

Executive report to Scrutiny

Scrutiny Commission: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny
Commission

Date of scrutiny commission: 28 June 2022

Title: Tree Strategy Review

Lead executive decision maker: Councillor Adam Clarke
Deputy City Mayor for Environment & Transportation.

Lead director: Sean Atterbury, Director of Neighbourhood
Environmental Services

Useful Information:

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Report author: Dave Jones

Report Version: 1

1. Summary

To provide members with an update on progress for the period 2021/22 on the Tree Strategy which was adopted by the City Council in November 2018.

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/185470/trees-strategy-2018-23-v2.pdf>

2. Recommendations

Scrutiny Commission is asked to comment on the report and suggest any amendments to its content and format prior to publishing the review document on the Council's web pages.

3. Introduction

The first Leicester Tree Strategy was formally adopted in November 2018 during National Tree Week.

It is a five-year strategy which aims to sustain and increase the tree stock in Council ownership and to improve the quality of the city's trees. It also promotes the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution and contributing to flood risk management.

The strategy outlines how we manage the city's trees to ensure that we sustain and enhance Leicester's urban forest for future generations.

A formal review of all of the aims and actions within the strategy for the period 2021/22 has been undertaken and the data collated in a table for ease of reference as attached at appendix 1.

4. Report

The Tree Strategy review considers the financial year 2021/22 and aims to monitor the delivery of the aims of the Tree Strategy via the five key strategic objectives:

- Promoting amenity
- Promoting habitat and wildlife
- Responding to global obligations
- Managing the pressure on trees in others ownership
- Delivering this strategy

And a series of 22 actions as specified in the Tree Strategy.

The review document gives the current position statement and identifies what has been achieved over the 12 months period, with a series of measures.

Each section is colour coded for ease of reference.

There are a series of headline key facts included in the start of the document on page 3 which give an overview.

5. Consultations

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this update report.

Stuart McAvoy – Acting Head of Finance, ext. 37 4004

6.2. Legal Implications

The Leicester Tree Strategy was adopted in November 2018. The Tree Strategy Review aims to monitor delivery of the aims of the Leicester Tree Strategy to date. There are no legal implications arising from this update report.

Katherine Hall, Locum Solicitor, Planning & Highways

6.3. Climate Emergency Implications

Leicester's tree stock plays an important role in mitigating the effects of climate change. This includes helping to reduce the risk of flooding by slowing the run-off of rainwater during heavy and prolonged rainfall, as well as moderating the impact of heatwaves and providing shade. Trees also store a significant amount of carbon and the planting of new trees can make a small but symbolically important contribution to removing carbon from the atmosphere.

The Tree Strategy delivery activities reported here are contributing to the above climate benefits by maintaining the existing tree stock in a healthy condition and increasing it through new planting. Certain activities, including the tree planting and tree wardens scheme, are included in the council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Duncan Bell, Climate Change Manager. Ext. 37 2249.

6.4. Equality Implications

The strategy aims to sustain and increase the tree stock in Council ownership and to improve the quality of the city's trees. It also promotes the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution.

There are no direct equality implications arising from this update report. It is important to note that although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, some people are more affected because they live in a polluted area, are exposed to higher levels of air pollution in their day-to-day lives, or are more susceptible to health problems caused by air pollution. The most vulnerable face all of these disadvantages.

Groups that are more affected by air pollution include:

- older people
- children
- individuals with existing CVD or respiratory disease
- pregnant women
- communities in areas of higher pollution, such as close to busy roads
- low-income communities

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, Ext 37 4148

7. Author

Dave Jones, Trees & Woodlands Manager





Trees bring enormous environmental and ecological benefits to our city.

They enhance our streets and grace our parks, making a huge contribution to our health and wellbeing.

This five-year strategy will guide us in sustaining and increasing our tree stock and help us improve the quality of the city's trees.

It will also help promote the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution and contributing to flood risk management.

