

Environment and Safe Communities Committee  
(21 March 2023)

## TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Victoria Potts, Interim Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision? (yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	1. Tree Management Plan 2. Stakeholder Consultation Statement

### Summary

This report presents the Council Tree Management Plan and seeks support for its adoption. The Plan was subject to a 5-week stakeholder consultation, as agreed by this committee on 18 October 2022, and this report presents the outcome.

The Tree Management Plan sets out a framework for how the Council will manage its current tree population and where appropriate increase existing tree cover on land in the ownership of the Council.

The plan also sets out a process for dealing with tree planting and memorial planting requests.

### Recommendation (s)

#### The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree to adopt the Tree Management Plan set out in Appendix 1

### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Council owns and manages substantial areas of land and estate across the borough and is responsible for the reasonable management of trees on its land, of which there are approximately 41,000.
- 1.2 The Council has committed to actions in the Climate Change Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan to increase tree cover in the borough and support and promote appropriate locations for tree planting.

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- 1.3 The Council committed to an action in the Annual Plan 2022/23 to developing a Tree Planting Plan.
- 1.4 This plan will set the framework for how the Council manages its current tree stock, now and in the future. It will set the plan for how we will increase the tree cover in the borough and contribute to the commitments made in the Climate Change Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 1.5 In addition, there is no current agreed process for dealing with ad hoc tree and memorial planting requests. This plan introduces a new process for addressing requests for such tree planting.
- 1.6 A targeted stakeholder consultation received a predominantly positive response to the introduction of a Tree Management Plan including offers of support for the tree planting plans.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 According to figures from the 'National Tree Map' there are around 140,000 trees in Epsom & Ewell, of which 41,000 are on Council owned land. This rises to 60,000 when including co-managed sites.
- 2.2 The borough currently has approximately 26% tree cover, which is well above the UK average of 13% and slightly above the Surrey average of 24%. It is noted that some wards, in the more urban areas, have a much lower tree cover than the borough average.
- 2.3 Trees provide a significant environmental, aesthetic, cultural and economic benefit for our residents and the importance of effectively managing the current tree population is clear, whilst also seeking opportunities to increase tree cover where appropriate.
- 2.4 The Council currently has an agreed Tree Maintenance Contract, renewed in 2022, and a formal Tree Risk Policy agreed in 2015. There is no formal overarching tree management framework.
- 2.5 The focus of the Tree Management Plan is to provide a framework for how the Council manages its current tree population and where appropriate to increasing tree cover on Council owned land.
- 2.6 It is recognised that trees play an important role in sequestering carbon and helping to provide resilience to climate change impacts, for example cooling, shading and flood alleviation.
- 2.7 The Council has committed within its Climate Change Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan to seek opportunities to increase tree cover. The Tree Management Plan sets out a proposed plan for tree planting on Council owned land.

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- 2.8 A Tree Cover Study was undertaken in 2019 which assessed the current tree cover within the borough and identified areas where there may be opportunity for further tree planting. This has been used to inform the plans for tree planting sites.
- 2.9 The plan also includes a formal process for dealing with tree planting and memorial planting requests, which are currently only dealt with on an ad hoc basis.
- 2.10 Without adopting this Tree Management Plan there will be no agreed framework for increasing tree cover in the borough and no formal process for dealing with planting requests.
- 2.11 The draft Tree Management Plan was subject to a five weeks' stakeholder consultation between the 7 November 2022 and the 12 December 2022. A total of 10 responses were received, with 2 responses covering more than one organisation. Feedback was predominantly positive and welcoming of a Tree Management Plan, with offers of support for the tree planting plans and for seeking external funding.
- 2.12 Comments received mainly proposed minor amendments and additions which have been incorporated where appropriate. Where comments related to existing planning processes, including Tree Preservation Orders, these have been shared with the Planning Development team.
- 2.13 Wider points raised centred around clarification on tree planting numbers and sites and tree policy in relation to development.
- 2.14 The Plan sets out that proposed tree planting sites and numbers are an initial indication on what could be possible and that for agreed sites it is the intention that a more detailed planting plan will follow with further detail. As such these comments will be taken into consideration as part of the more detailed planning.
- 2.15 As a new Local Plan is in development comments received regarding trees and new development have been shared with the planning policy team to consider.
- 2.16 A statement on the consultation outcomes can be found in Appendix 2.

### **3 Risk Assessment**

#### Legal or other duties

- 3.1 Equality Impact Assessment
  - 3.1.1 None arising from this report
- 3.2 Crime & Disorder

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3.2.1 There are no implications in terms of crime and disorder

## 3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None arising from this report

## 3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None arising from this report

## 3.5 Other

3.5.1 None arising from this report

## 4 Financial Implications

4.1 Planting and establishing trees can have significant financial implications. The Council will be exploring opportunities for external funding and support for tree planting schemes, along with actively encouraging community involvement.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Council has an annual budget of £145,870 for its tree maintenance contract. Any work arising from the Tree Management Plan requiring expenditure over and above this budget would need additional funding to be identified.

## 5 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

## 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

6.1.1 Green & Vibrant and supports delivery of the Annual Plan.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

6.3.1 The plan supports objectives in the Biodiversity Action Plan and Climate Change Action Plan, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and contributing to increased carbon sequestration and meeting the Council climate change targets.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

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6.4.1 No specific implications.

## 6.5 **Partnerships:**

6.5.1 None

## 7 **Background papers**

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

### **Previous reports:**

- E&SC Committee: Tree Management Plan 18 October 2022

### **Other papers:**

- None