



London Borough of Merton

Report and Recommendations arising from the
Scrutiny Review on Trees

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

March 2012

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Acknowledgements

The task group would like to thank all the officers and external witnesses who have taken the time to provide written and verbal information and discussed ideas with us. We are particularly grateful to all the people who responded to the questionnaire on trees.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 4 of this report.

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Foreword by the Review Chair

When I was asked to Chair a task group on the subject of trees in Merton, I imagined that our conclusions would be fairly straight forward. I expected that we would find that trees were a good thing and that we wanted more of them! Whilst both of these statements are true, we found that there is much more to discover about Merton's trees. Chairing the task group has been a fantastic opportunity to learn more about some of our greatest assets. In the development of the report, it has been important to understand the process of how and where our trees are planted and maintained by the Council. They heard about some of the challenges involved in making sure there are protected and given the chance to grow to maturity. The task group was even given a guided tour of Merton's most notable green spaces and trees!

We have been impressed by how well Merton Council's staff manage the various aspects of arboriculture, especially given that they do not have an excess of financial resource available to them. However, as a council we should always be looking at ways in which we can improve what we do and where possible to drive efficiencies. This report highlights areas in which changes could be made and offers solutions. We will be recommending that the Cabinet Member for the Environment implements the proposed policies, for the benefit of the Council, our trees, the environment and our residents who enjoy them.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to the process but particular thanks should go to the following people. My thanks to Dave Lofthouse, Arboricultural Manager; Jane Plant, Volunteer Co-ordinator of the Tree Warden Group Merton; Doug Napier, Leisure and Culture Greenspaces Manager; Mario Lecordier, Traffic and Highways Services Manager; Neil Milligan, Development Control Manager. I'd also like to thank my fellow councillors who sat as members of the task group – Cllr Russell Makin and Cllr Judy Saunders. Lastly, I'd like to give special thanks to Hilary Gullen, Scrutiny Officer at Merton Council, for her very hard work in driving the report forward, and for her patience and grace whilst working with us!

Councillor Miles Windsor
Chairman, Trees Task Group

Executive Summary

The task group was set up in order to undertake a review of how the council manages the planting and maintenance of trees in the borough, with a view to improving procedures already in place.

The report is evidence-based, drawing on a range of written and oral evidence.

Eighty-nine questionnaires were completed by local residents, showing their particular concerns regarding trees in the borough. The results of this survey can be found at appendix 2.

The task group recognises the benefits that trees can bring to help with providing shade, intercepting rainfall run off to alleviate flood risks, absorbing carbon and pollutants, and in making Merton a greener place to live, work and learn. There are also benefits to health and wellbeing, for example for asthma sufferers, as discussed at the meeting in December.

The Merton Climate Change Group is looking at sustainable urban drainage systems including looking at the role trees can play in this. The Flood and Water Management Act of 2010 will bring with it a requirement for boroughs to adopt Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

The task group has made 6 recommendations aimed at improving our street scene and borough in general. These fall into five main themes; development of a strategy, improved data collection and analysis, improved planning and enforcement procedures, public engagement, accessibility of information (using online provision), and financing planting and maintenance. The strategy should include reference to trying to extend the life of any planting by implementing best practice.

The recommendations are listed in full overleaf.

List of Task Group Recommendations:

	Responsible Decision Making Body
Recommendation 1 (para 57)	
That Cabinet lead on the development of a Tree Strategy for the Council. The Strategy should be aligned to the Borough's development aims, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy etc and Duty of Care considerations - as set out in paragraph 57.	Cabinet
Recommendation 2 (para 61)	
That existing data collection and analysis should be established and strengthened - as set out in paragraph 61.	Cabinet
Recommendation 3 (para 63)	
That Planning and Enforcement procedures are clarified and more effectively enforced – as set out in paragraph 63.	Cabinet
Recommendation 4 (para 64)	
That the local community are encouraged to become involved in caring for the Borough's trees – as set out in paragraph 64.	Cabinet
Recommendation 5 (para 65)	
That accessible information is provided- as set out in paragraph 65.	Cabinet
Recommendation 6 (para 67)	
That Cabinet review how tree planting and maintenance is financed – as set out in paragraph 67.	Cabinet

Report of the Trees Task Group

Introduction

Purpose

1. At the Scrutiny Topic Selection Evening in May 2011, those members interested or involved in the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussed possible topics for review that had been suggested by members of the community, councillors and officers. At the evening, tree management was noted to be of significant public interest, with some tree removal applications being particularly controversial. Members felt that how trees are managed with regard to disease/safety, planting and pollarding¹ (and whether they are on private land or council owned land) could be looked at in committee or by a task group review.
2. The Council's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting on 26th May 2011, agreed to establish a task group review on 'Trees'. At this meeting the following members were appointed to the task group: Cllr Windsor, Cllr Nelles, Cllr Saunders and Cllr Makin. Cllr Windsor was unanimously elected Chairman.
3. At the Panel meeting on 6th September, discussion took place and terms of reference were agreed as follows:
 - To investigate current practice with tree maintenance and planting, environmental issues and residents' views
 - To examine good practice in other boroughs
 - To make recommendations for improvement
4. Other lines of enquiry identified were:
 - Maintenance – pruning, protection during highway works and mowing/tree replacement/record keeping
 - Enforcement of Tree Protection Orders and other legislation relating to trees
 - Resources available/finance/sponsorship
 - Environmental issues
 - Residents' views
 - Housing development
 - Trees on private land

¹Pollarding: The removal of the entire branching structure, or crown, of a tree. Usually a cyclical operation, started at a young age and resulting in a permanently juvenile crown form and size. In a modern city this is done for several reasons, such as restricted space, not to produce animal fodder or small wood as in the past.

What the Task Group Did:

5. The Task Group held six meetings at which a wide range of evidence was considered including:
 - Discussion of the review at community forum meetings
 - Discussion with Traffic and Highways officers
 - Verbal and written evidence from Planning officers
 - Statistics and verbal evidence from the Arboricultural Manager
 - A visit to see examples of good and less good planting in the borough
 - Circulated a questionnaire on trees widely within the borough
 - Arranged an information evening on trees in February 2012, to further engage with the public
6. The Task Group was publicised at all five community forums, to introduce the review and ask for comments from residents. The Communications Team set up Twitter and Facebook items, coverage in the Local Guardian and an item in the spring edition of My Merton on Scrutiny Task Groups in general.
7. We were very pleased to have a member of the public involved in our work and welcomed Jane Plant, Tree Warden, to the task group meetings. During the course of the year, the task group was delighted to hear that Jane had been the fitting winner of the Forestry Commission RE-LEAF Acorn Award for being the person recognised as making a considerable contribution to London's trees and woodlands.
8. We heard about concerns relating to tree planting agreements, for example with new developments, and who should carry responsibility for future maintenance of the trees.
9. A question was also raised about whether a historical perspective was considered and whether 'non-tree' areas (for example conservation areas) would be protected. The Chair of the task group confirmed that these issues would be considered.
10. The Cabinet Member highlighted how the council identifies itself as a green borough regarding canopy cover. One issue would be how to maintain it for the future, for example, via S106 contributions. It was acknowledged that the Community Infrastructure Levy needed to be investigated to see how this could support parks and open spaces.
11. We also heard from the Arboricultural Manager about a computer software project he was working on to establish current canopy cover and to form the evidence base for any future policy or strategies.

