

Meeting of:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 20 January 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Tree Strategy Update Report
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Vale of Glamorgan Tree Strategy, summarising progress, challenges, and future priorities
Report Owner:	Rob Thomas – Chief Executive
Responsible Officer:	Colin Smith – Head of Neighbourhood Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Due to the corporate nature of this report, no specific Ward Member consultation has been undertaken. Committee Reports Head of Head of Sustainable Development Operational Manager - Accountancy
Policy Framework:	This report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
Executive Summary: - This update report provides an overview of progress on the Vale of Glamorgan Tree Strategy since its adoption. The strategy underpins the Council's commitment to protecting, enhancing, and valuing the local environment, supporting biodiversity, and addressing the climate emergency. - Completed actions to date are summarised as follows; internal tree inspection service established, electronic asset system implemented, tree information webpage launched, Friends of Trees volunteer scheme implemented and live, and feasibility studies for a community tree nursery has been completed. - The report includes an updated action table (21 actions) at Appendix A showing progress, lead departments, partners, and funding requirements. - There is an annual target to plant 1,500 trees (including 500 standards) which has been significantly exceeded, since the Strategy was implemented. The Strategy has also focused on planting the 'right tree, right place' principles.	

- In 2024/25 there were 13,454 trees planted and by the end of financial year 2025/26, it is projected that a total of 12,433 trees will be planted keeping the momentum of increasing our long-term objective, of increasing our tree canopy.
- In terms of other policy development, a draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on trees, woodlands, and hedges is in progress, as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP).
- There has also been focus on community engagement and volunteer opportunities have expanded and a dedicated webpage and sign-up system, is now operational.
- Future priorities will focus on delivering the remaining strategic actions, securing any external funding options, integrating The Tree Strategy into The Green Infrastructure Plan, and developing a tree sponsorship scheme.
- There will continue to be challenges around space limitations for planting, pest and disease threats (such as Ash Dieback), and budgetary pressures remain key risks. Additional resources, the use of volunteers and external funding will be essential to meet long-term objectives.
- Overall, continued investment and partnership working will be critical to achieving the Council's environmental and climate resilience goals.

Recommendation

1. That the Place Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) consider the contents of the report and the proposed priorities for the next reporting period.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To ensure Members are informed of the annual progress of actions contained within the Tree Strategy and additionally consider the challenges and achievements.

1. Background

- 1.1 As a Council, we are committed to investing in our green spaces and delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, meadow areas, grassland and other natural habitats across the Vale of Glamorgan to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.
- 1.2 Within the Council, trees fall within the remit of numerous departments of the Council, from Planning, Legal and Environmental Health, to Corporate Estates, Education, Parks and Countryside, Housing and Highways. Trees cannot be considered in isolation. They form a major part of our Green Infrastructure and how we manage them should complement other works, carried out by the Council, in terms of climate change measures.
- 1.3 The Council's Tree Strategy (2024/2039) was approved in principle by Cabinet 30th November 2023 (Minute number C173 refers) subject to the outcome of a 12-week consultation process and subsequently, the comments of the Council's Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

[Draft Tree Strategy Report](#)

- 1.4 The Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 16th January 2024 considered the draft Tree Strategy and the results of the public consultation and made recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny-ER/2024/24-01-16/Ref-from-Cab-VoG-Council-Tree-Strategy.pdf

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- 1.5 The Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 22nd February 2024 with a focus to protect and enhance the Vale's tree stock, support biodiversity and climate resilience and engage communities in tree planting and stewardship.

