

Supporting Documentation  
Environment & Leisure  
Committee Meeting

Tuesday 5 July 2022



## **AGENDA ITEM 8 POLICIES TO BE REVIEWED**

### **A.**

#### **Environmental Policy Statement**

The following is the policy of Highworth Town Council with regards to its place within the environment.

Highworth Town Council and its staff will operate at all times showing due regard to global and local environmental considerations and issues. Highworth Town Council will therefore conduct itself in such a manner so as to improve the environment or ensure that its operation minimises Highworth Town Council's impact there on. Employees will observe policies in force at sites visited in the course of their duties.

The Clerk and Staff are therefore charged with:-

- 1) Ensuring that the daily operation of Highworth Town Council does not constitute a nuisance to others.
- 2) Correctly using equipment and facilities provided to ensure the safe and correct handling and disposal of materials and waste products.
- 3) The economical use of all resources so as to minimise waste and take advantage of recycling schemes of general advantage to the community and the environment as appropriate.
- 4) The containment and safe disposal and/or recycling of chemicals, liquids, solids and gases in accordance with good operating practices.
- 6) Promotion of environmental awareness and general encouragement for staff to raise issues of concern and make recommendations and offer ideas to the Clerk to improve Highworth Town Council's performance.

In addition, field staff will, at all times, observe the environmental policies and instructions issued by competent, recognised authorities when visiting customer sites and premises. If, in the event that such instruction would appear to contradict Highworth Town Council policy statements, common good sense or create a potential environmental or safety hazard, staff are instructed to refer to the Town Clerk or Supervisor for advice before proceeding.

**POLICY ADOPTION DATE:** 5 June 2018

**MINUTE REFERENCE:** General Purpose & Finance Minute 14

## B.

### **Tree Management Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

Trees are a highly valued feature of Highworth. They have an ecological and environmental value. Trees contribute to their environment by providing oxygen, improving air quality, climate amelioration, conserving water, preserving soil, and supporting wildlife. During the process of photosynthesis, trees take in carbon dioxide and produce the oxygen we breathe. Trees are also important in urban landscapes not only visually but enhance the environment by improving air quality by filtering airborne dust, smoke and fumes. Trees absorb traffic noise in built-up areas and can help to limit noise pollution. They reduce temperature extremes by providing shelter in hot weather. They can act as a screen, increasing privacy in residential road and gardens and provide food and habitat for birds and other wildlife thus supporting nature conservation value and biodiversity.

Research has shown that trees also provide many psychological and health benefits and have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, reducing stress and encouraging outdoor exercise.

#### **2. Trees within Highworth**

Highworth Town Council has discretionary power to maintain trees in open spaces as per the deed, hand tools only from the ground where applicable under an agreement with Swindon Borough Council (SBC) which is the authority responsible for trees within the borough. Highworth Town Council has a responsibility to maintain trees on our land to ensure they are in a safe condition and not causing an unreasonable danger or actionable nuisance. Highworth Town Council carries out an annual tree inspection on our trees. Highworth Town Council also reports any tree issues that come to our notice on those that we are not responsible for.

Highworth Town Council can undertake work at ground level and up to head height if they so wish anything outside of this falls to Swindon Borough Council. Trees growing on land which forms part of the adopted highway are the responsibility of the Highways Authority, Swindon Borough Council.

Trees are generally maintained as part of Swindon Borough Councils continuous programme of work.

Trees along the main roads	Inspected annually
Street trees	Pruned on a cyclical basis every 1,3 or 5 years depending on species and location
Parks and green space trees	Pruned on an ad-hoc basis

Any problems reported are assessed by Swindon Borough Councils expert Tree Officer and any remedial work is determined on a priority basis depending on the nature of the request.

**All enquiries regarding trees in Highworth should be directed to Swindon Borough Council on 01793 445500 [www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk)**

### **3. Highworth Town Council – responding to complaints**

#### Obstructing/Overhanging Tree Branches

Tree branches can cause obstruction to public footpaths, roadways, signs, streetlighting and open spaces. Highworth Town Council will respond to reports where work can be undertaken at ground level by the Grounds Team who will eliminate hazards caused by obstructive branches.

#### Shading and loss of light

Trees are often perceived to block light to nearby properties. However, pruning or removal of trees will often have a negligible impact on the amount of light reaching a house or garden. Therefore, tree works to improve light levels will not normally be considered.