12. We heard from the Traffic and Highways Services Manager had been looking at a pilot programme which empowered residents to take responsibility for an area of land and the planting on it. We felt that the community could be engaged in planting and maintenance of trees and that this could be encouraged. Jane Plant, Tree Warden, had been co-opted to the task group and kindly agreed to attend the London Tree Officers' Association event on 9th September on behalf of the task group. At the event the speaker explained how well documented research showed that run-off after rainfall could be treated without recourse to costly storage and treatment systems by trees, which benefited from better irrigation thereby extending their life expectancy. However, this was principally implemented only as part of significant developments.
13. We also heard from Neil Milligan, Development Control Manager, about the work of his department in regard to trees and planning.
14. We heard about the work of Merton's Tree Wardens, enthusiasts who give their time and effort free and who are supported in this by the Greenspaces Team at the Council. Tree Wardens gather information, provide local liaison, protect trees and work on practical projects throughout the borough. They also work with friends' of parks groups. Merton has 22 Tree Wardens, about half of whom are active.
15. We received evidence at the subsequent meetings from officers and external witnesses.
16. We visited sites in the borough that were acknowledged as being examples of good and poor planting. Notes of the visit are available at appendix 3.
17. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full at the front of this document.

Consultation:

A questionnaire was widely circulated via community forum meetings, residents' associations and online, seeking views on planting, maintenance and problems relating to trees.

18. We had responses from 89 local residents, the analysis of these is set out in full in appendix 1.
19. The most common postcode area for respondents was SW19 (41), with 22 from SW20.
20. Opinion was divided on whether the number of trees in their area was about right with 44 respondents agreeing and 42 saying there were too few. Three respondents felt there were too many trees.
21. 53 respondents, when asked, agreed there were problems relating to trees in their area. These included problems with watering, vandalism and planting position. Several respondents noted fruit dropping on walkways as a concern.
22. We were really pleased to see that 41 respondents expressed an interest in

joining in activities to plant, preserve and maintain trees. An information event was planned in February to start to channel this interest into practical activity.

23. Respondents were very keen to give possible locations for trees, with many different areas of the borough given as potential planting sites. Merton's stations and Wimbledon town centre were some mentioned and some comments asked that dead trees were replaced.
24. Problems noted by residents included vandalism, tree damage by dogs, lack of watering and maintenance, diseases (horse chestnut trees).
25. Additional comments included lack of information to residents about trees, and the need to encourage residents to take responsibility for looking after local trees.

The Current Situation and Statutory Legislation

26. The planting and maintenance of trees is funded from yearly capital and revenue allocations. Tree planting is predominantly funded from a capital budget whereas all maintenance activities are funded through the Grounds Maintenance Contract from the revenue budget.
27. An increase in capital funding (Mayor of London funding and Merton capital funding) over the last three years has resulted in approximately 150 new trees yearly being planted on the public highway. While this increase in investment is welcomed there is no corresponding increase in the revenue funded element to allow effective maintenance of both the existing and new tree stock. The shortfall in the Ground Maintenance budget is increasing and the current funding regime must be reviewed to take into account the impact of planting new trees on the Council's ability to maintain them in the future.

28. Management of Tree Hazard and Risk

This note provides a brief review of the current position in England, on the management of tree hazards and risk, and the implications for management. The emerging situation is that the courts are considering the size of the tree stock and the skills and resources that are available to a defendant, with the householder at one end of the spectrum and a Local Planning Authority at the other, with varying sizes of landholder in between.

29. The principal of proportionality is now established in case law where the standard of duty of care increases with the size of landholding.

30. Statutory legislation

There are currently three principal instruments of statutory legislation that relate specifically to the management of tree hazards and risk within the London Borough of Merton:

Occupiers Liability Act 1957/84
Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
Highways Act 1980

31. Non-statutory guidance

The Highways Agency Network Maintenance Manual (2007), at paragraph 3.13.3 within the section entitled 'Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows', this document

states that any third party tree within falling distance of the highway is to be classified as a highway tree. Under section 154 of the Highway Act highway managers are empowered to order a third party to carry out works to abate risks or to carry out works and recharge the cost to the landowner. A material departure from this duty may lead to an attachment of liability; there is of course an implication for tree inspections here beyond just local authority/highway authority trees.

32. Case law

A significant amount of case law is now available with judgements forming the emerging position on managing tree related hazards in England. The body of case law goes back a long time. Four earlier cases where trees had not been inspected resulting in the defendant being found liable are:

- i) *Kent v Marquis of Bristol (1940), unreported*
- ii) *Brown v Harrison (1947) E.G. June 28 1947*
- iii) *Lane v Tredegar Estate Trustees (1954) E.G. November 27 1954*
- iv) *Quinn v Scott [1965] 1 W.L.R. 1004*

Recent case law

33. Two recent tree related failure cases where the defendant was found liable are:

- i) *Chapman v Barking & Dagenham LBC [1997] 2 E.G.L.R. 141; [1997] 48 E.G. 154*

It was held that a local authority was liable for serious injuries caused to a member of the public due to a falling branch, in that:

“The defendant council did not at any relevant time appreciate the distinction between making lists of trees and routine tree maintenance, and systematic expert inspection as often as would reasonably be required” (p.145G of the Judgement)

- ii) *Poll v Bartholomew and Bartholomew [2006] EWHC*
- iii) The preliminary judgement in this case held that the tree in question had not been inspected by a suitably competent inspector, thereby allowing a significant structural defect to go undiscovered.

34. Conversely there have been two recent cases where the defendant was held not liable.

- i) *Micklewright v Surrey County Council [2010]*

The county council was found to have breached its statutory duty to inspect the tree, however, it was determined that had an inspection taken place the defect could not have been found.

- ii) *Selwyn-Smith v Gompells [2009]*

The case reviewed the principal of proportionality. It was held that the householder defendant was not expected to have technical knowledge that would lead them to suspect the tree was dangerous. The implications for a landholder at the other end of the spectrum, such as a local authority, is obvious.

35. Implications of case law

The Health and Safety Executive's, Sector Information Minute (2007), 'Management of the risk from falling trees' states: *For trees in a frequently visited zone, a system for periodic, proactive checks is appropriate.* It clarifies with as a rough guide, *trees subject to frequent public access are those that are clearly approached by many people everyday.* The range of such sites within the London Borough of Merton are numerous and will include sites such as schools, parks, streets, car parks, playgrounds etc.

