



## Tree Strategy Scrutiny Review

Report of Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

March 2020



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Trees are a key part of our natural life support system as well as a significant part of Wirral's landscape, contributing to the health and wellbeing of a population and the sustainability of our communities. In the midst of a climate emergency, the role of trees is crucial in ensuring that we look towards effectively tackling the devastating impact of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and changing weather conditions. Trees provide a habitat for wildlife, a foundation for biodiversity and a basis for our ecosystem whilst also giving intrinsic beauty to our surroundings and economic value to our neighbourhoods. From the flood risk management benefits of tree roots to the improvement to air quality, the contribution trees make to our livelihoods cannot be undersold.

In addition to protecting trees for our communities and for future generations, Wirral Council also has a duty to protect its residents from harm and to ensure a safe environment for all. In order to fulfil this, it is vital that trees and woodlands in the Borough are managed effectively and that any potential risks from trees are identified, assessed and addressed.

## **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In 2016, the large bough of a horse chestnut tree of around 25 metres in diameter fell onto a busy carriageway from the perimeter of Arrowe Country Park, resulting in the tragic death of a baby girl. Following a full investigation and inquest by the Senior Coroner for Liverpool and Wirral, it was concluded that Wirral Council's lack of a 'proactive, robust tree management system in place for Parks and Countryside' as well as failings in communication and accountability were a contributing factor to the accident. A Tree Action Plan was subsequently created by the Council in order to effectively address prior issues relating to tree management on Wirral. Alongside this, the opportunity to comprehensively plan for Wirral's future tree planting programme and climate change agenda was addressed through the creation of a tree strategy for Wirral.

In July 2019, the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested that a scrutiny review of the Council's developing Tree Strategy and programme of tree maintenance was added to the Committee's work programme, with a Task & Finish panel established to carry out this review.

As per the scoping document attached as Appendix 1 to this report, it was initially envisaged that the following sessions would take place as part of this review;

- A site visit to Arrowe Park to gain an understanding of the range of challenges and issues currently faced.
- A focus group session with technical officers to hold detailed discussions around the draft strategy, tree risk management plan and additional areas of interest such as resourcing.

Following these initial sessions, an additional meeting was commissioned in order to further discuss findings, and to allow attendance of planning policy officers so that links between the draft Tree Strategy and Local Plan could be fully understood.

### 3. MEMBERS OF THE TASK & FINISH REVIEW PANEL

#### Chair of the Panel - Councillor Tom Anderson



#### Chair's Personal Statement

*"Wirral residents are fiercely proud of their local environment. Within our Borough, we are lucky to have a breadth of world class parks, green spaces and a beautiful expanse of coastline and as a Council we must ensure, in the public interest, that the conservation, maintenance and enhancement of our trees and woodlands is a priority. Over recent years, we have allowed siloed working to impact on our management of tree risk and as a result, we need to ensure a collaborative approach to how we maintain and encourage our tree stock. There is a fine balance to strike when it comes to protecting our natural assets whilst still fulfilling our statutory duty of care to Wirral residents and visitors and placing safety at the heart of tree management. This review has demonstrated the value of an extensive network of volunteers, Friends Groups, and diverse partner organisations who work with Wirral Council to help care for, improve and promote trees, woodland and open spaces and related activities throughout the Borough. I would also like to extend my thanks to my fellow Panel Members and to the Council officers who contributed to this report"*

**Councillor Allan Brame**



**Councillor Christina Muspratt**



**Councillor Steve Hayes**



**Councillor Phil Gilchrist**



**Councillor Tony Norbury**



**Councillor Ian Lewis**



**Councillor Helen Cameron**



## 4. DRAFT TREE STRATEGY

Wirral Council's draft Tree Strategy was initially developed in late 2019, with an aim to provide an essential set of priorities for safe and sustainable tree management and planting for the Borough. The purpose of the strategy is to 'provide overarching strategic guidance for trees in our Borough up to 2030', with a key focus on partnership working with stakeholders in order to deliver a holistic and aspirational 10 year plan. The strategy also looks to provide a clear vision and set of outcomes to be delivered over the course of the strategy's lifespan – putting a 'right tree for the right place' philosophy at the heart of the guidance.

*"In the ten year span of this strategy we will raise tree cover in the Borough to at least 10% to boost the benefits of trees and woodlands. We will seek to share these benefits across Wirral. Our planting will be based on "the right tree for the right place" building a strong legacy for our tree stock. If we are forced to fell any of our trees (because of a risk to the public) we will plant at least two more. We will work constructively with individuals and groups to deliver this vision."*

Ultimately, the strategy aims to more than double Wirral's woodland cover by 2030 in an effort to tackle climate change, as well as provide an enjoyable and pleasant environment for Wirral residents.

As part of this Scrutiny Review, Members of Panel took particular interest in the following areas of the Council's draft strategy;

### 4.1 Tree Risk Management

Each local authority has a number of statutory obligations to ensure the safety of the public, and there are key responsibilities regarding trees that the Council must fulfil. These responsibilities include repairing damage to roads caused by tree roots, safety surveys of roadside trees on a regular basis, and the removal of dying or dangerous trees that belong to the Council, amongst others. These actions minimise the risk of potential damage, injury or loss of life.

