

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

| SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE |                                      |
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| <b>Review:</b>                        | <b>Tree Asset Management</b>         |
| <b>Link Officer/s:</b>                | <b>Dale Rowbotham / Mark Nozedar</b> |
| <b>Action Plan Agreed:</b>            | <b>March 2023</b>                    |

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

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| <b>Recommendation 1:</b>  | <b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) refreshes its tree and woodland management policy and procedures, and as part of this:</b>   |
|   | <b>a) Reaffirms its mandatory (minimum) service requirements and where work is prioritised (e.g. high-use public areas).</b>   |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>   |
| Date:   | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | Publication of the key message that essential maintenance works to maintain public safety of trees and woodland is our high priority, with other service requests itemised with an appropriate priority rating and timescale.  |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Once introduced as policy residents will have a detailed understanding of service requirements of the authority and how work is prioritised.   |
|   | <b>b) Reflects within it the realistic cycle of essential maintenance of the Borough's tree stock (and that this be updated as and when required).</b>   |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |

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| Date:   | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | Maintenance timescales reflective of the current service availability will be delivered within the policy  |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Realistic timescales regarding SBC tree stock maintenance are clearly visible within the revised policy.   |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Once introduced as policy residents will have a detailed understanding of maintenance timescales of the authority.   |
|   | <b>c) Emphasises a key message throughout this review regarding the planting of the correct species of tree in the right places (helping to minimise future maintenance requirements and revenue costs).</b>   |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |
| Date:   | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | The revised policy will highlight that the planting of the correct species of tree relevant to the appropriate area is vital in ensuring future maintenance requirements are aligned with resource.  |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Key links to the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-2032 and detail on how we will identify the right tree based on area.   |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | This is currently happening and positive links between a number of departments and the arboriculture team continue to grow. This approached, highlighted in the policy, will ensure residents are aware that future tree planting will not impact the ongoing maintenance of the rest of the tree stock.   |
|   | <b>d) Ensures the updated policy and procedures are published on relevant Council platforms, with an appropriate communications plan to</b>  |

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|   | <b>ensure the local population can read its content and understand what future service it can expect.</b>  |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>   |
| Date:   | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | Revision to ensure a ‘readable’ policy and work with the corporate communication team to ensure publication of key messages along with links to the policy within relevant areas of the corporate website.   |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer. Communications are aware of the requirement to disseminate the information, and this will be dealt with in line with the council’s communications plan and platforms. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Communications contacted to plan dissemination. Communications plan to follow upon completion of final draft to policy.  |
|   | <b>e) Utilises both print (e.g. Stockton News) and electronic mediums to raise awareness of the current issues around tree management within the Borough, including responsibilities in relation to trees on private land.</b>   |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>   |
| Date:   | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | Ensure a full communications plan is in place to start once formal approval of the revised policy has been achieved.   |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | As above, communications plan will be drafted upon final draft of policy being approved.   |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Effective communications of policy and key information.  |

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| <b>Recommendation 2:</b>  | <b>Tree Preservation Order (TPO) planning procedures be reiterated to all SBC Ward Councillors and relayed to residents periodically via the Council's multiple communication mechanisms (emphasising the enforcement action that can be taken if processes are not followed).</b>  |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>  |
| Date:   | August 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | Development of an easy read document, incorporating some key Q&As, relating to Tree Preservation Orders and potential enforcement action which can be shared through members bulletins. A more detailed webpage to supplement the easy read document to be proposed alongside.  |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Easy read document specific to TPOs and updated information on corporate website to provide more detailed information.  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | Due to the delays in the service review being complete and the knock-on delay with recruitment this was not complete until early 2024. An easy read document has been drafted and agreed with the arboriculture team and planning (see <b>Appendix 2</b> ) and is ready to be made available to all SBC ward Councillors. A revised process in works approvals has also been approved and has been introduced in order to speed up decisions relating to residents work requests to TPOs. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>  |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | The easy read will ensure residents will have access to some of the most regular questions received by the authority on TPOs and the introduction of the new authorisation process will help speed up resident requests.  |

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| <b>Recommendation 3:</b>           | <b>Regular engagement continues between the SBC Tree and Woodland Management Service and other relevant Council departments (in particular the SBC Environment, Leisure and Green Infrastructure Team) regarding environmental projects and tree planting maintenance.</b>   |
| Responsibility:                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |
| Date:                              | October 2023   |
| Agreed Action:                     | Continue to meet and review projects and funding opportunities. Key links already in place between Tree and Woodland Management Service and the Environment Leisure and Green infrastructure team, planning team will look to be strengthened for shared project deliveries. |
| Agreed Success Measure:            | Successful delivery of environmental projects and tree planting, whilst ensuring maintenance is not impacted.  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024): | The work on this action started during the scrutiny process and was further strengthened after the process when plans were being developed for the winter tree planting schedule. Greater relationships have also been developed with  |

