



Report on Tree Survey of Significant Trees on MTC land

Background

In August 2025, Councillors approved the commissioning of an independent survey of significant trees across the Town Council estate. The appointed contractor is a highly qualified and experienced tree surveyor, who also undertook the inspection of MTC-owned trees in 2024.

As part of the initial 2024 commission, the contractor requested an 18-month return visit to allow comparative assessment across different seasons and to refine inspection intervals.

In May 2025, MTC completed the devolution of several parks and open spaces from Somerset Council, resulting in a substantial increase to the Council's overall tree stock. Many of the inherited sites had tree surveys due to expire from September 2025. This presented an opportunity to gain a complete and up-to-date understanding of the newly devolved trees, assess any risks or issues and ensure that all sites benefit from a consistent surveying approach and record-keeping system.

The full survey took place during October and November 2025 and comprehensive reports have now been provided for all locations.

Findings

The survey focused on significant trees within the Town Council estate. In accordance with the Tree Risk Management Strategy, each tree was assessed based on:

- The likelihood of failure, and
- The potential impact or harm arising from such failure.

Wherever possible, recommended works prioritise the retention of trees. Mitigating works are proposed in the first instance, while balancing:

- The ecological and amenity value of the tree,
- The financial implications of remedial works, and
- The anticipated longevity of the tree following intervention.

A range of works has been identified across all surveyed sites. These include:

- Removal of a small number of trees,
- Dead-wooding operations, and

- Trees requiring continued monitoring.

The Clerk has reviewed the surveyor's reports and compiled all identified works into a tracking spreadsheet. Each work item has been assigned a priority rating (High, Medium, or Low). While some elements of urgency may involve professional judgement, the current assessment provides a clear and manageable starting point for operational planning.

Summary of required works:

- 14 High priority
- 14 Medium priority
- 12 Low priority

These numbers may change as reports are further reviewed and natural tree decline occurs, but they present a reliable baseline for ongoing management.

Recommended works include a combination of in-house tasks and works requiring external contractors.

Some trees are located within conservation areas and therefore require a Section 211 notification to Somerset Council where works affect live growth. Dead wood removal or intervention on dead, split, hanging, or imminently dangerous trees does not require notification, but as a precaution, notifications are considered as good practice where time permits.

Financial and Legal Considerations

At the September 2025 meeting, Councillors resolved:

"To vire £5,000 from the Devolution Earmarked Reserve to the Tree Management Budget, and to delegate to the Clerk authority to expend, within the remaining tree management budget, for any high-priority works arising from the survey."

As a result, approximately **£7,000** remains available within the current financial year for tree works.

The Council has a legal obligation to manage risks associated with trees on its land. Commissioning a suitably qualified consultant to undertake the survey demonstrates compliance with this duty. Completing the identified works will further ensure that the Council meets its responsibilities.

Relevant powers are provided under:

- **Open Spaces Act 1906, S.10** – powers relating to the management and maintenance of open spaces and associated vegetation.
- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990, S.211** – requirements relating to notification of proposed works to trees located within conservation areas (where no TPO applies).

Recommendation:

That Council:

1. Reviews the survey reports and accompanying spreadsheet.
2. Approves the identified tree works and authorises expenditure up to the remaining tree management budget for 2025/26 (approximately £7,000), enabling the Clerk to arrange and complete the priority works as outlined in the independent survey.

Additionally, Council may wish to:

- Note the medium- and low-priority items for inclusion in future budget planning.
- Note that Section 211 notifications will be submitted by the Clerk where required.

Ben Parker
Town Clerk
December 2025