

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: 25th January 2021
Title: Trees Update
Contact Officer: Operations & Estates Officer – John Hickman

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the tree survey, tree works and tree planting.

Current Situation

2019 Tree Planting

A number of trees planted as part of 2019 replacement tree planting failed particularly at West Witney Sports Ground, these have been replaced under the insurance taken out against failure of the trees within the first year after planting.

Wychwood Tree Planting

Wychwood Project tree planting, the Operations went around the suggested areas and trees to be planted by the Wychwood project with the Countryside Learning Officer sites and trees were agreed on the 23rd November 20. The Countryside Learning Officer has given the Operations and Estates Officer an update regarding the planting, the people are in place to do the planting, the trees and tree guards are ready, however we are in lockdown which means the volunteers are unable to do the planting as a group now until lock down ends or eases. The Countryside Learning Officer is going to attempt to get the trees planted with one other person as per Government Guidance.

Tree Survey

The 2020 tree survey report was received from Environmental Practice who carry out the surveys on 27th November 2020. The Operations and Estates Officer has allocated the associated works to 3 areas, Works Team, Grounds Contract as requested works are part of the grounds contract and requested quote for the remaining works that require a tree surgeon to carry out the works from Town and Country Trees council preferred contractor.

Detailed Investigations

Detailed investigation has been suggested by the tree survey for two trees an Ash T792 and an Oak G764, a resident has also recently complained about T792 and its condition. The detailed investigations have a substantial cost and will need to be repeated periodically in the future. As the consultant has suggested it might be more appropriate to fell both trees replanting new trees of the same species in the original trees place. The two trees are not within the conservation area so the conservation officer at WODC would not need to be consulted regarding these works.

Town and Country trees have provided their quote to carry out all the works that the Operations and Estates Officer requested from them in association with the tree report. The cost of felling each of these trees will be in a similar region to carrying out the first static load test, the Operations and Estates Officer has requested the specific cost for each tree from the tree surgeon to enable councillors to be advised correctly.

Works will be commissioned after council has decide to carry out static load tests or to fell and replant the above trees.

The associated costs to felling the trees and replanting are only slightly higher than the associated costs of carrying out the initial detailed investigations.

T583 St Marys Churchyard

Councillors will be aware that the Cedar of Lebanon in St Mary's Churchyard was felled in November, the church requested a substantial amount of timber from the main trunk be left in the church yard for them to be to be made furniture for inside and outside the church. The church has stated they are arranging for this to be collected and taken to a woodyard, no timber was left for Witney Town Council to have made into a bench for the Leys Recreation Ground.

The replacement Cedar of Lebanon has been planted close by to the original tree's location.

Lakeside Allotment Boundary Tree Pollarding Works.

The associated works to Lakeside Allotment boundary trees has been programmed in for the first week of February.

Tree works to Willow tree adjacent to 143 Emma's Dyke

These works were completed on 3rd December 20.

Tree works to fell T277, T280 & T281 Queen Emma's Dyke

These trees will be felled if there is sufficient remaining arboriculture budget following the 2020 tree survey recommended works. If not, enough funds are available this year then the

works will be carried out early in the 2021 financial year. Trees more suitable to the location will be planted in replacement in the late Autumn Early Winter.

King Georges Field Tree works request.

The Operations and Estates Officer consulted with Tree Surgeon over possible works to the trees on King Georges Field to allow more light into the nearby properties as requested by council and reported the following.

Following your enquiry and my subsequent visit to the subject location I believe that removing some lower branches from the tree groups will have little influence on providing additional light penetration to the properties. In my opinion the only way light intensity levels could be increased would be to thin the groups by completely removing trees, this however is likely to have a detrimental impact on the location aesthetics and the environmental and social benefits they provide.

The most recent tree survey for each of these trees reports them as being in good condition with no requirement for any works at this time.

King Georges Field falls into the Witney and Cogges Conservation Area and the trees are noted in the Witney & Cogges Conservation Area Character Appraisal Preservation and Enhancement, where the following is recorded.

(King Georges Field represents the most significant open space in Newland – an attractive and spacious recreation ground, fronting the road and linking with playing fields belonging to Woodgreen School to the north-east. Trees, which are otherwise largely absent from this part of the conservation area, also play a key role here, fringing the green space and providing screening for, and from, the surrounding houses.)

The Operations and Estates Officer has also discussed the possibilities of carrying out tree works or removing trees from this area with WODC Landscapes and Forestry Officer whose permission would be required prior to carrying out any works or to remove any trees on King Georges Field. They felt it would be inappropriate to undertake disfiguring tree surgery or remove trees entirely unless there were good safety reasons for doing so.

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. There is an environmental impact to felling the trees requested within the Tree survey however council's policy of replacing trees should alleviate this impact for the future.

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. The associated risk to the trees that have been highlighted as high risk or require detailed investigation or felling.

Financial implications

The associated costs for Tree works to be taken from 4040/402 Arboriculture.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider carrying out detailed investigations or to fell and replant T792 & G764.