

# AUDIT COMMITTEE

16 March 2012



## RISK OF INCIDENTS RELATING TO TREES ON CITY COUNCIL LAND

1.0 Following the transfer of former Housing Revenue Account funded land to Corporate Property as part of the housing stock transfer process a risk was identified around the number of trees that were on land not managed by the parks service and thus not routinely inspected.

The risk is identified from Health & Safety Executive guidance 'Management of the Risk from Falling Trees' (SIM 01/2007/05) which indicates that 'each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed when trees fall on them'. The HSE guidance also indicates that 'around half of all fatalities due to falling trees occur in public spaces, such as a park or beside roads'.

1.1 Management of tree stocks is essential to:

- Reduce civil liabilities (e.g. prevent personal injury through trips and falls on footways disturbed by tree roots, prevent vehicle damage and personal injury from obscured sightlines on the highway, reduce the risk of property damage from subsidence, maintain tree stocks to preserve their amenity, conservation and environmental value);
- To meet legislative responsibilities (e.g. Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as well as legislation relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, planning issues and Tree Preservation Orders).
- To meet public safety perception.

1.2 The risk rating related to trees, located across Plymouth City Council's (PCC) land portfolio, has been reduced from strategic risk rating red to amber after the introduction of the following risk control measures:

2.1 Risk assessments:-

- PCC's Street Scene Services have an ongoing strategic tree risk assessment of Street Scene Services controlled land to highlight trees on, or close to, high risk areas e.g. adjacent to roads/high use footpaths, playgrounds,

- PCC's Highways Department assisted by Street Scene Services have an ongoing strategic tree risk assessment of Highways controlled land to highlight trees on, or close to high risk areas e.g. adjacent to roads/high use footpaths
- PCC's Corporate Property Department, assisted by Street Scene Services, is currently finalising a strategic tree risk assessment of Corporate Property controlled land (including the retained ex-PCC Housing land) to highlight trees on, or close to high risk areas.
- PCC's Street Scene Services offer Schools the opportunity for a price to cover the mitigation of any significant findings identified from a school tree risk assessment

## 2.2. Process and Resourcing Improvements:-

- PCC Street Scene Services planned tree inspection programme, currently resourced by two FTE tree technicians implements identified risk assessment significant findings. In 2010, Street Scene Services requested an additional tree technician to increase resource capacity to mitigate tree related risk. A response to this request is currently outstanding.
- PCC Parks undertook, over a 12 months period during 2011 and 2012, seventy-five programmed tree rectification works (excluding emergency tree and reactive tree work) following tree inspections on ex-housing land.
- PCC's Street Scene Services and Corporate Property Departments worked together in November 2011 to implement a Service Level Agreement (SLA) related to planned and reactive land maintenance of the Corporate Property controlled land portfolio. The SLA allows for improved communication processes between the departments, a health & safety risk based prioritisation system and an agreement that Street Scene Services operatives will undertake a general land inspection, during planned maintenance, to identify rectification or report based actions.
- Further communication improvements will occur in 2012 when Street Scene Services joins Corporate Property by using Dynamics (the corporate call handling software). It is expected that a public portal using the latest mapping information technology will be made available to identify report locations.

## 2.3 Cross Departmental Liaison Meetings:-

- Both PCC Highways (TIE/Amey) and Corporate Property are undertaking liaison meetings with Street Scene Services allowing the introduction of strategic and operational process reviews (indicated above) aimed at improving internal and Public service delivery and mitigating known risk across the Authority's land portfolios.

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