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Report of: *Laraine Manley, Executive Director of Place*
Report to: *Leader of the Council*
Date of Decision: *19th March 2020*
Subject: ***Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Working Strategy***

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000		<input type="checkbox"/>		
- Affects 2 or more Wards		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? <i>Environment, Streetscene & Climate Change</i>				
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? <i>Economic & Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny & Policy Committee</i>				
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>703</i>				
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:- <i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>				

Purpose of Report:

This report seeks the Leader's approval of the Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Working Strategy as a supplement to the Sheffield Trees & Woodlands Strategy 2018-22 published by the Council in December 2018.

Recommendations:

The Leader is recommended to approve:

- The new Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Working Strategy as the basis for the approach to the future management of the city's street trees, noting that the intention is to review the working strategy after one year
- The actions in the working strategy as the programme of work for the first year
- The proposal to establish an ongoing Sheffield Street Tree Partnership to drive delivery of the actions in the working strategy and keep it under review
- That **at least** one representative from Sheffield City Council is a member of the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership.

Background Papers:

- *Sheffield Trees & Woodlands Strategy 2018-33*, Sheffield City Council, Dec 2018
- *Joint position statement on mediated talks between Sheffield City Council, Amey and the steering group for Sheffield Tree Action Groups*, Dec 2018
- *Developing the Sheffield Street Tree Strategy*, Cabinet Report, 17th Jul 2019
- *Review of Tree Investigations – Lessons Learned & Actions*, 30th Aug 2019
- *i-Tree Eco Stratified Inventory Report*, Treeconomics, Nov 2019

Lead Officer to complete:		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>Paul Schofield</i>
		Legal: <i>Sarah Bennett</i>
		Equalities: <i>Annemarie Johnston</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	EMT member who approved submission:	<i>Laraine Manley, Executive Director of Place</i>
3	Cabinet Member consulted:	<i>Councillor Mark Jones</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Mick Crofts</i>	Job Title: <i>Director of Place Operational Services</i>
	Date: <i>9th March 2020</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 This report seeks the Leader's approval of the Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Working Strategy. It is a supplement to the Sheffield Trees & Woodlands Strategy 2018-22, approved by Cabinet in December 2018.

1.2 It follows on from the Cabinet report on *Developing the Sheffield Street Tree Strategy* which was approved on 17th July 2019, including the recommendation to:

- Establish a street tree strategy development group
- Appoint Liz Ballard, Chief Executive of Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT), as chair of the strategy development group.

Current position

1.3 Sheffield's trees and woodlands are one of the city's greatest natural assets and contribute to its reputation as one of the greenest cities in the UK. They provide a range of benefits for the people of Sheffield, as well as making urban areas and local neighbourhoods more attractive and healthy places to live and work.

1.4 Trees on the highway form a relatively small, but significantly important, part of Sheffield's tree stock that we want to improve, maintain and sustain for future generations to enjoy. Street trees often grow in tough environments and need to cope with things like traffic pollution, road salt, compacted soils and drought. As such, they are managed differently from the city's woodland trees.

1.5 As the local highway authority, the Council has a duty, under the Highways Act 1980, to maintain the city's highways. This duty is delivered through the Streets Ahead citywide highways maintenance contract between the Council and Amey. The Council's responsibilities under the Highways Act mean that it needs to make sure that the city's roads and pavements are safe and accessible for all members of the public, and that people and property are protected from the dangers of any hazards, e.g. things that might cause damage or fall on to the roads or pavements.

1.6 Street tree management and maintenance form part of the routine Streets Ahead programme of work alongside gritting and snow clearance, street sweeping and litter collection, gully emptying and grass cutting. These services all play an important part in the overall maintenance of the highway network and citizen satisfaction levels.

1.7 At the start of the Streets Ahead contract in 2012, a five year tree management strategy was produced setting out Amey's approach to delivering the street tree management element of the highway maintenance service. This document was published, reviewed each year and updated accordingly. The last five year tree management strategy published was for 2018-2023. No further updates of this document have been published while the new approach to street tree management has been in discussion and development with partners.

Why is there a need for a new street tree strategy?

