

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	3 June 2014
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Motion by Councillor Thomson: Consultations over applications to remove protected trees.
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/14/130
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This is a monitoring report on the six month trial period of notifying neighbours of applications to remove protected trees. It covers the number of notices issued, the number of responses received and the workload impact of the initiative.
2. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that this notification procedure is not continued. It is suggested that the staff time expended is disproportionate to any benefits that may result.
3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The only financial implication is the cost of staff time in administering the scheme.
4. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The scheme does not seem to be a particularly productive use of staff time.
5. **BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**
 - 5.1 In response to a motion by Councillor Thomson the Committee, at its meeting of 21 May 2013, agreed to a trial period of six months during which applications received for the removal of protected trees (trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order or within a conservation area) would be advertised by displaying a notice on the nearest lamppost. This would allow neighbours to make representations over the proposed tree removals. The results of this exercise were to be reported back to the Committee.
 - 5.2 In the period between 12 June 2013 and 30 April 2014, forty four notices were posted. Two of these notices generated comments, seven

individual comments in total. In the case of one of the notices, the comments received were on the undesirability of tree loss in the general area and were not specific to the particular tree that was the subject of the application. In the other instance the comments were objections to the removal of a tree where the reason given in the application for the removal was the structural integrity of the tree. Clearly, in such a case an assessment of the structural integrity must be the sole factor in determining the application.

5.3 The workload impact is chiefly the Planning Inspector's time in taking the notices to the sites and fixing them to lampposts, and also the time of the Tree Officer in responding to queries generated by the notices. The Planning Inspector estimates that these notices take up about 2 hours a week. The additional workload for the Tree Officer has been relatively small to date simply because of the low level of response from the public.

6. IMPACT

The low level of response from the public during the trial period of notification suggests that not continuing with the scheme will have little impact. The EHRIA identified a neutral impact.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is no statutory duty to carry out public consultation on applications to carry out works to protected trees. It is, however, the practice of the City Council to include tree work applications in the weekly list of new planning applications that is published on the Council's website. Thus, this information is available to Councillors, Community Councils and members of the public. There should be no risk, therefore, in the Council being seen to be avoiding the possibility of representations from the public; it is already doing more than it is required to do.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Paul Pillath
Team Leader Environmental Policy

paulp@aberdeencity.gov.uk

01224 522228