Sir Peter Soulsby
CITY MAYOR

Cllr Adam Clarke
DEPUTY CITY MAYOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Our Aims

The city council will:

- Ensure that the current level of tree canopy and tree numbers under the city council's control are extended and the quality improved.
- Ensure trees under the council's control are managed with the intention of resolving conflicts and problems in a rational, consistent and economic way - listening to the different views, taking them into account but ultimately taking responsibility for, sometimes difficult, decisions.
- Encourage other landowners to plant and manage their trees through advice, guidance and where necessary, the use of tree protection legislation.

It will also:

- Compensate adequately for the loss of significant trees in the landscape by planting more than one replacement - wherever practical at, or near, the location of the removed trees.
- Ensure that public realm infrastructure schemes that involve tree removal or tree planting will incorporate quality planting and design and that designers and lead agents liaise with the council at appropriate stages of planning, design and implementation.

Review:

- The delivery of the aims of the Tree Strategy is via five key strategic objectives, with a series of identified actions. The strategy will be judged against these actions.

Trees & Woodlands Portfolio Key Facts

Management of tree stock of 168k individual registered trees and 111 hectares of woodland.

In-house team comprising of an establishment of 36 staff, as appendix 1. Annual maintenance budget of £1.5m

11,076 small trees and 677 heavy stock planted. 607 trees felled in 2021/22 as part of stock management & storms. That's 19 trees planted for every tree felled.

The Trees & Woodlands team were successful in passing the Arb. Association Approved Contractor Certification, being one of only two LA's with this accreditation.

100% of by-product waste recycled, combination of biofuel woodchip material and logs. Over 1000 tonnes per annum, saving £115k in landfill costs plus transport costs.

In partnership with The Tree Council, we now have 23 volunteer tree wardens, 11 of these wardens joined us this year.

Leicester City Council's Ash Dieback Action Plan is being drafted; this will outline how LCC will manage the risks associated with this disease over the next 10 years.

Tree planting schemes in partnership with the Forestry Commission, Earthwatch & Trees for Cities have resulted in over 10,396 new trees planted in the city.

534 Tree Preservation Orders & 25 Conservation Areas in place offering a level of amenity tree protection.

155 planning consultations undertaken relating to TPO applications and notifications of trees in conservation areas.

Successful completion of phase 1 Western Park Sanitation project. 60 diseased trees felled and 122 heavy stock trees planted.

As part of the Queens Platinum Jubilee tree planting was undertaken at Abbey Park, Castle Gardens and Alderman Richard Hallam School with 1,000 small trees given out to the public to plant in their gardens.



Tree Inspection – Pine Tree Avenue



Abbey Park – Queens Jubilee carved seat



Volunteers tree planting – Appleton Park

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
1	Promoting amenity	Monitor the health of the council's trees.	Inspection and survey programme.	T&W	Schools, Highway, Housing and Parks tree stock inspections undertaken to identify works required to manage the health of the tree stock. 2021/22 - 350 surveys completed This equates to 27% of all LCC sites with trees were surveyed (total 1,285 sites). Sites include 208 parks, 185 housing transects, 642 highway transects etc.
			Continue to expand the council's tree stock	T&W	Replacement planting of heavy stock has been undertaken in the highway, housing areas and parks & open spaces, along with new developments. 2021/22 - 677 large trees were planted Examples: 122 Western Park 70 Various housing estates 19 Abbey Park
			Engage a team of volunteer Tree Wardens.	LEV	In partnership with The Tree Council LCC now has a dedicated team of 23 Tree Wardens registered as a constituted group, trained to assess and report issues and assist in tree planting and establishment, e.g. early identification of Ash Die Back etc.
2	Promoting amenity (cont)	Maintain trees with the aim of reducing nuisance, hazard and complaint	Level of complaints.	T&W	Formal complaints received: 2021/22 - 1 complaint

