



Committee and date

Cabinet

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Public

## SHROPSHIRE TREE SAFETY POLICY

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### Summary

This report proposes the adoption of a Tree Safety Policy for Shropshire Council. The former Shropshire County Council tree safety policy adopted on 7 Feb 2007 has been reviewed to take account of additional tree responsibilities as a result of unitary status. Corporate Risk Management supports the need for an agreed policy to be put in place.

### Recommendations

- A That Cabinet approves the Tree Safety Policy and recommends its adoption by full Council.

## REPORT

### Background

1. Trees are a vital component of the County's biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage, contributing to Shropshire's environmental wellbeing. They are crucial to making our communities the 'unique' place that local people really value.
2. Falling trees, or parts of trees, present an unavoidable hazard, but they are a manageable risk. In Shropshire they have resulted in four deaths, as well as serious injury, on the road network since the year 2000. There have also been at least two 'near misses' on school sites.
3. Shropshire Council has robust and well-managed arrangements in place for tree inspections and tree safety management. However it is important to review these arrangements and to formally adopt a council wide tree safety policy.

## Tree Safety Policy

4. Shropshire Council is directly or indirectly responsible for all its road and site users every day, including many vulnerable users such as the very young, very old and disabled, all of whom it has a duty of care to protect. It is also responsible as a landowner for its trees resource, with almost 10,000 individual specimens on school sites and some 500,000 trees within potential falling distance of our roads.
5. Tree safety has therefore been acknowledged as a corporate risk for the Council. The Tree Safety Policy has been developed to formalise the Council's approach to responsibly managing that issue.
6. The policy lays out the responsible, efficient and sustainable management of Shropshire Council's tree resource, how and when they are to be inspected, by whom, how recorded, and how any resultant remedial works are to be implemented.
7. Corporate responsibility in Shropshire Council extends from the elected Members, in setting policy, through the Chief Executive and senior management team, to the Site Manager or Highway Technician. The Arboricultural Officers have a key responsibility, undertaking tree safety inspections, monitoring standards and providing expert advice. The policy sets out clearly process, roles and responsibilities.
8. The risks associated with trees vary depending on the site usage and the size/condition of the tree. Whilst a simple, systematic, repeatable and budgetable process is required, one process does not fit all circumstances.
9. Processes are necessarily different for Council-owned trees and private trees in which the Council have a concern. For example, where private trees adjacent to the highway we are able to call upon statutory powers such as the Highways Act 1980 under which we can serve tree safety notices (i.e. Section 154 notice).
10. An extensive framework of guidance, legislation and case law which justifies, requires and guides the tree safety policy is included in the Appendices, together with other sections detailing processes for inspection, remedial works, cycles, qualifications required and details of an approved contractor list.
11. The policy will be subject to annual audit where its relevance, performance and processes will be reviewed and adopted as necessary in the light of information and experience.

12. **Summary Table of Tree Inspection Cycles**

<b>Client</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Environmental Maintenance	A&B roads	5 years
	Urban and secondary distributor roads.	5 years
	Minor roads (C, and unclassified roads)	Obviously hazardous trees identified by Highways inspectors in the course of the annual driven inspections. Ad hoc inspections undertaken by AOs on request
Resources	Street scene, public open space, car parks	2 years (Zone 1, highest risk, all trees recorded) 2 years (Zone 2, significant risk, hazard trees recorded) 4 years (Zone 3 intermediate risk) Inspect on request (Zone 4, low risk)
	Property services, Shirehall	2 years (sites with mature trees) 4 years (sites with young trees) 2 years (sites with mature trees)
Children & Young People's Services	Schools, & Youth centres and Children's centres	2 years (sites with mature trees) 4 years (sites with young trees)
Community Services	Housing, social care, & leisure centres	2 years (sites with mature trees) 4 years (sites with young trees)
	Parks and Countryside & Heritage sites	2 years (Zone 1, highest risk areas, all trees recorded) 2 years (Zone 2, significant risk areas, hazard trees recorded) 4 years (Zone 3 intermediate risk areas) Inspect on request (Zone 4, Low risk areas)

**Consultation**

13. The policy has been widely consulted upon with relevant officers from all Directorates within Shropshire Council.

**Resource Implications**

14. There are currently no additional resource implications in respect of the adoption of this policy. These are carried out by the Natural Environment Team in the Environment Service of the Development Services Directorate. Client departments contribute to the costs of their tree safety surveys.

Additional training may be needed by a certain number of staff. This can be funded from appropriate training budgets.

15. A proportion of all trees inspected require works which need to be implemented in the short term. To date these costs have had to be absorbed within existing grounds maintenance, and other services budgets. As we progress into future survey cycles, the burden will reduce, as more of the tree stock is under effective management. Future reviews of tree safety procedures may highlight additional resource implications.
16. The loss of tree cover in Shropshire as a result of felling dangerous trees is an inevitable outcome of the policy. Shropshire's environmental wellbeing is in part mitigated through the Community Free Tree scheme, funded in the base budget. Up to 15,000 trees are put back into Shropshire's communities and landscape annually. Local people value and appreciate this scheme.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Human Rights Act Appraisal**

Any works required as a result of the adoption of this policy may interfere with private landowner's human rights but such interference would be in accordance with the law and in the public interest.

**Environmental Appraisal**

An unavoidable consequence of policy adoption will be the felling of dangerous trees. This will in certain cases have a significant impact on the local landscape. Efforts will be made to replace felled trees to preserve tree cover in Shropshire and promote biodiversity.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

Corporate Risk Management Review identified the need to review our Tree Safety Policy to be put in place. The adoption of the policy effectively addresses this need.

**Community / Consultations Appraisal**

N/A

**Cabinet Member**

Martin Taylor Smith

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Tree Safety Policy