36. To discharge the Duty of Care obligations conferred upon it, the London Borough of Merton, as a landholder subject to the highest standard of duty, must demonstrate adherence to a proactive regime of tree inspections, by competent, appropriately trained and qualified persons, with any necessary works carried out in equally appropriate timescales.
37. The nature of what is done can acceptably vary according to the circumstances, with a higher burden clearly placed on local authorities than on most private individuals. Where there is significant public access, formal tree inspection by trained specialists is warranted by the courts, as is generally considered to be the case by the arboricultural profession.

Duties to protect and enhance the natural environment and/by protection of trees.

38. There are a wide range of Acts, Regulations and Directives, pertinent to the provision and protection of trees in their own right and as elements of green infrastructure with a role in climate change policy and bio-diversity and habitat protection and enhancement, including:
39. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 - which gives Local Authorities the duty to protect and enhance bio-diversity.
40. The Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
41. The Habitat Regulations 2007 and 2010 which put strict control on some operations on and around trees in the interests of a number of protected species and place the onus of best practice upon Local Authority tree specialists.
42. Hedgerow Regulations 1997
43. The Climate Change Act 2008, targets within which are unfeasible without consideration of the role of trees in sequestration of carbon (mitigation) and, more locally, in improving air quality and microclimate (adaptation).
44. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Trees and Planning Regulations 1999 are the main tools providing for protection of trees as public amenity (via Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Areas.
45. We heard from the Leisure and Culture Greenspaces Manager and the Traffic and Highway Services Manager that keeping Merton's tree stock replenished and maintained is a mammoth undertaking; this currently falls between two council

departments depending on where the trees are situated. Traffic and Highway Services have responsibility for trees on public highways, while Leisure and Culture Greenspaces have responsibility for trees in parks and greenspaces. It takes dedication and a considerable amount of hard work to maintain the tree stock to the standards expected. There are currently two part-time tree officers in street management, one full-time and one part-time in planning and two full-time in Greenspaces. We were informed that there was no overall strategy or policy for trees in the borough, and that this could be a beneficial outcome from the review.

46. Due to budget constraints, the Traffic and Highways current approach was reactive rather than proactive, with routine maintenance being carried out by the Council's contractor. Response to calls from the public or Councillor requests are subject to available resources. However, more proactive work has always been carried out in respect to pollarding, 3000 trees being pollarded in the current year (500 more than the previous year). A three year pro-active maintenance regime is also currently being developed to ensure that every street tree receives maintenance on a cyclical 3 year basis.
47. There are 20,000 trees in Merton parks, not counting our woodland areas, estimated at present to be around 100 hectares, and a further 3,000 – 4,000 in schools, with a high input needed. Communication between the teams and consistency of approach could be streamlined with a comprehensive strategy.
48. The cost of planting a tree in a new position in the Highway is £550. A similar planting in Parks is around £250.
49. Jane Plant, Tree Warden identified 49, 50 and 51, as problems in the borough:
50. We heard that some of the main problems identified in street tree management were inadequate record keeping, with little or no analysis of data, inadequate specification of planting and preparation of tree pits, not enough supervision of contractors, LBM only replaces failed trees, too many species used in each location, leading to a spotty appearance and requirement for varied management, and little analysis of the issues.
51. The problems identified in planning included: during assessment of applications, BS5837 (Trees in Relation to Construction) is not always applied rigorously. In all instances, LBM should require a full tree survey and not register an application until it is supplied which would make the job of assessing an application easier, all applications with trees on or surrounding the site should be referred by the case officers to the tree officers
52. The problems identified in parks included: planting without a plan, lack of simple management plan for staff and friends' groups to follow, some parks suffering from a monoculture of self-seeded sycamore.
53. We were informed by the Arboricultural Manager about the importance of trees in mitigating the effects of climate change by providing shade and cooling to built up areas (combating the urban heat island effect²), how they assist in controlling

² In cities, the density of tarmac, glass and concrete, which retain heat and human activity heat sources from vehicles, buildings, etc, mean that city areas can be far warmer than surrounding rural areas. These

storm water runoff during extreme weather conditions, and how trees are able to lock up (sequester) carbon. New research by the University of Kent (Journal of Applied Ecology vol 48, 1-125) has shown the beneficial impact of the urban forest is better than previously thought. The researchers studied the Urban Forest of the City of Leicester, population 289,700 area 73.32 km² (Merton has a population of 202,000+, area 37.61km²).

54. Before this it has been assumed that urban forests held relatively little carbon. This research suggests that the vegetation in Leicester contains 230,000 tonnes of carbon - ten times the previous estimate. What is as significant is that 97% of this is held by the Forest of Leicester and its large trees.
55. The researcher, Zoe Davies was quoted ' local authorities have plenty of scope. Most of the publicly owned or managed land across Leicester is grassland. If just ten percent were trees the carbon poll across the city could be increased by 12%'.
56. We don't have precise comparisons for Merton but we know from our own recent studies that almost half of the land cover in the borough is vegetation of some sort but that less than half of this is currently made up of trees. It seems that the Forest of Merton has a role to play right across climate change strategies. Greenspaces Arboriculture has just completed a research project on the extent of Merton's Urban Forest and Green Infrastructure and can now advise that the borough's individual tree cover is 14.5% Woodland covers a further 9.46% for a cumulative total of 23.91% tree canopy cover. The Standard Error is +/- 0.60% Other Vegetation in Merton covers a further 25.54%. Approximately one third of the above is likely to be under Merton's direct control.

Please see table below for comparison of Merton against three other London boroughs of similar area:

Comparable data – London Boroughs of similar area:

	Borough A (2009/2010)	Borough B (2009/2010)	Borough C (2009/2010)	Merton (2010/2011)
Please indicate the size of your authority in hectares. (These boroughs have been chosen as being in comparable size to Merton).	3778	3725	3800	3761
Please indicate the human population of your authority.	163944	180000	250000	202000
If your authority has a tree strategy when does it expire?	Planning a strategy	2013	No strategy	Under consideration
Which trees are your arboricultural officers/ tree team responsible for in your local authority [E.g. street trees, trees in parks, trees in schools/ education sites, trees on housing land, protected trees on private land)	All LA owned trees, education and administering TPOs and development. (Highways / Parks / Schools / Cemeteries / Housing /	Highways street trees, trees in parks, trees in schools/ education sites, trees on housing land, Social services, protected trees on private land	All trees in Council ownership	Merton teams responsible for all council owned trees
When is your term contract due to complete?	NA	2011	2013	2013 with possible two year extension.
Do you have a tree warden scheme?	Yes	No	No	Yes
How many administrative staff work exclusively for your specialist tree officers?	0	0	0	0
How many specialist tree officers work in your authority?	1	3	2	3.5
How do you store tree survey data?	Asset management system	Electronic database	Asset management system	Electronic database and asset management system
What tree database do you use?	Confirm	ARBORtrack	Confirm	Confirm and EZYTREEV
How many hectares of council woodland is there in your authority?	9	70	17	approx 100
What is your authority's annual budget for woodland maintenance works?	8000	NA	6000	40,000combined with below

