THORNHACKETT PARISH COUNCIL

TREE POLICY

This policy is for the management of trees owned and managed by Thornhackett Parish Council (THPC) It is intended as a point of reference for councillors, members of the public and contractors to ensure a clear, consistent and structured approach to the management of trees

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to land in the ownership of the Parish Council and land occupied by the Parish Council under lease.

1.2 A principal of law is that land/tree owners have a duty of care to visitors, residents, passers-by and trespassers when on their land. This means that THPC has a duty to do all that is reasonably practical to reduce the risk of death or injury to those on THPC land owned or leased.

1.3 Any queries arising concerning trees growing on THPC land should be raised with the Clerk at clerk@thornhackettpc.org.uk

1.4 Trees growing adjacent to the public highway or on other open spaces are likely to fall under the responsibility of Dorset Council or the landowner.

1.5 The Parish Council accepts that as well as being central to the visual character of the Council area, trees and hedgerows create a diverse habitat and wildlife corridors.

2. **Maintenance of trees owned by the Parish Council**

2.1 THPC will ensure that a formal 'Tree Condition Survey' of trees on THPC land is undertaken by a qualified arboriculturist every three years (approx.), unless the need arises for a more frequent inspection. The survey will focus on trees which present an unacceptable risk and will include trees located within falling distance of persons, property and areas deemed of high occupancy (for example; play areas, playing fields, routes used by pedestrians/dog walkers).

2.2 Interim informal inspections will be carried out as appropriate (after periods of stormy weather for example) and, in high-use areas (play areas) on a weekly basis (as part of play area check protocol).

2.3 Following a formal inspection a programme of remedial work will be arranged based on the reports findings.

2.4 THPC will allocate sufficient resources (in the Annual Budget) to ensure that it is able to manage the trees covered by this policy

2.5 THPC will ensure that any arborist or tree surgeon undertaking work on parish council occupied land will provide evidence of their public liability insurance and copies of risk assessment method statements.

2.6 In the process of maintaining THPC owned trees, consideration will be given to any possible impact on local wildlife and eco-systems and work will be scheduled to minimise the perceived impact.

2.7 Whilst maintaining THPC owned trees; those highlighted as presenting an unacceptable risk which can only be mitigated by felling; consideration will be given to replacing the tree with a suitable UK species specimen in the nearest suitable location as referenced in the Biodiversity Policy.

3. Maintenance NOT falling under the responsibility of the Parish Council

3.1 THPC has no obligation to carry out the following tree works;

- Cutting back branches overhanging private property.

- ‘Topping’ trees or removing branches to increase daylight or decrease height in relation to a property.
- Remove branches or trees affecting views or interfering with communications infrstructure.
- Remove branches or trees to prevent falling leaves, honeydew from aphids or other minor debris.
- Remove roots from drains or repair damage to structures, where the tree has NOT been clearly identified as the principal cause.
- Remove branches or trees to prevent access by wildlife (e.g. squirrels, birds)
- In the event of land being sublet by lease by the parish council the tenant will have a responsibility to undertake inspections and inform the parish council of any work required to comply with this policy.

4. Tree maintenance arranged by Members of the Public

4.1 In common law, a property owner can cut back overhanging branches to the boundary of their property. THPC would normally support property owners carrying out tree work, or engaging a contractor at their own expense provided that;

- If access to parish occupied land or, to a tree on that land is required, permission must be sought from THPC in advance.
- The tree is not protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), or within any Conservation Area. If a tree is protected, the appropriate planning procedure must be followed. Contact Dorset Council Planning Department for further guidance.
- Any work carried out is not detrimental to the health or stability of the tree. For their own protection, members of the public are advised to always seek advice from a qualified arborist or tree surgeon. Tree pruning work is carried out to an acceptable standard in accordance with the British Standard Recommendations for Tree Work 3998:2010.
- The property owner notifies THPC of the proposed work and commencement date.

4.2 THPC does not undertake work on privately owned trees.

5. Action Plan following diagnosis or disease or fungal activity

5.1 Trees identified as having a requirement to be re-inspected will be examined in late Spring or once in full leaf. If there has been no further deterioration, the tree will be re-inspected the following year.

5.2 If the tree has deteriorated, a further inspection will take place in late Summer and a full assessment made. An action plan will be agreed, seeking advice from a specialist contractor.

5.3 If a tree is showing clear signs of damage, decay and/or fungal disease, and there is a risk to the general public or property, removal or remedial works will be undertaken as recommended by a specialist contractor.

6. Hedgerows

6.1 Hedgerows are an important feature of the Parish Council area and their loss is to be discouraged. Hedgerows are an important habitat for wildlife.

6.2 The Council will aim to increase infill or new planting of native hedges on sites they own or occupy.

6.3 The Council will not undertake hedge pruning or maintenance during the nesting season as defined by DEFRA unless work is for health and safety reasons or there as been a full inspection to ensure there are no nesting birds.

7. Policy Declaration

7.1 Thornhackett Parish Council;

- Values the importance and amenity value of trees and hedgerows within the environment. It recognises how they; add variety to the landscape, provide valuable habitats for wildlife, remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and subsequently produce oxygen.
- Does not support the removal of trees and hedgerows that offer positive amenity unless there is a health and safety risk to members of the public or property.
- Encourages residents to retain existing trees and hedgerows within the curtilage of their property.
- Aims to preserve the number of trees within Thornhackett Parish Council area for future generations to enjoy.

Date of next Specialist Tree Survey due in or before 2029.

Adopted: Minute ref:

Review date: May 2026