

Crawley Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Agenda for the **Overview and Scrutiny Commission** which will be held in **Committee Rooms A & B - Town Hall**, on **Monday, 8 January 2024** at **7.00 pm**

Nightline Telephone No. 07881 500 227



Chief Executive

Membership: Councillors M L Ayling (Chair), H Hellier (Vice-Chair), I Ashraf, K Khan, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, J Millar-Smith, A Pendlington, S Piggott, S Raja and J Russell

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Town Hall
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Crawley
West Sussex
RH10 1UZ

The order of business may change at the Chair's discretion

Part A Business (Open to the Public)

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, councillors are reminded that it is a requirement to declare interests where appropriate.

Councillors must also declare if they are subject to their party group whip in relation to any items under consideration.

3. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 27 November 2023.

4. Public Question Time

To answer any questions or hear brief statements from the public which are relevant to the items on this agenda. The period will end after **15 minutes** or later at the Chair's discretion.

5. Safer Crawley Partnership Annual Review and Forthcoming Priorities

To receive the annual performance report of the Safer Crawley Partnership along with the future priorities

6. Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy

To consider report HCS/069 of the Head of Community Services.

7. Potential Establishment of Scrutiny Panels

To consider report OSC/316.

8. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

To consider any requests for [future items](#). Those highlighted items have been referred to the Commission.

	Item	PFD
1	2024/2025 Budget and Council Tax	Yes
2	2023-2024 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3	
3	Treasury Management Strategy 2024-2025	Yes
4	Review Of Crawley Borough Councils Statement Licensing Policy for 2024 - 2029	Yes
5	PSPO - Council Owned Multi-Storey Car Parks	
6	Irrecoverable Debts 2023-2024 (Over £50,000)	

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7	District Heat Network Phase 2	
8	Allocating Monies Collected Through CIL	
9	Installation of Toilet Facilities – Cherry Lane and Millpond Unsupervised Adventure Playgrounds	

9. Supplemental Agenda

Any urgent item(s) complying with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. Exempt Information – Exclusion of the Public

The Commission is asked to consider passing the following resolution:-

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraphs specified against the item.

Part B Business (Closed to the Public)

11. Crawley Homes Staffing Growth

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*Exempt Paragraphs 1 & 3
Information Relating to an Individual; and
Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)*

To consider report CH/203 of the Head of Crawley Homes.

12. Five Year Business Plan for Tilgate Park & Nature Centre

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Exempt Paragraph 3
Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)

To consider report HCS/068 of the Head of Community Services.

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Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 27 November 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

H Hellier (Vice-Chair)

I Ashraf, K Khan, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, J Millar-Smith, S Piggott, S Pritchard and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillor M G Jones

Officers Present:

Vicki Basley

Chief Accountant

Ian Duke

Chief Executive

Heather Girling

Democratic Services Officer

Carolin Martlew

Head of Corporate Finance

Clem Smith

Head of Economy and Planning

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor A Pendlington

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor	Item and Minute	Type and Nature of Disclosure
Councillor R A Lanzer	Crawley Station Gateway – Phase 1 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Crawley Station Gateway – Phase 1 (Minute 7)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member Representative on the Crawley Growth Programme
Councillor R A Lanzer	Western Boulevard Scheme – Crawley Growth Programme (Minute 8)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Western Boulevard Scheme – Crawley Growth Programme (Minute 8)	Personal Interest – WSCC Cabinet Member Representative on the Crawley Growth Programme

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Councillor R A Lanzer	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 9)	Personal Interest – Member of WSCC
Councillor R A Lanzer	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC) (Minute 9)	Personal Interest – Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing
Councillor R A Lanzer	Crawley Innovation Centre – Additional Towns Fund Monies (Minute 13)	Personal Interest – Member of Town Deal Board

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 30 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. 2023/2024 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2

The Commission considered report [FIN/635](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report set out a summary of the Council's actual revenue and capital spending for the quarters to September 2023 together with the main variations from the approved spending levels and impact on future budgets.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, the following comments were made:

- Explanation provided on the latest revenue and capital budget.
- Acknowledgement that the interest rate projections would be kept under regular review during the year and acknowledged the risk of being heavily reliant on investments when interest rates begin to fall.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the costings on various elements for the new town hall.
- Confirmation that project Jupiter referred to the works at Metcalf Way Depot.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

5. Budget Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

The Commission considered report [FIN/636](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report set out financial projections with particular reference to the period 2024/25 – 2026/27. The report set out the policy framework for improving financial efficiency and meeting the long-term investment needs of the Town, as well as proposals for the annual budget process.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, the following comments were made:

- Recognition that Ashdown House may remain vacant for a period from 2024 and this would allow the building to be refurbished and a new tenant to be sought.

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Similarly, it would be important for the Ask building to be renovated and re-let as soon as practicable.

- Explanation provided of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) review having identified a saving of £778k in 2023/24 being due to technical adjustments also identified future year savings by taking a payment holiday and switching the calculation to an annuity basis. The methodology being prudent due to the debt relating to the appropriation of garages from the HRA to the General fund.
- It was questioned whether the average increase in the fees and charges forecast of 3.5% was too lenient, in comparison with fees and charges having to be increased by a minimum of 7% (where feasible). It was queried whether fees and charges could potentially be increased higher than 7%, however, it then was noted that there was a balance to be made between covering the cost of the service whilst also remaining competitive. Further explanation was provided, that the forecasting model was a tool that did not distinguish between fees that could be increased and for example fees that were set by statute or rents.
- Recognition that additional cost pressure were predicted to impact the budget, resulting in a net overspend of £2.516m in the current year, some of these related to homelessness, pay award, town hall rates and inflation.
- It was commented that whilst there had recently been changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the overall impact was yet unknown, and whilst it would help private tenants to stay in their tented accommodation, it was confirmed that the LHA related to the recovery of Housing Benefit remained frozen and would not improve the budget position going forward, which remained unsustainable. However temporary accommodation was identified on the corporate risk register and would be constantly monitored and continued to be reported in future monitoring reports.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

6. Treasury Management Mid Year Review 2023-2024

The Commission considered report [FIN/637](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report provided an update on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council, Head of Corporate Finance and Chief Accountant, the following comments were made:

- Acknowledgement that the ethical investment policy was considered prior to every investment undertaking.
- Confirmation sought on the investment performance (Bail-in Exposure) and officers would look into the possibility of providing equivalent figures in pounds sterling. It was thought that it would be beneficial that a "Bail-In" definition be provided within the report.
- Explanation was sought on the investment limits across detailed holdings and portfolios.
- Recognition that the new strategy would be approved by Full Council in February 2024 (having been considered at OSC and Cabinet).
- Confirmation that the Council's treasury advisor was Arlingclose Limited, and the Council would have to make a decision to diverge from the advice provided. It was important that in accordance with the Treasury Management Code that the Council's investments priorities were security of capital, liquidity, yield and ethical investment policy.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

