

# Tree Strategy Working Group Update, June 2018

Update by Councillor Mrs J Tavener  
Presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) – Thursday 12th July

## 1. The Tree Strategy

- 1.1 The purpose of the Tree Strategy is to protect our trees and care for them properly. We also need to make sure we pass on a legacy of an attractive and healthy tree population for future generations, by ensuring that we plant new trees to replace those that have died or been removed. (*Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Tree Strategy February 2015*)
- 1.2 Trees are a vital part of our natural life support system; cleaning the air we breathe, moderating climatic extremes and contributing to the health and well-being of the community.
- 1.3 There are three parts to the strategic Tree Strategy:
  - **Action Plan** for delivery of the Aims of the Tree Strategy 2014 – 2019
  - **Tree Policies** Tree Protection, Tree Planting and Tree Care
  - **Tree Guidance Notes** The aims of the guidance notes are to provide information and advice on the management and care of trees, setting out optional standards and how management decisions will be made.

## 2. Report Update

- 2.1 The Working Group has looked at the existing Tree Strategy and how it fits in with the changing environment, increased housing, changes to town layout and changes to infrastructure, in particular the A14.
- 2.2 There is evidence of the importance of having a tree warden base. To create this, all Towns and Parish Councils were invited to establish a tree warden within their Council. A large number of the Town and Parish Councils now have a tree warden, but it is unclear how they will link in with the District or what the duties of Town/Parish tree wardens are. With regard to Planning Applications, without a tree warden Town and Parish Councils are reliant on the HDC Tree Officer or Arboriculture Officer is in agreement with the tree works but without knowledge of the local area needs.
- 2.3 A tree warden should be invited to inspect planned development and landscaping as well as making sure the tree planting has taken place. Tree wardens could address local concerns and contact the relevant department on behalf of the Town or Parish Council.
- 2.4 Trees are significant to our everyday life, providing oxygen and improving our air quality. This means that it is important to plant more mature trees where there are new developments or an industrial area. (Alconbury Weald is a good example)
- 2.5 The way in which trees are planted in an urban setting has to be considered. A city street with a heavy flow of traffic and surrounded by high

rise buildings can become a '*street canyon*' in which pollutants are trapped and the level of air pollution rises. Including trees earlier in the development process helps counter act pollution involved in the construction process and give an earlier sense of completion.

- 2.6 Inclusion of trees in landscaping and open spaces will provide a sense of well-being and can improve mental health. Studies have shown that patients with views of trees out of their windows heal faster and with fewer complications. Children with ADHD show fewer symptoms when they have access to nature. Exposure to trees and nature aids concentration by reducing mental fatigue. A recent study by the University of Exeter has indicated that respiratory illnesses such as asthma can be improved by the expansion of tree cover in polluted areas including urban neighbourhoods.
- 2.7 Whilst the Council no longer has a Tree Warden Co-ordinator we feel it would be best to continue with the working group to: endorse the role of the tree warden at the next Parish Conference, introduce tree wardens to Town and Parish Councils without a tree warden and introduce networking and training for tree wardens.
- 2.8 The existing five year Tree Strategy plan ends in 2019, and there is a need for it to continue. The Working Group suggest a second five year plan to update the existing plan as well as run alongside local plans including Huntingdonshire Local Plan with a review every 18 months. If the Council does not have the necessary resources to fulfil these aims then we recommend that additional resourcing is provided.