

Woodlands Committee meeting held on Monday 27 July 2020, commencing at 7.30pm, after the Planning meeting when there were present:

Mr P Savage in the Chair
Mrs L Barrington-Smith Mrs M Temple
Mrs B Clarke Mrs J Tyler
Mrs J Latchford Mr C Wilson-Town
Mr J Pennells

Also present: District Councillors Kelly and Adams, 2 parishioners and Clerk

Apologies for absence None

Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda Mrs Temple and Mr Pennells reminded the meeting that they were members of the District Council's Standards Committee.

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 25 November and 16 December 2020 were confirmed by the meeting and then signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising & report items

Activity in the wood: It was reported that dens, swings and a fairy garden had appeared in the wood but no damage had occurred.

To agree date for annual risk inspection tour

Councillors Savage, Latchford and Barrington-Smith agreed to meet on 3 August, opposite Ghost Hill Infant School at 10am, weather permitting.

To receive Mr Allaway's tree work update and consider recommendations

Councillors had received copies of Mr Allaway's update and the following actions resolved:

Oak no7: The soil around the tree had become compacted and the roots uncovered due to the high footfall around the tree. It was well-loved by the children in the area and councillors wished to preserve its life for as long as possible. Without any action, the life expectancy of the tree would be greatly reduced. Chestnut paling fencing to be erected around the tree, the compacted ground to be forked, and 3 tons of topsoil to be spread around the tree to protect the roots. Councillors were concerned about how negatively the action would be perceived by residents and it was requested that a notice explaining the action to be erected on the new fencing with copies published on the Council's website, on Facebook and an article published in the Newsletter.

G12 & G15: All of the worst affected ashes to be felled this winter with further felling expected over the coming years

Tree Planting Programme: The committee noted that felling the diseased ashes would leave areas of Eastfield sparse. It was agreed that over the coming years, applications would be made to the Tree Warden group for a variety of native whips to be planted in suitable locations. The felling and tree planting programme should be explained in an article in the Newsletter.

Sycamore no123: Mr Allaway had concerns about the internal health of the tree and advised that it would be beneficial to reduce the height and spread of the sycamore by 30% as a precaution due to the proximity to neighbouring properties and users of the wood. Councillors agreed to request that Mr Allaway makes an application to the District Council for permission to carry out the precautionary works.

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Scots Pine no 255: The upper crown of “woodpecker pine” was supported by and adjacent sweet chestnut but the crossing point of the two trees was causing gradual worsening weakness. Removal of one or other of the rubbing branches would render the entire tree below liable to sudden failure. It was agreed that the desire line underneath the trees would be blocked by reusing chestnut palings from elsewhere in the wood and that users of the wood would be encouraged to take an alternative route. Blocking the desire line would reduce the risk to users of the wood and present an opportunity to regenerate the area. The work in this area of the wood would also need to be publicised.

Oak 292: A basal cavity had been found but there appeared to be no active signs of decay. The honey fungus infection had caused the tree to become stressed and there were several new dead branches in the crown. Mr Allaway’s recommendation to carry out routine dead-wooding and lightening the end-loading was agreed.

To consider request to install boundary fencing on parish council land

A resident on Lytton Road, whose property abutted Ghost Hill Wood, had requested permission to install posts for boundary fencing just inside the Council’s boundary. The current fence sat on a retaining wall and the resident had been advised by a fencing contractor that it would be easier and more cost effective to install the posts for a replacement fence behind the wall into council-owned land. The resident had advised that she would ensure that the fence was marked in her deeds as belonging to that dwelling to prevent any dispute with future occupants over ownership. Councillors were concerned that granting permission would set a precedent and that the resident could have been considered to have received preferential treatment as she was a woodland volunteer. The Clerk stated that she and the RFO had reservations about granting permission as it would set a precedent, there could be future disputes regarding ownership of the fence and that there may be complications with regard to the Council’s insurance. The meeting agreed that permission could not be granted at this time and requested that the RFO investigate insurance implications should the posts be installed into Council land.

Tree wardens forum

Mr Sugden was in attendance. He confirmed that Ghost Hill Wood and Eastfield had been very well-used since lockdown and that the amenities had proved to be very valuable to the local community.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed.....

Dated.....