



TREE POLICY

1. Introduction

This Council has declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Trees are essential to the creation of an environmentally sustainable and economically successful town. They form the largest and the oldest single living element in our natural environment. The beneficial contribution of trees and the Council's duty to have regard to biodiversity will be considered when forming relevant Council strategies.

The benefits include:

1.1 Places

- Creating an attractive environment where people will want to live
- Providing wildlife habitats
- Replenishing oxygen and absorbing greenhouse gasses
- Reducing particulate air pollution
- Reducing noise
- Contributing to energy conservation by reducing wind speed
- Providing shade

1.2 People

- Reducing everyday stress levels and improving mental health
- Contributing to the well-being of communities
- Bringing beauty to the town

1.3 Prosperity

- Positively affecting property values
- Creating an attractive physical environment that encourages investment
- Creating a pleasant working environment for workers
- Creating an inviting place to visit

1.4 Environment

- Encouraging biodiversity and providing urban corridors
- Mitigating carbon dioxide emissions
- Deliver climate change resilience
- Providing a link with the natural environment for local communities
- Landscaping quality and natural heritage as national policies identify trees and urban 'green spaces' as amongst the community's most valuable features

2 Background

Upon its creation in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. While no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transfer, the Council has now completed an audit that maintains records of species, location, age, condition and maintenance requirements of its trees. This policy will set out the Council's legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock. This policy focusses on the management of land and trees owned by this Council. However, the Council also plays an important role in influencing the land-use and behaviour of people and organisations, including through making recommendations on planning decisions.



3 Key Challenges

- The overall management of a large urban tree stock
- Changes in climate require a greater diversity in tree type in order to mitigate loss and maintain current levels
- The urban and coastal environment is a much more challenging place for trees, requiring high levels of management intervention in both maintenance of existing stock and the establishment of new trees
- The need for understanding and tolerance about living close to trees as people's perceptions often differ greatly regarding trees.

4. Aims

All sections of this policy should be read in line with the following aims:

- 2.1 Manage the Council's tree stock, including pollarding, pruning, coppicing and removing trees where this has overall benefit to the environment and tree stock
- 2.2 Tree management will comply with relevant planning and health and safety laws.
- 2.3 Provide a sustainable and improving tree stock to help address the climate emergency and have regard to biodiversity.
- 2.4 Protect trees and the environment by working with other parties, entering relevant partnerships and taking advantage of relevant initiatives.

The Council reserves its right to exercise discretion in its management of tree stock, with due consideration of arborist or other expert advice where relevant.

5. Management of the tree stock

A risk-based system of tree management has been adopted which relies on a programme of regular inspection prioritised by potential hazard. This is undertaken with professional arboriculturist advice and opinion. The basis for repeat inspections will be graded in line with the tree audit. A prioritised programme of tree work will be maintained, based on the inspections and with an emphasis on planned rather than reactive tree maintenance. The risk and nuisance to persons and property will be balanced against the environmental and other aims of this Policy.

6. The climate emergency and the environment

The Council will take measures to manage its tree stock to reduce and address disease risks. In managing its tree stock and when dealing with felled trees, the Council will consider if it is appropriate to plant replacement trees, and if so in a suitable location, with considerations to be given to environmental benefits and the existing tree stock of the town.

7. Public requests for works to council trees

All of the Council's trees are on Council land. Many residents live close to trees and this proximity needs to be considered and managed. Within the town's tree population there are a number of common sources for complaint:



- Physical size
- Overhanging branches
- Shade
- Blocking sunlight
- Leaf and fruit fall
- Sticky deposits
- Interference with utilities
- Affecting TV and satellite signal reception
- Fear of tree safety
- Root encroachment related matters
- Preventing car parking on verges
- Obstructing a view

This can lead to a high volume of requests for tree work from the general public are not considered 'nuisance' in legal terms and the Council, as with any private tree owner, is not obliged to take action in these circumstances. It is a widely held perception that the Council has increased responsibilities in law in this respect. This is not the case. The requirements in law are the same as any private tree owner.

Environmental and biodiversity are a high priority for this Council and tree maintenance resources are finite. The Council will manage its resources with a priority to the environment, health and safety and the effective and sustainable management of its tree stock. Adopting a prioritised programme of tree work will mean that risk assessed lowest priority work will not be attended to until such times as the risk rating changes. In some cases it is not possible to resolve issues to a resident's satisfaction. However, the Council will communicate its position clearly to the resident. The Tree Policy will be published on the Council's website.

Revisions	
Date	Amendment
February 2021	Last sentence of introduction amended from <i>'The contribution of trees has to be considered when forming strategies to achieve many council objectives as follows:'</i> to <i>'The beneficial contribution of trees and the Council's duty to have regard to biodiversity will be considered when forming relevant Council strategies. The benefits include:'</i>
February 2021	Additional bullet point under heading 1.3 (Prosperity) <i>'Creating an inviting place to visit'</i>
February 2021	Under heading 1.4 amended <i>'National Policy identifies trees and urban 'green spaces' among the community's most valuable features and Central Government expects that Local Council's will</i>

	<i>maximise the opportunities that urban trees can bring to the above key areas through its strategic direction. This direction is now being delivered locally by Lowestoft Town Council by the formulation of an Open Spaces Strategy which underpins many facets of the wider council vision and policies. This Tree Policy will feed into the Open Spaces Strategy as well as any Planning and Neighbourhood Planning strategies and decisions.'</i> <i>to 'This Council has declared a Climate Emergency. National policies identify trees and urban 'green spaces' as among the community's most valuable features. This Council builds on opportunities to benefit from trees locally. The Council does this through implementation of relevant policies including those directly addressing environmental concerns and its Open Spaces Strategy.'</i>
February 2021	Point 1.5 amended from 'The historical context of trees owned by Lowestoft Town Council Upon its conception in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. However, no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transferring them to the Council and there is no record of tree type, location, age, maintenance or condition. This policy will set out the Council's legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock.' to 'Background Upon its creation in April 2017, Lowestoft Town Council inherited a considerable number of trees. While no audit of these trees had been completed prior to transfer, the Council's ambition is to create and maintain records of types, location, age, maintenance and condition of its trees. This policy will set out the Council's legal obligations as well as the challenges, priorities and plans for maintaining and developing its tree stock. This policy focuses on the management of land and trees owned by this Council. However, the Council also plays an important role in influencing the land-use and behaviour of people and organisations, including through making recommendations on planning decisions.'
February 2021	Wording at section 2 (Aims) amended to provide more clarity as to the aims of the policy, whilst now



	allowing some discretion for the Council to consider individual requests for tree works on their own merit.
February 2021	Wording at section 3 made more concise and more relevant to Lowestoft Town Council specifically. More clarity provided as to how the Town Council will manage its tree stock and associated risks.
February 2021	Section 4 added (the climate emergency and the environment).
February 2021	Section 5 (requests from the public) amended to clarify that the Town Council's priorities are biodiversity and the environment, and health and safety, and requests for tree maintenance from the public will be considered with this in mind. Amendment made to give the Town Council flexibility to deviate from the policy where necessary in considering requests from the public.
February 2021	Removal of the previous section 5 (the current administration of trees).
February 2021	Wording of the TPS statements amended to make them more relevant to the Town Council, and to better align with the purposes of the policy.
May 2022	TPS10 word 'ordinarily' added.
April 2023	Added reference to Earth Protector Town declaration at 1.4. Added 'pollarding' to 2.1 Added the word 'structural' to 6 TPS4 TPS6 – amended paragraph to update Committee names TPS15 – removed "Within five years..." TPS20 – replaced "exotic" with "non-native"
May 2025	All Tree Policy Statements removed as they duplicated information in the policy