	Borough A (2009/2010)	Borough B (2009/2010)	Borough C (2009/2010)	Merton (2010/2011)
What is your authorities annual budget for parks/ open space tree maintenance works?	25000	15000	142700	see above
Approximately how many parks / open space trees are there in your authority?	6000	7924	7200	12000
How often do you inspect trees growing in parks and open spaces?	Every 2 years	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	3-5 years
Approximately how many other council trees are there in your authority? Please add details of what these are in comments.	51500	NA	3000	3000-4000 (schools etc)
How much (£) did you spend last year on tree planting?	16000	0	100000	Parks £5000
Approximately how many trees does your authority plant a year?	175	48	750	Parks 50
How many new plantings are street trees?	20	25	620	400 (250 replacement + 150 new trees planted)
How many were removed for tree related subsidence?	1	1	0	Less than 5
Approximately how many highway trees are there in your authority?	4500	10037	17677	Approx 17000
What is your authorities annual budget for highway tree maintenance works?	69000	131500	670900	£21000
How often do you inspect trees growing on the Highway?	Annually	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	Working towards every 3 years
How often do you carry out works on highways trees?	Every 5 years	Every 3 years	Other	Pollarding programme on annual/biennial and triennial cycle, other work is ad hoc
How many TPOs do you have?	62	528	468	592
Do tree officers monitor the tree related planning and TPO conditions you impose?	No	No	Yes	Yes
How many planning applications does your authority's arboricultural team provide comments on per annum?	150	550	86	220

57. We recommend that Cabinet lead on the development of a Tree Strategy for the Council. The Strategy should address the issues identified by the Trees task group and be aligned to the Borough's development aims, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and Duty of Care considerations. (Recommendation 1)

58. We realise that the tree strategy should be long-term, but to fit in with the documents above the Strategy should set out a vision for the next 15 years. The strategy should be implemented through a management plan that would have a number of (ie 5 year) elements and review periods with performance assessments and measurement parameters.

59. The strategy should address the following issues:

- State Urban Forest benefits, assess attributes and collect data required for a strategic approach to management of Merton's tree assets. The task group felt this was vital to the strategy and it would be essential to keep it up to date.
- Set goals (eg canopy increase) and engage partners
- biosecurity strategies:

identifying resources to effectively manage any outbreak of tree diseases in the borough eg Oak Processionary Moth.

List and enforce the use of recommended chemicals in the treatment of any particular disease, monitor progress on issues such as the licensing of more effective treatments

Clarify recommended procedures for particular diseases – liaise with other relevant bodies to encourage comprehensive use of recommended procedures and chemicals (such as Wimbledon Common management)

Specify whether the policy for tree disease is to be one of eradication or containment

- consideration of east west divide, and ensuring sufficient planting schemes in place to give equity across borough for trees.
- A greater degree of forward planning with regard to Highway planting to ensure a cohesive strategy across borough to match species and size to the appropriate planning location. Residents responding to the questionnaire expressed concerns over tree fruit dropping on pavements, this should be borne in mind.
- standardised techniques agreed across council for best practice, ie size and volume of tree pit (cubic metre), quality top soil and double vertical stake method, with protective mesh where appropriate.

- Recognition that creating tree cover and enhancing the Urban Forest concerns far more than planting trees. That the task is not completed until trees are independent in the landscape and that trees require aftercare, water, support and protection for a period after planting
- Protection and reservation of key locations for street trees i.e. roundabouts, junctions that act as focus points & the traditional location opposite property party walls, which are frequently taken over by street furniture
- Potential desertification of streets following removal of trees, either on the highway or in gardens and due to either crossover installation, hard surfacing of gardens for off road parking, or installation of street furniture, signage and clutter. Encouragement of planting of garden trees and securing replacement of street trees in these circumstances.
- Sustainability - tree replacement is not keeping up with tree removal and replacement trees are generally of smaller growing species as well as being more difficult to establish than in earlier times when the pressures on trees were less. Recognition that replanting is not replacement, and that replacement has not occurred until the new tree reaches significant size. With inappropriate small replants, this can never occur.
- Consideration of other tree related risks - tree hazards (requiring zoning), subsidence issues, and maintenance of trees to ensure effectiveness of street lights and that existing trees are not compromised by the introduction of additional light columns or CCTV cameras.
- Improved communication between teams dealing with trees, or combining the existing teams into one if appropriate.

60. There is currently some information available to the public online regarding tree preservation orders, trees in public areas, tree sponsorship and a form to report problems, but no overall consistency of approach in what data is collected and by whom. This makes it difficult to establish what improvements are being made, which procedures are most successful and to make comparisons regarding performance with neighbouring boroughs.

61. We recommend that existing data collection and analysis should be established and strengthened by:

- **Expansion of the software mapping project that has already been started, to collect accurate information about tree cover in the borough. This will provide a base line to measure success of any future planting schemes³.**

³ Merton's Greenspaces Arboriculture with the London Tree Officers' Association has carried out a calculation of tree canopy area for Greater London and for Merton. Greater London data is to be released on 21st February 2012 and Merton data will be available in the same month. Other pilot projects cover a number of other London boroughs, including Camden, Islington, Croydon and Hackney, which can be used for benchmarking purposes.

- **Maintain close involvement with the London Tree Officers Association to ensure advantage is taken of all pan-London opportunities to join information with other boroughs for bigger picture, economies of scale, cross borough sharing of data on tree problems, bio-security threats etc. Note: tree canopy cover data will obviously include privately owned trees.**
- **Recording of 'significant trees'⁴ in the borough**
- **Look into possibility of extending valuation of trees as borough's assets to provide valuation of ecological services - however, increase in resources will be required to achieve this. We currently undertake routine valuations. These are generally accepted in the 'real' world, although Corporate Finance and Insurance companies do not consider trees to be assets. Establishing the value of the council's tree stock would give a benchmark against which the cost of tree management for example, could be compared as a percentage. The value of trees lost due to development could be charged to it and claimed by the council to finance other tree planting/management.**
- **Data collection on trees should be continuous and ongoing, and include survival rates for each year. The database should also include details of maintenance history and be kept up to date.**
- **Data should be exploited and analysed in order to direct operations and inform the tree strategy (recommendation 2).**

62. It was noted that during assessment of applications, BS5837 (Trees in Relation to Construction) is not always applied rigorously.

63. **We recommend that Planning and Enforcement procedures are clarified and more effectively enforced by:**

- **Stronger enforcement of British Standard 5837 - trees in relation to construction. Developers in some cases are not complying with the condition of the planning approval which requires newly planted trees to be alive and established after a five-year period. More monitoring is required to ensure newly planted trees are watered and trees are replaced where they die by allocation of responsibility of which officers will monitor these sites. This will require Enforcement Officers to be trained in recognising diseased or dead trees.**
- **Making (summarized) tree preservation orders (TPO) available online (with a GIS system). This would reduce calls to the office, and be a more efficient way for the public to access the**

⁴ A tree either of current quality, size etc, to provide public amenity or ecological value or other ecosystem service (such as pollution absorption, screening etc) or a tree with a future potential to do so. Also rare, ancient, significant for historical reasons or due to a tree marking an important position in the street scene.

information. (TPOs are available to the public in full, but the full version would not be cost effective to have on-line. The public can currently buy copies).