7. Crawley Station Gateway - Phase 1

The Commission considered report [PES/443](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report presented the refreshed concept designs for Station Gateway (Phase 1) public realm and bus station improvements. It sought approval to go out to public and stakeholder consultation and seek approval to combine two funding streams (Crawley Growth Programme and Towns Fund) already allocated within the Council's capital programme.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Economy and Planning the following comments were made:

- Acknowledgement that the delivery of the detailed designs of the scheme would be delivered as part of the Crawley Growth programme.
- Clarification was obtained regarding various elements of the concept design including connectivity improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, together with route access and pick up/drop off areas.
- Recognition that the Council would be working closely with partners and stakeholders to provide a greatly improved cycle and pedestrian access between Crawley railway station, bus station, County Mall and The Martlets. Delivering an enhanced bus station would also result in improved bus and traffic flow around Friary Way, including a dedicated left hand turn for buses from Friary Way onto Station Way.
- Confirmation provided regarding the £7.4m funding to deliver the scheme ("Phase 1") which was in anticipation of a renewed bid to be led by WSCC to Department for Transport in the future for "Phase 2" Station Way highway/bus lane infrastructure upgrades. It was noted that other sites under development along Station Way/Haslett Avenue had already taken account of the scheme within the development.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

8. Western Boulevard Scheme - Crawley Growth Programme

The Commission considered report [PES/442](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report updated on the progress of the Western Boulevard scheme as part of the Crawley Growth Programme with a recommendation that Full Council agree to add £2m of BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) monies to the scheme, which have been secured, subject to a funding agreement with West Sussex County Council.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Economy and Planning the following comments were made:

- Recognition that the scheme was set to deliver significant improvements to bus connectivity in the town centre alongside better sustainable transport facilities. It would widen The Boulevard/The Broadway junction, giving priority to buses turning in and out of the junction as well as improve cycle facilities in the area by continuing the segregated cycle tracks on The Boulevard completing the link from the Eastern Gateway to the existing cycle infrastructure on the High Street.

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- Clarification was obtained regarding various punctuated cycle lanes within the scheme, together with the exit closures and carriageway improvements.
- Acknowledgement that funding would be required in order for the scheme to be fully completed along The Boulevard.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

9. Exempt Information – Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

10. Crawley Innovation Centre - Additional Towns Fund Monies

Exempt Paragraph 3

Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)

The Commission considered report PES/449 of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report sought agreement to add Towns Fund monies to the Crawley Innovation Centre project and additional delegations to ensure the project could commence without delay. The draft Towns Fund business case for the Crawley Innovation Centre was agreed by Cabinet on 2nd February 2022 and Full Council on 23rd February 2022.

During the discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Economy and Planning the following comments were made:

- Confirmation provided of the processes which had taken place throughout the project were highlighted.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the financial aspects contained within the report.
- Acknowledgement that the Innovation Centre still enabled the Council to deliver on opportunities, whilst protecting, consolidating and enhancing economic diversity.
- Whilst there was support for the proposal which was poised to play a key and interesting role in delivering on future needs within the town, concern was raised regarding the reallocation of £2m of Crawley Towns Fund monies from the Town Centre to Manor Royal cycle route project and this should be noted for the future.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report and requested that the views expressed during the debate, were fed back to the Cabinet through the Commission's Comment sheet.

Re-admission of the Public

The Chair declared the meeting re-open for consideration of business in public session.

11. Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC)

An update was provided from the most recent HASC meeting. Key items of discussion included:

- Quarterly Performance and Resources Report –
 - Inspections were carried out for all health care services across the county, with Furnace Drive featured in Crawley (Burleys Wood), which was last inspected in 2018 and receiving a good rating. Due to pressures, assessments were currently being prioritising by the highest demand cases, and there were assessments overdue allocation (by approximately 4 weeks) and it was acknowledged that there was room for improvement.
- Update on delivery of the two-year improvement programme 2023-2025 to assist the delivery of the Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-25 –
 - Delivery of the programme was currently being supported by the council's Transformation Plan, which was agreed in early 2023. Workforce recruitment and retention issues remained a key issue for West Sussex as well as independent voluntary sector providers. Work delivered throughout 2022-2023-2024 was supported by the Transformation funding and provided as the foundations for further improvements and service developments.
- Update on Council Plan, Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Preparations for 2024/25 Draft Budget
 - Council tax remained the key source of funding. The proposed increase in fees and charges for 2024-2025 was 8.1% in line with the estimate of retail price index as of September 2023.
- Sussex System Winter Plan 2023-24 – November 2023
 - The plan was currently underway and provided an assurance to partners of the system of the measures in place to deliver the health and social care needs of the local population that would be met over the winter period.
 - NHS Sussex's plans relating to West Sussex residents highlighted any specific challenges and risks and how these are being addressed. The system was not yet achieving consistent delivery of the A&E 4-hour standard in emergency departments at the target level set by NHS England for this year. The causes included increased demand across primary, secondary, community and mental health services, challenges in recovery of productivity post pandemic, staff vacancies and issues impacting on staff morale.
 - These challenges would continue over the winter months and would be compounded by additional factors such as seasonally driven increases. In addition to targets issued by NHS England a number of requirements had also been issued by all trusts.

12. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

1. Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy
2. Crawley Homes Staffing Growth – Part B
3. Five Year Business Plan for Tilgate Park & Nature Centre – Part B

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.42 pm

M L Ayling (Chair)

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Agenda Item 6

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission
8 January 2024

Report to Cabinet
10 January 2024

Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy

Report of the Head of Community Services **HCS/069**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To endorse and approve the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy (as outlined in Appendix A) to provide a clear and consistent strategic approach the council will follow to support healthy and sustainable tree stock and tree canopy for future planting of its trees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2. To the Cabinet

- 2.3. The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy as set out in Appendix A.
- b) Delegate authority to the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, to review and make minor amendments to the Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy as further changes to legislation and statutory guidance are introduced or following any review. (Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation).

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. The proposed Crawley Borough Council Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A) has been created to guide and inform the Council's decisions to deliver a coherent approach for its tree planting, clearly outlining the standards for all tree planting, young tree maintenance and woodland sustainability. It identifies a clear approach for selecting tree species, location and a process for providing tree planting on council land across the town.
- 3.2. Crawley Borough Council declared a [climate emergency in 2019](#) and the associated action plan identified the need for a sustainable tree planting strategy to help tackle the effects of climate change. This strategy fulfils the response to this requirement whilst also delivering other tangible benefits that will assist officers in taking an agreed and consistent strategic approach for future planting of council trees across the Borough.

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4. Background

- 4.1. This is the first proposed Tree Planting Strategy for the council (Appendix A).
- 4.2. Alongside fulfilling the council's requirement for a strategy as outlined in its climate change action plan the proposed strategy provides multiple benefits including:
 - 4.2.1. Developing and improving the local urban tree cover
 - 4.2.2. Increasing species diversity and resilience which ensures improved overall health of the tree stock.
 - 4.2.3. Sets the replacement programme for council trees that have been removed
 - 4.2.4. Embeds continuous improvement through requiring regular review of the practices to improve planting and aftercare, thus keeping up to date with modern practice.
 - 4.2.5. Supports the council in being open and transparent as to how it will manage future tree planting.

