**TREE VISUAL CONDITION CHECKLIST: GUIDANCE**

* Visual checks of trees must be undertaken from ground level.
* A formal tree survey must be completed on a 2 yearly basis (minimum) by a qualified, trained specialist.
* Only qualified, trained specialists can under take remedial works on trees.
* If any hazards or concerns are raised from a visual inspection ensure professional advice is sought.

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| **Leaves / Foilage** | |
| a) Is the foliage dense and full when in leaf and buds are visible when dormant? | *Differences in colour and dying back of leaves can indicate an underlying problem. This should be further investigated.* |
| b) Are there any differences in colour of the leaves? |
| c) Are the leaves in a good condition? |
| d) Is there premature leaf fall? |

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| **Branches** | |
| a) Are there and dead branches? | *Deadwood in the crown of the tree is not always dangerous. However, if identified this must be investigated by a specialist.* |
| b) Are there any broken / hanging branches? | *These must be dealt with as a matter of urgency.* |
| c) Are branches split / cracked? | *If identified it should be investigated as it may indicate a potential failure.* |
| d) Are there any swellings in the branches? | *Swellings are a sign that the tree is strengthening itself following a weakness. There may also be “bleeds” as a result of decay. Swellings can indicate a weakness and should be investigated.* |
| e) Is there any evidence of pollarding? | *This is when a branch is cut short. Often regrowth occurs quickly and due to a fast increase in weight it can lead to mechanical failure. The remaining end point can also allow easy access to fungus/pathogens.* |

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| **Trunk** | |
| a) Are there any cavities in the stem? | *Cavities can be an entrance point for fungus/pathogens and cause decay/weakness. Cavities can also fill with water – it is not advised to drill a hole to drain the water as this may lead to further problems.* |
| b) Is there any loose bark? | *Loose bark may be a sign of internal decay and should be investigated.* |
| c) Is there any evidence the tree may be hollow? | *Hollow trees are at risk of structural failure and must be investigated further.* |
| d) Are there any swellings in the stem? | *Swellings are a sign that the tree is strengthening itself following a weakness. There may also be “bleeds” as a result of decay. Swellings can indicate a weakness and should be investigated.* |

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| **Tree Base** | |
| a) Are there any changes to soil level? | *Increases or decreases in soil (even of only small amounts) can have a fatal effect on mature trees.* |
| b) Are roots exposed? | *Roots are the support system for the tree. If roots have been damaged there is a risk of it falling. Roots can be damaged by a range of factors e.g. compacting soil (walking or driving over), chemicals and severing roots.* |
| c) Is there any evidence of damage to roots? |
| d) Are there any cracks in the soil around the tree? | *Cracks in soil can indicate that a tree is moving at the base. It can also be a sign of damaged/decayed roots.* |

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| **Other** | |
| a) Is the tree leaning, particularly towards a target? | *Trees leaning towards a target e.g. car park, playground, building may present a greater risk.* |
| b) Is there a large amount of ivy or other climbing plants? | *This can make branches heavy and prone to failure as the tree must support its weight. It can also hide defects which makes it difficult to identify hazards.* |
| c) Is there any evidence of fungus or decay? | *Some not all fungus is hazardous, however its presence indicates that further investigation is required.* |

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| **Environment** | |
| a) Is the tree located next to the highway? | *The environment in which a tree is located may present a greater risk of harm should there be a failure. Attention must be given to trees within these areas to ensure the condition is maintained.* |
| b) Is the tree located close to buildings? |
| c) Is the tree located close to areas of public access? |