Skipton Town Council

Policy Name:	**Tree Management Policy**
Date of Last Review:	**14th May 2026**
Version Number:	**V1**
Responsible Officer:	**Chief Officer** **Estate Supervisor**
Next Review Due:	**May 2027**
Added to Policy Register:	**Yes**

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy identifies the Council's approach to the management of trees on land owned by the Council. It is intended to act as a point of reference for the public, Councillors, Council Officers and professionally interested people to ensure a clear, consistent and structured approach to the management of trees and will be used in conjunction with the Council's Park Strategy and Strategic Plan and the Council's Sustainability Aims.

2. The Council's Responsibilities as Landowner

2.1. As landowner, the Council has a duty of care to ensure that all of the trees on its land are kept in an acceptable condition and do not put persons and property at unreasonable risk.

3. How the Council Will Manage Trees in Parks and Recreation Grounds

Skipton Town Council will develop and implement a risk-based system of tree management relying on a programme of regular inspection prioritised by potential hazard

3.1. The aim of this Policy is to establish a reasonable, defensible, and proactive tree management system that conserves and enhances the tree population on the land for which the Council is responsible.

3.2. Best practice now strongly favours a risk-based system of tree management relying on a programme of regular inspection prioritised by potential hazard. In the event of a tree failure causing loss, such a system is recognised as a reasonable method of management.

3.3. The basis for repeat inspections will be graded; so, a high-risk tree may be inspected annually and a tree with negligible risk inspected five or more years after the initial survey.

3.4. All trees and groups of trees for which the Council is responsible will be categorised in relation to the risk they represent. This is in conformity with industry best practice and is a significant step in ensuring a defensible system of tree management is implemented. For example; overhanging the highway represent a higher risk than trees growing in the middle of a Park or recreation ground and would therefore be prioritised for inspection.

3.5. A prioritised programme of tree work will be maintained based on the inspections and with an emphasis on planned rather than reactive tree maintenance.

4. Nature Conservation

4.1. Before undertaking any pruning, the nature conservation value of individual trees will be assessed.

4.2. All trees are checked, as a matter of course, for signs of the presence of bats. Where the presence of bats is suspected, advice will be sought before any work takes place.

4.3. Consideration is also given to the presence of nesting birds, especially during the period March to August and it is an offence to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built Pruning or felling work will not normally be scheduled to take place in woodlands and around hedgerows during this period. If a nest is discovered during cutting work, work will be suspended around the area of the nest, as soon as it is safe to do so.

4.4. The trunks of dead trees provide important wildlife habitats. Where possible dead trunks are left standing or lying on the ground, especially in woodland and branches are formed into habitat piles.

5. Requests from Residents

5.1. Service requests and complaints will be recorded and prioritised. Any that concern a dangerous or potentially dangerous tree will be treated with urgency and normally on the same or next day. Those of a non-urgent nature will be inspected within 20 working days. In all cases the resident will be informed of this policy when the call is first received and will be informed of what action the Council will take after the tree has been inspected. Skipton Town Council may need to seek the advice of the principle Authority Tree Officer.

6. When Will Trees be Felled?

6.1. Skipton Town Council will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary. Each case will be carefully judged on its merits. Replacement trees will normally be planted, though not necessarily in the same place as the felled tree. The Council will maintain records of tree removals and will maintain a planting programme to ensure that the Council's tree stock maintains a healthy age profile. Skipton Town Council may need to seek the advice of the principle Authority Tree Officer.

7. When Will Trees be Pruned?

7.1. Tree pruning will only be undertaken where there is sound justification for the work. Where pruning is done it will be in accordance with good arboriculture practice to ensure minimum harm to the tree. Pruning will be resisted if the tree has been pruned within the last 5 years

The following are situations where pruning will be considered:

· A tree that is obstructing a public highway or public right of way. Generally, a minimum clearance of 2.4m will be maintained over pavements and 4 metres over highways.
· A tree causing a legal nuisance to an adjoining property or the Council's property
· A tree that is causing soil shrinkage and structural damage to adjoining property, where it is felt that it is appropriate to restrict the size and moisture demand of the tree.
· Trees restricting access to property for maintenance or in physical contact with buildings or roofs.
· Trees interfering with street lighting, highway signage or another services equipment
· Trees obstructing Council-monitored CCTV surveillance cameras. Pruning will be the minimum necessary to maintain visibility without detriment to the health of the tree.
· Trees needing formative pruning to shape or train them during the early years.

· Removal of dead and diseased branches

8. General Nuisance

8.1. There are a variety of other potential nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and considered to be social problems associated with living near trees. Examples of such problems are:

· Falling leaves, sap, fruit, nuts, bird droppings or blossom.
· Reduction or increase of moisture to gardens.
· Suckers or germinating seedlings in gardens.
· Leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs.
· The build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structure

The Council will not fell or prune Council owned trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and / or seasonal phenomena.

The Council will not fell or prune trees for reasons of light unless they are blocking daylight from habitable rooms to a severe and unreasonable degree.

Television and satellite reception:

The Council will not fell or prune trees solely for the reason that they are causing interference with television and satellite reception, unless complainants have taken other measures to improve reception without success and it can be proven that pruning will improve reception. In considering any action the council will take account of the amenity value of the trees concerned.

9. Appeals Against Decisions not to Prune or Fell Trees

9.1. In circumstances where a request to prune or fell a Council owned tree is turned down, adjoining owners may appeal under the Council's complaints procedure.

10. Tree Inspections

10.1. The Council will inspect and record details of all significant council owned trees within the borough within 5 years. The inspection programme will be based on a risk-based assessment and the frequency of inspections will be at the Estate Supervisors discretion and recorded on the inspection spreadsheet. Certain trees may need to be inspected more frequently than others within the group it is located in.

10.2. Ash Dieback. Due to the many unknowns relating to the speed of deterioration of ash from infection to imminent failure, the frequency of inspection must be sufficiently flexible to account for updates to the standing advice and the progress of the disease in the local area. The Council undertook a full inspection of all of its Trees in Dec 2021, and sign of Ash Die back were noted and actioned.

11. Implementing Tree Work

11.1. When a tree has been inspected and action recommended, each particular job will be categorised, which will reflect on the urgency of the situation, the degree of inconvenience being caused and the best time of year for the work to be undertaken.

The following categories of priority will be used when categorising tree works:

· Emergency: Dangerous trees requiring immediate attention,
· Priority A: are to be classified as ESSENTIAL works, associated with mitigation of danger. The Council will endeavour to ensure that priority A work is completed within 12 weeks.

· Priority B: are to be classified as DESIRABLE and will include any work that results from request by local residents. The Council will endeavour to ensure that priority B work is undertaken within 6 months

· Priority C: are to be classified as NON-ESSENTIAL or work of a general routine management such as formative pruning or thinning out poor specimens to favour growth of better specimens. Priority C work will be completed within 12 months.

The Council will endeavour to increase the proportion of pre-planned or cyclical tree work and reduce the amount of reactive tree work.

The Council will follow the Financial Regulations when appointing contractors to complete work that can not be carried out by its own Estate Team.