

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**19 May 2009**

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

**Part 1- Public**

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

**1 ANNUAL TREE INSPECTIONS FOR OUTDOOR LEISURE SITES**

**Summary**

**This report outlines tree inspection reports recently completed by the Council's Ground Maintenance Contractor, which identify tree work required on areas of Public Open Space, Country Parks and at Poult Wood Golf Course on a prioritised basis. The report also updates Members on the development of a Tree Strategy for the Council.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Trees on Public Open Spaces are currently inspected annually by the Council's Ground Maintenance Contractor (Kent County Council Landscape Services) as specified in the Ground Maintenance Contract.

1.1.2 The areas covered by the tree inspection report include Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground; Tonbridge Castle Grounds; Swanmead Sportsground; Frogbridge Sportsground; Tonbridge Farm Sportsground; St Stephens Churchyard, Tonbridge; Tonbridge Cemetery and St Peter and St Paul's Churchyard, Tonbridge; as well as other open spaces throughout the borough.

1.1.3 The annual inspection is 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.

1.1.4 In addition to Public Open Spaces, inspections have also been undertaken at Leybourne Lakes and Haysden Country Parks and Poult Wood Golf Course.

## 1.2 2009 Tree Inspection Reports

1.2.1 The 2009 Public Open Space tree inspection report undertaken in January 2009 has been received and this supersedes all previous reports. A summary of the present position, which is detailed at **[Annex 1]**, is as follows:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Number of Trees Identified</b>	<b>Approximate Cost (£)</b>
Priority 1	1	2,000.00
Priority 2	55	5,630.00
Priority 3	182	22,502.50
Priority 4	42	4,180.00
<b>Total approximate cost</b>		<b><u>34,312.50</u></b>

1.2.2 The 2009 Haysden Country Park tree inspection survey undertaken in March 2009 has been received and supersedes all previous reports. A summary of the present position is as follows:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Number of Trees Identified</b>	<b>Approximate Cost (£)</b>
Priority 1	0	0.00
Priority 2	20	1,450.00
Priority 3	75	4,420.00
Priority 4	9	930.00
<b>Total approximate cost</b>		<b><u>6,800.00</u></b>

1.2.3 The 2009 Leybourne Lakes Country Park tree inspection survey undertaken in April 2009 has been received and supersedes all previous reports. A summary of the present position is as follows:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Number of Trees Identified</b>	<b>Approximate Cost (£)</b>
Priority 1	0	0.00
Priority 2	7	580.00
Priority 3	40	2,150.00
Priority 4	9	335.00
<b>Total approximate cost</b>		<b><u>3,065.00</u></b>

1.2.4 The 2008 Poulton Wood Golf Course tree inspection survey undertaken in November 2008 has been received and supersedes all previous reports. A summary of the present position is as follows:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Number of Trees Identified</b>	<b>Approximate Cost (£)</b>
Priority 1	0	0.00
Priority 2	9	870.00
Priority 3	129	7,620.00
Priority 4	10	190.00
<b>Total approximate cost</b>		<b><u>8,680.00</u></b>

- 1.2.5 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. It is encouraging to note that only one Priority 1 tree has been identified from the reports, reflecting the responsible approach taken by the Council in addressing tree safety over a number of years. The total cost for Priority 2 trees is £8,530.
- 1.2.6 Members will be pleased to note that following specialist training of the Rangers at Leybourne Lakes Country Park, it will now be possible to carry out a proportion of the work in-house, reducing the cost of external contractors.

### **1.3 Tree Strategy**

- 1.3.1 At the meeting of this Board on the 15 July 2008 Members approved (Decision Notice D080136MEM) the development of a Tree Strategy for the Council.
- 1.3.2 The first step in the development of the Strategy was to review the Council's current approach to tree safety and this has been carried out in liaison with our insurers, Zurich Municipal. Following interviews with the Council's Insurance Officer, Landscape Officer and representatives from Leisure Services, Zurich has provided the Council with a Tree Liability Report. The report focussed on risk management from an insurers perspective and although in general the report identified no significant failings in the Council's approach to the management of its tree stock, it did identify several recommendations for improvement, which will be considered within the new Tree Strategy.
- 1.3.3 It is proposed that the draft Tree Strategy is circulated for comment to relevant external organisations to include the Health & Safety Executive, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust. Following consultation a final draft will be brought to a future meeting of this Board for Member consideration and approval.

### **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 Open Spaces 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 (as in 1.2.5 above) resulting from the 2009 tree inspection reports can be met from the agreed revenue budgets for 2009/10.

### **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 It is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- 1) The tree works on the Council's outdoor leisure sites identified in the 2009 tree inspection reports be progressed in accordance with the Council's agreed policy.
- 2) Progress on the development of a Tree Strategy be noted with a final draft being brought to a future meeting of the Board for consideration and approval.

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:

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Nil

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Cabinet Member for  
Leisure, Youth and Arts