



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5 July 2017

REPORT TITLE:	HIGHWAY TREES MAINTENANCE CONTRACT
REPORT OF:	STRATEGIC COMMISSIONER FOR ENVIRONMENT

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides a brief update on the current position with respect to the maintenance of the Council's highway tree stock within the Borough.

Maintenance and improvement of highway trees contributes to the Wirral Plan pledges to: provide transport and technology infrastructure fit for the future; ensure Wirral's neighbourhoods are safe and an attractive local environment for Wirral residents.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Members note the contents of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

The large volume of enquiries currently being received suggests that highway tree maintenance is of particular concern to residents and Members.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This report provides an update on a number of issues and initiatives relating to tree maintenance service provision. Where appropriate, options appraisals have been considered to ensure best value for money and service efficiency within the applicable constraints.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wirral has approximately 25,500 trees on the adopted highway network. A full survey was conducted in 2012 to identify the number and species of trees.

The tree maintenance operational service provision in Wirral is delivered by external suppliers. The service is now managed within the Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) in Business Services.

A contract was awarded to Man Coed VM Ltd, who is a specialist arboriculture and tree surgeon service supplier, in September 2016, for the maintenance of the Council's highway trees for a two year term, potentially extendable by a further one year. Man Coed VM Ltd also hosts an asset database with details of all the Council's highway tree stock.

Other contracts are delivered by suppliers appointed following competitive tender in accordance with the Council's procurement rules. A contract for a full condition survey of all the Council's highway trees at a cost of approximately £21,000 has recently been completed by Amenity Tree Care Limited. The results of the survey have been prioritised using a risk-based approach and statutory clearances were recorded.

4.0 MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The results of the recent survey have been submitted to Man Coed VM Ltd. An order has been placed for the immediate removal of all dead, dying or sick trees. All other highway trees requiring attention as a result of the survey have been programmed for planned maintenance on a RAG status priority basis using a risk-based approach, and will be attended over the course of the contract with Man Coed VM Ltd. Reactive maintenance (as a result of public reports of storm damage or road traffic accident collisions, for example) is also prioritised and issued to the supplier accordingly. However, the supplier has been asked to programme work on a pragmatic and proactive value for money basis. For example, if three trees in a particular road have been identified as high-risk, then the supplier has been asked to consider whether all trees in that road may be better maintained at the same time.

- 4.2 Planned and reactive maintenance work is currently being issued to the supplier at a monthly average value of £15,000 from an annual available service revenue budget of £220,000 in 2017/18 (i.e. £180,000 work value for the year).
- 4.3 A budget of £30,000 will be set aside for any further storm damage and associated maintenance costs, such as traffic management and road closures/diversions.
- 4.4 Where a number of trees have been removed as a result of their surveyed condition or storm damage a further budget of £10,000 has been set-aside for re-planting, but clearly this is from a limited resource where essential safety-related maintenance takes priority.
- 4.5 Internal management of the highway tree maintenance service is currently being reviewed, including consideration of improved inspection and reporting mechanisms and an improved customer access strategy, including standardised and timelier customer updates as well as improved web-based customer information in order to better assist with enquiries.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Reactive and planned routine tree maintenance is funded through the Revenue service budget allocated for highway tree maintenance, which is £220,000 in 2017/18.
- 5.2 Based on the recent tree survey results, an assessment will be made in due course of the potential funding requirement necessary to address all the condition issues reported.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications relating to this report.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 7.1 There are no additional specific ICT, staffing or assets implications relating to this report.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

The contract with Man Coed VM Ltd will have a contract-specific risk register monitored by the appropriate contract management hierarchy.

All highway tree maintenance and work priority will be determined using a risk-based approach using the available survey information and/or advice from the specialist supplier.

There are no specific risk implications relating to this report, which is a general position update.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

There are no specific engagement or consultation matters relating to this report, which is a general position update.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

No, because there is no relevance to equality.

REPORT AUTHOR: *Simon Fox*

Interim Commissioned Services Manager (Highways and Traffic)

telephone: (0151) 606 2334

email: simonfox@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

None.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

No specific background material has been used.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date