A key finding of the inquest into the 2016 incident in Arrowe Country Park was the impact of a lack of funding and failure to recruit and employ specialist staff for tree management, as well as inadequate training of Parks & Countryside staff with regard to tree management and identifying common hazards. At the time of the incident, there was no programme of mandatory, ongoing training and there had been no dedicated arboricultural officer employed within the Parks and Countryside team since 2003. The lack of a collaborative approach to tree risk management has been highlighted as an issue in recent years, with no previous policy in place for tree management within the Parks & Countryside team as well as a lack of understanding of the risk of trees falling from a park setting onto the highway.

When agreeing the scope of this review, Elected Members set a key objective that they would look for assurance that Wirral Council had implemented a robust system to control risk from trees to Members of the Public, employees and contractors and that lessons had been learned from previous failings. Although the draft tree strategy states the intention to build strong cross-departmental working partnerships to mitigate risk and encourage tree planting, the Wirral Council Tree Risk Management System document published by The Environmental Partnership (TEP) was also included for consideration as part of this review.

As previously mentioned, reductions in staffing within the Parks and Countryside team and a lapsed programme of maintenance for Wirral's tree stock had impacted on the regularity of tree safety inspections in recent years – with an indicated backlog of unfulfilled inspections of trees in a park setting dating 10 to 13 years. As a result, this maintenance was completed throughout late 2019/early 2020 in order to ensure that high risk trees were properly inspected and necessary works done. Although at the time of this review officers gave assurance that the programme of maintenance was due to come to an end, the short timeframe and extensive works that had taken place understandably raised concerns amongst Elected Members, residents and communities alike – a mass of tree felling with seemingly no consultation with interested groups. In this instance safety was the priority, and many trees which had not been inspected for a long time were diseased and requiring immediate works. To attempt to put the backlog maintenance programme into context, officers advised the Panel that approximately 1050 trees had been removed as part of essential safety work across the whole of the Borough – there are around 9000 trees that make up the 'shelter belt' boundary of Arrowe Country Park alone – so comparatively the number of trees felled had been kept as low as possible.

In the last year a permanent Tree Risk Management Co-ordinator has been appointed, with this role directly responsible for tree risk across the Parks & Countryside and Highways teams. The Panel were reassured that inspections will be carried out on all trees on highway verges over the coming months, with the expected recruitment of a dedicated Highways tree officer taking place shortly. The Council's workflow for tree management will be a cross-cutting endeavour, addressing the concerns of Elected Members around the implications of previous siloed working in relation to trees. All Panel Members agree that the prior barriers between the two departments needed to be broken down to ensure a holistic approach to tree risk across the Borough and are assured to be informed that steps have already been taken to improve the Council-wide system. Members were given further assurance that the current inspection programme ensures that trees on the roadside, or within falling distance of a highway, are inspected annually – isolated trees are likely to follow a five year inspection cycle.

### **Arrowe Country Park Site Visit**

Arrowe Country Park is made up of some 250 acres (1.0 km<sup>2</sup>) of open parkland, ponds and deciduous woodland at the heart of the Wirral Peninsula. The park site includes an 18-hole municipal golf course, a children's play area, an outdoor gym, tennis courts and a fishing lake (amongst a number of other features) with the Arrowe Brook flowing along the western edge of the park, from south to north, also incorporating Arrowe Park Lake. Arrowe Country Park is also a locally valued site of biological diversity; with a variety of bird life, wildflower meadows and ponds.

On 30th October 2019, Members of the Scrutiny Review Panel undertook a site visit to Arrowe Country Park. The purpose of this visit was to look at key area of woodland within the Borough in order to understand first-hand the range of issues and challenges faced when managing arboriculture, in addition to understanding the context around staffing resources and needs.

Arrowe Country Park, with its vast expanse of woodland in such close proximity to a busy highway network, is a prime location for tree risk to be identified, and for the implications of lack of action to be understood. In addition to the aforementioned incident in 2016, a large beech tree came down in the area in 2015, and despite it being within a park setting, fell across the highway on Arrowe Park Road. It was only when the tree was felled that fungus was discovered within the tree, something that Members were advised is difficult to observe through visual surveyance alone. Following these events, Amenity Tree Care were commissioned to carry out a tree safety survey on the perimeter of the park wall, with inspections taking place annually since 2016. Arboricultural officers informed Members that often the tree itself can be 'the tip of the iceberg' in terms of potential problems and often it is what can't be seen that causes the real danger. At the time of the park visit, Members were provided with information on the survey that had been undertaken of half of the Arrowe Country Park site - this can be found as Appendix 2.

Officers undertaking a visual survey of the tree take into account the following issues;

- Is the tree in a 'high risk' area?
- What will happen if the tree falls?
- What is reasonable action to take?

