West Northamptonshire Council

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tree Policy and Strategy Scrutiny Review

July   2022

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APPENDICES

Chair's Foreword

The objective of this in-depth Scrutiny Review was to achieve a harmonised current Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees

- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals

- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.

- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.

- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

The required outcomes being to make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

The Task and Finish Group was made up from members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Myself (Chair); Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford; together with three further non-Executives Councillors Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts

and Brian Sargeant. There were no co-optees to this Task and Finish Group, but a wealth of information was gathered from a variety of expert advisors who attended meetings of this Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group received both written and spoken evidence from these expert advisors and Desktop research was undertaken by the Deputy Democratic Services Manager. Representatives of the Task and Finish Group undertook site visits to various places within West Northamptonshire. All of which produced a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this important Scrutiny review.

Following the collation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group drew various conclusions and recommendations that are contained within the report.

The review took place between October 2021 and July 2022.

I would like to thank all those people acknowledged below who gave up their time and contributed to this review.

Councillor Pinder Chauhan

Chair, Task and Finish Group – Tree Policy and Strategy

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford, Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant who sat with me on this Review

- Councillor Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, Fiona Unett, Assistant Director – Highways and Waste, Peter Hackett, Environment, Countryside & Parks Manager, Chris Carvell, Environmental Services Contract Manager, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) for providing a collective response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group, along with Benjamin Lloyd, Veolia and Michael Mitchell, Idverde.

- Blisworth Parish Council, Hollowell and Teeton Parish Council, Marie Weller Primary School, Towcester, Rectory Farm Primary School, Great Houghton Parish Council, Queen Eleanor Primary Academy, Daventry Town Council, Eastonneston Parish Council, West Hunsbury Parish Council, Spratton Parish Council, Deanshanger Parish Council and Weston and Weedon Parish, Dodford Parish Council, Brixworth Parish Council, Holcot Parish Council, Kingsthorpe Parish Council, National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Northampton Town Council – Environmental Services Committee, who provided a written response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group and/or attending a meeting to provide further details

- Save our Trees, the Woodland Trust, Northampton Partnership Homes, an independent Chartered Arboriculturist and Garden Organic who provided a written response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group and/or attending a meeting to provide further details

- Mr Grimes a local resident for attending a meeting of the Task and Finish Group and providing information to inform the review

- Members of the public and various groups and organisations who took the time to complete the management of trees survey that the Task and Finish Group had put together

Executive Summary

1.1   The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
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- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

1.2   A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2   Context and Background

2.1   Following approval of its work programme for 2021/2022, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 31 August 2021 commissioned the Task and Finish Group to undertake the review – Tree Policy and

Strategy. An in-depth review commenced in October 2021 and concluded in July 2022.

2.2   A Task and Finish Group was therefore established comprising Councillor Chauhan (Chair); and Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford, Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant.

Corporate Priorities

2.3   This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Green and Clean.

2.4   A significant amount of evidence was received by the Task and Finish Group which is detailed within the report.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

After gathering evidence, the Task and Finish Group established that:

Public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group highlighted that there is a need for a holistic policy and strategy should be formulated to derive a way forward for West Northamptonshire.

4.1.2 The Task and Finish Group felt there was a shift in people's perceptions of tree maintenance and towards the importance of the planting of trees. The Group heard that there was real understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by trees and the benefits to climate.

4.1.3 From the evidence received, the Task and Finish Group felt that schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat which would be beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife.

4.1.4 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should Parishes and Community projects be forthcoming they should be encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.5 The opinions of residents often differed depending on the proximity of the residents to the tree, as one resident may live next to a tree causing issues whereas another would admire the tree and not want it to be removed. Ideally the policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.

4.1.6   From the consultation process, the consensus was that residents were for the planting of trees but emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be better at maintaining and coordinating the planting of trees.

4.1.7   The survey results showed a very strong view among respondents in factor of retaining street trees in almost all circumstances, even where they were causing problems of some form.

4.1.8   The feedback from the consultation highlighted that more people in Northampton were seeing the green and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces.

4.1.9   Evidence gathered supported the idea of creating a communal green space and encouraging communities to become part of a community orchard.

4.1.10 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that it should be recognised that t tree policy and strategy is a journey and Cabinet should look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.

4.1.11 The need for the Council to continue to work with organisations and the community going forward was recognised. It was welcomed that Moulton College was interested in working with the Council on projects to help educate students and provide skills for younger generations.

Ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works of trees

4.1.12 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Tree Policy and Strategy should contain general principles for Council trees and prescribe circumstances where trees would not be cut down unless they cause serious issues to the health and wellbeing of a resident.

4.1.13 From the survey results, the majority of respondents wanted trees to remain or be replanted.

4.1.14 The Task and Finish Group agreed that people wanted trees to be planted, specific trees to be in the right place and the Group supported the list of recommended trees provided by Save our Street Trees.

4.1.15 The Task and Finish Group felt that the criteria for the removal and work surrounding tree maintenance should be robust, clear, and transparent.

4.1.16 The Task and Finish Group felt that there needed to be a focus on replacing trees that had been removed, either in situ or with a plan to plant elsewhere before the tree is removed.

Review the contracts for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

4.1.17 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the new Tree Policy and Strategy should have more stringent restrictions for developers and who was responsible for checking trees and landscaping. It was acknowledged that this could only be the case if the land was adopted as highway. If so, a commuted sum would be provided by the developer and this was used to fund future maintenance. If not, the case would be managed by planning enforcement. WNC could also offer developers a service to plant and water the trees for a fee so land gets adopted quicker. It was felt that some developers would like this option and so do some local authorities as they receive commuted sums quicker. This could make the implementation of planning conditions more effective.

4.1.18 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should aspire, whether through income or grants, or both, to a high standard of provision of maintenance. It noted the likely costs of the desired level of service, described as gold' below:

Service Level	Description	Annual Cost, £k
Bronze (current)	• Reactive works which fall into P1 and P2 classification only • Contract wide epicormic growth program.	450
Silver	• As above, plus: • Further planned survey works • Deal with all P1, P2, P3 and some P4 classification enquiries. • An increase in the management, supervision, surveyors, and operational teams. • This level of service would over a period of time provide a good planned and reactive service for the Council and its residents	1,200 (increase of 750)

Gold	• As above, plus:
	• Large amount of the surveyed work to be planned in line with the surveyors' recommendations.
	• Managing the stock as assets to the Council's portfolio.
	• 'Nice to have' items that most residents expect Council to be able to provide.
	• Provide data and information on:
	   o Tree stock and health
	   o Biodiversity benefits
		1,700
		(increase of 1,250)

These costs are for Northampton. Given the intensity of work required in Northampton compared to other parts of West Northamptonshire, it would probably be reasonable to add 25% to the increase in costs above the baseline to achieve a

similar level of service across the area. This would mean the additional cost to achieve Silver or Gold levels of service would be:

- Silver: £938k
- Gold: £1,563k

4.1.19 Members agreed that the Policy needed to look at "the how" and it should be ensured that the Council's Tree Policy and Strategy would eliminate ambiguity and give clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

4.1.20 The Council's Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, and could cause detrimental effect to a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

4.1.21 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to implement a Tree Policy and Strategy and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's Tree policy to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. It would be useful for the Policy to comprise frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

Examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan, other Planning Policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

4.1.22 It was acknowledged that the Tree Policy should be accessible to all stakeholders.

4.1.23 The Task and Finish Group felt that the urban woodland areas should be within a short walking distance of all residents.

4.1.24 It was highlighted that information should be provided to encourage residents to forage.

4.1.25 Evidence gathered highlighted the benefit of incorporating the emergency tree plan into the Tree Policy and Strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

4.1.26 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should be more proactive in using all legislation and planning policy tools available to the Council to reach

appropriate agreement with developers. It was further agreed that this should be followed up with appropriate enforcement.

4.1.27 The Task and Finish Group concluded that pollarding was sometimes useful but needed to be started when the tree was young, and that topping was not a good method. It was explained that pollarding was a short-term solution but in the longer-term the council could seek to plant trees that would not need pollarding and should set out pruning expectations in their policy. Historically, trees were planted that needed pollarding as the Victorians found that no other trees would grow with the amount of pollution that existed. This was no longer the case.

4.1.28 The Task and Finish Group concluded that a canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced.

4.1.29 Evidence gathered highlighted that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact on the Council's organisational goals

4.1.30 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to have a good working Tree Policy and Strategy in place and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's policies to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. The Task and Finish Group felt that frequently asked questions/topics should be incorporated into the Policy to aid officers with their work in the area.

4.1.31 Evidence gathered highlighted that it is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is currently available is prioritised against routine and reactive works.

Consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

4.1.32 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting

as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. It was further recognised that there is a need for a review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock considered when reviewing the budget.

4.1.33 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the current contracts should be reviewed in the future to see if the Council were obligated to use the contract and align the predecessor councils' contracts under a harmonised West Northamptonshire Council contract in the future and the potential for this to be separate from the wider waste contract.

4.1.34 The Task and Finish Group discussed the length of the policies in comparison and felt that a detailed policy was needed to ensure there were no grey areas when dealing with tree maintenance to support officers. Members compared the Birmingham and Bristol Councils' policy documents and suggested Epping Council as photographic. It was felt that a summarised policy would be useful but one that was clear and concise.

4.1.35 Council management contracts should be examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost was satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy and Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost and replanted. Evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need for the Council to hold contractors to account, for example with Delapré park maintenance work had not been done. The Council needs to review the work undertaken by contractors. The current contract deems that the contractors will deal with problematic trees and the provision for this took precedent over the general maintenance of trees and the service was driven by the cost.

Examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can enforce infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

4.1.36 The Task and Finish Group emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.

4.1.37 Evidence gathering showed that the Council could save on cost by making use of larger planning developments and influencing the planting and species of trees at the earlier stages as the developer usually leads on landscape planning and would select the cheapest species to plant and may not maintain the trees properly. If the Council had a tree policy and strategy that could identify the

species required and other relevant information, it could help the Council meet its environmental targets and other performance targets.

4.1.38 It was realised, however, that the Council could not specify numbers but the role and purpose of trees, as the national model design code stated that new streets should be lined with trees.

4.1.39 In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.

4.1.40 Evidence gathered highlighted that the right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4.1.41 The impacts of trees varied in different places, such that, for example, a tree in a rural setting would have different impacts to one planted on an urban street close to houses. However, there were places in towns and villages where the impacts of a tree were more like those in a rural area.

4.1.42 It was recognised that tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking.

4.1.43 With the community the Council needs to manage expectations particularly with residents and Parish Councils, that the tree policy would be an ongoing process and may take some time for longstanding issues to be resolved.

4.1.44 The Task and Finish Group noted increasing interest in the environmental and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. It felt that it would be desirable for the Council to work more with community groups, such as on projects developing community orchards.

4.1.45 It would be beneficial for the project team currently working on the Queen's Green Canopy project to take this forward once their current project finishes and that the Sustainability Group is approached for consideration and assistance with community projects. The Task and Finish Group concluded that any Parishes/Community projects planted for the Jubilee should be encouraged to register the trees for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.46 The Task and Finish Group emphasised that that working with other organisations and communities should be incorporated in the tree policy and strategy.

4.1.47 The documentation submitted by the resident highlighted the need for trees to be planted in the right way and with the right tree in place and emphasised the need for trees to be maintained properly.

4.1.48 Members recognised that a template letter for Parish Councils would be useful to help with enforcement matters.

Explore how the CAVAT tool can be implemented

4.1.49 Evidence gathered suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

4.1.50 Evidence suggests that by CAVAT introducing and enforcement it would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees.

Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

4.1.51 The Task and Finish Group supported the role of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer but was concerned that the first round of recruitment had not ended with someone in post. It was felt the salary and the grading process for this post should be investigated as it has proved difficult to recruit to this post.

4.1.52 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Council should be proactive in looking for opportunities to create areas such as urban food jungles and parklets which can support residents and are beneficial to wildlife.

4.1.53 The Council should rigorously enforce planning requirements related to the planting and maintenance of trees as part of development, including replacement and care of trees which fail within five years of planting.

Site visits

4.1.54 Members felt that the site visits had been very informative and valuable, as they gave Members an insight into the challenges and positives of maintaining trees across West Northamptonshire. Members could see the impact on residents' homes, and how tree placement affected the number of light homes received and where lack of maintenance had negatively impacted residents. The site visits helped to understand the separate rural and urban needs and the need for

integrated management, for example there were examples of street sweepers not cleaning leaves away properly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations: -

5.1.1   A Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northants Council is prepared no later than March 2023.

5.1.2   A review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock to a suitable standard considered when reviewing the budget.

5.1.3   The Tree Policy and Strategy should be concise but clear. The use of diagrams and illustrations to aim understanding was encouraged.

The Tree Policy and Strategy should include:

- The purpose of the Policy - to empower officers and encourage collaboration and communication between all relevant departments to apply the Policy and setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife

- Trees planted are appropriate to their location

- A requirement for replacement of any non-woodland trees in situ or in close proximity   that unavoidably have to be removed

- A plan stating the approach to tree and woodland preservation orders

- Details that encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical

- Prioritisation of planned as opposed to reactive works

- Direction and guidance on how to protect trees

- A canopy cover target

- Details of relevant statutory obligations.

- Frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

- A section regarding the planting and re-planting of trees, together with the species of trees that should be planted. This would include an Urban Tree List

- Identification of ancient woods

- An audit of Council land for potential woodland

The Policy & Strategy should address:

- Promotion of the Policy and community grants available

- Trees on both private and public land

- Woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside

- How it aligns with the Council's wider strategy and targets, to give clear focus and direction

- Eliminates ambiguity and gives clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

- How to hold contractors to account.

- Specify how issues will be resolved

- Differentiate between the terms – urban, rural, open areas and built-up areas.

- Reflect the needs of residents

- Trees which are lost to be replanted immediately where it is safe and appropriate to do so and where it is not appropriate, suitable local alternatives are found

5.1.4   Working with other organisations and communities is incorporated in the Tree Policy and Strategy.

5.1.5 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places.

- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, food provision, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.
- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.

- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring, and future updating.

5.1.6   Valuable urban trees are replaced in situ when taken out. The right tree for the right place is important.

5.1.7   The Tree Policy and Strategy must be applied consistently.

5.1.8   The Council should seek to allocate sufficient funding to achieve the 'gold' service level detailed above. Indicatively this would cost an additional £1.6m pa across West Northamptonshire.

5.1.9   Pollarding is used as a solution to manage trees in specific areas only when absolutely necessary.

5.1.10   Where bulk planting takes place, a full maintenance, protection, and viability programme is implemented, and environmental measures are followed.

5.1.11   The CAVAT tool is introduced, publicised, and applied.

5.1.12   A canopy project is undertaken for the Council at an early stage as this will be able to give accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show what potential there is for planting.

5.1.13   There is collaborative working across all services in respect of trees and tree maintenance.

5.1.14   In development proposals, mature trees in situ are by default considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.

5.1.15   When planning applications are received the assumption should be that important trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), rather than relying on planning conditions alone.

5.1.16   WNC offers developers a paid-for service to plant and water trees on their sites.

5.1.17   A variety of template letters that supports parish councils when dealing with issues of tree planting, removal and maintenance are devised.

5.1.18   Consideration is given to the implementation of Community Orchards, food jungles and parklets with a clear plan and marketing strategy to take this forward.

5.1.19   The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group supports the recruitment of a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer. The salary should be investigated if it continues to prove difficult to recruit to this post.

5.1.20   A consultant is employed to help build the policy for the Council whilst ongoing recruitment takes place for the post of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

5.1.21   Relevant contracts are examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost is satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy & Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost.

5.1.22   A separate landscaping contract that would give better cost and focus on delivering the service is implemented as the existing arrangements come to an end, or earlier if the opportunity arises.

5.1.23   Parishes/Community projects are encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5.1.24   Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' from when Cabinet responds to the recommendations, and then as part of the Committee's agreed monitoring schedule.

West Northamptonshire Council

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of   Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group

1   Purposes and Rationale

1.1   The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
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1.2   A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

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2.2   A Task and Finish Group was therefore established comprising Councillor Chauhan (Chair); Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler and Jo Gilford; Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant.

Corporate Priorities

2.3   This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Green and Clean.

2.4   The Task and Finish Group established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Evidence Collection

Background data, including:

Scene-setting presentation – To identify any issues with trees and tree maintenance

Information regarding trees helping to alleviate flooding when planted in the right place.

Carried motion – full Council July 2021:

"Council agrees that planting trees has a significant benefit to health, well-being, the environment and to helping tackle climate change. This Council agrees to fully embrace "The Queen's Green Canopy Scheme" launched to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Council agrees to develop an action plan to work with Schools, Colleges and Community Groups alongside the Woodland Trust to co-ordinate a campaign across West Northamptonshire to apply for the free saplings available as part of the Scheme and to encourage tree planting between Oct 2021 to the end of 2022."

Proposed by Cllr Hallam, seconded by Cllr Morgan."

Relevant local policies and strategies

Relevant national and local research, such as Woodland Trust "Local Authority Tree Strategies"

Draft Tree Policy for West Northamptonshire

Examples of good practice from West Northamptonshire and other comparable areas

Various site visits as determined by the Task and Finish Group; to include a visit to another local authority noted for its best practice for the implementation of a Tree Policy, such as Birmingham City Council or Bristol City Council.

Views from internal expert advisors

- o Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste
- o Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs
- o Executive Director of Place, Economy & Environment
- o Assistant Director Assets & Environment
- o Assistant Director Highways & Waste
- o Assistant Director Growth, Climate & Regeneration
- o Environmental Services Contract Manager
- o Tree Maintenance Officers
- o NPH service lead for tree issues

Views from external expert advisors

- o Community Groups, such as Save our Trees, Garden Organic
- o Conservation Groups such as the Woodland Trust
- o Environment Agency
- o Construction developers
- o Grand Union Housing, Futures Homes, and other relevant registered providers of affordable housing
- o Parish and town councils
- o Local residents, via a survey
- o Residents' associations
- o Schools and colleges

3. **Desktop Research**

3.1 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group agreed that desktop research be undertaken into the Tree Policies of Bristol City Council and Birmingham City Council.

Bristol City Council

3.2 Bristol City Council has a Tree Management Policy (the Policy) that sets out its approach to the management of the Council's own trees.

3.3 The Policy is set out in various sections. Within the sections are sub-sections. Common Law Right – The Policy states: "You have a Common Law right to remove a nuisance associated with trees. The following advice is given if you wish to exercise your Common Law right:

> a) You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.
>
> b) You are strongly advised to consult an Arboriculture Association Registered tree surgeon (www.trees.org.uk) for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees, unless the works are small enough to do with hand secateurs or similar. c) Before you consider doing any works to a tree(s) you should find out if it is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area. If the trees are protected, you will need to gain consent by making an application / give notice to the council You are advised to discuss with your neighbour your intention to prune overhanging branches. Legally you do not own the overhanging branches and you should offer these to your neighbour. But in all likelihood, you should consider disposing of the cuttings yourself. If the overhanging branch is from a council owned tree, any cuttings must be disposed of appropriately and not returned to City Council land."
>
> **Maintenance and Safety Inspections** - The Policy states that Council owned trees are inspected for safety on a cycle of between one and five years, according to the level of public use in the area immediately surrounding the tree. It further states that the Council is progressively bringing all trees into an active programme of management. It details ongoing maintenance that includes:
>
> **Removal of dead wood Formative pruning Removing low branches from pathways.** Removal of trees when they come to the end of their safe and useful life The Policy highlights that the way in which trees are managed very much reflects where they are and the amount of space they

have grown. Trees in education facilities are the responsibility of the education establishment. Maintenance and safety inspections also cover growth around tree trunk and pollarding. Private trees A key section in relation to private trees is detailed in the Policy: "Policy: If a tree or branch from a privately owned tree is causing a danger to the highway the landowner will be contacted and instructed to make the tree safe under the Highways Act (1980). If it is necessary, that the council undertake this work to make it reasonable safe then the owner will be charged in full for the council's costs. Information and advice. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of collapse or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention. Our tree contractor will be instructed to attend site within 1 hour to make the situation safe" The Policy states that in a non-emergency situation: "a site inspection will be carried out within 12 working days of notification. The owner of the tree will be informed of what works they are responsible for to make the situation safe. If it is decided that the council should undertake the works after the appropriate notices have been given, then instructions will be issued to our Main Contractor" The public can report an emergency situation using a tree report form which is an online form. Reports regarding non-Bristol City Council trees causing an obstruction can be made using a separate online form. This section refers to private trees causing a nuisance to a neighbour and it is stipulated within the Policy that the Council cannot intervened in a dispute between neighbours.

The section of the Policy - Council tree issues contains sub- sections:

Bird droppings – Trees are not pruned to stop or reduce bird droppings Blossom Low tree branches – road, cycle, or footpath – The Policy states that the Council will carry out work to Council owned trees to maintain a minimum: Road – 5.5 metre height clearance, cycle path next to a road or highway – 3 metres heigh clearance; footpath next to a road or highway – 2.5 metre heigh clearance

Tree overhanging property - The Policy states the Council does not remove or prune a Council owned tree to stop a nuisance of overhanding branches.

Drains Policy: The Policy states that the Council does not prune, remove, or cut the roots of a council owned tree to prevent roots entering a drain that is already broken or damaged Fruit / berries / nuts / seeds - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop

or reduce the nuisance of fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds, or remove fallen fruit, seeds or seedlings from private land including gutters. The public is advised to contact the Police should there be significant anti-social behaviour problems.

Poisonous berries: The Policy states that there is no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees), however where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children or livestock are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated, and appropriate action considered.

Leaves - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop or reduce leaf fall or remove fallen leaves from private property.

Light - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to improve natural light in or to a property including solar panels Suckers from tree roots the Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a Council owned tree to stop or reduce the nuisance of sucker growth on private land. Personal medical condition - complaint - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree where a request has been made to do so because of a personal medical condition.

Pollen - The Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop or reduce the release of pollen. Trees affecting street lights, signs, and traffic view - The Policy states that the Council will undertake work to a council owned tree to maintain clear sight lines (where feasible) at junctions, access points (associated with a street, road, or highway), traffic signals and street signs.

Sap/honeydew – The Policy states that the Council does not prune or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.

Subsidence damage to property (tree-related) - The Policy states that the council has in place active tree management systems to avoid damage being caused to buildings and other structures as a result of the action of council owned trees. Telephone wire - The Policy states that it does not prune or remove council owned trees to stop or reduce interference with telephone wires.

Trip hazard - The Policy states that the council will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard caused by the growth of council owned trees.

Tree touching building - The Policy states if a council owned tree is touching a property (house, boundary wall, garage etc.) the Council will take action to remove the problem.

Tree too big / too tall - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree because it is considered to be too big or tall Tree and TV / satellite reception – The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to prevent interference with TV / satellite installation / reception. View – The Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to improve the view from a private property.

Wild animal / insect pest - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove council owned trees to stop or reduce incidents of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals.

Tree next to a building site - The Policy states that the Council is not required to prune or remove a council owned tree to allow building works to proceed, whether planning consent was necessary or via permitted development.

Vandalism – The Policy states that the Council will look into any reports of vandalism to a council owned tree and try to correct any damage where we can.

Each section contains information and advice, for example regarding a tree too big/tall:

> "Information and advice. A tree may seem too big for where it is, but this doesn't make it dangerous. Our trees (excluding woodland areas) are inspected for safety. We inspect them everyone to five years, depending on how much the area surround them is used. Maintenance will be carried out, if necessary."

