

TO: EXECUTIVE
26 SEPTEMBER 2017

TREE STRATEGY
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The report presents a draft Tree Strategy, prior to public consultation, which forms the overarching framework by which the borough will directly and indirectly approach the management of trees, both on public and private land.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Executive:

- (a) considers the detail in this report and agrees that the draft Tree Strategy (Annex 1) be approved for public consultation, and that**
- (b) that following public consultation and subject to the outcome of that consultation the strategy be approved by the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services & Public Protection.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Bracknell Forest is the third most forested authority in the country, with an independent survey identifying 39.8% of the borough is covered by tree canopy (Bluesky, 2014). These trees define the character of Bracknell Forest and represent a significant natural infrastructure asset from which the borough's residents derive multiple benefits.
- 3.2 To continue benefiting from this resource the council will require a co-ordinated approach to maintain the forest of Bracknell while meeting our legal duties and management responsibilities, which fall to the authority as both a tree owner and a democratic body with specific responsibilities relating to trees.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There is no legislative need for having a formal strategy. However, the Council has a central role in the community to lead on managing trees for the benefit of the public. The Council also previously identified the need for a tree strategy in 2006 (Report of Tree Policy Review Group).
- 4.2 Without a strategy, tree management across the borough will continue on a case-by-case basis without reference to a public document. While the 2006 tree policy provides guidance that directs day to day decision making, it is not a public document and it does not have a format or structure that supports a wider use in Council operations.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 In 2006, the Executive approved a group of six statements referred to as the tree policy that were proposed by the Tree Policy Review Group. The review also identified the need to have a more comprehensive Tree Strategy to support the work of the Council across departments. In addition, the Biodiversity Action Plan 2012-2017 also identified the need for a Tree and Woodland Strategy to address current threats to these important features.
- 5.2 While the 2006 tree policy has provided some guidance, managing trees remains a challenging issue both for the council's limited resources and for residents. In addition, the management of tree cover within Bracknell Forest is the responsibility of every landowner not just the council. Therefore, setting out and consulting on a public tree strategy enables transparency and encourages buy-in from the local community and private landowners.
- 5.3 The draft tree strategy is designed to cover 20 years with 5 year plan in Appendix 1 that implements actions through three existing channels and one new: cyclical inspection programmes, Biodiversity Action Plan, planning policy and decisions, and a new woodland management plan.
- 5.4 The draft tree strategy is based around a set of three core values and six themed principles that incorporate the 2006 tree policy as follows over leaf:

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Value 1 Significance	Value 2 Active management	Value 3 Stewardship
The Council recognises the significance of trees in creating the character of Bracknell Forest and works to ensure that its varied tree population is managed and enhanced for environmental, social and economic benefit.	The Council will ensure that our tree resource is actively managed and expanded with nature conservation and public benefit as the main objectives as part of green infrastructure . The Council will seek potential income from woodland through timber and other woodland products where this does not conflict with other principles.	The Council works to promote understanding and responsible stewardship of all trees on public and private land as part of green infrastructure .

Principle I Tree retention	Principle II New trees	Principle III Veteran trees	Principle IV Ancient woodlands	Principle V Growing environment	Principle VI Tree Preservation Orders
The Council will favour tree retention unless there are sound reasons for removal such as sustainable woodland management, arboricultural practice or public interest such as quality of life or safety.	The Council will support new tree planting within new and existing urban areas that are appropriate for their location. Special consideration will be given to large species, future veterans and street trees.	The Council will use best practice to promote the lifespan of veteran and potential veteran trees within the borough.	The Council will seek to protect, manage or restore ancient woodlands to maximise their biodiversity and historic value on public and private land.	The Council will endeavour to protect trees and their growing environment from threats such as encroachment, pruning pressure*, compaction, shading and excavation.	The Council will continue to protect significant trees by the use of Tree Preservation Orders using a best practice approach.

