

WROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Open Spaces Committee meeting on 6th February 2024

Update on Tree Works and Request to consider the cost of a PICUS Test

Update on Tree Works

Since the previous Open Spaces Committee meeting, I contacted 4 tree surgeons used by WPC to obtain quotes for the tree works which Bawdens advised should be carried out within 3 months of their Tree Survey in 2022. One contractor advised they couldn't quote as they didn't have the resource available, one advised they had too much work, one didn't respond at all, so we only received one estimate from Transition Trees at £6,035 + VAT which has been accepted. They have provided a copy of their insurance certificate and policy. Transition Trees are working their way through the work at one day per week, each Friday, until the work is completed. A post has been put on local fb groups to let residents know that they may see tree works being carried out around the Parish, and to advise that this is being carried out to keep the trees healthy and safe. The costs for these works were not budgeted for 2023-24 and there is insufficient money remaining in the budget for tree works. The Committee is asked to retrospectively approve the costs and that the costs of these works be taken from General Reserves.

Tender for remaining Tree Works

Any tree works outstanding (not including the work currently being carried out by Transition Trees) will go through the tender process as a single tender. It is hoped to take a draft tender document to February's Full Council meeting.

PICUS Test

Transition Trees could not quote for the PiCUS Test as it is very specialist. I asked Bawdens to quote – see attached quote of 11th January 2024 for £650 + VAT. A PiCUS Sonic Tomograph is an instrument that can detect decay in trees by taking readings of the velocity of soundwaves through the stem from several sensors installed with small nails around the trunk, which are each struck to pass sound through the trunk of the tree.

Why has a PICUS Test been recommended? Bawdens report advises for Tree 186 Wroughton Central: *'Historic Rigidoporus ulmarius fruiting bodies on buttress roots and stem. Tree has a busy union from which multiple large stems diverge. There are many large pruning wounds from historic management. Recommend an areal inspection of unions, any wounds a cavities. Also if no recent test for internal decay via us of PICUS then this is also advised.'*

It is recommended that the costs of this test are taken from the budget for Tree Works 4650/450 for 2023-24 in which there is £4,700 remaining, £500 of which has already been committed to remove a tree at North Wroughton in order to make it safe.

NB: You will note that Bawdens have quoted for a PiCUS test on a twin stemmed holm oak. I asked them to clarify that they mean the horse chestnut. They have confirmed that the quote is for a PICUS test on the large horse chestnut tree on the Moat site, and that multiple readings will be taken as necessary – they apologise for the mix-up.

Recommendations:

- 1. Note the update and that the tree works which Bawdens advised should be carried out within 3 months of their Tree Survey in 2022 have now started.**
- 2. Note that any other outstanding tree works identified by Bawdens in their Tree Survey of 2022 will go through the tender process as a single tender, and that it is hoped to bring a draft tender document to February's Full Council meeting.**
- 3. Approve the quote from Bawdens for £650 + VAT to carry out a PiCUS test on Tree 186 at the Moat (the old, large horse chestnut tree) with costs to be taken from the Tree Works budget for 2023-24 4650/450.**
- 4. Approve retrospectively the quote from Transition Trees of £6,035 + VAT to carry out the works which Bawdens recommended should be carried out within 3 months of their 2022 Tree Survey, the money to be taken from General Reserves.**