

Date: 1st November 2018

Title: Report Item 9 – Report of the Tree Warden

By: P Williamson (Tree Warden)

Purpose: To present a general report and recommendations for consideration by the council

Recommendations: a) To consider the Tree Warden's recommendations in sections A, B, C and D of the report and to approve them where desired;
b) To approve the items of expenditure listed in section E;
c) To approve the administrative recommendations in sections F and G.

The parish council's Tree Warden has submitted the following report for consideration.

(A) Tree Dossier – Survey with recommendations

This was referred to in the 'Business in Progress' report for the August 2018 Council meeting. For that meeting, I proposed a parish survey be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and insured contractor in order to:

1. Identify all trees the PC owns or is responsible for (i.e. on unregistered land), including TPOs, by age, species & plant health status
2. Draw up long term management plan recommendations for existing trees and hedgerows, including new & replacement planting, as this will enhance wildlife habitat and, therefore, promote natural biodiversity & resilience to climate change by diversifying both the age structure and species of what is growing, as well as connecting the village to the surrounding countryside via hedgerow corridors and woodland
3. Identify short, medium & longer term priorities
4. Estimate expenditure for:
 - annual maintenance, including roadside tree inspections (recognising that highway verges are the property of East Sussex Highways)
 - tree pruning & hedge trimming; and,
 - replanting operations.
5. Recommend trees to apply for TPO status.

If this is approved by the parish council, the Tree Warden will investigate appropriate providers and draw up a specification for their use.

(B) Dutch Elm

Bearing in mind the alleged impact of local authority funding cuts on ESCC's timely removal of infected elms in the parish as well as the incentive/disincentive on property owners to part-fund such removal, I would like to propose that the PC considers the relative risk of the current situation so that it can decide what action it may be worthwhile taking in future. For example, would it be worthwhile further incentivising property owners to act or is there little point as DED may still infect local elms by entering from neighbouring areas? I raised this dilemma at the Tree Council's 6 October South-East Forum for Tree Wardens and the advice received was to ensure diseased elms were properly dealt with in a timely fashion as this will help control spread of the infection locally.

[Note by the clerk: The parish council does have a grant scheme in place to reimburse householders for 25% of the cost of felling diseased elms, on production of an invoice from the county council's approved contractor].

(C) Ash dieback

Having been considering this over Summer when affected trees in & around the parish appear relatively easy to identify and with storms becoming more likely through Autumn into Winter, I suggest the PC adopts a policy towards their management.

In August I had a very useful conversation with Nick Covarr, East Sussex Beat Forester, Forestry Commission England, who covers Friston Forest. The FC had then begun forestry operations to remove dead/dying ash trees in the forest where they present a significant danger to people on rights of way/roads and to property. Local policy is not to remove all diseased trees partly as this does not control the spread of the fungi and partly as there is now evidence of recovery amongst some affected trees. Therefore, in Friston Forest, the FC is identifying and removing only dangerous dieback-affected Ash trees and leaving other affected trees in situ in the hope they recover or as a way of retaining dead wood in the forest for habitat purposes.

Nick Covarr then clarified his district position in 14 September email saying: "unless there is a Health & Safety risk or management reason to remove them, there is no urgent need to do so. Equally, if you want to remove them, there is nothing to stop you. Some trees were never that badly affected, some appear to be recovering and a lot have died. From an evolutionary viewpoint, it is obviously best to leave as many individuals in as you can and see if it reveals more resilient individuals. If we were to knock down every ash tree as a response to disease, then we would never know if there were some resistant strains in the population. The standing deadwood is also good wildlife habitat and this should be considered prior to operations, as you would before any works."

Further information is available at <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback#managing> infected trees.

I suggest that, in the first instance, a contractor qualified to inspect roadside trees

and with professional indemnity insurance cover in place is found to carry out **identification of** - as well as **inspection of** - dieback-affected Ash trees within a certain proximity to roads, rights of way and property. Such an inspection could obviously be widened to identify all trees that present the same kind of danger. Recommendations should be made tree by tree of what type of operation would be best to remove the danger whilst protecting if not enhancing the health status of the tree. Suitable contractors could then be identified and approached for quotes.

I emailed the PC about this issue on 30 August 2018, but it did not appear on the agenda for the October Council meeting. In the email exchange, the Parish Clerk also raised the issue of the PC supplementing the County Council's activities in feeling diseased elms. Both have financial implications that could be fed into the autumn's budget deliberations.

(D) Maps required

The Tree Warden role would be invaluable supported by provision of/access to a map or maps showing:

1. PC boundary
2. Crown/unregistered land
3. TPO'd trees
4. Roadside trees that the PC is responsible for
5. Rights of Way, including footpath & bridleway ID numbers & the type/s access permitted.

If the PC is unable to respond to this request, who would the PC suggest the Tree Warden approaches instead?

[Note by the clerk: The information requested in 1, 3 4 and 5 can mostly be assembled from data held in the parish office, given time. However, item 2 would require fresh research].

(E) Budget for trees, hedgerows & Tree Warden activity, e.g. a survey

I'd appreciate being informed of agreed funds, how they are allocated for what year on year, how to advise on future allocation and how to access them. Should funding from the PC budget not be available, what other sources would be appropriate, e.g. SDNPA, EDFRA community grant, crowd-funding. Would it be possible:

- To be reimbursed the £15.00 paid to attend the recent Tree Forum (ticket purchase also attached to email) ? [Note: this was agreed in advance of the Forum session]
- To have the following guidebooks purchased as resources for the Tree Warden role: Collins Complete Guide to British Trees: A Photographic Guide to every common species (preferably the latest edition - ? published 2015); Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Britain published by Nature Lover's Library, Reader's Digest available at https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?cm_sp=SearchF_-_topnavResults&ds=20&kn=Readers+Digest+field+guide+to+trees+and+shrub+s+of+Great+Britain&sts=t

(F) Planning applications

It would be helpful if only those applications relating to trees being affected were forwarded to the Tree Warden, in future.

[Note by the clerk: Yes, this can be done in the parish office]

(G) PC website

It would be useful for the Tree Warden to have a public profile, so I'd like to suggest the posting of the role holder's name, email address & photo on the website. Some legitimacy when meeting villagers, local authority officers etc. would be welcome.