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/agendas/cabinet/2024/24-02-22.aspx

- 1.6 The Tree Strategy provides a unified direction for all Council departments in respect of tree management and provides a framework to consider the organisational and resource requirements, needed to address the current challenges and the opportunities highlighted by the broader scope of the climate change and biodiversity emergencies.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** An update of the action plan and associated actions of the first year of the Tree Strategy are summarised, at Appendix A.
- 2.2** In terms of tree planting, during 2024/25, there were 13,454 trees planted with a minimum of 500 of these being standard size trees or larger. During 2025/26, it is projected that a further 12,433 trees will be planted with a minimum of 500, being standard size trees or larger, far exceeding initial targets.
- 2.3** As part of promoting the new Strategy, the Arboricultural Team undertook a Tree Strategy roadshow with 7 locations selected around our main towns. These were generally well received by the community, although some feedback suggests that the advertisement of the roadshows did not quite reach, the wider community.
- 2.4** The next round of road shows will ensure that additional attempts to reach our wider community will be made, including contacting Town Councils, Community Councils, using the full potential of social media and advertising on the Council's website.
- 2.5** During the 2024/25 and 2025/26 planting season, the service area has focused on reintroducing highway street trees back into the urban street scene, initially replanting at existing or former tree locations utilising the existing pit area, and ensuring the right tree, the right place, and species selection. The Neighbourhood Services Arboricultural Team are working closely with the Highways Team, to produce the most effective, efficient and financially viable planting methodology, for highway tree reinstatements.
- 2.6** Internal customers who now request tree removal[s] must ensure the replanting costs of the appropriate quantity of replacement trees (and 3-year maintenance) is covered by their budget, before removal is approved and in consultation with the Senior Arboricultural Manager. This ensures that the tree asset is protected where possible, and any necessary replacement, appropriately managed.
- 2.7** One challenge in the first year of the Strategy, was to ensure all sections of the Council are aware of their legal obligations, with regard to trees and Neighbourhood Services now offer an internal service for tree inspections. This ensures compliance and provides an opportunity to bring in, some additional income.
- 2.8** Additionally, internal awareness of the new Tree Strategy has improved, ensuring that relevant departments are aware that this is a Council wide Strategy and not just for Neighbourhood Services and Countryside to manage.
- 2.9** New for the 2026 planting season are water bag trials. The service area will be trialling "water bags" for certain standard tree planting, in difficult to reach irrigation areas, which will assist with efficiencies and irrigation programming.
- 2.10** Also, for 2026, there will be trials of specific "messaging" on newly planted street trees aimed at engaging with volunteers, to help manage watering. The first trials will involve working closely with the Penarth Civic Society.
- 2.11** It has been noted, that limited urban space for planting will potentially become an issue based on current underground service placement, these situations will

become more apparent as we commence with re-introducing further trees into the street scene.

- 2.12** Additionally, there are likely challenges around the impact of pests and diseases (an ongoing example is Ash Dieback) which will continue to have an impact on our existing assets and consequently, on our objective to increase our tree canopy which invariably add further pressure on our targets.
- 2.13** Although the 5-year capital program (£100k for planting, £75k for cyclical maintenance) is aiding our strategic targets over a 5-year cycle (with 2026/27 being year 3), longer term budgetary constraints will affect cyclical maintenance schedules, unless additional funding is identified. Leading into year 4, the service area will prepare a further 5-year plan identifying any gaps and what funding will be necessary to achieve later goals.
- 2.14** As a service area, coordinating work to deliver the remaining actions such as nursery development, sponsorship schemes and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) policy adoption, as well as focusing on our long-term objective of increasing our overall tree canopy by 7.5% by 2039 and retaining the assets that we already have, and managing trees in the right sustainable way, will be our priority.
- 2.15** There will be a need to secure external funding for large-scale planting projects and the service area will have to retain a focus on continuing to strengthen community engagement and volunteer programmes to manage the increase in the tree stock, especially with the demands associated with new tree management.
- 2.16** Trees are, and will always be, an essential cost-effective way to improve the environment quality within our towns and villages, delivering physical, social wellbeing and economic benefits, as well as mitigating biodiversity loss, climate change, carbon storage, air quality, storm water management and improving amenity value.
- 2.17** As part of our vision, there will continue to be importance around integrating the Strategy with the Green Infrastructure Plan and promoting trees as public assets rather than liabilities, recognising their contribution to eco system provision.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Long term - The Tree Strategy sets out an approach to the management of trees that responds to short term issues of health and safety matters associated with trees in a way that undertakes works to promote the long-term health of trees. The Strategy highlights the value that trees provide to the Vale of Glamorgan and proposes an approach towards planting of further tree stock for longer terms benefits.
- 3.2** Prevention – The I-Tree assessment highlighted the deficiencies of canopy cover across the Vale of Glamorgan and the need to improve connectivity. The improved maintenance of trees will reduce failure rates and will help ensure planting is sustainable.