At the end of the Policy a section regarding information is detailed and it advises where advice and information can be obtained on:

➢ Crime and anti-social behaviour

➢ High Hedges

➢ Installation of a dropped kerb and that the Council is not required to agree to the pruning or removal of roots from a Council owned tree to allow the installation of a drop kerb.

➢ Logs/woodchip

➢ Tree and tree protection – Tree Preservation Order, Conservation Area - The Policy contains information and advice why a tree is going to be removed/has it been removed and why a tree was or is to be pruned. Further information and advice is detailed regarding why tree stumps are left in the pavement. The Policy concludes with a section regarding tree planting, and should the public be interested in sponsoring or the replanting of a tree that has been felled they can contact the Council.

Birmingham City Council

3.4 Birmingham City Council does not publish its Tree Policy in its entirety on its website but publishes various sections: Tree Maintenance Council trees affecting your property Trees on private land or gardens Tree Planting Tree Maintenance The information states that the Council is responsible for trees on land owned by the council. The Council prunes or remove our trees when they are:

• diseased, damaged, or dying

• dangerous, because the tree or part of the tree has fallen or is at risk of falling

 • causing damage to a property

• getting in the way of vehicles or pedestrians

• blocking street lighting, road signs or traffic lights The Council also carries out pruning when it's needed to keep trees healthy. It is stated that the Council does not prune every tree each year. Priority is given to trees that are dead, diseased, or dangerous. The public can report and track progress of any reports they make by registering for a "BRUM account" they can then identify where the tree is on the map. Council trees affecting your property

The information states: "Overhanging branches If branches from a council tree are overhanging your property, you can cut them back yourself, unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a conservation area. You may prune the branches back to the boundary of your property but no further. The work must be done from your own property. You must dispose of any cuttings yourself, do not leave them on Council land. "

Trees blocking light or affecting television reception - The council does not prune or cut down trees which are blocking light or affecting television reception. Bird droppings, sap, or pollen Unfortunately pruning a tree won't stop sap or pollen falling, or birds sitting on the remaining

branches. The Council does appreciate that droppings, pollen, and sap from trees can be inconvenient.

Tree damaging property - The information advises that If you think a tree is damaging your property, the first thing to do is contact your home insurance company for advice. If it is proved that a council tree has damaged your property, or could cause damage in the future, we may carry out work on the tree.

Tree damaging pipes - It is very rare for underground water pipes to be broken by tree roots. Tree roots don't break into undamaged pipes but will take advantage of a pipe that is already damaged. The Council does not carry out work on trees to prevent roots entering damaged pipes, as repairing the pipe is the only certain solution. The public is advised that if they think a tree is damaging pipes on their property, the first thing to do is contact your home insurance company for advice. Fallen leaves and fruit If leaves or fallen fruit are causing a hazard, the public is advised to contact street cleansing services. Trees on private land or gardens It is stated that the Council is not responsible for trees in private gardens. Individuals are responsible for maintaining trees on your property and making sure they are safe.

The website details a list of qualified tree surgeons on the Arboriculture Association's website. The information advised that before carrying out any work on a tree in the individual's own garden, check whether the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a conservation area. In extreme circumstances, and when all other avenues have been explored, the Council can take action to ensure that dangerous trees on private land are made safe.

Tree planting - The information states that the Council plants new trees between October and March. These usually replace trees that had to be removed. Individuals can request for a tree to be planted on council land. The Council will check if this is possible and get in touch. The Council also accept requests for memorial trees; the public is advised to use the map on the website to submit their request. The Council is not able to add plaques to or near trees as the plaque may get damaged. During a long dry spell, the Council always welcomes the public's help in watering new trees. If a tree dies within the first year it will be replaced in the next planting season.

3.5 In addition to undertaking desktop research, the Democratic Services Officer met remotely with the Principal Arboriculturist who provided a wealth of information regarding the Tree Policy of Birmingham City Council: Planning key points:

• Use CAVAT (Capital Asset Amenity Trees) to give monetary value to trees to help rationalise tree maintenance and works and account for trees as part of the Council's asset mapping process.

• CAVAT process helps planning with agreeing landscaping with new developments, to ensure planning has control over which type of trees are planted where and can help with tentation and tree gardens.

• Tree policy empowers planning officers to amend planning conditions relating to landscaping as they can put in place maintenance conditions (for example, developers have responsibility for maintenance for first 3-5 years).

• Embed the maintenance of trees in highways policies (i.e., footway policy) and create a process that the Council follow and write this into highways contracts (for example, with the replacement of trees Birmingham City Council has a period of 8-10 months for trees to be replanted).

• Tree planting calculated by root volume; species matched to the root volume.

• Create a tree mitigation strategy as with Birmingham's urban development of the rapid bus transit, 500 trees were lost and because of the strategy 1158 needed to be planted to replace the oxygen and canopy cover gains lost.

3.6 The Principal Arboriculturist stated that Birmingham City Council go further than "right tree right place", as they have "right reason right place right tree right way" to include rationale and planting method, as roots can cause issues on footpaths and need to use constructed trees in city centres:

> Important to look at contracts as contract providers often inflate the cost to include tree maintenance but it is rare that trees will be problematic. Landscape works are often part of a waste contract, rather than specific to trees.

> Council needs to use social value, climate, and public health benefits as well as light and biodiversity to promote investment of tree stock and maintenance strategy.

> Engagement with community is crucial and volunteers can help to reduce cost as tree strategy is ultimately a long-term process and future risk will be mitigated by trees being planted properly and efficient planning.

> Integrating officers in projects so cost can be accounted for from different budgets and encouraging collaborative working.

Tree plotter system helps to map which trees are there and contains data relating to each tree as well as oxygen levels and monetary value so can be accounted for if the tree is lost to justify planting of more trees.

3.7   Other key points:

• Many Councils try to reinvent the wheel but lots of expertise and knowledge readily available that has existed for years and not really changed.

• Need to look for engineering solutions rather than overcomplicating issues, for example street trees use flexi tarmac to ensure roots don't cause damage to pavements. • Signposted to British best practice policy documents relating to tree maintenance BS8545 Tree Planting, BS3998 Tree works and pruning and BS5837 Conservation of trees.

• Important to do survey to keep as a data source, arboriculture survey shows age profile of trees.

• Create a masterplan with a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and embed within policies so strategy links together

Background reports

3.8   Parks and Open spaces strategy for Northampton 2013 published by the Cabinet Members for the predecessor Council   - Northampton Borough Council http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s40472/Appendix 1.pdf

3.8.1 **'How do trees influence the air we breathe?**

The Forest Canopy published its succinct document - how do trees influence the air we breathe? Key points within the document:

Why is air important

How do trees influence air quality - Trees provide a localised air quality regulation service through the filtration of airborne pollutants. This can happen either by internal absorption of pollutants via stomatal uptake or the deposition of pollutants on external surfaces including leaves and bark. Although all tree species filter air of pollutants to an extent, certain species have been shown to have adverse effects on the atmosphere through the release of biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCS). These BVOCs are used by some species to attract pollinators and repel harmful insects.

How can woodlands be designed to best improve air quality? Several factors play a role in the capacity of a woodland creation scheme to improve local air quality. As the effects of trees on air are highly localised, the location of planting is key to mitigate pollution from point sources. Planting in areas where levels of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulate matter (PM2.5) are high, typically surrounding industrial centres and major transport links, will be the most effective.   species choice is important. Planting a mix of species with a relatively high Leaf Area Index (LAI) will increase a woodland's ability to filter air as greater surface areas of biomass increase pollutant capture capacity. Large schemes should avoid overuse of species that may offset their benefits to air quality through the release of BVOCs.   the woodland's structural design is also important. Trees should be placed strategically in shelterbelts to screen emission sources and buffer sensitive habitats.

3.8.2 Presentation to set the scene

Salient points:

Over the next 12 months Officers will:

- Identify scope, key priorities and content

- Appoint specialist consultants

- Tree condition surveys as needed

- Working with all relevant teams, stakeholders and the public

- Review draft policies and action plan to ensure fit for purpose

- Agree final policies and action plan prior to submission to Cabinet

Result:

- Single coherent WNC tree policy and strategy

- 'Right tree in the right place'

Current very limited resource:

- C1.5 FTE posts – dedicated to responsive planning matters

- Contractor roles – dedicated to day-to-day works management

- One-off arrangements to support QGC

- No resource for strategic work

Schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat – beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife

The costs of the upkeep of trees would be embedded within various budget codes from the legacy authorities.

A work project had begun to investigate the existing tree pits as it had been noted removal of trees had occurred in some areas. Consideration of the option to plant within tubs for later transferal to land would bear a significant cost, in the region of £10,000 each.

Small local parks were not considered to be suitable for large scale tree planting.

3.9   Core Questions

3.9.1 The Task and Finish Group devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a cycle of meetings (Copy at Appendix B).

3.9.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Task and Finish Group on 24 January 2022, 2 February 2022, 2 March 2022, 6 April 2022 and 23 May 2022.

3.9.3 Salient points of evidence:

Collective response Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, together with Officers of West Northamptonshire Council and Employees of Veolia and Ideverde

Currently, under the highway contract no differentiation is made regarding how trees are maintained based on geographical areas. Other trees tend to be managed according to their location and historical connections, resulting in some different treatment reflecting their location and context.

Going forward, canopy cover could be split into two categories within West Northamptonshire, rural and urban. This would allow for prioritisation of funding, as managing existing tree stock and introducing new tree stock would require substantial financial investment. As is commonly understood canopy cover in towns is a lot less than in rural areas where trees are allowed to grow to their natural heights and self-sets are allowed to thrive. In urban areas many trees have to be controlled or removed to protect property and highways. To mitigate those future issues in urban areas, specific parks and open spaces within the towns could be identified for targeted tree planting, but ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place. Planting trees in rural area is important but offers fewer immediate benefits as it would to areas of higher population.

The statutory obligations and guidance that are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area: Highways Act 1980 – duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition, Environment Act 2021 – impacts how this is carried out e.g., the need to consult before removing trees. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – Bird nesting season, etc. More generally, the Council has a duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act and ensuring that the requirements for tree maintenance are met within each of the contracts affecting trees operated by the Council.

Highway tree maintenance is currently carried out by KierWSP under its highways contract duties for all areas of West Northamptonshire other than Northampton and Daventry urban areas. Urban Northampton is maintained by Veolia via the ex-NBC environmental services contract, and highway trees in Daventry are handled by Daventry Town Council (which in turn uses West Northamptonshire Norse). Within urban Northampton, the environmental services contract is running and managed well between WNC, Veolia and the sub-contractor, idverde. The tree maintenance element of the contract is the only part of the contract governed by a set budget rather than a specified outcome or process. The budget is only £350k per annum with an additional £100k to be spent on enhancement works for the first five years of the contract. Unfortunately, this does mean there are only funds available to provide a reactive service. The service is mainly driven by requests for service and a smaller amount through the results of inspections.

Trees are then maintained by priority, for instance if there is a storm, this takes priority over all other works and schedules are put on hold until these works are completed. As an example, the hurricane of 31st October 2021 is likely to take until end February 2022 to clear and cost in the region of £130k-£160k out of the £350k budget. The management resource (1 x Tree and Woodlands Officer, 2 x Surveyors and 1 x Support Officer), also come out of the budget. The contract covers around 1.6 million trees: with the budget available, this makes it very challenging.

All trees looked at are surveyed and logged on the OTIS Tree Management System.

The contract requires replanting of whips, but other than that is vague, and the costs of planting also have to come out of the budget. As part of the commitment to replanting/ replacing trees, the contractor plants larger trees as the whips tend to get vandalised and in their experience do not survive. Around 40 trees are planted twice per annum, spring and autumn. This planting programme is enhanced through working with other groups, gaining further funding from WNC and donated trees.

Highway trees are usually only removed where they are considered to be unsafe, i.e., dead, dying or diseased and pose a risk to the safety of highway users, or they have grown such that they are causing damage to property. This represents a relatively small number which isn't quantifiable each year given the reactive nature of this. Other trees may be removed to accommodate new highways or improvements.

Under the Northampton environmental services contract, approximately forty trees are planted each year through the contract and up to 500 trees and whips are planted through donations, other funding and groups.

Removals per annum:

> 2018 – 128

> 2019 – 175

> 2020 – 155

Examples of why a tree is felled and the reasons for its removal are listed as follows:

a) Decay caused by fungi resulting in structural weaknesses in the tree or partial or complete tree death.

b) Bacterial infections resulting in partial or complete tree death.

c) Removal of trees causing subsidence as recommended in Insurance claims from private properties.

d) Uprooted and failed trees due to inclement weather.

e) Failed limbs or branches due to inclement weather which can cause structural weaknesses, or leave the tree unbalanced and not safe to be retained.

f) Dead trees due to points a) and b) above that deem the tree unsafe and no longer retainable.

g) Roots in the highway causing the tree to be unsafe to cyclists and motor vehicles using the road. (No cases on record regarding this in Northamptonshire).

h) Irreversible decline due to points a) b) c) and e).

Wherever possible, the approach is to try and leave standing timber (monoliths) for natural ecology and 1 metre stumps for safety and for reservation of the spot to later replant.

At present, the various services are operating an essentially minimal safe service, rather than making a significant contribution to the Council's objectives.

In relation to highways, Highways Development Management would expect developers to detail site layout plans with accurate positions for tree and shrub planting, and not as is often the case random planting indicated on site layout plans, this is particularly important at Reserved Matters stage. The Standards for Highway Layouts contain these details

The Guidance Note for Highway Cultivation are the standards we apply for trees in and adjacent to adoptable highways. We also require root protection to prevent damage to the highway. We do relax the 2.5m offset requirement in the Standards for Highways Layout (clause 10) to 1.5m on request subject to suitable species being provided and with agreed root protection

New tree planting is secured in local plans. For example, the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) – NE4, points four and five of the policy provide for:

> 4. Where the loss of existing trees, woodland or hedgerows is unavoidable, suitable replacement planting will be required within the development site or secured via planning obligation to be provided at another location with direct links to the development site.

> 5. Planting schemes should, where possible, use native or similar species and varieties, and maximise the benefits to the local landscape and wildlife, details of tree protection for existing trees on development sites how these planning commitments can be enforced.

New tree planting is secured by inclusion of a condition, where suitable, with any approved planning application. The condition will require the submission of planting details to be approved.

Where trees are identified to be retained or there is a desire to do so due to their quality and value a condition is included with the development approval for trees to be protected:

These are the two standard conditions commonly used:

Standard condition 1 No development shall take place until the existing tree(s) to be retained [describe identity and location and add 'subject of a Tree Preservation Order' if that is the case] have been protected in the following manner unless otherwise previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

a) Protective barriers shall be erected around the tree(s) to a distance not less than a radius of 12 times the trunk diameter when measured at 1.5m above natural ground

level (on the highest side) for single stemmed trees and for multi-stemmed trees 10 times the trunk diameter just above the root flare.

b) The barriers shall comply with the specification set out in British Standard BS5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations' that is steel mesh panels at least 2.3m tall securely fixed to a scaffold pole framework with the uprights driven into the ground a minimum of 0.6m depth and braced with additional scaffold poles between the barrier and the tree[s] at a minimum spacing of 3m.

c) The barriers shall be erected before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of development [and / or demolition] and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus material has been removed from the site.

d) Nothing shall be stored or placed within the areas protected by the barriers erected in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavations be made, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Standard condition 2 - No development shall take place until the existing tree(s) to be retained [describe identity and location and add 'subject to a Tree Preservation Order' if that is the case] have been protected in accordance with the approved Tree Protection Plan [drawing number and date received] and Arboricultural Method Statement dated [**] unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The barriers shall be erected before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of development [and / or demolition] and shall be maintained until all equipment machinery and surplus material has been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed within the areas protected by the barriers erected in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavations be made, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

The type of tree protection approved for use will be in accordance with the principals of BS5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations and will vary in type dependant on the specific requirements of the trees, site and development but put simply be 'fit for purpose'.

There are generally two avenues ware a breach of any condition is brought to the attention of the Council. Either through public notification or through monitoring of the site by Council officers. Any reported breach by a member of the public will be dealt with in accordance with the West Northamptonshire Local Enforcement Plan. In the first instance officers will endeavour to negotiate and appropriate outcome, i.e., no further activity to take place within the exclusion zone and implementing required tree protection within 24 hours. If this is not successful a temporary stop notice may be

served, in the case of tree protection breach and/or a breach of condition notice, which is more likely to be served in respect to landscaping/tree planting matters.

There is no specific programme for the review/reassessing of existing Orders at this time. TPO trees in Northampton and former Daventry District are recorded on the geographic information system.

A more proactive approach would be highly desirable. Unfortunately, due to only providing a reactive service as a result of the many years of financial restraints, it would take a quadruple investment and a 10-year strategy to get back to a full proactive planned service

It is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is available is prioritised against routine and reactive works

All 'urban' trees have been valued using CAVAT tool and any highway trees that are impacted by works, we are then able to recover value to aid tree replanting

A canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced. The Northampton urban contractor is rarely given permission to restock, presumably to save ongoing maintenance costs, not only in replacing a tree, but maintenance cost of paths from root damage as an example. Conversely, there are areas like NN3 for instance that are over-stocked and this needs to be balanced as much as under-planted/ lack of replacement in other areas. Before a target can be set, WNC needs to know what the current tree canopy cover status is.

The new Tree Policy & Strategy will have the greatest impact on the Strategic Plan and other policy documents if it is:

- Based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places.
- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.
- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.
- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring and future updating.

The Council is in the process of recruiting to a new Tree Strategy & Projects Officer. This will provide key resource to develop the strategy and guide implementation of it.

The policy and strategy should be applied consistently, such that over time and expectation is developed that they will be followed

Trees in urban areas were valuable and responded that trees in urban areas required significant investment as they were expensive to manage; as trees planted close to roads or pathways as an example, needed to be actively managed in comparison to, for example, a sycamore in a park. He emphasised that the placement and type of trees in different areas needed to be managed.

The cost of planting trees in containers rather than directly into the ground was typically quite expensive, for example recently received quotations for potted trees around the drapery in Northampton. Prices received from quotations were showing costs of £5,000 per container, with the price of the container, the tree, and soil plus the placement of the container. These containers would weigh over a tonne. They also needed to be fixed to the pavement and the trees in them would require regular watering and treatment, which had its own costs. For the same cost of planting one tree container costing £5,000, 36 trees in could be planted in open spaces. Surveyors could look at 20 trees per day and there was an estimated total of 1.6m trees in West Northamptonshire. There needed to be five times the current resource for an active service to be provided in maintaining the Council's trees.

 The policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.

The policy could differentiate by the terms 'open areas' and 'built up areas' rather than rural and urban and shared the opinion that the policy needed to reflect the needs of residents.

There were issues with trees being built in areas where there were new build homes; trees on the edge of park spaces affecting resident's television aerials; and trees impeding on property. Pollarding could be a useful solution to manage trees in some places.

With climate change there were increased extreme weather events, such as storms and periods of droughts. These could harm trees. The costs of taking action would need to be determined. However, already climate change impacts were considered in the long-term plan as there were trees coming to their end of life. With each tree replaced the appropriateness of the location and other factors were be considered.

A record of tree stumps is kept but nonetheless stumps were often left to stop pits being tarmacked over. They were not always able to replant as it would cause issues with subsidence.

With any major development there is likely to be impacts, including the loss of trees. These losses would be considered in the planning balance. The need for housing often took priority with decision making. Sometimes trees could be preserved in detailed planning.

With the establishment of the West Northamptonshire Council, there were a number of inherited services and contacts which provided tree-related services. The aim was to move to one policy that would enable them to consistently manage the service irrespective of service provider.

Canopy cover was assessed with the use of aerial and satellite imagery. Probably this would be done no more than annually.

Schools, Colleges and Parish Councils

Key Points:

Spratton Parish Council

The region in this part of Northamptonshire (Spratton) is extremely poorly off when it comes to the number and quality of trees. The woods which do exist are of small scale and on the whole, created by the land owners in the form of coverts used for hunting. Such trees as there were growing in the hedgerows have been removed along with the hedges which are sparsely disbursed owing to the expansion of large-scale farms and indiscriminate enlargement of arable fields over the last 70 years. To get a sense of the lack of trees in this area one need only look at the OS Explorer Map of Northampton and Market Harborough(1:25000) and the absence of trees is plain with the only reasonable sized wood being the conifer plantation of Harlestone Firs near Northampton. The nearest former forests of Rockingham, Salcey, Wittlebury and Everdon with their remnants of old forest, do not appear on the OS map mentioned which emphasises the paucity of trees.

The loss of trees has only relatively recently been recognised as a significant factor in the whole ecosystem which includes water retention, species loss, soil degradation and many other things affecting climate change. There are clearly numerous statutory or other obligations which advise or compel local governments to reverse the historic decline in tree cover. WNC could well lead the way in pursuing the aims of the England Trees Action Plan but at the same time innovate new ways of educating the public in the importance of trees in the whole ecosystem and moving to restore at least some of the lost woodlands in West Northants. There will always be the inevitable conflicts between land use and the need to protect trees, flora and fauna and the soil but hard decisions must be made if the exponential loss of species and soil quality is to be slowed down. This conflict may be reduced if there are good explanations given for pursuing a rigorous tree planting programme, changing the planning laws to ensure planting where possible and continuous education using positive examples of programmes that are

working. The planning of trees cannot be divorced from the need to create habitat for birds and wildlife and, for example, when considering new build houses or removal of existing potential wildlife habitat, the planning rules should ensure the creation of new habitat wherever possible. The planning legislation should include consideration of the planting of trees (as well as the existing TPO rules) but should not consider these in isolation. An awareness of the present and future diseases in trees such as Ash Dieback is necessary in all consideration of the planting of trees.

Even relatively small-scale policies such as preventing the removal of trees that grow in hedgerows, by indiscriminate flailing or cutting of trees at the level of the hedge cutting, should be discouraged.

There is a need for a more joined up thinking and sharing of expertise among charities, voluntary organisations, experts, universities, and government using real data as the climate changes and a willingness to adapt policies based on that data. The WNC could also participate by becoming a member of such organisations as the Tree Council which facilitates a system of Tree Wardens to local authorities around the country and the Woodland Trust, among others.

There needs to communication between the Council and residents concerning tree maintenance and more liaison between West Northamptonshire Council and Parish Councils. A Tree Policy and Strategy was welcomed that should include hedges and wildlife corridors.

Litchborough Parish Council

The main problem for residents in the area was falling trees causing road blockages and fallen telephone wires.
The Parish Council is keen to get involved with tree planting initiatives and would work in collaboration with local farmers to mitigate climate change.

Lamport and Hanging Houghton Parish Council

- Support the work that is taking place to create a new policy and strategy
- Lamport Estate is keen to develop woodland in the area.

Great Houghton Parish Council

Great Houghton Parish Council has been most concerned with the previous authority's tree management policy which has for too many years, not been applied fully or in part. Having been subjected to financial restraints and lack of appropriate timely action. Resulting in a number of trees being lost or becoming dangerous and thereby an increasing risk to residents and properties, to pedestrians and motorists, to telephone,

electricity and drainage supplies and services. The Parish council has little ownership of land and therefore little responsibility for tree management. It does receive a great number of complaints and concerns from residents regarding tree risk and tree damage. Complaints and concerns that the Parish Council often had great difficulty in getting addressed by the appropriate landowner authority.

There is a statutory obligation of 'due care' on the 'Landowner' to ensure the maintenance and safety of trees. Throughout this parish, as like many other parishes, the greater number of existing trees are on land owned by the previous authorities and now WNC Unitary Council.

