**Draft Urban Forest Policy: Summary**

The City of Cape Town’s current Tree Management Policy was adopted by Council in 2015. Over time, the applicability and relevance of the existing policy diminished and it became incumbent to undertake a revision of the existing policy and develop an urban forest policy that is responsive to the changing social, legislative and environmental context of the city and can be adopted across City, public and private land. The existing policy lacks sufficient recognition of trees as a network, which compromises the holistic approach to tree management and the benefits derived from an abundance of trees forming an urban forest.

The City of Cape Town’s strategic frameworks and policies emphasise sustainable development, environmental protection and the creation of quality living and work environments. Trees play a critical role in achieving these objectives and therefore these valuable environmental assets need to be retained, provided and managed in a manner that will optimise the outcomes of key City strategies.

Due to increasing urbanisation demands, tree management must be carefully approached to ensure acceptable tree survival rates, whilst reducing potential risks, which trees can pose to people, property, infrastructure and the environment in the event of poor selection of planting sites, tree placements, inappropriate choices of species or lack of tree pruning and maintenance.

The current Tree Management Policy was applied and utilised predominantly within the operational environment of the Recreation and Parks Department of the City of Cape Town. This review (the Urban Forest Policy) aims to develop a transversal policy that applies to the management of all trees growing in the city, including City, state and privately owned land, and can be utilised by all City departments and give guidance to the general public and owners of state land. As a result, this policy also aims to widen its scope by addressing the roles and responsibilities of private landowners, providing guidance in relation to tree management, as well as providing decision-making criteria to ensure informed decision-making, transversally, by all City departments.

Cape Town is one of hundreds of cities across the world affected by water scarcity brought on by climate change, and we face an even drier future. We can no longer rely on drinking water to irrigate trees. This is why this policy also promotes efficient watering methods and alternative solutions to watering with drinking water, such as groundwater, rainwater, reclaimed effluent or other non-drinkable water, to ensure trees are watered and maintained to reach maturity.

The aim of this policy is to —

1. ensure the retention, enhancement and management of the city’s urban forest;
2. ensure that the city’s trees contribute positively to the quality of the local environment;
3. ensure that trees do not pose a risk to the health and safety of people, or of damage to property;
4. ensure that trees are protected from unnecessary harm; and
5. provide for a uniform approach to the management of trees.

This policy will take into account the management requirements related to the full life-cycle of a tree, the conditions for tree removals, trees growing within the urban environment and the appropriateness of the selection of species, planting locations and local contexts. This policy deals with trees, forest and arboriculture elements, but it does not deal with other horticultural elements such as shrubs, groundcovers and other flowering plants.