- 3.3** Collaboration – It will be necessary for officers to work with private developers and private landowners to encourage increased tree planting to assist with improving the tree canopy. Officers will also work with voluntary organisations to help manage its tree stock and seek external funding opportunities to both better maintain the existing stock and increase new tree planting.
- 3.4** Integration – A cross Council project team has worked together to date to develop the Tree Strategy, in recognition that the management of Vale of Glamorgan Council tree stock, does not fall to a single department. Going forward, training will be provided to members of staff to increase the awareness of sustainable tree management.
- 3.5** Involvement - The tree strategy highlights the need to work with local communities to develop partnerships for future tree planting schemes and maintenance. In addition, there will be focus on working with third party organisations and government departments, to develop funding opportunities.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** The Tree Strategy represents an important vision for trees in the Vale of Glamorgan area and is a vital part of the Council's response to the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency declaration.
- 4.2** The core principles and delivery mechanisms detailed within the Strategy, will help mitigate our changing climate by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, create shade and shelter thus keeping our urban areas cool and increase our resilience to flooding.
- 4.3** The Strategy will also seek to safeguard existing habitats and, through additional planting, trees will also create more, better, joined up habitat. As such, the Strategy also links to the Council's Biodiversity forward plan.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The current tree maintenance revenue budget for Parks and Highway trees (not including Country parks) is £127k. To assist with supporting the Tree Strategy, two capital bids were secured for 2024/25 and for a total of 5-years, totalling £175k per annum. £75k of this funding is for cyclical tree maintenance and £100k is for planting new trees.
- 5.2** In addition, the service spent circa £118k in 24/25 of which a £100k was funded from reserves dealing with the ongoing problem of Ash Die-Back and this work will need to continue for several years. In 25/26 there is a budget of £100k for Ash Die-Back works and a 26/27 cost pressure has been submitted for this additional work, for consideration.

- 5.3** All Council departments that manage land will continue to make provision to manage trees on their land in accordance with The Strategy, with key targets added to each department's annual performance indicators.
- 5.4** Responsibility for trees on education land rests with the relevant school and its Governing Body. All schools will however be encouraged to sign up the principles of the Tree Strategy.
- 5.5** It is recognised that the Council's financial position is extremely challenging and is likely to remain so. Therefore, all forms of external grant funding will be investigated to support The Strategy. In addition, Town and Community Councils, voluntary and private sector organisations and private individuals will be encouraged to increase their tree planting efforts.

Employment

- 5.6** A Senior Arboricultural Manager post is in place to help deliver the Tree Strategy action plan.
- 5.7** There is a future aspiration to create a Tree Preservation Officer post should suitable funding become available.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.8** There are no direct legal implications arising from the activities detailed within this report, but activities undertaken in response to the climate change emergency will be consistent with duties under the Environment Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