Planning for, and the planting of new trees, is both welcomed and appreciated. Trees play an incredible role in combating climate damage caused by carbon emissions into the environment. Considerably more must be done to protect and preserve existing tress and forests. All developments, both housing and commercial, must therefore include tree planting as a requirement.

Great Houghton Parish Council believes that the final policy & Strategy would be best utilised by ensuring that it is clear, precise, fully transparent, and widely shared with all stakeholders and delivery agents. Adherence with the policy must be a condition for all future development and planning applications. Most importantly, defined maintenance schedules and responsibilities must be included in the policy and firmly adhered too. The Policy must ensure that, always, there is a clear, transparent record of ongoing responsibilities. Especially with developed sites, residential or commercial, where the builder/developer may no longer be operating or apparent.

The planned maintenance schedule included in the policy & strategy must be shared with all stakeholders along with a clear definition of maintenance work to be undertaken, which service agents must comply with. Scheduled Tree inspections should be conducted in conjunction, or consultation, with relevant stakeholder whether that be the Parish Council, the voluntary sector or managed agencies and service areas. A copy of the subsequent inspection report must be provided to the relevant stakeholder. If scheduled inspection or work cannot be conducted the relevant stakeholder must be kept informed and advised of alternative arrangements.

Deanshanger Parish Council

The new Tree Policy and Strategy needs to be accessible on the Council's website.

Parish Councils could be involved to help survey areas . Deanshanger Parish Council is creating its own tree strategy, and this could join up with West Northamptonshire Council. Trees should be replaced, and a one in one out policy applied to tree maintenance. As well as regular hedge trimming, to preserve the landscape and give light to trees and ensure trees remain healthy.

Developers should be held accountable for old and new tree stock for a period of 5 years as once trees had grown their own root system, they would be easier to maintain as they could draw water from the ground.

There should be more species of trees available to be planted to match the landscape, as more variety was needed.

Brackley Town Council

There needs to be a regular tree stock inspection to ensure no risk to the public.

In terms of mature trees, there needed to be a care plan in place and there needs to be a mechanism for replacing lost trees and the types of trees analysed and planting trees in the right places. In Brackley there are many trees that were not suitable or appropriately placed. there needs to be more community engagement.

Tree nurseries could contribute to climate change.

Blisworth Parish Council

There must be enforcement of the Tree Policy and Strategy. There are examples within the parish of trees being damaged or removed although they are key to the environment and the character of the village. The Parish does not have TPO records

Hollowell and Teeton Parish Council

The Parish Council manages a variety of trees located around the parish adjacent to highways and within the Pocket Park. These are surveyed every three years and maintained as advised in the survey. Trees have been planted to enhance the locality but care should always be taken to ensure appropriate species are planted at each location, particularly adjacent to highways and in parks. Account should be taken of the medium to long term growth of trees and the space available, in addition to the ground condition for species.

By careful selection of sites and species, the planting of trees can add benefit to the overall design of a development

The Tree Policy and Strategy should be available as supplementary guidance to policy makers to assist with decision on planting of trees.

To aid cohesive working between all stakeholders, clear advice and guidance on mandatory obligations and discretionary requirements for tree planting.

Daventry Town Council

The Town Council has recently taken on open spaces and trees, as well as maintaining highway trees in its parish.

There is little support for parish councils in terms of insurance claims and there should be more emphasis on mitigation and removal of problematic trees.

There should be more emphasis on developments and conversations should take place with developers in terms of maintenance. Daventry Town Council audited their trees through a software program which worked very well; there should be emphasis on the highways service doing its own audits.

Daventry Town Council takes the management of its tree stock very seriously and regularly inspects and surveys trees on land owned by the Town Council. Working with our contractor the Town Council is continually mapping its trees, recording age, height, species, health and required works. This is viewed by the Town Council as good practice and has noted that other landowners (i.e. Highways) do not survey or map trees on their land, which results in trees being felled rather than being retained through remedial arboricultural works. Also, by surveying trees and maintaining a record you can easily identify areas for replanting or planting. Key issues are not to plant in areas that will in the future cause problems to nearby structures, as the tree will always be felled in favour of retaining the structure.

A Tree Policy should ensure a sustainable programme of proactive surveying, conservation and detailed criteria for the decision to fell a tree. It should also identify areas for re-planting and new planting to ensure the re-planting and new planting is sustainable, provides long term benefits and no risk of being felled due to nearby structures. A Tree Policy should ensure a sustainable programme of proactive surveying, conservation and detailed criteria for the decision to fell a tree. It should also identify areas for re-planting and new planting to ensure the re-planting and new planting is sustainable, provides long term benefits and no risk of being felled due to nearby structures.

To aid cohesive working between all stakeholders, create a forum that meets annually or bi annually to ensure consistency throughout the WNC area by giving advice to Parishes and sharing good practice.

Eastonneston Parish Council

More native trees planted in appropriate locations through the area to increase canopy cover, reduce air pollution and provide areas of woodland for people to enjoy. No more removal of hedgerows. More trees specifically planted along roadsides. Maintenance of trees in Conservation Areas prioritised

To support good infrastructure design and avoid or reduce conflict, be specific about the detail of planting schemes, with clarity of maintenance procedures and enforcement. Have effective enforcement.

All contributions to the Tree Policy and Strategy and West Northants Strategic Plan be utterly devoid of difficult language, and over-complicated ways to respond. That is, it is currently very difficult for the lay person to respond to your publications.

Weston and Weedon Parish Council

Castle Mound is the Parish Council's primary focus as far as trees are concerned, because of its historical importance and its value as an amenity and asset for the community.

The Parish Council also reports and notes any trees on the highway that it perceives could be dangerous.

Barby & Olney Parish Council

The Parish Council's main concern is identifying tree ownership, and which authority should be carrying out maintenance on the trees.

Brixworth Parish Council

The Parish Council hopes that the Policy and Strategy would provide clear and easily accessible guidance that could be used; the parish council is working hard to achieve net zero carbon but needed guidance. There is an urgent need to sequester carbon and the tree canopy is an obvious opportunity to do this. Within Brixworth the Parish Council has an ambitious plan to plant trees and hedgerows to futureproof old canopy. For such an ancient settlement the Parish has relatively few old or ancient trees and there has been little tree succession planning within the confines of the village. With the increasing weather challenges in the forms of storms and rainfall it is imperative that all is thinking ahead and planting to allow for any disease or damage to the tree canopy. There are often planning applications granted to remove trees from land and properties for good reason however, the requirement to replace any trees felled within the conservation area appears to be difficult to measure or enforce. According to the committee on climate change the UK needs 1.5 billion more trees to reach its zero carbon emissions and the UK Government has a target to plant around some 30,000 hectares of woodland by the end of 2024. Northamptonshire, as a largely rural area needs to be taking a large and leading approach to make sure we are working towards a zero-carbon target. With the storm pattern as is   trees are lost faster than they can be replanted. Maintenance and monitoring of the existing canopy must form part of the tree strategy. There is one dedicated resource for this and even though there appears to be money in the budget for an additional resource this is still far short of what is required. There is a need to ensure there is an appropriate, effective and efficient way of recording tree planting to ensure the net gain is achieved for tree numbers in the county.

The importance of tree planting is recognised as a means of reducing water run-off and thus providing a natural means of mitigating flood risk, as a way of enhancing and

protecting biodiversity (utilising native species) to tackle the biodiversity emergency, as a way to providing recreation and health benefits.

The Climate Change Act 2008 and amended 2019: includes encouraging activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or remove greenhouse gas from the atmosphere as well as making provision about adaptation to climate change. The Environment Act 2021 will have implication on the biodiversity crisis as well as implications for air quality and the dependant health benefits of a healthy biosphere. The UK Forestry Standard 2017 applies to all UK forests and woodlands and whilst it probably has little implication for the parish of Brixworth, it may well have implication with the county as a whole to ensure woodland operation and activities are sustainable.

Any infrastructure or build will include embodied carbon. All planning should include a full calculation of the embodied carbon so that there can be a clear and evidenced calculation of the impact on the environment. An example would be phase one of the northern relief roads. According to the officer's report the climate impact of this was deemed to be negligible which clearly cannot be the case. Without full understanding of the impact of infrastructure design it will be impossible to make mitigating plans, including the extent of increase to the tree canopy required. There are still developments being built particularly within the Sustainable Urban Extension (SUEs) that often have inadequate green space and lack of trees. Developments need to be built with 'green lungs' as part of the masterplan. Our view is there is an opportunity for wider use of Supplementary Planning Documents SPDs) which could be used to address these issues. Every opportunity to plant a tree should be taken but clearly there needs to be appropriate planning to ensure the right trees are sited in the right locations. There have been instances of the wrong trees planted, in particular in urban setting that are clearly too big for their location so result in problems as they mature. Local councils should be engaged with and supported by the tree strategy: many parish councils are fearful of tree maintenance responsibilities and shy away from increasing their canopy cover.

It is key that all are aligned – the Tree Policy and Strategy must be part of the Climate Strategic Plan and also should inform any planning policy. It needs to be practical, accessible, easy to interpret and provide clear guidance.

More resource would be available to provide guidance, education, support and expertise. More should be done to engage with volunteers who for whatever reason chose not to involve WNC. Transparency of agendas and careful consideration on how the council choses to structure itself will ensure trees, biodiversity and the climate emergency are given full and appropriate focus.

Dodford Parish Meeting

Within the Parish there are not any trees which are owned or maintained by the Parish Meeting, this being the responsibility of private landowners. We do however support tree planting and hedging initiatives in planning applications and are of course in full

support of the worldwide need to plant trees to help reverse climate change. The practicalities of mass tree planting seem fraught with red tape, since anything other than planting on council or highways owned land transfers this responsibility to private landowners, mainly farmers also committed to maximising food output yields from their land. Farmers are already under pressure to provide wildlife margins around arable fields which reduce yields, and it seems unlikely that many would further commit to large swathes of land being planted with trees. The Parish Meeting applauds the vast tree planting programme we have seen recently along the cuttings and embankments of the new A45 Daventry Development Link Road; however, one also has to consider the contradiction of this in relation to the corresponding tree losses resulting from the ongoing expansion of Daventry.

Boughton Parish Council

Trees underpin green infrastructure, they are exceptional carbon stores, precious habitats and a natural beauty. o We should have more ambition to grow the "urban forest". London manages to achieve 20% of the city being covered with trees, making it 3rd in a country-wide league table, after Surry at 31% and Exeter at 20.5%. Camden is in the Top Ten most tree covered area of England. Health benefits & cost savings. A report by Forest Research reports that visits to woodlands boosts mental health and is estimated to save £141million in treatment costs annually in England. It is reported that the value over the next 100 years is estimated to be £1billion for the mental health benefits of street trees, alone. Whilst National Planning Policy will largely dictate new developments, WNC should be innovative and utilise their power from the outset. The Tree Policy should be factored in when agreeing s.106 agreements and applying planning conditions. Overall green infrastructure should be delivered in excess of the minimum planning standards.

The Local Plan should include the Tree Policy, so it is incorporated into the 30,000 houses to be delivered by the spatial options. When agreeing large scale development consideration should be given to woodland areas to provide wildlife habitats and mitigate flooding (not just open space with a simple LEAP/NEAP). New development planning conditions should refer to the Tree Policy and enforce:- Replacement of trees where they have been felled for development, even if there is no TPO. Specialist horticultural advice sought on plant species to reduce flooding. Despite Buckton Fields complying with planning standards there is very little tree canopy. The inflation basis sits dry whilst the open space pools with water on boggy land. Protection of existing canopy cover, mature trees and iconic views:

- Extend conservation areas
- Grant more TPOs on worthy trees Flooding - Despite seasonal flooding evident on Devonshire Close/Howard Lane and Boughton pocket Park residents feel they have no avenue to address this as the surrounding fields are privately owned.

Consider specific environmental officers to work with local communities to provide advice as to how to deal with flooding issues. Possible grants may also be beneficial.

Woodland - The National Forest Inventory reveals that only 5% of Northants' 8000 hectares are covered in woodland. The Environment Bill 2021 is aiming for 12% woodland cover in England by 2050. Work with land owners where fields are deemed low grade pasture, to see increased planting and woodland creation.   Consider woodland provisions as part of s.106 agreements to improve health and wellbeing, reduce NHS costs to health services and protect the natural beauty of the land.

The Tree Policy and Strategy support good infrastructure design and avoid (or reduce) conflict by having sections in relation to flooding, traffic and pollution, rambling/dog walking etc, green belt protection, privacy and property values

The plan should take into account effective environmental planning

There should be cross departmental meetings or working parties to ensure open communication, shared targets and concerns and engagement with key partners

Northampton Town Council – Environmental Services Committee

Planting new trees: There are areas in Northampton town which are almost without any trees at all, some of which would rate highly on the criteria of deprivation, poor health and wellbeing, in addition to zero canopy cover. These should be a priority for planting, though I guess tree planting would be more expensive in some of these areas (e.g., due to the area being high density housing, with small pavements) than the easier places to plant, such as current green areas whether parks or grass verges on roads.

Managing current trees: introducing the CAVAT tool and publicising this to the public would help make people aware of an economic component to the value of trees. Also publicising a broader 'pro-tree' campaign by WNC is essential – e.g., to include the 1] climate change, 2] reducing air pollution, and 3] increased sustainability of wildlife diversity reasons for valuing trees. Overall, I should like to see a tree planting program supported by sustainability focused and ambitious West Northants Council tree policy. E.g. – adequate urban tree planting can reduce town temperatures by 3-6 deg C, mitigating one of the effects of worsening climate change, and the associated physical and mental ill-health effects of high levels of heat.

Introduce use of the CAVAT tool – and publicise and enforce it. CAVAT introducing and enforcement would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees. WNC's Tree Policy and Strategy needs to include a requirement that all components of the Strategic Plan and other Council policies stipulate that a consideration of tree planting be included, and for developments

that involve renovation of areas are 100% required to significantly increase the number of trees in the area - e.g., the proposed Market Square and Abington Street plans have together c. £13m to spend. A defined percentage of this spend should be on 'greening the town' initiatives, including tree planting (e.g., £250,000 - leaving £12,750,000 for concrete, paving, seating, water feature, etc.)

A dedicated set of web pages on WNC website - This could have a library section on trees, their benefits, etc.; a news section on plans for planting or maintenance, resources for the public to obtain low cost, appropriate trees for them to plant on their property, and for schools etc. to get batches of 'whips' that can safely be planted on their property, etc. An annual or more frequent conference bringing together all the groups you mention in the question.

Kingsthorpe Parish Council

As a new Parish Council, Kingsthorpe did not have many assets in terms of trees but welcomes the new policy and acknowledged the challenge West Northamptonshire have with addressing the urban and rural landscapes. Historically trees were an issue with roots getting in the way of footpaths, for example, Trinity Avenue as trees were viewed as obstacles.

There needs to be a continued effort with replanting in vacant tree pits where possible.

There needs to be clear guidance in the policy regarding what point trees needed to be removed and replaced as well as consideration for providing canopy and green spaces, planting the right tree in the right place.

The Parish Council asks that WNC considers planting in urban areas, with an aspiration to improve St David's area. The tree planting strategy should be developed that replacement trees will be required to be planted on site where appropriate at a rate of two new trees for each tree lost . Reinstatement of tree-lined streets and increase the area of, and more accessibility to green spaces. Planting of underused urban areas across the Parish to benefit wildlife, biodiversity, enhance areas, and public amenity. Concentrate on urban densely populated areas, so the health and well-being of residents is improved. Ensure the policy is considered when planning and delivering infrastructure projects. Ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and compatible with highways. Encourage tree planting to help mitigate and adapt climate change. The Tree Policy should give direction and guidance on how to protect trees. Investigate funding to create a tree corridor. Promote the policy and community grants available. Produce a comprehensive Trees Policy Strategy as part of the Local Plan

West Hunsbury Parish Council

The lack of maintenance was the parish council's biggest concern; hedgerows are also becoming overgrown. Where trees had been regrown or self-seeded, some areas continued as part of the ongoing maintenance of trees. Where trees had been Free-grown or self-seeded, some areas had also become overcrowded.

West Hunsbury Parish Council is concerned about trees planted as hedges that are just left to grow. Photographic evidence was provided to the Task and Finish Group of trees that were over 3 meters high and out of control.

Syresham Parish Council

The local highway authority has the ability to require the property owner to take action. Where trees are planted on highway land and the parish council has not specifically agreed that the planting was done on its behalf, the parish council has no responsibility for those trees.

Little Houghton Parish Council

It is not clear which authority has responsibility for which tree in the parish. There is no room for new trees, as well as gaps in hedgerows. The parish council would like to see some sort green corridors between the villages.

Holcot Parish Council

a) Northamptonshire is a rural County, the fact that Northamptonshire has been administratively split up does not mean the County's countryside Environment should find itself isolated dependent on which Administration is in place. The boundaries should not make a difference, active co-operation complimentary to each other / not contradictory should be the Policy / Philosophy.

b) Trees take years to grow, mature and produce Seed etc. There is little regard paid to the growth cycle, excuses are found to cut down / remove long established trees / hedges / 'wild areas' because in our 'Planning culture' there is now a presumption of 'Development Approval' and little regard for the Value of the existing Environment and Wildlife that has taken decades / centuries to adapt to the surroundings.

c) Planting of Trees by Local Authorities in Towns ends up with a 'monoculture' of the same tree type, planted for picturesque blossom of no benefit to insects / bees etc. because of little nectar / pollen value from the variety propagated commercially. The majesty of our large trees is almost absent from large areas of the Towns and when they get old a presumption that, for 'Safety reasons', they have to be removed when a little bit of care and maintenance would be us with many more years allowing younger trees to acquire their maturity to be an immediate replacement when the old tree eventually dies, even in this state it is a Wildlife resource.

d) Trees symbolise Life, Nature, Humanity in the local area. A complete contrast to Urban Concrete Jungles, the decay and inclination towards people having depression / hopelessness. Improving air quality serves to compliment the 'Health and Well-being' Policy. 2 e) Towns and Villages without Trees and Hedges / Shrubs etc. are artificial / Sterile Environments. The exposed soil areas around increased use of Trees / Hedges help control surface water run off / prevent storm drainage overflow with the consequence that Anglian Water (and other Water Authorities) can justify releasing untreated Raw Sewage Discharges. f) Any planting of trees / shrubs and hedges MUST reflect an effort to build up and encourage insect life (not just bees) which has been decimated by overuse / inappropriate spraying of Insecticides by Farmers etc. The loss of insect food supply for Birds has contributed to the sharp drop in their numbers.

Experience of a number of Ash Trees in the hedges was provided. A large Ash, about 140 years old died completely, others suffered from Ash Dieback. This meant picking up the Cost of Felling a diseased tree, and removal of the timber etc. Cost was several £thousand, not covered by Insurance but required due to risk to Road Users. Key point being Tree Disease required this work but no financial help available. Many Householders who have a diseased tree would have great financial difficulty in paying for the tree removal, therefore the diseased tree STAYS and continues providing a source of infection to other trees. There has to be a way that the Local Authority can assist in the removal of trees that are infectious / diseased to stop the spread of the contagion. A Grant, a Loan, Subsidy, Recovery of Cost through Council Tax over several Years, Council 'Tree Surgeon Team' provided for the work?

Mass tree planting without recognition of the need to diversify away from monoculture and beneficial varieties for Insects etc. would just compound the present problems. Limited reasoning to provide 'carbon dioxide removal' is short sighted and a waste of Opportunity provided by the money / resources / investment that is our attempt to address Climate Change. The rapidity of Climate Change on the Environment needs the foresight to lessen the burden of the existing damage to the Environment by intelligent Planting to stave off the decline, provide an environment in the County to act as a buffer for Wildlife which includes insects. Mass tree planting is a first step, the obligation remains to nurture to maturity these trees which logically includes a budget to Fund this work. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) can provide the long term funding of this Environmental Infrastructure of the County, not just West Northants limited area. Policy Co-operation with other Local Authorities is the most efficient and effective way to achieve this.

Value of trees must be placed on their age, maturity, benefits to insects etc.

The biggest issue with 'Street Trees' is the Council's total lack of priority given to address the multitude of unrepaired cracked, lifted paving slabs in paved areas near trees. Fix the paving and most of the Public Issues go away, maintain the trees so that low level suckering / branches are removed promptly instead of left for years until the number of

Complaints reaches the level to trigger a 'Work Order' but have built up a resentment in the Community. Introduce a specific Bye Law to penalise those who wilfully damage trees etc. and prosecute the Vandals (Parents as well) until it is second nature for the Community to protect its local Environment and it's contribution fighting Climate Change. Removal should only be considered as a very last resort because of the value placed upon a Mature Tree having a greater CO_2 removal potential than planting a small, young replacement.

Developers will submit Plans to remove a Stand of trees because they are inconvenient, no Value placed upon their maturity and CO_2 Removal potential compared to a proposed tree planting scheme as a mitigation to the Mature Trees destruction. Planners are not factoring in the loss of CO_2 Removal and the time for the mitigation planting to achieve the existing level of CO_2 removal before felling, which of course is only half of the equation as you need to ALSO ADD the increased potential maturity of the existing trees over the same time frame for CO_2 removal. Example : - Felling of 20 assorted maturity trees would require planting not just 20 tree whips (in mitigation) but in fact the impact is far more dramatic : - Young trees absorb far less CO_2 than mature trees.(29) It can take decades for them to absorb large quantities of CO_2. Scientists have found that "in more than 30 years, the regrowth of secondary forests in the Brazilian Amazon has offset less than 10 per cent of emissions from the loss of old-growth forests".(30) The carbon offset that old-growth trees provide cannot be quickly and easily replaced simply by planting new seedlings.

Recognition of the significance of the Anglian Water Region being classified as an area of serious water stress is required.

This Rural County does not have any idea about the location and numbers of major, mature trees in the County. Suggest Commissioning an extensive Tree Survey via Parish and Town Councils, Volunteers etc. organised to upload their Survey Results of the Tree Population / Location onto a Website, don't limit it just for West Northants, make it capable to cover Countywide. This data can provide areas where the tree loss / absence can be addressed, wildlife corridors built up (gaps filled) and the large areas available for tree planting on the extensive land acreage in Countryside Highway Verges. There are Grants available for large scale acreage Planting, the verges provide this land area.

There needs to be long term projects with 10-year commitments for a Tree Policy.

Consideration needs to be given to Elm Tree protection from Dutch Elm disease.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Most of the 165 civil parishes in West Northamptonshire have a parish council of some description and are experts of their local areas; they are best placed to consult when

the Council came to deciding where to plant new trees. They will be invaluable with work on local nature recovery strategies since their purpose was to look at biodiversity at a local level. The news of the reinstatement of a Tree Officer was welcomed .

The website www.righttrees4cc.org.uk is a helpful resource for planners, developers and ecologists when deciding which trees to plant in which area, in the face of climate change.

Hawksmore Learning Trust, Marie Weller Primary School, Towcester

Grounds maintenance at the school is responsible of the few trees within the grounds of the school and would welcome any assistance in the siting of new trees on the grounds of the Radstone Primary School.

Rectory Farm Primary School

Details of our perspectives and priorities for the tree management are to ensure trees are maintained, cut and canopy cover is kept to a minimum. Trees are maintained, to ensure health and safety and to limit the risk of large falling branches, but also to a health and safety stand of limiting risk of damage to properties in bad weather, such as storms and high winds. Where possible limit and manage the growth of trees to a height restriction to reduce the damage caused by roots and over hanging branches.

