

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

CONTENT

Version Control	3
Introduction	4
Tree Zones	5
'Frequent Access Zones'	5
'Secondary Zones'	5
Inspection Programmes	6
Periodic inspections	6
Non-Scheduled Inspections	7
Inspection Criteria	7
Risk Assessments	8
Reporting process	9
Records	10
Review & Monitoring	10
Zone Plans	12

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Version Control

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28/08/2011	0.1	1 st Draft	M Richardson
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YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

This Policy is to ensure safety for members of the public and employees and to maintain a rural and ecological village. Yaxley Parish Council (the Council) is striving to provide a sustainable Tree Management Plan without placing detriment on any individuals. The document is produced and takes into account the instructions issued by various Authorities and Agencies and where necessary have included the direct actions arising from such instructions.

It is also the aim of this Policy to provide information and guidance as to a set procedure involving a day-to-day tree management plan, frequent and less frequent tree inspection programmes, individual responsibilities and a robust reporting and action procedure.

This Policy also places a responsibility on the Council to maintain Tree Assessments, a tree inspection register, a risk assessment and a log of all major tree work undertaken by either Council employees or specialist contractors. There is also a responsibility for the Council to maintain a robust reporting system that is easily accessed by the public and a recording system that allows an audit trail.

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TREE ZONES

To enable tree inspections and work to be prioritised, planned and monitored two Zones have been established to identify specific areas under the control of the Council. The classification of specific areas within the zones must be amended should there be a change in condition of use.

'Frequent Access Zones'

The 'Zones' are areas where members of the public or Council employees have frequent access to trees i.e. those which are closely approached by people every day. Frequent Access Zones must be given priority for inspections and tree maintenance work. Plans of the 'Zones' have been produced by an arboricultural specialist and are included in appendix A.

The Frequent Access Zones that are recognised as Council responsibility are:

- Middletons Road Recreation Field;
- The Cemeteries;
- Blenheim Way
- St Peters Church Yard/Pound Lane
- Land lying to the North of Seaton Close known as Green Park

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'Secondary Zones'

These are areas where trees are not subject to frequent access and have been identified as:

- Apple Tree/Mere View as highlighted on map CB4453
- Kingfisher Close
- Laurel Close
- Lee Road
- Foxglove Close
- Queens Park

NB/ Gault Park and the field off Church Street/Waterslade Road are leased from the Parish Council and the responsibility of the trees is with the leaseholder.

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INSPECTION PROGRAMME

To enable the Council to maintain the trees within their remit to a safe standard it is essential that both periodic and non-scheduled inspections are carried out. It must be recognised that certain inspections can only be undertaken by a specialist contractor. This does not, however, remove any responsibility placed on individual Council employees, Council Members or members of the public using Council facilities. The inspection programme forms the basis on time scales although it must be accepted that there may be occasions when inspection must be undertaken outside of these periods.

All inspections must be prioritised through Risk Assessment, specialist advice received and in accordance with the 'Zone' classification.

It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure contact details are maintained of competent tree contractors/technicians and specialist advisors. Before any contractors are placed on a contact list they must produce evidence of their qualifications. The national standard for tree surgery work is defined in British Standard 3998: 2010 'Recommendations for Tree Work'. This standard should be the basic standard followed by all tree work contractors.

Periodic Inspections

Following advice received from an arboricultural specialist the following inspection periods have been agreed, together with the level of competency required by individuals carrying out the inspections.

Yearly Inspection	These should be carried out by a technician with appropriate training and knowledge to assess the condition of trees.
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YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

3 yearly Inspection	These should be carried out by a qualified arboricultural specialist.
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The yearly inspection should assess any work that is required to maintain the trees to a safe standard. Any identified work should be discussed with the Clerk and if necessary a trained arboriculturalist brought in to give a second opinion. Any minor work will be carried out in house by the Grounds Team, in circumstances where the work can not be undertaken in house then the work will be undertaken by qualified tree surgeons.

The 3 yearly inspection will include an assessment of tree hazards including estimating the risk which a tree or group of trees poses to persons or property. This will involve a visual inspection for defects and contributory site factors, and if necessary a detailed investigation of suspected defects which may involve the use of a resistograph. Re-inspections may be necessary to monitor for any signs of decline.

Non-Scheduled Inspections

There will be occasions where inspections must be conducted outside of the periodic Schedule. These inspections should be triggered:

- Following high winds/gales**;
- During drought periods**;
- Following extended heavy rainfalls**;
- Recognised subsidence;
- Following fires that either directly or indirectly involve a tree;
- Following work undertaken by contractors;
- When work is undertaken by other utilities in close proximity of trees (i.e. drainage work, underground cable laying, overhead cable works etc.)

