

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	21 July 2014
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Public</b>
Open Spaces Tree Safety Policy and Biosecurity Guidance	
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
Director of Open Spaces	

### **Summary**

Approximately 64% of the City Corporation's Open Spaces are comprised of woodland or wood pasture. Although each Open Spaces division manages its tree stock in a safe way through local procedures, there is currently no overarching departmental policy to ensure consistency of approach.

In addition, there are an increasing number of harmful pests and diseases affecting trees in the UK, and there is the potential for these to harm both our users and the composition and character of our tree stock if left unchecked. It is important that staff, contractors and visitors to our sites are made aware of these pathogens and that there is guidance in place to minimise the risk of their spreading.

Policies have been written to address both of the above issues and this report seeks your approval for these documents attached at Appendices 1 & 2.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Approve the Tree Safety Policy, Biosecurity Policy and Biosecurity Protocol for immediate adoption by the Open Spaces Department;
- Agree that the Tree Safety Policy be shared with other relevant departments in order to ensure a consistent approach to tree safety management across the City Corporation.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London owns and manages approximately 11,000 acres of green space, managed by its Open Spaces Department. This includes approximately 7,080 acres of trees (64% of total open space), ranging from stands of historic woodland and wood pasture, to garden and street trees.
2. Trees are living organisms which, by their nature, pose certain risks such as natural shedding of limbs, and the potential to topple in extreme weather conditions. Whilst it is accepted that the overall risk to human health and

property is extremely low, as tree owners the City Corporation has a duty of care to monitor and manage that level of risk in order to protect its users and its staff from potential harm.

3. In addition, Members will be aware of the increasing number of pests and diseases threatening our tree stock, some of which have the potential to impact on human health (e.g. Oak Processionary Moth), whilst others have the potential to impact substantially on certain tree species and, ultimately, the character of our landscapes (e.g. Ash Dieback, Acute Oak Decline and *Massaria*). In order to better protect our trees and our landscapes, it is important that we do all we can to prevent the spread of these pests and diseases into our open spaces.

### **Current Position**

4. Whilst each of the Open Spaces' divisions currently has local policies for managing their tree stock and guidance has been available for managers through our departmental Health & Safety Framework, procedures need updating in line with National guidance and a formal adoption process followed. The current lack of an overarching policy could be seen as a weakness in our Health and Safety systems.
5. In 2013, a working group was set up to monitor, and seek solutions to, some of the challenges shared by all divisions regarding the management of our tree stock. The Tree Management Improvement Group consists of representatives from each of the divisions within the Open Spaces Department, and has drafted the following documents:
  - Tree Safety Policy: this document provides overarching strategic guidance on the safe management of trees across the department. It is based on guidance drawn up by the National Tree Safety Group whose work is in turn endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive. The Policy takes a common-sense approach to the management of trees, recognising that they are living organisms that provide a great many benefits to man and the environment.
  - Biosecurity Policy: this good practice document focuses on the importance of protecting our trees from harmful pests and diseases, and the potential impact that these can have if left to spread unchecked. It recognises that 'wrapping our trees in cotton wool' is not practical, but provides guidance to staff, contractors and users on how to minimise the risk of spreading harmful pathogens. It also recognises that this will not always be possible where there is free access to roam, but stresses the importance of providing information to all visitor groups in order to raise awareness of the issues.
  - Biosecurity Protocol: this accompanies the Biosecurity Policy as a practical guide for staff on the issues covered by the Policy. It takes the form of a template that can be adapted by each open space to fit their particular local needs.

## **Proposals**

6. Subject to your Committee's approval, it is proposed that the Open Spaces Department adopt the documents listed at paragraph 5 immediately, and implement the actions outlined within.
7. Furthermore, it is proposed to share these documents with other relevant departments that also have a responsibility for managing trees on City Corporation land, for example Community & Children's Services, City Surveyors, and the City of London Freeman's School.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

8. This report supports key strategic aims within the Open Spaces Departmental Business Plan 2014-17, notably to:
  - Provide safe, secure and accessible Open Spaces and services for the benefit of London and the Nation;
  - Deliver sustainable working practices to promote the variety of life and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations;
  - Promote opportunities to value and enjoy the outdoors for recreation, learning and healthy living.

## **Conclusion**

9. A consistent, co-ordinated approach to tree safety management across all City open spaces is important in order to protect staff and visitors from harm, and to protect the City Corporation's reputation. It is also important that staff and visitors are aware of the need to minimise the risk of spreading harmful pests and diseases into, and between, our open spaces. The documents appended to this report, if adopted and diligently implemented, will help in minimising these risks.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Tree Safety Policy
- Appendix 2 – Open Spaces Biosecurity Policy and Biosecurity Protocol

## **Martin Rodman**

Superintendent Parks & Gardens

T: 020 7374 4152

E: martin.rodman@cityoflondon.gov.uk