



Title: **A Tree and Woodland Framework for Torbay 2012-2017**

Public Agenda Item: **Yes**

Wards Affected: **All Wards in Torbay**

To: **Council** On: **1 March 2012**

Key Decision: **No** How soon does the decision need to be implemented: **1 April 2012**

Change to Budget: **No** Change to Policy Framework: **Yes**

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## **1. What we are trying to achieve and the impact on our customers**

### **A Tree and Woodland Framework for Torbay**

- 1.1 Driven by overarching policies contained within various National and Regional policies, strategies, legislation and statute duties, the Torbay Council Tree and Woodland Framework has been written to deliver these wider aspirations to the local level. The Tree and Woodland Framework has been written to act as both a stand alone document that defines our actions with regard to the management of our tree asset but also further and more importantly as a vehicle to link into the various local strategies and documents that are currently in place to deliver the wider green infrastructure goals of the council. To enable a more unified and therefore effective delivery of the various disparate strategies and documents the Torbay Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan is in its final stages of completion prior to delivery.
- 1.2 Natural resource strategies rarely work in isolation and, for this reason, Torbay Council is developing a framework of strategies and policies around how the natural resource assets on council-owned land, such as trees and woodlands, are going to be managed in the long term. This framework will provide guidance for the maintenance and enhancement of the trees in Torbay and will define the management approach required for the safe useful life expectancy for Council-owned tree stock. It will present a clear strategic aim and will explain the reasons why decisions and actions are taken through the adopted policies laid out within the framework.

- 1.3 The Council has a duty of care for the trees within its ownership and therefore seeks to be a responsible manager and to maintain its trees reasonably, subject to the wide range of constraints and demands presented to them. In view of the Council's ambitions and all the benefits that we receive from trees, as well as the Council's responsibility for tree management and protection, it is fitting for the Council to set out its approach to these issues in a framework.
- 1.4 The purpose of this framework is to address fundamental issues by laying down the basis of management practices to ensure all those involved are working to the same basic principles. This will result in an overall improvement in the standards of tree care which will in turn result in a healthier tree population and happier residents within Torbay.
- 1.5 The framework seeks to establish a point of reference for the public, Councillors, officers and professionally interested people to enable informed discussion and to establish a clearer, more structured approach to the issues affecting trees in the Torbay area.

## **2. Recommendation(s) for decision**

**That the Mayor be recommended:**

- 2.1 that the Torbay Tree and Woodland Framework 2012 – 2017 as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.**
- 2.2. That the Executive Head (Residents & Visitor Services) and the Executive Lead for Tourism and Environment be authorised to make minor amendment to the Framework as required as a result of feedback from the community and stakeholders. If any major alterations are made the Framework will be brought back to Council.**

## **3. Key points and reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 The overall aims of the framework are to ensure the safety of Council-owned trees; maintain and encourage biodiversity; maintain and improve landscape quality; and, through these elements, to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors both now and in the future. We will achieve this by:
  - maintaining and improving the tree cover for the future by taking advantage of different funding methods available;
  - to reduce the number of inappropriately planted trees by their phased removal and replacement;
  - encouraging the conservation, positive management and the appropriate planting of trees and woodlands within Torbay;
  - promoting the importance of trees and woodlands in shaping the distinctive local character and appearance of the Torbay's coastal, urban and rural landscapes;
  - recognising the significant aesthetic, landmark, ecological, cultural and historic value that trees provide;
  - effectively communicating, educating and engaging with the local community over trees;
  - continuing to move away from a reactive service towards the proactive cyclical

- management of council-owned trees using current best practice;
- managing the tree stock in accordance with good Arboricultural practice and current British and European standards;
  - providing clarity over why decisions and actions are taken;
  - managing any associated risk identified in line with Torbay Council's adopted Tree Risk Management Strategy, whilst balancing nuisance to persons and property against all other aims.
  - recognising the value of trees as a tangible asset.

**For more detailed information on this proposal please refer to the supporting information attached.**

**Sue Cheriton  
Executive Head – Residents & Visitor Services**

## Supporting information

### A1. Introduction and history

A1.1 The Tree and Woodland Framework is an updated version with new policies, guidance and objectives following on from the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2003 – 2008.

A1.2 The framework identifies policies and procedures for Council Owned Trees, private trees and their management.

The key elements of the framework are:

- The benefits of Torbay's urban forest
- Council owned tree and there management
- Council owned woodlands and conservation sites and there management
- Trees on private land and development sites
- High Hedges guidance and authority responsibilities and involvement.

A1.3 Following the agreement wider work will be carried out on the Framework to seek community engagement and ownership.

A1.4 A copy of the draft framework is available on the Torbay Council website on the following link:

[www.torbay.gov.uk/treeandwoodlandframework.htm](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/treeandwoodlandframework.htm)

### A2. Risk assessment of preferred option

#### A2.1 Outline of significant key risks

A2.1.1 There are no additional key risks associated with accepting this report as the risk management of trees has been previously adopted and is concurrent (Tree Risk Management Strategy 2010). Key risks include the following:

- **Finance**, the Framework has been written to be cost neutral based on current levels of funding, reducing funding in the future will affect the levels of service provided.
- **Resources**, the loss of staff will affect the ability to implement the Framework effectively.
- **Legislation**, the Framework will have to be reviewed if there are any changes to legislation.

#### A2.2 Remaining risks

A2.2.1 **Unplanned events**, all of the Council's tree assets are subject to adverse weather conditions and can be affected by extreme high winds.

### A3. Other Options

A3.1 Continue with the existing tree and woodland strategy (now out of date), this strategy was currently unaffordable and lacked direction of proactive

management, low in environmental perspective and does not meet the high current customer service demands.

#### **A4. Summary of resource implications**

A4.1 The framework and its emerging delivery plan will be within the budget allocated for this service area. Developing the use of external grant and resources through proactive management.

#### **A5. What impact will there be on equalities, environmental sustainability and crime and disorder?**

A5.1 The framework is for the presentation and promotion of environmental benefits of trees and their management. The framework outlines how the Council manages its tree holding within all areas of ownership.

#### **A6. Consultation and Customer Focus**

A6.1 The Framework has been consulted on internally within the Council during its development and a draft document has been issued to Key Stakeholders for consultation. Feedback to date has been positive and has led to some amendment to the framework, however, at the time of the publication of the report some further comments are expected which may lead to further amendments.

#### **A7. Are there any implications for other Business Units?**

A7.1 There are no significant implications for any other business unit by approving this framework.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1- Tree and Woodland Framework

Appendix 2 – Consultation Responses

### **Documents available in members' rooms**

Tree and Woodland Framework

### **Background Papers:**

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

A Strategy for England's Trees, Woods and Forests (DEFRA 2007)

Trees in Towns II (Department for Communities and Local Government 2008)

The London Plan – Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London (July 2011)