

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE
17 November 2021**

Officer: Gary Farmer (Head of Operations)

ASH DIEBACK UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on plans to address the prevalence of Ash Die Back across the Town Council's Estate.

Ash dieback update 2021.

This is a short report to update relevant staff on the ongoing ash dieback (ADB) situation on STC and Countryside land.

An ash dieback survey was again conducted this year by myself and Countryside staff. I also took the opportunity of involving 2 work experience students from Mary Webb School in the process which seemed quite successful, with both students enjoying their time spent surveying.

Different year, different survey.

The survey conducted in 2020 aimed to present a picture of the prevalence of ADB on our sites as well as identifying any trees requiring work. To achieve this 8,500 ash on Countryside land and 1,500 ash on STC land were surveyed with each tree placed in a size and ADB health class category. This information allowed me to present a clear picture of the prevalence of ADB and to break down the prevalence amongst the different tree size categories (see report sent 2020).

This year the survey was purely a risk management exercise, meaning that only ash trees within striking distance of potential targets were surveyed e.g. roads, footpaths, residential boundaries, benches etc. A full survey is planned again for 2025 to give an update on prevalence.

2021 survey.

The 2021 survey took place between the middle of June to the end of July, around 6 weeks. The 2020 survey was conducted on my own and took around 14 weeks. In both years the work had fit around other summer schedule duties e.g. haymaking, path cutting, general maintenance etc.

- On STC land we identified 9 trees requiring work which were a mix of reductions and removals. This was completed by the tree gang. This is the same amount as in 2020.
- On Countryside land there were approx. 66 trees requiring work. 48 removal and 10 deadwood/lifting for Countryside staff. There were a further 5 that needed climbing by the tree gang with a possible 3 requiring MEWP hire. There is also one large removal at Burrs field that is being put out to contactors. A small number of trees are waiting on TPO/Cons area permission before work can commence. In 2020 there were around 45 trees requiring work.

- We will be re-planting 32 trees to replace those felled (not including woodland trees which will be replaced by natural regeneration) up from 23 in 2020. This means a total of 55 to maintain (spray/water) through spring/summer of 2022

Conclusion.

Ash trees requiring work in 2021 were approx. a third up on the amount in 2020. The work has been successfully absorbed into the winter schedules of the Countryside team and the tree gang. The ADB work undertaken by the Countryside team this year took around 4 weeks to complete, quite a considerable drain on operational resources and also means a reduction in our ability to conduct scheduled work e.g. the Community woodland thinning project.

If the amount of work continues on this course then we can expect approx. 100-110 trees requiring work in 2022.

If we had delayed our ADB response from 2020 to 2022 we may have been facing upwards of 225 trees requiring work next winter! Scaled up to county level this could be particularly relevant to our colleagues in Shropshire Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Report be noted