During the site visit, the Panel met with the newly appointed Tree Risk Management Co-ordinator, as well as the Trees and Woodland Officer. In addition to this, Members were advised that Parks & Countryside staff members have now been offered tree risk training to help them to note any potential issues, and visually recognise common problems. The Panel were also assured that this training came down to simple reporting rather than burdening the team with extra duties, and that discussion is due to take place with Trade Unions (although the training is not mandatory). This process was a deliberate step in improving the system and staff members do not hold any liability in the case of something going wrong.

As part of the visit, Members were keen to query how useful the iTree eco-tool might be for Wirral. iTree is a software application that quantifies the structure and environmental effects of urban trees and calculates their value to society. Although data collected through the app provides an understanding the urban forest such as canopy cover, species importance rankings and age distribution, it does not act as an inventory for trees nor does it assist to any extent with management. For a cost of approximately £18,000 the tool was generally thought to be unnecessary for Wirral – however, tree officers are aware of the software and its potential were it to become a more feasible option in future.

## 4.2 Tree Felling

A key commitment stated within the strategy is that *'the ultimate decision to remove or cutback a tree is always the absolute last resort and one we only take when there is no other option'* - with the Council's intention to replace every felled tree with two trees in the vicinity, or four trees in place of any mature tree felled. Members of the Scrutiny Panel echo the sentiment of the Council's Planning Sub-Committee meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in which the Bristol City Council model of tree replacement was referenced as a potentially beneficial benchmark for Wirral.

Members are keen to emphasise the point that the Council should be taking a firm line with developers to plant more trees, and that there is a clear need to monitor this. Bristol's guidance sets out a number of planning obligations in terms of the impact of development on tree cover, with a 'level of contribution' from the developer is required in the case of new tree planting to mitigate the impact of a development, or where trees are felled as part of the works and replacement planting is required on public land.

The contribution covers the cost of purchasing, planting, protecting, establishing and initially maintaining the new tree, on either open ground or hard standing;

- Tree in open ground (no tree pit required) - £765.21
- Tree in hard standing (tree pit required) - £3,318.88

Bristol City Council remain responsible for the planting of trees on public land in order to ensure a consistent approach and level of quality, and to increase the likelihood of new tree stock surviving. The number of trees required to compensate for loss of existing trees depends upon the size of the trees to be lost. This is set out in Figure 1 below;

Fig. 1

<b>Trunk Diameter of Tree lost to development (cm measured at 1.5 metres above ground level)</b>	<b>Number of Replacement Trees</b>
Less than 15	0 - 1
15 - 19.9	1
20 - 29.9	2
30 - 39.9	3
40 - 49.9	4
50 - 59.9	5
60 - 69.9	6
70 - 79.9	7
80 +	8

The Scrutiny Panel understands that promoting the benefits of a greener urban environment to developers and encouraging the retention of mature trees should always be encouraged in the first instance, but that the implementation of a scheme similar to the Bristol model (even if used on a case by case basis taking into account site conditions and affected species) would be the most effective mitigation of essential tree felling.

In stating this, the Panel do not advocate the loss of healthy established trees, with the priority always the preservation of mature trees and hedgerows, but in exceptional circumstances and if fully justified the replacement planting scheme needs to go further than the broadly simplistic 'two for one' pledge. In addition, 2020 is the International Year of Plant Health

(IYPH), with the Panel welcoming a greater emphasis on sourcing nursery stock locally rather than importing from the continent.

The process of sign off for tree felling was questioned by the Scrutiny Panel as part of the review, with Members seeking assurance that appropriate checks and balances were in place to ensure that the external tree specialist contracted to carry out tree maintenance only resorts to felling or pollarding where there is a clearly established and imminent risk to safety. Senior Council Officers confirmed that the strategy's outline procedure for tree felling (see Figure 2 below) is always followed – an independent surveyor carries out an initial assessment of the tree, with recommendations then considered by the Council's own expert before final sign off is obtained. The Scrutiny Panel were also advised that it is standard practice that the contractor is required to dispose of the tree in an environmentally-friendly way, which in turn creates a sustainable outcome and ultimately subsidises the service for the Council. Often these trees are decayed or diseased and therefore of no real value, however the transparency of this process was questioned – with the Panel stating that it would be advantageous for the Council to be more open about this disposal procedure, particularly as in some cases the public may wish to use this wood themselves.

Fig. 2



#### 4.2.1 Enforcement

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order placed on a specific tree, group of trees or woodland by the local authority. A TPO prohibits any work to the tree without the authority's prior written consent, and arboricultural advice from competent contractors and consultants, or the authority, is usually required to inform tree owners of their responsibilities and options.

Following consultation with Planning Policy officers, the Scrutiny Panel became aware of the need for a thorough review of all TPOs currently enforced across Wirral – with a requirement to reassess historical orders and potentially implement new ones. It was apparent, however that a lack of resource within this team was a causal factor in the inability to carry out this piece of work. The Council website does however provide an online TPO mapping function that allows users to search locations of trees covered by a TPO across the Borough.

### 4.3 Public Consultation and Community Engagement

Trees are an important and very visible part of the local community, providing appealing neighbourhoods and shaping our social environment. It is therefore no surprise that residents feel connected to the green spaces and tree cover around their homes and experience a sense of apprehension when they discover tree felling is taking place within the locality. Members of the Panel were concerned with the lack of consultation with local residents in relation to the backlog of tree work carried out in 2019/20 and, whilst appreciating the time constraints and safety implications of the programme, sought clear assurance that all major future tree work would involve public engagement as a matter of course.