5. Description of Issue to be Resolved

- 5.1. The proposed Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A) fulfils the identified need for the council to have its own agreed strategic approach and methodology to achieve future maximum success for planting its own trees.
- 5.2. The Strategy provides a concise plan of the council's approach and protects future financial exposure through a clear planned and managed method for future tree requirements.
- 5.3. Having a clear and agreed Tree Planting Strategy will enable council officers to support and sustain local biosecurity in a responsible and sustainable manner, thereby protecting the health of our existing trees through planting trees from a known source, free from pest and diseases and that are in keeping with the local climate conditions
- 5.4. In response to increasing pressure on the availability of local open spaces, having a strategic and sustainable approach to tree planting by the council will assist stakeholders and residents to understand the rationale and principles that will be applied to ensure that new trees planted have the maximum opportunity to thrive and survive.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1. Adopting a Tree Planting Strategy for all future council trees provides multiple benefits in having a clear strategic and agreed methodology which officers can implement thus enabling a consistent and transparent response. It fulfils a climate change action plan requirement as outlined in the document. Furthermore, the Strategy ensures that the right trees are planted in the right place, assisting the council in mitigating future financial and health and safety risks.
- 6.2. Should the proposed Strategy not be approved, there will be continuation of ad-hoc council tree planting in the vacuum of agreed principles, posing levels of risk to the council including randomised planting, difficulty in ensuring effective aftercare, inappropriate selection of species that do not have maximum survival rates with the changing weather patterns as well financial and wellbeing considerations.
- 6.3. A public version of the Strategy is shown in Appendix B. This summarises the key points for residents and stakeholders in an engaging format and this publication will be available on the council's website.

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6.4. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change has been consulted and is supportive of the proposed Tree Planting Strategy (Appendix A).

7. Implications

- 7.1. Financial: there are designated and ringfenced section 106 funds to provide trees for planting on Crawley Borough Council land going forward and sufficient is in place for the duration of this Strategy. Therefore, there are no direct and / or adverse financial implications for the council.
- 7.2. Legal and Procurement: there are no legislative and /or regulatory requirements associated with the council adopting the proposed Tree Planting Strategy and this Strategy will only apply to council owned land. Formal procurement does not apply as future tree purchases are under the stated thresholds but the principle of value for money will be consistently applied for future purchases of stock.
- 7.3. Environmental: future planting of trees as outlined in the Strategy has clear environmental benefits including improving air quality, carbon absorption and offsetting carbon emissions, reducing the risk of flooding and increasing biodiversity and ecological habitats. On average, each tree absorbs around 10kg of carbon dioxide per year (dependent on the type and age of tree), making tree planting a good value strategy for carbon sequestration. Having a clear Strategy for tree planting will support the council to take advantage of this benefit.
- 7.4. Staffing: there are no known implications. The Strategy will be delivered by existing specialist council officers.
- 7.5. Equality Impact Assessment:

The Council must have regard to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under that Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and,
- foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:-
 - (i) tackle prejudice; and,
 - (ii) promote understanding.

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and does not identify any implications and / or further action that needs to be taken as a result of the proposed Strategy plan.

8. Background Papers

[Crawley Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan Report PES/390](#)
[Crawley Borough Council Climate Change Core Principles for Action](#)
[Crawley Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)

Report author and contact officer:

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Crawley Borough Council

Tree Planting Strategy

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce Crawley Borough Council's Tree Planting Strategy, to thank everyone who has worked on its production and, of course, everyone who works in some way to look after our trees.

This is an area of environmental stewardship in which the council occupies a position of strength. There are more than 250,000 trees in a variety of species owned by the council, plus tens of thousands more owned by others around the borough. Visitors to Crawley will surely never have imagined a new town this close to London with a globally significant airport could be so leafy. We're also fortunate that our trees are not subjected to a vigorous timber industry. If you look down from space, you'd see them covering more than a quarter of Crawley, far more than the national average, and we're fortunate to have the amenity value of several forests and wooded parks.

This strategy will prevent us from becoming complacent or losing the advantage we already have. We know trees are a vital component of a successful ecosystem and provide us with a raft of economic and social benefits. We also know we need to care for them, but we are fortunate to have a team of tree officers and park staff who intimately know the trees, our soil, climate and environment to manage them effectively over the previous decades. Our focus is on maintaining the coverage we already have and ensuring the species best suited to surviving and thriving in our local environment are selected. This strategy will ensure that we plant trees for the future using organisational expertise which is rooted in our past.

Councillor Bob Noyce

Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change

With reference to The England Trees Action Plan 2021 – 2024 Sir William Worsley, Chair of the Forestry Commission states;

“As well as tackling climate change and providing vital habitats, trees and woodlands are a pivotal part of our landscapes, particularly when planted and supported in and around our towns and cities and can provide space for people to connect with nature.

Trees and woodlands also play an increasingly important role in building thriving rural economies, helping to level up the whole of the UK, and supporting a green recovery by stimulating markets for timber and wood products as renewable resources.

Our trees are facing unprecedented environmental challenges and our woodlands need to be resilient to this, including those that we plant over the coming decades.

Alongside planting more trees, we must protect the precious ancient woodlands and veteran trees which have stood for hundreds of years. The oldest tree in England is estimated to be 2,000 to 3,000 years old. By preserving these and planting more to withstand the test of time, trees can form a central part of our vision to leave the environment in a better state than we found it for generations to come.

We must come together to protect, improve, and enhance our trees and woodlands across England which is why we will be providing improved funding options for different types of treescapes and landowners and managers. This includes the new England Woodland Creation Offer which will support landowners and managers with establishing trees and woodlands as we transition into our new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery Schemes.

It is not just about funding the trees and woodlands of tomorrow but supporting their long term management and protection. That is why we will develop better guidance, provide more advice, develop platforms and opportunities for innovation and encourage more people into this thriving sector as we create more jobs throughout the whole supply chain.”

Introduction

This strategy sets out how Crawley Borough Council will carry out its responsibilities for

- Urban tree planting
- Diversity of species
- Woodland management
- Communal tree projects

It sets the standards for all tree planting, young tree maintenance and woodland sustainability for Crawley Borough Council trees across the borough. The strategy adheres to the relevant British Standards:

- BS8545 Trees: From nursery to independence in the landscape
- BS5837 Trees in relation to design, demolition, and constructions
- BS3998 Tree work

Aims

Crawley Borough Council aims to:

- Create a sustainable tree planting strategy that supports evidence-based decisions to continue developing and improving urban tree cover
- Increase species diversity across the town (based on the tree survey being carried out) to ensure overall health of the tree stock and improving resistance to current and potential threats
- Replace all council trees which have been removed (excluding self-seeded trees) from amenity land where practicable
- Review practices periodically to improve tree planting and aftercare
- Record progress, maintain the tree database and use the experience and lessons learnt to inform future decision making and strategies

In summary, planting and establishing the right tree in the right place will deliver benefits for people, for wildlife, the climate and the economy.