- 1.8 Before the start of the Streets Ahead programme, unhealthy or damaging street trees were removed without being replaced. Streets Ahead allocated funding for the maintenance of all of the city's street trees so that the Council could prevent the decline of the street tree stock and maintain a healthy street tree age profile across the city.
- 1.9 Over the last seven years there has been high profile public interest in Sheffield's street trees. In some parts of the city, local action groups formed to protest against the approach to felling and replacing street trees as part of the Streets Ahead contract.
- 1.10 In an attempt to resolve the disputes around street trees, in 2018 representatives of the Council, Amey and the steering group for Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG) came together through a series of mediated talks to explore and understand the different positions and find a way forward. As a result of these talks, a joint position statement between the parties was agreed and published in December 2018.
- 1.11 The joint position statement included an agreement between all parties that the approach to the future management of the city's street trees should be set out in an exemplary new street tree strategy, as a supplement to the Sheffield Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-33 approved by Cabinet in December 2018. Development of the strategy would be led by an independent chair.
- 1.12 The intention was that the development of the strategy would take place within six months from December 2018. However, delays in establishing the partnership group meant that work on the strategy began in August 2019.

Partnership approach

- 1.13 Members of the strategy development group include representatives from Amey, the Council (two officer representatives), STAG and The Woodland Trust, as well as tree management and valuation experts. The group is independently chaired by the Chief Executive of Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Streetscene & Climate Change has been regularly briefed during the strategy development process.
- 1.14 The document is being published as a working strategy. The aim in the first year is to engage with a range of stakeholders on the proposed six outcomes and related actions. The strategy will be reviewed after a year and updated as needed in response to the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement work.

Overview of the Street Tree Working Strategy

- 1.15 The working strategy aims to balance safely retaining street trees for longer alongside the Council's responsibility to maintain the safety and integrity of the city's highway network. It sets out an approach to retain street trees where possible by using a flexible combination of arboricultural or highway engineering solutions, enhanced monitoring and maintenance of street trees, appropriate species selection, and decisions on the removal and replacement of trees made on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.16 The working strategy focuses on three themes:
- The value of street trees as natural capital assets
 - Decision process for street tree management and species selection
 - Community involvement in the management and maintenance of street trees.
- 1.17 It sets out the following vision for Sheffield's street trees:
- *We want to see a network of street trees that Sheffield can be proud of: Well-maintained and cared for; resistant to the threats of disease and climate change; and delivering many benefits for people and our environment including:*
 - *Supporting our wildlife*
 - *Enhancing our city*
 - *Cleaning the air that we breathe*
 - *Improving our health and wellbeing*
 - *Reducing the impact of our carbon emissions*
 - *Helping to combat the effects of climate change such as flash floods and rising temperatures.*
- 1.18 It is structured around six outcomes to promote and enhance Sheffield's street trees and their long-term benefits for the public, wildlife and the wider environment:
- i. Sustainably and carefully managing our street trees in accordance with best practice
 - ii. Ensuring our street trees are more resilient through the type and age of trees we plant and also how we manage the current street tree stock
 - iii. Increasing the value and benefits that flow from our street trees
 - iv. Contributing to a more equal distribution of urban forest across the city to promote health & wellbeing
 - v. Increasing street tree canopy cover
 - vi. Involving the wider community in caring for and valuing street trees.

A number of actions set out how these outcomes will be achieved in the short, medium and longer terms.

Value & benefits of street trees

1.19 As an important part of the evidence base for the strategy, the partnership group commissioned an independent inventory report¹ to quantify the benefits, or 'ecosystem services', provided by Sheffield's street trees. The report was prepared by Treeconomics², a social enterprise that works internationally with community groups, research organisations, public bodies, local authorities and businesses, to demonstrate the value of trees. It was produced in November 2019.

Treeconomics independent inventory report – Baseline figures

1.20 The table below summarises the baseline figures (as at November 2019) for the five measures to be used to track changes in the value and benefits that flow from our street trees.

Ecosystem Service	Level of service provided each year (Annual physical flows)	Value of service provided each year (Annual monetary flows)	Present financial value
Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT)			£340,746,149
Tonnes per year of air pollution removal (ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide & particulates by street trees) & financial value of this service	3.0 tonnes	£39,198	£1,175,641
Tonnes per year of carbon sequestered (taken up) by street trees & financial value of this service	302 tonnes	£74,246	£6,049,720
Cubic metres per year of storm water alleviation by street trees & financial value of this service	10,415m	£18,039	£541,032
Total		£131,483	£7,766,393
	Natural capital stock (2019)	Total value (£2019 prices)	
Tonnes of carbon currently stored by street trees and financial value of this service	12,313 tonnes	£3,025,104	

1.21 The values for the ecosystem services provided by street trees were calculated using i-Tree Eco, an open source software system used worldwide to assess and manage urban tree populations. It is used to characterise the tree population, quantify some of the environmental functions performed, and assess the value of the annual benefits provided by these functions.

