

## **Notes of a Meeting of the Tree Task and Finish Forum held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 5 December 2014**

### **Present:**

Councillors:

Tony Howard (Chairman)

Roger Giles

Claire Wright

Iain Chubb, Portfolio Holder - Environment

Officers:

John Golding – Strategic Lead – Housing, Health and Environment

Charlie Plowden – Service Lead – Countryside and Leisure

David Colman – Senior Arboricultural Officer

Stuart Baker – Arboricultural Officer

Diana Vernon – Democratic Services Manager

Amanda Coombes – Democratic Services Officer

### **Apologies:**

David Key

Brenda Taylor

### **Non-attendance**

John Humphreys

The meeting commenced at 9.35 am and ended at 10.15 am

### **1. Introduction and welcome**

The Chairman of the Forum welcomed those present.

The appointment of Councillor Howard as Chairman of the Forum had been made (as established practice) by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Tim Wood. Councillor Howard's appointment was challenged and would be raised again at the next meeting of the Forum.

### **2. Public speaking**

Val Jones attended the meeting to learn more about Tree Preservation Orders and how to protect trees under threat. She gave specific examples of specimen trees in Feniton on the boundary of development sites. She said that these trees were worthy of preservation but her efforts to get a TPO on the trees had so far been unsuccessful. She was assured that developers were required to take account of trees and conditions were imposed when planning permissions were granted. Ms Jones agreed to speak with the Council's Arboricultural Officers at the close of the meeting.

### **3. Declarations**

Councillor Claire Wright declared a personal interest as Devon Tree Champion for the Woodland Trust.

#### **4. Scoping of the Forum**

The draft scope of the Forum was set out in the agenda for the meeting.

Comments raised during the subsequent debate:

- The scope should include opportunities for tree planting.
- Local data should be reviewed to determine threats to protected trees and how many trees were felled prior to a TPO being made.
- Why was the Local Plan not included within the scope? The Local Plan was specifically shown as an area not being covered by the review of the Forum. The Local Plan was not yet approved. The tree policy within the Local Plan was very good but the house allocation within the Plan would have an impact on trees. An addendum specific to trees could be added to the Plan.
- There was a real danger that including the Local Plan within the scope of the Forum would open up discussions too widely. The priority of the Forum was to look at the protection and value of trees.
- The Forum needed to make sure that the scope was not too restrictive.
- Enforcement action should be included.
- National and local tree policy should be covered within the scope.

It was clear that those present at the meeting would not reach agreement on a number of issues and the Chairman adjourned the meeting to consider how best to proceed.

#### **5. Closure of meeting**

Following the adjournment and failed further attempts to agree the scope of the Forum, the Chairman said that there were too many disagreements and challenges within the meeting to continue. He closed the meeting and said that this should be reconvened when the full complement of Forum members could be present. He suggested that at that meeting, members would be asked to appoint a new Chairman.

#### **6. Date of next meeting**

The suggested date for the next meeting was 26 January 2015.