

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism  
Cabinet Member - Technical Services

**DATE:** 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
20<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**SUBJECT:** Resourcing of Tree Works - Update

**WARDS AFFECTED:** All

**REPORT OF:** Leisure Director

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Mark Shaw, Parks and Greenspace Manager  
934 2393

**EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To update the Cabinet Members on issues around the resourcing of Tree Works and their likely impact.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

No decision required

**RECOMMENDATION (S):**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member (Leisure and Tourism)

1.) Notes the report

Cabinet Member (Technical Services)

1). Notes the report

**KEY DECISION:** No

**FORWARD PLAN:** No

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** N/A

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

**N/A**

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:** The issues contained within the report regarding the budget will affect the amount of tree work undertaken

**Financial:** No budget implications

**Legal:**

**Risk Assessment:** Insufficient budget resources made available to meet the shortfall in the Arboricultural contract budget will reduce the standard of service delivery and customer satisfaction, with the likely result that there will be additional health and safety issues, insurance claims and complaints from the public.

**Asset Management:** The report deals with the maintenance and management of Council trees stock on the highway and in parks.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

**Planning and Economic Regeneration Department: Network Management**

## CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Creating Safe Communities		√	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Environmental Sustainability		√	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		√	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		√	
8	Children and Young People		√	

### LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Reports and minutes of the following meetings:

Cabinet, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008

Cabinet Member (Leisure and Tourism), 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008

Cabinet Member (Technical Services), 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008

Cabinet Member (Leisure and Tourism), 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Cabinet, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008

Scrutiny and Review Committee (Regeneration), 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008

Scrutiny and Review Committee (Social and Community Services), 6<sup>th</sup> December 2005

Scrutiny and Review Committee (Social and Community Services), 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Cabinet Member will recall the recent review of arboricultural works which led to the repackaging of these works into an “Arboricultural Works” contract and a “Tree Planting and Establishment” contract.
- 1.2 The arboricultural works contract was re-tendered against a schedule of rates, and the submitted rates were assessed against an indicative quantity of works.
- 1.3 This assessment model showed there had been 25% increase in rates and that to deliver the same amount of work as in the previous year required an additional £55k per year.

Cabinet members were advised of this and in accepting the tender they also referred the matter to the budget process for 2009/10.

- 1.4 As a separate issue, Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2008 reviewed their previous recommendations made in 2002/3 for the arboricultural budget to be improved by £63k year on year for 5 years, as they had considered the service required a budget of £463k.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that Cabinet/Council had not fully acted on these recommendations and had only allowed the budget to increase by £50k for 2 years and recommended the Cabinet to consider increasing the budget by £20k.

Cabinet received this recommendation and in June 2008 referred it to the budget process for 2009/10.

- 1.5 In setting the budget for 2009/10 Council agreed to allocate £20k to be applied towards the shortfall to the arboricultural works contract.
- 1.6 A proportion of the overall budget is also reserved for tree planting. Due to the general increase in prices it is also likely that this budget will buy 25% less new tree planting than previously.
- 1.7 The purpose of this report is to make members aware of the likely consequences of these budgetary shortfalls.

## **2.0 SUMMARY OF BUDGET**

- 2.1 A breakdown of the budget from 2002/03 to 2009 /10 is shown below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Streetside Trees (Technical Services)</b>	<b>Park Trees (Leisure Services)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2002/2003	£96,000	£52,700	<b>£148,700</b>	
2003/2004	£96,000	£52,700	<b>£148,700</b>	No indexation applied
2004/2005	£137,000	£61,700	<b>£198,700</b>	Budget Increase of £50k No indexation applied
2005/2006	£181,900	£72,400	<b>£254,300</b>	Budget Increase of £50k plus £5600 indexation
2006/2007	£172,000	£81,600	<b>£253,600</b>	Budget cut by £9900 for street side trees Budget increased by £9200 for parks trees No indexation applied
2007/2008	£172,000	£81,600	<b>£253,600</b>	No indexation applied
2008/2009	£172,000	£81,600	<b>£253,600</b>	No indexation applied
2009/2010	£186,000	£87,600	<b>£273,600</b>	Budget increase of £20k No indexation applied

2.1 Members should note that the current budget is significantly less than the £463k recommended by the Scrutiny and Review Committee in 2003/4.

If this figure is factored by 25% to reflect the general increase in tendered rates, then the required budget would be in the order of £579k.