- **Team working (with Greenspaces and/or Highways) to cover gaps in officer availability due to annual leave and that there are now only 1.5 Planning Tree officers in total, so it is extremely difficult to respond in a timely manner to every request for site visits and inspections.**
- **Ensure in all instances the applicant/developer is made aware of the value of seeking professional advice from an arboricultural expert prior to submitting planning applications (given as online information) and make the street tree contractor responsible for replacement trees that die or don't thrive.**
- **Giving greater consideration to crossovers when approving all types of applications. These cause garden loss, can lead to the eradication of locations for street trees (and garden trees) and can cause problems to street trees. This is a shared problem between Traffic and Highways and Planning (recommendation 3).**

64. Following expressions of interest from the questionnaire and the current emphasis on volunteering, recommend enhanced community engagement for the maintenance and planting of trees (40 respondents to the questionnaire expressed an interest in becoming involved in caring for trees). We therefore recommend that the local community are encouraged to become involved in caring for the Borough's trees by:

- **Implementation of schemes such as the Sponsor a Tree/Green Space, and 'Wiki' style interactive database to monitor the condition of specific trees and build up information on the condition of trees.**
- **Encouragement to look out for damaged/diseased trees and report these - this would require considerable training backed up with access to online resources, and an online report form.**
- **Provision of stronger support for friends of parks groups and Tree Wardens.**
- **The voluntary groups need clear guidance – straight-forward management plans and training, to be more effective.**
- **Information being sent to residents' associations etc with request to water street trees for 3 years+.**
- **Alerting ward councillors to tree work in their area**
- **Visits to schools by Officers to inform children about the importance of trees and how they are cared for. This would require additional staffing resources. (recommendation 4)**

65. We value the input of the work of the Tree Wardens in Merton, and as 40 questionnaire respondents expressed an interest in volunteering in planting and maintaining trees in Merton we recommend, in order to increase community engagement, that greater access to information relating to trees be made available using the council website. The website should link to the London Tree Officers' Association (LTOA) website and the Surrey Tree Wardens website and consideration should be given to the possibility of acknowledging their help by the donation of a tree each year, or similar gesture. That accessible information is provided to include:

- **Online information about what the public can expect from the council in terms of work on trees, in streets and parks.**
- **Online information about species identification, disease recognition, areas of new planting in the borough**
- **Online information to include the Tree Strategy and brief summary of aim of the council in regard to its trees**
- **Online information of proposed street tree planting, with location and species provided each autumn for council and GLA funded tree planting and liaison with the Community Forums in the borough.**
- **Advice to all officers involved with trees on how to identify and deal with diseases, to be contained in a procedure manual**
- **Use of Community Forums to channel information where appropriate. (recommendation 5)**

66. Since reorganisation in the 1970s, councils nationwide have been failing to maintain tree stock in established urban areas except where major grant money has been available in the regions. London has suffered and it must be understood that we're planting for future generations just as those before us up until the 1970s did. The tree planting budget is tiny in relation to overall council spend and the importance of trees to people's quality of life. It is important to substantially increase budgets compared with currently and in manpower terms maintain/ideally increase resources. As a result of the current economic situation, the task group recommend investigation into the financing of tree planting and maintenance.

However it would be noted that we should attempt to challenge the false idea of a separation of 'tree planting' and so-called tree 'maintenance'. We do not maintain trees – we nurture them just as we help children to grow to healthy adulthood. This concept requires that we stop the practice of dividing tree budgets into planting and maintenance, capital and revenue. A woodland has no more been created when it is planted, than a house has been built when its foundations have been dug.

We should aim to carry out full ecological valuation of our tree assets so as to derive the full financial benefits they produce. Trees reduce heating and cooling bills, and provide benefits to health and wellbeing. They also contribute to

sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) by slowing and reducing runoff, store carbon in wood and absorb gaseous pollution. Much particulate pollution such as heavy metals, dust, materials from vehicle brake linings and smoke are also removed from the air and stick to foliage.

67. We recommend that Cabinet review how tree care operations are financed by:

- **Regarding trees as assets and looking into how planting and then maintenance work is currently financed, and streamlining whether this comes from capital or revenue budgets. The requirement is for funds for ongoing enhancement of the Urban Forest/Green Infrastructure resource. Enhancements can be carried out with capital or revenue funding, the problem being artificial definitions of what is an asset.**
- **Considering how to resource biosecurity threats to trees (eg Oak Processionary Moth and diseases to London Plane and Horse Chestnut trees which could be monitored by staff and volunteers). Specific threats will require specific training (recommendation 6).**

Concluding remarks

68. Our findings fall into six main themes:

- Formation of an overall strategy, combining the procedures currently divided between (three) teams.
- Engaging the public
- increasing the availability of accessible information to encourage participation and interest in the enhancement of the Urban Forest resource.
- Improving data collection and analysis to enable accurate performance monitoring and strategic approaches
- Strengthening of planning and enforcement procedures
- Reviewing the financing of enhancements and extension of the Urban Forest resource.

What Happens Next?

69. This task group was established by the Council's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 24th April 2012 for the Panel's approval.

70. The Panel will then send the report to one of the Council's Cabinet meetings early in the next municipal year for initial discussion.

71. The Cabinet will be asked to provide a formal response to the Panel within two months.

72. The Cabinet will be asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support and implement some of the recommendations, then it is expected that clearly stated reasons will be provided for each.

73. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and that their response to those recommendations is included in the report.

74. A further report will be sought by the Panel six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

Appendix 1

Trees Task Group

Analysis of public self-completion questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to residents' associations, handed out at Community Forum meetings, and a link advertised on the Merton website and on the Scrutiny in Merton Facebook page.

89 completed questionnaires were received

1: Your postcode:

CR4	10
KT3	2
SM4	6
SW16	3
SW17	1
SW19	41
SW20	22
Nil response	4

2: What do you think of the number of trees in your area?

Too few	42
Too many	3
About right	44

3: Do you think more trees need to be planted in public spaces in your area?

Yes	58
No	22
Not sure	8
Nil return	1

4: Do you think there are problems relating to trees in your area?

Yes	53
No	31
Not sure	5

5: Would you be interested in taking part in any activity to plant, preserve or maintain trees?

Yes	41
No	43
Nil return	3

If yes, what activity?

Planting	16
Preserving	18
Maintaining	17
Other	3

About you:

Gender:

Male	38
Female	38
Nil return	13

Age:

Under 20	2
20-34	5
35-49	12
50-59	15
60+	41

Do you have a disability?

Yes	9
No	68
Nil return	12

How would you describe your ethnic background?

White	68
Asian	4
Black	0
Mixed	1
Other	1
Nil return	15

Appendix 2

Comments received from the questionnaire on Trees

In response to question 3 – If you think more trees need to be planted in public spaces in your area, where?