To help avoid conflict, WNC to take into consideration the boundaries which the trees create. To help maintain these boundaries to a high standard, cut branches and maintain the trees. Take into consideration fences and property boundaries which the trees may encroach and possible damage caused to pathways, gardens, houses and roads from large trees and their roots.

A wider view to communication within all sectors and opening channels showing opportunities and a clear definition of stakeholders' responsibilities.

Save Our Street Trees Northampton

Saveourstreettrees.org has been running since 2016 with the aim of promoting, protecting and (re)planting street trees in Northampton. It has been working with councillors and council officers, as well as partners such as The Woodland Trust and the urban forester at Woodland Dwelling, to engage with residents about urban trees, and retain and plant more street trees in the town.

It considers street trees are any trees located on roads, highways, pavements, or grass verges in urban areas and encourages and supports tree planting projects in urban parks, and urban community orchards. With more than 80 per cent of UK residents living in the built environment, access to green spaces and/or green views has never been more important.

Save our Trees would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment and reinstatement of Northampton street trees. It feels strongly that valuable urban trees should be replaced in situ when taken out. Trees are not being routinely replaced in Northampton. Research conducted for the Group by the University of Northampton in 2019 showed 58% of street trees had disappeared in Far Cotton alone in the last 50 years. There is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

The Group would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees. In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable. There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in Northampton, which will measure current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting. There should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance. Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.

The following legislation and guidance is most relevant:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024
- The National Planning Policy Framework contains many references to trees in planning.
- https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/common-sense-risk-management-of-trees/
- https://www.tdag.org.uk/ has several very good research documents about urban trees and planning.
- https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/tree-strategies/
- The Occupiers Liability Act and Health and Safety at Work Act for risk management of trees by the local authority.
- The Town and Country Planning Act has the statutory obligation to protect and plant trees by the local authority, also administering TPOs and assessing planning applications.

It would be good to tie any work into the upcoming obligations under the Duty to Consult England Trees Action Plan (above) with any existing work of Save Our Street Trees.

There should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge

benefits trees bring to people and wildlife. Studies have shown urban trees boost social cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour and littering, as well as improve air quality, and provide biodiverse corridors that breathe life into urban areas. Recent research shows people who have trees within walking distance of their homes also have a lower risk of developing psychological distress.

The right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Lack of regular maintenance is a key area of concern for residents. Environmental contractors should be tasked to regularly maintain and carefully manage Northampton Street trees wherever possible. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential problems further down the line.

Alternatives to felling should be made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them.

There should be an Arboriculture Officer(s) at the heart of plans. We believe West Northants Council's Tree Strategy and Projects Officer role needs to be reinstated and funds put aside to ensure that there is a key, expert contact at council level to oversee all tree policies, planning and planting.

A strategy/policy adopted across the council will work across multiple departments such as highways and housing with more coherent working, planning and decision making around tree management. This will help influence decision making at a more strategic level, including budget commitments, and increase protection of existing trees on developments, as well as boost tree planting and management.

Good strategic planning requires councils to have a holistic view of future development and growth across its area, and importantly have a good understanding of the impact this will have on residents. Key to this is striking a balance between the need for new development with the protection and enhancement of the environment and quality of life. Responsibility for hitting local and national climate targets, as well as delivering public health (especially mental health) and social care have become, and will continue to be, some of the highest priorities for councils. A good Tree Policy and Strategy is key to this. It gives the council a better understanding of how urban tree planting can help deliver against many of its objectives – for example, enhancing wellbeing, beneficial heating/cooling effects, reducing road wear, etc. A clear tree strategy will define how and where trees need to be maintained and planted, the cost benefits and how this will deliver against overall strategy.

There should be a single point of contact for tree issues i.e., Tree Officer(s), would provide the nexus to encourage joined-up thinking about tree policy and strategy. This person/s would have the necessary overview to coordinate between stakeholders. Engagement with a Tree Forum would also allow residents and community groups to have their voices heard and considered, allowing for greater cohesion, and understanding between residents' concerns and council decision making. Beneficial for Local Tree Champions or community engagement officers for trees.

Save Our Trees recommended an Urban Tree List:

Large Canopied Species

- Oak Family - Red, turkey, English
- Elm – Ulus New Horizon – disease resistant
- Maples (Acer) – freemanii Autumn Blaze, Freemanii Armstrong, rubrum
- Sycamore
- Beech – **needs a verge**
- Horse chestnut – Carnea (Red), Yellow Buckeye, Indian
- Hornbeam
- Tulip
- Sweet Chestnut
- Turkish Hazel
- Magnolia Graniflora – **Needs a lot of sunlight so not in between buildings**
- Dawn Redwood – **good for centres of roundabouts**
- Nothofagus – Antartic beech – **needs a verge**
- London plane
- Lime – platyphllos, euchlora – **NOT x europeae which whilst cheaper produces a lot of epicormic growth so is very expensive to maintain.**

Medium Canopied Tree

- Birch – many cultivars – **needs grassed verges, struggles in street pits**
- Field Maple, including varieties Elegant, Elsrijk, William Caldwell - **specifically for streets**
- Maple – Acer cappadocicum aureum, platanoidies
- Ginko biloba
- Liquidamber
- Magnolia – Galaxy, Heaven scent, kobus, spectrum
- Pine – Scots
- Cherry (prunus) – Avium plena, x schmittii, tai haku

Small Canopied Trees

- Amelanchier – Robin Hill, Ballerina, Lamarckii
- Maple – acer griseum

- Judas Tree – Cercis siliquastrum
- Magnolia – susan, star wars
- Cherry (prunus) – accolade, amanogawa, hillieri spire, kanzan, maackii, pandora, sargentii, shirotae

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

The Housing Revenue Account land which is managed by NPH on behalf of the Council. He advised that areas of responsibility are split into 2 areas:

1) Trees in gardens, which under the tenancy agreement (WNC's tenancy) are the responsibility of the tenant; and

2) Trees in communal areas which are managed by NPH and the responsibility is the Councils which is managed by NPH, who have a 4-year cycle of inspection, each tree being categorised into essential, planned, no work required. All survey work is carried out by a qualified arboriculturist.

In respect of point 1, where a tree is identified as a potential problem or danger, NPH will inspect to discharge the "duty of care" and where considered to be potentially dangerous, NPH will fund and undertake the work. Regarding possible changes to the tenancy agreement, NPH is keen to be involved in any review process.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity. We own over 1000 woods all over the UK, covering more than 20,000 hectares. Its aim is to see a UK rich in trees and woods. In Northampton, it has been working with the Council and its predecessor authority and with a local community group, Save our Street Trees, to help local people value their street trees and get more planted in the town. It believes that all councils should have a trees and woodland strategy, so we very much support the work that the Task and Finish group is undertaking. It is discussing with senior management at West Northants Council a bid that they have made to the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund to help provide staffing support for development of a tree strategy including mapping of the current tree canopy cover and public engagement and then delivery of the recommendations of the strategy.

The Woodland Trust believes that the best tree strategies include trees on both public and private land and thus include management of the council's own trees and woods and also trees and woods on development sites, which links with the planning system. In early 2020, the Woodland Trust published its Emergency Tree Plan https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2020/01/emergency-tree-plan which outlines how it believes trees and woods can contribute to tackling both the climate and the biodiversity emergencies. During the Covid pandemic and resultant lockdowns it also became very apparent how much people see walking in woodland and seeing trees

as vital for protecting their mental and physical health. Its Emergency Tree Plan sets out a number of points that the Trust would like to see included in a local authority tree strategy or equivalent document:

1. *Measure the current tree canopy cover, either just on council land or across the council area and set ambitious targets for its expansion*

2. *Identify and map ancient woods, veteran trees and others of conservation importance and ensure they are on relevant national inventories and ensure that you have planning policies in place to give them the highest possible levels of protection. Further information on the importance of ancient woods and ancient trees in the planning system can be found at: https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/06/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland*

3. *Carry out an audit of council land to find suitable locations for woodland creation or other tree planting. Encourage partner organisations (e.g., the NHS, housing associations etc) to carry out similar exercises*

4. *Set out the contribution that trees and woodland and their expansion can have in meeting the Council's climate and biodiversity commitments and targets (e.g., getting to net zero carbon).*

5. *Assess what sources of funding are available to implement your tree cover expansion targets and set annual budgets to ensure that the necessary funding is made available*

6. *Ensure that enough qualified staff and/or contractor support are available to implement your targets*

7. *Commit to planting with UK sourced and grown trees and consider setting up a community tree nursery, either yourself, or in conjunction with neighbouring councils.*

8. *Commit to procuring UK sourced timber from FSC certified sources and encourage use of locally produced timber where possible.*

9. *Promote active involvement of community groups, schools and volunteers to help deliver your tree canopy expansion targets*

10. *Look to amend your planning policies to ensure that there is at least 30% tree canopy cover in all new development.   Until this can be put into local plan policy, commit to working with developers to encourage them to maximise tree canopy cover, particularly in new housing developments.*

11. Support healthy lifestyles by promoting access to woodland for relaxation, exercise and community development.

12. *Support agroforestry by working with the council's tenant farmers and with private landowners to seek out opportunities for tree planting and woodland creation.*

Some other issues suggested for inclusion in the Tree Policy and Strategy include:

1. At the beginning of the document setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife

2. Set out a presumption in favour of retaining trees wherever possible and clear policies on circumstances in which the Council would not consider removing a tree (e.g., where it is blocking out satellite TV reception or dropping leaves onto a parked car).

3. Include a policy for replacement of any non-woodland trees that unavoidably have to be removed. We advocate specifying at least two or three to one replacement and higher ratios may be appropriate for older trees. For example, some councils have adopted a formula whereby the number of replacement trees increases in proportion to the diameter or circumference of the tree that is being removed.

4. Have policies which set out clearly your approach to tree and woodland preservation orders and trees in conservation areas, in respect of those aspects where local authorities have discretion.

5. Have policies which encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where this is practical. This can be particularly valuable when seeking to create new woodland adjacent to existing ancient woodland, as natural regeneration encourages species which inhabit the ancient wood to migrate over time into the new woodland.

Relevant statutory obligations: Government launched a consultation paper on tree protection in which they floated the idea of tree strategies becoming obligatory for principal councils in England. In the England Trees Action Plan (2021-24) published in 2021, it states:

The enriched treescape we need across England will often be created with the help of local authorities. Local tree and woodland strategies offer an opportunity for local

communities to decide where new trees will be planted and how existing trees will be protected. Local tree and woodland strategies will also dovetail with Local Nature

Recovery Strategies to help target woodland creation opportunities.

The following is listed as an action:

1.12. Publish guidance for local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland strategies.

This guidance has not yet been published but, when it is, it will obviously be an important source of information as to what the Government would like to see included in council tree strategies and hence highly relevant to the one that West Northants is developing.

The Trees Action Plan also includes a "Call to Action" for everyone in England to work with Government to help them deliver their long-term vision for trees and woodlands in England. In particular, the call for action asks that people and organisations:

- Apply for grants for establishing and managing trees and woodlands.

- Access more and better advice and guidance on establishing and managing trees

  and woodlands.

- Work with the Woodland Trust (i.e., Government) to unlock more private finance to invest in trees and woodlands.

- Plant trees particularly where they make the most difference - for water, biodiversity, climate resilience and close to where people live, work and play.

- Responsibly enjoy our wonderful, wooded landscapes

Also relevant to the tree strategy is the Environment Act (2021), which creates a requirement for at least 10% biodiversity net gain to be achieved in new development via the planning system and it imposes a requirement that upper tier councils develop in 2022-23 local nature recovery strategies: Government worked with five councils on pilots for the new LNRS and we understand they are shortly to publish guidance outlining how the LNRS programme is going to be rolled out across the country.

While most of the Environment Act's provisions came into force on 9th of January the duty on local authorities to consult on the felling of street trees will be implemented sometime in mid to late 2022. Prior to this Defra intends to hold a public consultation on guidance for the duty to consult provision sometime in Spring 2022. This guidance when published will assist local authorities in their preparations for being ready to implement the duty when a date is set. The guidance will provide timescales and advice on how to interpret the requirements of the duty imposed. This guidance will be in addition to the Forestry Commission's Operations Note: Advice to local authorities on evidencing exemptions to the need for a felling licence.

The Woodland Trust understands that there are also provisions in the Highways Act about street trees and in the Public Liability Act about liabilities created by falling tree

branches etc, but I am sure your council trees officers would be able to supply suitable references to include in your tree strategy if felt appropriate.

Trees, and particularly those in densely populated areas, have an ability to enhance the quality of people's lives in many ways and they are being increasingly recognised as important in providing a range of what are called "ecosystem services": helping to reduce the danger of surface water flooding, improving air quality, providing shade for farm animals, and reducing the "urban heat island" effect in towns and cities. However, particularly in densely populated areas, trees can sometimes become a subject of controversy and even low-level conflict between residents or between residents and the Council. Having strong policies in your tree strategy can help to provide a policy framework within which such disputes can be resolved. It is important that the Tree Strategy sets out clearly why trees are generally beneficial to local people but also sets out circumstances in which the Council will not remove a tree or where some other form of management (such as pruning or pollarding) may be the best course of action. This will help council tree officers, local councillors, or contractors in dealing with the many tree related queries that they get from residents. Having strong policies on how the Council will administer tree preservation orders or how they will deal with instances of trees on private land causing issues, will also be helpful. A key principle in including trees as part of infrastructure design is to design them in from the start, to avoid situations in which trees or other green infrastructure are added later as an afterthought. Some councils have adopted urban design guides to specify how various aspects of the urban environment can be blended in with each other to maximise benefits. It is particularly important that trees are considered as a key component of new housing development and as mentioned earlier, the Woodland Trust advocates that all areas of new development should have at least 30% tree canopy cover. The Woodland Trust has also produced a guide to residential development. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/01/residential-developments-and-trees

Adequate provision should be made in council budgets for management of any trees and woods that are on council land. It would be good if your tree strategy could specify a cycle of proactive inspection and management of street and other non-woodland trees every few years to ensure that any issues and identified and dealt with at an early stage. In the case of woodland, the Trust would recommend that the Council has a management plan in place for each of their woods and preferably has them registered with an accreditation body such as the Forest Stewardship Council, which will ensure that management plans are assessed against nationally and internationally recognised standards.

Involvement of the community wherever possible in tree and woodland management is something that we would like to see encouraged in your tree strategy. The Woodland Trust has worked closely with the Save Our Street Trees community group in Northampton to get more street trees planted in the town and on wider tree related

issues: we understand that your task and finish group will be talking to them as part of your development of the Tree Strategy.   Involvement of local schools in tree planting and in visits to areas of woodland can also be beneficial in encouraging an appreciation of trees in young people and possibly reducing the possibility of vandalism of newly planted trees in the future.

The draft Tree Policy & Strategy be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents: Spatial objective 2 in the emerging West Northants Strategic plan (for which a consultation on spatial options was carried out at the end of 2021) states:

Objective 2: Green Infrastructure and Natural Capital

To conserve natural habitats and species, provide net gains in biodiversity and enhance West Northamptonshire's network of natural capital and green infrastructure by improving existing areas and designing green and blue infrastructure into development

The Group believes that the proposed Trees and Woodland Strategy provides an opportunity to give more detail on how trees and woods as part of new development can contribute to achievement of this spatial objective, given that trees and woods are an important component of green infrastructure. Spatial Objective 1 on climate change is also relevant, as trees and woods can both capture carbon emissions and enable adaptation to climate change that is already occurring.

Policy BN3 of the West Northants Core Strategy (2014) provides existing policy on the importance of protecting ancient woodland and aged and veteran trees but it will need to be updated to reflect the wording in para 175c of the revised National Planning Policy Framework which now requires that any development impacting on these irreplaceable habitats should be "wholly exceptional", which is a much stronger test than that applied in Policy BN3.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of trees amongst the public and particularly an awareness of the need to sequester carbon as part of tackling climate change and getting councils and the country to net zero carbon. For example, we are aware that the former Northampton Borough Council had a policy of getting the town to net zero carbon by 2030. Government has a 2050 net zero target and we stated earlier how in their England Trees Action Plan they state a commitment to working with councils and other stakeholders to get many millions more trees planted.   The Government's Independent   Advisory   Panel   on   climate   change   has   stated https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/land-use-policies-for-a-net-zero-uk that in order for the Government to have any chance of meeting its 2050 net zero carbon target, at least 90 million trees will need to be planted in the UK every year. In pursuance of these

government targets, statutory agencies such as Natural England and the Forestry Commission have put in place a range of grants to encourage tree planting in both woodland and non-woodland contexts. The Government website contains a list of grants that are available https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table but new ones are being added on a regular basis. Some of these schemes also include allocations of funding for ongoing management costs, at least for the first few years after planting. We believe it is important that the Council has an officer of appropriate seniority who is able to ensure that the action plan in your tree strategy is delivered and that relevant grant aid is applied for. Such an officer could review the contracts that the Council has in relation to tree planting and maintenance and ensure that these are delivering best value for the Council and its residents. They could also, through working with relevant cabinet members, help to ensure that the tree strategy is owned by and delivered via all departments of the Council. In some councils, this process is helped by making the tree strategy part of the Council's major policy framework, which would require that the strategy is agreed and adopted at a Full Council meeting. The Woodland Trust also offers grant aid support for tree planting through our More Woods and More Hedges schemes, https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/trees-for-landowners-and-farmers which are mainly aimed at farmers and landowners but are also open to local authorities. As part of these schemes, the Woodland Trust also offers advice to landowners in return for a small contribution (usually 25%) towards the cost of the trees. Where councils work with the Woodland Trust find opportunities for planting on private land, the 25% contribution can be split between the Council and the landowner. For smaller areas of woodland planting by community groups or schools, the Woodland Trust also offers free community tree packs.

The Woodland Trust would like to see the tree strategy have a clear action plan which sets out what planting can be delivered, when and by whom and how it will be funded. The Trust would recommend that the Council through the action plan seeks to involve schools and community groups both in planting of new trees and woods and in ongoing management. Some councils have introduced schemes, for example, where people can sponsor a tree to be planted on a council owned grass verge outside their house. In other parts of the country, community woodland groups have been set up to manage (and even in some cases take on ownership of) local woods which are valued by local people.

The Woodland Trust suggested content for the West Northamptonshire Council tree policy and strategy:

- The Council should set out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
- Cover trees on public and private land
- Include woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside

- Set out a presumption in favour of retaining trees wherever possible and clear policies on circumstances in which the Council would not consider removing a tree
- Include a policy for replacement of any non-woodland trees that unavoidably have to be removed. We advocate specifying at least two or three to one replacement.
- Set out clearly your approach to tree and woodland preservation orders and trees in conservation areas
- Provide support and context for Local Plan policies on trees/woods
- Have policies which encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical.

The Woodland Trust provided support for building woodland and had worked with councils to create their tree policies previously and had created their own policy papers on Local Authority Tree Strategies and an Emergency Tree Plan for the UK to assist councils. The emergency tree plan into the tree policy and strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

Chartered Arboriculturist

Any policy needs to be driven by data, it is therefore important that the Council collects basic data on the tree under its management e.g., species composition, age, and size characteristics etc. Without this basic information it is difficult to manage your stock effectively, e.g., to deal with pest and disease outbreaks, to make long term planting decisions, to understand what tree works you spend your budget on so that when you issue contracts you know which rates are best for the works you require.

Before any policy is produced, it is important for the council to look at its existing policy frameworks and set out systematically how and when these can be improved, this will help your new Tree Policy officer work effectively and also see how other policy documents will fit.

The Arboriculturist also recommended that a canopy project is undertaken for the unitary at an early stage as this will be able to give you accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show you what potential there is for planting. A recent poor example is Gloucestershire Council who in October 2020 announced they would be planting 35 million trees over 10 years which then made it into a corporate strategy in February 2021. In an article on 1st July 2021 when it was pointed out they would need to plant 10,000 a day to meet this target did it start to unravel as potentially being overly ambitious, especially when by this date they had only planted 10,380 trees over an entire season !

A good canopy example is where Birmingham Council has worked with Birmingham Tree People to produce a canopy map that is open to the public, this is then informing targets. Such maps can be produced in 4 weeks, and can bring in information such as flooding, pollution etc and then allow the council to model where best to plant based on the outcomes it decides. It also allows you to incorporate failure rates, so can help show why maintenance is worth investing in. This type of map also allows you to look at either Ward or LSOA level and can provide numbers of trees based on final canopy size, which will then allow the authority to plan. Their map: www.uk.pg-cloud.com/BTP/

The same group is also using technology to inform the public of the benefits of trees, and this type of website can also show next inspection dates, works on order, which then can limit enquiries sent to officers: http://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/where-are-our-trees/ It is also really important to realise that planting is not the only way to meet any ambitious target its part of the answer. You also need to invest in management of existing stock and new stock to ensure that it grows to its full potential.

Statutory obligations and guidance are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area, and what implications they have. (For example, the England Tree Action Plan, the Environment Act 2021.) include:

> Planning Obligations via TPOs, Conservation Area notifications, and to look at tree related issues under planning.
>
> https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas
>
> Highway tree management operations note 51:-
>
> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highway-tree-management-operations-note-51
>
> Ability to gain funding for trees via community infrastructure levy, highways act S278 or section 38.
>
> Tree Production Innovation Fund:-
>
> https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-production-innovation-fund
>
> Environment Act – right to consultation on felling
>
> https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tree-and-woodlands-introducing-measures-for-felling-street-trees

Far too landscape design lead schemes are seen which look to squeeze too many trees into schemes for instant impact to sell properties or buildings. Longer term this then can become a burden for local authorities who adopt roads and parks as younger trees

need to be felled to allow others to mature. This is also a waste of limited resources as buying UK sourced trees is a challenge and this puts pressure to import trees which can then bring in pests and diseases into the country. A good "poor" example of this is in the central reservation and adjoining open spaces of the A4500 – Weedon Road at Foxfields, where pyrus chanticleer (flowering pear) has been planted. This is a small/medium tree which is short lived (40 years). This has been planted en-mass very close together, it would have been better to plant half as many trees but of a larger species such as elm, lime etc which once established should easily live for 100-200 years in these locations. Once lower branches were lifted these could easily be managed with the occasional deadwood without interfering with highway infrastructure. Within 20 years the Council will now be left with a bill to remove and replace these trees, better species choice in the design phase would have avoided this. It is therefore important that your new tree officer is allowed to influence such choices in future and is consulted on major schemes and any schemes where the council will be adopting land.

Also, the choice of trees on development sites can be limited as landscape architects have a limited palette of tree and these also tend to be smaller species. The benefits of trees are relative to their size, with larger tree providing more benefits. By having multiple schemes with the same trees, there is also a greater risk that pests and disease will then cause more trees to be lost, as has been seen with ash dieback recently.

By having a good policy document with a lot of different acceptable approaches to tree planting on new developments, can influence and ensure better design, as well as producing a tree'd landscape that will cost less for an authority to manage over its lifetime. Good practice examples of how this can be done can be found in documents such as TDAG (Trees and Design, Action Groups), tree in hard landscapes.

The council should look to adopt CAVAT as this will reduce the number of council trees lost to development and where they have to be lost will provide monetary funding which can be used for further tree planting across the Council.

