



## Policy Document

# Tree Policy

Adopted: Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. Minute no: F75

Review Date: 02.02.2028 – 2 years

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Witney Town Council is responsible for over 7,500 trees across the town and surrounding area. These trees provide a valuable amenity with many benefits for the town, parks and surrounding areas. These include maintaining and shaping the environment and align with the Town Council’s commitment to Climate Change and maximising biodiversity value through proactive tree care and a tree planting programme. Trees also play an important role and structure for the town to help support flood alleviation, carbon sequestration, noise and air pollution, wildlife corridors (both urban and rural), and health and wellbeing.

### 2. Management of the Town Council’s Trees

2.1 The Town Council has a duty to inspect these trees and to comply with its legal obligations to manage and maintain. In addition to planned maintenance, the Town Council react to reported issues where there is a risk to the public or where damage has been caused to property.

2.2 Where trees are located on land not owned by the Town Council, the landowner will be responsible and should be contacted directly with any concerns.

2.3 The Town Council will respond to urgent matters reported within 24 hours where trees pose a risk to life.

<b>Tree maintenance will only be carried out if necessary and in line with the following criteria:</b>	
Safety	Significant risk to the public Dead trees located near properties or roads
Tree Health	Work which will prolong life and encourage the development of a good tree structure
Removal	Dangerous, diseased, damaging property or to comply with the Highways Act 1980 S.154

<b>Tree maintenance will not be carried out for the following:</b>	
Natural Characteristics	Shade Leaf, blossom, pollen or seed distribution Television reception View
Overhanging Vegetation	Which is not causing damage or a risk to health & safety. Any tree owned by us that is causing any of the above can be cut back to your boundary. (Before cutting back any tree you will need to check whether there is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protected by a Tree Preservation Order</li> <li>• In a Conservation Area</li> </ul> If the tree is protected in any way, you will need to seek our permission.

2.4 The Town Council will seek to investigate and prosecute any organisation or individual that has caused significant damage to or removed any public tree(s) that are the responsibility of the Town Council.

### **3. Claims for subsidence, damage and heave**

3.1 When investigating claims of subsidence and/or damage to properties from tree roots emanating from a tree owned and maintained by the Town Council, the Town Council requires the property owner to submit a structural engineers report. This will enable the Town Council to review the evidence and determine the appropriate course of action.

The report must cover:

- Physical damage
- Presence of live roots of a suitable specie
- Seasonal movement or variation of the damage during different seasons

3.2 All claims regarding subsidence will be referred to the Town Council's Insurer along with a brief report detailing the age, type and condition of the tree and any other factors that may be of importance to the claim. If evidence is insufficient any claim will be dismissed.

### **4. Tree planting strategy**

4.1 The Town Council will manage and maintain the quality and quantity of its tree stock by continuing to plant new trees in suitable locations with appropriate species to enhance the enjoyment of open spaces, promote local distinctiveness, conserve the environment and enhance structural and genetic diversity of its treescapes.

4.2 The Town Council will establish a diversity of species to mitigate against climate adaptation, pests and disease that can threaten entire species adopting a 'Right tree, right place' approach to species selection will be made.

4.3 The following will be taken into consideration at the planning stage prior to planting:

- Local provenance (as much as can be confirmed) of ALL trees must be confirmed.

- Factors limiting planting (e.g. archaeology, underground utilities, roads).
- The planting is suitable for the landscape and enhances the way the area is utilised.
- The planting is appropriate from an arboriculturally perspective, giving considering to the issue or situation in terms of tree care, management, and conservation.
- Planting schemes are tailored to the site's specific conditions and requirements to ensure a high success rate.
- Planting schemes and specifications will comply with the latest biosecurity measures and strategies for tree health resilience.

4.4 For every tree that is on Town Council land that has a stem Diameter of 15cm or greater at the time of removal, two trees will be planted in the same or similar location. Should the existing location(s) be deemed not viable for direct replacements, alternative tree planting locations will be identified within the Town Councils responsibility or land within the locality.

4.5 Any Town Council tree that must be removed due to claim mitigation will be replaced adhering to the mitigation agreement.

4.6 The Town Council will proactively work and engage with Community Groups, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to enable tree planting projects to succeed.

## **5. External Funding and Grants**

5.1 The Town Council will actively seek external funding and grant opportunities to support the delivery of new tree planting and long-term establishment projects. Priority will be given to initiatives that promote sustainability, biodiversity, and climate resilience, ensuring that all funded projects align with the Town Council's environmental objectives and best practice standards.

