

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report To: Neighbourhoods & Environment Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday 19th July 2016

Subject: Manchester Tree Action Plan

Report Of: Deputy Chief Executive – People, Policy and Reform

Summary

An approach to refreshing the Manchester Tree Action Plan, in the context of the adopted Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy, was agreed at Neighbourhood Scrutiny Committee in September 2015. This report sets out the draft Tree Action Plan and highlights the key actions contained within it. It provides a summary of engagement with partners to date and how public consultation will further help to shape the Action Plan before its final approval later this year.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Notes the report and the draft Tree Action Plan for the purposes of on-line public consultation.

Wards Affected: ALL

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Manchester Tree Strategy and Action Plan 2005-10, Manchester City Council
- Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester 2015-25, Manchester City Council
- Manchester's Great Outdoors, Stakeholder Implementation Plan 2015-18, Manchester A Certain Future, Manchester City Council
- Manchester City Council Climate Change Delivery Plan 2010-20, Manchester City Council
- Manchester Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2012-27, Manchester City Council
- The Manchester Strategy: Our Manchester 2016-2025, Manchester City Council

1. Background

Manchester's original Tree Strategy and Action Plan was produced in 2006 to increase the understanding of trees in the City, to raise awareness of the important role that trees play and to galvanise and catalyse tree-related activity. Since then the understanding of the importance of green infrastructure to a thriving city has increased. This has been recognised in several approved key policy documents that provide the strategic context to this refreshed draft Tree Action Plan.

- **The Manchester Strategy: Our Manchester** sets a long term vision for Manchester's future. It recognises that world class Cities of the future will have access to beautiful green spaces and emphasises the need for a liveable city which is clean safe and attractive.
- **The City Council Climate Change Action Plan** sets out the council's contribution to delivering *Manchester – A Certain Future*, the city's climate change action plan. Trees are a vital component of green and blue infrastructure within the city and have a key regulating role to play in terms of air and water quality, climate change adaptation and mitigation, carbon storage and flood control.
- **Manchester's Great Outdoors:** a Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy for Manchester is the key document and the mechanism that will help deliver the liveability agenda. Trees are recognised as playing an important part in this. The G&BI Strategy specifically references the development of this Action Plan as a key priority. One of the key objectives of **Manchester's Great Outdoors** is to improve the quality and functionality of all our green and blue spaces, including woodlands, and trees in parks, along streets, in both public and private areas, and this action plan can help support that.

2. How a refreshed Tree Action Plan will sit with the G&BI Strategy

2.1. The Tree Action Plan will not be a stand alone document but will be an essential part of the delivery plan for the G&BI Strategy. This sets the overall strategic context for the different elements that comprise green and blue infrastructure and provides an effective strategic foundation for the delivery of actions to enhance the City's trees.

2.2. The G&BI Strategy's four key objectives are to improve the quality and function of existing and new G&BI, improve connectivity and accessibility to G&BI within and beyond Manchester and to raise awareness and understanding of the G&BI benefits to residents, the economy and the environment. Each of the four key objectives has a set of headline actions which are relevant to particular stakeholders or particular types of G&BI.

2.3. The two key Headline Actions that are directly relevant to the City's trees are:

- 'Effective and appropriate tree and woodland management and planting'. (G&BI Strategy Objective 1, Headline Action 5) and
- Embed G&BI in key plans and policies - (G&BI Strategy Objective 4, Headline Action 2)

The Tree Action Plan will sit within the Stakeholder Implementation Plan primarily under the Headline Action of 'Effective and appropriate tree and woodland management and planting'. It will be an integral part of the G&BI Strategy Implementation Plan enabling more detail to be provided regarding how the City's tree assets can be cared for not just by the Council but by a range of stakeholders.

3. Consultation on the draft Tree Action Plan

3.1. Refreshing the Tree Action Plan has involved extensive engagement with key partners including those within the council. Evening and day time briefing sessions have been held with councillors and discussions have taken place with relevant officers across the council including the Tree Officers, Park Managers, Grounds Maintenance and Planning Officers. External partners including the Tree Council, Woodland Trust, GM Tree Station, City of Trees (formerly Red Rose Forest), Groundwork and the MACF G&BI Group have also been engaged with. Online public consultation with local residents and businesses will take place following Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

4. The vision for Manchester's trees

4.1. Trees in parks, along highways, in gardens and in other public and private spaces are an important part of the City's GI assets, providing the backdrop to Manchester as a world class, liveable City – they are not an optional extra. The Manchester of the future will have an extensive, maturing tree and woodland canopy, with a rich and diverse mix of species, which will help the City adapt to climate change. The Tree Action Plan will allow a focus to be given to Trees, helping to ensure that they will continue to be planted in Manchester selectively and appropriately, with due regard given to location, landscape character and sustainability. Work will continue to bring existing trees and woodlands into active management, with a key emphasis on collaboration and partnership working. Communities and partner organisations will be engaged and involved, taking a proactive role in understanding, promoting, improving and protecting the City's treescape.

