

## **KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY**

### **Responsibility for trees**

Where does responsibility lie for trees on Council owned land?

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?

Who is legally responsible for highway trees?

BCC. The Birmingham Highways Management and Maintenance Service (BHMMS) contract with Amey transfers maintenance and management responsibilities to the Amey who also indemnify the authority against losses associated with the management and maintenance of trees.

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

Who carries out the actual work of pruning and felling?

For highway tree maintenance and management Amey as part of the BHMMS. Other felling and pruning works are undertaken to highway trees as part of projects and developments with the consent of the authority.

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

Highway tree planting is supervised by Amey as part of tree replacement programmes agreed with the authority.

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

For highway trees this is dependent on the service need to comply with the BHMMS contract

### **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?

Highway trees removed under the BHMMS contract are replaced on a 1 for 1 basis.

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?

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.

The BHMMS service to use a base list to replace trees from, this is variable depending on availability of supply. There is also a 'Prohibited Species' list that the BHMMS service may not replant in the highway. The use of tree species does come down to professional judgement as the number tree species available is extensive.

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?

The BHMMS develop these on a case by case basis as needed.

### **Monitoring tree stock**

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

The BHMMS service does not use a valuation method.

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

The BHMMS service is obligated to maintain highway tree numbers for the term of the contract. This achieved through the electronic inventory.

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

This is updated as part of the cyclical inspection programme and reviewed in the electronic management system. The BHMMS has no composition targets.

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

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 BHMMS tree strategy.

### **Management and maintenance of trees**

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

The Annual Highway Tree Pruning Programme is cyclical and undertakes works to 20% of the highway tree stock by geographical area, this is currently 8 wards per year across the city. The works undertaken is identified as part of the annual survey cycle which follows the same rotation. These programmes are reviewed and agreed by the authority's highways officers

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?

The BHMMS operates an electronic tree management system for highway trees. Data is gathered electronically as part of an on site survey, is updated by cyclical re-surveys and is used to answer enquiries and queries from all sources.

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

As part of the BHMMS highway maintenance programme information. Or upon request from any source.

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

Involvement in BHMMS programmes is limited as these are driven by the contract and the condition of the trees. Feedback and suggestions are considered but may not be implemented.

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

The BHMMS service determine the programme. Highway trees are maintained on a cyclical geographical basis by ward. All highway trees in the wards to be maintained will have work undertaken to bring them to the standards required by the BHMMS contract.

Who is responsible for undertaking this work?

The BHMMS with a direct and also subcontract workforce

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

Where highway trees managed by the BHMMS are concerned are found to be causing danger, obstruction or damage that requires maintenance before the next cyclical programme. Where these are of an emergency in nature, the BHMMS will attend and make safe within 1 hour, temporarily repair within 1 day and full y repair within 28 days.

### **Street Trees**

What is the City Council policy on replacing trees on the highway that have been removed for whatever reason?

Highway trees included within the BHMMS are replaced on a 1 for 1 basis.

What is the City Council policy in relation to individual trees on streets that may have outgrown their location and are causing damage to footways or the road surface and may need pruning or replacing? How do we identify these?

These trees are identified as part of cyclical tree surveys, pre-works surveys as part of BHMMS highway works, as part of routine highway inspections and as part of enquiry interrogations

How many street trees have been removed for each of the past 5 years and how many replacement trees have been planted?

June 2016 to May 2017 1638 trees removed – Planting in winter 2017 to replace these trees.

June 2015 to May 2016 1168 trees removed – 1168 trees replanted winter 2016/16

June 2014 to May 2015 1235 trees removed – 1235 trees replanted winter 2015/16

June 2013 to May 2014 1639 trees removed – 1639 trees replanted winter 2014/15

June 2012 to May 2013 1399 trees removed – 1399 trees replanted winter 2013/14

Can you explain some of the constraints which arise around planting trees in the highway?

The significant challenge to planting trees in the highway is the existence of suitable sites. Previous works to remove verges and improve parking have left many areas with poor replant opportunities. Works to provide planting opportunities in schemes in many areas did not provide suitable provision for trees to grow with poor and limited soils, and works to prevent tree roots affecting surfaces with concrete rings or similar generally lead to tree failure as the trees could not grow the roots required to survive. Services and their locations are a challenge in some cases preventing replanting, but replacement in existing locations can generally be achieved as the services avoid the existing trees. The creation of new footway vehicle crossings removes many planting locations especially where these extend to the width of the property boundary, and link up to remove any verge or kerb protected footway. New developments do not generally provide highway trees or options to plant.

