaces and trees to help improve mental and physical health was highlighted in 2020 with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the introduction of national lockdowns. These sites become increasingly popular as residents explored their local woods and parks.

Trees in Sevenoaks

- 7 There is a strong cultural and historic link to trees within the district; the Council's own logo is of the seven Oak trees, and linked with the town's name, it is believed.
- 8 There is over 7,000 hectares (ha) of woodland that cover across Sevenoaks District. This equates to over 19% of the district being covered by woodland (11% ancient woodland), which is considerably higher than the overall English average.
- 9 Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for 487ha of woodland. Approximately 287ha is common land, and 200ha is Council owned, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife sites.
- 10 In an average mature woodland, you could find between 200-400+ trees per ha. This means that within woodlands that Sevenoaks District Council has responsibility for; there could be in excess of 100,000 trees.
- 11 The council also maintain the responsibility of approximately 30ha of residential housing estate grounds, 20ha of open spaces, closed churchyards, parks, and 10 ha of car parks across the district.

Key Implications

Financial

In 2020/2021 the budget and spend for trees was approximately £40,000, this included maintenance, planting and removal of trees across the district.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984, as amended, the Council has a duty of care to ensure it acts as a reasonable and prudent landowner. This requires the

Council to ensure they avoid acts or omissions that could cause foreseeable risk or harm to persons or property.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

It is important that the Council have a published and adopted strategy for tree management as a large and responsible landowner.

Appendices - Appendix A - Tree Strategy 2021-2031

Background Papers - None

Adrian Rowbotham

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading