



Motion 766 – Improving Tree Maintenance

Cabinet Response

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members considered the following motion to Full Council on 23 March 2016.

Motion 766 – Improving Highway Tree Maintenance

That this council notes that there are approximately 8,000 trees on highway land in Cheltenham alone, and many more right across the county.

It is understood, that the highways contract with Amey is under review and that Liberal Democrats have already asked the Cabinet Member to consider improving highway tree maintenance.

That his Council asks the Cabinet Member to report back to the Highways Advisory Group on measures to improve the County Council's tree maintenance programme, before reporting back to the Environment and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a positive action plan.

Proposed by Cllr Klara Sudbury

Seconded by Cllr Bernie Fisher

- 1.2 At the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting in September 2016, the committee received a report from the Highways Advisory Group outlining a series of recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet Member: Highways and Flood as proposed measures for improving the County Council's Tree Maintenance Programme.
- 1.3 The following response from the Cabinet Member: Highways and Flood was considered by the committee on 22 November 2016, prior to consideration by the Highways Advisory Group in January 2017.

2. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Having considered the recommendations from the Highways Advisory Group, the Cabinet member noted the recommendations and provided this formal response. The recommendations included;
- a) Officers to improve the availability of information about highway tree maintenance in order to help manage the public's expectations of what works will be undertaken and what communities can do to tackle the issue themselves.

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Cabinet response: Officers will pull together guidance notes on tree works for publication on GCC website to make this clear.

- b) Amey to improve member communications by sending out advanced warnings of significant tree maintenance works to the local member(s) in the same way that they currently do for resurfacing works.

Cabinet response: Officers will ask for this approach to be adopted.

- c) The Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood to consider increasing the budget allocations for tree maintenance so that more preventative tree maintenance works can be undertaken. Members feel the budget reductions in this area of work are short sighted and could cause more problems, a backlog of tree works and increased safety concerns over the long term.

Cabinet response: Officers have prepared a summary of options for enhanced environmental maintenance, including tree works, to be considered by the Highways Advisory Group so that the prioritisation of works can be considered and discussed. Increasing the budget allocations for tree maintenance within this context will be considered as part of the annual budget cycle.

- d) The Cabinet Member and officers to explore potential devolution of tree maintenance works to districts and/or work more closely with districts to increase efficiencies and jointly tackle budget concerns.

Cabinet response: The County Council already work closely with Gloucester City Council where their contractor carries out some highway tree works through their mini-agency agreement. Opportunities to work with other district colleagues will be explored as part of wider devolution discussions.

- e) Amey to ensure Highway Safety Inspectors have sufficient training in identifying tree safety hazards, particularly tree and hedge growth obscuring highway signs.

Cabinet response: Officers will ensure that Highway Safety Inspectors are carrying out inspections in accordance with GCC policies and that Amey have the required training in place for those Inspectors.

- f) Highways officers to audit Amey inspectors to ensure compliance with policies and that tree, hedge and verge overgrowth safety issues are routinely recorded and action taken to resolve them in a timely manner.

Cabinet response: Officers will ensure that Highway Safety Inspectors are carrying out inspections in accordance with GCC policies. Audits of Highway Safety Inspections are scheduled on a regular basis.

- g) Highways to consider commissioning additional annual works (depending on budget availability) to cut back overgrown hedges, trees and vegetation growth to ensure signs are visible, visibility splay are maintained to improve safety and to stop highway footways and

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cycleway from becoming overgrown. This will have the added benefit of encouraging walking and cycling.

Cabinet response: Officers have prepared a summary of options for enhanced environmental maintenance, including tree works, to be considered by the Highways Advisory Group so that the prioritisation of works can be considered and discussed. Increasing the budget allocations for tree maintenance within this context will be considered as part of the annual budget cycle.