Who is responsible for carrying out tree replanting and how is the work monitored?

The BHMMS service is responsible for the planting and work monitoring. This is reported to and overseen by the authority.

Are planting schemes as part of highway improvement projects designed to maximise opportunities for new tree planting? If so, can you explain the process for how this happens?

Highway improvement projects are not a part of the BHMMS service.

Are there any controls in place to ensure that a balance is maintained between incorporating new trees and retaining existing trees and how is this monitored?

### **Trees and new developments**

When a new development is being planned and designed in the city how is consideration of trees within the design scheme, such as retaining suitable trees, identifying tree replacement sites and numbers and appropriate species factored in at the start of the design process?

Are the relevant officers within the Council with the knowledge and expertise in this area included as part of the design process and in particular, are they included where tree works or removals are included in the design proposals?

Where design proposals require tree works or removals how are these approved?

Is any advice taken where the City Council is identifying sites for disposal prior to development to ensure that consideration can be given about whether there are trees on site worthy of retention so that appropriate action can be taken to protect mature trees prior to the land being cleared in preparation for development where necessary?

Trees require an adequate supply of good quality, well aerated, moist and importantly uncompacted soil in order to grow and thrive. Suitable amounts of healthy soil which would facilitate tree planting is often not available in urban environments. New developments present a potential opportunity for tree planting but they need to wherever possible backfill with soil as the default material and to use grass as a default surface as opposed to alternatives such as asphalt (unless there is an engineering need to). What would the implications be of including this in policy?

### **Impact of footway crossings**

Can you please provide data about the numbers of footway crossings installed each year and do you have any data about the number of trees removed to enable footway crossings?

Is there any information available or estimation about the number of trees damaged during construction of footway crossings which would have implications for the future health and stability of those trees? What is the current process for managing this?

### **Planting of trees in the footway**

What is the current planning policy which governs the planting of trees in the footway on new developments? Can you tell us about the impact of this policy on the planting of trees in the footway in terms of the numbers of trees being planted in footways?

### **Potential conflict between planting trees in footway and street works**

Is there a potential conflict between street works and planting trees in the footway? Can you please explain the current system for managing street works and what controls are in place to limit the potential impact of street works on tree planting and maintaining mature trees?

### **Off-street parking and dropped kerb vehicle crossings**

Finding a balance between the need for vehicle access and off-street parking provision in urban areas and tree preservation is not easy. What does the current planning guidance say about how requests for a dropped vehicle crossing should be assessed?

What happens where the verge contains a tree which would need to be removed for the dropped kerb to be installed? How would such a request be assessed? Can we have the data on the numbers of trees removed for crossings over the last 5 years? On what basis have these trees been replaced?

Are there alternative solutions which could be utilised but aren't currently being used to retain trees in some of these situations?

Would you say that the current process enables us to achieve an adequate balance between the competing aspects of highway development and tree preservation?

Is the increasing move towards the electrification of cars and their charging needs likely to have a big impact on demand for off-street parking and charging stations within the highway? If that is the case, is this being taken into account when considering any future changes to the parking policy and the tree policy?

### **Dealing with public enquiries about trees**

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

For highway trees the BHMMS deals with enquiries. The enquiries are logged within the BHMMS electronic management system, investigated by the Arboriculture asset team and a response is provided from the system by the BHMMS customer service team.

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

For highway trees the request for tree removal are assessed as to whether there is a need or case for removal as the tree is either unsafe or causing damage to the network or private property that cannot be removed or resolved by pruning or other works. Tree planting requests are recorded, but as the BHMMS is only replacing trees removed as part of the BHMMS are only considered if trees are not able to be replanted in the original or adjacent site.

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

For highway trees these calls are logged out of hours via online systems and the authority's control centre and any emergency is passed to the BHMMS incident response teams and if appropriate the BHMMS arboriculture call out teams. There is a 365 day 24 hour call out service as part of the BHMMS for highway trees.

What is the process for handling enquiries from councillors?

For highway trees the BHMMS logs and investigates councillor enquiries within the BHMMS electronic management system as with enquiries from any source. There is a dedicated resource within the customer service team to respond to councillor enquiries.

### **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?

