

Members are reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

TREE POLICY TASK & FINISH GROUP

THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2017 AT 14:00 HOURS
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE,
BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB

A G E N D A

1 NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman to advise/meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

3 WELCOME

4 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies.

3 - 6 **5 TREE POLICY TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

To note.

7 - 10 **6 SIMON SMITH**

For discussion.

7 **NICK GRAYSON**

For discussion.

8 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 30th November, 2pm, Council House.



DRAFT Tree Policy Task and Finish Group

Terms of Reference

August 2017

1 Background

1.1 On 4th April 2017, City Council passed the following motion:

Council notes that:

- Birmingham is recognised as a Green City and that the quality of its green spaces and trees has been used over a long period to attract inward investment.
- The City is part of the Global Biophilic Cities Network - a group of Cities that aspire to integrate green infrastructure into everyday life.
- Trees provide health and wellbeing benefits along with a positive contribution to the ecosystem in the form of flood alleviation, air cooling etc.
- Its policy on trees was last updated in 2009 but dates back to 2002.

Council notes the work already under way to develop a new tree policy for the City and in particular the intention to develop a more sophisticated method of valuing trees that might replace the current 2 for 1 policy.

Council also recognises that opposition party representatives will be engaged in the process of developing the new tree policy along with a task and finish scrutiny.

1.2 Following that, the Scrutiny Chairs agreed to establish a task and finish group on the forthcoming revised tree policy.

2 Outline

Aim

To support the development of a revised cross directorate tree policy for the "Birmingham Forest" that will reflect the environmental and development challenges and pressures placed upon it. Utilising knowledge of best practice from the UK and around the world particular focus will be given to building resilience within the tree stock and retention, removal and replacement policies.

Approach

Two sessions for members to engage in the development of the new policy via a discussion of:

- Current processes and what has worked/not worked;



- Best practice examples – what can we learn;
- Valuing our tree stock - Economic, Social, Ecological (Ecosystem services)
- Proposed changes and how these might work;
- Working arrangements – involvement of other departments and partners to design and deliver;
- Other ideas;
- Evidence (contributors are outlined in Appendix A) has already been taken from some witnesses about the health aspects of trees in relation to their impact on air quality as part of the scrutiny inquiry into 'The Impact of Poor Air Quality on Health'. The Scrutiny Report is due to be presented to City Council in September. In particular the report contains two recommendations R08 and R09:
 - That when planning for future transport infrastructure consideration should be given to the wider and longer-term benefits of keeping mature trees, especially in roadside locations where a buffering effect on air pollution is provided; and that appropriate protection for mature trees should be incorporated into any planning permission granted.
 - That planning for new developments should incorporate the planting of trees of a suitable species in the right place with careful selection of the species to be planted, density of placement of the trees and with provision for appropriate maintenance for a period after planting, as a condition of planning for new developments.

Follow up sessions may be required, and members may want to publish a short report summarising their involvement and recommendations.

A document pack of existing background information will be circulated to the group in advance of the inquiry sessions.

Timescales

Informal meeting of the group to discuss TOR	Early September
Session 1	Late September
Session 2	October

Outcomes

To support the development of a robust and deliverable tree policy.

Members are to agree if they wish to take a report to City Council.

Membership

The Task and Finish consists of eight members with places allocated according to political proportionality (i.e. 5 Labour, 2 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat) as follows:



Councillors Debbie Clancy, Roger Harmer, Keith Linnecor, Mary Locke, Ewan Mackey, Karen McCarthy, John O'Shea and Fiona Williams

The chair of the Task & Finish group will be appointed by the Scrutiny chairs. The Deputy Chair will be elected by the group members.

Officer Support

Rose Kiely, Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Research & Policy Officer

Simon Needle – Lead Support Officer

Key witnesses to include:

Birmingham City Council

- Planning (including BDP, DPD, Design Guide) (Uyen Phan Han/Richard Cowell)
- Highways (non-PFI), Parks management, Housing, Bereavement & Education (Simon Smith, Tree & Green Waste Recycling Manager)
- Councillors Ian Ward, Stewart Stacey and Lisa Trickett
- Ecological (Simon Needle to Lead)
- Green commission outputs (Nick Grayson, Climate & Sustainability Officer)
- Nick Barton, Amey – Highways PFI Contract



Appendix A – Contributors to the Scrutiny Inquiry on ‘The Impact of Poor Air Quality on Health’

