

Executive Decision Report

Western Park Sanitation Tree Works

Decision to be taken by: Deputy City Mayor, Environment
and Transportation

Decision to be taken on: 6 August 2021

Lead director: John Leach

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Western Park
- Report author: Dave Jones
- Author contact details: 0116 454 4939
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

A significant number of trees within Western Park have become infected with diseases that have made them unsafe and require immediate action to have them felled.

Phytophthora has infected many of the Tilia (Limes), but several other species have also been infected. The main area of Phytophthora infection is from the main entrance to the park off Hinckley Road up towards the children's play area at the top of the main drive.

The area of mature Pine trees to the right of the main entrance off Hinckley Road are infected with Needle Blight. This disease defoliates the trees leading to their demise.

Several of the Ash trees are now showing early signs of ash dieback and require removing before their condition deteriorates further.

Western Park is now a hotspot for these tree diseases which have no cures. Piecemeal removal of diseased trees has failed to control the problem. Sanitation felling is now required.

Current situation

Western Park contains 108 trees effected by various diseases mentioned above. Many of these trees are now showing significant signs of die-back and require action to protect the public and to limit the spread of these diseases to other areas of the city.

Where trees had become infected previously within Western Park they were removed as part of the parks tree management regime. During the tree survey of 2020 it was clear that more radical works were required to control the spread of these aggressive diseases and to ensure public safety.

Improvement Plan

It is anticipated works at Western Park will be completed in two phases over 2021/22 and 2022/23.

- 2021/22 - 60 fells and the replanting of 120 trees.
- 2022/23 – 48 fells and the replanting of 96 trees.

All works are in line with the Council's adopted tree strategy.

- Monitor the health of the council's trees.
- Maintain the trees with the aim of reducing nuisance, hazard, and complaints.

- Respond appropriately and proportionally to the threat of pest and disease epidemics.
- Compensate adequately for the loss of significant trees in the landscape by planting more than one replacement.

All replacement planting will be trees with a high resistance to the diseases currently present within Western Park.

These works will not affect any trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders, located within a Conservation Area, or scheduled monument site.

2. Recommendations

The Deputy City Mayor is asked:

To approve the release of £500,000 from the Capital Programme policy provision for Tree Replacement to fund the removal of diseased trees and their replacements.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

None

4. Details of Scrutiny

None.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The report proposes to release £500,000 from the Capital Programme policy provision for Tree Replacement. This funding will enable the removal of 108 diseased trees and 216 replacement trees.

Amy Oliver, Head of Finance, Ext. 37 5667

5.2 Legal implications

The tree felling works do not include any trees protected under a Tree Preservation Order and therefore consent is not needed to undertake the works.

Should any of the trees fail while awaiting felling the Council may be liable for any damage to property or persons which may arise. While this may be an insurable risk,

any emergency works needed will incur additional costs and injury to persons may give rise to compensation claims.

Until such time as the conditional contract for sale of part of the park land is completed, the Council will remain liable for maintenance of trees within that area of the park also. Arrangements should be agreed as part of the contractual process for the transfer of liability on exchange/completion.

Katherine Hall, Ext. 37 6451

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Mature trees such as these can have a significant role in the city's resilience to climate change by moderating the impact of heatwaves and slowing down rainwater run-off to reduce flood risk during intense rainfall – both of which events are expected to become more frequent and severe as climate change gets worse. They can also store a significant amount of carbon, which will ultimately be released back into the atmosphere following felling.

The felling of these trees will lead to a short-to-medium term loss of these climate change benefits until the replacement trees start to reach a similar size but, by slowing the spread of disease to other trees and their loss, the action proposed is preferable in climate change terms to inaction. The replacement of the felled trees will, over time and depending on the mature size of the selected replacement species/varieties, more than compensate for the loss of climate benefits, although it may take many years.

Duncan Bell, Change Manager, Ext. 37 2249

5.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report recommends the release £500,000 to cover the required felling and replacement planting for 2021/22 & 2022/23. There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report recommendations.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, Ext 37 4148

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

6. Background information and other papers:

During the parks cyclical inspection in 2020 it was found that several diseases had taken hold in the south east section. The infected trees are now a public safety hazard. Due to the significant number of trees involved and the cost implications to fell and replace, which cannot be met from the existing trees & woodlands budget, funding is being sought.

Ward Cllrs

On site meeting – to be shown extent of tree diseases.

Press release & media launch

Date:11 June 2021

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix1 - Photos of infected trees.

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

No

Appendix 1



Bleeding cankers on the base of a Lime tree in the avenue - Phytophthora



Lime with advanced Phytophthora, giving rise to secondary fungal infections on stem.



Lime – snapped out branch on main drive - infected with Phytophthora



Pine with advanced Red Band Needle Blight infection.