**Review of Tree Management Policy 2015-2020 ‘Living With Trees’**

The Council's Tree Management Policy 2015-2020 'Living With Trees' was adopted at a meeting of the Council on July 13, 2015.

The policy was developed by the Council’s Public Realm section having regard to best practice within the wider local authority and arboricultural sectors on both national and international levels. The process involved the support and active input of a dedicated working group comprising members of the Environment, Water & Climate Change Strategic Policy Committee. A draft policy document was published to coincide with a period of public consultation enabling the public to submit comments and observations which were considered by the working group and addressed in the adopted policy.

The Tree Management Policy provides a framework to inform and support decisions made by the Council on the management and development of a sustainable tree population in the County. The Policy acts as a point of reference for the public, Councillors, Council staff and professionally interested people to enable informed discussion and to establish a clearer, consistent and a structured approach to the issues affecting trees.

The objectives of the policy are:

* Improve tree management and create a safer, healthier tree population
* Implement a proactive, planned programme of cyclical tree maintenance
* Maximise the use of the Council’s resources to provide a better service and give better value for money.

**Interim Review**

This is a 5-Year management policy which is now into its third year and is scheduled for an interim review in accordance with the relevant specific action listed in the Action Plan which accompanies and supports the Tree Management Policy. It is intended to carry out this interim review during 2018.

The aim of the review is to:

* Review and assess progress to date on the implementation of the Action Plan
* Confirm whether the vision established by the policy is the right focus
* Provide an updated snapshot of our current tree stock and how the Council manages them
* Reassess aspects of the policy on particular issues that continue to generate ambiguity
* Look at emerging issues
* Assess consistency of relevant policies and actions of the Tree Management Policy with the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan
* Make new policy recommendations as necessary from review process

Since the Tree Management Policy was adopted in 2015, there are a number of policy issues which continue to generate ambiguity. These issues are reflected through:

* analysis of tree-related enquiries received via the Council’s Customer Contact System
* emerging policies on climate change action
* increasing housing densities
* ongoing conflict between trees and services
* public concerns arising from extreme weather events

In order to provide further clarity, specific policy issues proposed for review include:

* Trees in conflict with built structures – a clear, corporate protocol is required for resolving issues where tree roots are in conflict with the built environment. Specific locations include public footpaths, private boundary walls and driveways.
* Guidelines and options for implementation of alternative engineering solutions in order to minimise removal of healthy trees
* Review policy on removal of trees in proximity to public lighting columns in order to minimise loss of healthy trees and address public resistance to current practice
* Trees along riverbanks & watercourses – clarify procedure for resolving issues
* Trees and utilities - procedures and protocols for planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees to be formalised with internal Council Departments and external agencies
* Irish Water Infrastructure Standards – restrictions on tree/shrub planting adjacent to water mains
* Tree root pruning – requirement for policy and guidelines
* Tree planting systems and use of rootbarriers – requirement for policy and guidelines
* Resistance to tree planting in residential streets and open spaces
* Disposal and recycling of timber and green waste
* Dublin Tree Canopy Study published March 2017 – review findings and implications for tree management in South Dublin
* SDCC Climate Change Action Plan
* Unauthorised removal of trees
* Tree risk management – identifying, prioritising and undertaking tree works according to categorised level of risk

**Action Plan Update**

The Tree Management Policy incorporates an Action Plan to support and deliver progress against policy’s the vision and aims. The plan identifies a number of key actions, responsibilities and timescales for delivery over the period 2015-2020.  The current status for actions identified for delivery in the period 2015-2017 is as follows:

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| **Objective 1 - To establish the current position with regard to street trees in the County** | | | | |
| ***Ref*** | ***Action*** | ***Measurement*** | ***Timeframe*** | ***Status*** |
| 1.1 | Evaluate and purchase a tree management system | Purchase and use of system | 2015 | Procurement process complete and contract for supply of system has been awarded. |
| 1.2 | Survey all street trees in County and collate all data on computerised tree management system | Number of trees surveyed | 2015-2020 | Survey commenced in March 2015. Over 13,000 trees surveyed to date |
| 1.3 | Prepare a system for the ongoing update of street trees data in a spatial format | Real time availability of information on street tree location, number, condition and maintenance history | 2020 |  |
| 1.4 | Use the CAVAT system to value all Council street trees and use this information to assist in the management of the tree stock | All trees have accurate CAVAT value | 2020 |  |
| 1.5 | Review existing Tree Preservation Orders in the county | Annual Review | Ongoing | Ongoing as part of the planning process by Public Realm in conjunction with Planning Section |

