

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 2 March 2020

**Report author:** Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

**Title:** A Tree and Woodland Management Strategy for Watford

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 In line with the Council's adopted Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023, the Council, in association with Veolia have drafted a Tree and Woodland Management Strategy to assist the council in how it maintains, improves and increases its current stock of trees. Watford's trees within parks, woods, open spaces and the many tree-lined streets form an important component of our landscape, linking the urban area with the surrounding countryside and contribute to the town's long-term sustainability. They provide many benefits to people's wellbeing and for enhancing the quality of life in many ways including environmental, economic, social, amenity, healthy living, and biodiversity. This 10 year Management Strategy has been developed after consultation with stakeholders and partners and will give greater clarity to those responsible for our tree stock.

## 2.0 Risks

2.1 There are no defined risks identified.

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 To note the contents of the report

3.2 To formally adopt the strategy

### **Further information:**

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**Report approved by: Alan Gough - Group Head of Service for Environmental and Community Services**

## 4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 A Vision was developed as part of the process in developing this management strategy which was:-

“To ensure that Watford’s trees and woodlands are well planted, maintained, protected and managed in line with best arboricultural practice, to help create a more attractive, sustainable and healthy place to live, work and visit and critically taking into consideration, conservation, wildlife and the impact of climate change”.

This strategy is underpinned by the council’s Green Spaces Strategy (2013-2023) in creating a network of accessible, high quality and highly valued green spaces to enhance the quality of life for local communities in Watford and creating a more attractive, healthy place to live and work and visit. It also supports Watford Borough Council’s Corporate Policies.

The council is currently responsible for approximately 10,500 trees that are located on:

- Highway verges and street
- Parks and public open spaces; and
- Cemeteries and churchyards.

In addition, the council manages thousands of trees across 506 hectares of public open space including the woodlands of Whippendell Wood, Harebreaks Wood, Albans Wood and woodland areas in Oxhey Park, and Orchard Park.

Tree and woodland canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground when viewed from above, is 18.2% across the borough against the average tree canopy cover figure of 16% in England.

Whippendell Wood accounts for a large percentage of this cover but opportunities exist in the town for increasing this cover in other parts of the town, including parks and playing fields. A bold and progressive ambition would be to increase cover to 20%.

4.2 The council’s trees are managed by Veolia as part of the Parks and Open Spaces maintenance contract and a Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. The ownership of trees brings certain legal responsibilities and obligations as to how they should be managed. Watford Borough Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of trees, to fulfil its duty of care by delivering a programme of tree management aimed at keeping the public and property safe from harm, and by preserving the health and future sustainability of its tree stock.

4.3 The purpose of this strategy is therefore to strengthen our role, clarify our responsibilities and ensure good, consistent practice with regards to tree management. The strategy has identified a number of actions that we will be taking forward over the next 10 years.

4.4 Engagement and consultation was undertaken with a number of stakeholders including Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, The Friends of

Cassiobury Park as well as other local Friends Groups. Although feedback was limited, it was positive and all comments were included.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no new financial implications in the report, however any additional costs that are not currently contained in existing budgets will require growth bids as part of the budget process.

### 5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the Strategy.

### 5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered equalities and human rights are not affected.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

### 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Not applicable

### 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

### 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 The action plan includes regular safety inspections in line with the council's duty of care.

### 5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The adoption of a strategy to manage our trees and woodlands adds to the Council's wider sustainability agenda and Climate Change Emergency. The importance of retaining, managing and increasing our tree cover is essential to this wider agenda.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Tree and Woodland Management Strategy

## **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.