

## REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2008

### TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture

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#### Summary

This report briefly describes the aims of Medway Council's tree management policy document and describes how it ties in with Medway Council's core values and strategic priorities.

#### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The tree management policy is consistent with Government guidelines on tree management and protection, arboricultural best practice and policies that concern trees contained within the Medway Local Plan.
- 1.2 The policy delivers Medway Council's core values in the following ways:
  - 1.2.1 **Putting our customers at the centre of everything we do** – This policy seeks to ensure the Council effectively communicates and engages with the local community over trees, providing clarity over why decisions and actions are taken.
  - 1.2.2 **Giving value for money** – This policy aims to ensure damage to trees is minimised, that proper and timely advice on tree care minimises the need for maintenance works to trees in the first place and that essential works are undertaken by competent people at a competitive rate thereby targeting resources where they are needed.
  - 1.2.3 The overall aims of the Tree Policy are to ensure the safety of Medway Council's trees; maintain and encourage biodiversity; maintain and improve landscape quality; and through these elements, improve the quality of life for

residents and visitors now and in the future. In doing so the following strategic priorities of Medway Council can, in part be achieved through this policy. ***A clean and green environment, Safer communities, Children and young people having the best start in life, People travelling easily and safely in Medway and Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration.***

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. Medway Council has a dual role to play in tree management. Firstly, as an owner it has a duty of care to manage its own trees in a safe and healthy condition while maximising their amenity value. Secondly, the Council has a variety of regulatory roles for example under the Highways Act, to ensure trees do not cause a danger to users of the highway, and under the Town and Country Planning Act for the preservation of valuable trees with tree preservation orders and the consideration trees through the development control process.
- 2.2. The tree management policy sets out the principles by which the Council will approach its role with specific regards to customer requests for service, the management of its own trees, dangerous privately owned trees, problematic high hedges, protected trees and trees affected by development.
- 2.3. The policy follows best practice in the arboricultural industry and no substantial changes are being made from the existing informal policies adopted by tree officers and used for a significant number of years.
- 2.4. Officers have considered the diversity implications of this policy and concluded that it follows the same basic principles outlined in government guidelines and industry best practice on tree care, so there are no obvious reasons to suggest this policy should lead to any differential impact.
- 2.5. The Portfolio holder for Community Services asked for this tree management policy. The policy document has been shared with the Portfolio Holder and has his approval.
- 2.6. A Diversity Impact Assessment screening has been carried out on the policy. It was found that the policy does not favour any particular social groups and that there are no differential impacts on local communities. The screening form is attached at Appendix 2.

## **3. Financial and legal implications**

- 3.1. There are no financial or legal implications specifically arising from this policy.

## **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1. Members are asked to recommend the tree management policy to Cabinet for approval on 16 December 2008,

### **Lead officer contact**

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### **Background papers**

None