**Southwell Town Council**

**Tree Inspection**

**Policy**

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**1. Policy Statement**

Southwell Town Council (‘the council’), as a tree owner, has a direct responsibility to ensure that its trees do not pose a danger to the public or property.

The council has a statutory duty of care to members of the public and staff who must not be put at risk because of any failure by the council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety. In the National Tree Safety Group publication, “Common Sense Risk Management of Trees”, statistics show that there is about a one in 10 million chance of an individual being killed by a falling tree or part of a tree in any given year.

Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline and collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fall in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases.

Ancient and decaying trees are often beautiful and uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and, however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is only necessary where there is a clearly perceptible risk to life or property. This might mean removing part of the tree or reducing the level of public access in the vicinity.

This Tree Inspection Policy will therefore ensure that:

* the risk to life and property, as a result of tree deterioration, is kept to as low a level as is reasonably practicable;
* a system of tree inspections is in operation in relation to the above risk;
* a record of trees and inspections is retained;
* staff who carry out inspections are competent to do so;
* work identified through the inspection programme to be undertaken by suitably qualified staff or contractors.

**2. Introduction**

The council recognises that trees are an important conservation and amenity resource to the area, but that they can present risk to the public if they are not managed properly.

Owners of trees have a legal duty of care and are obliged to take all reasonable care to ensure that any foreseeable hazards can be identified and made safe. Although it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of a tree falling, there are often indications that a tree may be in decline, have structural faults or be suffering from decay or pests and diseases. Many of these signs can be recognised by trained inspectors who can then instigate further investigations by an external qualified arboriculturist.

The safe and appropriate management of its trees is important to the council who want to ensure that a balance is maintained between public safety and sustaining a healthy tree population with the benefits it provides. Trees are integral to most natural land-based ecosystems, providing a wide range of ecosystem services to humankind, including mitigating the harmful effects of climate change as well as assisting with climate adaption. Trees are an important part of the economy providing timber and non timber forest products. They also bring communities together, playing a part in their cultural and spiritual values and aesthetic appreciation.

Their importance is recognised in international, national and local government policies, and many non-governmental organisations have policies dedicated to conserving trees and their biodiversity.

This policy seeks to manage the risks associated with trees using a risk-based approach which requires the inspection of trees belonging to the council to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

**3. Prioritisation of Tree inspection**

A review of council owned land was undertaken to prioritise the initial inspection regime and establish an ongoing inspection frequency for all trees within the council’s ownership. This prioritisation was completed using the following risk table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Zone** | **Initial Inspection**  **Period** | Notes |
| **High Footfall**  Kings Street Car Park  Church Street Car Park  Bramley Street CarPark  Market Square  Ash Tree Spinney  Minster Field Path [within 3m of path]  Edward Cludd [within 3m of path]  Squires Pond Play Area [within 3m of edge]  Squires Pond Woodland  Humberstone Play area [within 3m of edge and play equipment]  Memorial Drive [within 3m of path] | To be undertaken by October 2023 and thereafter every 1.5 years | This is a continual process with routine inspections |
| **Medium Footfall**  Burgage  Froggatts  Harvey Field  Minster Field  Norwood Gardens play area  Riverside [within 3m of path]  Squires pond picnic area  Orchard Land  Potwell Path  WMRG [within 3m of path or play equipment] | To be undertaken in the first year by March 2024 (out of leaf) and September (in leaf) and thereafter every 30 months |  |
| **Low Footfall**  Squires pond woodland  Adams Row  Hillcrest  Beaumont  Wakeling  Cedar Green  Dudlley Doy  Hillcrest  Adams Row  Beryls Meadow | To be undertaken in the first year, in leaf and out of leaf, by October 2024 and thereafter every 66 months |  |

The physical inspection of each risk area will identify trees that have defects that need to be monitored further in accordance with the individual tree inspection programme noted below.

**4. Individual Tree Inspection Programme**

This procedure is summarised in the flowchart in appendix 1.

When a site is inspected according to the frequency determined by the risk zones table shown above, the designated grounds staff will fill in a site tree inspection form, FORM A, (appendix 2). If no trees with significant defects are found, this will be stated on the form. Those trees that appear to be sound during formal inspection require no further documented record of their condition at this stage and will be re-inspected in accordance with the risk table.

Where a tree with significant defects is identified as being potentially hazardous this must be documented and a tree defect report form, FORM B, (appendix 3) must be filled in, in addition to FORM A.

The inspection should be recorded in the record book / database to enable individual tree information to be viewed, providing a means of monitoring changing tree condition.

The assessment of risk on FORM B is designed to give an indication of the risk posed by the defect. The assessment of risk is based on 3 factors:

* designated risk zone of the site (i.e. high, medium or low);
* overall condition of the tree;
* urgency of works required.

