

Halls and Green Spaces Committee

Date: 11th November 2019

Title: Amenity Areas - Farmers Close Screening/T&B Motors

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer John Hickman

Background

This report has been prepared in order to inform the Councillors about the current position regarding the boundary between T&B Motors and Farmers Close Amenity area.

Complaints have been received about the unsightly boundary that remains between T&B Motors and Farmers Close amenity area from residents of the area. The Operations and Estates Officer planted 2 x Beech trees on this amenity area late autumn winter 2018 to help improve the view towards the scrap yard in future years.

Action Taken

The Operations and Estates Officer has visited site, it appears a large building that was damaged by the fire along this part of the boundary, however it is no longer their leaving this area much more open to view. The scrap yard owners have placed a temporary steel hoarding on WTC property to secure their property from the amenity area; this steel hoarding is very unsightly to local residents.

There appears to be a stone wall or remains of a stone wall behind the hoarding, the hoarding runs from being in line with the boundary to approx. 50cm-60cm onto WTC property. In the meantime several bushes appear to be growing from behind the hoarding in places and are not currently accessible to deal with, nor are we able to deal with the grass cutting in this area around this hoarding.

Current Position

The Town Clerk contacted WODC Planning enforcement on behalf of the residents and has the following response:

“I visited the site last month and have discussed the fence with the site manager. T&B Motors maintain that the fence is a temporary but necessary measure to secure the site. The owners are in on-going discussion with the Environment Agency to determine the best course of action for future workings at the site with safety and fire prevention being paramount.

T&B Motors are not intending to replace the fence until the best form of boundary has been advised or agreed. They hope that this matter will have been resolved in the next 6-12 months. In the

meantime, the site manager advised that they are paying consideration to neighbours to the rear of the scrap yard by way of minimal stacking of vehicles so that scrap heights are kept to a minimum.”

The Operations and Estates Officer has written to T & B Motors on 27th Sept 19 stating that no permission has been sought to place this hoarding on Witney Town Council property and can they please move it back onto their own property in order that Witney Town Council can maintain its land properly. He has also sourced free hedge planting of approx. 25lm-30lm from Continental Landscapes as part of their Carbon off setting, to develop a hedge along the WTC side of the boundary to help form a natural screen in future years. Although this will not totally screen the scrap yard it will improve the view immensely on the current view in years to come.

In order to plant the hedge the Hoarding will need to be removed by the owners and the owners should perhaps install this on their side of the boundary if they require it to secure their property.

Although there will be no charge for the whips for the hedge and the planting etc. there will be an associated cost to the ongoing maintenance of the hedge of £54 per annum.

No response has been received from T&B motors and the temporary fence has not been moved onto its own premises at this current time.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

The associated additional costs on the grounds contract of £54 per annum to maintain this hedge ongoing.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following.

1. Whether to send further communication to T&B Motors regarding the Temporary Fence.
2. Whether to plant a hedge to improve the view in years to come.