

Council – 7th September 2023**Notice of Motion: Southend's Urban Trees**

They say an oak tree spends 300 years growing, 300 years living and 300 years dying. There are huge environmental and social implications to how a council values tree maintenance. This motion aims to improve our tree management, especially the management of declining trees, to maximise the benefits and lifespan of trees on council-owned or council-managed land.

Southend's urban trees are assets of immense community value, providing tree canopy cover (TCC) which is proven to reduce 'urban heat island effect' that is the cause of an increasing number of fatalities across Europe due to climate heating.

Despite significant tree planting in recent years our TCC currently stands at 13% on average, and just 10% in Leigh-on-Sea. The value of mature trees cannot adequately be replaced by saplings so we must do more to retain our mature trees and to improve our current TCC to the Forestry Commission's recommendation of 15% at the very least.

More trees will bring many benefits to our city such as an improvement in air quality, greater local sequestering of carbon to aid our Net Zero ambitions, and a positive effect on the mental health of local people.

To maintain and increase our TCC we must seek to prolong the lifespans of our mature trees alongside planting thousands of new ones through a variety of methods including tree planting focused grant applications. This will require a progressive and pragmatic approach to tree management and a refinement of practices with a preservation-first approach.

Therefore, Southend-on-Sea City Council resolves to:

- 1. Establish a biodiversity and tree retention working party with observers from external organisations with knowledge and expertise in arboriculture and biodiversity. The remit of the working party will be to consider tree management and preservation, including assessing trees marked for removal, unless there is a perceived immediate risk, and to informally advise the administration on matters of tree preservation, maintenance, and biodiversity.*
- 2. Invoke an immediate moratorium on tree felling where there is not an immediate risk to the public until there has been a review of existing practices around maintenance and retention of highways trees to develop an alternative methodology toolbox to align with best practice under the Tree Design Action Group, the Forestry Commission and the Tree Council of Great Britain.*
- 3. Embed quality assurances procedures within a tree retention policy as part of best practice so that common scenarios can be actioned quickly and without ambiguity.*

4. *Continuously seek funding opportunities to bid for to plant new trees.*
5. *Review potential planting locations across the city and keep an up to date map for the use of tree officers and highways surveyors.*
6. *Where practicable, seek to plant replacement trees as far in advance as possible of a removal.*
7. *Where practicable, plant larger, more mature trees in build-outs at the end of double yellow line demarcations to alleviate pressure on our drainage system from stormwater attenuation and to preserve the integrity and longevity of our highways trees and nearby footpaths.'*

Proposed by Cllr Richard Longstaff

Seconded by Cllr Stephen Ayles