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					No complaints have been upheld by the LG Ombudsman.
			Tree inspection programme to identify and eliminate potential risk. Maintain inventory register for each tree on Ezytreev database.	T&W	<p>Visual tree inspection regime as ref 1 above: Sites inspection frequency 3 – 7 years based on potential risk depending on location:</p> <p>This identifies the condition and health of the tree stock and any impact the whole tree, might provide in terms of nuisance, hazard and complaint, typical examples being, obstruction of highway/street lamp, removal of deadwood, tree disease and potential tree failure, etc.</p>
			Aim for two thirds of available budget to be targeted on proactive maintenance, rather than emergency works.	T&W	<p>Annual programme of works identified following site surveys with the aim to manage the stock in a safe and healthy condition and reduce the reliance on emergency reaction works.</p> <p>2021/22 Reactive spend £207k (33%) Proactive spend £428k (67%)</p>

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
3	Promoting amenity (cont)	Use a variety of species and cultivars.	Planting plans	T&W	<p>Tree species are chosen to meet the suitability to location being planted using a range of native trees but also recognising that exotic trees have a place in the landscape.</p> <p>e.g., Western Park used predominantly native tree stock, but some exotics species were planted where the location warranted this.</p>
			Promote the wide selection of species and cultivars used at key parks	P&OS	Development of a tree trail template which can be downloaded or used as an App to showcase and promote core species across a site encouraging the user to visit the whole site. Abbey Park tree trail will be launched in 2022. With further park tree trails added throughout the year.
4	Promoting amenity (cont)	Reduce problems that can be associated with the presence of trees when making decisions about planting design and the positioning of trees in the landscape.	Right tree right place	T&W Planning	<p>Early engagement between planning team and developer as part of the design process to build in tree stock which provides appropriate amenity suitable for the location.</p> <p>eg. Ashton Green, green infrastructure planning with Tilla Homes. 30 highway trees, 11 SUDS area planting & 3 front garden plantings.</p>
5	Promoting amenity (cont)	Purchase planting stock of good quality and prepare an underground environment that is conducive to good tree growth.	Procurement policy to ensure quality and scope of species.	T&W	Tender developed for a procurement exercise to establish a framework contract for the supply of a range of species and cultivars to meet the needs of the council.

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			Successful establishment of heavy tree stock.	T&W	<p>Preparation of tree pits with appropriate soil conditioner, drainage and irrigation system to ensure successful establishment.</p> <p>2021/22 – 98% establishment rate</p> <p>Any establishment failures are replanted within the following planting season.</p>
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6	Promoting habitat and wildlife	Encourage the planting and management of woodland and groups of trees.	Identify sites with scope for planting of woodland groups and seek funding to support projects.	P&OS	<p>Climate Woods group with representatives from a range of services meet several times a year, scoping opportunities for mass tree planting and utilising suitable schemes. Successful projects in 2021/22 include:</p> <p>Trees for Cities, in partnership with this charity, 3416 small trees were planted in Appleton Park and 905 small trees in Monks Rest Gardens.</p> <p>Urban Tree Challenge, in partnership with the Forestry Commission, 70 large trees planted at 10 locations within the city.</p> <p>Local Authorities Treescape Fund, in partnership with the Forestry Commission, 1875 small trees, 85 large trees & 60 fruit trees planted at Western Park.</p> <p>Tiny Forest, in partnership with Earthwatch, 600 trees planted in a space the size of a tennis court. 4200 small trees planted at 7 schools.</p>
7	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Where it is compatible with amenity, seek to retain old tree stock, including trees in decline and manage them in a way that promotes their value to wildlife.	Number of trees identified and surveyed.	T&W & Nature Conservation	There are 177 mature trees which meet the Local Wildlife Site criteria for designation due to the size (girth) generally being over 3.77m and containing features likely to be of value for wildlife such as cracks, fissures and crevices.