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

- Immediately on receipt of a report of damaged or dangerous trees.

*** identifying droughts and gales is far from straightforward and information from the MET office, Environment Agency and the UK Power Networks will be considered as part of the assessment to undertake an inspection.*

This list is not exhaustive and it is the responsibility of Council Members and employees to identify any other triggers that will result in an inspection being required.

Non-scheduled inspections can be undertaken by Council Members or employees and where there is uncertainty as to the safety of any tree a specialist or technician must be consulted.

INSPECTION CRITERIA

Acceptable and effective tree inspection procedures should ensure that changes in tree condition are noted and acted upon before the tree becomes hazardous and injury to persons or damage to property occurs. The Councils tree inspection procedures take into account the following criteria:

- Species – Some species are more prone to develop physiological defects;
- Age of Tree – A tree is more likely to develop structural defects during the latter stages of its life;
- Condition – Trees should be inspected more regularly if structural defects have been noted which increase the risk of failure in extreme weather;
- Location – Surrounding features should be noted which would become a target if the tree collapsed or fell;
- Level of access – ‘Frequent Access Zones’ will take a priority over ‘Secondary Zones’;
- Timing – Trees are best inspected when in full leaf, from mid-summer through to autumn, before leaf fall. However, if the scale of the operation dictates, inspections should continue throughout the year. Risk Assessment review periods have been programmed for August to take this into account;

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GENERAL TREE ASSESSMENT

General Tree Assessments must be produced every 3 years by a trained and qualified arboriculturalist. The information should be presented in an easy to read manner and must describe the condition of the tree in detail and any work/action required. All trees will be mapped for ease of reference. These assessments will then be used to programme work and a base for annual tree inspections by the Grounds Team or when there is a report of tree damage. An 'Action Plan' will also be maintained and updated as recommendations/tasks are completed.

The assessments and associated maps are kept electronically and are available at all times.

This Policy will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis once reviewed, the Version Control must be updated at the front of this Policy.

Yaxley Parish Council has a duty of care to ensure the safety of its Parishioners on its land. This duty extends to notifying the tree owner, if one can be ascertained, where privately owned trees are assessed as a hazard to those using Council facilities or to Council property. Having ascertained a potentially hazardous tree, appropriate steps will be taken to contact the tree owner, if possible, to make the area safe. The tree owner will be urged to carry out the work as soon as possible to remove the hazard.

REPORTING PROCESS

Systems are in place to allow damaged or dangerous trees to be reported and to ensure that any reports are actioned and recorded. Yaxley Parish Council has recognised that reports are likely to be received from members of the public, Council employees, Council members, groups using Council facilities or the Police.

It is envisaged that the Clerk will normally be the first point of contact for persons making a report. The Clerks first priority should be to identify the tree owner. Where the Clerk considers that immediate action is required to remove a hazard there will not be a need to first contact the Chair or Vice-Chair prior to work being sanctioned.,

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

The following reporting scheme must be maintained:

Members of the public (Council office hours)

During office hours members of the public may report concerns to the Council Office. The details will be recorded in a tree management action log by the Clerk who will ensure that the tree reported is inspected by an appropriate person. This may initially be a Council groundsman but if considered this will not be appropriate a technician should be contacted.

Members of the public (outside Council office hours)

A telephone number is available with a facility to record any messages. For emergency contacts a number will be supplied on the voice mail to allow contact with either the Clerk or a nominated person. The person receiving the report will arrange for an inspection to take place by either a Council employee or nominated specialist or technician.

Council Employees and Members

Council employees will report any concerns directly to the Clerk. If unavailable, the trained technician of the workforce team will be contacted who will then arrange for an inspection to be undertaken. If a report is made directly to a Council employee they will direct the reporting person to the Clerk.

Groups using Council facilities

Concerns should be reported using the same process as that for members of the public

The Police

From time to time it is expected that reports from the public will be made directly to the Police. The local Police station maintains a contact number for the Council.

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

To enable members of the public to be aware of the reporting process details will be placed:

- On the Council website;
- On the Council's Facebook page ;
- On Council notice boards;

RECORDS

Records must be kept of all activities involving tree management. A log will be kept by the Clerk and will include:

- Dangerous/damaged tree reports and outcomes/actions;
- Details of all tree works undertaken by contractors and any major work undertaken by the Grounds Team;
- An Action Log of reports received. ;

Where possible trees will be numbered and a record of these numbers kept with the tree log to help with identification.

REVIEW AND MONITORING

The Tree Management Policy will be regularly monitored and updated by the Policy and Procedure Working Group to ensure that the objectives of the Policy are met.

Electronic copies of the maps are kept on file in the office and are available on request.