#### Loss of view

Trees will only be pruned or removed to restore views when necessary to retain important public viewpoints or there is a potential to bring about significant public benefit and/or enhance the local landscape or townscape. Pruning of trees for highway sight-line requirements will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

#### Trees affecting reception (Television, satellite or solar panels)

Pruning in the short term may help improve television reception, however in the long term the flush of quick extra growth associated with pruning can exacerbate the problem. In most cases the problem can be resolved by relocating the aerial or satellite dish or using a booster. Residents are advised to contact their satellite or tv provider for specialist advice. Removal or pruning of trees will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

#### Overhead cables/telephone wires

Utility companies have certain legal rights to carry out works to public or privately owned trees to address health and safety problems, to maintain a clearance between trees and their apparatus to ensure continuity of supply. This may sometimes involve the loss of trees. Where works to trees are necessary as a result of proximity or conflict, we will encourage utility operators to adopt the most appropriate long-term solution, giving consideration to tree health, local tree cover and visual amenity.

Highworth Town Council will not prune a tree within our maintenance work in order to prevent or reduce interference with telephone wires. We would recommend contacting the telephone service provider.

#### General/Minor Nuisances

Highworth Town Council will not prune trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, which are largely outside our control. There are a variety of potential nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees.

Examples of such problems are:

- Falling leaves, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings
- Insects associated the trees (spiders, wasps flies etc)
- Reduction or increase of moisture to gardens
- Suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens

- Leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs
- The build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures

Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which property owners are expected to carry out.

Falling leaves, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings are not readily controllable by pruning and cleaning of affected surfaces can be considered routine maintenance. Pruning will not normally be considered solely as a way of alleviating problems with these issues alone.

#### Trees considered too big / too small

Felling trees sits within the remit of Swindon Borough Council.

#### Damage and tree roots

Many tree conflicts arise because of the presence of tree roots and the perception that they are causing damage. Where damage is alleged, each complaint will be investigated on an individual basis. The following guidance will be used in assessing levels of nuisance and identifying appropriate action.

Root invasion in gardens, tree roots in gardens are a natural occurrence and root presence is unlikely to be affected by tree pruning or removal. Landowners do have a common law right to prune back tree roots to their boundary, providing that this would not lead to tree death and providing that the tree in question is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or situate within a Conservation Area.

All issues relating to tree roots from land maintained by Highworth Town Council should be directed to Swindon Borough Council.

#### Damage to walls and fences

Any issues where trees are considered to be causing damage to walls or fences should be referred to Swindon Borough Council.

#### Damage to paths

It is often possible to repair paths to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots, Where roots protrude they can be pruned or the path re-laid around the tree with flexible materials such as asphalt to provide a smooth surface. Where trees are considered to be causing damage to paths and footpaths please contact Swindon Borough Council to address the issue.

#### Damage to drains or water pipes

There is no evidence to suggest that the tree roots can actively penetrate an intact pipe or drain, but they can find their way into drains by any existing fault and increase damage. In these situations, the owner of the drain should seek to get the drain repaired at their own expense.

#### Trip Hazards

Highworth Town Council will work with Swindon Borough Council to make safe an unacceptable trip hazard in a street, road or highway which is caused by a tree in our ownership.

### **4. Other factors constraining work to trees**

#### Birds

Under the Wildlife & Conservation Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to kill, injure or take wild birds, their young, their eggs or nests. Non urgent major tree work involving tree

removal, reduction in hedge cutting operations should not normally be undertaken during bird nesting and breeding season, which is considered to be from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> July.

#### Bats

Bats are a European Protected Species and are protected by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Causing damage to a roosting/nesting site is a criminal offence which can lead to imprisonment. Trees displaying signs of roosting bats will be referred to an ecologist before any work commences. Any trees supporting roosting bats will not be worked on until Natural England is consulted.

#### Restrictive covenants

Occasionally, restrictive covenants attached to the deeds for a property may restrict what work can be undertaken to trees.

#### Unadopted land

There are areas in Highworth that may not be adopted by Swindon Borough Council and may not have ownership recognised by neighbouring properties. Highworth Town Council does not have the authority or responsibility to maintain private land. Some instances may be considered on a case by case basis as exceptional circumstances.

### **5. Damage relating to trees**

#### Direct damage to property

Tree roots, stems and branches get thicker each year via a process called secondary thickening. Over time as they increase in size they can disrupt or distort adjacent structures and surfaces. This is generally limited to 'lightly loaded' structures such as low walls, fences and paving. Trees generally deflect around more 'heavily loaded' structures such as houses. Any reports of damage to property needs to be reported to Swindon Borough Council in the first instance.

### **6. Insurance claims**

Where trees are alleged to have caused direct or indirect damage to property and a formal claim is submitted the matter will be referred to Swindon Borough Council.

POLICY ADOPTION DATE:

MINUTE REFERENCE:

C.

## Use of the Podium and Market Square Guidelines

### 1. Usage

The Podium and Market Square can be used for the following, this list is not exhaustive.

