

Stronger Communities Committee

Date: 11th November 2019

Title: Trees

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer John Hickman

Background

This report has been prepared in order to inform the Councillors of the current position regarding this year's tree survey, tree works carried out and the outcome of the Operations and Estates Officers meeting with the tree surgeons regarding the trees to the West Witney Bowls Green and possible height reduction work.

Action Taken

This current year's tree survey was commissioned in August and was carried out during September.

Current Position

The Operations and Estates Officer has commissioned and carried out the following tree works at West Witney.

The felling of 1 tree that was dying and had dead branches that had fallen on top of the Tennis Courts pavilion at West Witney and also grind out stump of further tree that had been removed previously at a cost of £500 + VAT

The cutting back of trees to the side-line of pitch 4 that were very low and overhanging the pitch causing issues when juniors were playing football and also causing H&S issues. These trees have been lifted and reduced back beyond the side-line of the pitch at a cost of £750 + VAT

The Operations and Estates Officer viewed the remainder of the tree belt to the Southern and Eastern Boundary's at West Witney with the tree surgeons whilst looking at all the other tree works at West Witney and found there are high levels of major dead wood within the tree belt which should they fall could easily cause injury, low canopy's that required lifting and removal of 1 x dead Hawthorn tree.

Given the level of runners running underneath these trees now with Park Run has increased WTC's liability, the Operations Officer has requested the tree surgeons provide a quote to remove the dead branches etc. within these trees canopies to ensure the public's safety. The Tree Surgeons were requested to provide a quote for the associated work. The associated cost is quite substantial £3995.00 + VAT and will take a large proportion this year's arboriculture budget. The Operations and Estates Officer would ask that council provide an additional sum to the tree budget for the cost of these tree works.

The recent tree survey report has been received the associated required tree works within this report have been given to the tree surgeons to provide a quote, along with other essential tree works noted by the Operations and Estates Officer under the Council's tree policy over the last year to quote for.

The Council's tree surgeon has also inspected the trees at West Witney identified in the STRI report for reduction or removal to improve air flow and light to the green. It was discovered the trees are of such a size now that they would need to be severely reduced to have any effect on light to the Bowls Green. The trees are also in two staggered rows so it is not simple to remove 4 or so to open up an area between them to let in light. It would be possible to open two gaps in the trees to let light and air through however this would entail the removal of 10 trees making a very large difference to the area. It was thought that the loss of these trees would outweigh the benefits it gave to the bowls green.

The Operations and Estates Officer did look at the trees to the southerly side in the old Contractors compound where there are 4 substantial trees. It was thought possible that 3 of these trees could be removed allowing an increase in air flow and light from the southerly side of the bowls green. It was felt that it would not be such a large change to the area with the trees being much less visible than the ones to the easterly side of the green.

The contractors have provided a quote to remove 3 of the 4 trees from the southern side of the bowls green. £800 + VAT.

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. It should be noted that any trees felled and removed will have an impact on the environment, even though WTC try to replace each tree that is removed. However it is important from a H&S perspective that trees are maintained per the next paragraph.

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. Council should consider the Major dead wood works at West Witney in order to negate its liability should a member of the public be struck by one of these branches.

Financial implications

These are detailed in the report above.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider the following,

1. The request of the operations and Estates Officer for an additional sum to be added to the Arboriculture budget to deal with the Major deadwood etc. within the tree belt. £3995.00 + VAT.
2. The removal of 3 x trees to the southern side of West Witney Bowls Green.