

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICER REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ASSETS COMMITTEE
TREE SURVEY REVIEW

Date: 24 September 2026

Purpose

To update Members on the Council's responsibilities as a landowner in relation to tree management, provide an update on the Council's existing tree stock assessment programme, and advise Members of officers' intention to commission an updated arboricultural survey of Council-owned trees.

Background

The Council commissioned a comprehensive arboricultural survey in January 2022 covering Council-owned trees across its open spaces, cemetery, allotments, Parish Office grounds and other landholdings. The survey was undertaken to assess tree condition, identify any risks to public safety and property, and recommend any remedial works required to ensure the Council continued to discharge its duty of care as a landowner.

The resulting programme of tree works was subsequently implemented, with the final phase of approved works completed on 9 August 2024.

Legal Responsibilities

As a landowner, Chigwell Parish Council has a duty to take reasonable steps to manage and maintain trees situated on land under its ownership and control. The Council's obligations arise from its general duty of care, together with its responsibilities under health and safety and occupiers' liability legislation.

The Council is not required to eliminate all potential risks associated with trees. However, it must be able to demonstrate that it has adopted a reasonable and proportionate inspection regime, considered any risks identified and undertaken remedial works where appropriate. The 2022 survey specifically recognised the Council's responsibility to inspect its tree stock and identify works necessary to safeguard residents, visitors, neighbouring properties and highway users.

Maintaining an up-to-date professional assessment of the Council's trees forms an important part of demonstrating compliance with these responsibilities and provides evidence that the Council is actively managing its assets.

Whilst there is no statutory requirement prescribing a fixed interval for tree surveys, local authorities and parish councils are expected to maintain a proportionate inspection regime. The Council's last comprehensive survey was undertaken in January 2022, with the associated remedial works completed in August 2024. Given that the Council's arboricultural consultant recommends review cycles of no more than two years for management

purposes, commissioning a further survey during 2026 would be consistent with good arboricultural practice and would assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with its ongoing duty of care responsibilities.

Current Position

Trees are dynamic living assets whose condition can change over time because of age, disease, storm damage, environmental conditions and public use. Consequently, tree surveys should not be viewed as a one-off exercise but as part of an ongoing programme of inspection, risk management and asset maintenance.

Officers have recently sought indicative quotations for an updated arboricultural survey. One quotation received from Arboricultural Solutions LLP, who undertook the Council's previous survey, totals £4,575 plus VAT for a comprehensive reassessment of Council-owned sites.

Whilst there is no statutory requirement prescribing a fixed interval for tree surveys, local authorities and parish councils are expected to maintain a proportionate and reasonable inspection regime as part of their duty of care as landowners. The Council's last comprehensive tree survey was undertaken in January 2022, with the associated programme of remedial works completed in August 2024.

Given the passage of time since the original survey, the completion of the previous programme of works, and the dynamic nature of tree management, officers consider that 2026 is an appropriate time to undertake a further review of the Council's tree stock. An updated survey will assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with its ongoing duty of care responsibilities, identifying any emerging risks, and ensuring future maintenance works can be planned and prioritised appropriately.

Proposed Survey Locations

The proposed survey would review the principal sites previously assessed by the Council's arboricultural consultant, namely:

- St Mary's Way
- Manor Road Junction with Tomswood Road
- Lee Grove Junction with Chigwell Rise
- Parish Council Offices, Hainault Road
- Chigwell Station Green
- Courtland Drive
- Brook Way / Barnaby Way
- Brook Rise
- Manor Road Junction with Romford Road / Gravel Lane
- Romford Road adjacent to All Saints Church
- Manor Road Junction with Hainault Road
- Chigwell Park Drive
- Chigwell Cemetery

- Limes Farm Allotments
- Gravel Lane Allotments

These locations formed part of the original January 2022 survey and contain the majority of the Council's established tree stock.

Members should note that Woodland Road was not included within the 2022 survey. Officers understand that the trees at this location are relatively young, being approximately six to seven years old and not yet mature specimens. Advice will therefore be sought from the appointed arboricultural consultant as to whether these trees should be included within the formal inspection programme at this stage or whether routine monitoring would be sufficient until they become more established.

Procurement Position

Members are advised that the Council is not currently undertaking a tender process.

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, officers are obtaining three quotations for the provision of a professional tree survey. The commissioning of the survey is considered a routine asset management and compliance activity and forms part of the Council's ongoing duty of care responsibilities.

Should the survey identify remedial works requiring procurement beyond delegated limits or within the scope of the Council's tendering requirements, a separate report will be brought forward at the appropriate time setting out the proposed procurement route and any associated financial implications.

Financial Implications

Provision exists within the approved budget for routine asset inspections and tree management activities. The commissioning of an updated tree survey is therefore considered a routine operational requirement rather than a new project. Any tree works identified as a result of the survey will be subject to separate assessment, costing and, where appropriate, reported to Members for consideration and approval. Provision for tree maintenance is held under Cost Code 116, for which Full Council has approved a budget allocation of £10,000.

Conclusion

The Council's previous tree survey was undertaken in January 2022 and the subsequent programme of recommended works concluded in August 2024. As part of the Council's ongoing duty of care and asset management responsibilities, officers consider it prudent to commission an updated arboricultural survey during 2026.

The proposed survey will provide Members with an up-to-date assessment of the Council's tree stock, identify any emerging risks, prioritise future maintenance requirements and assist the Council in continuing to manage its trees in a safe, proportionate and legally compliant manner.

This report is submitted for information only. No decision is required at this stage.

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