Benefits

Efficient management of the urban tree cover provides many benefits including:

- Conserving heating and cooling of the environment by providing shelter and shade
- Tree foliage removes and processes pollutants from our environment

- Intercepting rain and water runoff which reduces flooding
- Providing noise barriers
- Creating desirable landscapes and increasing amenity value
- Providing important ecological habitats and wildlife corridors
- Providing health and wellbeing benefits, proven that a walk in the trees reduces stress

Background

The 2016 survey by Forest Research identified that Crawley Borough exceeded the 20% canopy cover recommended by the Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Network for inland towns and cities. The national average for canopy cover is 16.4%; Crawley has 26.6 per cent coverage which is 10.2 per cent above the national average.

Canopy cover is defined as the percentage of the ground covered by a tree crowns when viewed from above. The forest survey includes all trees and does not distinguish between public and privately owned trees.

Planting more trees is not the only way to maintain this canopy cover. Good management of the existing trees and woodlands will maximise the current benefits and protect future cover.

Some diseases such as Ash Die Back (ADB) will have a significant detrimental effect on the canopy cover.

CBC's tree database holds valuable information on the council-owned tree stock including existing quality, variety and quantity of canopy coverage. This information directs decisions on planting and maintenance.

CBC current policy and service level determines that work will be undertaken on trees that are reported/inspected and deemed to be dead, dying or dangerous. This policy should deliver a robust tree stock that can withstand impact from the urban environment and environmental conditions.

Reasons for a tree planting strategy

There are an estimated 250,000+ trees across the Borough, approximately 13,000 have been surveyed as they are risk assessed as high interest (trees that are deemed to be likely to strike people or property). The tree survey is still ongoing and it is estimated that it will take a further two years to survey the remaining 7,000 high interest trees.

CBC declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. The subsequent Climate Emergency Action Plan directed the need for a sustainable tree planting strategy to support the council in tackling the effects of climate change. This Tree Planting Strategy has been developed and is presented as a realistic, affordable and sustainable approach.

Crawley by design has always enjoyed a high level of tree cover throughout the town, in its many parks and woodlands as well as within the amenity spaces in the urban environment. The available space to replace trees on a like for like basis is no longer sustainable or viable due to:

- Increasing urbanisation which diminishes suitable space
- Changes to insurance specifications which requires greater distances between buildings and trees
- An increase in the provision of Wi-Fi enabling infrastructure such as posts and underground cables across the Town. Trees cannot be planted on top or near underground services

New and increasing pests and diseases incur additional responsibilities in managing biosecurity to ensure the tree stock is protected e.g., procurement of stock from reputable, disease-free source.

The overarching principal widely supported by industry experts such as The Tree Council, Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission is to have “the right tree in the right place”. This document will set out the strategy for Crawley Borough Council that will support that principal. The process will ensure that pertinent information is considered so that sound, objective and evidence-based decisions are made.

Future Plan

Recording of tree planting and aftercare

The tree database will continue to be used to capture newly planted trees and their aftercare. This will produce a healthier more reliable tree stock in future as essential maintenance will be planned and executed.

It is expected that trees planted as part of new developments will be protected and managed responsibly by developers. If further assurance and safeguarding is required, this could be achieved by amending planning conditions.

Species Diversity

Future planting and selection of species will consider:

- The continuation of existing native species
- Urban compatible species e.g.
 - Not planting fruiting species in areas where it will increase risks of slips and falls, and pests such as wasps.
 - Not planting species with a high water take-up that may affect nearby building foundations.
 - Not planting species that have an invasive root structure which has the potential to damage property e.g., pavements and walls.
 - Not planting species that will obstruct or interfere with overhead or underground services
 - Ensure that the size of the planting area is sufficient to maintain a mature tree.
- Compatible with existing ecology
- Tolerant of predicted future climates. This may involve diversifying the stock as traditional native species are less tolerant to drought e.g., birch trees
- Disease-resistant and disease- tolerant where possible.

Funding

Section 106 funds, provided through the planning application tree mitigation scheme, is sufficient to fund planting for this strategy, including aftercare. The mitigation scheme provides sufficient funding to purchase the tree and one replacement if required along with staff time to plant the tree and maintain it for five years. After that time the tree should be established and will be funded from the normal tree maintenance budget.

Woodland Trust funding can be allocated to other organisations that may wish to plant trees within their land e.g. schools, volunteer organisations or private bodies. As there is sufficient funding

through Section 106 there is no requirement for the council to draw on this, therefore providing opportunity for other organisations that are unable to fund tree planting themselves.

Tree Planting Process

The Councils Tree Officers will assess locations and suitability for tree planting and choose a suitable species, size and age of tree to be planted, taking into account the following factors:

- Trees will only be planted in land owned by the council to avoid liability and maintenance issues
- To prevent property damage and to adhere to insurance specifications, small trees will not be planted within 5m and large trees within 15m of a property
- In most circumstances trees will not be planted over pipes, cables and other services running underground to prevent damage in the future
- Avoid species where the canopy will overhang into highways or obstruct sight lines etc
- The existing tree stocks will not be adversely affected by new planting
- Trees will be procured from a safe and reputable source that can provide plant passport documentation
- To prevent the introduction of pests and diseases that could be detrimental to the Councils tree stock donated trees will not be accepted
- Experienced council staff or approved contractors will plant new trees. Members of the public/volunteers will only be permitted to plant under the supervision of a council Tree Officer to ensure this essential task is completed correctly giving the tree the best chance of survival
- In order to maintain urban tree cover, all felled trees will be considered for replacement (this excludes self-seeded trees and saplings which have established as weeds). However, it may not always be possible to replace on a one for one basis
- Wherever possible re-planting should take place in the same location the tree was removed from. In cases where it is not possible to replace in the same location then a location nearby will be sought
- Where trees are removed due to disease the ground shall be quarantined for two years to allow the disease to disperse before new trees are planted to avoid reinfection.

Tree Pests, Diseases and Risks

Current threats to the tree stock are varied and are being managed within the standard dead, dying or dangerous process. If it is determined that a diseased tree poses a threat to other trees then the tree will be removed to prevent contamination.

New threats such as ADB and oak processionary moth (OPM) are managed following the guidance which has been provided from organisations such as DEFRA or the Forestry Commission. Further details can be found by visiting government websites – www.gov.uk/environment/forest-and-woodland

The council has managed the impact of ADB within its existing policy and budget, however, if this escalates, further resources may be required. In this circumstance it should be noted that replacement of felled diseased trees may not be possible due to sheer numbers.

Volunteers

An area in Tilgate Park has been earmarked for a new Community Woodland as part of the Queens Green Canopy pledge.

