

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

15 July 2008

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 WOODLAND TREE INSPECTIONS

Summary

The report outlines the tree inspection report recently completed for woodland trees, which identifies tree work required on a prioritised basis.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Trees on areas of Public Open Space owned by the Council are inspected annually by the Council's Ground Maintenance Contractor, with the inspection report reported to Members of this Board. At the last meeting of this Board Members considered the inspection report for 2007/08 and agreed that a separate report on woodland trees be considered at this meeting.
- 1.1.2 In addition to Public Open Spaces, the Council is responsible for 26 woodland sites in the Borough, the majority of which have unrestricted public access. In accordance with the Outdoor Leisure Operational Risk Register a tree inspection of all the woodland sites has recently been undertaken for the first time.
- 1.1.3 The inspections have been progressed in accordance with guidance from the Woodland Trust with trees inspected that are ten metres from boundaries and ten metres either side of official pathways.
- 1.1.4 The findings of the inspection are received as a written report, which identifies the tree work required under four priorities:
- Priority 1 – immediate action required
 - Priority 2 – high priority with action required in six months
 - Priority 3 – medium priority with action required within twelve months
 - Priority 4 – low priority with action required within four years.

1.2 2008 Woodland Tree Inspection

1.2.1 With the exception of the woodlands at Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Parks, the woodland tree inspections have been completed. A summary of the findings detailed below:

Priority	Number of Trees Identified	Approximate Cost (£)
Priority 1	0	0.00
Priority 2	23	3,954.00
Priority 3	532	72,081.00
Priority 4	171	24,075.00
Total approximate cost		90,040.00

1.2.2 It is the Council's policy that Priority 1 works should always be progressed on an urgent basis, and that Priority 3 and 4 works should only be progressed once Priority 2 works have been completed, and then only if the work can be funded from existing resources. If it is not possible to progress works to the lower priority trees, throughout the year, the next annual inspection will identify whether the trees have deteriorated and moved into a higher priority.

1.2.3 Priority 2 works have been identified at the following sites and will be actioned with funding from existing revenue budgets:

- Woodlea/Grassmere, Leybourne
- Salisbury Road, Tonbridge
- Woodland Walk, Tonbridge
- Quincewood Gardens, Tonbridge
- Woodbury Road, Walderslade
- Woods Meadow, Leybourne
- Winterfields, East Malling

1.3 Tree Risk Strategy

1.3.1 Tree risk management is an area that is currently under national review with the Tree Safety Group championing the drive to develop an "Industry statement". In addition, BSI British Standards is currently developing a new British Standard (BS 8516 Recommendations for tree safety inspection) aimed at tree owners and managers, and all those designing tree inspection regimes. The draft standard is currently out to public consultation.

1.3.2 Taking the above into account it is felt appropriate for the Council to review its approach to tree safety, to ensure the most appropriate and effective procedures

are in place. Members may well recall a similar approach was taken in respect to water safety a few years ago. The Council's insurer, Zurich Municipal, has advised that it can offer advice and guidance on tree risk management and would be willing to assist in the development of a Tree Risk Strategy for the Council.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 Under the Occupiers Liability Act the Council has a duty to ensure that visitors to its premises are kept reasonably safe. As far as Public Open Spaces and woodlands are concerned this includes a requirement for the Council to inspect and carry out work to any trees that may be regarded as a risk to safety.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 In accordance with the Council's policy, it is anticipated that the financial implications of progressing the tree works resulting from the 2008 woodland tree inspection survey can be met from the agreed revenue budgets for 2008/09.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The risk implications of having inadequate management systems for dealing with dangerous or diseased trees are highlighted in the Outdoor Leisure Risk Register.

1.7 Policy Considerations

- 1.7.1 Biodiversity & Sustainability, Asset Management.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 The 2008 woodland tree inspection survey has identified a relatively low number of Priority 1 and 2 trees requiring attention and it is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:

- 1) the Priority 1 and 2 tree works on woodland areas identified in the 2008 woodland tree inspection report be progressed, in accordance with the Council's agreed policy.
- 2) a Tree Risk Strategy for public open spaces and woodlands owned by the Council be developed in liaison with the Council's Insurer.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers: Nil

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Nil

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