Wimbledon Station and Morrisons
Outside Wimbledon Station
Along London Road
Morrisons car park
Forecourts of Raynes Park and Wimbledon stations – the latter looks horribly bare. Dorien Road
Town centre area of Wimbledon
More small street trees and more trees in our parks and open spaces
streets
Roadside trees
On street
Streets and parks
On the streets
On pavements, open spaces, on the Common edges
Alongside street sides where there are many gaps
In paved areas in Wimbledon Village ie where the flower stall currently located and on wide parts of High Street pavement
On the pavement to stop cars parking on the pavements
Where developers have taken out trees, they should replace them
I would like to see the trees that were cut down in our road because of damage replaced.
Street trees along Morden Road, Merton Road
The part of Morden Rd that is at present treeless. Also in front of the Big Yellow Storage to soften the impact on residents
Morden Road Abbey recreation ground
Any pavement where there is a lot of space, more along the side of paths in the Common and Wimbledon Park
Chase side avenue. Around Wimbledon Chase Station to screen the railway line
Raynes Park Centre
Cottenham Park
Claremonth Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Cavendish Avenue
Tabor Grove Alt Grove
Along Kingston Rd
Along the roads and Miles Road recreation grounds
Outside 10 New Barns Avenue
Kendor Gdns
In all available open areas
Local parks, public spaces such as RP Station Bellmouth
In front of Wimbledon Station
In streets to replace missing trees
Cricket Green plus where trees are lost
Where trees have died
Bushey Rd, The Chase footpath, Wimbledon Chase station area
On pavement and spare grass verges
Raynes Park town centre
Hartfield Rd, Wimbledon Town Centre where dead ones haven't been replaced
Not on pavements

Near unsightly car park in centre of Wimbledon, behind Robert Dyas
Prince Georges playing fields to replace the dead trees and to redefine the original field boundary marked with oaks
In Botsford Rd, this is the only street in the area with no trees at all planted. It has really wide pavements so a large green would be ideal. It looks very bare compared to other roads. Trees would also help cut pollution and noise from traffic
Tree lined roads give extra protection for people to see property, but must be maintained for road users
Estella , Adela, Church Walk
Hartfield rd wimbledon town centre where dead ones have not been replaced
Not on pavements
Park areas, streets
Along streets, outside train stations, outside morrisons and morrisons car park
Over ugly golf courses, where they are supposed to be

In response to question 4 – do you think there are problems relating to trees in your area and if yes, what problems: (by area)

CR4 area (Mitcham)

Some trees damaged by dogs pulling at bark
Some trees planted outside Tesco/Glebe Court allowed to die, not watered
Be planted with too short a support hence they get broken
One of the trees died out and was never replaced. The council seem to prune too many poplar (lime?) trees in the road and by the time its spring there are hardly any branches for the leaves to grow. Why do the council prune the trees every year? To save money what about every 3 years? The tree near me is a different kind and is never pruned annually. Also I notice many trees seem to be in poor state and the other issues are vandalism eg the trees planted near Colliers Wood station have also been vandalised so many time the trees are in a poor state the council should keep it safe from hooligans.
Too close to houses. Blocking out light and threatening foundations
Young trees are damaged too frequently by mindless criminals and not enough is done to try to avoid this. In lavender fields ward and along Prince Georges Road and outside colliers wood station
The tree next to the 004 lamp post needs trimming down
School playing fields and open spaces, spaces where old trees have been removed but not replaced

SM4 area

Trees have been vandalised and just left to die
People plant trees but do not maintain them

SW16

Along Stanford Road/Way the trees block out the streetlights, and it can feel unsafe especially in winter when evenings get darker earlier.
When some trees were removed from the streets a few years ago, not all were replanted. People use the base of trees for dumping rubbish
People dump rubbish cans and bottles against them, road cleaners rarely remove this rubbish and it ends up broken

SW17

Too many and need to be cut down, they only come once a year.

SW19

There was no consultation or notification about the recent planting of street trees

Lorries breaking branches

Border of St Mary's cemetery trees too low over pavement

Some of the trees in Willmore End are getting too big. Evidently some of the trees are not owned by the Council – so who checks that they are safe?

The council is not pruning them often enough and they're obstructing the pavements on Melrose Avenue

College at end of road cut some down without permission in conservation area; also one destroyed by builders working in area who backed a van into it.

Is there a disease affecting chestnut trees?

Some of the street trees currently in Anchorage Close are a type of berry which has two main problems; one it sheds on the cars and on the pavements and is very messy around Sept to Autumn. Apart from being messy it is also a danger to pedestrians (particularly myself who is disabled and elderly, some of my neighbours) as it is very very slippery. I would suggest that these trees be replaced with more appropriate trees.

Vandalised young trees in Nursery Road playing fields

Tree in neighbouring property resting on very old wall and spreading over my garden, have tried for three months to get owner to act, but no answer. It is killing everything and taking light from my kitchen.

Horse chestnuts along Southside

Big plane trees at rear gardens of Colliers Wood High Street between College Road and Boundary Road the roots are causing problems with the drains. They are also seeding themselves on the roofs.

Not regularly pruned and only partially sometimes, in Abbey Recreation ground – Willmore end boundary

Problems with trees in Belvederes. We are fortunate in having reasonable size gardens but these are often spoilt by large trees, dominating the garden. Biodiversity needs to be taken into account. A well kept garden with plants and flowers plays an important part by keeping a balance of natural flora. Trees are sustainable and some species which detract from the beauty of the area should be replaced by more sympathetic species.

Some chestnut trees seem diseased, brown patches on leaves

20 years ago Merton planted lots of cherry and other trees with cheap rubbish rooting systems on pavements and are not being badly damaged

Crab apple trees on Gladstone and Hartfield Roads dangerous

Street trees are not being looked after and pruned

Crab apple trees on Gladstone and Hartfield Road dangerous

Vandalism, not planted properly (concreted in), not chosen to suit specific location

Some trees are too big for the small streets in the SPERA area

Relatively young trees removed without consultation apart from with one householder who claimed they were causing subsidence. The council just left two big holes and a pile of sawdust. The holes are now a hazard.