Volunteers (and other stakeholders) were offered the opportunity to assist Tree Officers with planting a range and variety of suitable trees to create the Community Woodland (approximately 500 trees). Further volunteer work will take place over a number of years to maintain and establish the woodland.

If successful other woodland schemes in different locations can be considered, in conjunction with ward members, neighbourhood volunteer groups, resident forums, Gatwick Greenspace etc.

Justin Roberts

Neighbourhood Services Support Manager

November 2023

Crawley Borough Council tree planting strategy



Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce Crawley Borough Council’s Tree Planting Strategy, to thank everyone who has worked on its production and, of course, everyone who works in some way to look after our trees.

This is an area of environmental stewardship in which the council occupies a position of strength. There are more than 250,000 trees in a variety of species owned by the council, plus tens of thousands more owned by others around the borough. Visitors to Crawley will surely never have imagined a new town this close to London with a globally significant airport could be so leafy. We’re also fortunate that our trees are not subjected to a vigorous timber industry. If you look down from space, you’d see them covering more than a quarter of Crawley, far more than the national average, and we’re fortunate to have the amenity value of several forests and wooded parks.

This strategy will prevent us from becoming complacent or losing the advantage we already have. We know trees are a vital component of a successful ecosystem and provide us with a raft of economic and social benefits.



We also know we need to care for them, but we are fortunate to have a team of tree officers and park staff who intimately know the trees, our soil, climate and environment to manage them effectively over the previous decades. Our focus is on maintaining the coverage we already have and ensuring the species best suited to surviving and thriving in our local environment are selected. This strategy will ensure that we plant trees for the future using organisational expertise which is rooted in our past.

Councillor Bob Noyce

Cabinet member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change

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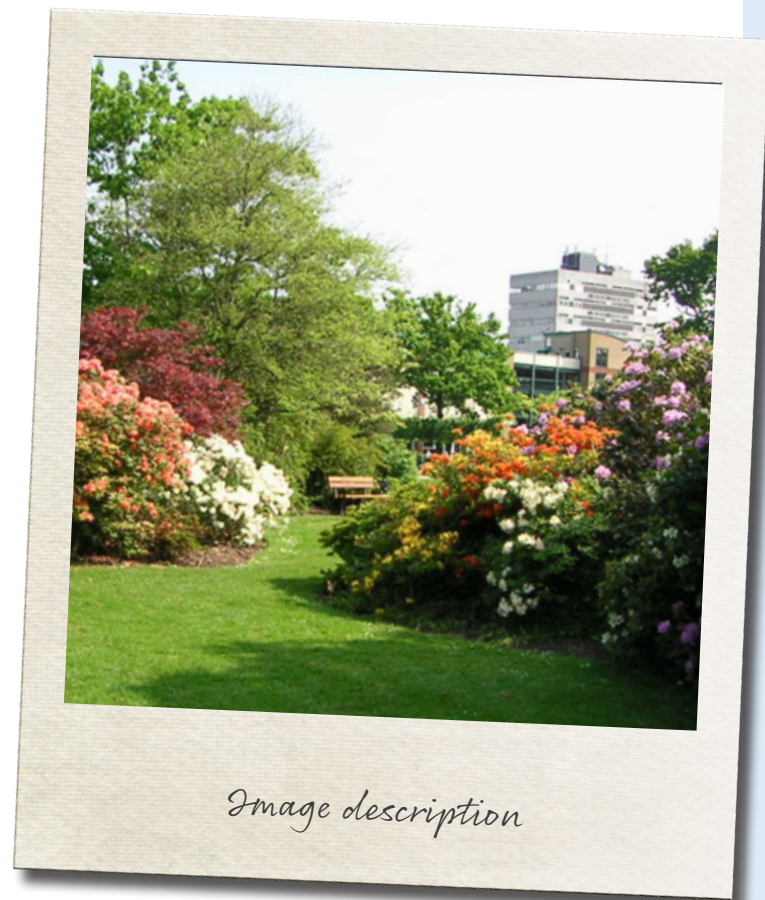
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Background

Trees are an essential element of a healthy balanced environment. They improve wellbeing for our residents, businesses and visitors.

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The action plan identified the need for a sustainable tree planting strategy to help tackle the effects of climate change.

Crawley Borough Council is responsible for the management of trees on its land including woodlands, residential and commercial areas.

Crawley has always had a high percentage of tree cover. When trees fail it is becoming ever more challenging as the available and suitable open space is reducing.

There are an estimated 250,000 council-owned trees across the Borough, 13,000 have been surveyed so far as they are 'high interest' which means trees that have been identified as likely to strike people or property if they were to fail or fall.

The tree survey is ongoing and a further 7,000 trees will be added to the tree database over the next two years.



Image description

Crawley Borough Council's current tree policy prioritises work on trees that are dead, dying or dangerous.

This tree planting strategy has been created to inform future management decisions that will support a healthy and sustainable tree stock and tree canopy.

Strategy aims

A sustainable planting strategy will help manage and maintain Crawley's trees and tree canopy to ensure they meet the needs of the present and future generations by:

- Replanting the tree stock where possible and appropriate, planting the right tree in the right place
- Preserving, maintaining and managing the existing tree canopy cover
- Planting a diverse range of tree species that will thrive in a warmer and wetter climate
- Purchasing tree stock only from reputable and safe suppliers, ensuring as far as possible that new trees are disease and pest free.

Did you know?

There are an estimated
250,000 council-owned trees
across the whole borough.

The benefits of trees

Environmental

- Conserves property energy by reducing the need to heat or cool because they provide shelter and shade
- Removes and processes pollutants from our environment through tree foliage
- Reduces the risk of flooding by tree roots soaking up rainwater
- Trees provide a very efficient barrier to noise
- Provides important ecological habitats and wildlife corridors.

Social

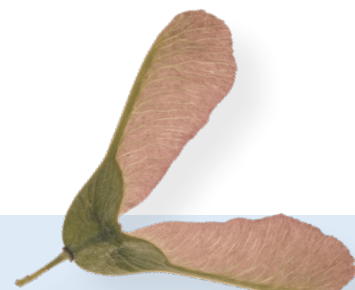
- Increases amenity value and creating desirable landscapes
- Provides physical health benefits and increases feelings of wellbeing
- Psychological improvements by providing a link with the natural environment which reduces stress
- Creating a pleasant community areas to be, exercise or meet others.

Economic

- Reduces heating and cooling costs by providing shelter and shade to properties
- Reduces the health care costs to a population by improving health and wellbeing
- Increases property values in areas with high tree canopy cover.

Did you know?

Trees are an essential part of a healthy environment, they improve people's wellbeing and provide an efficient barrier to noise.

