Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution

Report to: The Executive – 15 March 2024

Subject: Refreshed Tree and Woodland Action Plan – 2024 - 2034

Report of: Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing

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The report brings the new Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan to Executive for endorsement.

On 9th November 2023 a report detailing a proposed new Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan was brought to Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee for consideration with recommendations for public consultation.

An update report with final draft Action Plan was provided to Scrutiny on 9th March 2024. The final draft Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan and the results of the public consultation are attached.

Recommendations

That the Executive

(1) Notes the results from the public consultation on the draft Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan
(2) Endorses the Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan as an integral part of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	Manchester's trees and woodlands, help to capture and store carbon, and provide resilience against the effects of extreme weather events, for example reducing the effects of flooding and cooling in times of drought.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	The improvement of our green and blue spaces allows for greater environmental equity for all Manchester's residents. Delivery of the strategy down to neighbourhood level seeks to increase the equitable distribution of the benefits that trees and woodlands can bring.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	A thriving treescape increases the attractiveness of Manchester as a place in which to work and invest. Jobs are created in the environmental sector through the need to plant and manage the treescape. Specialist jobs are also created such as arborists, forest schools' leaders, ecologists and wildlife related engagement officer roles.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Manchester competes on a world stage to attract skilled people. A well-managed and growing treescape makes an important contribution to this.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	An equitable and appropriate treescape is one of the aims of the Action Plan and will provide multiple benefits to communities including creating a sense of place and increasing climate resilience.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The city's natural environment, its trees and woodlands, play a valuable role in storing carbon and creating a liveable city.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Improved connectivity across the treescape contributes and links the wider Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Network.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

1. Draft Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2024-2034
2. Public Consultation Analysis
3. Growing Manchester's Trees Study: May 2023
4. Ward Based tree capacity posters May 2023
5. City Roots: May 2023
6. Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee 9/3/24.

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 Since inception, the previous versions of the Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan (TAWAP) have successfully galvanised activity across a diverse range of organisations, departments and individuals involved in tree and woodland planting and management. Information on these actions is given in the annual report to Scrutiny on Green and Blue Infrastructure.

1.2 The Tree and Woodland Action Plan will continue to be an integral part of the Green &Blue Infrastructure (G&BI) Strategy Implementation Plan enabling more detail to be provided regarding how the City's tree assets can be cared for not just by the Council but by a range of stakeholders.

1.3 The new TAWAP, together with a comprehensive suite of studies and strategies including the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy, River Valley Strategies (Our Rivers Our City), Open Spaces study and Biodiversity Net Gain study will help increase our understanding of biodiversity needs and nature-based solutions and connect the tree and woodland agenda across other thematic priorities, such as climate resilience, health and wellbeing and air quality.

1.4 It will look longer term, over the course of ten years instead of five years. This report sets out how the Tree and Woodland Action Plan is being updated in line with best practice and our most recent evidence, so we can continue to meet the current challenges facing our trees and woodlands. The full TAWAP can be found in Appendix One.

2.0 **Background**

2.1 A revised TAWAP will be the third iteration since the first tree strategy was produced in 2005. In developing the new TAWAP, we have been working with a range of partners, including the Tree Council and City of Trees.

2.2 The Headline Actions have been revisited and streamlined down from 21 to 16 across the four key objectives. This will help provide clarity, maximise their effectiveness and avoid duplication.

3.0 **Tree & Woodland Action Plan – The Vision**

3.1 The TAWAP will allow a focus to be given to trees, helping to ensure that they will continue to be planted in Manchester selectively and appropriately, with due regard given to location, landscape character and sustainability.

3.2 Within the context of the wider G&BI Strategy our vision for the City's trees and woodlands will be to:

Secure a long-term future for our trees and woodlands for generations to come, providing the right management and strong protection, ensuring their positive contribution to climate resilience in a growing, world class City.

3.3   **Tree and Woodland Action Plan - Objectives**

3.4   It was considered that the four, well established, key objectives continue to provide broad, easy to understand priorities for the City's treescape.

3.5   These four objectives from the original Tree Strategy will continue to shape the many actions that both the council and stakeholders are already undertaking individually and in partnership, as well as future actions that are required.

(i) Managing Sustainably - The sustainable management of the City's tree stock has included tree audits and the development of an internal tree management system. This objective is still relevant and will continue to help in terms of forward planning and future proofing the City's tree stock.

(ii) Planting Appropriately - This objective continues to be appropriate; the right tree planted in the right place is part of creating a diverse and maturing tree stock that is sustainable and resilient and can cope better with the adverse effects of climate change, including new pests and diseases and extreme weather events that may appear over time.

(iii) Protecting Strongly – The aim of this objective is to ensure that Manchester's existing tree stock, both in public and private ownership, continues to have adequate protection. With a fast-growing population, demand for residential growth and developing transport infrastructure, the City's trees and woodlands will continue to face challenges, but informed decision making supported by an appropriate policy framework, application of the principles of tree management for Manchester and protecting trees of high amenity value through the TPO process where appropriate, will improve the future for trees and woodlands within Manchester.