Contributor	Organisation
Kevin Blacktop	Senior Research and Development Specialist, Network Rail
Kevin Chapman	Chair, West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport
Dr Chris Chiswell	Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Birmingham Children’s Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Nigel Cripps	Member of the public
Alec Dobney	Unit Head, Environmental Hazards & Emergencies Dept., CRCE, Public Health England
Karen Exley	Senior Environmental Public Health Specialist, Air Pollution & Climate Change Unit, CRCE, Public Health England
Jane Harding	Project Manager, Birmingham Trees for Life
David Harris	Transport Policy Manager, Birmingham City Council
Libby Harris	Birmingham Friends of the Earth
Adam Harrison	Senior Policy Officer, Transport for West Midlands
Dr Wayne Harrison	Assistant Director of Public Health, Birmingham City Council
Kris Jeffrey	Occupational Health, Network Rail
Andrea Lee	Healthy Air Campaigner, ClientEarth
Simon Needle	Birmingham Trees for Life
John Newson	Birmingham Friends of the Earth
Paul O’Day	Street Services Manager, Birmingham City Council
Patrick Power	Station Manager, New Street Station, Network Rail
Cllr Victoria Quinn	Birmingham City Council
Anne Shaw	Assistant Director, Transportation & Connectivity, Birmingham City Council
Cllr Lisa Trickett	Lead Cabinet Member for Reducing Air Pollution, Birmingham City Council
Mike Waters	Head of Policy & Strategy, Transport for West Midlands
Cllr Fiona Williams	Birmingham City Council
Mark Wolstencroft	Air Quality Lead in Environmental Protection, Birmingham City Council

Simon Smith, Tree & Green Waste Recycling Manager

Response to Key Lines of Enquiry

Responsibility for trees

- *Where does responsibility lie for trees on Council owned land?*

All trees on Parks, Housing, Education ,Birmingham Property Services and Transportation (None PFI) are managed by the Parks & Nature Conservation Tree Section.

Highway Trees are managed by Amey under a PFI contract.

- *Who is responsible for managing and maintaining these trees and how is the basis for carrying out this responsibility agreed covering trees in different parts of the Council eg Housing?*

See above.

- *Who is legally responsible for highway trees?*

N/A

- *Where does responsibility for the Tree Service sit and what does the Tree Service do?*

Trees that are not part of the Highway PFI contract are the responsibility of the Parks Tree Manager.

- *Who carries out the actual work of pruning and felling?*

None PFI work is carried out by Idverde.

PFI work is carried out by Amey.

- *Who supervises tree planting works carried out for example on the highways or as part of development schemes?*

Highway PFI – Amey

Development schemes – Planning Tree Officers

Other – Parks Tree Section

- *What is the budget and costs involved in pruning/felling/planting/removal of trees?*

Parks Tree Section - £950k (Parks, Housing, Education ,Birmingham Property Services and Transportation (None PFI)

Planting of trees

- *What is the current City Council policy for tree planting? What is the current target? What is the current level of canopy cover for Birmingham and should there be a target increase for canopy cover within Birmingham?*

There is no city wide policy for tree planting targets. Current canopy cover is 18%. We should have a target of at least 25%.

- *What process do we use for identifying and installing tree planting areas within development zones such as highways infrastructure, planning/regeneration schemes and parks or public open spaces?*

Parks Tree Section – Tree Officers liaise with Birmingham Trees for Life to identify sites and species selection. Tree Officers also plant a small number of trees annually.

- *Do we have a recommended tree species list that can be used to identify the right species to be planted in particular places/where specific conditions exist.*

No, I don't think we should have a list as each situation should be considered on its merits.

- *Do we have a set of standards or designs for potential tree planting locations covering issues such as, minimum rooting volumes, incorporation of rainwater harvesting within hard landscape situations, cable and services routing and canopy space needed for different species?*

No

Monitoring tree stock

- *What is the current method of valuation of tree stock and the relationship to retention/replacement?*

We do not have one. However, the Parks Tree Section use CAVAT for amenity value and ITree for Eco-benefit evaluation.

- *Do we monitor changes in tree stock quantities and if so how?*

The Parks Tree Section (PTS) uses the POPI database.

- *How is the current tree stock composition (age, condition and species) assessed? Do we have targets for what an ideal composition would be?*

An assessment is carried out using the dataset. No agreed city targets but the PTS is working towards the Frank Santamour targets of (1) plant no more than 10% of any species, (2) no more than 20 % of any genus, and (3) no more than 30 % of any family.