- Highworth Weekly Market
- Community Outreach
- A General Community meeting space
- Business use i.e. Café tables
- Civic functions
- Charitable promotions
- Church/Carol Services
- May Day
- Christmas Lights

### Use by Cafes/Public Houses

Cafes may put tables and chairs on the Podium. The responsibility of the tables and chairs along with the clearing of any litter (including cigarette butts) is the responsibility of the business owner. Highworth Town Council expects especially during COVID-19 times that frequent cleaning and disinfecting of tables will take place and again the onus is entirely down to the business owner. This area is solely for non-alcoholic beverages, alcohol **must not** be consumed. Business owners are to ensure that their own insurance policy covers customers while dining on the Podium. Storage facilities are not permitted in any circumstances.

Usage will be reviewed every 12 months. Priority will be given to any charity/group or event that have booked the Podium.

### 2. Making a booking

If you would like to book the Podium or Market Square, please contact Highworth Town Council [admin@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:admin@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk) or 01793 762377.

Bookings of the Podium will be for single use, unless prior agreement is sought from Highworth Town Council.

### 3. Conditions of use

A copy of the users Public Liability Insurance will be required unless agreed with Highworth Town Council prior to the booking being agreed.

A Risk Assessment may be required prior to the booking taking place.

The walkway from the Market Place to the Podium steps must be kept clear at all times.

Vehicles are not permitted on the Podium without prior permission from The Town Clerk.

The Market Square Car Park is to be free of cars from 6:00am on Saturdays.

No parking spaces are to be designated for individual businesses unless agreed by the Council on application for a temporary specific purpose. Highworth Town Council reserves the right to close off spaces for events and parking.

These guidelines must be adhered to at all times. If you are in breach of these conditions future bookings will not be granted.

Name.....

Signature.....

On behalf of (Group or Business).....

I agree to the above conditions of hire and accept if I breach these conditions I may not be permitted to future use of the Podium.

**POLICY ADOPTION DATE:** 19 January 2021

**MINUTE REFERENCE:** Full Council Minute 62

## AGENDA ITEM 11 – ROAD SWEEPER AND GROUNDS TEAM VEHICLES

### a. Green Machine Road Sweeper

The road sweeper is off the road again, a recent visit from the engineer has confirmed that the repairs will be extremely costly and run into the thousands and possibly tens of thousands. Due to the age and condition of the machine it has been out of action more than it has been on the road.

Quotes have been received from several suppliers:

- To purchase a new road sweeper averaging at a cost of £60,000
- To hire a new road sweeper averaging at an annual cost of £20,000

The Grounds Team have found difficulty in keeping the High Street and surrounding areas up to a decent standard due to the high numbers of pigeons and available resource to undertake this by hand without other areas of the town suffering.

The sweeper was not only used around the High Street but also in other areas of the town during leaf fall to prevent paths becoming hazardous and when in working order was a valued asset to the Grounds Team.

#### Recommendation to Full Council

*To retire the Green Machine and replace with a new machine with a view to replacing every 3-4 years to ensure longevity and good value for money.*

## b. Grounds Team Vehicles

Current vehicles owned by Highworth Town Council:

- Ford Connect 2013
- Ford Transit Tipper 2013
- Renault Kango 2011

### Options

#### **1- Electric vehicles**

Highworth does not have the infrastructure to support this. The Grounds Team do not have a depot where vehicles could be charged so at present this is not a viable option.

#### **2- To purchase new vehicles**

Quote received:

Ford Transit Connect £21499 plus VAT

Ford Transit chassis cab plus tipper body £46499 plus VAT

Total cost to replace vehicles £89497 plus VAT

This option has a large outlay to the Council and does not fit with the Environmental Policy of continuing with diesel vehicles.

#### **3- Lease hire vehicles**

Enquiries have been made; this is the most cost-effective option with the option to change to electric vehicles after a 3-year period.

- *Peugeot Partner Van* £195 plus VAT per month
- *Ford Ranger* £309 plus VAT per month
- *Ford Transit One Stop* £369 plus VAT per month

*Approximate annual lease hire cost £10476. Other vehicles are being investigated.*

#### Recommendation to Full Council

*Option 3 – to lease hire diesel vehicles with a view to transferring to electric after 3 years*

## AGENDA ITEM 12 – FIREWORKS

In previous years the ticket price for Highworth Town Council annual firework display has been:

Adult - £6.00

Child - £4.00

Senior Citizen - £4.00

Research has been carried out and these prices are in line with many displays in the area, with some being slightly higher at £7.00 per adult.

*Recommendation*

*To keep the ticket price the same as previous years*

Adult - £6.00

Child - £4.00

Senior Citizen - £4.00