It would also be beneficial for the council to adopt a system where trees on planning sites are lost they are either replaced on site, or a commuted sum given to the authority to plant on its land for the great public good. Bristol's tree replacement standard is now one of the most well-known since having been adopted by other councils across the UK (DM17: Development Involving Existing Green Infrastructure) page 20:-

> https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34520/SPD%20Final%20Doc%20Dec2012.pdf/daf75908-50fd-4138-afed-770310a6a431

A well-designed tree planting and engagement program will also be needed, as this can leverage funds into the council, work effectively with businesses and local groups. A well-designed program can also easily be turned into a sponsorship scheme to allow

residents and businesses to sponsor trees (you would already be planting), which will allow your revenue budgets to go further, good examples of this in practice are:-

https://www.bristol.gov.uk/museums-parks-sports-culture/treebristol-planting-trees-in-bristol

The Arbiculturist's experiences of working within the Authority are that the current contracts are poor value for money and the contracts limit your ability to effectively tender work to your advantage. In order for any new policy or strategy document to be effective these need to be looked at urgently or it will be very expensive to improve your tree management, planting and ultimately tree cover. Tree works both management and planting are carried out on day rates, and it is almost impossible to get the councils contractors to provide reasonable rates, we have seen rates on Penrhyn road double between years for the same planting, when if anything there should have reduced as the risk was lower once the first years pits were dug. In the first year of trying to gain a price for the work the initial contractor we were advised we had to use offered a day rate with no guarantee on how many trees could be planted. Most councils operate contracts with a set schedules of rates (SORS) for individual items for a period of 5-7 years, the opportunity to employ day rates when the council chooses, and also the opportunity to tender work. The reason for this is certain operations work better on SORS such as highway works, parks works if the job is small are usually done on SORs, but where works are greater it is usually more cost efficient to tender operations. In my 20 years of managing councils external tree teams the only times I have seen day rates effective for the council is where in a park a lot of low hanging branches need removing and using SORs for individual branch removal would be really high, and where an officer is on site to supervise and choose which branches need removing. At the moment the Council is paying higher rates to plant trees in highways than councils in London are paying. Working with local groups the Arbiculturist is now starting to experience similar problems/costs when looking to plant into parks, verges and schools and these groups are also being advised they have to use your set contractors, which he queries. Without getting to grips with these costs and also the variation it is impossible for groups to raise funds which would support what the council is doing. These groups have the ability to access money through grants not open to the council on its own, and also where there are government grants such as the Urban Tree Challenge fund the rates (which are reasonable for the operations) are so below what you are paying that your bids are unlikely to be a success when you compete with other councils.

There will need cross party-political backing to make a tree strategy effective and also senior officer support to ensure that it is enacted across council departments. Without this lead, it is likely that council silo working will mean opportunities are lost. Longer term there is the need for more than one Tree Strategy and Project Officer for the council to be effective, you will need further officers to better manage your contracts, tree planting and community engagement and also for fund raising and working with local groups.

The Chartered Arboriculturist recommends that a supplement salary be provided to the Tree Strategy and Projects officer as it was hard to recruit and retain talent, and the salary may not allow for an experienced individual.

The tree policy and strategy should be recognised as a journey and look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.
There is the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. Tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking. He alluded to issues with highways and emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.
The Arbiculturist recommends that the Council adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

Garden Organic

Garden Organic is a national charity that aimed to promote organic growing and biodiversity with over 60 years engagement with communities to give them empowerment to take action and get involved with waste and composting advice and food growth, by sharing experience within local communities. Garden Organic welcomed the tree policy and strategy and stressed the onus of the tree strategy to connect with processes to help residents and any challenges they had with tree maintenance, with trees impacting residents with planning and proximity issues. The tree policy should be pro-active with strong ambitions for appropriate new tree planting as well as sensible in its approach for the maintenance and care for existing trees. Trees as being an important factor in the wider biodiversity agenda being positive for wildlife, the wider environment and for people. Much of the work with national charity Garden Organic is about empowering people and communities with the confidence and skills to undertake positive environmental actions. Tree planting is obviously one such action but it's important that people feel confident to care for these trees, nurture them and support their growth. Communities need to feel to able to take pride in their green spaces and instigate tree planting activities as well as broader activities including habitat creation and even possibly the creation of community gardens.   There should be a connected network or support mechanism for people around the county keen to initiate and share positive environmental messages – this should be a collaboration of various stakeholders, charity's, community organisations etc. This would help promote behaviour change and move away from the often repeated phrase in local communities / parish councils of 'that's the county councils responsibility… `nothing we can do there'. Trees / hedgerows should be valued more in planning applications.   There is the need

for the right species of tree in the right place as trees were valued but needed proper consideration.

Local resident, West Hunsbury

The local resident supports the need for the tree strategy and policy to consider the proximity of trees in residential area and provide an example of roots of trees that had damaged his patio. had not witnessed the trees being maintained or pruned in his area and the hazards that loose branches and leaves could cause if not cleaned up and maintained.

3.10   Site Visit

3.10.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would undertake a site visit to inform its evidence base.

3.10.2 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group suggested site visits to:

> ➢ Northampton East and Talevera

> ➢ Deanshange

> ➢ West Hunsbury, in particular Main Road

> ➢ Penrhin Road, Northampton

> ➢ Tiffield, with a focus on the Ash trees

3.10.3 Councillors undertook the site visits, key findings:

In Talevera tree branches growing too close to houses was observed as was tree roots causing a potential trip hazard, creating a need for tree maintenance. Leaf fall was very deep, causing a slip hazard. A number of unmaintained trees and shrubs was observed.

In Tiffield, the site raised a few potential issues: the beauty of the approach to the village is clear, and as this is an area which floods, the potential of the canopy cover to slow down the rainfall and thus to minimise flooding is also apparent. However, the leaves from the trees regularly block the drains, emphasising the importance of regular street sweeping in urban areas. The trees are on private land, but the owners of the trees are not in contact with the parish council and have made no overtures to discuss maintenance. If the trees are not monitored, then there is a chance they will crash onto the road if they are weakened by disease – notably Ash die back. The Parish Council is not responsible for the trees.   The Council's Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish

Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

Along Penrhyn Road and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton, it was highlighted The Far Cotton project has had and continues to have a big impact on the ward and specifically the road. The project is heavily supported by residents and tree wardens/guardians who take very good care of the trees including their watering. It is important to note the project organisers felt that any planting must have a committed to group of people/contractors to water. They would rather not plant, than plant trees that were not going to be looked after and therefore our policy on maintenance including watering of anything we plant has got to be key. Their tree pits are tended (and planted up regularly with bulbs and wildflowers) by their team of tree guardians, which means they are full of life - beetles, ladybirds, and worms. They have already found bird nests in our two-year-old trees. The project faced a number of hurdles which had to be overcome. Increasing cost between two projects on the same road, who would plant, who could purchase the plants, which contractors carried out the work and who would authorise the work to name a few.

Hornbeams are a great choice for urban areas because they are shade tolerant, and they keep their leaves for longer (like beech) during winter. This means over winter insects have a place to hibernate. The flowering cherries are also excellent for early pollinators.

Other benefits of urban/street trees, in brief:

- Trees remains one of the most cost-effective methods of controlling CO2. Particulate levels on tree-lined streets can be up to 60% lower than those without trees.
- Shading helps cool buildings and reduce the heat island effect. One mature tree has the same cooling effect as 10 room-sized air conditioners.
- Trees stabilise land and buffer storm water, preventing erosion and flooding. 100 mature trees can capture up to 300,000 gallons of rainwater each year.
- Trees create habitats and early pollen for insects and biodiverse corridors through urban (and rural to urban) areas that link pockets of nature.
- They help us feel good – by improving asthma, stress, and our wellbeing.

3.10.4   Detailed at Appendix C are their full findings

3.11   Management of Trees Survey

3.11.1 A survey was conducted comprising a number of questions regarding the management of trees:

1. What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages, woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2. Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

6. How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

8. How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups, and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

9. Which laws, regulations or Government guidance do you think West Northamptonshire Council should be paying particular attention to? What would this mean in practice? (This question may be of most interest to specialists, but responses from anyone are welcome.)

10. Are there any other issues you think the Council should consider about trees in West Northamptonshire and what is covered by the new Policy & Strategy

There were 88 responses in total to the consultation; 64 completed the whole questionnaire and 24 didn't complete all questions

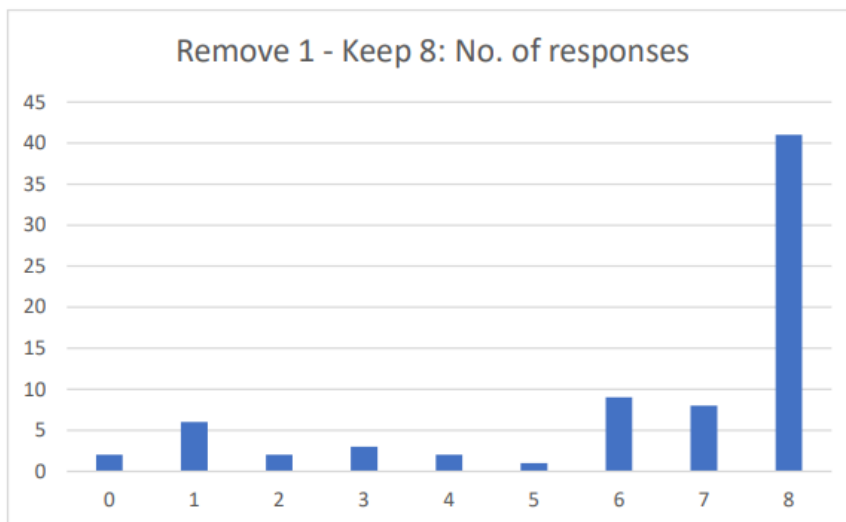Headline results of the survey are detailed below:

Management of Trees Survey Results

Total completed responses (at least one question complete	74
Total blank responses	14
Overall total	88

Keep/remove question (1-8 scale, 1 - remove, 8 - keep)

Average	6.35
Median	8.00
Mode	8.00

Breakdown of scores:

Comprehensive results from the survey are contained within Appendix D.

4   Conclusions and Key Findings

4.1   After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

4.1.1   The Task and Finish Group highlighted that there is a need for a holistic policy and strategy should be formulated to derive a way forward for West Northamptonshire.

4.1.2   The Task and Finish Group felt there was a shift in people's perceptions of tree maintenance and towards the importance of the planting of trees. The Group heard that there was real understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by trees and the benefits to climate.

4.1.3   From the evidence received, the Task and Finish Group felt that schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat which would be beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife.

4.1.4   The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should Parishes/Community projects be forthcoming; they should be encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.5   The opinions of residents often differed depending on the proximity of the residents to the tree, as one resident may live next to a tree causing issues whereas another would admire the tree and not want it to be removed. Ideally the policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.

4.1.6   From the consultation process, the consensus was that residents were for the planting of trees but emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be better at maintaining and coordinating the planting of trees.

4.1.7   The survey results showed a very strong view among respondents in factor of retaining street trees in almost all circumstances, even where they were causing problems of some form.

4.1.8   The feedback from the consultation highlighted that more people in Northampton were seeing the green and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces.

4.1.9 Evidence gathered supported the idea of creating a communal green space and encouraging communities to become part of a community orchard.

4.1.10 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that it should be recognised that t tree policy and strategy is a journey and Cabinet should look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.

4.1.11 The need for the Council to continue to work with organisations and the community going forward was recognised. It was welcomed that Moulton College was interested in working with the Council on projects to help educate students and provide skills for younger generations.

Ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works of trees

4.1.12 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Tree Policy and Strategy should contain general principles for Council trees and prescribe circumstances where trees would not be cut down unless they cause serious issues to the health and wellbeing of a resident.

4.1.13 From the survey results, the majority of respondents wanted trees to remain or be replanted.

4.1.14 The Task and Finish Group agreed that people wanted trees to be planted, specific trees to be in the right place and the Group supported the list of recommended trees provided by Save our Street Trees.

4.1.15 The Task and Finish Group felt that the criteria for the removal and work surrounding tree maintenance should be robust, clear and transparent.

4.1.16 The Task and Finish Group felt that there needed to be a focus on replacing trees that had been removed, either in situ or with a plan to plant elsewhere before the tree is removed.

Review the contracts for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

4.1.17 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the new Tree Policy and Strategy should have more stringent restrictions for developers and who was responsible for checking trees and landscaping. It was acknowledged that this could only be the case if the land was adopted as highway. If so, a commuted sum would be provided by the developer and this was used to fund future maintenance. If not, the case would be managed by planning enforcement.   WNC could also offer developers a service to plant and water the trees for a fee so land gets adopted quicker. It was felt that some developers would like this option and so

do some local authorities as they receive commuted sums quicker. This could make the implementation of planning conditions more effective.

4.1.18 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should aspire, whether through income or grants, or both, to a high standard of provision of maintenance. It noted the likely costs of the desired level of service, described as gold' below:

Service level	Description	Annual cost, £k
Bronze (current)	• Reactive works which fall into P1 and P2 classification only • Contract wide epicormic growth	450
Silver	• As above, plus: • Further planned survey works • Deal with all P1, P2, P3 and some P4 classification enquiries. • An increase in the management, supervision, surveyors, and operational teams. • This level of service would over a period of time provide a good planned and reactive service for the Council and its residents.	1,200 (increase of 750)

Gold	• As above, plus:
	• Large amount of the surveyed work to be planned in line with the surveyors' recommendations.
	• Managing the stock as assets to the Council's portfolio.
	• 'Nice to have' items that most residents expect Council to be able to provide.
	• Provide data and information on:
	   o Tree stock and health
	   o Biodiversity benefits
		1,700
		
		(increase of 1,250)

These costs are for Northampton. Given the intensity of work required in Northampton compared to other parts of West Northamptonshire, it would probably be reasonable to add 25% to the increase in costs above the baseline to achieve a similar level of service across the area. This would mean the additional cost to achieve Silver or Gold levels of service would be:

- Silver: £938k
- Gold: £1,563k

4.1.19 Members agreed that the Policy needed to look at "the how" and it should be ensured that the Council's Tree Policy and Strategy would eliminate ambiguity and give clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

4.1.20 The Council's Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

4.1.21 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to implement a Tree Policy and Strategy and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's Tree policy to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. It would be useful for the Policy to comprise frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

Examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan, other Planning Policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

4.1.22 It was acknowledged that the Tree Policy should be accessible to all stakeholders.

4.1.23 The Task and Finish Group felt that the urban woodland areas should be within a short walking distance of all residents.

4.1.24 It was highlighted that information should be provided to encourage residents to forage.

4.1.25 Evidence gathered highlighted the benefit of incorporating the emergency tree plan into the Tree Policy and Strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

4.1.26 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should be more proactive in using all legislation and planning policy tools available to the Council to reach

appropriate agreement with developers. It was further agreed that this should be followed up with appropriate enforcement.

4.1.27 The Task and Finish Group concluded that pollarding was sometimes useful but needed to be started when the tree was young, and that topping was not a good method. It was explained that pollarding was a short-term solution but in the longer-term the council could seek to plant trees that would not need pollarding and should set out pruning expectations in their policy. Historically, trees were planted that needed pollarding as the Victorians found that no other trees would grow with the amount of pollution that existed. This was no longer the case.

4.1.28 The Task and Finish Group concluded that a canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced.

4.1.29 Evidence gathered highlighted that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact on the Council's organisational goals

4.1.30 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to have a good working Tree Policy and Strategy in place and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's policies to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. The Task and Finish Group felt that frequently asked questions/topics should be incorporated into the Policy to aid officers with their work in the area.

4.1.31 Evidence gathered highlighted that it is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is currently available is prioritised against routine and reactive works.

Consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

4.1.32 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting

as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. It was further recognised that there is a need for a review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock considered when reviewing the budget.

4.1.33 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the current contracts should be reviewed in the future to see if the Council were obligated to use the contract and align the predecessor councils' contracts under a harmonised West Northamptonshire Council contract in the future and the potential for this to be separate from the wider waste contract.

4.1.34 The Task and Finish Group discussed the length of the policies in comparison and felt that a detailed policy was needed to ensure there were no grey areas when dealing with tree maintenance to support officers. Members compared the Birmingham and Bristol Councils' policy documents and suggested Epping Council as photographic. It was felt that a summarised policy would be useful but one that was clear and concise.

4.1.35 Council management contracts should be examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost was satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy and Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost and replanted. Evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need for the Council to hold contractors to account, for example with Delapré park maintenance work had not been done. The Council needs to review the work undertaken by contractors. The current contract deems that the contractors will deal with problematic trees and the provision for this took precedent over the general maintenance of trees and the service was driven by the cost.

Examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can enforce infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

4.1.36 The Task and Finish Group emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.

4.1.37 Evidence gathering showed that the Council could save on cost by making use of larger planning developments and influencing the planting and species of trees at the earlier stages as the developer usually leads on landscape planning and would select the cheapest species to plant and may not maintain the trees properly. If the Council had a tree policy and strategy that could identify the

species required and other relevant information, it could help the Council meet its environmental targets and other performance targets.

4.1.38 It was realised, however, that the Council could not specify numbers but the role and purpose of trees, as the national model design code stated that new streets should be lined with trees.

4.1.39 In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.

4.1.40 Evidence gathered highlighted that the right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4.1.41 The impacts of trees varied in different places, such that, for example, a tree in a rural setting would have different impacts to one planted on an urban street close to houses. However, there were places in towns and villages where the impacts of a tree were more like those in a rural area.

4.1.42 It was recognised that tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking.

4.1.43 With the community the Council needs to manage expectations particularly with residents and Parish Councils, that the tree policy would be an ongoing process and may take some time for longstanding issues to be resolved.

4.1.44 The Task and Finish Group noted increasing interest in the environmental and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. It felt that it would be desirable for the Council to work more with community groups, such as on projects developing community orchards.

4.1.45 It would be beneficial for the project team currently working on the Queen's Green Canopy project to take this forward once their current project finishes and that the Sustainability Group is approached for consideration and assistance with community projects. The Task and Finish Group concluded that any Parishes/Community projects planted for the Jubilee should be encouraged to register the trees for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.46 The Task and Finish Group emphasised that that working with other organisations and communities should be incorporated in the tree policy and strategy.

4.1.47 The documentation submitted by the resident highlighted the need for trees to be planted in the right way and with the right tree in place and emphasised the need for trees to be maintained properly.

4.1.48 Members recognised that a template letter for Parish Councils would be useful to help with enforcement matters.

Explore how the CAVAT tool can be implemented

4.1.49 Evidence gathered suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

4.1.50 Evidence suggests that by CAVAT introducing and enforcement it would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees.

Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

4.1.51 The Task and Finish Group supported the role of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer but was concerned that the first round of recruitment had not ended with someone in post. It was felt the salary and the grading process for this post should be investigated as it has proved difficult to recruit to this post.

4.1.52 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Council should be proactive in looking for opportunities to create areas such as urban food jungles and parklets which can support residents and are beneficial to wildlife.

4.1.53 The Council should rigorously enforce planning requirements related to the planting and maintenance of trees as part of development, including replacement and care of trees which fail within five years of planting.

Site visits

4.1.54 Members felt that the site visits had been very informative and valuable, as they gave Members an insight into the challenges and positives of maintaining trees across West Northamptonshire. Members could see the impact on residents' homes, and how tree placement affected the number of light homes received and where lack of maintenance had negatively impacted residents. The site visits helped to understand the separate rural and urban needs and the need for

integrated management, for example there were examples of street sweepers not cleaning leaves away properly.

5   Recommendations

5.1   The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group recommends to Cabinet that:

5.1.1   A Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northants Council is prepared no later than March 2023.

5.1.2   A review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock to a suitable standard considered when reviewing the budget.

5.1.3   The Tree Policy and Strategy should be concise but clear. The use of diagrams and illustrations to aim understanding was encouraged.

The Tree Policy and Strategy should include:

- The purpose of the Policy - to empower officers and encourage collaboration and communication between all relevant departments to apply the Policy and setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife

- Trees planted are appropriate to their location

- A requirement for replacement of any non-woodland trees in situ or in close proximity that unavoidably have to be removed

- A plan stating the approach to tree and woodland preservation orders

- Details that encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical

- Prioritisation of planned as opposed to reactive works

- Direction and guidance on how to protect trees
- A canopy cover target
- Details of relevant statutory obligations.

- Frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

- A section regarding the planting and re-planting of trees, together with the species of trees that should be planted. This would include an Urban Tree List
- Identification of ancient woods
- An audit of Council land for potential woodland

The Policy & Strategy should address:

- Promotion of the Policy and community grants available

- Trees on both private and public land

- Woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside

- How it aligns with the Council's wider strategy and targets, to give clear focus and direction

- Eliminates ambiguity and gives clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

- How to hold contractors to account.

- Specify how issues will be resolved

- Differentiate between the terms – urban, rural, open areas and built-up areas.

- Reflect the needs of residents

- Trees which are lost to be replanted immediately where it is safe and appropriate to do so and where it is not appropriate, suitable local alternatives are found

5.1.4 Working with other organisations and communities is incorporated in the Tree Policy and Strategy.

5.1.5 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places.

- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, food provision, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.

- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.
- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring, and future updating.

5.1.6   Valuable urban trees are replaced in situ when taken out. The right tree for the right place is important.

5.1.7   The Tree Policy and Strategy must be applied consistently.

5.1.8   The Council should seek to allocate sufficient funding to achieve the 'gold' service level detailed above. Indicatively this would cost an additional £1.6m pa across West Northamptonshire.

5.1.9   Pollarding is used as a solution to manage trees in specific areas only when absolutely necessary.

5.1.10   Where bulk planting takes place, a full maintenance, protection, and viability programme is implemented, and environmental measures are followed.

5.1.11   The CAVAT tool is introduced, publicised, and applied.

5.1.12   A canopy project is undertaken for the Council at an early stage as this will be able to give accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show what potential there is for planting.

5.1.13   There is collaborative working across all services in respect of trees and tree maintenance.

5.1.14   In development proposals, mature trees in situ are by default considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.

5.1.15   When planning applications are received the assumption should be that important trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), rather than relying on planning conditions alone.

5.1.16   WNC offers developers a paid-for service to plant and water trees on their sites.

5.1.17   A variety of template letters that supports parish councils when dealing with issues of tree planting, removal and maintenance are devised.

5.1.18   Consideration is given to the implementation of Community Orchards, food jungles and parklets with a clear plan and marketing strategy to take this forward.

5.1.19   The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group supports the recruitment of a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer The salary should be investigated if it continues to prove difficult to recruit to this post.

5.1.20   A consultant is employed to help build the policy for the Council whilst ongoing recruitment takes place for the post of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

5.1.21   Relevant contracts are examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost is satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy & Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost.

5.1.22   A separate landscaping contract that would give better cost and focus on delivering the service is implemented as the existing arrangements come to an end, or earlier if the opportunity arises.

5.1.23   Parishes/Community projects are encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5.1.24   Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' from when Cabinet responds to the recommendations, and then as part of the Committee's agreed monitoring schedule.

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APPENDICES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW – SCOPE

1. **Topic - Tree Policy & Strategy**

2. **Responsible Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

    Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

3. **Purpose of the scrutiny review**

    The purpose of this Scrutiny review is to:

    To achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

    Key lines of enquiry

    - To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

    - To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees

    - To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

    - To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

    - To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals

    - To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.

    - To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.

- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4. **Outcomes**

To make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

5. **Approach**

The scrutiny review will be carried out by a Task and Finish Group made up of the following councillors:

1. Councillor Pinder Chauhan (Chair)
2. Councillor Jo Gilford
3. Councillor Janice Duffy
4. Councillor Louisa Fowler
5. Councillor Emma Roberts
6. Councillor Penny Flavell
7. Councillor Brian Sargeant

Co-optees: None for this Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group will make use of the standard working methods applicable to scrutiny reviews, including evidence-gathering meetings (either in-person or virtual); desktop research; targeted evidence-gathering by individual members; and site visits, as appropriate.