SW20

New trees not nurtured

Occasional vandalism in Apostles area. Crab apple trees tend to create a bit of a mess, but probably good for the ecology
Periodic attempts by developers/residents to cut down fine trees
Need pruning away from overhead lines
Infilling spaces behind commercial premises in Durham Road has meant considerable loss of trees. Home owners unrestricted ability to cut down trees in their gardens has lead to massive loss of wildlife habitat and destruction of green corridor. Some very established trees have disappeared recently, apparently in the name of minimalism. Also loss of greenery and drainage by unrestricted conversion of front gardens into parking space.
Trees are needed to screen off the railway at Wimbledon Chase. Trees were growing in an unmanaged way and network rail cut them down with no replacement. There is a need for a managed tree programme that improves the roads for residents and does not interfere with the railway
In dry periods, trees, especially young ones MUST be given water, either by council or residents. Otherwise as on the Common Southside the young trees die
Vandalism in breaking down and damaging street trees
Too many new trees are vandalised or left to dry out.
Residents fell trees that screen adjoining properties (even in conservation area)
Outside 6 Dunstall Road the street tree has dies and needs to be removed or replaced
Road gulleys blocked due to insufficient routine cleaning
Excessive pollarding, kill the tree, alternative need to enforced (?) to repair houses rather than kill tree planted prior to the housing being built.
There are a few very tall trees which drop what looks like catkins. These drop on the cars parked below and leave stains. Bird dropping also fall on the cars causing erosion of paint. Tree roots invade front gardens causing paving break-up, especially the one in front of 112 and 114. Serious problem as paving is extremely expensive.
Issues with respect to wasps (to aphids), growth on trunks. Insufficient pruning (low branches touch pedestrians, too high/too much growth can lead to roots causing subsidence problems to nearby properties
Horse chestnuts and now oak trees being chopped down. On Cannon Hill Common and on street. Poor maintenance of ditches on common are leading to drying out of ground which is making matters worse. Crude tree surgery on mature trees make them unsightly for years.
Too many golf courses, not enough trees

In response to question 6, - any other additional comments?

The trees outside Centre Court and Tesco Metro have been concreted at the base. This constricts growth and reduces water take up. One tree in Queens Road has recently been concreted outside Boots
Have noticed where new trees have been planted in past they have been unwatered and left to die (outside Tesco)
If planting, please water.
Although many of the trees in Spera area were planted ? years ago, some are past their best, many too large a tree for the small and narrow roads, they need to be taken out and re-planted with some smaller varieties for sure. No more Mountain Ash either, the berries destroy hall carpets when trodden in.
Consult and/or notify local residents Encourage them to 'adopt' their local street tree
Developers should not be allowed to kill mature trees and if such trees are lost they should be required to plant replacements of a decent size.

Good idea to engage local people and give them responsibility for looking after local trees
I watered the new trees close to my home in Vernon Avenue. Sadly, one of them was vandalised, but the other is thriving. Commitments prevent me from other tasks.
I am chairman of our local residents' association (300 members) we have fought several battles to preserve trees.
I am a tree warden and have to keep an eye on trees in our road. I am not strong enough to plant trees, but am happy to keep an eye on local trees for damage, disease etc
Sponsor a tree on Erridge Road
Would like to select all options for activities but computer only allows one response
The leaves are swept up more often in the autumn and that larger trees are pruned
Don't ask council taxpayers to do it. If you're offering up jobs you should be doing, I'll offer to write the surveys in future.
Trees around Wimbledon Chase station were cut down this summer by network rail with no consultation with residents. Local people should be able to have some input beforehand
Can you arrange for residents near specific trees to water them? Give the explicit responsibility – voluntary
Developers need to replace, where necessary.
I applaud the tree officers who do an excellent job with limited resources to try to provide us with street trees.
The type of tree planted near or on street or pathways should take into consideration the shedding of any material that is likely to cause a hazard beyond the normal wet leaves in autumn
I would like to see the trees replaced in our road but with the right trees for the areas. My neighbour and I had subsidence due to a large tree being planted a couple of feet from the side of her house. The trees I would like replaced were at the front of our houses (with our small front gardens in between the trees and our houses)
New trees near shops need more sturdy protection from hapless delivery drivers. Taxpayers' money is wasted on new trees which are left to dry out and die
It would be great if more (appropriately sized) pretty trees could be planted in residential roads
No point planting more trees to improve street scene until more money/effort made to keep current street scene appearance good, ie please remove weeds growing in gutters and edge of roads and around traffic islands – the Ridgway/Combe lane is particularly bad
These tree roots will disrupt the pavements as they grow causing people to trip and injure themselves.
We have lots of spaces where further trees could be planted
Crab apple are hazardous for people, especially the elderly, the fruits are a real nuisance, they should be avoided!
I don't mind planting and maintenance as well
Regular maintenance (especially hedges) in Abbey Recreation Ground is essential to present a tidy appearance – Willmore End boundary.
Maintenance is essential. Protection appears to be poorly maintained.
Roads in area are called 'groves' and had trees along verges of pavements. Now missing due to removal and not being replaced. Many ageing chestnuts pollarded every 2-4 years now showing signs of age. Gaps need filling to ensure continuity and enhance environment. People keep cutting down trees in their gardens!
Why is the willow woodland being lost when it was protected? Because of problems relating to viruses etc, oaks, horse chestnuts they need to be observed and cared for
Since we moved here 37 years ago we have been more troubled by sycamore trees in Belvedere Grove. Much of the rear garden is darkened and I wish you could see this.
My area's feature was all roads had lime trees planted in the 1920s, many were pulled up and replaced by cherry trees, this was a way of avoiding tree maintenance.

The base of the trees is not cleared out regularly enough
Obviously trees are attractive but unless they can be maintained it is no use planting. They could be planted on common ground or some scheme to plant in people's front gardens
It is a false economy to leave the street trees to grow unchecked. That is why we lost so many in the 1987 gales. They were very top heavy.
As Wimbledon is becoming saturated with new build flats, it's important to plant trees and green spaces
More attention needs to be paid to plant smaller trees and keep them pruned. Sometimes the branches overgrow to eye level which can be dangerous
It is clear to see the benefit of well planted and maintained trees in many surrounding roads. They add shade in summer and cut down on pollution and noise as well as being attractive and adding to the character of the road. We are very sad we have no trees in our road!
I think if it is unsafe due to weather or to the public then it should be removed, and others planted elsewhere, if land wasn't used everywhere to build flats then more green space areas can be used.
Merton council are always keen to participate in tree planting activities but then say they have no money to maintain them. This is a ridiculous situation
Planting without enough maintenance (watering saplings, pruning) is pointless
Obviously trees are attractive but unless they can be maintained it is no use planting they could be planted on common ground or some scheme to plant in people's front gardens
Cannot participate in planting at present due to medical reasons. Very concerned that a generation of trees is being wiped out and there is not enough realistic replanting of these large trees
When new trees are planted, I think it would be very good for the community if these were fruit trees, eg apple or plum.

Trees Task Group

Notes from tour of borough 21st September 2011

Present:

Cllr Windsor, Cllr Makin, Cllr Saunders, David Lofthouse, Jane Plant, Hilary Gullen

The first stop on the tour was Grand Drive (outside the Co-op) to look at examples of problematic street planting. These trees had been planted three years ago. A couple had thrived, a couple were still growing, although not as well as hoped, and one had been removed due to a vehicle collision. The tree trunks were thought to have 12-14cm girth when planted, and growth can be assessed from the increase in circumference measurement. The task group were shown how the trees have watering pipes, how they are surrounded by loose soil that needs raking over regularly to allow water to soak down to the roots, and how they are supported. One tree was protected with a wire mesh surround, and all the trees were supported with stakes and ties. The preferred method of supporting a young tree is to use two stakes, each with a band attaching it to the trunk. For street tree planting particularly, double vertical stakes are best, as the stakes are positioned outside the root ball to cause less interference with the developing roots and to reduce the possibility of the bark being damaged which can happen when using angled stakes. Young trees need watering every two weeks in the summer season. In the winter, a major problem for trees is the use of salt on the pavements in icy conditions. When the snow melts, the salt residue tends to collect in the soil surrounding the trees and will kill them.

