

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL- TREE SURVEY BUSINESS CASE

Date: 22 October 2026

Purpose of Business Case

Following a review of the Council's tree survey requirements this business case sets out the findings of the research undertaken and options for member consideration. This business case requires a decision regarding the appointment of a suitably qualified contractor to undertake a survey of all Council-owned trees.

The Council as a landowner has a duty to take reasonable and proportionate steps in identifying, assessing and managing foreseeable risks associated with its trees. Whilst it is not possible or expected to eliminate all risks, it assists the Council in taking necessary action in preventing tree failure. It assists the Council in maintaining an appropriate regime for inspecting and managing its trees¹. An updated survey would provide a current assessment of tree condition and support future decisions by providing the Council with an evidence base to assist in risk management and prioritising tree maintenance.

Recommendations

- **APPROVE** the appointment of Place Services (Essex County Council) to undertake a Tree Risk Assessment Survey of Council owned trees at a cost of £3,515 plus VAT, funded from Budget Code 116 (Tree Survey and Management).
- **NOTE** that any recommendations for remedial works arising from the survey will be reported separately to Council for consideration and approval.

Executive Summary

This report seeks approval to appoint a contractor to provide an updated Tree Risk Assessment Survey of trees owned and managed by Chigwell Parish Council. The Council last commissioned a tree survey over four years ago. The survey identified a programme of tree works which was subsequently completed in August 2024. No further survey has been undertaken since that time.

As a landowner, the Council has a responsibility to take reasonable and proportionate steps to manage foreseeable risks associated with its trees². Whilst there is no statutory requirement in specific inspection intervals, councils are expected to maintain inspection arrangements that are appropriate to the nature, location and condition of their trees.

To inform this business case, the Clerk has reviewed previous survey documentation, records of completed works, relevant legislation and recognised tree works guidance.

¹ Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 s.2(2)

² Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 s.1(4)

Quotations from been obtained from three suitably qualified providers and benchmarked arrangements with a neighbouring local council³. This research has informed the options appraisal and recommendation presented within this report.

Three quotations were received ranging from £3,125 to £4,575 excluding VAT. Following an assessment of cost and benchmarking information and recommendation, officers consider that Place Services (Essex County Council) offers the most comprehensive solution, representing the strongest overall balance of quality, assurance and value for money.

Approval is sought for the commissioning of the survey only. Any recommendations arising from the survey, together with the costs of any resulting remedial works needed will be reported separately to Full Council for consideration and approval.

1. Background

Chigwell Parish Council owns and manages a significant number of trees across its open spaces, allotments, cemetery and land. These trees provide important environmental benefits, but as living assets they require ongoing inspection and management to identify and mitigate foreseeable risks⁴.

The Council commissioned a comprehensive arboricultural survey in January 2022. The survey identified a programme of maintenance and safety works. These have since been completed, with the final phase concluding on 9 August 2024.

The proposed survey would cover the Council's trees at the following locations:

- Chigwell Cemetery
- Station Green
- St Mary's Way
- Limes Farm Allotments
- Gravel Lane Allotments
- Brook Rise
- Brook Way
- Barnaby Way
- Chigwell Park Drive
- Parish Council Offices
- And any other locations included within the 2022 survey programme

Professional advice will also be sought regarding the future inclusion of the younger tree stock at Woodland Road within the Council's formal inspection regime.

Given that the previous survey was undertaken over four years ago and the associated programme of works was completed just over two years ago, officers consider that

³ Loughton Town Council, September 2026

⁴ Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 3 (1)(2)

commissioning an updated survey in 2026 represents prudent asset management and will assist the Council in maintaining an up-to-date understanding of the condition of its trees.

2. Research Undertaken

To inform this business case, the Clerk has reviewed the Council's existing tree management arrangements, the findings of the 2022 Tree Survey, records of completed remedial works, relevant legislation and recognised tree guidance⁵. Research was also undertaken into available providers, procurement options and legal requirements for local authorities in England.

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, quotations were obtained from three specialist tree consultants. Benchmarking and recommendation information was also obtained from other town and parish councils, in particular Loughton Town Council who recently commissioned Place Services to undertake their tree survey. Positive feedback was received regarding both the quality of service provided and the standard of reporting.