6. **Information required**

Background data

- Scene-setting presentation –   To identify any issues with trees and tree maintenance

  Information regarding trees helping to alleviate flooding when planted in the right place.

- Carried motion – full Council July 2021:

  "Council agrees that planting trees has a significant benefit to health, well-being, the environment and to helping tackle climate change. This Council agrees to fully embrace "The Queen's Green Canopy Scheme" launched to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

  Council agrees to develop an action plan to work with Schools, Colleges and

Community Groups alongside the Woodland Trust to co-ordinate a campaign across West Northamptonshire to apply for the free saplings available as part of the Scheme and to encourage tree planting between Oct 2021 to the end of 2022."

Proposed by Cllr Hallam, seconded by Cllr Morgan."

- Relevant local policies and strategies

- Relevant national and local research, such as Woodland Trust "Local Authority Tree Strategies"

- Draft Tree Policy for West Northamptonshire

- Examples of good practice from West Northamptonshire and other comparable areas

- Various site visits as determined by the Task and Finish Group; to include a visit to another local authority noted for its best practice for the implementation of a Tree Policy, such as Birmingham City Council or Bristol City Council.

Views from internal expert advisors

- Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste

- Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs

- Executive Director of Place, Economy & Environment

- Assistant Director Assets & Environment

- Assistant Director Highways & Waste

- Assistant Director Growth, Climate & Regeneration

- Environmental Services Contract Manager

- Tree Maintenance Officers

- [If required] NPH service lead for tree issues

Views from external expert advisors

- Community Groups, such as Save our Trees, Garden Organic

- Conservation Groups such as the Woodland Trust

- Environment Agency

- Construction developers

- Grand Union Housing, Futures Homes, and other relevant registered providers of affordable housing

- Parish and town councils

- Local residents, via a survey

- Residents' associations

- Schools and colleges

7. Resources and support

- Simon Bowers, Assistant Director Assets & Environment
- Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager for evidence-gathering and for production of the scrutiny review report

8. Timetable and key dates

Inaugural Task and Finish Group meeting	13 October 2021 (remote over Zoom)
Confirmation of the scope of the review by the Place OSC	1 November 2021
Evidence-gathering (specific dates for meetings and	November to February 2022
other activity to be set by the Task and Finish Group)	
Approval of draft report by the Task and Finish Group	
Agreement of draft report by the Place OSC	April 2022
Chair of the Place OSC to present the final report	
to WNC Cabinet	

9. Follow-up/Monitoring

The Place OSC will review the impact of the scrutiny review 6 months after the presentation of the final report to decision-makers.

NB: Each OSC will have a monitoring Work Programme to monitor the impact of the accepted recommendations

West Northamptonshire Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Core Questions

The purpose of this Scrutiny review is to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives, which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan and reduces the impact of climate change.

The required outcomes of the Review is to make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

Core Questions

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Task and Finish Group

Priorities

1. Please provide details of your perspectives and priorities for tree management in different areas of West Northamptonshire, and what issues you feel are important (for example deprivation measures, flood risk, health statistics, current canopy cover).

2. Please explain which statutory obligations and guidance are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area, and what implications they have. (For example, the England Tree Action Plan, the Environment Act 2021.)

Current position

3. Please provide details of the current arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire. **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**

4. Please provide details of how available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers)**

5. Please provide details of the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and how you feel this impacts the Council's organisational goals **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**

6. Please provide details of tree planting within new developments and details of tree protection for existing trees on development sites and how these planning commitments can be enforced. (*question to Cabinet Member and Officers*).

7. Please provide details of how the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) records are kept up to date? **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers).**

The future

8. How can it be ensured that the Council's tree maintenance policy/practices meet best practice for the protection, planting, management, and maintenance of trees, including the choice of tree species and the criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees. How should it be ensured that adequate budget and resources are committed to this? **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**

9. How can the Tree Policy and Strategy ensure that tree protection, planting and management is considered from the outset of all new development and infrastructure schemes - including the use of tools such as CAVAT, to ensure that the full value of trees are factored into decision making processes? **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers**

10. In your opinion how can the Tree Policy and Strategy support good infrastructure design and avoid (or reduce) conflict.

11. How should planting targets be set? Should WNC set a canopy cover target?

12. *(l core questions to the Cabinet Members)*

13. In your opinion, how can the draft Tree Policy & Strategy be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents?

14. How should the Council ensure that the draft Tree Policy and Strategy is adhered to and referenced across all relevant Council teams?

(core questions to the Cabinet Members)

15. How can contracts be reviewed and managed to ensure they are as cost effective as they can be? Is there a community engagement strategy and dedicated support for this, to ensure that residents/citizens are engaged in tree planting and maintenance? **l question to Cabinet Member and Officers)**

16. In your opinion, how can there best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies and service areas regarding the opportunities and responsibilities in relation to trees

NB: In addition to the core questions as listed above, the Task and Finish Group may ask supplementary questions on the response that you provide.

West Northamptonshire Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Briefing Note: Site Visits

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would include within its scope desktop research regarding other Tree Policies in the country.

1.2   In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group suggested that desktop research be undertaken in:

> ➢ Northampton East and Talevera
> ➢ Deanshanger
> ➢ West Hunsbury, in particular Main Road
> ➢ Penrhyn Road, Northampton
> ➢ Tiffield, with a focus on the Ash trees

1.3   Councillors undertook the site visits and detailed below are their findings:

2   Site Visits

2.1   Northampton East and Talevera

2.1.1 Councillor Janice Duffy undertook this site visit and took some photographs and provided details of her visit. Tree branches are growing too near to windows on the houses, enabling wildlife such as squirrels to enter roof spaces. There is a need for the trees to be maintained

2.1.2   Councillor Duffy found from her site visit that there was an abandoned stump that she felt was a potential focus for vandals. She adds that the leaf full was so deep and they had become slippery when wet and could cause a trip or a fall.

lots of leaf fall

2.1.3   Councillor Duffy observed unmaintained trees and shrubs that she felt to be an eyesore and could therefore encourage flytipping

2.1.4   Also during the site visit, Councillor Duffy observed tree roots caused undermining of nearby house's foundation. She felt that the tree was planted too close and was of wrong variety.

2.1.5 Councillor Duffy further observed issues with tree roots creating potential tripping hazards and undermining house foundations, clogging waterways, leaf falls creating slippery pavements, leaves blocking and has provided photographs below:

2.2   Tiffield

2.2.1   On Monday 4 April 2022 Councillors Emma Roberts and Louise Fowler visited Tiffield to view an area of land which they noted to be dominated by Ash trees. The ash trees are either side of Eastcote Road and form an attractive avenue into the village. They are built into an old railway line and there are already some trees which have weak branches which have fallen onto the bank.
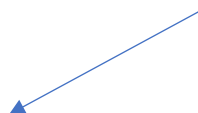
2.2.2   Councillors Roberts and Fowler concluded that the site raised a few potential issues: the beauty of the approach to the village is clear, and as this is an area which floods, the potential of the canopy cover to slow down the rainfall and thus to minimise flooding is also apparent. However, the leaves from the trees regularly block the drains, emphasising the importance of regular street sweeping in urban areas. The trees are on private land, but the owners of the trees are not in contact with the parish council, and have made no overtures to discuss maintenance. If the trees are not monitored then there is a chance they will crash onto the road if they are weakened by disease – notably Ash die back. The Parish Council is not responsible for the trees.

2.2.3   The Councillors felt that it seems therefore, that the Council's Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.   From the evidence gathered at the site visit, Councillors Roberts and Fowler noted that the Parish Council has looked at government websites, but there does not seem to be a council, as yet, with examples of good practice for dealing with areas of Ash.

2.2.4   Detailed below are various photos taken during the site visit to Tiffield:

The photo shows that the ash trees are planted either side of the avenue into Tiffield, and so if all of them are lost this would affect the approach into the village.

A blocked drain –   sludge of uncollected wet leaves.

Branches that have come down in the wind and been moved to one side to keep the road clear.

Councillors Roberts and Fowler at Tiffield

2.3   Penrhyn Road and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton

2.3.1   On 29 March 2022, Councillor Emma Roberts and Councillor Louisa Fowler visited Penrhyn Road, and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton.

2.3.2   The Councillors highlighted the key points from her site visit:

The Far Cotton project has had and continues to have a big impact on the ward and specifically the road. The project is heavily supported by residents and tree wardens/guardians who take very good care of the trees including their watering. It was important to note the project organisers felt that any planting must have a committed to group of people/contractors to water. They would rather not plant, than plant trees that were not going to be looked after and therefore our policy on maintenance including watering of anything we plant has got to be key. Their tree pits are tended (and planted up regularly with bulbs and wildflowers) by their team of tree guardians, which means they are full of life -

beetles, ladybirds and worms. They have already found bird nests in our two-year-old trees.

The project faced a number of hurdles which had to be overcome. Increasing cost between two projects on the same road, who would plant, who could purchase the plants, which contractors carried out the work and who would authorise the work to name a few.

Councillors Roberts and Fowler viewed the trees planted and their locations. They felt that Hornbeams are a great choice for urban areas because they are shade tolerant, and they keep their leaves for longer (like beech) during winter. This means over winter insects have a place to hibernate. The flowering cherries are also excellent for early pollinators.

2.3.2 The Councillors discussed other benefits of urban/street trees, in brief:

- Trees remains one of the most cost-effective methods of controlling CO2. Particulate levels on tree-lined streets can be up to 60% lower than those without trees.
- Shading helps cool buildings and reduce the heat island effect. One mature tree has the same cooling effect as 10 room-sized air conditioners.
- Trees stabilise land and buffer storm water, preventing erosion and flooding. 100 mature trees can capture up to 300,000 gallons of rainwater each year.
- Trees create habitats and early pollen for insects and biodiverse corridors through urban (and rural to urban) areas that link pockets of nature.
- They help us feel good – by improving asthma, stress and our wellbeing.

2.3.3 The Councillors highlight that Save our Street Trees did a survey with the University of Northampton in 2019 looking at the tree canopy cover in Far Cotton. It showed 58% of trees had been lost in the area and not replaced since the 1960s. I attach a a link to the survey here . Detailed below are photos that show what St Leonard's Road looked liked in the 1940s - courtesy of the Far Cotton History Group - and what it looks like now, with one tree. It provides a stark picture of the huge change in canopy cover in just this one street).

2.3.4 The Councillors felt that maintaining existing tree pits and not capping off the pit if a tree is removed was clearly essential. Stumps that prevent utilities being placed without notice are helpful.

2.3.5 Detailed below are further photos taken during the site visit:

West
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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Briefing Note: Results of the Public Consultation

1   Introduction

1.1   The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group published a short consultation document which contained the following questions:

1. What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages, woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2. Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

 4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them

unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

6. How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

8. How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups, and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

9. Which laws, regulations or Government guidance do you think West Northamptonshire Council should be paying particular attention to? What would this mean in practice? (This question may be of most interest to specialists, but responses from anyone are welcome.)

10. Are there any other issues you think the Council should consider about trees in West Northamptonshire and what is covered by the new Policy & Strategy?

1.2   The consultation was promoted widely and although Parish Councils had been invited to respond to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group, they were also given another opportunity to have their say.

2   Findings from the Consultation

2.1 There were 88 responses in total to the consultation; 64 completed the whole questionnaire and 24 didn't complete all questions. A short analysis of the results is attached at Appendix A.

2.2   A summary of responses is detailed below:

1. **What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages,**

woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2.

Responses were mainly positive to this question comments included:

To look nice and placed in sensible spots

Trees are generally a good thing and an essential part of the environment

Help wildlife

Some trees give out fruit and flowers for insects and birds to feed on

They provide shelter, shade, and cool air

Trees are aesthetically pleasing

Trees are essential, especially in urban areas

They provide a green area

We need more green areas

More trees are needed

Trees are part of the heritage and fabric of the country

The right trees in the right place can help harmonise a landscape and provide a focal point for encouraging green activities

Some trees are planted too close to property and can cause subsidence

Need to ensure trees are maintained

We would like WNC to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment, and reinstatement of Northampton streets

Trees should be replaced when taken out

Investment and recruitment of officers such as a Tree Officer to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees

Mature trees should remain in developments

Have a formal tree mapping exercise which includes an audit to see if there are opportunities for tree planting

Better and more regular tree maintenance

Trees absorb carbon

Trees both capture carbon but also like all green plants take in CO2 and put out oxygen

Trees can help prevent flooding and can help to reduce road wear, and damage as cars tend to slow in tree lined roads.

Trees can improve mental health and wellbeing in residents

Trees are an important part of our ecosystem

Trees are essential for survival of the planet

Trees mitigate the heat-island effect which is a growing problem in urban areas

There is a real biological as well as environmental need for tree systems to be created: trees in isolation are great for birds and insects but the environment is dramatically improved where trees are part of a mixed ecosystem structure with connecting corridors. In this way you can create conditions for wildlife increase.

3. **Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?**

Trees make an area look good, but they should be maintained.

Keen to maintain wildlife as well as appreciating their beauty

Bird's nesting

"because they are"

Groups of deciduous trees with appropriate undergrowth and safe and easy access and egress for animals from each area

They are a part of nature and we are products of nature, so we respond to them. Northants generally is not particularly well stocked with trees - a great pity.

If trees were not in park land areas these areas may be used for building projects

Trees are environmentally essential with so much building work

My father was a market gardener and he taught me much about growing, planting out, pruning and general maintenance of plants, shrubs, and trees. I have also read several books written by foresters for example "The Secret Life of Trees" which anyone considering planting trees should read. It is written by a forester who knows what he is talking about. Often when there are high winds there are problems with households losing power, quite often because of fallen trees. You must ask why these trees were planted so close to a power line or a railway line or too near to the road. All too often people plant trees in completely the wrong place due to lack of understanding how trees thrive. A little more thought and taking proper advice should be mandatory before planting.

Government evidence that trees are good for the environment

Just look at the deforestation of the rain forest, of vast areas in Northants completely cleared for houses (i.e., On the way to Wellingborough and Harleston firs/Kings Heath, shocking) mud slides in third world countries etc.

Various scientific reports I have read, nature programs and personal observation

Having trees and woods close to where people live is important for a large number of reasons.   Trees provide oxygen for us to breathe, they can clean pollutants out of the air and protect people from sources of pollution such as heavy traffic. Trees also give people in urban areas contact with nature, which can help in improving mental health, and woods provide areas where people want to go for healthy exercise. Trees are also good for absorbing carbon to help us tackle climate change and help us adapt to the climate change that is already happening. So, there is a need for a big expansion of tree cover in the district but also its really important to protect the trees that are already there.

Currently I think there are too many rules and regulations to get trees planted in Northamptonshire. Decisions have been made in the past that I think with good intentions at the time to try and keep the public safe but now are not needed. So many people want to get involved and help but are prevented with all the 'red tape' and paperwork. Planting trees is not difficult but has been made so by west Northamptonshire council.

Science shows us this.

For all reasons above - lots of research available which shows the numerous benefits of trees, particularly in urban areas.

The branches come down in high winds and residents are left to clear them.

The benefits of trees to nature and climate have been scientifically proven. Trees also improve people's wellbeing. 'Green canopies' improve mental health. Trees are crucial to your lives.

There are less & less trees & therefore less nature

Its fact

Greenery and countryside are good for people's mental welfare.

Wildlife, air quality, aesthetic

Trees are a vital part of achieving climate change targets. They've been proven to benefit health and wellbeing, wildlife, and the local economy. Alternatives to felling should be discussed and made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides.

I look around and see 1000s of plastic tree collars all over the place. About 40% look to have trees growing out of them. No aftercare at all? I see clumps of Aspen\poplar trees planted very close together that will never reach maturity without taking out at least 70%. Why are they planted so closely and only one species used? These are wasted

opportunities for reforesting. Money that should be used more wisely is wasted in thinning these. We need more considered and integrated approach to tree planting as a part of habitat creation for biodiversity rather than what appears to be thoughtlessly sticking any amount of tiny whips in anywhere and everywhere

Because the world is changing due to global warming and the people with it. (Just one example: there is conflict (i.e., people dying) because of a lack of fresh water in 17 countries already.) Because, if you walk through streets without a tree, then even Hunter Street in Northampton which has a couple, you notice your mood lifts.

Planting new trees, and maintaining current trees, will help combat climate change. Rewilding provides a home for wildlife hopefully increasing numbers. Trees and green space provide health and wellbeing benefits to people. Building developments often remove trees and green space without thinking about the loss means to wildlife and people

It's a scientific fact

Its proven

It's obvious really

Tree lined streets are massively more attractive

A mature tree is beautiful as well as contributing to biodiversity and counteracting climate change and air pollution. The loss of a large tree is tragic - they are irreplaceable within a lifetime - we should strive to maintain the legacy rather than lose it.

The tree planting by Long Buckby Parish Council has successfully visually improved the Station Road area.

Trees are aesthetically pleasing in as much as they 'break up' what could otherwise be a bland landscape both within urban and rural areas providing they are manged well.

This is not my opinion these are facts established by scientific studies. See reports published by the Woodland Trust on the benefits of trees for example. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/

It has long been documented about the advantages of having mature trees in the urban landscape. Destroying ancient trees to make way for development and planting saplings is not a solution to the problem

Because I studied Environmental Science and read numerous papers about the devastation deforestation is having on our planet.

Because green spaces - including trees - significantly contribute to our mental and physical health and wellbeing

It is important that the multitude of benefits is recognised, so that there are building controls. So, areas can't just be cleared and the trees 'replanted' elsewhere. You cannot

replace the utility, the look or feel of a mature, established tree. What is a baby acer compared to a mature lime for example!

Trees are not being routinely replaced in Northampton. Research conducted for us by the University of Northampton in 2019 showed 58% of street trees had disappeared in Far Cotton alone in the last 50 years. It is easy to extrapolate this could be the case in other areas of Northampton/shire. We are particularly interested in areas of depravation where we feel there are increasing levels of tree inequality.

As many animals live in trees, they are important for keeping our local ecosystems healthy and we should strive to maintain trees and wooded areas well.

Trees have aesthetic value and have been proven to improve wellbeing just by seeing one. It also improves air quality and helps cool the air in summer increasing wellbeing. This is even more prominent with global warming. It also improves biodiversity, creates wildlife corridors, and provides food and shelter for animals. On top of which absorbs carbon from the atmosphere all of which improve the planet.

Healthy for our lives

Trees don't last forever and especially with diseases like ash die back. So, there should be a continuous tree planting plan. Trees already in place need monitoring and maintaining to ensure healthy and thriving. Development corporations should be heals accountable for environment-based law. All new developments should enhance their environment and take account of the nature already in that area. Too much us being damaged or destroyed. Vital to help provide a healthy and beautiful environment to support our populations health and wellbeing. Contribute towards counterbalancing carbon emissions. The benefits are too numerous to mention here but are evidence backed.

They provide shelter and privacy to our properties in streets where homes are close together. They also block and absorb excess noise. The greenery is soothing to the soul and looking after them brings much joy and happiness. It is also a very good way to connect with neighbours and other likeminded people.

They clean the air, provide a vital habitat for nature, and provide shade and shelter. They make an area look prettier. They absorb sound and some pollution. They make us aware of changing seasons. They are good for our mental health.

It is vital that we reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere - trees do this. It is also important to plant native species of trees.

Experience, reading and scientific evidence.

I give up a lot of free time supporting the friends of Eastfield Park and want to see WNC support the group more

Because they provide habitats / break up concrete and green is generally good for us

From a people perspective, having access to trees in urban areas is vital for wellbeing, particularly in deprived areas where people may to have access to their own garden or many open spaces. They're good for mental wellbeing and their presence provides a cooler, calmer and more beautiful environment for people to spend time in/near. They also reduce/buffer noise and remove pollutants (particulates and greenhouse gases) from the air which have immediate health benefits. A good local tree plan can also be a magnet for community engagement which is something that so many people crave these days. Being part of a community can help individuals and groups to truly thrive and belong. From an environmental perspective, they are essential to the health and future existence of our planet. They absorb CO2, remove pollutants, have a dramatic effect on the temperature of streets and can address the 'heat island' effect in urban areas. They are a flood defence, with is particularly relevant with the more extreme weather patterns that we are seeing which are exacerbated too by all of the extreme construction that we are seeing locally, coupled with many people paving over their drives and gardens.

The climate change mitigation effects are well documented. The benefits to mental health have been studied and are recognised by public health organisations. Trees will become important at the human level for: shade, well-being, cooling, absorption of pollutants, flood control along the river where flood plains need to be restored with species such as alder, Salix species, dogwoods and other marshy ground tolerant species or those who can survive wet and dry. At the biodiversity level trees provide nesting sites and if grown with the strata of a woodland or copse ecosystem i.e., as a corridor with ground level, shrubs, small and medium trees a range of animal classes can thrive. It is important to think in terms of connecting corridors that connect urban and rural tree environments. This would include parkland and allotments and traffic islands

For human mental health: The advantages/benefits are obvious. Support nature, improve places visually, reduce climate issues and improve people's well-being. 'Green canopies' help mental health. Science shows us that trees and plants are essential for life on earth. Important in maintaining clean air, supporting animals, birds and insects

We would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment, and reinstatement of Northampton street trees.

I am very concerned re the Climate and Ecological Emergency and I am aware of the importance of trees in the natural cycle

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

A number of respondents chose not to answer this question, however from those that did:

42 answered yes

18 answered no

Comments received, not all those who answered yes/no provided additional comments:

Comments with a **yes** answer:

Oak trees cut down when not necessary. Green Lane in West Hunsbury, trees were cut down because of proximity to houses. The trees had been there for hundreds of years before the houses were built, so why was permission granted to build the houses so close to the trees? Why are people allowed to cut down trees outside their property? Surely, local councils should have to grant permission and then only if the trees are dangerous.

Trees that over run roads have fallen which nearly caused a car crash

A prime example of how not to manage trees happened on Hilldrop Rd between The Hayride and Penn Gardens in East Hunsbury. A hedge planted some 20+ years previously which had not been managed, the Beech Trees which made up the hedge had grown to between 3 - 4 meters in height when these were complained about the Borough Councils answer was to treat these trees as if they were still a hedge, they were chopped down to 1 meter stumps. So 100 meters of trees were decimated. Similar hedgerows exists elsewhere. Also, at a time when much development is planned, trees must be protected. Having previously served on Leicester City Planning Committee I do have some experience with TPO's.

I love the trees in our own garden but particularly appreciate those in Abington Park and the Cherry trees behind Pyket Way, Weston Favell.

Living in Weston Favell the trees in and around Church Way are always a welcome sight when passing by.

W.N.C and the previous Borough council have no policy towards tree management or planning ,as witnessed by their inability to prune dead wood out of trees or to clear up broken branches that fall from trees on footpaths and roadways. Inappropriate trees have been planted alongside footpaths i.e. Rowan trees planted alongside footpaths so that rowan berries foul the footpaths in autumn. The leaf fall from deciduous trees are a yearly problem in that are left to rot where they fall and left to be blown into people's property.

