



Tree Policy

Policy and Finance Committee Approved: 17th May 2023

Due for next review: 17th May 2026

1. Overview

Fleet Town Council (FTC) is committed to protecting its arboricultural heritage through the positive management of trees on land managed by the Town Council within Fleet.

The FTC has an on-going tree survey programme resulting in the recording of trees requiring arboricultural work and those requiring felling. This will ensure improved management through continuity and will assist the FTC in providing a professional service to the community.

2. Tree Inspection and Management Programme

FTC has a duty of care to manage its trees. To assist with routine management, FTC has adopted a tree inspection and management policy which includes the categorisation of trees into three risk categories-high, medium, and low:

High risk: Those which overhang residential neighbours' properties, a play area or well-frequented paths, will be inspected within every 18 months of the previous inspection.

Medium risk: Those which are located close to informal paths will be inspected at least every two years.

Low risk: No regular routine inspection of trees in low-risk locations

Once surveyed, trees will be categorised further into priorities. Suggested timescales in which works are to be completed within is provided by Priority Numbers. This "Risk Rating" can be used to better define where to start.

Priority 1 – Works required immediately. Works are to be undertaken as soon as practically possible. Works are to be completed within 30 days of receiving report, or as soon as possible.

Priority 2 – Works / action to be completed within 3 months of receiving report.

Priority 3 – Works / action to be completed within 12 months of receiving report.

Priority 4 – Works / action to be completed within 18 months of receiving report.

Provision has been made in the FTC's Ground Maintenance contract for the routine inspection of trees and the obligation on the grounds maintenance contractor to report concerns regarding any individual tree for which the Council is responsible.

Notwithstanding the above, it is not the policy of FTC to arrange the cutting back of trees in its ownership which overhang neighbouring properties.

3. Tree Replacement

The case for trees and the contribution they make to the quality of our environment include:

- Improving air quality, micro-climate characteristics and mitigating the 'urban heat island' effect
- Providing aesthetic, mental health and social benefits
- Providing a sense of place, continuity and belonging
- Contributing to the urban design and character of the town, including flood mitigation.

It is the intention of FTC to replace every mature tree that is removed for any purpose from land managed by FTC where possible.

4. Tree Maintenance

Public safety is of paramount importance when making decisions about trees and the FTC has in place programmes for the regular inspection and maintenance of its trees.

Work that will be carried out on FTC owned trees.

In maintaining our trees FTC will:

- Remove dead, dying and dangerous trees
- Remove dangerous and damaged limbs
- Remove limbs which are obscuring Highway signs, traffic lights or lamp columns

The trees will be assessed by a qualified arboriculturist to see if works are required and will report back findings to FTC, if works are required, they will be programmed as necessary.

Work that will not be carried out to FTC owned Trees.

FTC has no obligation to carry out the following tree works:

- Cut back branches overhanging private property.
 - 'Top' trees or remove branches to increase daylight or decrease height in relation to property.
 - Remove branches or trees affecting views or interfering with TV reception.
 - Remove branches or trees to prevent falling leaves, honeydew from aphids or other minor debris.
 - Remove roots from drains or repair root damage to structures, where the tree has not been clearly demonstrated to be the principal cause due to failure of the tree's health.
 - Remove branches, trees, or roots to prevent potential damage to structures including fences, patios and garden landscaping.
 - Remove or cut back roots which grow beyond Council owned boundary lines.
 - Remove roots under fences or patios.
 - Remove branches nearly touching buildings, walls, roofs, fences etc.
 - Remove branches or trees to prevent access to squirrels or birds.
- If the tree works residents would like the Council to carry out are in this Section, the Council cannot undertake the tree work for residents.

5. Property Owners carrying out tree works and Pruning Guidance

In common law, a property owner can cut back overhanging branches to the boundary of his/her property. FTC usually has no objection to property owners carrying out tree work or engaging a contractor at their own expense, provided that:

- Access is not gained onto the neighbouring land or to a tree within that land. If access to FTC land or to a tree on that land is required, FTC permission must be sought.
- The tree is not situated in a Conservation Area or protected by a Tree Preservation Order.
- Any work done to a tree is not detrimental to its health or stability; please obtain advice from a qualified tree surgeon.
- For tree pruning work, it is carried out to an acceptable standard, in accordance with the British Standard Recommendations for Tree Work 3998:1989.
- Residents notify FTC of the proposed work and commencement date. FTC does not carry out works to privately owned trees

6. Erecting garden structures near Council owned trees

When erecting structures such as fences, patio's, garden buildings etc. consideration should be given by property owners for near by council owned trees, and a plan for compassionate builds to be put in place to prevent future need to carry out works on the tree/s. The Council will accept no liability for

any damage to structures due to inappropriately placed structures, and may reclaim from the resident, any costs incurred for tree works as a result of inappropriately placed structures.

7. Bats, birds and other species

The inspecting officer and contractor must make consideration to the likely presence of protected species. Bats, birds and other species and their habitats are afforded statutory protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the EU Habitats Directive 1992.