Designated grounds staff must consider these factors when inspecting a tree and calculate the total hazard rating in order to rate the tree as high, medium or low. This is done by using the following scoring system as shown on FORM B:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | Score |
| Factor 1 | Risk Zone | A mature or veteran tree | High | 5 |
| A semi-mature tree where there is public access to area as defined in high risk | Medium | 3 |
| A young tree | Low | 1 |
|  | | | | |
| Factor 2 | Condition | * Dead * Very low vigour * Short life expectancy * Sparse leaf cover * Significant defects | Poor | 5 |
| * Generally healthy * Some thinning of crown * Some defects of low significance * Limited >4yr life expectancy | Average | 3 |
| * Healthy * Full crown * Long life expectancy * No significant defects | Good | 1 |
|  | | | | |
| Factor 3 | Priority | Within very close proximity [<2m at the base] to:   * Major footpaths * Play areas * Picnic areas * Main public areas * Work yards * Car parks * Any areas with high footfall * Land used for regular events | High | 5 |
| Within close delete close proximity to:   * Bridle ways * Quieter areas of parks and gardens * Woodlands (moderate use) * Any areas in regular but not intensive public use | Medium | 3 |
| Within close proximity to: In   * Low intensity land use i.e. arable * Other woodlands and open spaces * Surplus land * Any areas away from public footpaths and only lightly used | Low | 1 |

The scores for each risk factor are then added together to produce the overall risk score for that particular tree. This will then determine the frequency of inspection for the tree.

*N.b. all trees will be inspected in accordance with the tree inspection programme; only trees that have significant defects identified will be inspected in accordance with the following until the defect has been rectified.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Frequency of Inspection** |
| 13-15 | Immediate works (within 30 Days) |
| 9 - 12 | Every 12 months |
| 8 or below | Every 3 years |

**6. Immediate Works**

Where the scoring is 13-15 and immediate works are identified within FORM B, at the time of inspection the tree inspector must provide a description of the works required, any safety considerations and equipment requirements.

The completed form must be presented to the Clerk The arboreal officer should assess whether the works can be carried out by the in-house team or whether a contractor is required and record this on the form.

In cases where the work is within the capabilities of in-house resources Grounds Work Planner must ensure that all work can be carried out safely, prior to the works commencing. All staff must be issued with the appropriate safety equipment and be suitably qualified to carry out the task.

When in-house resources are not qualified to carry out the work or are unavailable, a specialist tree surgeon may be used to undertake the work. A list of approved arboricultural tree work contractors will be used to commission the works and such works should comply with contract and financial procedure rules and adhere to health and safety legislation.

Once all remedial works have been carried out on the tree, either in-house or by a contractor, the tree should be reassessed using FORM C (appendix 4).

Rectification of all defects will result in the tree being removed from the individual tree inspection programme and the monitoring of this tree will then continue in accordance with its high, medium or low risk location area.

**7. Tree Replacements**

Any tree that is felled as result of the tree inspection programme must be replaced with a tree of an appropriate species. Wherever possible STC will retrieve saplings and grow them on in our tree nursery.

**8. Monitoring**

In order to ensure adherence to the Tree Safety Management policy, adequate tree inspection records must be kept for 10 years and systems demonstrating compliance with the policy must be in place.

Grounds Work Planner will ensure that the Tree Safety Management Policy is kept under constant review and is formally reviewed every 5 years.

**Appendix 1- Tree Inspection Procedure**

Complete FORM A spreadsheet

Order work with approved tree surgeon.

If work required in conservation area NSDC work order placed

Assess remedial works and Chair of TE, Clerk and designated grounds staff to recommend and agree process

If tree specialist consulted. Provide description of works, safety & equipment requirement

Inform Town Environment Committee.

Any out of budget financial implications to go G&F Committee.

Confirm works completed

Copy of FORM B sent to Clerk and TE Chair

Tree requires immediate work 13-15

Update tree record

Carry out work in house

Re-assess tree and complete FORM C

Re-inspect as per tree inspection programme

Tree requires monitoring 9-12

Complete FORM A

No trees with defects <9

Tree with defect found >9

Inspections continue in respect of risk scoring

Scan and store in database FORM A

Complete FORM B for each tree with defects identified

**Appendix 2 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM A**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location: | | Site Reference: | | | |
| Risk Zone: | | | |
| Date: | Time | Weather | | | |
| Inspectors name | |
| **Type of inspection** | | | | | |
| Planned (as per inspection program) | | | | |  |
| Reactive (as a result of complaint or storm) | | | | |  |
| If only covering part of site, please state which areas covered | | | | | |
| **Findings** | | | | | |
| Number of trees with significant defects | | | | |  |
| Additional comments | | | | | |
| For each tree with significant defects fill out one FORM B | | | | | |
| Confirm risk Zone | | | High | Medium | Low |
| Signed | | | | | |
|  | | | | | |
| Date scanned into data base: | | |  | | |
| Scanned by |  | | | | |

