

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 13 January 2022

DRAFT TREE STRATEGY

Report of the Strategy Lead (Environment)

Recommendations

- 1. It is recommended that the Panel provide feedback and comments on the general scope, direction and implications of the Tree Strategy so it can be developed prior to future adoption.**
 - 2. It is recommended that the Panel give the Executive Heads for Environment and Neighbourhood Services authority to develop and implement detailed action plans to deliver the principles and forward planting work programme as required.**
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Summary

The draft Tree Strategy for Eastleigh is presented for initial comments. The Strategy outlines the Council's current activities relating to trees, provides a framework to underpin these activities and sets the Council's key principles in relation to trees.

Focus for Scrutiny

- Does the Strategy broadly cover the key areas envisaged?
- Is there anything that staff have missed?

Statutory Powers

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("TCPA 1990")

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA 2004")

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ("the Local Planning Regulations")

Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 (Power of Wellbeing)

Strategic Implications

1. Climate breakdown and negative environmental impacts are among the biggest challenges facing the long-term future of residents and businesses of Eastleigh.
2. The Council's approach to trees, including its existing policies and tree planting programme will support environmental objectives relating to creating an Excellent Environment for All and Green Infrastructure. Our approach to trees will also help to improve wellbeing through enhancement and access to nature.

Introduction

3. The Council undertakes several functions in relation to trees, which are described in a suite of documents:
 - On 9 December 2021, Cabinet approved the Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance on the approach to trees alongside new development in the borough;
 - The Council has adopted a Tree Policy for its trees on public land which outlines how the Council will protect, improve and develop its existing tree stock in public places. This document sets out how the Council administers and enforces Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees that bring significant amenity benefit; and
 - The Council has adopted a Tree Risk Management Plan which sets out the method by which trees on Council owned land will be pro-actively inspected, recorded and managed.
4. On 22 July 2020, Cabinet also approved the creation of an in-house Tree Nursery to help achieve its commitment to plant 160,000 new trees by 2030. At the same time, Cabinet was informed that work was underway to produce a Tree Strategy for the borough.
5. The draft Tree Strategy, presented in Appendix One, has now been developed to provide an over-arching framework to support the activities summarised above and to help guide future action on trees across a range of services of the Council in a co-ordinated manner.

Next Steps

6. The Strategy outlines some high-level actions that will be required to enhance our current work with trees and begin to embed the key principles outlined in the Strategy.
7. Moving forwards, it is suggested that Executive Heads (for Environment and Neighbourhood Services) are now given authority to develop and implement detailed action plans to deliver the principles and planting work programme as required.

8. It is suggested that public consultation is not required to adopt the draft Tree Strategy as it supports decisions already in the public domain (e.g. the Cabinet decision to create a tree nursery), it is not a technical or operational policy document and the Trees and Development SPD has recently been out to consultation.
9. Following consideration by this Panel and the completion of any amendments required, the draft Tree Strategy will be reported to Cabinet for adoption.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications for the draft Tree Strategy at this stage; the Tree Nursery business case was approved in July 2020 and developing and delivering more detailed action plans and updates to current policy documents assumes that staffing resource in necessary teams remains the same and can be achieved within current resources.
11. It is anticipated that the Strategy can be delivered within existing budgets however if the Executive Heads for Environment or Neighbourhood Services identify the need for additional budget, this will be reported as required to Cabinet.

Risk Assessment

12. The draft Tree Strategy assumes that nature recovery within the Borough will continue to be a corporate priority and part of the response to the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency declaration. As such, the Strategy also links to the Council's Biodiversity Strategy.
13. No further risks have been identified as part of the Strategy at this stage.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. The Equality Act is relevant to the decision and an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out and is attached in Appendix Two. In summary the EqIA shows that:
 - The implications of the draft Tree Strategy may have potential negative impacts for groups with a Disability, specifically with regards to accessibility in visiting and enjoying newly planted trees. This can however be mitigated with appropriate planning.
 - The draft Tree Strategy does not have any negative implications for areas of Social Deprivation, however ensuring that all neighbourhoods gain from tree planting will also allow these areas to share in their benefits.
 - An Equality Impact Assessment was also carried out to support the Tree Nursery Report to Cabinet on 22 July 2020. It identified a number of potential impacts and opportunities to be addressed to reach people with protected characteristics including maximising health and

wellbeing benefits for age groups, ensuring the consideration of disability barriers, particularly for group and home planting initiatives, ensuring good engagement with the community and using apprentices for the nursery project as appropriate. These will also be taken forward as part of the implementation of the overall Strategy.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

15. The draft Tree Strategy, and the technical and operational policy documents it supports, are part of the Council's response to the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency declaration.
16. The core principles and delivery mechanisms detailed within the Strategy, will help mitigate our changing climate by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, create shade and shelter thus keeping our urban areas cool and increase our resilience to flooding.
17. The amount of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) a tree will sequester depends on many factors, such as the type of tree, where it is planted and the amount of room it has to grow. Following the Woodland Trust Guide, it is estimated that 160,000 trees will absorb approximately 440 tonnes of CO₂e each year. By means of comparison, total gross Eastleigh Borough Council greenhouse gas emissions for 2020/21, as reported to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 6 December 2021 were 9,163 tCO₂e.
18. The Strategy will also seek to safeguard existing habitats and, through additional planting, trees will also create more, better, joined up habitat.

Conclusion

19. The draft Tree Strategy is intended to provide a framework to underpin the Council's technical and operational policy documents relating to trees and to set out the key principles for the management of trees, incorporating its commitment to plant 160,000 new trees by 2030.
20. The Strategy allows for the current documents and activities to be considered in a joined-up way which will help to deliver more enhanced, co-ordinated action regarding trees.

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Appendices Attached:	Appendix One – Draft Tree Strategy Appendix Two – Equality Impact Assessment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

- Biodiversity Strategy, Report to Cabinet, 9 December 2021
- Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document, Report to Cabinet, 9 December 2021
- Climate and Environment Emergency Update, Report to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel, 6 December 2021
- Tree Nursery, Report to Cabinet, 22 July 2020