**STREET TREE STRATEGY – IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSULTATION**

Cr Rebecca Paterson, Mayor

***RECOMMENDATION***

*That Council endorses the revised implementation and consultation process for the Street Tree Strategy.*

***INTRODUCTION***

### Council adopted a Street Tree Strategy in June 2016. We are in the early stages of implementing the strategy in about 13 streets. Some residents have raised concerns about the removal of trees and the level of consultation that has occurred with them.

### BaCKGROUND

The vision of the Street Tree Strategy is to establish a Street Tree Canopy that will be the source of neighbourhood and city pride and create a network of engaging and inviting green corridors, encouraging walking, cycling and street activity and deliver tangible benefits to local communities.

Over the past few months, Council has written to residents in about 13 streets, advising them of our intention to remove and replace street trees. In this correspondence, we asked residents which of two species they would prefer as the replacement trees for the street.

### Discussion

Residents in and around the selected streets, particularly Glen Tower Drive (Glen Waverley) and Essex Road (Mount Waverley), have expressed concern about:

* Lack of details/rationale for removal of each individual tree.
* An insufficient choice of replacement species.
* All trees being removed at the same time.
* That the letter drop did not go to neighbouring streets and letters were not personally addressed.
* The lack of opportunity to provide input into the plan.
* The desirability of having one dominant species along a street.

In responding to the community, it is proposed that we commit to the following revised implementation and wider community consultation for future proposals under this strategy:

1. Prior to putting a street forward for renewal, our horticulture team will conduct a detailed and rigorous inspection of the street. Following this inspection, they will only propose streets for renewal where they are satisfied that it is necessary to undertake this renewal because:
	1. There are trees that are: declining in health, have a short life expectancy (approx. 10 years or less), causing nuisance or are damaging infrastructure such as footpaths; and/or
	2. they are satisfied that from a horticulture perspective, the tree canopy needs to be improved through replacing existing trees with new plantings.
2. Council in implementing the plan will recognise the importance of trees and the need to actively engage the community in the implementation of the plan.
3. When working through the strategy Council will not only consider the street under consideration but what the change means for the neighbourhood. Changes will only occur if the changes are supported by the majority of the local community.
4. Where appropriate, Council will offer the opportunity to residents to replace the trees that pose an immediate risk but consider a long term annual inspection and replacement program for those trees that have a limited lifespan based on a replacement listing of trees supported by the community.
5. In advising the street of proposed change, our communication will be addressed to each household and in detail describe what we are proposing. We will also describe how this change would contribute to the vegetation of the neighbourhood and why it is required or recommended. We will clearly articulate what we are proposing. We will identify who to contact at Council in our early communication.
6. We will provide a survey as part of this communication so that we can gain a clear sense of community feedback. Residents will be given sufficient time to respond.
7. We will offer up opportunity to meet with individual residents as required but will also arrange for a community meeting within a reasonable time frame of residents receiving the first letter.
8. We will share the feedback with residents and where we do not have clear support we will meet with the residents to consider other options.
9. If we cannot reach consensus agreement or majority support **the planned changes will not be undertaken.** The only trees that will then be removed will be those that pose a risk. Residents will be advised of the outcome before any change is made.
10. All consultation will involve not only the affected street but those in close proximity including any streets adjacent to the selected streets.

### FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

A total of $240,000 was included in the 2016/17 budget for implementation of the Street Tree Strategy. This is unlikely to be completely expended in 2016/17 due to extended community consultation and requirements for ordering of tree species and recommended planting times in autumn/winter months.

### conclusion

Council has heard the strong message from our community that we need to improve the way this strategy is implemented. Once we have made the improvements included in this motion, we will have strengthened our communication and consultation on a matter that is vitally important to our community.