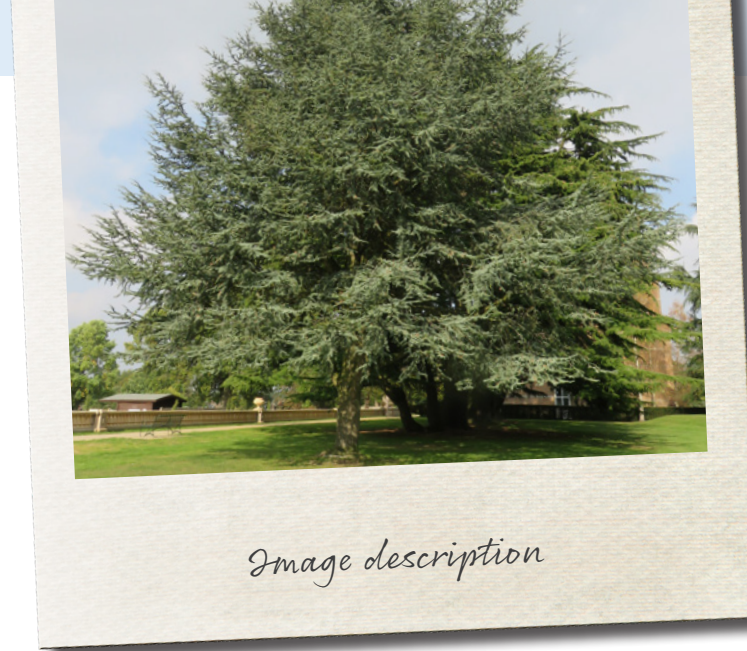


The planting process

An annual planting plan will be created using information from the tree survey database.

Newly planted trees will be maintained to the British Standard best practice.

Maintenance and management of newly planted trees will be recorded on the tree database.



Tree selection criteria

The council's Tree Officers will select tree species for planting using the following criteria:

- Is it an existing native species?
- Will it suit the location?
- Is it the right size and spread in relation to the surrounding structures?
- Is there enough open space for the tree to thrive?
- Is it compatible with existing ecology?
- Will it be tolerant of future warmer/wetter climates?



Overview of the planting process:



Did you know?
Crawley has 26.6 per cent tree canopy cover which is 10.2 per cent above the national average.



Planting criteria

Trees will only be planted on land owned by Crawley Borough Council.

Felled trees will be considered for replacement, however it may not always be possible to replace on a one for one basis. (N.B. this excludes self-seeded trees and saplings).

Small trees will not be planted within 5m, and large trees not within 15m, of property to prevent encroachment and property damage. This also adheres to current insurance requirements.

In most circumstances, trees will not be planted over pipes, cables or other services running underground.

Species where the canopy will obstruct highways, footpaths or sight lines will be avoided.

The existing tree stock will not be adversely affected by new planting.

Trees will be procured from a safe, reputable, disease and pest-free source that can provide bio passport documentation. Donated trees will not be accepted.

Experienced staff or approved contractors only will plant new trees. Volunteers will be supervised by a council Tree Officer to ensure correct planting, therefore giving the tree the best chance of survival.

Wherever possible re-planting will take place in the same location the tree was removed from. In cases where it is not possible to replace in the same location, then a location nearby will be sought.

Where trees are removed due to disease the ground will be quarantined for two years to allow the disease to disperse before new trees are planted to avoid reinfection.

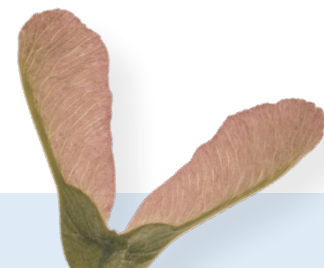
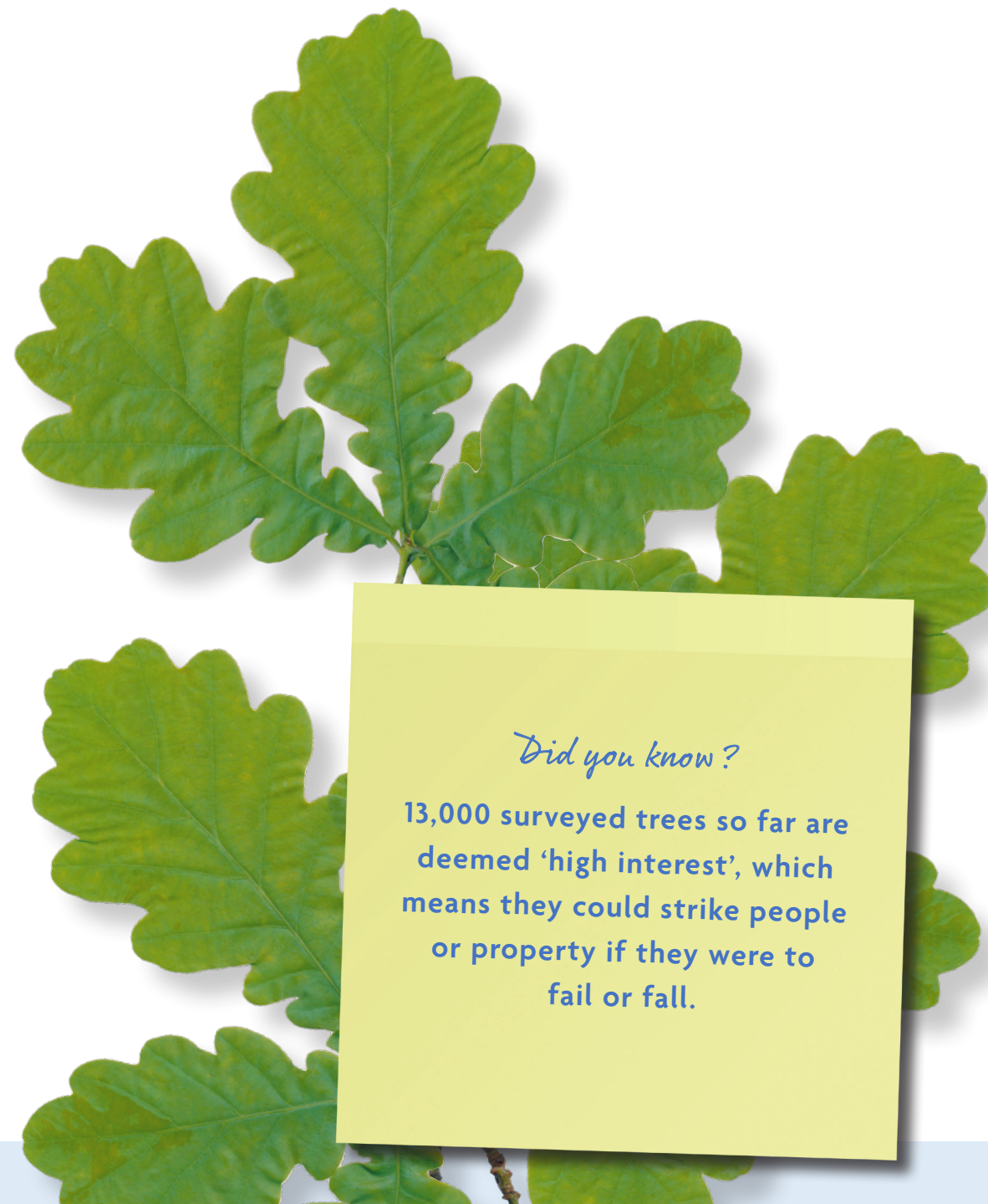


Image description

Canopy facts

- Some diseases such as ash dieback will have a significant detrimental impact on the canopy cover. At present there is no known cure
- Canopy cover is defined as the percentage of ground covered by a tree crown viewed from above
- Good management of the existing trees and woodlands will protect future tree canopy cover
- Crawley has 26.6 per cent tree canopy cover which is 10.2 per cent above the national average
- Planting more trees is not the only way to maintain canopy cover.