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					<p>Where practicable large standing dead trunks (habitat poles) are retained to support wildlife, as they are valuable eco systems.</p> <p>The Saving the Saffron Brook project aims to improve the condition of the woodland Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within the catchment, improving structural diversity via selective thinning and coppicing works, along with woodland creation and tree species enrichment within Knighton Spinney and Washbrook Local Nature Reserves (LNR's).</p>
8	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Favour native trees over exotics when specifying, planning and implementing new planting.	Species type and quantities	T&W/Planning	<p>Examples of schemes utilising British native tree stock, including oak, silver birch, hornbeam, field maple, cherry & hawthorn.</p> <p>Western Park Sanitation works replacement planting</p> <p>Local Authorities Treescape Fund planting at Western Park</p> <p>Trees for Cities planting at Appleton Park & Monks Rest Gardens</p> <p>Urban Tree Challenge Fund at 7 locations</p> <p>Tiny Forest planting at 7 schools</p>
9	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Protect and conserve protected or rare species through appropriate	Staff training. Bio diversity action plan	T&W/Planning	Tree inspection prior to felling to determine presence of protected bat species, team are LANTRA trained to undertake bat inspections

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		compensation when loss cannot be avoided.			<p>and utilise specialist equipment, such as the endoscope.</p> <p>Trees & Woodlands team work closely with the Nature Conservation team to ensure Biodiversity Action Plan is adhered to.</p> <p>Ensure that the Wildlife & Countryside Act is taken into consideration when undertaking any maintenance works to protect nesting birds.</p>
10	Responding to global obligations	Respond appropriately and proportionately to the threat of pests and disease epidemics.	Monitor the impact of Ash Dieback.	T&W	<p>Ash dieback disease will have a significant impact on the tree stock in the city. Nationally the disease has been under reported and public awareness of it is low. It is still unclear how fast the disease will establish itself in the city and start to cause significant practical problems.</p> <p>In 2021/22 10 Ash trees in poor condition were felled due to Ash Dieback, but many others have been identified with this disease, and significantly more Ash will be removed in 2022/23.</p> <p>Contingency budget in capital programme for 2022/23 to react and manage.</p> <p>The council's Ash Dieback Action Plan will be released in 2022/23. This will give more</p>

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					details on the ash trees in the city and budget and human resources required.
			Through tree surveys identify concerns on individual tree's health & condition and where necessary review a site for potential pathogens.	T&W	<p>Western Park phase 1 sanitation works was completed in 2021/22. This was the felling of 60 trees, the majority infected by Phytophthora a fungus that infects the host tree.</p> <p>Western Park phase 2 works will be undertaken in 2022/23 to fell & replace the Pine trees infected with Needle Blight. This fungus infects the needles and gradually defoliates the tree.</p> <p>Contingency budget in capital programme for 2022/23 to react and manage.</p>
11	Responding to global obligations (cont)	Recycle the materials that arise from the management of trees, including the use of wood as a carbon-neutral fuel.	Volume of material diverted from landfill and recycled.	T&W	<p>By diverting by-product waste from landfill costs of £115k per annum have been avoided on landfill costs and transporting costs Woodchip is recycled for biofuel.</p> <p>Recycled by tonnage/total sale value/percentage recycled</p> <p>2021/22 – 1000t / 100%</p>
12	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership	Seek to preserve amenity afforded by trees when considering our response to	Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) created.	Planning	LCC has 535 Tree Preservation Orders in place offering a level of amenity protection.

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		tree work applications made under planning controls.			2021/22 short list made of highest priority TPO sites for revoke & renew as ongoing project.
			Revise policy to support tree preservation.	Planning	Pine Tree Avenue, tree preservation strategy in place. In planning terms, the document represents Informal Guidance. It promotes the trees as a “material consideration” when planning or assessing works that might affect their retention.
13	Managing the pressure on trees in others’ ownership (cont)	When assessing planning applications, take into account the effect on trees and protect them where the balance of factors favours preservation.	Consider all planning applications within timeframe.	Planning	2021/22 – 200 (all within timeframe)
14	Managing the pressure on trees in others’ ownership (cont)	Where landscaping that includes tree planting is made a condition of planning consent, incorporate quality design and specification.	Process to ensure conditions issued provide suitable design outputs.	Planning	All Planning consents issued seek to secure the standard and specification as requested by Trees and Woodlands officers. Where this cannot be negotiated the reasons are reported and recorded in the Decision Report.
15	Managing the pressure on trees in others’ ownership (cont)	Work directly with landowners and developers to support them with the management, inclusion and retention of trees affected by the planning process.	Number of planning consultations undertaken.	Planning	Planning consultations undertaken relating to TPO applications and notifications of trees in conservation areas. 2021/22 – 155 (all within timeframe)