- *Is information about the distribution and management of the tree stock widely available and is it available to the public?*

The PTS data is available on the Open Universities Treezilla webpage.

- *Do we have a tree strategy which managers can refer to and that can be updated as required to reflect changes to the city's tree stock and new thinking?*

There is a policy that was written in 2009 but it is now out of date.

Management and maintenance of trees

- *Can you explain how the Annual Highway Tree Pruning Programme is drawn up, and how it is agreed?*

N/A

- *What data does the council keep on Council owned trees, how is this data gathered and how is it maintained? Is this data used to determine priorities? Can it be used to deal with enquiries from Councillors and the public?*

All trees managed by the PTS are recorded on the POPI database. The trees are inspected by a Tree Officer every five years. An basic annual inspection is carried out by the Duty Holder. This is as per the agreed Management system setup by Dr David Lonsdale following the deaths caused by a falling city tree in Kings Heath (1998). All enquiries are recorded on POPI and remedial work orders are linked to the enquiries.

- *How is the planned programme of work communicated to local councillors and to the public?*

PTS - Notices for major tree works are sent to Cllr's and discussed with stake holders such as Parks Friends of Groups.

- *Do the public or local councillors have an opportunity to be involved prior to the work being carried out?*

PTS -If they have expressed an interest or any work is potentially contentious.

- *Who decides which roads should be included and what criteria are used to select the roads to be included?*

N/A

- *Who is responsible for undertaking this work?*

Not sure what this question is referring to?

- *Can you explain the criteria used for carrying out other urgent remedial tree works and pruning as necessary throughout the year?*

Trees that are identified as being dead, diseased or dying have an order raised to rectify the problem. Trees that are identified as being the cause of indirect structural damage to property (on the balance of probabilities) have to be removed. Emergency works are carried out by the Service Provider who offer a 2hr call out service.

- *Who deals with public enquiries about trees and what is the process for dealing with these enquiries?*

PTS – Call are recorded by the call centre or online and are then delegated to the area Tree Officer through POPI.

- *What happens where there are requests for tree removal or tree pruning from members of the public. How are these requests assessed ?*

The area Tree Officers assess if the tree requires pruning or felling.

- *What happens when calls are received out of office hours or when there is an emergency to do with a dangerous tree?*

PTS – Yes, all emergency calls are responded to within two hours. There is always a Tree Officer on standby to deal with emergency issues.

- *What is the process for handling enquiries from councillors?*

PTS – The enquiry is entered on POPI and the area Tree Officer responds.

Controlling activities of contractors working for developers, utilities or the highway authority near to trees

- *What measures does the City Council take to prevent damage to trees caused by works near to trees? How are these measures monitored and enforced?*

PTS – In Parks the Park Managers liaise with the Tree Officers when trees may be affected.

Nick Grayson, Climate Change and Sustainability Manager

Thoughts on the Terms of Reference:

- The most successful and desirable cities in the world can all be measured by their green credentials- not lip-service- but making that centre-stage of their identity and USP. This gives confidence to investors. So what builds is an upwards spiral as the vital building block is not the economy per-se but the engagement of the citizens and businesses- so the vision is owned widely across the city not just the municipal institution. The role of the municipal institution is one of leadership.
- A 5 year study based at the University of Birmingham, called Liveable Cities (<http://liveablecities.org.uk/>) has researched all the essentially qualities and necessary conditions that need to be in place to craft a liveable city. Using systems thinking modelling it has been possible to reveal how inter-connected and inter-dependent all the various agendas and city challenges are.
- One principle finding has been how the solution going forward for many of these 'wicked' problems- connects back to the vital importance of nature in cities. Modern science has proved new tools such as ecosystem services- where our human dependency on nature can be made visible. And the new accountancy methodologies of natural capital can convert these benefits into multiple values.
- These tools and approaches start to show just how important a role trees and green space in cities plays.
- We need to move from a position whereby the environment in cities is seen as the sole responsibility of one party, one interest group; and seen as a financial liability. This current 'business-as-usual' approach needs challenging; and now is the time to challenge that. We are advancing new tools and new models that we want to trial in the city that will advance this cause; and move us closer to the point where those that 'benefit' – contribute. Not through legislation but because they are able to see the business case.
- The city's trees will be safe once we reach this new point of understanding.

