

Report of the Director of City Strategy

City Tree Strategy – Scoping Report.

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides the revised scoping report for a City Tree Strategy. The strategy would be applicable to all trees and woodland, both public and private, within the City of York's authority.

2.0 Background

2.1 Trees play a vital and multifaceted role within cities, villages and the countryside. They contribute to the setting of the city and character of villages; they can be landmarks in themselves, and soften the urban built environment. They improve the quality of lives, and places and feeling of well being. They also have a role in our chemical environment as absorbers of air pollutants and CO², producers of oxygen and providers of shade and cool areas through transpiration. They make a positive contribution to reducing CO² emissions and their absorption of water and binding of the soil retain ground water and reduce run off. Trees, therefore, help to mitigate against climate change and help us to adapt to the changing climate we are already experiencing. There is a need for a clear vision for the development and maintenance of York's City Forest (a term used here to encompass all the trees within the City of York).

2.2 An initial scoping report was presented to the Leaders Meeting on 3rd August 2007 at which it was considered that;

'the review report scope was too wide and in some areas too restrictive. The report should be restricted to:

Preserve overall numbers of trees with less emphasis on specific individual site replacement of trees in all cases;

Recognise the necessity (with good reason) for trees to be removed on occasion; and

Identify potential areas for planting to create additional visible areas.'

This review has been drafted in light of these comments.

3.0 Consultation

3.1 The following council officers have been consulted in the preparation of this scoping report: Landscape Architect, Arboricultural Officer, Sustainability Officer, Head of Parks and Open Spaces, and Ass. Director for Planning and Sustainable Development,.

3.2 The preparation of the strategy will require a much wider consultation which will include the following:

All council Directorates
Forestry Commission (Regional Forestry Strategy)
Natural England
Conservation Voluntary groups and other interested parties

4.0 Options

4.1 Option A.

No change to the current way the council manages the trees it has control and influence of.

4.2 Option B.

Production and implementation of a council tree strategy.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 Option A.

The absence of a long-term strategy for the management and protection of the city's trees will mean the probable loss of tree cover within built-up areas and ad hoc replacement. City ambitions to increase tree cover and the amount of woodland are unlikely to be met. It will be more difficult for the city to respond to the challenge of adaptation to and the mitigation of climate change.

5.2.0 Option B.

The Regional Forestry Strategy for Yorkshire and The Humber states that the York area currently has one of the lowest percentage tree cover of UK cities (3.7%) i.e. below the national average which is 7% or 5.5 hectares per 1000 people. Nonetheless it has an active regime of management, protection, new planting and monitoring of its own tree stock.

5.2.1 Annex A for the current system of management of trees. However, there is no Strategy for Trees in York to support the work of the local authority and to increase the city's tree stock. There has recently been a request to create an "off-set" woodland in York; Parks and Open space Services will be soon launch a carbon off-set tree planting initiative to complement the existing tree donation scheme. In principal this is a good proposal, however it needs to be set within a wider strategy for the enhancement of the City Forest.

5.2.2 The adoption of a Tree Strategy which clearly identifies the city's vision and objectives will make it easier for the council to:

- a. Streamline and improve the efficiency of internal council practices and procedures for tree management.
- b. Increase the overall number of trees and area of woodland whilst having a coherent and logical reason for the removal of trees when necessary and a managed replacement planting regime.
- c. Increase the role of planning through supplementary guidance to achieve better Tree Protection procedures on development sites.
- d. Identify land for the creation of new community woodland and secure funding for associated tree planting.
- e. Agree a common inspection and maintenance regime
- f. Work in partnership with other agencies to achieve outcomes.
- g. Identify and achieve outside funding including sponsorship.
- h. To fulfil the local authority's duty to respond to the Regional Forestry Strategy for Yorkshire and The Humber and aid the implementation of its objectives.
- i. Contribute to the LDF process

5.2.3 Content of the proposed Tree Strategy

Vision

To include the city's aspiration for tree coverage in the long term; how will it manage existing stock; how it will encourage/facilitate the planting of new trees for the future.

Evidence

Baseline data and qualitative information on trees and woodlands within the city of York area on which to formulate and monitor an action plan.

Targets

The Strategy will set short, medium term and aspirational targets. The final sets of targets are important as they provide the direction in which tree policy and procedures will be progressing and provide a basis for actions in the future.

Action Plan

The Action Plan will specify procedures and means of implementation relating to the split between control and influence of tree management in the city. It will set clear timescales, staff and resource implications and lines of responsibility for each action. It will also identify actions and measures that will cut across both areas of control and influence such as communication and awareness raising. See Annex B for examples.

5.2.4 If approved the Tree Strategy will be produced on the following timetable:

March 11th 2008 – Scoping report to Executive Meeting.

July 2008 – Consultation draft of Strategy and Action Plan for approval by Executive

September/October 2008 – Consultation

December 2008 – Strategy and Action Plan approved and implementation starts.

December 2009 – First review of the Strategy and Action Plan.

6.0 Corporate Objectives

6.1 A strategy to actively manage trees and support tree planting in the City would positively contribute to the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Direction statement:

'We will seek to place environmental sustainability at the heart of everything we do.'

Ten Priorities:

Improve the actual and perceived appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from council activities and encourage, empower and promote others to do the same.

6.2 It will also contribute to the work of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan for the council and the Climate Change Strategy for the city.

7.0 Implications

7.1 The production of the Strategy and Action Plan can be achieved with existing staff resources; however actions proposed by the Strategy once approved may have wider implications. These will be considered when the Strategy and Action Plan is recommended for approval.

Financial - None

Human Resources (HR) - None

Equalities - None

Legal - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Information Technology (IT) – GIS updating.

Property - None

Other – None

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 Possible staff vacancies during the preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan causing delays.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 Members are asked to approve Option B.

Reason: To provide a strategic approach to tree management and future planting within the City of York.

10.0 Contact Details

Author:

Author's name

Title

Dept Name

Tel No.

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Michael Slater

Assistant director

Planning & Sustainable Development

551300

Report Approved

tick

Date *Insert Date*

Co-Author's Name

Title

Dept Name

Tel No.

Esther Priestley

Landscape architect

Planning & Sustainable Development

551341

Co-Author's Name

Title

Dept Name

Tel No.

Harvey Lowson

Arboricultural officer

Planning & Sustainable Development

551316

Report Approved

tick

Date *Insert Date*

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

City of York Tree Strategy and Action Plan – Scoping report. 3rd August 2008 Leaders Meeting.

Annexes

Annex A. Current tree management arrangements.

Annex B. Examples of possible actions that could be included in the Action Plan.