The second stop was at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field to see the Millennium Wood. This park now has a very strong Friends' group, which has successfully worked to improve the ambience of the park. The Millennium Wood is a wood of mixed species, and has developed extremely well since planting eleven years ago. The shorter prickly plants around the edges of the wood act to prevent people going into the centre, with the possibility of lighting fires etc once there. The planting encourages bats, as they use the edges of vegetation for navigation.

Next, the task group visited Wandle Park to see three areas of planting. Local school children had been involved in the projects. The three areas had been planted at different times, and the task group were able to see how they had grown and developed. They also demonstrated how the Millennium Wood would have looked a year or so after planting. The task group also saw an example of a chestnut tree being attacked by leaf miner and a Manna Ash that showed a problem in its leaves, possibly from uptake of heavy metals from the soil.

Trees in Dennison Road that had been planted as part of the Mayor of London's project were prematurely brown in the leaf.

The task group also looked at planting outside Wimbledon Chase station on the Kingston Road where trees had been planted in a regularly spaced avenue, in generously sized pits, with new cycle racks and advertising hoardings set between.

Pollarded plane trees were also seen in residential roads, which added character to a street and lasted a long time. The benefit of the plane tree is its longevity, a tree of 130 years old still being regarded as not fully mature.

David explained how it would be a mistake to only plant one type of tree as this could lead to devastating effects if the species suffered from a particular disease. Mixed planting was safer but perhaps limiting species to three per street in order to achieve local distinctiveness and visual harmony as well as simplifying the management of the street. When selecting trees for an area, some of the considerations needed were; space available on the pavement, whether water would reach the roots, how much space is available for the canopy and whether the size of the tree was appropriate for the width of the road. It was noted how crossovers could limit the space available for trees, and how additional tarmac or other surfacing for crossovers could prevent water reaching roots.

The task group also saw the effects of heat on the bark of trees, bleeding cankers, and dog damage to bark.

The members thanked David and Jane for their time and enthusiasm.

Appendix 4 - Whom we spoke to

Officers:

- Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, 1st December
- David Lofthouse, Arboricultural Manager and (chair of the London Association of Tree Officers) 13th July, 6th September, 1st December
- Mario Lecordier, Traffic and Highways Services Manager 20th June, 13th July, 6th September
- Doug Napier, Leisure and Culture Greenspaces Manager 13th July, 6th September, 17th October, 1st December
- Cllr Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration, 1st December
- Neil Milligan, Development Control Section Manager, 17th October

External Witnesses

- Jane Plant, Tree Warden – co-optee

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



This form should be completed in line with the Equality Impact Assessment guidance available on the [intranet](#)

EqIA completed by: (Give name and job title)	Hilary Gullen, Scrutiny Officer
EqIA to be signed off by: (Give name and job title)	<i>Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services</i>
<u>Department/ Division</u>	Corporate Services, Democracy Services
Team	The Scrutiny Team
EqIA completed on:	4th July 2011
Date of Challenge Review (if you have one):	N/A
Date review of this EqIA is due (no later than 3 years from date of completion):	TBC

1. What are you assessing? **(Tick as appropriate)**

- Policy:** A policy is an adopted approach by the Council to a specific issue or position, usually in the long term. It provides a set of ideas or principles that together form a framework for decision making and implementation.³ A policy may be written or unwritten, formal or informal. For example, the Corporate Equality Scheme.
- Strategy:** A strategy sets out the activities and actions that have been identified as most likely and cost-effective to achieve the aims and objectives of a council policy e.g. the Consultation Strategy.
- Procedure:** A procedure sets out the way in which practices and actions are to be undertaken at an individual level in order to achieve the policy in local situations, for example using a flow chart approach. Procedures also outline who will take responsibility on a day to day basis for decisions in the implementation of the policy.⁴ For example, this procedure for carrying out an EqIA.
- Function:** A function is an action or activity that the Council is required to carry out for example emergency planning arrangements.
- Service:** A service is a facility or provision made by the Council for its residents or staff for example the Library service or Translation service.

2. Title of policy, strategy, procedure, function or service

A Scrutiny Review of Trees – planting and maintenance, undertaken by scrutiny councillors on the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (supported by the scrutiny officer).

3. For functions or services only: Does a third party or contractor provide the function or service? If so, who?

Not applicable.

4. Who is the policy, strategy, procedure, function or service intended to benefit?

Potentially all residents, businesses and voluntary organisations in the borough of Merton.

5. Who else might be affected?

Visitors to the borough.

6. What is known about the demographic make up of the people you have included in your answers to questions 4 and 5?

There is no specific demographic profile. The review will take evidence from members of the public, as well as officers from relevant departments such as Environment and Regeneration.

7. Have you already consulted on this policy, strategy, procedure, function or service? If so, how?

Yes – as part of the scrutiny review process – through attending witness sessions and hearing first hand

³ See the Council's Policy Handbook http://intranet/policy_handbook_final_agreed_nov_07-2.doc

⁴ As above

evidence. The review was conducted from July 2011 to March 2012 by the Scrutiny Team and the outcomes of consultation and witness sessions is included in the review report.

8. How will you measure the success of your policy, strategy, procedure, function or service?

Once the review report has been approved, an action plan will be drawn up to take forward the agreed recommendations. Implementation of the action plan will be monitored at regular intervals by the Sustainable Communities O&S Panel and Cabinet.

9. How often will the policy, strategy, procedure, function or service be reviewed?

The review report will result in an action plan, to be monitored probably six monthly by the scrutiny panel.

10. When will the policy, strategy, procedure, function or service next be reviewed?

Once the action plan has been agreed, progress is likely to be reviewed in 2012-2013.

11. Please complete the following table and give reasons for where:

- (a) The policy function or service could have a positive impact on any of the equality groups.
- (b) The policy function or service could have a potential negative impact on any of the equality groups.

Think about where there is evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, concerns or priorities in relation to this policy, strategy, procedure, function or service.

Equality group	Positive impact		Potential negative impact		Reason
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Gender (inc. Transgender)				✓	
Race/ Ethnicity/ Nationality				✓	
Disability				✓	
Age				✓	
Sexual orientation				✓	
Religion/ belief				✓	
Socio-economic status				✓	

12. Did you have sufficient data to help you answer the above questions?

Yes

No

If there is a potential negative impact on one or more groups, or there was insufficient data to help you answer the above questions, you should complete a full EqlA

13. Is a full Impact Assessment required?

Yes

No

EqlA signed off by:	Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services.
Signature:	
Date:	4 th March 2012