¹ *i-Tree Eco Stratified Inventory Report*, Treeconomics, November 2019

² <https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/>

1.22 The asset value was derived from Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees or CAVAT. This method for tree valuation allows for appreciation and depreciation, bearing in mind that value of most trees can change over time. Although there are other methods that could have been used for assessing the value of the city's street trees, CAVAT was selected because it is designed specifically for publicly accessible trees, treats trees as assets, considers the social component of trees, and is being used by an increasing number of UK local authorities.

Treeconomics independent inventory report – Other findings

1.23 Ensuring that the tree population is made up of many different species is important as it increases overall resilience in the face of threats, such as pests, diseases and climate change. The report shows that Sheffield's street trees have relatively high diversity with 187 species, the most common being:

- Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Common Lime (*Tilia x europaea*)
- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

1.24 Other information from the report will help manage a sustainable and diverse urban tree population. For example, size class distribution was measured as it is important to help ensure that there are enough young trees to replace older specimens that will eventually be lost through old age or disease. This will ensure canopy cover is not lost over time. Leaf area was also measured as it indicates the surface area of the tree canopy, which is directly related to the amount of benefits, e.g. air pollution reduction, a tree can provide.

1.25 The total replacement cost of all street trees in Sheffield, as calculated by i-Tree Eco, currently stands at just over £41m. This is based on what it would cost to replace a tree like for like, a depreciated cost, clean-up following installation, and maintenance costs. It is a practical guide to what it would cost to replace trees and does not represent a benefit provided by trees.

1.26 At ward level, the report provides a breakdown of leaf area; air pollution removal; carbon storage; carbon sequestration (removal of carbon from the air); avoided rainwater run-off; and replacement costs. Unsurprisingly, the wards with the largest leaf area experience the greatest benefits in terms of air pollution removal, carbon storage and sequestration, and avoided rainwater run-off.

1.27 The information about the benefits and value of street trees will enable realistic cost-benefit analyses to be made that account for the value of the benefits provided by street trees, and the arboricultural or engineering solutions available to try to retain them. It also will underpin better choices about what species to plant in which areas, in line with the principle of the right tree in the right place.

Proposal for a Sheffield Street Tree Partnership

- 1.28 A key proposal is to establish an ongoing Sheffield Street Tree Partnership. Similar models have been adopted in other places, e.g. Bristol Tree Forum, Swansea Tree Forum, to promote the importance and value of urban trees, encourage community engagement, and better protect existing trees and support new planting.
- 1.29 The current strategy development group, which was established with the specific remit of producing the street tree working strategy, would not necessarily continue as the Sheffield Tree Partnership, although some of the existing partners may remain involved. It is envisaged that the new partnership would include members from a broad range of organisations and communities to bring a diverse representation of views and ideas.
- 1.30 Appendix 4 of the working strategy sets out a draft terms of reference for the proposed partnership with the following purpose:
- To deliver the Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Strategy
 - To work in partnership to contribute and secure skills, resources and funds to deliver the strategy
 - To develop and evolve the strategy over time in response to the needs of the people of Sheffield, and the climate and ecological emergency
 - To encourage and direct donations with reference to the strategy, including funds for tree planting and to support the retention of existing trees.
- 1.31 Given the Council's critical role in highway maintenance, including the management of the city's street trees, it is recommended that **at least** one Council representative is a member of the proposed partnership.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 The proposed outcomes and actions contribute to the following Council priorities:
- *Climate Emergency/Carbon Neutral City* – Improving the city's air quality, reducing the impact of carbon emissions, and helping to protect against the devastating effects of flooding.
 - *Highway Network* – Street trees as natural capital assets with a value, to be assessed alongside the costs of maintaining the safety and integrity of the city's highway network.
 - *Health & Wellbeing* – As well as having an important role to play in helping to reduce the health impacts of carbon emissions and poor air quality, there is growing evidence to support the wider wellbeing benefits of being in close proximity to trees, including reducing stress and improving the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals and communities.

- *An In-Touch Organisation/Customer Service & Access* – The working strategy has emerged from the mediated talks between representatives of Amey, Sheffield City Council and the STAG steering group. These talks enabled work on the strategy to progress through true collaboration, discussion and dialogue, demonstrating the value of listening, being connected and responsive to a range of people, organisations and ideas.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Building on the development of the Joint Position Statement agreed in December 2018, there has been ongoing and substantial engagement with representatives of STAG, The Woodland Trust and Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust through the partnership approach to developing the working strategy.
- 3.2 As the document is published as a working strategy, the aim in the first year is to engage with people from different groups to get their views and understand how they might be affected by any of the proposals in the working strategy. The strategy will be reviewed after a year and the action plan updated in response to the outcomes of this engagement work.

