

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Planning & Environment Committee

Volunteer Tree Request

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 The West Swindon Parish Full Council has a mix of volunteers who undertake a range of activities including litter picking, planting, low level maintenance in copses and general tidying in public open spaces.
- 1.2 During the pandemic, many volunteers have continued to work as single individuals whilst group activities have been on hold.
- 1.3 All volunteers are required to read a risk assessment and safe system of working and confirm that they will abide by these.

2. Volunteer Request:

- 2.1 The Parish Council has received the following request

That the Parish Council encourages members of the public to report dead or dying ash trees, where they may be a hazard to passers by. This could be done through the website, explaining the problem and giving a point of contact for reports.

In some places, ivy has begun to overwhelm the trees. While ivy is valuable as a habitat for wildlife, I think it needs to be controlled in some places.

I, and maybe other volunteers, would be happy to do some of this work. Clearly the first step would be for the Parish Council's 'trees manager' to inspect the area, agree what is to be done, and satisfy himself/herself about the competence and safe working of the volunteers (including COVID19 safety).

- 2.2 As the owner of public land and trees, any arrangements would need the consent of Swindon Borough Council.
- 2.3 If consent is granted, consideration of the involvement of volunteers would need to be within the restrictions that the Parish Council's team operates under for tree work.
 - no tree felling or tree removal (unless specimen is dead and able to be removed safely)
 - work must be conducted from the ground only

- team members to be restricted to removal of tree parts that have a diameter of 15cm or less when measured at a point of 1.3m from the ground
- only one member of team is licensed to use a chainsaw and is required to have a valid license and appropriate PPE.

2.4 It would be feasible to create a risk assessment and safe system of working to cover the removal of ivy however it is not without risks to volunteers. The risk assessment would need to consider

- Risk of debris falling from the trees
- Risk of breaking branches
- Risks to pedestrians, park users or passers-by
- Removal of accumulations of waste
- Risks of use of tools appropriate for the job
- Training and supervision

2.5 Within existing volunteer activity, the removal of accumulations of green waste is time consuming and requires input from Parish Council resources. Consideration could be given to funding green wheelie bins to support this activity.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That this Committee considers whether work on trees for the purpose of removing ivy is suitable as a volunteer activity, and, whether it wishes to extend the existing volunteering scheme to incorporate this work.

Paula Harrison
Parish Manager