The draft Tree Strategy document references the importance of engagement and states that the Council will involve stakeholders (referenced in Figure 3 below) in delivery of the strategy;

Fig. 3

Communities	Groups	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents</li> <li>• Elected Members</li> <li>• Visitors</li> <li>• Businesses</li> <li>• Landowners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree Wardens</li> <li>• Wirral Initiative for Trees</li> <li>• Wirral Parks Forum</li> <li>• Friends of Parks Groups</li> <li>• Wirral Environmental Network</li> <li>• The Wirral Society</li> <li>• Cheshire Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• Wirral Countryside Volunteers</li> <li>• Urban Beekeepers Association</li> <li>• Tree Council</li> <li>• Woodlands Trust</li> <li>• Forestry Commission</li> <li>• Merseyforest</li> <li>• Love Where you Live Forum</li> <li>• National Trust</li> <li>• Landmark Trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magenta Housing</li> <li>• Wirral Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Merseyside Ecological Advisory Service</li> <li>• Liverpool City Region Local Nature Partnership</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Countryside</li> <li>• Public Health</li> <li>• Highways</li> </ul>

Although welcomed by the Panel, Members feel that this pledge requires a demonstrable process of communication in order to ensure that it can be delivered effectively. Simplistic yet useful processes could include erecting temporary signs prior to the commencement of works, promoting and justifying essential works online and formally meeting with 'Friends of' groups and other relevant community groups. The Panel also suggest that as well as informing residents and inviting their comment, there is a clear opportunity to involve them in tree planting by providing saplings and engaging with children to set the scene for future generations.

As part of the review focus group, officers advised Members of the imminent development of an interactive GIS map that will be made available for residents. The purpose of this map will be to allow the public to enter an address and be provided with narrative and justification around any tree works in the local area, with instant data retrieval for all Council held tree records. Although this project was welcomed by the Panel, the necessity for an immediate communication plan on tree works to Elected Members was asserted – as their capacity as ward representatives often requires the provision of assurance to concerned constituents. The Panel recommends that regular updates are provided to all Councillors as soon and as often as

practicable so that they may provide a much needed link between officers and residents whilst a more formal engagement plan is established.

The Panel are pleased with the inclusion of the 'Adopt a Tree' scheme in the strategy and highlight this programme as an area of good practice and potentially huge benefit. This scheme allows members of the public to make a payment towards the planting of a tree on the highway verge outside their property. The draft Tree Strategy notes that this scheme is of great value and that the Council intends to improve the current programme by working with businesses and other organisations. The Panel approves this scheme as a positive way of engaging with the public but suggests that the significant cost of the programme may be impacting on its take up.

A public consultation on the draft Tree Strategy took place between November 2019 and December 2019, with feedback received from 244 respondents through the Survey Monkey portal along with 8 responses of more substantive feedback received from a variety of partners and stakeholders via e-mail. Although at the time of this review consultation feedback had not yet been collated formally, Members of the Panel call for a full evaluation of all responses and ask that the draft strategy be amended as necessary based on consultation outcomes.

#### 4.4 Funding and Resources

In February 2020, Wirral Council learned of its successful bid for funding to cover an extensive planting programme through the government's Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The fund has awarded Wirral £300,000 which will be match funded through the Council's own capital investment programme, pending agreement at the Council meeting of March 2020. If successful, this programme will allow for more than 1700 new trees in around 50 different urban locations on Wirral, with planting season beginning in November and 2020 and continuing to February 2020. The Panel are greatly encouraged by the successful bid and the opportunity to green some of the most deprived areas in the Borough – ensuring a focus on the health and wellbeing of the population. The first phase of the planting programme is currently underway, with the second phase looking at more localised planting using community intelligence. The Panel suggests that this second phase could give further consideration to tree planting along a wider area of urban highways and residential verges (in consultation with ward members and communities) in order to supplement the aforementioned 'Adopt a Tree' scheme.

At present, Wirral Council does not undertake its own specialist arboricultural works but rather contracts a number of private businesses to carry out work on its behalf relating to tree and vegetation management and arboricultural maintenance. The Scrutiny Panel questioned whether, following the conclusion of the current backlog maintenance programme, it may be a more sustainable and cost-effective approach to look at using the Council's own workforce to undertake these duties – ultimately, bringing these services back under the direct responsibility of the local authority.