(iv) Involving People Creatively – This reflects the need to raise awareness, increase understanding, build capacity and highlight the joy of trees in the City. It is vital and embraces actions by all partners not just the Council.

3.6   **Governance and Leadership**

3.7   The Tree and Woodland Action Plan is fully integrated into a suite of natural environment-related plans and strategies, part of a policy hierarchy that supports the city's 'Our Manchester' ambitions and its drive to be climate resilient.

Our Manchester

Local Plan

Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Climate Change Action Plan

Green & Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan and Tree & Woodland Action Plan

Park Strategy

Biodiversity Strategy

Our Rivers Our City

3.8   The context for the Tree and Woodland Action Plan is provided by Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester, the overarching document that provides the strategic framework for the different elements that comprise green and blue infrastructure.

3.9   The G&BI Implementation Plan is delivered by the Council and its Partners, led by the Executive Member for Environment. Progress against the Council actions is steered within the Council by the G&BI Board, chaired by the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing and attended by relevant Heads of Service and this will also oversee progress on the updated Tree and Woodland Action Plan.

3.10   **How a refreshed Tree Action Plan will sit with the G&BI Strategy**

3.11   The G&BI Implementation Strategy was refreshed in 2022, and the TAWAP has now been updated to align strongly with 16 of the 18 G&BI Strategy Headline Actions. In particular Headline Action 3 to provide effective and appropriate tree and woodland management and planting.

3.12   The Tree and Woodland Action Plan will be an integral part of the G&BI Strategy Implementation Plan enabling more detail to be provided regarding how the City's tree assets can be cared for not just by the Council but by a range of stakeholders.

3.13   **Delivery Partners**

3.14   As a key part of delivering the City's G&BI Strategy, the TAWAP benefits from a strong cohort of supportive partners, both internal to the Council and externally. These include City Council tree officers, park managers, planners and policy officers, also external practitioners including environmental charities such as City of Trees, the Tree Council, the Orchard Project, Wildlife Trust, the Groundwork Trust and river valley catchment partnerships as well as landowners including registered housing providers, TfGM and the Universities.

3.15   Delivery partners including climate change engagement officers and projects such as In Our Nature are already using our tree related evidence while engaging with residents and communities around climate resilience.

3.16   One example is illustrated in this short video:
with a Community Orchard planted in Crowcroft Park, Longsight supported by The Orchard Project.

3.17   The City Council is also a key member of the Greater Manchester Forest Partnership, an independent forum for all ten Greater Manchester Districts, chaired and facilitated by City of Trees. This forum has a direct role in feeding into the objectives of the regional Tree and Woodland Strategy for Greater Manchester "All our Trees".

3.18   **Challenges & Opportunities**

3.19   The importance and value of nature and green spaces for the city continues to be recognised, with dedicated research, knowledge and understanding increasing year on year. The Growing Manchester's Trees Study along with other key environmental strategies provide us with a pathway towards climate resilience, an ability to cope with extreme weather events and a way to help improve the functionality of the City's landscape as well as helping to address environmental inequalities.

3.20   Key challenges and opportunities identified through the new TAWAP include:

- Planning: Integration into Places for Everyone Joint Local Plan, Manchester Local Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain, GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Climate Resilience: air quality, extreme heat, flood risk, species diversity
- Pests and diseases: Ash dieback
- Addressing environmental inequalities across neighbourhoods.

4.0   New Evidence, New Approaches

4.1   The new TAWAP has been underpinned by the Growing Manchester's Trees report, associated ward-based capacity posters, and the City Roots study. These are detailed, informative and extensive pieces of evidence that represent a step-change in our understanding of the city's treescape.

4.2   They are fully accessible to all via the Council's website and can be viewed and downloaded here:

Trees | Green and blue infrastructure | Manchester City Council

4.3   An assessment of the treescape with this level of detail has never been undertaken before in the UK. Delivered by consultants TEP and City of Trees, in partnership with the Council, there are three elements to the work:

4.4   **Evolution**: City Roots – the story of Manchester's Urban Forest is an informative 100-year look back at how the city's treescape and its neighbourhoods have evolved over time, referencing population decline and

growth, and reflecting the changes, both positive and negative, across the city's landscape.

4.5 **Opportunity and Capacity**: Using highly detailed data sets on tree cover this work provides a ward-level insight into where and how tree canopy can be increased effectively, sustainably, and appropriately, planting in parks, and green spaces, gardens and roadsides to increase the city's canopy cover where trees are needed most.

4.6 We are working towards a smart, achievable goal of increasing Manchester's tree canopy from 18.8% to 21.8% by 2050. The table below shows how this compares with other cities.

City	London	Bristol	Plymouth	Cambridge	Torbay	Birmingham
Existing Canopy Cover	21% (2015)	18% (2018)	18.5% (2017)	17% (2008)	12% (2008)	21% (2020)
2050 Target	30%	30%	20%	19%	20%	24%

City canopy cover estimates and goals Source: Birmingham Urban Forest Masterplan

4.7 Our city-wide target, which is for everyone not just the council, equates to approximately 64,000 large trees, or 320 hectares of planting. This target, evidenced by the Growing Manchester Report, allows a nuanced, ward level approach to be considered.