## **6. Memorial and Commemorative Tree Planting**

6.1 Requests for memorial or commemorative tree planting will be considered where the proposed details meet location standards and provisions are in place for long-term management. For further guidance, please refer to the Council's Memorial Tree Policy.

## **7. Mayoral Trees**

7.1 Since 2015, the Town Council has planted a Mayoral tree each year within the Witney Parish boundary. In accordance with minute F315, the Council has agreed to continue this tradition, with a preference for planting within the Mayor's electoral ward. Officers will identify a suitable location and select an appropriate native species, ensuring compliance with Town Council restrictions and management plans.

7.2 The Council will replace any Mayoral tree that becomes damaged, vandalised, or decayed. Where ground conditions or repeated vandalism make replanting impractical, officers

may relocate the replacement tree to an alternative site. A plaque may also be installed to indicate the tree's dedication.

## **8. Tree Suppliers**

8.1 The Town Council will work with local and national UK tree nurseries and suppliers to source trees grown within the UK, prioritising sustainable practices and biosecurity. By supporting the production and use of locally grown, native species, the Council aims to reduce environmental impact, minimise the risk of pests and diseases, and contribute to long-term biodiversity and climate resilience.

## **9. Disposal and recycling**

9.1 The Town Council will consider recycling and upcycling tree wood waste where appropriate to align with its sustainable and environmentally friendly approach to managing timber and wood waste.

9.2 Disposing of tree wood waste in a way that promotes biodiversity is an important consideration in the Town Council's environmental management. Proper disposal methods can help ensure that the ecosystem remains balanced, avoiding harm to wildlife and encouraging the regeneration of plant species.

9.3 The Town Council will always look at ways wood waste can be recycled which can involve processing the wood into new products, wood chippings and pellets, or compost and mulch.

9.4 The Town Council will determine where retaining deadwood, damaged trees, and felled trees would be suitable in particular circumstances, to support biodiversity, promote invertebrate and fungal activity, and create wildlife corridors.

## **10. Management of the Town Council's trees – Routine inspections**

10.1 The Town Council is responsible for over 7,500 trees across the town and surrounding area. To ensure that we survey these as per best practice, the Town Council will undertake a Zoning\* exercise on selected Town Council sites to highlight areas where trees are present and in need of an increased level of inspection. This method is now being used by many Local Authorities. The method is to: -

- Identify areas of sites that are high risk and require surveying more frequently.
- Identify areas of sites that are low risk therefore reducing the inspection frequency of these areas. The Town Council believe a number of our trees will not be classed as high risk and will reduce the frequency of inspection required.

*\*Zoning – The following extract is from the 'Common Sense Tree Risk Management - Summary' by the National Tree Safety Group*

<https://ntsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NTSG-summary.pdf>

'Zoning is a practice whereby landowners and managers define areas of land according to levels of use. This practice prioritises the most used areas, and by doing so contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection, focusing resources where they are most needed. It contributes to sensible risk management and a defensible position in the event of an accident. It may be a reasonable outcome of the zoning process to decide that no areas require inspection. Classifying levels of use in this way requires only a broad assessment of levels of use. Typically, two zones, high and low use, may be sufficient. High-use zones are areas used by many people every day, such as busy roads, railways and other well-used routes, car parks and children's playgrounds or where property may be affected. Low use zones are used infrequently and may only require irregular inspection, if any. While owners and managers may deem it appropriate to use a more sophisticated approach, designating three or more zones, in the event of an accident whichever system is adopted may require justification according to the standard set. Normally, the best person to carry out an initial zoning assessment is someone who is familiar with the land, how it is used and what trees are present. Typically, this could be the landowner, occupier or land manager. It does not require a tree specialist to zone a site.'

10.2 Zoning, inspection schedules and the inspections will be undertaken by a specialist inspector. This information is held on the Town Council's tree mapping software and plotted on a geographical information system.

## **11. Unauthorised Tree Planting**

11.1 To ensure appropriate tree species selection and long-term management, prior Town Council written approval is required before planting tree(s) on Town Council land. Tree(s) planted without prior approval will be removed by the Town Council. Residents and community groups are advised to contact Witney Town Council to discuss any requests and should refer to the Witney Town Council's Memorial Tree Policy.

## **12. Privacy Statement**

12.1 Witney Town Council is committed to ensuring that the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 1998 are met. Please refer to the Council's data protection policy and privacy notice here: [Witney Town Council Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice](#)

## **13. Monitoring and Review**

13.1 A formal review will take place every two years or sooner if required by legislation or organisational change.