

Leisure & Recreation Committee

Report: Allotment Tree Survey and Southbrook Forest Survey

Date: 2nd July 2026

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1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks Member approval to instruct professional tree survey work across Council-managed allotment sites, with the cost to be coded to the allotment budget.

The report also asks Members to agree that the Council writes to HBUF regarding the separate survey proposal for the forest area at Southbrook Recreation Ground, which is under their lease management.

2. Background

The Council is responsible for 9 allotment sites. Several of these sites contain mature trees or have trees located around their boundaries, including areas adjacent to public highways, neighbouring properties, footpaths, recreation land and allotment plots.

While trees provide significant environmental and amenity value, they also create a management responsibility. The Council has a duty to take reasonable steps to understand the condition of trees on land it manages and to act where risks are identified.

A tree survey has therefore been requested to establish an up-to-date inventory of trees across the allotment estate, identify any urgent or priority works, and provide a structured basis for future inspections, maintenance planning and budgeting.

3. Proposal

Treework Environmental Practice has provided a fee proposal to undertake tree survey work across the following allotment sites:

- Pickards Field;
- Kiln Lane;
- Churchward Avenue;
- Rodbourne Farm;
- Allington Road;
- Gorse Hill;
- Crowdys Hill; and
- Redcliffe Street.

The proposed scope includes:

- Tree surveys;
- Tree schedule data;
- Site plans;
- Recommendation schedules;
- Long-term budget summary information; and
- Re-inspection regime summary information.

The total cost of the allotment survey work is **£5,155.00**

The surveys can commence within four weeks of formal instruction, subject to access arrangements and confirmation.

4. Financial Implications

It's proposed that the cost of the allotment tree survey is coded to the allotment budget.

Members should note that the allotment budget is £18,000, with approximately £2,000 spent to date. This leaves approximately £16,000 available before this commitment.

If approved, the tree survey would commit £5,155, leaving approximately £10,845 available in the allotment budget for the remainder of the financial year, subject to any further committed or pending expenditure.

This will reduce the budget available for other allotment improvement works and may impact the Council's ability to deliver some potential projects this year. However, officers consider the survey to be an important exercise due to the Council's liability and the need to have a clear, evidence-based understanding of tree risk across the allotment estate.

Any works identified following the survey will be brought back to Members if they require additional budget approval.

5. Risk and Liability

The main driver for the survey is risk management.

Without an up-to-date tree survey, the Council has limited evidence to demonstrate that it has taken reasonable steps to inspect and manage trees on land under its control. This is particularly important where trees are located near allotment users, members of the public, neighbouring properties, roads, footpaths or community spaces.

The survey will help the Council to:

- Identify trees requiring urgent or priority works;
- Establish a clear inspection and re-inspection regime;
- Support long-term budgeting for tree works;
- Prioritise limited resources based on risk; and
- Demonstrate a reasonable and proportionate approach to tree management.

6. Southbrook Recreation Ground / HBuF

A separate fee proposal has also been provided for a tree survey at Southbrook Recreation Ground, relating to the forest area under HBuF lease management.

The quoted cost for this work is £2,215.00

As this area is under HBuF lease management, it is recommended that the Council writes to HBuF to advise them of the proposed cost and to discuss the opportunity for the forest to be surveyed as part of a coordinated approach to tree risk management.

This would allow the Council and HBuF to consider whether there is benefit in progressing the Southbrook survey alongside the allotment survey work, while also clarifying responsibility for cost, instruction and future management actions arising from the survey.

7. Environmental Implications

The survey is not intended to provide professional advice on condition, risk and future management.

A structured survey will assist the Council in retaining trees where appropriate, managing risk proportionately, and planning works in a way that supports the long-term health and safety of the allotment estate.

8. Officer Comment

The allotment budget is limited and Members should be mindful that this expenditure will reduce the funding available for other allotment improvements during the year.

However, given the Council's responsibilities as land manager, and the potential liability associated with unmanaged tree risk, officers consider this work to be necessary and proportionate.

The survey will also provide a stronger basis for future budget planning, helping the Council to move from reactive tree management to a planned inspection and maintenance regime.

9. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. **Approve** the instruction of Treework Environmental Practice to undertake tree survey work across the Council-managed allotment sites at a cost of £5,155 excluding VAT.
2. **Approve** that the cost is coded to the allotment budget - 350/1300
3. **Note** that the allotment budget is £18,000, with approximately £2,000 spent to date, and that approval of this work will reduce the remaining budget available for other allotment projects this financial year.
4. **Note** that the tree survey is considered an important risk management exercise due to the Council's responsibilities and potential liability as land manager.
5. **Agree** that officers write to HBuF regarding the separate Southbrook Recreation Ground forest survey proposal, including the quoted cost of £2,215 excluding VAT, and seek discussion on responsibility, funding and the opportunity to progress the survey for the area under their lease management.