4.2. Within the context of the wider G&BI Strategy our vision continues to be to:

Secure a long-term future for our trees and woodlands for generations to come, providing the right management and strong protection, ensuring their positive contribution to a growing, world class City, recognised for its dynamic and sustainable economy and high quality of life.

5. Tree Action Plan objectives

5.1. The four objectives from the original Tree Strategy will continue to shape the many actions that both the council and stakeholders are already undertaking individually and in partnership, as well as future actions that are required.

(i) Managing Sustainably - The sustainable management of the City's tree stock has included tree audits and the development of a GIS based tree management system. This objective is still relevant and will continue to help in terms of forward planning and future proofing the City's tree stock.

(ii) Planting Appropriately - This objective continues to be appropriate; the right tree planted in the right place is part of creating a diverse and maturing tree stock that is sustainable and resilient and can cope better with the adverse effects of climate change, new pests and diseases.

(iii) Protecting Strongly – The aim of this objective is to ensure that Manchester’s existing tree stock, both in public and private ownership, continues to have adequate protection. With a fast growing population, demand for residential growth and developing transport infrastructure, the City’s trees and woodlands will continue to face challenges, but informed decision making supported by an appropriate policy framework will support the future for trees and woodlands within Manchester.

(iv) Involving People Creatively – This reflects the need to raise awareness, increase understanding, build capacity and highlight the joy of trees in the City. It remains important being at the centre of the G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan which embraces actions by all partners not just the Council.

6. Key actions within the draft refreshed Tree Action Plan

6.1. Below each objective the attached draft refreshed Tree Action Plan lists several headline actions and a wide range of potential activities through which the objectives would be delivered. The key actions are summarised as follows.

6.2. Managing Sustainably - One of the key pieces of work contained within the draft Tree Action Plan will be the development, and on line publication, of a series of **key principles of tree management** in Manchester. It will aim to be a useful starting point as to what the Council will and won’t do with regard to trees, highlighting the need for a consistent approach to tree management in the City. The principles will be developed working with professional tree officer and key partners, and will hopefully be a catalyst for other relevant tree management bodies to develop policies and principles of their own.

6.3. Planting Appropriately - Within the context of a growing city which is liveable and climate resilient a key issue will be to ensure that Manchester continues to have a healthy tree canopy formed by a mixture of trees by type, age and location. Manchester’s current tree canopy cover is 20% and the actions under this objective seek to sustain this level.

6.4. Protecting Strongly - It is proposed that potential tree replacement and compensation measures be investigated to inform decision making where development of a site may require the removal of existing trees. This would provide a better understanding of the value of individual trees from saplings to mature specimens. This would supplement the more formal protection of trees that takes places through the use of TPOs and conservation area status, and could potentially provide additional protection for mature trees.

6.5. Involving Creatively - The benefits of trees need to be widely understood by all partners if Manchester's tree assets, in both public and private ownership, are to be fully cared for. Key to this is the provision of opportunities to support training and capacity building within community organisations. The development of the City of Trees Citizen Forester Volunteer Scheme is one such opportunity, launched earlier this year. This aims to build on the legacy of the Manchester Tree Warden Network which ran from 2008-2013 when it merged with the Manchester Community Guardian scheme. It will harness community interest in trees and woodlands and continue to provide an opportunity for the public to get actively involved with trees and woodlands in Manchester.

6.6. The success of the Action Plan would be monitored through a small number of potentially identifiable measures:

- The number/area of trees/woodland with management plans
- The percentage of tree canopy cover across Manchester
- The number of trees removed and replaced through development, in parks and on highways
- Numbers engaged with through volunteer opportunities

7. Next steps

7.1. The interest and initiative by a wide group of partners that kick started the original Tree Strategy and Action Plan is still very much alive. It is this interest and initiative that needs to continue to assist the role of council tree officers and ensure that a healthy tree stock across the City is well managed, protected and enhanced by all those who benefit from this essential natural asset. Collaborative approaches will continue to yield new opportunities for the City's trees and woodlands.

7.2. The draft Tree Action Plan has been refreshed through engagement with these partners both within and external to the council. This draft Action Plan will be used as the basis for an on line public consultation. This will give residents and any other interested individuals or groups the opportunity to comment on the headline actions and/or to volunteer to become more involved.

7.3. Once the results of the public consultation have been assessed, it is proposed that the final refreshed Tree Action Plan, linked to the G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan, will be brought back to Neighbourhoods & Environment Scrutiny Committee for endorsement, later this year.

Appendix Draft Tree Action Plan