Did you know?

13,000 surveyed trees so far are deemed 'high interest', which means they could strike people or property if they were to fail or fall.



Image description

Funding

Current funding provided through Section 106 payments in the form of developer contributions for tree mitigations is sufficient for this strategy.

Funding includes tree purchase, planting and aftercare including one replacement if required.

Other organisations that wish to plant trees on their land will be encouraged to seek grant funding opportunities.

Community woodland development

An area of Tilgate Park has been earmarked for a new Community Woodland as part of the Queen's Green Canopy pledge.

Volunteers assisted with tree planting and will continue to manage the trees for the next few years until the Community Woodland is established.



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Agenda Item 7

Potential Establishment of Scrutiny Panels, OSC/316

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Following the Full Council meeting in October 2023, a [Notice of Motion](#) was passed which requested the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission “to look into setting up a cross-party Scrutiny Panel, to look at how household waste recycling rates in Crawley can be improved”.
- 1.2 It is the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider and establish Scrutiny Panels as required.
- 1.3 There are several factors that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission need to consider in advance of determining the recommendation:
 - a) The careful selection and prioritisation of review work is essential if the scrutiny function is to be productive, achieve added value and retain credibility. The work programme should also be realistic, flexible and retain spare capacity so that additional matters raised during the year can be addressed.
 - b) The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered the Waste and Recycling Contract Extension Report (HPS/34) at its meeting on 6 March 2023. There was support for a further report to OSC once the National Waste Strategy was known, indicating proposals for the Council’s collection regime.
 - c) On 21 October 2023, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published the Government response to the “*Simpler Recycling*” [consultation](#) (formerly Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England). Appendix A features an [extract](#) from the Government’s response on key proposals along with proposed implementation dates and timelines. This was noted in the Council’s Budget Strategy 2024/25-2026/27 report ([FIN/636](#)). The final consultation for all local authorities closed on 20 November 2023 on additional policies related to “*Simpler Recycling*” in England and the Council is awaiting the results.

In summary, changes will see:

- More standardised recycling and waste collections across the country, including mandated waste collections as all authorities in England must collect the same waste streams for waste, recycling or composting from households.
- Residual (general, non-recyclable) waste collections to be collected (at least) fortnightly.
- Garden waste will remain a subscription based fee-paying service.
- Co-mingled recycling will continue to be collected on a fortnightly basis.
- A separate weekly food waste and absorbent hygiene products collection will be mandated. Waste collection authorities are required to introduce these arrangements with effect from beginning of April 2026.
- A separate soft plastics collection (crisp packets, cling film) will be required by March 2027.

To implement the above changes to any collection regime, the Council will need to agree a new specification for the new collection arrangements by September 2024 to meet a contract start date 1 April 2026.

Agenda Item 7

2. Recommendations:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

- a) Consider in more detail the merits of setting up a cross-party Waste Recycling Scrutiny Panel (following the guidance set out in Appendix B), and then agree or not, the establishment of a Panel.
- b) Should the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agree the establishment of a Scrutiny Panel, request Democratic Services to seek nominations (including Chair) from Group Leaders for a Panel in accordance with political proportionality, for approval by the Commission, to ensure a swift commencement, taking into account the timescales noted above.
- c) Should a Scrutiny Panel not be agreed, propose of a one-off report to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission indicating proposals for the Council's collection regime on waste and recycling options.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To consider the Full Council proposal in a timely manner.

Appendix A

Extract –

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs – Government response on key proposals

Timeline for implementation from households

Collection of dry recyclable waste streams

The dry recyclable waste streams (excluding plastic films) must be collected from households by the end of the financial year in which payments to local authorities for packaging materials under EPR will commence. This means they must be collected by 31 March 2026.

We will work with local authorities to support them to improve their recycling performance and overcome any difficulties they might face in relation to compliance within the legislative timeframes.

We will require recyclable plastic film to be collected by 31 March 2027. In the lead up to this, front-of-store and postal takeback schemes will continue to be a route for collection.

Collection of food waste

Waste collection authorities will be required to introduce weekly food waste collections to all households in England, including flats, by 31 March 2026 – unless they need longer to transition due to a long-term waste disposal contract (see the next section ‘Collection of food waste: where there are long-term residual waste disposal contracts’ for more detail). We recognise that it is most efficient to make changes to waste services holistically, so the deadline has been aligned with the implementation date for household dry recycling. This single date will ensure a consistent rollout of new requirements across England for most waste collection authorities and avoid confusion for householders.

If a local authority chooses to co-collect food and garden waste from households, they must ensure that food waste is collected for free on a weekly basis by 31 March 2026, where they are continuing to co-collect it with garden waste. We are consulting on providing an exemption to allow food and garden waste to be collected together in one bin. If using an exemption, waste collectors would not be required to produce a written assessment to co-collect. This exemption would apply for both household and non-household municipal premises. Subject to consultation with relevant parties as per the requirements in the Environment Act 2021, we will confirm these exemptions in upcoming regulations.

To ensure local authorities have the time they need to prepare, we have pushed back the date that these reforms come into force from those consulted on, acting on feedback from local authorities and the wider waste and producer sector, to provide additional time to prepare and align with implementation of EPR for packaging.

Government will provide local authorities with funding to meet agreed reasonable new burdens arising from this policy, including up-front transition costs and ongoing operational costs. We will be working with waste collection authorities to allocate funding to local authorities to implement separate food waste collections.

Collection of food waste: where there are long-term residual waste disposal contracts

The government's position is that all local authorities should implement food waste collections by the end of March 2026. However, we recognise that there are exceptional circumstances in which specific local authorities may need longer due to long-term waste disposal (mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste) contracts that run beyond 31 March 2026. Government is not prepared to meet the costs of breaking long-term contracts.

Defra will proactively work with local authorities to provide transitional arrangements where needed to avoid contract-breaking. Any local authority that does not request a transitional arrangement and is subject to variation or contract break costs must meet those costs itself. The Secretary of State may in certain circumstances specify that an authority should be subject to a transitional arrangement, where the Secretary of State is satisfied that there would be a significant cost to the taxpayer if an arrangement was not in place.

The reduction of food waste collected within the residual waste stream following the introduction of food waste collections could cause increased contractual costs or financial penalties for affected waste disposal or unitary authorities. Our evidence shows that it would not represent good value for money were government to compensate waste disposal authorities and unitary authorities for these costs, as required by the new burdens doctrine. This is because the carbon benefits may be marginal compared to far greater carbon savings per pound spent on other government projects.