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|   | planning and insurance with a lot more dialogue happening between the teams. This has resulted in additional improvements being made to TPO authorisations and also inspections relating to insurance claims.                             |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>1 (Fully Achieved)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Ongoing maintenance pressures of the council's tree stock is not being added to by ensuring the correct species of tree is planted. Responses to residents requests are being provided a lot quicker whilst also freeing up officer time. |

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| <b>Recommendation 4:</b>  | <b>A detailed business case be produced for consideration by SBC management regarding a potential reinforcement team within Grounds Maintenance to undertake smaller scale routine maintenance, thereby allowing the existing Tree and Woodland Management Service specialist staff to focus on more technical operations.</b>             |
| Responsibility:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |
| Date:   | May 2023   |
| Agreed Action:  | A detailed business case paper to be prepared for discussion at CMT.   |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | Report to CMT.   |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | Due to the team not being fully staffed and the service review was still ongoing this report has yet to go to CMT. However due to the heavy rain seen last year staff were deployed onto this work as they were unable to undertake grass cutting works. It is now anticipated that the report will be prepared for CMT in April/May 2024. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>3 (Slipped)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  |  |

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| <b>Recommendation 5:</b> | <b>Corporate funding be sourced for an ash tree survey to be undertaken as soon as possible to establish the potential extent of the looming arrival of ash dieback within the Borough, along with a plan on how this will be managed (including anticipated resource requirements).</b> |
| Responsibility:          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |
| Date:                    | June 2023  |
| Agreed Action:           | Source external quotes from industry specialists to undertake an ash dieback survey on SBCs ash tree stock. Engagement with Tees Valley colleagues   |

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|   | <p>around the potential of a combined approach or combined funding opportunities will also be investigated.</p> <p>Once all information has been received a report for CMT consideration will be prepared and presented.</p>  |
| Agreed Success Measure:   | <p>A number of quotes for a complete SBC ash dieback survey.</p> <p>Evidence of discussions / meetings with Tees Valley colleagues around the potential for joint working.</p> <p>Report to CMT.</p>  |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024):  | <p>Quotes were requested by the arboriculture department for an ash idea back survey, the disease was being continuously monitored within the borough. Although this was an issue the council was very aware of, the impact of the disease within the borough, to date, has not materialised. Due to the minimal impact this has had on the tree stock it was felt that this survey and consequent funding was not required at this time.</p> <p>The team continue however to discuss this issue with colleagues in the tees valley and will be monitoring the impact moving forward.</p> |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>4 (Not Achieved)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Ash dieback is not as much of an issue in the borough of Stockton, compared to other areas.   |

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| <b>Recommendation 6:</b>           | <b>Consideration be given to strengthening administrative support to the SBC Tree and Woodland Management Service to enhance communications between the team and Ward Councillors / residents regarding tree management enquiries / complaints (particularly around the responses to issues raised and plans / timescales to address them).</b>  |
| Responsibility:                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>   |
| Date:                              | January 2025   |
| Agreed Action:                     | Proposed service review within community services and transport will be used to identify and propose additional areas of administrative support for the arboricultural service.  |
| Agreed Success Measure:            | Successful implementation of proposed service review to provide administrative support to service.   |
| Evidence of Progress (March 2024): | Recruitment for a business support officer role was completed in 2023 with a member of staff in post in November 2023. Courtney Burrell was successful in applying for the role and is now an established member of the grounds maintenance and arboriculture department. A new shared mailbox has been put in place so that all tree requests can be sent to one place. This is working well and is helping with the response times to emails. By freeing up officer time |

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|   | this is allowing the service to look at ways in which the service can take advantage of digital solutions and improve service delivery. |
| Assessment of Progress (March 2024):<br>(include explanation if required) | <b>1 (Fully Achieved)</b>   |
| Evidence of Impact (March 2024):  | Emails are now responded to a lot quicker and officer time is more effective in improving the service.                                  |

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| <b>Assessment of Progress Gradings:</b> | <b>1</b><br>Fully Achieved | <b>2</b><br>On-Track | <b>3</b><br>Slipped | <b>4</b><br>Not Achieved |
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