



TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Date Ratified:	8 October 2024
Meeting:	Finance and General Purpose Committee
Next review date:	October 2027 (3 yearly review)

1. Background, Scope and Aim of Policy

The Town Council has a statutory duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure that members of the public and staff are not put at risk because of a failure by the Town Council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety. There is therefore a need to inspect the trees on spaces owned by, or the responsibility of, the Town Council. This inspection will assess whether the trees represent a risk to persons or property and recommend remedial actions as appropriate. The Town Council will then arrange for those remedial actions to be carried out in line with the urgency attributed to them during inspection. There is an unacceptable risk associated with the Town Council's tree assets where there is no defensible system in place.

This document sets out how trees on land owned by, or the responsibility of, the Town Council will be maintained and managed. The benefits of the Town Council's approach as set out in this policy include:

- Delivery of a structured maintenance programme to enhance and protect the quality of existing tree stock.
- Ensure the ability of the Town Council to defend against tree related insurance claims.
- Provide clear guidance on how the Town Council responds to reports of issues regarding its trees.
- Create more opportunities for wildlife to thrive in Town Council open spaces and help to mitigate against the climate change emergency in line with Town Council's stated priorities.

The Town Council is responsible for trees on the following open spaces – Mundy Playing Fields including Poulterbrook, Chantry Field, Thornbury Cemetery, St Marys Churchyard, Thicket Walk, Eastland Avenue Play Area, Chantry Road Play Area, Oakleaze Green, Land Adjacent 1 Ashgrove, Land Adjacent to Grace Lodge. All open spaces will be inspected at the same frequency as there is no real difference in the risk level for each space.

The policy relates solely to existing trees which includes any newly planted trees. This policy does not cover the planning of new tree planting. That is covered by agreed grounds maintenance regimes developed from ecology survey recommendations.

2. Safety Inspections and Maintenance

- The Town Council will arrange for three yearly inspections of all trees on land owned by it or for which it is responsible.
- Each individual tree will be surveyed to assess their physiological and structural state and the results recorded.
- Inspections will be carried out by a qualified arboriculturist and tree works carried out as a result of the inspections will be based solely on their advice. Their inspection reports will include a list of works to carry out which have been prioritised by them.
- The identified works will be carried out in order of priority by a separately appointed and qualified tree surgeon. (Where an individual action is so straightforward that it doesn't require any kind of specialist training or equipment e.g. removal of tree guards, Town

Council staff will carry out that action at an appropriate time of year and exactly as specified in the list of works.)

- Officers will maintain a schedule of progress against identified actions from the inspections to ensure they are completed in a timely manner and this schedule will be reviewed periodically by the Open Spaces Committee.

3. Ad Hoc Issues and General Principles

- In the event of storm damage to trees leading to the falling of one or more trees, a full resurvey should be carried out of all trees as detailed in section 2 and the three-year cycle will begin again from that point. Town Council staff will visually survey trees after severe weather in order to identify fallen trees as quickly as possible.
- Staff will report any issues that may have developed in between inspections and that are not covered by the list of agreed works. Officers will then seek advice from either the tree surgeon or arboriculturist, depending on availability, to assess these issues and make recommendations as to remedial works, including urgency. Works will be carried out in line with the assessment of urgency, either by the tree surgeon or by staff if appropriate.
- Issues relating to trees reported by members of the public will initially be assessed by officers. Only if appropriate (see below), officers will seek the advice of the tree surgeon or arboriculturist, depending on availability, to assess these issues and make recommendations as to remedial works, including urgency. Works will be carried out in line with the assessment of urgency, either by the tree surgeon or by staff if appropriate.
- Officers will assess each report received by members of the public on a case-by-case basis, and seek advice as necessary, but generally the Town Council will not carry out works to trees for the following reasons alone:
 - branches overhanging private property
 - cutting back of trees to reduce blocking of light
 - removal of trees or branches to prevent falling leaves or other natural tree debrisIn general, trees will not be removed or significantly pruned or reduced unless there is a demonstrable arboricultural, safety or legal reason for this.
- Trees will be cut back if they touch or are very close to touching windows, roofs and gutters of Town Council or private property, or power lines or similar, or if they obstruct pathways.
- Trees may be pruned, reduced or removed if they grow in a way that affects staff working safely around them e.g. overhanging branches affecting the safe use of mowers or strimmers.
- If at all possible, large and heavy tree branches or tree trunks will not be removed from site following tree works, assuming that these can be made safe e.g. to ensure they are not hazardous for children climbing over them or moving them.
- Where appropriate, the Town Council will endeavour to replace any trees that are removed, except where a tree is removed because of an issue with its location, either operational or natural.