6. Background Papers

None

Appendix A

Action	Corporate Plan Objective	Well-being Objective	Timeframe	Completed Y/N	Progress	Lead Dept	Other Partners	Funding
1. Ensure that all sections of the Council are aware of legal obligations with regards to trees. Write to all sections of the Council with regard to trees on their sites Offer an internal service of inspection. Costs based upon size of the site and number of trees	Env. Responsible & Prosperous Vale	Protect, enhance & value environment	Dec 2024	Y (ongoing)	Internal service set up; strategy shared; working group in place	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Education, Social Services, Housing, Estates, Countryside, Highways	Recharge
2. Set up a dedicated electronic system to record findings and plot Council owned trees	Same	Same	End 2024	Y	Asset system now in place	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	—	Existing resources
3. Produce a schedule for tree inspections based upon size, age and position of tree	Same	Same	Apr 2026	Y	3-year cycle in place; strategic routes moving to 2-year	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Multiple	Additional resources
4. Highway & Park trees plotted and recorded on new electronic system and inspected	Same	Same	2027	On target	95% highway trees plotted; parks next	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Multiple	Additional resources
5. All remaining Council estate trees plotted and recorded on new electronic system and inspected.	Same	Same	2028	On target	Progressing	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Multiple	Additional resources
6. Progress 3 yearly tree inspection programme, on all trees.	Same	Same	2024–2027	On target	Programme underway	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Multiple	Existing resources
7. Enable all relevant inspecting officers to assist in the inspection of the Council's tree stock and aid in the identification of tree issues as part of their inspections.	Same	Same	2024	—	Training planned	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	—	Existing + training funds

8. Adopt C.A.V.A.T as a tree evaluation model to be applied as policy to aid decision-making around potential tree removals	Same	Same	Apr 2024	Y	Awaiting LTOA training date	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	—	Existing resources
9. Identify locations for tree planting / natural regeneration across the VOG working with other departments.	Same	Same	2025	Y	Active collaboration with Housing, Highways, Education	Place, Neighbourhood Services & Transport	All departments, private sector	Existing resources
10. Plant a minimum of 1500 trees, which will include a minimum of 500 standards, in predetermined targeted areas (right tree, right place), across the Council estate, annually.	Same	Same	Annual	Y	Exceeding target	All departments	—	Additional resources
11. Look at potential Council land to develop a community tree nursery of approximately 2Ha in size	Same	Same	Dec 2024	Y	Feasibility completed	All departments	Private sector	External funding
12. Look to develop a local tree nursery in partnership with third party organisations.	Same	Same	Dec 2026	On target	Seeking funding and partners	Places, Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Private sector	Additional + external
13. Draft trees, woodlands and Hedges SPG to reflect the climate emergency	Same	Same	2024	In progress	Linked to LDP process	Place	Planning Dept	LDP process
14. Launch a web page for the Council's internet site giving information on trees throughout the Vale.	Same	Same	Apr 2025	Completed	Includes email contact & volunteer signup	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Corporate Comms	Existing resources
15. Actively seek funding streams through third party organisations, external grant funds and internal grant funding opportunities to assist with planting more trees on Council land and to increase the town tree canopy.	Same	Same	Ongoing	Ongoing	Submitting bids; utilising S106	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Planning, private sector	S106/CIL

16. Launch a voluntary friends of Trees Scheme	Env. Responsible & Aspirational Vale	Protect, enhance & value environment	Sept 2025	Completed	Volunteer signup live	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Stakeholders, Town Councils	Existing resources
17. Review the tree strategy every 2 years	Env. Responsible & Aspirational Vale	Protect, enhance & value environment	2026	In progress	First review scheduled	All departments	Stakeholders	Existing resources
18. To increase canopy cover by 7.5% across the Council estate over the next 15 years	Env. Responsible & Aspirational Vale	Protect, enhance & value environment	2039	In progress	Long-term target	All departments	Stakeholders	Additional funding
19. Tree survey to be repeated, to ensure that targets have been achieved.	Same	Same	2032	In progress	Planned	Countryside & Environmental	—	Additional funding
20. Incorporate the tree strategy into the Green Infrastructure plan	Same	Same	2024	In progress	Draft GI plan in place	All departments	—	Existing resources
21. Develop a tree sponsorship scheme	Same	Same	2027	In progress	Exploring options	Neighbourhood Services & Transport	Stakeholders	Additional funding