The following quotations were received and evaluated:

Contractor	Cost Ex.VAT	Summary of Service Offered
Arboricultural Solutions LLP	£4,575	Comprehensive tree survey including tree tagging, condition assessments, site plans, digital reporting and prioritised management recommendations.
Elite Arborists Ltd	£3,125	Full tree survey and visual tree inspection, including GPS mapping, traffic-light prioritisation of works and tree tagging.
Place Services (Essex County Council)	£3,515	Ground-based tree risk assessment survey including visual inspections, mapping, prioritised recommendations and detailed management reporting.

All three providers demonstrated the capability to undertake the survey. Officers assessed submissions against cost, reporting methods, public sector experience, public sector and benchmarking information. Whilst Elite Arborists submitted the lowest-priced quotation, officers consider that Place Services offers the strongest overall balance of cost, quality, assurance and public sector expertise.

3. Options Appraisal

Option	Cost Ex.VAT	Outcome
1, Do Nothing	Nil	Continues reliance on 2022 survey information and provides limited assurance that the Council's tree inspection regime remains current.

⁵ Chigwell Parish Council's Tree Survey, January 2022

Option 2: Commission Arboricultural Solutions LLP	£4,575	Updated survey and management recommendations.
Option 3: Commission Elite Arborists Ltd	£3,125	Updated survey and management recommendations.
Option 4: Commission Place Services	£3,515	Updated survey and management recommendations supported by local authority expertise and detailed reporting.

Having considered the options available, officers recommend Option 4 for the reasons outlined in the quotation evaluation.

4. Financial Considerations

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, three quotations were obtained from suitably qualified specialist tree consultants⁶.

The quotations received were:

- Arboricultural Solutions LLP: £4,575 (excluding VAT)
- Elite Arborists Ltd: £3,125 (excluding VAT)
- Place Services (Essex County Council): £3,515 (excluding VAT)

The recommended quotation is £390 higher than the lowest-priced submission and £1,060 lower than the highest quotation received. The additional cost over the lowest-priced submission is considered proportionate considering recommendations and public sector experience. The approved budget allocation for Tree Survey and Management activities in 2026/27 is £10,000⁷. Approval of the recommended quotation would result in expenditure of £3,515 excluding VAT, leaving a remaining budget provision of approximately £6,485. The proposed expenditure can be met from the existing approved budget and no supplementary budget allocation or virement is needed.

5. Next Steps

Upon completion of the Tree Risk Assessment Survey, officers will review the findings and prepare a further report setting out any recommended maintenance, safety mitigation required through tree works, together with associated costs and proposed delivery timescales. Where recommended works require procurement in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, the appropriate quotation or tender process will be undertaken before any contractor is appointed⁸.

Any works identified through the survey will be prioritised according to risk, legislation and immediate safety critical matters will be addressed as a priority. A detailed options appraisal

⁶ s.5.8 Chigwell Parish Council Financial Regulations, 2026

⁷ Tree management minute reference FC208/25 annual budget, 26/27

⁸ S.5.6 Chigwell Parish Council Financial Regulations, 2026

and financial assessment will be presented to Members before any tree works are commissioned.

The survey findings will help members consider how the Council manages its trees in the future. They will also provide useful information to support longer term budgeting, maintenance planning and the management of foreseeable tree related risks.

Subject to the findings of the survey and any recommendations arising from it, members may wish to consider introducing a regular programme of tree inspections. For example, the Council could make provision within future budgets for periodic tree surveys and any resulting works. A planned approach would help ensure the Council's trees are inspected on a regular basis, enabling issues to be identified at an earlier stage and helping to support effective long-term tree management.

6. Conclusion

The Council's previous comprehensive tree survey was undertaken in January 2022, with the resulting programme of remedial works completed in August 2024. Research undertaken by the Clerk supports the commissioning of an updated assessment of the Council's trees to support effective and proportionate management of tree-related risks.

Having considered the available options, quotations received and benchmarking recommendations, officers conclude that Place Services (Essex County Council) represents the most economically advantageous solution and offers the strongest overall balance of quality, assurance and value for money.

Officers therefore recommend that Members approve the appointment of Place Services (Essex County Council) to undertake a Tree Risk Assessment Survey at a cost of £3,515 plus VAT, funded from Budget Code 116 (Tree Survey and Management).

Prepared by:

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Clerk and Proper Officer