4. RISK ANALYSIS & IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

Equality of opportunity implications

- 4.1 The proposed outcomes and actions in the Sheffield Street Tree Working Strategy set out to balance sustaining and enhancing the benefits of the city's street trees with the need to maintain the integrity and safety of the highway network. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), this will help to protect all members of the public including disabled people, people of different ages, women who are pregnant or people with a new baby, from any hazards presented by street trees.
- 4.2 The equality impact assessment (EIA) will be kept under review during the first year of the strategy, paying particular attention to the equality impacts of the actions in the strategy. The EIA will be updated as required to take account of any potential negative impacts and the mitigations needed to address these.
- 4.3 At this stage, the potential equality impacts are highlighted below:

Health

- Positive impact in terms of the role street trees can play in helping to reduce the negative health implications of carbon emissions and poor air quality.
- Positive impact in terms of the presence of street trees in urban nature, particularly where people live, and the positive impact on mental wellbeing.

- Negative impact in terms of potential ‘canyon’ effect that can be created by dense avenues of street trees leading to an increase in particulate matter concentrations and poorer air quality.

Age

- Positive impact in terms of balancing the benefits of the city’s street trees with the need to maintain the safety of the highway to protect people of different ages from any hazards presented by street trees.

Disability

- Positive impact in terms of balancing the benefits of the city’s street trees with the need to maintain the safety of the highway to protect disabled people or people with long-term health conditions from any hazards presented by street trees.

Pregnancy/Maternity

- Positive impact in terms of balancing the benefits of the city’s street trees with the need to maintain the safety of the highway to protect women who are pregnant or people with a new baby from any hazards presented by street trees.

Race

- Positive impact in terms of the presence of street trees and better mental and physical health for BAME people living in different parts of the city, including those living in areas that are the most deprived.

Poverty & Financial Inclusion

- Positive impact in terms of the presence of street trees and better mental and physical health for people living in the most deprived parts of the city.

4.4 In terms of the geographical impact across Sheffield, one of the six main outcomes of the working strategy is to contribute to a more equal distribution of urban forest across the city to promote health and wellbeing. This outcome will be supported by work to better understand the current distribution of urban forest to help inform what type of tree to plant where to maximise health and wellbeing benefits.

Financial and commercial implications

4.5 Based on the current proposals in the strategy, it is not envisaged that there will be any significant financial costs or commercial implications for the current Streets Ahead contract.

4.6 However, some of the proposed actions in the strategy are likely to incur modest expenditure and/or require the input of some human resources by the Council and partners, for example:

- Establishment and support for the proposed Sheffield Street Tree Partnership
- Stakeholder and partner engagement activities in year one

- Recalculation of ecosystem benefits using i-Tree Eco every five years so that progress can be monitored
- Some limited engagement of tree management and valuation experts
- Independent accreditation of our approach to street tree management in line with best practice.

4.7 There is an existing budget which could be used to fund modest expenditure.

4.8 The financial and commercial implications will be kept under review as part of the year one activity.

Legal implications

4.9 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The implementation of the working strategy may be subject to further decision-making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the legal implications of any proposal would be fully considered at that time.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Two alternative options are:

- No new street tree strategy
- Maintain and manage the highway network without taking account of the value of the benefits provided by street trees in decisions about whether to retain or replace them.

5.2 Neither of these options would be in line with the commitment set out in the Joint Position Statement agreed between Sheffield City Council, Amey and STAG to develop an exemplary new street tree strategy for Sheffield.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Leader is recommended to approve:

- The new Sheffield Partnership Street Tree Working Strategy as the basis for the approach to the future management of the city's street trees, noting that the intention is to review the working strategy after one year
- The actions in the strategy as the programme of work for the first year
- The proposal to establish an ongoing Sheffield Street Tree Partnership to drive delivery of the actions in the strategy and keep it under review
- That **at least** one representative from Sheffield City Council is a member of the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership.

6.2 The recommendations are made on the basis that:

- This honours the commitment made by the Council, Amey and STAG in the Joint Position Statement and the Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-33
- The working strategy and the actions to deliver it represent a balance between sustaining and enhancing the benefits of the city's street trees, and the need to protect the public, property and other street infrastructure from any hazards presented by street trees
- The information about the benefits and value of street trees will enable realistic cost-benefit analyses to be made that account for the value of the benefits provided by street trees, and the arboricultural or engineering solutions available to try to retain them
- All partners mentioned in the strategy, including the Council, commit to delivering the actions assigned to them.