**Appendix 3 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM B**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location: | | | | Site reference: | | | Tree Number: | |
| Date: | | | | Time: | | | | |
| Inspectors Name: | | | | | | | | |
| Species: | | | | Age Young Semi-mature Mature over mature | | | | |
| **Tree Assessment** | | | | | | | | |
| Risk Zone Score: | |  | | | Total Score | | | |
| Condition Score: | |  | | |
| Priority Score: | |  | | |
| **Frequency of inspections** | | | | | | | | |
| Total Score 11-15 | | | Immediate works needed | | | | |  |
| Total Score 8-10 | | | Inspect in 12 months | | | | |  |
| Total Score 7 or below | | | Inspect every 24 months | | | | |  |
| Complete following information for IMMEDIATE WORKS ONLY | | | | | | | | |
| Description of works needed, safety considerations and equipment requirements: | | | | | | | | |
| Name: Signature: | | | | | | | | |
| **TO BE COMPLETED BY AUTHORISING OFFICER**  Date sent:  Date returned: | | | | | | | | |
| Name: |  | | | | Signed | | | |
| Authorised: |  | | | | Y/N | | | |
| Cost code |  | | | | |  | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| Date recorded in Data Base: | | | | | |  | | |
| Recorded by: | | | | | |  | | |

**Appendix 4 - Site Tree Inspection - FORM C**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location: | | | Site reference: | | Tree Number: | |
| Date: | | | Time: | | | |
| Inspectors Name: | | |  | | | |
| Species: | | | Age Young Semi-mature Mature over mature | | | |
| **Remedial works** | | | | | | |
| Date works undertaken: | Order no. | | | In-house: team |  | |
| Contractor:  Name |  | |
| Decryptions of works undertaken: | | | | | | |
| Re-assessment | | | | | | |
| All defects rectified: Y/N  Tree can revert to routine inspection program Y/N | | | | | |  |
| Defects still remaining  Where further defects identified complete FORM B | | | | | |  |
| Signed: | | | | | | |
| Date scanned in data base: | |  | | | | |
| Scanned by: | |  | | | | |

**Appendix 4 List of trees for planting**

This is the beginning of a list of trees for planting on STC’s estate. It is not exclusive but is intended to be continually updated.

This incorporates Southwell Town Council’s Tree Planting Policy.

**List of local and native trees:**

**Fruit trees**

Available from Marc Richmond https://marcrichmond.weebly.com – 07817654022)

Adams Pearmian - (1826) – Late dessert apple. Handsome, rich, and nutty flavour. Highly ornamental. Beeley Pippin - (1880 Derbys) Early eater. Dusky pink flush and russet. Rich aromatic flavour.

Bess Pool – (Chilwell, Notts) Late dual purpose, keeps until March. Flowers late so useful in frost pockets. Beautiful crimson flush, rich, crumbly flesh. Popular in Victorian times for decoration alone. Court Pendu Plat – (17th century or earlier) Dessert apple. Claimed to have Roman origins. Known as ‘ wise apple’ as it flowers late so misses frost – good to pair with Bess Pool. Rich fruit, pineapple like flavour. Makes a compact tree with good disease resistance.

Blenheim Orange – (c1740) Dual purpose. Highly esteemed apple, long held favourite of many. Often described as having a addictive nutty taste. Quite sweet, crumbly texture. Good with cheese.

King of the Pippins (poss 1770’s Europe – widely grown) Very versatile, can be used for eating and cooking – great for patisserie as keeps shape when cooked. Also used for cider. Quite sweet, firm but with plenty of acidity. Upright tree - good for allotments.

Lord Lambourne (1907) – Dessert apple. Valued and reliable garden apple. Sweet juicy and crisp. September to November.

Nottingham Pippin (1815) – Dessert apple. Strong flavour of fruit, sweet, crisp, and juicy. Keeps until February. Orleans Reinette (1776) Dual purpose. Rich, nutty, aromatic flavour. Highly esteemed due to exceptional flavour. Keeps until January.

Ribston Pippin (1707) Parent of Cox’s Orange Pippin. High vitamin C content. Intense, rich, aromatic flavour. Esteemed Victorian dessert apple. Keeps until January.

Rosemary Russett (1831) Intense, sweet, sharp flavour. Reliable. One of the best russets. Keeps until March.

Available from John Hempsall helenhempsall@aol.com – 01777870214

Mead’s Broadling [1884] Notts Markham Pippin [1990]

Notts Sisson Worksop Pippin [1910]

Notts Nottingham Pippin [1815] Notts Allinham Pippin [1884] Lincs Nov-Dec

Malster [1830] Notts Sept-Nov

Bibliiography

The National Tree Safety Group: The Common Sense Risk Management of Trees 2011

The Forestry Commission: Trees and Woodland Strategy Toolkit 2022

Weymouth Tree Management Policy 2022 -2025

Frome Town Council: Wild About Trees May 2022