### 5. SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The content of the draft Tree Strategy and its key objectives are accepted by the Scrutiny Review Panel as an adequate response to the Council's need for a comprehensive plan for tree management in terms of safety and sustainability. A number of crucial findings were gathered by the Scrutiny Panel as part of this review;

- i) *Collaborative Working* – Steps have already been taken to establish a whole system approach to tree management, with issues addressed around the previously disconnected working practices between Highways and Parks & Countryside Team.
- ii) *Openness, Transparency and Access to Information* – Residents and communities have a vested interest in the management of trees in the Borough. It is vital that the current engagement process between the Council and its residents is strengthened and formalised, through publication of key information online and promotion of community schemes to encourage public involvement in creating and sustaining our environment.
- iii) *Preservation of Trees and Woodlands* – It is important that the Council convey a strong message to potential developers that retaining our current stock of trees is a priority and that Wirral Council’s developing Local Plan is founded on this principle. The Scrutiny Panel understands that promoting the benefits of a greener urban environment to developers, and encouraging the retention of mature trees should always be encouraged in the first instance but that the implementation of a scheme similar to the Bristol model (even if used on a case by case basis) would be the most effective mitigation of essential tree felling.
- iv) *Resources* – Historic underfunding of specialist ‘in house’ tree services has resulted in poor outcomes. Although recruitment has taken place to ensure that there is a dedicated core staff for tree management, there could be potential for additional resource to the area and removal of the current reliance on contractors.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the Tree Strategy Scrutiny Review Panel largely endorse the content of Wirral Council’s draft Tree Strategy, it is requested that the following recommendations are referred to Cabinet for consideration.

The Scrutiny Review Panel recommend that;

1. **Wirral Council’s draft Tree Strategy is amended to place greater emphasis on the Council’s intention to prioritise preservation of existing trees across the Borough, with tree felling reserved for only exceptional circumstances. This ethos should be firmly communicated to local developers and contractors.**
2. **Where tree felling is essential, Wirral Council’s tree replanting programme is amended to reflect the Bristol City Council model of new or compensatory tree planting in which a level of contribution is applied and Wirral Council retain responsibility for the replanting and maintenance of trees on public land.**
3. **All available options are explored to ensure the most cost-effective provision of future tree management, including the potential for bringing Wirral Council’s tree maintenance contract back ‘in house’.**
4. **Additional resource is allocated to the Planning Development Control Team so that a comprehensive review of all historical Tree Preservation Orders can be undertaken, and the need for any new Tree Preservation Orders can be addressed.**

5. **Outcomes of the public consultation on Wirral Council's draft Tree Strategy are fully taken into account and the strategy document amended accordingly to reflect the opinions of Wirral residents and stakeholders where relevant.**
6. **A clear communication plan is produced to encourage improved engagement and consultation with residents, community groups and local businesses regarding planned surveyance and justification around proposed tree works in the Borough – in addition to a plan to involve communities, and particularly schools, in replanting schemes.**

APPENDIX 1

## Scrutiny Review Scoping Template

**Review Title:** Tree Policy and Tree Risk Management Plan

**Responsible Committee:** Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

1. Contact Information:	
<p><b>Scrutiny Panel Chair:</b></p> <p>Cllr Tom Anderson (<a href="mailto:tomanderson@wirral.gov.uk">tomanderson@wirral.gov.uk</a>)</p> <p><b>Panel Members:</b></p> <p>Cllr Christina Muspratt (<a href="mailto:christinamuspratt@wirral.gov.uk">christinamuspratt@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Allan Brame (<a href="mailto:allanbrame@wirral.gov.uk">allanbrame@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Steve Hayes (<a href="mailto:stevehayes@wirral.gov.uk">stevehayes@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Ian Lewis (<a href="mailto:ianlewis@wirral.gov.uk">ianlewis@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Phil Gilchrist (<a href="mailto:philgilchrist@wirral.gov.uk">philgilchrist@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Tony Norbury (<a href="mailto:tonynorbury@wirral.gov.uk">tonynorbury@wirral.gov.uk</a>) Cllr Helen Cameron (<a href="mailto:helencameron@wirral.gov.uk">helencameron@wirral.gov.uk</a>)</p>	<p><b>Key Officers:</b></p> <p>David Armstrong, Corporate Director for Delivery Services (<a href="mailto:davidarmstrong@wirral.gov.uk">davidarmstrong@wirral.gov.uk</a>)</p> <p>Alexandra Davidson, Scrutiny Officer (<a href="mailto:alexandradavidson@wirral.gov.uk">alexandradavidson@wirral.gov.uk</a>)</p>
2. Review Aims:	
<p><b>Wirral Plan Pledge/s:</b></p> <p>“Attractive Local Environment”</p> <p><b>Review Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To review and understand the strategic guidance within the Council’s draft Tree Policy, and to make recommendation(s) to assist in shaping the final strategy.</li><li>• To undertake detailed examination of the Council’s tree risk management plan to ensure that there is a robust system in place to control risk from trees to Members of the Public, employees and contractors.</li><li>• To consider how the proposed planting and management programme will be</li></ul>	

successful in increasing Wirral's tree cover to the level considered desirable to help combat change.

- To look in detail at how best the draft Tree Policy can be utilised to enhance the development and implementation of Wirral Council's Local Plan.
- To ensure that there is a joined-up approach to tree maintenance and risk– with consistent processes in place across Council departments.

#### **Scrutiny Outcomes:**

- The Council will be held to account over the effectiveness of provision in place to protect Wirral residents in relation to trees, and that statutory responsibilities as a local authority are met.