We will therefore provide named waste collection authorities with bespoke transitional arrangements, so that they have until existing long-term contracts expire, or at an earlier date as agreed, before they need to bring in separate weekly food waste collections. Following one-to-one engagement with local authorities this year, waste collection authorities who require a transitional arrangement will be listed in the commencement regulations, along with the date by which they are required to provide a weekly food waste collection. This will ensure that there is no uncertainty in respect of the legislation. As separately collecting food waste for treatment by anaerobic digestion (AD) remains the best environmental outcome, we will require these waste collection authorities to introduce a separate, weekly food waste collection service to all households as soon as contracts allow.

We will continue to work with affected local authorities and industry following publication of this response to see what can be done to introduce food waste collections sooner than contract expiry dates. If a local authority contract ends sooner than expected or they can amend it to incorporate separate weekly food waste collections at an earlier date than the contract end date, it might be possible to amend the date in the commencement regulations and/or bring the ongoing new burdens funding forward, subject to ministerial agreement and funding at the time. Government will remain in contact with local authorities that receive a transitional arrangement to assess annually if this date can be brought forward.

Collection of garden waste

Waste collection authorities will be required to collect garden waste in accordance with the new requirements by 31 March 2026, but, as is currently the case, they will still be able to charge for the service. This means that the duty to collect garden waste only arises once the householder has requested its collection and has paid any charge.

Annex A: Summary of implementation dates

The summary below sets out the dates by which waste collection authorities, non-domestic premises that produce household waste, and producers of relevant waste^{[footnote 1](#)} must comply with the new requirements in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as amended by the Environment Act 2021.

Implementation dates

New requirements for collections of dry recyclable materials (except plastic film) from:

- households: by the end of the financial year in which EPR for packaging commences – by 31 March 2026
- businesses and relevant non-domestic premises: by 31 March 2025
- micro-firms: by 31 March 2027

New requirements for collections of plastic film from:

- households, businesses, non-domestic premises and micro-firms: by 31 March 2027

New requirements for collections of food waste from:

- households: by 31 March 2026 – unless a transitional arrangement applies^{[footnote 2](#)}
- businesses and non-domestic premises: by 31 March 2025
- micro-firms: by 31 March 2027

New requirements for collections of garden waste from:

- households: by 31 March 2026

New requirements for minimum collections of residual waste from:

- households: by 31 March 2026
1. Relevant waste is waste from industrial or commercial premises which is similar in nature and composition to household waste. ↵
 2. Where long-term waste disposal (mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste) contracts present a barrier to introducing separate food waste collections, a longer implementation period may be required. Defra will continue to engage with affected local authorities. ↵

[Government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

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General Information and Guidance on Selecting and Rejecting Topics for Scrutiny Reviews

There is a massive amount of information and guidance available on scrutiny. It should be stressed all of the following is guidance and is not prescriptive.

Selecting topics for review

Selecting and prioritising the right issues to review and scrutinise is crucial to the success of scrutiny. It will add value to the Council's work and improve the credibility of scrutiny. Improvements need to be made where it matters, can make a difference and produce tangible benefits.

The following nine questions cover matters the Commission must be very clear on before approving a review. An explanation of each question has been added.

1. What, precisely, will be reviewed?

Members need to be certain exactly which aspect of a service they want to review. Failure to do this will have a knock-on effect for the rest of the work. Imprecision from the Commission will mean a difficult time for the panel and its supporting officers.

2. Why should it be reviewed?

This is the most important of the nine questions. The best topics are those where there is:

- high Member interest
- high public interest
- evidence the service is under performing
- clear user dissatisfaction
- certainty the review will make a difference where other work will not
- a clear link to corporate priorities
- a clear link to key areas for improvement
- a new, approach being taken by the Commission or a panel

3. Are the reasons for the review good ones, which would stand up to scrutiny themselves?

Could you justify spending the Council's money on the review to a constituent? If so, it's probably a good topic.

Scrutiny needs to be able to justify why it chooses the reviews it does. The Commission is accountable for the resources it uses.

4. How will the subject be reviewed and is this achievable by the resources available?

While imaginative thinking among Members is always encouraged, it is important to be aware of reality.

Members must be conscious of officer resources available (and not just in the service area itself) and other costs (such as visits to other councils). Launching a review of a severely short staffed service may make problems worse.

5. What is the outcome of the review expected to be and how will it improve the lives of Crawley's residents?

It is not always easy to predict, but often the sign of a good review is one where the likely improvements are obvious. If Members are struggling to think of the wider benefits of a review, it is unlikely to be a good choice.

6. Will the outcome assist in achieving the corporate objectives?

The corporate objectives set out the longer term aims for the town. Everything the Council does should fit in with these, scrutiny reviews included.

While Members are not expected to know these off by heart, they can't be ignored totally.

7. Are the issues (and outcomes) important to local people? Will the Commission add value?

An ideal review is where both the issue and outcome are important to local people.

There are issues of great importance to which the Council can do little about. An additional runway at Gatwick is a good example. A panel would risk becoming a talking shop, whilst acknowledging there would be great public interest in the issue, the final decision would be made elsewhere.

On the other hand, a review of some of the Council's support services (such as finance or legal) may not be of high importance to the public. However, it could lead to savings and a knock-on effect on council tax.

Most importantly, it is important to consider if the review will actually add value.

8. What sort of timescale is involved?

In general, there is a presumption against reviews which have either very long or very short timescales.

A very short timescale suggests not much work is needed and it could be done on a much more informal basis. The exception would be where the Commission itself has been set a very tight timescale. An example might be the response to an important consultation where a detailed discussion at a panel could be more useful than at the more time constrained Commission.

A review which is expected to take a very long time is again less likely to help as it will become disjointed when panel Members and officers change.

9. Are the potential recommendations likely to be financially viable?

This will be quite hard to judge before a review starts work.

Ultimately the Commission does not have the luxury of implementing its own work and must be conscious of costs. There is no point starting a review whose recommendations will be rejected immediately because they are too expensive. The Commission must be realistic about what it can achieve.

Reasons to reject a Review

1. It's a new policy area

Panels suggest areas where new policies are needed and may even come up with some ideas. They can also investigate whether policies are having the desired effect. Scrutiny does not look at creating new policies.

2. It duplicates recent, existing or programmed work

Members must be very aware of duplication. There will be exciting topics where Members would love to get involved, but if something similar is being done elsewhere, doing it again is a waste of time.

3. New legislation or guidance is expected within the next year

There is no point reviewing something where the rules governing the service are about to change. Officers will know this and can advise appropriately.

4. There are other, better, ways of picking up the review

Scrutiny isn't always the best way of dealing with a problem. There may be other better, easier ways of resolving issues – perhaps by simply talking to the appropriate officers or Cabinet Members.

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Agenda Item 11

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Agenda Item 12

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