

**Proposal to work with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to set up a trial
to use a Volunteer Tree Warden at Belmont Green**

1.0 Introduction

This proposal follows the offer by a resident local to Belmont Green to look after the apple trees and their subsequent agreement to check the whips planted as part of the Trees for Climate project. The resident has attended a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) day course on tree pruning. The apple trees receive very little maintenance. Supporting a volunteer to check on and carry out basic maintenance on these trees would reduce the future workload for the Grounds Team, would ensure the trees were better maintained, and should also save Wroughton Parish Council (WPC) money, as the use of a specialist contractor to care for the trees planted as part of the Trees for Climate project should not be required for several years.

2.0 Report Details

- 2.1 Following the resident's offer, the Deputy Clerk contacted WWT and arranged a meeting on site with Neil Pullen and the Parish Council's Projects & Grants Officer. Neil advised that the resident could carry out basic tree pruning, but as the apple trees had received very little maintenance, they would take several years to re-shape.
- 2.2 Wiltshire Council were originally going to set up Volunteer Tree Wardens across Wiltshire & Swindon. Whilst they have set them up in Wiltshire, there are none so far in Swindon. Neil would be happy to set up a Swindon trial at Belmont Green with the resident who has offered to help, volunteering under WWT's insurance. The resident has confirmed they would be happy to go ahead on this basis. More information on the Tree Wardens Scheme can be found here:
<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/tree-wardens-scheme-to-be-relaunched-in-wiltshire>
- 2.3 The role of a volunteer Tree Warden is not to carry out every aspect of work which a tree requires. The main role is to carry out a visual check which could be done on all trees at Belmont Green, and then to report back to WWT/ WPC noting any concerns or questions, which could provide useful early warning of any issues. They could also carry out basic tree pruning up to shoulder height to the apple trees. The whips are unlikely to need much maintenance, other than a few which might need re-staking correctly; most tree guards would need to remain in situ for the next 2-3 years. The Volunteer Tree Warden could check if any have died and remove those; the die-off rate is very low and therefore they would not need replacing. The Volunteer Tree Warden could also replace any guards which become loose, and notify WWT/ WPC of any concerns to any of the trees at Belmont Green, including the mature trees.

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- 2.4 WPC would need to continue to use contractors or the Grounds Team to deal with any tree works to the mature trees, anything above shoulder height, as well as continuing to get all the mature trees at Belmont Green assessed as part of the 3-yearly Tree Assessment, which Full Council has already resolved will be carried out during the current calendar year.
- 2.5 If Members are happy to support this proposal, then WWT would meet with WPC and the resident to set out what would be expected of each party, to agree the role profile of a Volunteer Tree Warden, including how and when the volunteer would report back to WPC/ WWT.

3.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 3.1 Accept that the setting up of a Volunteer Tree Warden would not remove the need for WPC to continue to have the trees in Belmont Green assessed as part of the 3-yearly Tree Assessment, the main purpose of which is to ensure that the trees for which WPC is responsible are kept healthy and as safe as possible, so as to minimise the risk of injury or property damage. In addition anything other than minor/ basic tree works below shoulder height must continue to be carried out by the Grounds Team or a qualified tree surgeon.
- 3.2 Agree that WWT can set up a trial for a Volunteer Tree Warden at Belmont Green to include checking all the trees, including the apple trees, the whips planted under the Tree for Climate project, and the mature trees, as well as carrying out basic tree pruning to shoulder height. This would be under WWT's insurance and guidance.
- 3.3 Agree that the Deputy Clerk and the Projects & Grants Officer can take this forward, by meeting with WWT and the resident to agree the expectations of WPC, WWT and the resident, and to agree the role profile of a Volunteer Tree Warden, with updates being brought to this Committee.