

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 12 March 2020 Minute 42 – Tree Strategy Scrutiny Review

Councillor Tom Anderson introduced this report which set out the findings and recommendations arising from a scrutiny review of Wirral Council's draft Tree Strategy. The review had been commissioned as part of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme in 2019/20. Committee agreed that although there was a risk with trees that could not be completely mitigated, the tree strategy and scrutiny review findings provided a comprehensive basis for effective tree management and a focus on planting.

Councillors raised points and questions about the strategy highlighted several the review's recommendations which included

- A request that the consultation data be shared
- That 'friends' groups and community groups be engaged with
- That assurance be provided around the perception that profits were being made by companies selling wood from felling, although it was clarified that tree surveyors were independent of felling contractors
- The Council currently did not have the resources to undertake the entire process from inspection to maintenance in-house.
- The duty of inspection and maintenance extended to all Council land including public footpaths as well as parks and highways, although they all faced the risk of falling during storms
- There was a commitment to plant about 200,000 trees in the next ten years as part of the Council's Climate Strategy and this would help replace the approximately 2,000 trees that required felling
- Ward groups identified by Members who had previously adopted trees as part of the Council's 'Adopt a Tree' scheme and had concerns around maintenance would be investigate by officers on a case by case basis
- Councillors could not pay for new or replacement trees from their Ward budgets because there was an ongoing maintenance cost, but those rules may need reconsidering

Resolved - That

- 1. the findings and recommendations contained within the Tree Strategy Scrutiny Review report be approved**
- 2. the report to the next meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.**