4.8 Every ward is provided with its own analysis, its own area-based tree opportunity assessment, taking lots of complex factors into account, including land identified for development and space for other environmental priorities. Neighbourhoods, communities, and organisations can pick these individual plans up and start shaping them into prioritised local planting plans and bids for funding.

4.9 **Function**: Equally important is the need to look after the one million trees we already have, and cater for constant challenges such as pests, disease, and climate resilience, e.g., Ash Dieback. We will provide options for better and sustainable treescape management. A new Ash Dieback Strategy will be developed by the City's Arboriculture Team, and the TAWAP will look to update and refresh the City's Tree Management Principles document to further sustain the climate resilience of our trees and woodlands.

4.10 **Delivering the Action Plan**

4.11 Below each objective the new TAWAP lists several headline actions and a wide range of potential activities through which the objectives will be delivered. Key examples include:

4.12 **Managing Sustainably**

4.13 The Principles of Tree Management document approved in 2019 has provided clear and concise guidance regarding what the Council does in relation to

sustainably managing its tree stock. As a priority, this document will be appraised and refreshed to ensure that it keeps up to date with tree related legislation and tree management approaches.

4.14 Manchester has committed to delivering its first Ash Dieback Strategy to ensure that the potential effects on trees within the City Council's land holding are recognised and appropriately mitigated against.

4.15 **Planting Appropriately**

4.16 Within the context of a growing city which is liveable and climate resilient a key challenge will be to ensure that Manchester continues to have a healthy tree canopy formed by a mixture of trees by type, age, and location. We will encourage broad collaborative partnerships to develop neighbourhood tree action plans to realise the ambition set out in the Growing Manchester's Trees document and associated ward-based capacity posters.

4.17 **Protecting Strongly**

4.18 Tree replacement and compensation measures will be investigated to inform decision making where development of a site may require the removal of existing trees.

4.19 **Involving Creatively**

4.20 We will continue to promote tree related activity, for example by delivering the annual Manchester Festival of Nature at Heaton Park and deliver locally focussed tree related activity, projects and events.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The interest and initiative by a wide group of partners that kick started the original Tree Strategy and Action Plan is still very much alive. The draft TAWAP has been refreshed through engagement with these partners both within and external to the council.

5.2 A public consultation took place between 10th November 2023 - 7th January 2024. 548 completed responses were submitted, with a further 183 incomplete responses. This is compared to 143 completed responses to the same survey undertaken in 2017. There is some consistency across both surveys, for example in that economic priorities were significantly a lower priority to respondents than environmental and social priorities.

5.3 Key findings include:

- 94% of respondents think it's extremely important to have trees as part of the urban environment.
- 90% of respondents would like to see more trees in Manchester.
- Respondents value the presence of trees in parks and public gardens the most (98%).
- Respondents value local trees mostly due to their importance for wildlife.

5.4 The responses received from the public consultation demonstrated support for the actions identified within the Action Plan. There were no actions that received significant amounts of negative feedback. Keen emphasis from the consultation was placed around protecting what we have in terms of the treescape. This would be supported by the suggested refresh of the Principles of Tree Management guidance. The consultation also resoundingly supported the need for more trees in the City, which is reflected in the delivery of the Growing Manchester's Trees capacity study, with tree planting opportunities suggested for all wards.

5.5 From an Our Manchester perspective, the Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan consultation provided an opportunity for local individuals and communities to get involved. The consultation asked respondents to state if they would be interested in volunteering opportunities in tree related activity across the city. 69% of respondents said they would, with a further 19% already actively involved through friends' groups and community initiatives.

5.6 **Monitoring and Review**

5.7 The TAWAP will be updated and reported on annually as part of the wider G&BI Implementation Plan. The delivery and success of the TAWAP will depend on collaborative working by all partners. The TAWAP will also be monitored through the following measures:

- Number of trees planted on known schemes,
- Number of hedge trees planted on known schemes,
- Number of orchards/fruit tree groves planted,
- The number/area of trees/woodland with management plans,
- The percentage of tree canopy cover across Manchester,
- Numbers engaged through events and volunteer opportunities,
- % of Sites of Biological Importance in active conservation management,
- Number of Local Nature Reserves designated.

Note – all of Manchester's Local Nature Reserves and 73% of all Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) have a significant tree and woodland aspect.

5.8 **Funding and Delivery**

5.9 Projects identified within the action plan will either rely on collaborative funding bids being developed or have been identified as part of existing budget provision. In relation to the Council's commitments, project funding could come from prioritising or reallocating existing resource, while external bids to grant schemes such as Government's Urban Tree Challenge Fund will need to be driven locally by operational leads in parks, arboriculture and neighbourhoods teams.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The recommendations appear at the front of the report.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix One – Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan 2024 – 34
Appendix Two – Tree and Woodland Action Plan Public Consultation Summary