## **2. Risks and Implications**

#### **Potential Risks:**

- The absence of a comprehensive and sustainable policy for tree risk management may mean that the Council is left vulnerable to litigation.
- The Council cannot completely remove the risk from trees throughout the Borough, but this review will look to ensure that a robust tree risk management plan is put in place and delivered effectively.

#### **Other Implications:**

- Wirral Council must take action to adapt to, and mitigate against, the threats caused by climate change.

## **3. Review Plan**

#### **Review Approach:**

A Task & Finish approach will be undertaken for this review, which will include two evidence sessions held within one day.

#### Evidence Session 1

A site visit to Arrowe Park to gain an understanding of the range of challenges and issues currently faced.

#### Evidence Session 2

A focus group session with technical officers to hold detailed discussions around the draft strategy, tree risk management plan and additional areas of interest such as resourcing.

It is proposed that recommendation(s) will be agreed during these sessions, however in the case of an additional 'wrap up' session being deemed necessary to formulate final recommendations, this will be arranged.

**Review Duration:**

October to December 2019; with focus on a one-day evidence session.

**Scheduled Committee Report Date:**

Review Sign Off Deadline; 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Scheduled Committee; 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Scheduled Cabinet Report Date:**

February 2020

**4. Sources of Evidence:****Key Witnesses:**

Colin Clayton – Assistant Director, Community Services  
Mike Cockburn – Lead Commissioner, Environment  
Mary Worrall – Senior Manager, Parks, Coast and Countryside  
Michael Anders – Risk Management Co-Ordinator  
Colin Quinney – Tree & Woodland Officer  
Wirral Council Policy Team

**Supporting Papers / Documentation / Wirral intelligence Service Website:**

Wirral Council '*Draft Tree Strategy*'  
The Environment Partnership '*Wirral Council Tree Risk Management System*'  
Woodland Trust '[Local Authority Tree Strategies](#)'  
National Tree Safety Group '[Common Sense Risk Management of Trees](#)'

**Involvement of service users / public:**

Although not applicable for this review, it is proposed that a wider piece of work around trees in the Borough could be undertaken in 2020/21.

**5. Key Communications:****Cabinet Member:**

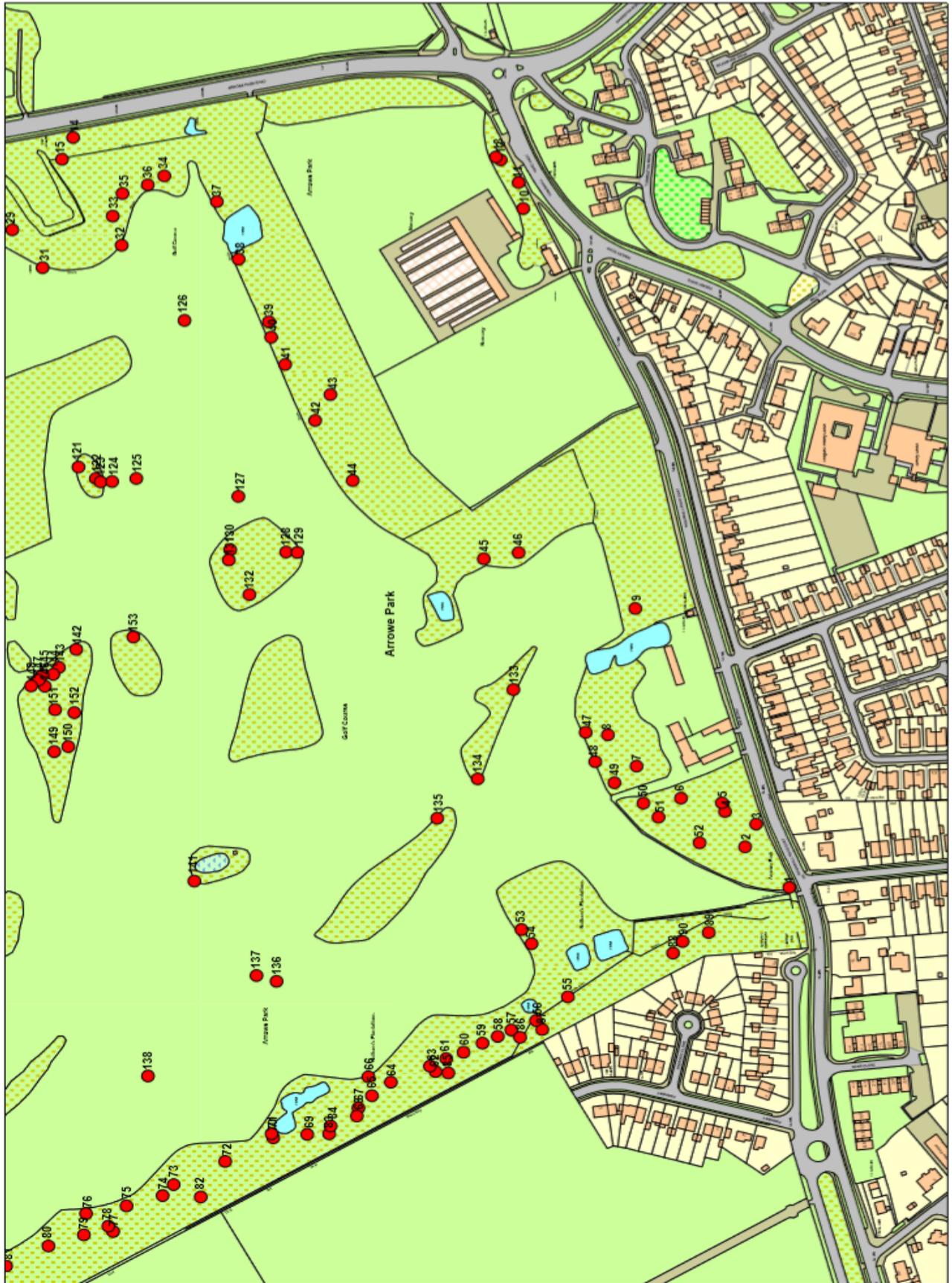
Cllr Elizabeth Grey  
([elizabethgrey@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:elizabethgrey@wirral.gov.uk))

