



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	5 th March 2021
Report Author	Andrew Taylor/Robert Barnett
Service Area	Neighbourhood Services (Parks)
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	24th March 2021

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Tree Policy

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is responsible for the management of all trees growing on its land including street trees, trees on public open spaces and in woodlands. By law, the Council is required to manage and undertake work to any tree that constitutes a statutory nuisance and, to discharge this duty, has a programme of inspection and maintenance works aimed at keeping the population safe from harm and preserving the health and future wellbeing of its tree stock.
- 1.2 Trees are an important part of the environment bringing many health and social benefits, the Council is committed to maintaining, and where possible increasing the level of tree cover across Merthyr Tydfil. There are, however, a number of conflicts that may arise where the Council's trees are located close to neighbouring properties; the aim of this policy is to set out the Council's stance in dealing with these conflicts and to clarify the Council's legal obligations.
- 1.3 Once adopted the tree policy (at Appendix 1) will ensure that all tree related queries are dealt with in a fair, transparent, and consistent way and will aid the resolution of conflicts between the public and the local authority. It will act as a framework for Officers and Councillors alike and will ensure efficient use of the Council's resources.
- 1.4 The report was considered by the Planning & Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny committee on the 1st March 2021.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The new tree policy be approved.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Many local authorities across the United Kingdom have their own individual tree policies that dictate what tree works they are legally bound to investigate and what work they need to carry out.
- 3.2 The policy will be a guide to individuals/Officers and Councillors and state the legal requirements of works for the local authority and clearly indicate whether the tree work should be undertaken.
- 3.3 The local authority receives many complains/requests about trees each year, many are neither a legal requirement nor a priority. This in turn dilutes available resources and is effectively allowing unnecessary works to be completed and priority safety works being left unchecked.

4.0 CURRENT WORKING PRACTICES

- 4.1 MTCBC currently receives a high number of public complaints regarding trees reported through various means. A proportion of these requests/complaints are not justified or a legal responsibility of the local authority. The volume of these unvalidated complaints significantly affects the level of service due to time spent responding to correspondence, assessing, and sometimes completing the works. Thus, taking time away from priority or safety issues.
- 4.2 MTCBC has always responded to complaints on a reactive basis and these have not always been dealt with by fully assessing the individual issues or merits of each case. The emphasis was on trying to deal with the complaint without fully assessing the priority or legal responsibility of the Council. This on occasions has led to inefficient use of the Council's limited resources and has not been in the interests of the Council's priorities or protection of the environment.
- 4.3 If approved the policy will become the 'go to' guide when dealing with problematic trees. It will provide a free readily available framework for Staff, Officers, and Councillors as well as a useful information source to the public. It will be made available via the Council's web site and to Staff and Councillors via the intranet pages.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral/Not Applicable	
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	4 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4	
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5	
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10	
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6	
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required	
	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1	
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No	
	1 of 1		0 of 1	
7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced	Neutral/Not Applicable
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
Summary				
The main positive impacts are:	On Biodiversity, use of data and the Merthyr Tydfil Wellbeing objectives			
The main negative impacts are:	None.			

JUDITH JONES
CHIEF OFFICER PLANNING &
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

COUNCILLOR DAVID HUGHES
CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING &
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.