I cannot believe that councils planted trees that would grow to quite large sizes in residential areas. Tree management in my area is very poor. Following recent storms branches (and trees) fell. These storms were in October 2021 and where fallen, are still in situ. It seems the council contract out to the cheapest sub- contractor who do the minimum of work for the price. Work never seems to be inspected. This estate has many "alley ways" between streets and the council planted many trees in these that are totally unsuitable- for example, why plant a Rowan that will produce berries, these drop to the floor and people then walk on them, making the paths both messy and dangerous. In the autumn leaves are rarely swept which again leaves paths dangerous to walk on. My husband has actually been to clear these himself at times! The area has many very

pleasant walks to complete but again, following recent storms these are now littered with fallen branches that have not been cleared up as promised

Live in a road with trees with TPOs and fear for their management

There are innumerable cases. I have taken up the case of pavement access due to badly planted hedges in Clumber Drive restricting access for pedestrians with Councillor Kilbride, but nothing has been done (I complained in September last year and several times since). Visibility of signposts for access to the A14 is another bone of contention when the trees are in full leaf. Also, it is impossible to walk from my house to that of a friend without being hit in the face by branches from trees belonging to homes where the trees have been planted too close to the pavement. I also complained to Councillor Kilbride about the fallen trees on the Billing Road which had been removed from the road and cut up but left on the verge. He told me that they would be collected later, though it would have been far more cost effective to do the job properly in the first place.

There outside property's they cause problems in storms should not grow trees near homes there's problems when tress grow underneath homes and causes a lot of subsidence

Trees at the abbey are important to remain. Trees need to be maintained better to prevent damage when they fall. Trees look good down the sides of main roads - block noise & make the town look more attractive.

Trees removed because of lack of care or not appropriate species for limited space. No replacements.

I work for the Woodland Trust and have been talking to the Council about how we might be able to support them in developing a tree strategy.

I am trying to get more trees planted in and around my village and I have found there is no consistency when getting permission. Answers change depending on who replies to my emails

The canopy needed to be cropped as this was causing danger to cars and pedestrians. Also, the roots are pushing up the pavement outside my house, but nothing has been done to help this tree.

Confusing and leading question! Not quite sure what it is asking but... Experience of trees and tree management tends to be that attitude is very negative - trees are seen as a problem which needs to be solved by removal, rather than a natural resource which we should make adaptations to in order to preserve. Tree management should not be about removing trees to solve issues with access for example, but more intelligent approaches to management and development design so trees can be maintained and more planted. Tree management to date appears to be underfunded, not focussed on maintaining trees, lacks a unified strategy, and too often resorts to removal (and lack of replacement) to solve perceived "problem" trees. Current system of single contractor with enforced monopoly on any tree planting/maintaining makes it artificially expensive and overly complicated to get trees planted, even when it is a simple project. Deal with

contractor also appears to make it more profitable to find reason to remove trees, rather than look after them.

I campaigned to save a local tree which was 200 years old. Despite numerous objections to it being cut down it was not saved by the planning committee of the council. It had a preservation order too. This tree was particularly appreciated by residents and visitors alike and its removal has affected the ambience of the area and left my house without natural protection from the sun and rain.

Yes, so so disappointed when trees are destroyed to allow development - e.g., a couple of years back close to Cheyenne Walk in town

We need to line more the streets of Wootton with trees and wildflower rather than just grass verges to mow. If we have space, put it to good use.

I feel that trees should only be removed when the case is justified and there should be a planting of more trees as a matter if course. In public spaces fruit trees should be planted so as to provide a source of fresh fruit for local residents.

I am an ex-farmer and lifelong conservationist. I have initiated and am leading a rewilding and tree planting initiative in my Parish and have started a local Wildlife Group to get others involved in this work. I have also begun an initiative propagating and planting Dutch Elm Disease resistant Elm cultivars in an attempt to replace our lost elms. Since the M1 became a smart motorway. Most of the trees along its borders were removed. The noise level has increased several fold in our location due to this even to the extent we would not have chosen to live in a location ad noisy as ours has become.

A huge tree was felled by the alley between Birchfield and Ashburnham Rd - all it needed was for the wall to be removed and the new fence to go around the tree. Each tree felled causes sadness to one or many.

I think the council are very quick to remove trees that should be looked after.

Sponsored trees at Charter wood Delapre. As trustee of local charities supported tree planting

Trees in my road have had to be removed by the council because of disease, but they have not been replaced.

I have watched HS2 felling so many beautiful trees - including large, mature oaks. I feel with a little more consideration and will, many could have been saved and worked around. Saving even one would have been an achievement.

I see a lot of mature (tall/big) trees which are now causing apprehension and nuisance for residents who live nearby. This is by no fault of the tree, but often comes down to a legacy of poorly thought-out planting schemes, or more often, poorly thought out building design and layout. Addressing these sorts of issues will be key in developing a sustainable coexistence between the built environment, those that live within it, and trees. Ensuring that large trees persist within the landscape is also particularly important

and so providing spaces where these big environmental/ecological/beautiful features can provide benefits without causing conflicts should be a major aim. Part of this relies on making sure there is suitable below ground space as well as air space for the tree to grow into in the long term. On the flipside, providing spaces within new developments for small and medium-sized trees should be a long-term aim. This requires input from multiple disciplines working together, as opposed to what is often a situation of opposing departments pulling in different directions.

I am particularly concerned about trees within our cemeteries as a number of them are overgrown and have not been managed in the past. In particular, the trees that line the avenues in Dallington Cemetery are far too large now and block out light making the cemetery an even more depressing place than it actually should be. I can remember some 40 plus years ago when these trees were a lot shorter in height and as very little tree management has taken place since that time, they are now out of hand.

Some trees have been removed from planting holes on park avenue north, Abington and not been replaced. Not enough street trees around Abington /Phippsville where there are many homes and school with increased traffic pollution

Having worked with the WLTBCN who manage trees for the benefit of wildlife, I know how valuable trees are and how proper management can mitigate future issues. Planting trees in the right places can help with flood defence as well as create habitat for birds. We are able to live alongside trees - it is important to include them in developments and urban environments.

When trees are cut down because they are old or diseased they should be replaced as a   matter   of   course.
We had to fundraise to get this done and I ended up paying £400 of my own money to replace a tree cut down in a public place.

Our community group (saveourstreettrees.org) has been running since 2016 with the aim of promoting, protecting and (re)planting street trees in Northampton. We've been working with councillors and council officers, as well as partners such as The Woodland Trust and urban forester Russell Horsey at Woodland Dwelling, to engage with residents about urban trees, and retain and plant more street trees in the town. Lack of regular maintenance is a key area of concern for residents. Environmental contractors should be tasked to regularly maintain and carefully manage Northampton street trees wherever possible. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential problems further   down   the   line.
We feel strongly that valuable urban trees should be replaced in situ when taken out.
• We would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees.
• In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention,   then   removal   only   when   unavoidable.
• There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in Northampton, which will measure

current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting.
• We believe there should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance.
• Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.
• We feel strongly that there should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge benefits trees bring to people and wildlife. Studies have shown urban trees boost social cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour and littering, as well as improve air quality, and provide biodiverse corridors that breathe life into urban areas. Recent research shows people who have trees within walking distance of their homes also have a lower risk of developing psychological distress.
• We believe in the right tree for the right place. That more appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.
• We believe alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them.

The trees planted on older streets in Northampton are particularly beautiful at different times of the year. Sadly, those that are lost seem not to be replaced. London planes on Wellingborough Road between Abington Park and Westone - huge and strong . Flowering trees on Clarence Avenue - old and beautiful - not being replaced Chiltern Avenue - old trees not being replaced. Queens Park Parade - mostly lines that help reduce pollution around two schools and a nursery on one of our busiest roads.

Supporting/tree warden of the Save Our Trees project in Penrhyn Road

The collection of trees in Abington Park is outstanding and should be cared for and conserved especially as they age and need replacement. The trees in the streets throughout Northampton are excellent and should be valued and expanded. I have a mature holly tree at bottom of my garden with several birds nests every year.

I have supported in a small capacity as a Tree Warden supporting a local campaign in Rushden & Higham Ferrers where trees are being threatened by a new housing development

Excellent collaboration with St Giles church / community group and the council to ensure succession of planting this year and replacement of old dead trees

I feel that people are too quick to remove trees. They take years/decades to establish yet can be cut down in a matter of minutes. I've seen examples of people cutting down or pollarding trees that are on council land (and that they do not have the right to cut) taking them down to improve their light/view. I feel that an awareness campaign on the benefit of trees would be very beneficial to help people protect trees rather than remove them. The removal of a tree here and there

may not seem like much, but the sum of the parts is having a devastating effect on our local environment and the biodiversity.

I was shocked that an entire row of trees along a footpath and brook on farmland adjacent to our village were felled a few years ago. I walked past these trees almost daily year-round, and they were alive with birds in the spring. I was informed by the Parish Council that they were deemed to be unsafe. It seemed to me that no attempt had been made to manage them. And to date no attempt has been made to replant. There is such widespread destruction of mature trees in our county to make way for housing, warehousing, and the rail freight interchange. A huge loss to habitats.

I have trees outside the back of my flat in the summer I get no sun or light into the garden, then in the winter I can rarely use my disability access due to fallen leaves making it slippy and getting caught up in my rollator causing it to get jammed, due to the fallen leaves.

As mentioned above the tree cover must be increased dramatically. Tree species can be planted that are appropriate for the specific locality as long as the overview includes reference to the long term and as wide a variety of different species and size and longevity of trees. I would like to see more gardens for wildlife created. There should also be a consideration of the concept of agroforestry systems for food production either as new common land systems or by rethinking the current allotment structures. If we think about biodiversity, we can also think about food production. Trees such as hazel, blackthorn, walnut (not exactly indigenous but will grow here as its warmer), fruit trees are all medium sized trees but will hit the biodiversity targets and begin to cement the idea that local food production is an important part of the resilience of a community whether urban or rural.

I was very disappointed that a 200-year-old tree near to where I live in Northampton Town centre was removed a year or so ago despite many objections from residents. I don't think enough consideration was given about its removal. I also work as a Park volunteer and would like to see more trees planted in our local parks. As a town resident I would like more trees to put into streets. Please just ensure any new planted trees get watered properly and consistently until they are established. I have seen newly planted trees die in parks due to lack of water or poor positioning.

I've had the joy of seeing 6 new trees planted in St Giles church yard. Putting something back that will last longer than me and benefit future generations.

I have known of several well-established trees be removed with a promise they would be replaced. This has not taken place to date

We have responsibility for managing approx. 8.5 acres of woodland and they are wonderful for the diversity of wildlife they support. However, they bring issues with neighbours who want us to cut down trees because they feel the tree is blocking their light or the leaves are blocking their downpipes, or they are too near their boundary etc. even though all the trees were there before the houses! People like trees so long as they look pretty from a distance and don't have any direct impact on them.

4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

Not all respondents answered this question.

1 Remove	6 responses
2	2 responses
3	3 responses
4	2 responses
6	9 responses
7	7 responses
8 Keep	40 responses

Most respondents chose to 8 to keep the trees

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

The responses have been detailed below from the comments relating to how respondents scored from 1 - 8

1   Remove responses

Street trees should be kept to a height no higher than surrounding houses .They should be pollarded to confine growth to the main part of the tree trunk

I have previously lived in a terraced street that had cherry trees planted along it. Spring time you have the mess of the blossom then eventually the berries which make paths dangerous to walk on and look very messy.
Trees are allowed to grow too big and are not looked after.

When I see a tree in my area and a storm you need to check all streets tress and building them outside properties is not good because they could fall on my bungalow dangerous

When trees are diseased or dead, they should be removed but they're not they're not even inspected.

We agree as a whole street the tree's placed behind our flats are a pain not only do they block daylight for people especially ground floor flats, but in windy weather we have branches and twigs banging off our windows. Along with it making the path as well as gardens extremely hazardous especially in winter months.

2   Responses

Some trees are very old and are damaging pavements, property, and pedestrians. They need proper management and if to problematic replacing

Obviously, the trees planted in towns need maintaining. And it is the Council's duty to do this as they are responsible for the urban environments.

3   Responses

This area was overplanted many years ago. Often the wrong species was planted, and these have grown too large. Due to neglect, these trees are not healthy, have become overgrown with large overhanging branches and roots lifting up pathways. In some areas they cause blind spots for traffic. Cherry and Rowan trees in area are a major issue with blossom, fruit and leaves littering paths and leaving mess that can be hazardous.

Trees should be removed if they damage streets - trip hazard.
Trees blocking light & entrance to houses should be removed.
Trees should be removed/not planted along terrace streets - block parking when the council are already not managing the parking crisis. Trees should remain where there is adequate parking &/or across the street from houses. Trees should remain in gardens, but the council should support with regular & adequate maintenance, so they do not cause damage/hazard. Trees should be planted in sensible places (behind houses, across the street, in green areas) to add to aesthetic beauty & absorb carbon dioxide. The council should adequately maintain all trees to prevent damage, becoming overgrown & impacting on residents' lives.

I think that trees should be removed if they are creating access problems, particularly if there is no other way to solve these problems. I also think they should be removed if diseased in a way that would spread to other trees and cause more issues, if they disrupt pipework that is difficult to reroute, or are causing property damage that was unforeseeable at the time the property was built/tree was planted. I don't think trees should be removed just because TV signal is affected, or it is in front of someone's window.

4   Responses
If not a safety issue and people who live there, they should stay

Street trees should be kept wherever possible because of their advantageous effects on the environment. However, there are instances where they are too dangerous and need to be removed. A lot of these decisions need to be considered when a problem arises. However, the lack of tree maintenance makes it far more likely that a tree, left to its own devices and at the mercy of vandals, could become a danger to others and to the structure of buildings as well as to the provision of public utility services.

5   responses

In some place's trees are not being managed due to the costs of care, e.g. The trees in some pub gardens have grown above a manageable height. If pollarding is done regularly, they could remain in situ, but frequently this cost is prohibitive if there is some sort of financial grant available for the management of these trees it should be possible for them to be managed rather than replaced, this would be of benefit to everyone.

6   responses

Street trees must carefully managed to prevent the footpaths becoming hazardous, in particular to disabled people.

I appreciate the problems but favour keeping them if possible .... it will always be a compromise.

Trees in a town are wonderful for shade, and for simply making streets more attractive but clearly must be of a suitable size and habit for the environment. They should be kept where possible but removed if causing major problems or expense - and replaced with a more suitable species where possible.

We value the trees but they can cause problems for my husband's wheelchair where they have seriously raised pavements or cracked them with roots rising through tarmac or making paving slabs hazardous

More & more green space has been sold for warehouses so at least keep trees in streets

If they are causing a danger, then necessary to remove. Otherwise, the priority should be to manage the growth

7   responses

I would like to see the tree strategy contain a presumption that street trees will be retained unless there is overriding evidence of a serious health and safety concern. There is a wording in Peterborough's tree strategy which covers this point very well. The tree strategy needs to set out clearly the benefits of trees and explain to people circumstances in which trees will not be removed,   e.g., because they are dropping leaves on cars or blocking out satellite TV reception.

We are not the only species on this planet. Consideration needs to be taken to accommodate wildlife/ biodiversity in all we do. Without it we will not survive. The loss of biodiversity due to development in our area must be enormous but no-one will have measured it yet. Due to this loss we need to be more mindful of the effect of actions like tree removal than we have in the past.

I think they should not be removed unless absolutely necessary. Because they cost money to maintain should not be a reason to cut down trees

We are not the only species on this planet. Consideration needs to be taken to accommodate wildlife/ biodiversity in all we do. Without it we will not survive. The loss of biodiversity due to development in our area must be enormous but no-one will have measured it yet. Due to this loss we need to be more mindful of the effect of actions like tree removal than we have in the past.

Keep mature street trees as they provide character and wildlife preserves. They bring a sense of nature and humility to build up areas. Builders should not be allowed to ravage streets and fake these away.

Trees are the lungs of our planet and to continue this role for future generations we need to protect existing ones as much as possible unless causing significant issues on pavements or they have to be removed for legal reasons

8 Keep responses

They look nice

Every effort should be made to keep street trees. Only if they are a danger to the public or dying should the Council consider removing them.

The street I live on has trees and they were a deciding factor in us choosing this street. So many of the older trees have been removed due to their roots causing damage to the pavements and the atmosphere of the street was lost. Recently more appropriate tree species have been planted and the street looks absolutely lovely again

Improve the environment

It seems trees are being cut down or felled due to wind damage and never replaced. I also thought an avenue should have tree's, at the rate they are disappearing there will be none left soon.

In public spaces, Trees should be kept in all environments unless in terminal decline and likely to harm through falling limbs. In private areas, (peoples gardens) against trees self-seeded and poor tree choices by previous owner, greater discretion should be given. Some level of negotiation needed for felling perhaps for trees over a certain height within a neighbourhood as it has impact on surrounding houses.

We should always plant the right tree in the right place. Also, so many trees have been lost over the years and never replaced. There is a suitable tree for every street and action needs to be taken now. We can improve our local environment for the better by planting trees

Leading question again - focussing on negative aspects of trees! As per previous response, far too often our attitude is that the tree is the problem - therefore should be removed when we do something which doesn't work. A tree may have been there for decades but because someone puts a satellite dish in the wrong place, has built a wall when it was clear a tree would grow and effect it, or wants to build a house where trees already are, it is the trees which have to go, rather than us taking the time, using better design, or simply accepting that compromises have to be made due to the huge benefits trees bring to us all.

Keeping trees is essential. It is common sense. The more trees we have the more impact they will have.
We all know there is a slight risk of a tree falling over or a branch falling off but that is a small risk. The chances of being involved in a traffic accident or being victim to crime will be higher than being hit by a falling tree!

Tree removal as an utter last resort

Trees are vital to our wellbeing and the eco system and we should be actively planting more. As more development takes away our green fields, we must work hard to rejuvenate our towns and villages.

Street trees absorb harmful pollutants

Keep all trees unless they are a risk of causing harm or injury

As we see a massive negative change in our climate, as a county we need to do all that we can to combat the effect of CO2 on our atmosphere. Keeping our trees and allowing nature to do its thing is the least that we can do to battle the terrifying changes that we're seeing in the world

Trees are far more important and should be retained

Trees should only be removed if they are irrevocably diseased, pose direct harm to the environment or to people living nearby.

Around here, Birchfield Rd, there are many gaps where street trees have been removed and not replaced.

Trees can be properly managed to prevent them from causing problems. Any removed should be replaced with new trees

In most cases with some care and by being looked after most trees should stay or be replaced.

Trees have huge benefits for people living in urban areas - and there is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing, the local economy and wildlife. In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable. Alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. A tree should only be removed where there are proven risks to retaining it which cannot be overcome in any other way e.g., by maintenance or making changes to manmade structures or behaviour.
If WNC and the UK in general has any hope of meeting its carbon budget and net zero targets, we need to value trees as an important mechanism for removing carbon from the atmosphere, rather than seeing them as untidy or inconvenient.

Street trees in my opinion have lacked maintenance from councils. If the right sized tree was planted for the environment it was in it would only require minimal maintenance. The benefits of street trees out way any negatives

They provide shade and oxygen to the environment around them

They should be kept, replaced, increased

If suitable urban species were planted in the right places - and the trees that were planted were routinely maintained, given adequate tree pits, and watered in the first two years – there would be many fewer 'problems'. Problems come from poor management, lack of expertise (hence the

need for a well-paid tree officer at council level) and wrong tree in the wrong place. Historic plantings have planted forest trees, which can get too big for the space in urban areas - however judicious pruning and maintenance could remedy these problems. We believe alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them. We feel having a single point of contact for tree issues i.e., Tree Officer(s), would provide the nexus to encourage joined-up thinking about trees. This person/s would have the necessary expertise, and overview to coordinate between stakeholders. Lastly, if there was genuine engagement with communities on new tree planting projects - there would be less need for tree removal. We feel strongly that there should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge benefits trees bring to people and wildlife - not repetitive, and often mis-informed statements about them damaging paving and obscuring satellite dishes. Surely, we want streets of trees not satellite dishes. Engagement with a Tree Forum would also allow residents and community groups to have their voices heard and considered, allowing for greater cohesion, and understanding between residents' concerns and council decision making.

Street trees improve air quality next to roads, reduce the urban heat island effect and increase cooling in the areas with trees and make streets a nicer place. They also act as traffic calming due to making the road seem thinner.

The value of mature trees to the whole population of the town (shade, clean air, bio diversity) far outweighs the inconvenience to the few (roots and autumnal leaves) The council should aim to maintain and promote the value of all mature trees in all areas of the town unless legally obliged otherwise. If trees are maintained properly there should not be a need for removal. Most people gave digital TVs so tv reception is a pathetic excuse to remove a tree. Public need educating about why trees are there and the benefits. It's also about planting the right kind of new tree in the right place. Thinking of its impact over a long period of time.

I have noticed OLD very well-established trees being removed in Northampton. I am specifically referring to trees being removed near the Sol Centre on Barrack road to make way for buildings. It is heart-breaking. It has changed the look and feel of the road. Imagine how long it will take to get trees to grow back to the same size. Not to mention the effort and cost.

If they are diseased or damaged or cause a genuine problem such as blocking vital access.

Measures should be taken to keep street trees wherever possible, removing them should not be the default action, mitigation should be tried before this.

Trees take a long time to grow so more care should be taken before a decision is made to chop down even a single tree.

Many people don't have gardens their only but of green is the street trees

We really must move away from seeing trees as an inconvenience and place more education and awareness on their benefits. In our modern world we place so much emphasis on convenience, people can be too quick to ask for a tree to be removed or simply remove it

themselves. Removal should always be a last resort and the council should stand strong and resist challenges to remove trees. More thought should go in to finding another solution to the problem that is presented. For example, if it's TV reception, maybe move the dish or ariel. Try to find creative solutions which mean that the end goal can be achieved whilst protecting nature. Trees are essential in our efforts to remove $CO2$ from the atmosphere, and we need to halve emissions globally by 2030 otherwise we will be presented with much bigger issues that whether or not a resident can get a TV reception! Be bold in your statements about the importance of trees and be proud to stand up for them and create an urban tree regeneration project that our county and future generations can be proud of! We have a very short window and moment in time to make a difference. Why wouldn't we?!

Trees can be managed. There are two huge horse chestnut trees in front gardens in my street. One is in competition with telephone lines and is periodically reduced.

I think the biodiversity crisis is such that we have to change our attitude to nature and no longer consider whether a tree is a useful commodity or not. Our attitude should be that if we are to improve the health of any environment for future generations then we have to behave as if we are part of nature and not continue to impose ourselves on it. Tree planting is more important (if done with nature in mind) than our need to watch TV or park our cars. Small trees can be planted in 1.5-metre-high planters as they are in Abington Street, so infrastructure is protected. It is a travesty to allow mature trees to be felled by planners or property developers. Mature oaks were felled as part of a care home development in Spinney Hill. This is criminal - 300-year-old trees. We need to think differently.

Unless the tree pose a danger to life or have died and need replanting.

All trees should be kept as long as possible. If they die, they should be replaced and their future welfare should be addressed - i.e., regular watering , pruning if necessary, etc. We need mature trees. They add so much to the local environment. There is always a slight risk that a tree may fall over, or a branch may come off in bad weather conditions. This should not cause us too much alarm. We cannot change nature.

There should be no need to remove street trees unless they are diseased or dead. It's not the tree's fault that it is outgrowing its environment. This is all about planting the right trees in the right place - if a street tree is raising pavements then it is because the wrong tree has been planted in that location. If they are growing too high or thick then again it is all about the wrong tree planted where it is not suitable. If a targeted programme of street tree planting is implemented this must take into account, the right tree for that environment.

How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

As it is seems alright

Mature trees should be protected from felling on developments sites. Too many perfectly healthy trees are cut down to make way for developments. Developers should be forced to work round mature trees. Planting new trees elsewhere on their site is no compensation for trees which have been growing for hundreds of years. More preservation orders should be made AND ENFORCED!

