

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE	PLANNING COMMITTEE	13 SEPTEMBER 2017	6
ARBORICULTURE AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

Tree planting within their landscape setting is a very important element of the character of the urban and rural areas of the Borough. There are a significant number of extant tree preservation orders. In addition, policy requirements in respect of planting within new development is set out in statute and through the Local Plan. However, the Council does not have a comprehensive policy position and approach to tree planting. A Strategy would enable the relevance of these issues to be fully considered and specific policies, guidelines and technical requirements to be set out. This would have a very beneficial impact for the Borough, the Council and officers engaged in these particular issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Committee authorise the commencement and preparation of a strategy for arboriculture and associated landscape issues and that reports be brought to Committee, at the appropriate time, for updates and for the making of decisions in respect of the development of the Strategy.
2. That Committee nominate a sub-committee of planning committee, to form a working group to assist in the development of the Strategy in collaboration with officers and that the group meets at the appropriate times to progress its development.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	✓
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	✓
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	✓

REPORT

One of the key characteristics of the Borough is the wealth of the tree planting in both the urban areas and rural landscapes. The contribution and issue of trees as key component of the built environment is usually referred to as urban forestry. Primarily, the planning service deals with both the protection and management of trees, through preservation orders and in securing the provision of tree planting in the context of new development.

Planning strategy, in the form of specific policies are contained within the Local Plan. In the emerging plan, Policy ENV 1 specifically refers to the protection of landscape features, largely by way of tree preservation orders. The policy also refers to the securing of tree planting and landscape features in the context of new development.

Tree planting is specifically endorsed as a national policy and indeed it is a statutory requirement to seek to secure the protection and planting of trees on the context of new development, where this is appropriate.

Since the 1950's tree preservation orders have and continue to be made across the Borough to protect individual, groups or areas of woodland. From this perspective, such protection involves this Council, as any works to protected trees require specific consent of the Council, which is usually a delegated matter to officers. From this perspective, there is a considerable management role in ensuring that trees are protected and any works undertaken are done so in the proper manner to secure the long term health of a tree(s) in addition to questions of maintaining value from the visual amenity aspect. A major aspect of protecting trees is where new development is proposed that may impact on preserved specimens. Many of the regeneration schemes that have been implemented include significant tree planting.

STRATEGY

In the spring of this year, an event was held for councillors to consider the importance and issues in relation to trees across the Borough. The suggestion that a strategy was appropriate was discussed and endorsed as a matter of principle. The preparation of a strategy would enable an overview to be taken as to what was required in developing an approach to this element of developing green infrastructure.

The purpose of the Strategy would be based on the following objectives.

- To fully understand and appreciate the statutory and national planning policy position with regard to arboriculture
- To fully understand the importance of tree planting and associated landscape within the urban and rural areas – urban forestry
- To protect the tree cover that is already present
- To potentially provide greater tree planting across the Borough
- To agree a consistent and comprehensive approach to securing tree planting within new development and in the case of (for example) highways.
- Providing policy and guidance in respect of planting requirements for use by developers
- Confirmation of technical standards and practices that will be applied in the context of tree protection e.g. British Standards
- Procedural matters including the making of tree preservation orders and the involvement of Committee where objections are made to provisional orders.
- Funding opportunities and implications for tree planting

This particular strategy would follow the format of those produced for Economic Development and Built Heritage and would set out legislation, practice, relevant issues and include an action plan for future implementation. It would tie in closely with the Local Plan and assist in the development of its policies. The development of the strategy would also involve other sections of the Council with which the regeneration team engage in respect of tree and landscape related issues.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

In the development of the previous strategies a small 'support group' of councillors have been included to assist in the work, scoping and guiding the process, working alongside the relevant officers. This has proved very useful.

It is suggested, therefore that Committee appoints a small working group (4 members would be appropriate) who can assist in the process. This should not be an onerous task but would be beneficial for those who have a direct interest in the subject and also act as a sounding board for officers in the development of the Strategy.

CONCLUSION

As outlined in the report tree planting and the protection of trees is a vitally important aspect of the planning portfolio. Up and until the present time, there has not been any approach to comprehensively consider this issue. It is considered, therefore, that such a strategy will set out clearly the Council's position and ambitions with regard to this aspect of developing green infrastructure. It would assist developers and officers by setting out the council's policies, procedures and expectations in respect of tree and landscape related issues.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The Strategy would be prepared within the existing resources of the Council
Legal	None directly applicable
Community Safety	None directly applicable
Human Rights and Equalities	The scheme relates directly to issues of broad environmental significance that would, benefit all sections of the community in equal measure.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	The Strategy is aimed at having a positive impact of the character and appearance of this Borough.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None directly relevant

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Paul Drinnan	01253 658434	21 st August 2017

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
None		