**Press Office:**

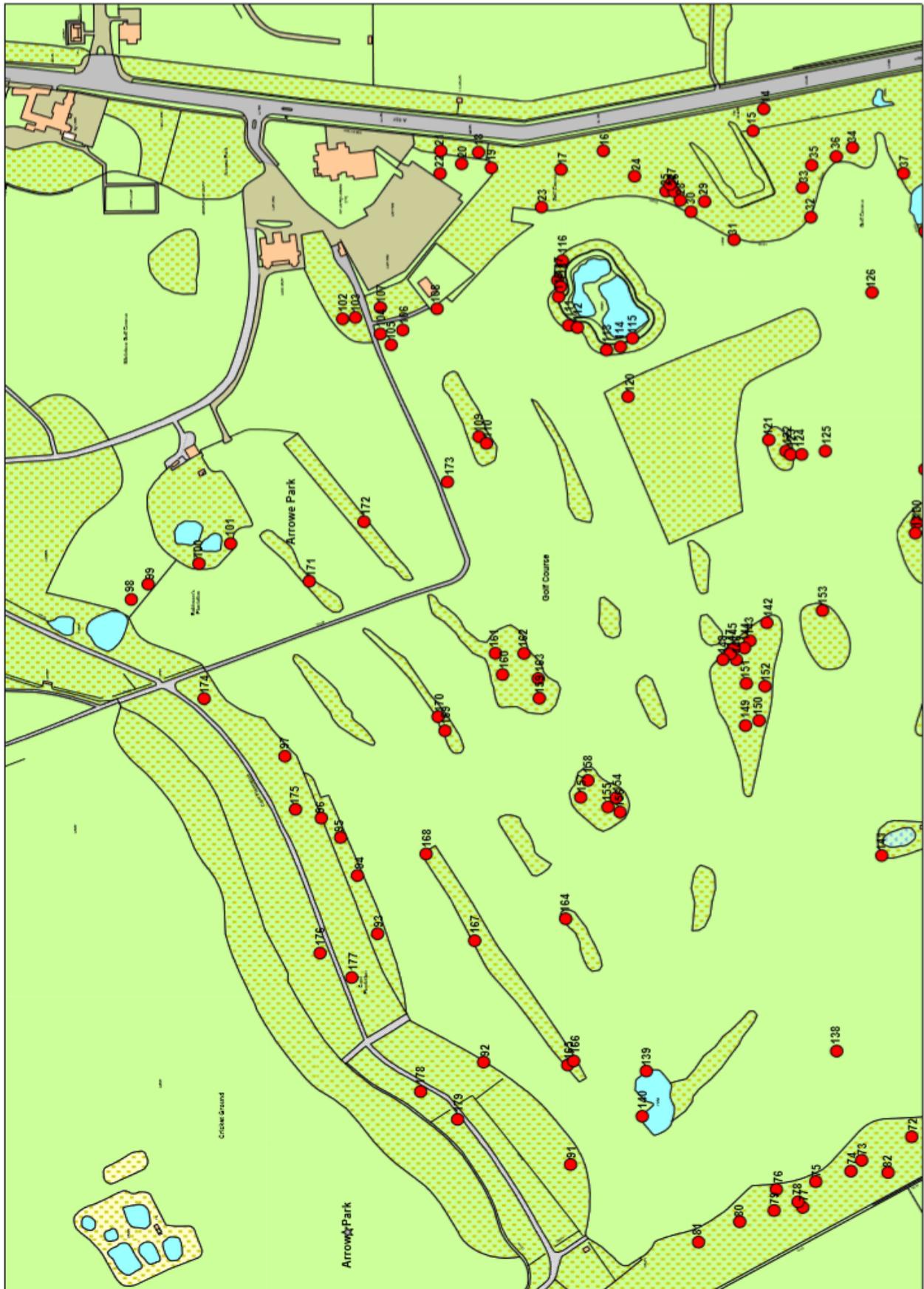
To be notified if appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2

