

## TREE PROTOCOL UPDATE

### Item HP 24/43 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 3 December 2024

Following the adoption of the Tree Preservation Order Protocol and the Enforcement Tree Protocol in May 2024, Members had expressed concern that the measures proposed to address an existing backlog of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) requests were insufficient to make a significant improvement within a reasonable timeframe.

As the Borough Council did not have current capacity to clear the backlog of requests in a timely manner, three options were presented for consideration. These were detailed in paragraph 5 of the report and included:

- seeking a consultant to work on the backlog of requests
- continue to attempt to reduce the backlog within existing resource
- await the outcome of a wider review of case work and capacity.

Members recognised that one of the proposed options would require a funding stream to be identified as there was no budget provision available. It had been estimated that a one-off cost of approximately £29,000 would be required to clear the backlog.

Due regard was given to the Borough Council's financial position and the potential impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Members also recognised that this needed to be balanced with providing an effective service and on the grounds of reducing the backlog Cllr King proposed that a consultant be sought to work on the backlog of TPO requests (detailed in Option A). This was seconded by Cllr Roud and supported by the Committee.

Whilst recommending the use of an external consultant to address the backlog, Members felt it was important to identify and understand the ongoing and future demand and capacity within the Service. Concern was also expressed that the existing backlog was delaying the protection of other trees.

**\*RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) a consultant be sought to work on reducing the backlog of Tree Preservation Order requests (Option A), as detailed in 5.3 – 5.7 of the report; and
- (2) the approximate one-off cost for Option A of £29,000 and the need to identify a funding stream be noted.

**\*Recommended to Cabinet**