

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE
14 OCTOBER 2025**

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

DELEGATED AUTHORITY FOR TREE APPLICATIONS

Purpose of the Report

To consider granting delegated authority to officers to respond to tree applications where the statutory deadline for comments falls before the next scheduled Planning Committee meeting, ensuring that the Town Council retains the ability to comment on such applications.

Background

The Town Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications, including those relating to trees. The consultation period for tree applications is typically 21 days. In practice, deadlines often fall before the next scheduled Planning Committee meeting, meaning the Council may be unable to provide a formal comment. This results in either missed opportunities to influence decisions or the need for retrospective endorsement of officer comments.

Proposal

It is proposed that delegated authority be given to the relevant officer(s) to submit comments on tree applications in cases where:

- The consultation deadline falls before the next scheduled Planning Committee meeting; and
- The application has been reviewed by the Town Council's appointed Tree Officer, who will provide technical advice and recommendations.

All such comments would be reported to the next Planning Committee meeting for transparency and record-keeping.

Advantages of Delegated Authority

It would:

- Ensure the Town Council's voice is always heard in the planning process.
- Provides timely responses within statutory deadlines.
- Makes use of the Town Council's specialist Tree Officer to ensure informed comments.
- Reduces the risk of the Council being excluded from decisions due to procedural timing.

Concerns Raised by Members

Some elected members have expressed concern about delegating any decision-making authority to officers, as this may be perceived as diminishing the role of the Planning Committee. There is a desire to maintain democratic oversight of all planning responses.

Safeguards

To address these concerns, the following safeguards are suggested:

- Delegated comments would only apply to tree applications where the deadline is before the next Committee meeting.
- The Committee would receive a summary of all delegated responses at its next meeting.
- Any applications considered sensitive or controversial could still be referred to members by the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Committee if timing allows.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (i) That the Planning Committee considers granting delegated authority to officers, in consultation with the Town Council's Tree Officer, to submit comments on tree applications where the deadline for response falls before the next Planning Committee meeting;**
- (ii) That all delegated responses be reported to the next available Planning Committee for information and accountability.**