### **3.0 IMPACT OF LESS WORK BEING CARRIED OUT**

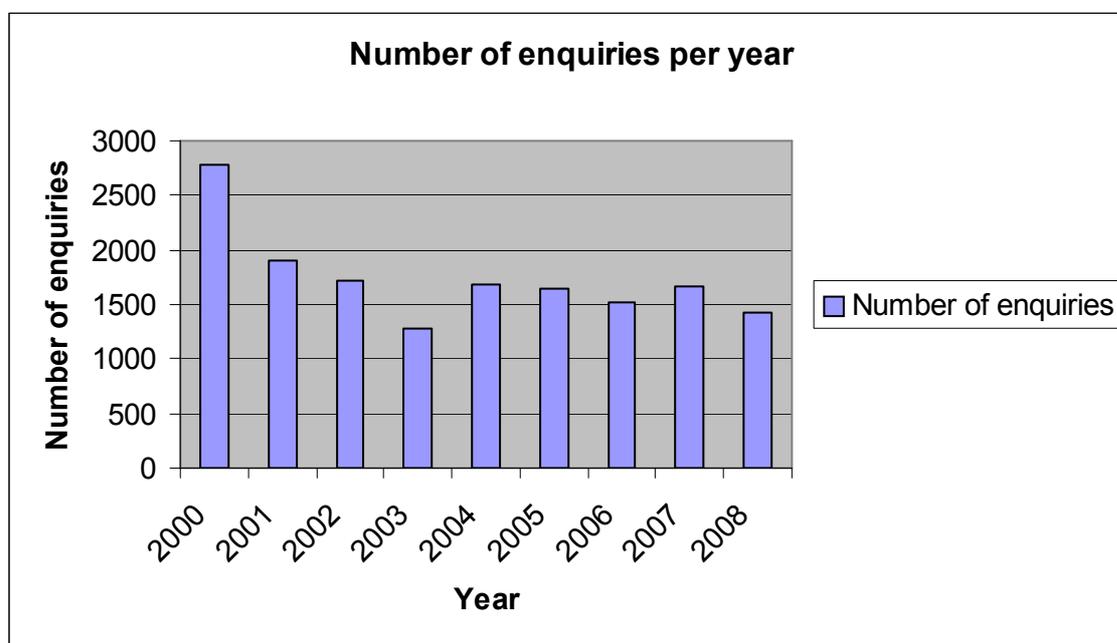
3.1 Notwithstanding the fact that the current budget is inadequate, the issues described above will mean that approximately 25% less work will be carried out in our parks and on the highways in future than done in the past. This will mean that only higher priority works are done, and many more minor tree-related issues will not be attended to.

3.2 For example, overhanging branches onto private property or interfering with gutters will no longer be possible, only those which pose a health and safety risk will be undertaken. In essence, the pro-active/ pre-emptive works will cease, and works will be restricted to those which are reactive to problems which have already occurred (eg fallen/ falling branches)

Inevitably it is these issues that are most important to the public and cause the most annoyance and generate the most correspondence.

3.3 This scenario may lead to public dissatisfaction of the services offered by the Council and will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of tree-related complaints received by Officers and Members.

- 3.4 The delivered service is clearly resource led. The increased budget, following Overview and Scrutiny Committee's intervention, saw a dramatic drop in public dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, this has started to rise as available budgets have not kept pace with inflation and the revised tender prices.



- 3.5 To ease the situation, it may be possible to use some of the tree planting and establishment budget to supplement the Arboricultural works budget. But this would lead to a reduction in the number of new trees planted, a continuing decline in the tree stock and further complaints due to the lack of tree planting.
- 3.6 Cabinet Member (Technical Services) should be aware that the Network Management section, which monitors the overall Highway Arboricultural budget, currently reports a performance indicator under promotion of sustainability and safety of the highway environment as follows:
- \* Monitor targeted planting programme to reflect year on year increase of trees planted on highway.
  - \* Demonstrate a commitment to ongoing safety and sustainability of highway trees by inspections and replanting.

The effective cut in budget for arboricultural works as detailed in this report will adversely affect the outturn of this performance indicator.

#### **4.0 SUMMARY**

- 4.1 To remain within the existing budget for arboricultural works, less works will be undertaken in the forthcoming years. This will have a detrimental impact on

the service offered to the public and is likely to increase the volume of complaints received in relation to tree works and new planting.