### ARROWE COUNTRY PARK – SITE SURVEY 1



ARROWE COUNTRY PARK – SITE SURVEY 2



ARROWE COUNTRY PARK – SITE SURVEY DETAILS

Easting	Northing	Tree No.	Tag No.	Common Name	Maturity	Est. Stem Dia. (mm)	Est. Height (m)	Avg. Crown Spread (m)	Comments	Recommendations	Priority Timeframe
327031.31	384978.46	1	2670	Ash	Mature	750	14	9	There is an open cavity on the stem of the tree at 4m above ground level on the south side of the stem. The cavity is partially obscured by ivy and an inspection was not possible from ground level. There is significant wound wood around the edge of the opening to the cavity. Minor deadwood is visible throughout the tree crown.	The ivy that is growing up the tree stem should be severed at ground level. A climbing inspection of the cavity is recommended in order to determine the extent of decay in the stem of the tree.	Moderate
327061.63	385009.15	2	2671	Beech	Mature	700	19	12	The fruiting bodies of Kretzschmaria deusta (primary decay fungi) are present between buttress roots on the north and northeast side of the stem at ground level. There are no signs of decline in the tree crown. The tree is leaning towards the footpath and highway (Thingwall Road East).	Reduce the overall height of the tree to 1.5m above where the stem first divides. The stem will no longer be within falling distance of the highway and can be retained for habitat.	Significant
327078.67	385001.47	3	2672	Sycamore	Semi-Mature	300	10	N/A	The tree is in a state of significant physiological decline.	Reduce the overall height of the tree to 3m above ground level and retain for habitat.	Moderate
327088.09	385023.09	4	2673	Ash	Mature	600	18	11	Branch decline is evident around the crown periphery. No structural defects were identified at the time of survey.	Reinspect the tree within 3yrs.	Minimal
327094.61	385025.17	5	2674	Ash	Mature	550	18	11	Branch decline is evident around the crown periphery. No structural defects were identified at the time of survey.	Reinspect the tree within 3yrs.	Minimal
327098.05	385053.55	6	2675	Oak	Semi-Mature	300	14	N/A	A dead oak tree has failed at ground level and is leaning against an oak tree on the opposite side of the footpath.	Fell the dead oak tree leaning over the footpath to ground level.	Moderate
327122.05	385084.27	7	2676	Oak	Mature	600	19	12	The tree has major stem and basal decay that has affected many of the supporting buttress roots. The tree is approximately 2m off the woodland footpath in the direction of the golf course.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Moderate
327145.4	385104.05	8	2677	Oak	Semi-Mature	350	11	N/A	The tree is dead and has fallen against the stem of an adjacent oak tree. The tree is approximately 2m off the woodland footpath in the direction of the white house.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Moderate
327240.03	385085.13	9	2678	Larch	Early-Mature	400	15	4	The tree has structurally failed and has fallen into a sycamore tree that is adjacent to the woodland footpath.	Fell the larch tree to ground level.	Moderate
327539.18	385162.74	10	2679	Ash	Mature	900	21	12	There is a very old small open cavity on the east side of the tree stem at ground level. The tree stem is encircled in mature ivy and should be removed to facilitate a detailed inspection of the tree stem.	Sever the ivy around the circumference of the tree stem at a height of 3.5m above ground level. All ivy below 3.5m should be removed and the tree should be reinspected by an arboriculturist.	Slight
327558.62	385165.98	11	2680	Sycamore	Semi-Mature	250(3)	11	5	The tree is in decline and is infected with Cryptostroma corticale. The tree is within falling distance of the footpath and the highway.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Moderate
327575.54	385178.4	12	2681	Beech	Early-Mature	475	15	7	The tree is in significant decline and is in a poor structural condition. The fruiting bodies of Kretzschmaria deusta are evident on the lower tree stem.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Significant
327577.7	385181.64	13	2682	Beech	Mature	700	18	12	Standing dead tree within falling distance of the footpath and the highway.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Significant
327592.25	385474.52	14	2683	Beech	Mature	900	23	16	There is Ganoderma australe bracket on the south side of the tree stem at ground level. A second bracket of G. australe is emanating from a point on the stem just above ground level on the west side of the tree stem. There is a longitudinal crack on the west side of the stem that starts at 1.5m above ground level and extends to 1.8m. A sounding hammer was used to aid the risk assessment and identified two areas of low resonance on the south and west side of the stem between the buttress roots and close vicinity to the two fruiting bodies.	Fell the tree to ground level.	Significant
327575.93	385482.2	15	2684	Beech	Mature	800	23	14	There is a large bark wound on the northern buttress root. Wound is evident around the margins of the wound. There is minor decay of the exposed wood.	Reinspect the tree within 3yrs.	Minimal
327561.11	385588.65	16	2685	Beech	Mature	850	23	12	There is a fungal fruiting body emanating from the tree stem at a height of 8m above ground level. The stem is covered in mature ivy which has precluded a detailed tree inspection. A climbing inspection is recommended to confirm the id of the fruiting body and its mode of decay. Due to the size of the bracket it is likely Ceriophorus squamosus or a species of Ganoderma.	Sever the ivy at ground level. A climbing inspection is required to id the fruiting body.	Moderate