In build-up areas stress should have a notice if they are a danger

Not only should TPO's be used but such developments should made fully aware there duty to ensure that no accidents should befall these protected trees.

Look after trees and make tree preservation orders in advance of any threat. When approving any new housing areas make tree preservation orders first so that site and road planning takes their position into account. Otherwise, developers may (usually will) take the easy option of getting rid of them before anybody can object.

Careful management of planning on building sites would help, plus accurate note kept of trees on these sites and no "Accidental" removal of mature trees un-necessarily should be prevented.

More TPO's would be helpful.

Ancient trees and forests in particular should be protected from development (not sure what whether there are many in West Northants) and other trees should be planted and protected on development sites to help slow down water runoff.

Stop using sub-contractors! Employ your own staff who can be monitored. Looking after trees is a full-time process.

Make tree planting compulsory if it isn't already, on new estates, business parks etc. Surely many old trees have TPOs already, but if not, why not?

Appoint someone who knows about trees with proper qualifications. Far greater care needs to be taken when planning new developments as developers are still allowed to plant trees in inappropriate places.

Depends on where you grow them if you grow trees any near people property and they fall on their buildings the council could be made to pay for damage on private property on council property people feel afraid when a storm damage could fall on council bungalow or house and they would have nowhere to go

TPOs should not be used by planning depts.
Planners need to speak to residents who live in areas. Trees are nice in parklands but only in residential areas if appropriate trees are planted and these are then maintained.
Surely, as council tax payers, this is local money the council are using and therefore we should be asked what we want in our community.

Trees should be protected when in sensible places. Trees should not be protected when not in sensible places. New development should by law have to include green spaces & trees.

New housing sites need to have more street trees and I feel older more historical trees need to be kept to preserve what was there. The horse chestnut on Billing Road being removed was an absolute travesty. The look and feel of Billing Road was hugely impacted by the removal of this tree

If needed yes

Re plant when cut down and protect large mature trees when land is cleared.

Protect all existing trees on development sights and make an obligation of the developers to plant new trees as part of the development. The landscaping of the eastern district in Northampton is superb due to the trees and avenues of tree and grass pathways through the district for wildlife and human mindfulness.

The Council should use TPOs to protect trees which have significant amenity value. But it is also important to put adequate funding into enforcement, as not enforcing TPOs can lead to public distrust in the system.
The Council should also aim for the tree strategy to support policies for protection and planting of trees which are in the Local Plan and to provide more detail on how these policies will be delivered in practice.

Listen to the community

Recognise that trees are a hugely important natural resource and make this a key part of a coherent strategy to maintain existing trees and increase canopy cover, particularly in urban areas. Properly fund this strategy, including at least one qualified, full time tree officer to oversee strategy. Prioritise tree protection and planting, so trees come first. There is no reason new development cannot be cleverly designed to preserve existing trees. Make tree planting in situ a key criterion of all developments. Increase TPOs, make protecting trees easier, and properly enforce existing and new TPOs. Proactively insist on a tree survey (at developers cost) on all development sites to identify trees worthy of protection (similar to archaeological or ecological surveys ahead of developments)

Change current planning laws to protect trees

There were a number of comments regarding TPOS being made on trees

Protection of trees is vital

More preservation and established trees should be kept on new housing estates rather than being ripped out and the land flattened

I think that we should be trying our best to transform unused spaces of land into ecosystems for endangered animals and insects- which would be done by planting trees, and also other native flora. As well as that I think that we should investigate new innovative ideas RE greenery to incorporate more trees into our towns and villages

The council should use it powers to prevent stress from being cut down and make planting sufficient new trees for new developments part of its planning policy.

Planting enough new trees to offset the development and sufficient green space should be criteria for all new developments. Planning permission should be rejected if not met.

Ensure that preservation is key .If trees are removed then a replacement program including management over long term period to ensure success

Any tree that is removed should be automatically replaced. All trees that have been removed in the past should be replaced.

I think there should be more protected trees, for example, where the trees have been a part of streets for many years, e.g., Kingsland Avenue, they should not be removed without notice or explanation. I think that there should be a limit on tree clearance in parks, for example in Abington park, quite a few trees have been removed recently, which is sad.

Each mature tree should have a TPO, and all new developments should work around the mature trees.
Developers should be charged with planting suitable new trees to provide corridors between trees, groups of trees and gardens.
Developers should be required to plant a secretion of trees from a list of trees suitable to support bio diversity and grow suitably within an urban environment. Mono- cultures avoided.

Stop allowing hundreds of trees to be cut down for road improvements unless absolutely vital and replaced 10-fold with new ones. The destruction of trees on the road out to Corby near Overstone, and from Junction 15 to Roade has been nothing short of shocking, though I will concede it has improved the safety of the junctions on the latter. I hope these are replaced and monitored until they are fully established.

Construction should work around nature, rather than cut everything down and build over it. We've witnessed the shocking removal of a whole line of mature trees in Hardingstone recently as part of the Landimore development. This should be unacceptable. Developers can be ruthless and much tighter controls should be placed around what they can and can't do. Protect what we already have and plant more. The planning team should take a strong position and ensure that nature is preserved first and foremost. Ecology report should be accurately conducted, and the outcome respected. If there is a finding from the ecology report that is inconvenient to the planner, then it should still be respected. Nature is irreplaceable. Construction should be sympathetic and protective of our natural environment as we are dependant on the health of our natural world for our own human existence.   All trees and hedging in the planning process should be protected. I saw a planning application recently which supported the removal of 7 mature apple trees as they were deemed 'insignificant'. No tree should be insignificant.   TPOs are important but it should not take the presence of a TPO to deem that a tree should be saved.

A lot could be done through planning to preserve corridors of intact habitats and mature trees around and within development sites. I think this should be mandated in planning applications. This would benefit the developments themselves when finished and be a resource for the new residents also.

Making less tree preservation orders some trees are beyond saving and need chopping down before a serious accident happens, cut more than 2 meters off of trees that are over grown

especially near flats and houses as the twigs bang on windows in windy weather. Chop trees down that are blocking daylight into flats for example the cost of electricity is going up, yet some flats even mid-summer have to have lights on due to trees stopping daylight into premises.

There could be an issue of disease e.g., in Chestnuts and Ash. - but not all. The ash certainly was an issue of sourcing from Europe - the disease was bought in.
No tree dies naturally - if the roots are left it will sprout vegetatively.
I think more trees especially the deciduous hardwoods like beech and oak should be preserved. These indigenous species should be planted as a priority and watered effectively. I not there are different varieties of oaks planted in Abington park . Developers should be providing proper naturalised landscaping, common land/allotments, and tree planting as part of planning specifications and clauses (Civic Living strip of houses in Houlston just outside Rugby has used the natural agricultural land and hedgerow as part of the green space and has left an orchard in tack. WNC should look at other councils approaches.
Yes, management is important for the health of the environment - no wanton felling - it needs to be guided with expertise from all perspectives and not for ease of the developers or conflict with infrastructure.

Enforce the tree preservation orders that exist for a start, which should require regular checks on those trees with a TPO to ensure they are still in place and healthy. If a TPO tree is not being cared for, then ideally there should be advice and support to help the tree owner look after the tree better and if they persist in neglect or cut it down then there should be stringent penalties enforced. I don't know enough about the way trees are protected on a development site.

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

The enforcement of laws and regulations should be strictly adhered to - it seems to me that Councils are lax in this and developers and builders can flout these with impunity

Other than enforcing TPO's in a sensible manner, I don't know what laws apply

I am not sure of legislation but feel sure the number of trees in residential areas is monitored. I do however feel that even trees with TPO attached to them are not "looked after" and become dangerous to people etc.

New planting on new developments

There can be too much interference with councils from the government there's a lot of paperwork for Cllrs to read but bye laws sometimes are too old they do a lot of interfering with doctors surgery's I'm on PLC not many doctors around only have one when his not there we get locum in there useless

The amount of HMOs allowed in areas - this is certainly not being adhered to in far cotton. Parking - ensuring there is adequate parking & any new developments/changing of building use include plans for adequate parking - assuming that people will use public transport is not good enough.

Improve roadside parking but still plant trees

The Green agenda, plant trees for the jubilee, carbon offsetting.

We covered this point in the Woodland Trust's submission to the councillors' task and finish group on the tree strategy. There are, for example, regulations in the Highways Act in relation to trees and there are potentially opportunities to encourage more tree planting through changes proposed under the Environment Act (2021): for example, the new requirement for biodiversity net gain in planning. Changes proposed to agricultural subsidies will put more emphasis on "public money for public good", which could encourage more woodland creation on farm land. The Forestry Commission is offering an increasing range of grants to support woodland creation and there are other sources of grant aid being made available by Government departments (e.g., DEFRA's Treescape Fund).

Planting more trees and creating green spaces.

Less building - more preservation

Plant more trees

I think the council should come up with its own set of regulations to help combat climate change and increase better thought out and sustainable landscapes rather than relying on central government.

Climate change and how trees can have a positive effect in making a change and helping to clear pollutants

Felling Licenses for any cutting / chopping of trees. TPO's. Conservation Areas - trees should be left alone and cared for.

We would suggest the following are of most relevance, but our partner The Woodland Trust has also responded to this question in more detail:
• https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024
• The National Planning Policy Framework contains many references to trees in planning.
• https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/common-sense-risk-management-of-trees/
• https://www.tdag.org.uk/ has several very good research documents about urban trees and planning.
• https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/tree-strategies/
• The Occupiers Liability Act and Health and Safety at Work Act for risk management of trees by the local authority.
• The Town and Country Planning Act has the statutory obligation to protect and plant trees by the local authority, also administering TPOs and assessing planning applications.

England Trees Action Plan
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987432/england-trees-action-plan.pdf

It's not just laws and legislation, they should be looking at best-practice guidelines on ecology and climate change, and consulting relevant organisations e.g., Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and RSPB

Property developers or land owners that 'sit' on land especially in the town.

How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

Keep them up to date

Keep in touch regarding any projects which affect those areas. All Parish Councils should be kept informed of all relevant projects, as well as groups such as Friends of West Hunsbury Parks (my group).

Get info to people

Many Parish Councils are looking to plant more trees some on land owned by WNC, there are larger grassed area's which would come under Highways where more trees could be planted. The organisation NACRE based in West Hunsbury.

By consulting as early as possible with all, including local Residents Associations and Conservation Groups.

Draw up plans of vegetative areas and ensure that every effort is made to preserve all that is good about each area concerned

Pretty much as above, all departments should keep the policy in mind when organising projects. They should talk to local representatives and engage with local landowners as well as businesses.
Seek the advice of Woodland Trust, BCN Wildlife Trust and other forestry and tree organisations - they will offer advice and assistance. Co-operation is always better than confrontation.

Voluntary groups are very good but are often not protected by H&S policies etc.

Consultation

Build more open spaces and trees can go there like Victoria Park in in Bow E3 and Foster Park in Kent take a look at other areas in other towns

As above but also it would be good for council members to attend groups in person to discuss this.

If voluntary groups were to attempt to manage trees in our area, we feel the council would possibly reprimand us. Again H&S issues and risk assessments needed.

Provide assistance with maintaining the trees such and create local tree management groups who look after and tend to the trees

Give local groups resources and guidance

Listen to their concerns, usually ignored.

Coordination of skills, sharing of equipment and signposting to government pots of money available for such projects. Encouraging and rewarding those councils which prioritise trees and green spaces.

Involvement of town and parish councils is particularly important, as they often have land which may be suitable for tree planting and they usually have strong links with their local communities. It is worth noting that the Woodland Trust offers free community tree packs to enable small scale woodland creation (e.g., up to 400 trees) and these are available to schools, community groups and parish and town councils.

To make getting permission much easier. By changing some of the rules. I'm trying to get trees planted along the A428 outside Little Houghton but have been told trees have to be 10 metres from the kerb. There are no pathways so why 10 metres. Having a 2-metre distance would be much better

Listen

Consult and listen. Utilise the people willing to give up time to help with tree planting and looking after trees. Support them with funding and equipment and resources (for example to help watering new trees). Provide positive information and guidance to town councils and groups about the benefits of trees. Send a clear message that the council is prioritising the environment and putting trees first. Encourage and praise those doing the right thing by trees, and make it clear those who abuse the protections, or remove trees unnecessarily are on the wrong side of this. Run a publicity campaign to boost resident attitude to trees.

Talk to them, get them. They have residents' interests at heart not people who don't live in the area but just work for WNC.

Publicity. Advertise your plans to all. Encourage partnership work. Have a tree department with council staff!

More open & public consultation

Speak to the parishes and locals. Ask what they want in their areas. All variety to what we are planting and most importantly, make sure its priorities our wildlife

By working together

Listen to people

By creating a really strong bond with volunteers and townspeople - making them feel included in the improvement of their towns. Educating on the importance of trees in their communities, as well as passing on information to our youth about the different native species to our area. If people feel involved, they're more likely to care about the work that's happening

Plant more via local groups

By listening to their views whilst being aware the loudest or most eloquent voices are not necessarily the wisest or most informed.

Work with local communities to identify sites for new planning and how the council can make current towns and villages more green. Identify local sites that should be set aside for mass tree planting.

Involve communities in the development of the strategy. I have stumbled on this survey purely by chance. The strategy should not be developed internally then presented to communities when it's too late to have a say

By supporting projects and not putting financial barriers in the way Recently as a trustee of a charity of a local parkland (council owned) we were offered over 50 trees free of charge by the rotary club who were to charged £500 a tree by the council to maintain the tree. Utter madness. The Rotary club could not afford this so the project did not get off the ground.

A tree officer at WNC would be able to work this out.

Inclusion, information, integration

Parish councils have an important role to play, as they often have more expertise in an area's needs. Increased funding for Parish and Town Councils for tree-planting projects could be effective.

Voluntary groups should also be supported, for example being supplied by the Council with trees (or at least the Council significantly contributing towards the cost or matching public donations) so that the group can plant them.

Again, by keeping all relevant personnel informed.

I'd suggest an online session open to all relevant organisations to launch the new policy and strategy.

Roles and responsibilities for tree management should be clearly documented, with support available for those who have questions or need clarification. A known and published point of contact within WNC for queries and support with tree management. Sharing information about what others are doing and how would be helpful - currently parish councils operate largely on their own and any communication between PCs is ad hoc and up to each PC to initiate. Publishing tree management FAQs or an online discussion forum might be considered.

Steering / focus groups

All should work together to achieve the same goal

Make it easier for voluntary groups for example making sure IDeverde are responsive in tree planting projects or allowing others to get involved. It is so expensive and complex to do (I am the chairperson of a voluntary group that has planted town centre trees this year)

Keeping them informed and getting their input. A monthly Tree Forum with all parties, stakeholders, and organisations (such as The Woodland Trust, CAWN and Save Our Street Trees) involved.

There is a lack of information about trees out there - and it would be helpful to have a tree hub on the council website for all related FAQs. A good tree policy will allow all parties to sing from the same hymn sheet!

Make sure that each group is involved in the decision, and that each group has the resources to carry out any delegated tasks.

Share the location of the trees managed by the council and encourage town and parish councils to help look after them and plant new homes in the areas.

The Tree Officers team should be able to advise and encourage local groups. They should be willing to work occasionally with community groups at their meetings. There should be members who can lead school projects. There should be regular press announcements and social media profiles.

Create a data base to register these groups and have meetings with them to hear their voices,

Invite them to meetings. Make accessible to all. For example, county hall has appalling accessibility. Corridors to lifts blocked and impossible to have a wheelchair in the seated area. Use social media to raise awareness.

Communication.

Keep them informed about any potential changes before these are going to happen.

By having joint membership with these other organisations to further knowledge together.

Clear and continued consultation to seek good solutions

Be really clear on a plan, including educating people on the benefits for wellbeing, the environment   and,   essentially,   future   generations.
Make it really easy to contact/work with the Council. Create a simple plan for approval to plant and remove all unnecessary barriers to plant - make it effortless so that people can make quick progress. Offer funding, if there is any.

Provide clear, unambiguous guidance and support on-demand regarding managing trees which might otherwise be removed.

Publicity about trees and the councils strategy is required. A lot of it. Recruit tree wardens. Put trees first!

How should the Council's new Tree Policy and Strategy work with other policies and projects of the Council and with other government bodies working in West Northamptonshire? - Work with other policies/projects/other government bodies

Work with parish councils

The Council could look to DEFRA and the Forestry Commission

Just talk to each other and listen as well

Roads, highways, planning should all co-ordinate with reference to the policy.

Not sure- you don't listen to public anyway!

Consultation with all parties.

Government never keep their policies they change them all the time and who breaks the law only the council

Engage with other authorities

All agencies should liaise with each other. It appears developers rule at the minute.

I am not a councillor, so I am not up to date with the policies and projects. I would hope with the environment being at a precarious point as highlighted internationally this week that the priority of protecting the Green environment would take precedence.

A key linkage will be to the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, as mentioned earlier. I also recently attended the launch of your new Sustainable Communities Strategy; community involvement can be a key component both in drawing up your tree strategy but also in delivering it.

By making tree planting a priority. Tree planting planning should be the start of every project

Needs to be coherent and fully joined up - tree strategy should inform other areas of policy and projects, for example local plan, development criteria and planning, and budgeting.

Essential as part of net zero policy

Appoint somebody who really cares about trees and give them the funding necessary to monitor the programme and liaise with relevant bodies.

Yes, definitely

By working closely with all necessary bodies and keeping all personnel informed of progress instead of working as a separate unit.

Difficult to say as I don't know what other policies and projects the council has - in general terms all policies should be aligned, with review and sign off processes in place to make sure they don't   contradict   one   another.
I'd suggest in relation to the point about other government bodies that these are identified and proactively engaged with as part of the process of developing the Tree Policy and Strategy.

Be compatible with other schemes

With openness, honesty, and transparency.

Collaboration but not be pushed over too easily in terms of other priorities

Encourage more forest schools. Let every child have access to nature. More volunteering opportunities with retired and non-working communities. More community projects.

The policy should work in conjunction with other organisations

The policy and strategy must be 'joined up' with planning, transport, and decisions regarding schools and other public spaces.

Partnership work is crucial. Cannot comment on the details.

Please outline any additional comments that you feel may be appropriate and relevant for the Council to consider about management of tree in West Northamptonshire?

- Any additional comments

Just don't wait for the trees in build-up areas to fall

The Council should keep in mind biodiversity in both the trees and hedging plants

There are many pubs which now have overgrown trees inappropriately placed. These need to be managed, e.g. The trees in the grounds of the Trumpet pub in Weston Favell Northampton. They have been pollarded before but are now so high that houses across the road have to keep their lights on in the daytime even in Summer.

There are many initiatives in place around the country. Learn from other's experiences and be flexible in dealing with organisations and businesses

Again- find appropriate staff / contractors. You always seem to contract out to companies that do very little for the fees paid. Get our local councillors to complete "walkabouts" with local residents and "LISTEN" to us.

No trees in street or near a property private or council that why we have a lot of pot holes and subsidence parks and open spaces

More detail is needed to allow residents to be made aware of plans in area. Why is tree maintenance sub contracted out ? Often companies that council select then contract out work to other companies (umbrella contracts). Work is minimal and often not inspected.

Replace tree stumps with fresh trees

Make sure you have environmental and tree specialists included as part of and debate and they have a voice within the debate.

A lot of people in Northamptonshire want to help plant trees. Use the public to volunteer and suggest sites to plant trees, use local knowledge. Give parish council access to plant trees along roads leading in and out of their parish council. Help create a network of tree wardens that will look after and maintain trees

Plant more as previously said, remove dead and diseased.

Hurry up and get things done.

Rather than looking to save money and make maintenance easy, think about what is right for the generations to come. Plant like our future depends on it rather than how will we afford it.

To summarise - trees are so important, if we keep chopping them down and neglecting our environment, we're going to suffer massively in the years to come. Let's act now and start building change so that our kids and youth have a future to look forward to. Planting and maintaining trees is such an easy thing we can do to make a real difference

Please take time to look at the current research re biodiversity losses. You may not be aware of e.g., 43 million less birds than 20 years ago. Over 80% insect loss in same time. This includes the Uk. Our Earth will not be able to support life (including us) if this continues. Think of how successive generations will view us .

Please work with communities more

I am always really saddened when trees are removed or damaged and not replaced.

Make sure your policies and financial support / restrictions are not barriers to delivery

• We would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision,   investment   and   reinstatement   of   trees.
• I would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees.
• There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in West Northamptonshire, which measures current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting.
• We believe there should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance. That more appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential   problems   further   down   the   line.
• Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.

Creating more paving planting holes for small trees in town streets

With more than 80 per cent of UK residents living in the built environment, it is our belief that access to green spaces and/or green views has never been more important. There is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Create meadows please and don't keep verges cut. DO NOT use weedkillers and insecticides in parks etc.

It's not enough to just chop everything down and say we can plant some more. A small sapling cannot support the diversity of nature that a huge old tree can. We are doing those who came before us a disservice by destroying their planting and those who come after us will suffer as a result of our selfishness. Money cannot buy hundreds of year-old trees. We should have a "no chop" policy in the county.

Make sure we have expert advice in order to ensure that any trees that are planted are right for the space they're going in to and for our changing, warming climate, so that they have the best chance of survival. A leafy suburban environment is attractive for residents and people considering moving in to the area. As well as all of the wellbeing and environmental benefits, a strong urban tree policy and programme could be a game changer for West Northants. Just image how engaged and proud everyone could be to be part of a huge tree regeneration programme! It could be amazing!

The council has made a bold pledge about becoming net zero by 2050 and yet everywhere I look in South Northants there is wholesale destruction of mature trees and hedgerows. Planning must be changing with immediate effect to halt this devastation. Development can be done in a much more sustainable way. it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

Please just get on with it! Plant more, save more and make tree management a priority.

Location

Respondents were asked to state the location that they were responding from:

Daventry

West Hunsbury - Green Lane, joining Lady bridge Drive with Hunsbury Hill Road. Hunsbury Hill Country   Park.
Lady bridge Park and Wootton Brook Park.

Road from Blisworth to Gayton where trees over hang the road. These should be made safe

Abington Park and that behind Pyket Way but I'm particularly thinking about the whole area and new developments where there may be the opportunity both to preserve established trees and to ensure that new trees are planted as an essential part of granting planning permission.

Weston Favell/Northampton and the surrounding area

Lings area   x 2

Riverside area

NN4   x 2

Penrhyn Road, Northampton   x 2

Northampton x 5

Little Houghton

All of West Northants area x 2

Wootton village x 2

Mostly area ten mile radius of Nether Heyford but also all of the uk.

Dallington Cemetery

The Avenue Spinney Hill

Phipsville/Abington

Brackley and Northampton town

St Giles Churchyard

Abington Park and streets throughout Northampton

Rushden and Higham Ferrers

Wootton/Hardingstone

South Northants, Towcester, and Roade

I do not live in West Northamptonshire but have been involved in work there through my role in policy advocacy at the Woodland Trust and our urban team have been very involved with a local community group that is promoting street tree planting in Northampton.

Respondents were asked what their connection with West Northants

All those that answered this question responded that they were a local resident except for one that stated they were a Parish Councillor/Town Councillor and four respondents advising they were a representative of voluntary or a community organisation. Two respondents were from Residents Councils, one a representative of Friends of Dallington cemetery, one was a student at the University of Northampton; one respondent was a street warden. A respondent represented CA-WN.

A number of respondents chose not to answer this question.