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| **Objective 2 - To implement a proactive tree management programme** | | | | |
| ***Ref*** | ***Action*** | ***Measurement*** | ***Timeframe*** | ***Status*** |
| 2.1 | Ensure tree maintenance is completed in a safe manner in accordance with recognised standards and best practice | Ongoing development and training of all Council staff involved in tree work  Employment of qualified, trained, competent contractors | Ongoing | Training and upskilling of staff ongoing  Suitably qualified external contractors engaged as necessary |
| 2.2 | Use the Council’s planning powers to retain and protect trees on  development sites and enforce as necessary | Annual review | Ongoing | Ongoing as part of the planning process by Public Realm in conjunction with Planning Section |
| 2.3 | Maximise the recycling of tree related green waste generated  by the Council’s own tree management. | Annual review | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| 2.4 | Establish guidelines to prioritise maintenance work on street trees | Guidelines in place and used | 2015 | Guidelines set out and in use as per Tree Management Policy ‘Living With Trees’ |
| 2.5 | Develop a 5 year cyclical tree maintenance programme for street trees | Publish programme on Council’s website | 2015 | 3 year rolling tree maintenance programme for 2017-2019 in operation |
| 2.6 | Develop best practice protocol for tree maintenance works and nesting birds | Protocol agreed and in practice | 2015 | Draft document prepared |
| 2.7 | Provide staff training in tree survey and inspection | Training completed | 2015 | Training completed |
| 2.8 | Develop a quality standard specification for assessment of tree maintenance works post completion | Quality standard completed and in use | 2016 |  |
| 2.9 | Develop an annual tree planting programme | Number of trees planted | 2016 | 300 new trees planted in winter 2016. Approx. 1,500 new trees planted in winter 2017/spring 2018. |
| 2.10 | Develop tree planting and management guidelines | Guidelines in place | 2016 |  |
| 2.11 | Monitor the removal of street trees and ensure that new trees are proposed. | Annual review | 2016 | Statistics for tree removal and tree planting reported and monitored on a monthly basis |
| 2.12 | Work with a range of partners agree procedures and develop protocols to secure active protection of Council-owned trees from avoidable damage caused by the activities of  other agencies. | Procedures and protocols agreed and in practice with internal Council Departments and external agencies | 2016 |  |
| 2.13 | Develop a protocol for resolving issues where tree roots are in conflict with the built environment | Procedures and protocols developed and in practice | 2016 |  |
| 2.14 | Develop a protocol for maintenance and management of trees along riverbanks & watercourses | Procedures and protocols developed and in practice | 2016 |  |
| 2.15 | Develop protocols for dealing with trees and utilities in consultation with the main utility providers | Procedures and protocols agreed and in practice with utility providers | 2016 |  |
| 2.16 | Pilot a community based leaf composting project | Project in place | 2016 | Information provided and discussion with community groups in Clondalkin and Rathfarnham |
| 2.17 | Pilot a tree replacement programme in an urban street setting | Agree area and complete | 2017 | Draft proposals in preparation for St. Joseph’s Road |
| 2.18 | Document a list of the significant trees of South Dublin | List established | 2017 |  |
| 2.19 | Develop a tree risk management system | System developed and in place | 2018 |  |
| 2.20 | Present annual review of Tree Management Policy Action Plan | Annual Review completed | Annually 2016-2020 | Updates on 2016 Tree Management presented to ACMs in March 2017. Updates on 2017 Tree Management presented to ACMs in December 2017 |
| 2.21 | Undertake a mid-term review of the Tree Management Policy | Mid-term review completed | 2017 | Review commencing February 2018 |
| 2.22 | Undertake review of Tree Management Policy 2015-2020 and draft new 5 year Tree Management Policy | 5 Year Review completed | 2020 |  |

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| **Objective 3 - Prepare and implement a public awareness and education tree programme** | | | | |
| ***Ref*** | ***Action*** | ***Measurement*** | ***Timeframe*** | ***Status*** |
| 3.1 | Develop a ‘Trees’ webpage on the Council’s website www.sdcc.ie | Webpage in place and maintained | 2015 | <http://www.sdcc.ie/services/parks-and-recreation/tree-management> in place and maintained |
| 3.2 | Make tree maintenance programme available on website | Information available on website | 2015 | Information available on website |
| 3.3 | Promote Tree week and Tree day in association with the Tree Council of Ireland | No. of Tree week & Tree Day activities organised each year | ongoing | Programme of activities arranged annually |
| 3.4 | Prepare feasibility study for sponsored tree planting | Plan completed | 2017 |  |
| 3.5 | Develop tree trails in each of the regional parks | Tree trails in parks | 2017 | Development of tree trails in progress for Dodder Valley Park and Sean Walsh Park |

**Next Step**

In order to progress the review of the Tree Management Policy, as a next step, it is proposed to organise a workshop for key representatives of internal Council departments to discuss issues proposed for review.