* the pressure to prune a tree as a result of perceived threats due to its proximity to a property

- 5.5 The Tree Strategy also supports the Council's aspiration to deliver sustainable woodland management that will reduce the cost of maintaining tree stocks by accessing woodland grants and harvesting saleable products.
- 5.6 The development of the tree strategy has involved consultation both internally and with external stakeholders to ensure the strategy is well advanced and should required minimal changes following the final public consultation. The draft will be published and promoted via the Council's website and consultation portal for 4 weeks. In the unlikely event that major changes are required to the strategy, it will be reported back to the Executive for consideration.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

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- 6.1 The strategy has been reviewed by the borough solicitor and there are no legal implications arising.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The costs of the tree strategy are contained within existing revenue budgets. The report makes reference to reducing the costs of maintaining tree stocks in the future and this proposal is being considered as part of the Parks and Countryside transformation project.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 A current EIA is in place for the parks and countryside service. There are no negative impacts resulting from the proposed project. An EIA scoping assessment is included in Appendix II.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The creation of a clear Tree Strategy strengthens the efficient and effective management of trees in the borough as required in the discharge of legal obligations.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Heads of Service have been consulted for Environmental Services, Education, Flood Authority, Highways Asset Management, Recreation, Property Services, Planning and Transport Development.
- 7.2 Consultation has also been made with stakeholders such as the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership.

Method of Consultation

- 7.3 The Strategy will be made public via the Bracknell Forest Council website/consultation portal, and Parish Council's and stakeholder groups made aware of the consultation by letter.

Representations Received

- 7.4 Any representations will be considered in the finalisation of the Strategy.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Tree Strategy

Contacts for further information

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APPENDIX II

Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of screening: 15/08/2017	Directorate: Environment, Culture and Communities	Section: Parks and Countryside	
1. Activity to be assessed	<i>Please give full details of the activity</i> Adopting a Tree Strategy for managing trees on public and private land in the borough.		
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Marlies Boydell		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Stephen Chown		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<i>Please describe briefly its aims, objectives and main activities as relevant.</i> Tree Strategy, a concise, long term strategy that distils how the council believes trees across the borough should be managed both on public and private land.		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	All residents of the borough, landowners and visitors.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? <i>What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both?</i> <i>If the impact is neutral please give a reason.</i>	What evidence do you have to support this? <i>E.g. equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc</i> <i>Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data</i>
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities including conditions such as dementia.	Y N ✓	Neutral. The management of trees is designed to benefit all residents equally.	Several studies referenced in the Tree Strategy demonstrate the benefits of trees to people for economic prosperity, physical and mental wellbeing.
9. Racial equality	Y N ✓	Neutral. The strategy will be worded in English and copies in other languages will be made available upon request.	
10. Gender equality	Y N ✓	Neutral.	
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y N ✓	Neutral.	
12. Gender re-assignment	Y N ✓	Neutral.	

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13. Age equality	Y	N ✓	Neutral. The strategy can be provided in large print upon request and auto-reader is available on the council website.	
14. Religion and belief equality	Y	N ✓	Neutral.	
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y	N ✓	Neutral.	
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N ✓	Neutral.	
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.	<p><i>Please explain</i></p> <p>The strategy will benefit all residents equally. The document will be free to download and paper copies will be made available on request. Access to greenspace is available free of charge, 365 days a year.</p>			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	<p><i>Please explain</i></p> <p>N/A</p>			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	<p><i>Please explain</i></p> <p>No</p>			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N ✓	<i>Please explain for each equality group</i>	
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	None			
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N ✓	<p><i>Please explain your decision. If you are not proceeding to a full equality impact assessment make sure you have the evidence to justify this decision should you be challenged.</i></p> <p><i>If you are proceeding to a full equality impact assessment please contact Abby Thomas.</i></p>	
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? <i>Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</i>				
Action	Time-scale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria	
The strategy will be accessible to all in different languages, large print and other formats via the website and in paper form on request.	End of 2017	Marlies Boydell/Biodiversity Officer	Appropriate information is available to those who should wish to read it. The council receives no complaints regarding the accessibility of the strategy.	

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24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	The Parks & Countryside Normal Operating Plan, Digital Services Accessibility Standards and Corporate Identity Standards.
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	<i>Please list</i> When adopting new strategies and consulting on them, we: 1. Adhere to BFC Corporate Identity Standards and accessibility guidelines. 2. Provide opportunity to comment at different stages in the development of the strategy
26. Chief Officers signature.	Signature: Date: