

Introduction to the tree policy from a Parks perspective.

1. What is a Tree Policy?

A tree policy is a set of guiding rules and principles that will determine how the authority manages trees within its care in a safe and sustainable way.

A tree policy will set out the authority's rules and objectives with regard to all aspects of arboricultural practices carried out on council owned trees and woodlands and protected trees and woodlands within the City and County of Swansea.

A tree policy has an important role as a communication tool for informing both the public and stake holders of what they can expect from the council and provides a consistent approach across council services that have responsibility for trees on their land. This point is most important to Parks as public understanding of common law is limited and the perception that we should carry out all tree work that they require is prevalent.

A tree policy will require the input and agreement of all departments that have trees and woodlands on their land as well as other departments that are responsible for trees, woodlands, the environment and tree planting.

2. What are the aims of a tree policy?

The aims of a tree policy are to ensure the safety, maintenance, care, protection and longevity of the authorities tree stock, maintain and encourage biodiversity, mitigate the inevitable effects of climate change and maintain and improve landscape quality and by doing this improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors to the city. These aims are achieved by;

2.1 Maintaining and improving tree cover within the City & County of Swansea

2.2 Encouraging the conservation, positive management and appropriate planting of trees and woodlands within the City & County of Swansea.

2.3 Promoting the importance of trees and woodlands within the City & County of Swansea and how they can shape the character and appearance of the local landscapes

2.4 Recognising the significant aesthetic, landmark, ecological, cultural and historic value that trees provide.

2.5 Effectively communicating, educating and engaging with the local community with regard to tree issues

2.6 Continuing to work towards proactive management of the council's tree stock by a process of surveys and inspections across all departments' portfolios

2.7 Providing clarity over why decisions and actions are taken.

2.8 Balancing the risk and nuisance to persons and property against other aims

2.9 Recognising the value of trees as a tangible asset.

3. Points to include within a policy within the Tree Services Unit remit.

3.1 Tree surveys and Inspections. Trees are a potential liability for the authority and the authority has a duty of care to ensure that trees belonging to them are safe. It is recognised that there is a need for local authorities to carry out tree surveys. Due to the scale of the task, tree data management tools are required. Parks and TSU already run Ezytreev which we have used since 2012. We have the planned schedule for initial survey work detailed and we are halfway into our second year of a four year cycle in carrying out this work. To date we have plotted and surveyed 24702 individual trees trees and 683 tree groups and woodlands

3.2 Planting and re-planting. A commitment should be considered with regard to planting and re-planting trees wherever possible on a one to one basis especially when a dominant landscape tree is removed with ample space around it. Larger tree sizes should always be considered as they are less prone to vandalism and more resistant to climatic changes until they are established as well as making instant impact on the landscape

3.3. Arboricultural works. It is recognised that pruning trees can weaken their structure and be sites for disease entry into the tree, therefore it is important to restrict the work we carry out to protect the tree stock wherever possible.

Accepted work should be restricted to; removing dead or diseased trees, clearing obstruction from highways pavements and footpaths, CCTV, street light obstructions, trees causing structural damage, where trees restrict repairs to infrastructure and formative pruning.

Pruning work to cut back overhang from gardens and houses will be evaluated on a tree by tree basis and work will remain discretionary and subject to the availability of funding

While we realise that pruning and removal of trees can't always be avoided, we have to be able to restrict the work we agree to carry out on our trees to ensure that the trees are not unduly damaged or weakened by over pruning. In other cases we must be able to refuse work that will not have much tangible benefit to the complainant or the tree.

Tree policies in general across the country will all state the same restrictions which are based within common law principles. These same restrictions will also be applied within the policy. The points to include are;

3.4 There is no right to light. Trees will not be cut back, reduced or felled to improve 'light'

3.5 There is no right to views. Trees will not be cut back or felled to produce or maintain views

3.6 There is no right to TV reception. Trees will not be cut back, reduced or felled to improve TV reception

3.7 General nuisances and seasonal phenomena. Trees will not be cut back, reduced or felled to improve or alleviate problems created by; leaf fall, suckers, seedlings, blossom, sap, fruit, nuts, bird droppings, insects, honeydew, algae on fences paths or other structures, valuation of property and blocked solar panels.

3.8 Other points to include for information would be:

What constitutes a dangerous or unsafe tree and how do we respond.

Stump removal and recycling of wood and chip

24 hour emergency cover

Ivy on trees

Tree roots and root damage

Subsidence

Telephone and Electric lines

Nature conservation; birds, bats and badgers.

Damage to council owned trees and vandalism

The environmental objectives of the authority.