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					<p>T&W offer British Standard 5837 surveys required to ensure all trees are considered as a material consideration for all planning applications, e.g. Saffron Lane & Aylestone Rd cycleways, Beaumont Park P+R.</p> <p>Planning, Development and Transportation team work with each developer as part of the design process to ensure that existing landscape features can be retained and preserved and are enhanced with new design features.</p>
16	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont)	Provide a 24/7 call out service ensuring a response to tree emergencies at any time.	100% of emergencies responded to within two hours.	T&W	<p>Responding to a range of situations, e.g. tree failure, road traffic accident. storms etc.</p> <p>2021/22 370 total emergencies responded to 67 out of hours</p>
17	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont)	Respond within 24 hours to reports of other contraventions, actionable nuisance and hazards and deal with these quickly and proportionately - making appropriate resources available.	Number of contraventions responded to within timeframe.	Planning	2021/22 – 17 tree related claims received, and site visits undertaken. 70.5% undertaken within 24 hours.
18	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont)	Be bound by the relevant planning practice guidance when managing protected tree regulations.	Consider planning enforcement action as required.	Planning	2021/22 - 11 cases where no breaches, 3 resolved through negotiations by removing harm to trees, no action agreed for 1 case, 2 under investigation.

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					Prosecution action was taken against 1 breach from last year.
19	Delivering this strategy	Adequate financial resources from council budgets and income generation.	Annual review of budget allocation and income forecast.	P&OS	<p>In addition to a small revenue budget the T&W team have a £500k capital budget for the sanitisation works at Western Park and the treatment of Ash Die Back during 2021/22 and 2022/23.</p> <p>Salaries budget reduction due to centralisation of employee insurance costs in 2020/21.</p> <p>All vehicle and plant expenditure budget held centrally by Fleet; annual budget £226k</p>
20	Delivering this strategy (cont)	Appropriately qualified, skilled, motivated and experienced staff	Certificates of competence and CPD for all staff.	T&W	<p>100% of operative's have achieved the required certificate of competence for the range of tasks undertaken.</p> <p>2021/22 – 117 refresher & technical training undertaken.</p> <p>The majority of operative training is a legal requirement as nearly every function requires certification, leading to some operatives holding as many as 50 certificates, many of which require regular refreshment, e.g. climbing at height, use of chain saw, pesticides use etc.</p>

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					All staff training and competency is reviewed as part of the quality conversations.
21	Delivering this strategy (cont)	The organisation, systems, depots, facilities and good quality equipment that our staff need.	Infrastructure in place to support T&W team in service delivery.	T&W	<p>Health and safety audit identified pressures on Beaumont Park Depot capacity, identified opportunities to relocate part of service to reduce pressure on available space.</p> <p>Beaumont Park Depot will lose the storage compound area to the Beaumont Leys park and ride site. A suitable replacement site is being sought.</p> <p>Ongoing replacement programme of chippers and chainsaw equipment.</p> <p>Ezytreev software system in place to manage tree stock.</p>
			Accreditation to the Arboricultural Association as an approved contractor.	T&W	<p>The Arb Approved Contractor programme is the only comprehensive accreditation scheme for Tree Surgery businesses in the UK. Every approved contractor has been thoroughly assessed and found to carry out tree work to the highest standard. Assuring customers of good quality tree care undertaken safely and efficiently.</p> <p>T&W team successfully passed the 2-day assessment by the Arboricultural Association in October 2021.</p>

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					Leicester City Council is one of only two LA to hold the AA accreditation in the country.
22	Delivering this strategy (cont)	Support from all appropriate sections of the council.	Awareness and understanding of the Tree Strategy within departments and with core clients.	Marketing & Comms	<p>Tree Strategy marketed with clients and council divisions, including Members.</p> <p>The document is available of the LCC website.</p> <p>Directing officers to online documents and reiterating policy on replacement planting and tree policy management guide.</p>

Trees & Woodlands Team Structure

