

**WARDS: Norton
Wollaston and Stourbridge West**

AGENDA ITEM NO.

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE – 29th MARCH, 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

TREE MANAGEMENT WITHIN PARK ROAD STOURBRIDGE

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To apprise Committee of residents' concerns regarding the management of trees within Park Road Stourbridge.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Arboricultural Section within the Department of Urban Environment has received growth of £50,000 for the current financial year. This money is being used to target major areas of concern regarding safety issues associated with mature street trees.

- 2.2 Lime Trees, (previously pollarded 25 plus years ago) growing adjacent to street within the borough have been identified as particularly susceptible to damage during adverse weather conditions. Owing to the current condition of the trees a programme of re-pollarding (topping and lopping), including trees within Park Road has been instigated.

- 2.3 The following streets contain a large number of Lime Trees:

Park Road West
Harmon Road
Leonard Road
Francis Road
Terry Street
Woodland Avenue
Linden Road

Work has been, and is currently being undertaken to Lime Trees at the following locations:

Hawbush Road
Dixon's Green road
Fairfield Road
Victoria Avenue
Fenton Street

2.4 **Reasons for re-pollarding (topping and lopping)**

Lime Trees within roads were regularly pollarded until the mid/late 1970's. At this time there was a change in fashion and trees were left to grow more "naturally" and allowed to develop natural looking crowns. This also coincided with a reduction in resources available to local authorities.

Trees have now developed large crowns that have received varying degrees of treatment in subsequent years.

The growth of the branches from the previous pollard points is less secure than branches developing on a tree that has grown naturally, as a consequence branches break away with little or no warning during adverse/inclement weather.

This was demonstrated dramatically during the October gales 2002 when a large section of a tree within Park Road broke away and struck an adjacent property.

2.5 The re-pollarding (topping and lopping) of trees within Park Road commenced on Monday 18th August 2003, and was halted on Wednesday 20th August 2003 after concerns were expressed by a local resident. Following discussions with residents work was due to commence in January 2004. After receiving a petition and a subsequent letter of complaint work has been delayed for consideration by Stourbridge Area Committee.

2.6 The Arboricultural Section has received thirty letters, containing 51 signatures of Park Road residents and 12 phone calls in support of the work.

On 3rd January 2004 a petition opposed to the re-pollarding (topping and lopping) was received by the Arboricultural section this included the names of various signatories, including 14 addresses within Park Road, and various other addresses.

2.7 Signatories of the petition against to re-pollarding (topping and lopping) have indicated they wish to see the crown of the trees thinned by one third. The thinning of the trees will not reduce the height of the trees leaving the trees liable to shed limbs with little or no warning. In addition Lime trees produce a prolific amount of re-growth from pruning wounds. When a Lime tree is thinned re-growth rapidly establishes resulting in the crown of the tree being denser than when it was originally pruned.

Accordingly the stability of the crown is reduced following crown thinning work.

2.8 Re pollarding (topping and lopping) is practised by neighbouring Authorities. A number of these Authorities have or are undertaking programmes to remove Lime trees within highway locations. It is the Arboricultural section wish to maintain trees within their current location as long as is practically possible.

2.9 The Arboricultural section has received no more than half a dozen complaints in total from residents living within the eight street where work has been undertaken by contractors.

2.10 **Consequences of NOT re-pollarding (topping and lopping)**

The consequence of not re-pollarding these trees is that the trees will remain liable to shed limbs with little or no warning. Falling branches can pose a danger to both public safety and to property. Tree management is a high priority area in relation to the Council evaluating its legal obligations with regard to Health and Safety and Risk Management.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 That the Committee take note of the majority view expressed by residents, that re-pollarding is recommenced as outlined in paragraph 2.6.

3.2 That the re-pollarding of trees within Park Road as out lined in paragraph 2.2 is continued.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 The work is to be funded from the Revenue budget held by the Arboricultural section, within Green Care.

5.0 LAW

5.1 Under Section 96 of the Highways Act 1980, the Council may plant shrubs and trees in a highway maintainable at public expense by them, and will be responsible for their subsequent maintenance.

5.2 Also, at common law, the Council as the relevant highway authority will normally be responsible for trees growing in any land forming part of the highway (e.g. the pavement, adjoining grass verges etc), including their maintenance and safety.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 The contents of this report comply with the Councils equal opportunities policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 That the proposals set out in section 3 of this report be approved

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Director of the Urban Environment - John B. Millar

Contact Officer: Mark Waddams, Arboricultural Officer Ext 5524

Background Papers:-

Petition