

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - DECEMBER 13TH 2022

Item 12 – To receive an updating report on the possible purchase of a replacement tree for the “Bartley Oak”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This report follows reports delivered to the July 12th 2022 Parish Council meeting (Item 133/22) and the September 27th 2022 Parish Council meeting (item 154/22) and should be read in conjunction with those reports (including appendices).

The decision of the Council to the first report was that the Clerk should continue to investigate the issues and costs associated with the idea and report again with an update to the September 2022 meeting.

The decision of the Council to the second report (whilst noting the responses to the points raised following the first report) was that the Clerk was to investigate the likely cost of paying a contractor to water the Oak and then bring an updating report to a future meeting of the Council. This is that updating report.

CURRENT POSITION

1. Below are all of the questions (arising from the first and second reports) that I was asked to chase responses for, along with (where possible) the responses received:-

Questions to Clerk of Burley PC – June 22nd 2022

I am interested in knowing:-

The cost (and size) of the trees you have recently planted – CHASED BUT NO RESPONSE

The cost of the wooden frame to project the tree - CHASED BUT NO RESPONSE

Questions to Forestry England (“FE”) – June 28th 2022

I note from your reply below that we need to erect a tree guard, which you would give us the specification for. Please can you let me have that? – 2m SQUARE FRAME, 1.5m HIGH, MADE FROM POST AND RAIL WITH STOCK NETTING AT THE BOTTOM

Also, are there any costs associated with you obtaining (on our behalf) SSSI consent and consent from Natural England? – NO

2. Oak Tree – An 8-10cm girth tree of circa 1.5 -2m height is likely to cost around £100 (note: FE have suggested that give the location of the tree an alternative might be to consider planting a “whip” rather than an immature tree as this might help it to become established. The guard though would still need to be the same size.)
Guard - Online quotes for a guard of similar dimensions to that advised by Forestry England are for around £200.
(note: FE have provided details of the contractor that worked with Burley PC. The quote from that contractor is £330 (ex VAT).
Ancillary items – FE have suggested that watering pipes be installed to add the flow of water directly towards the base of the tree. The cost for simple piping would be minimal.

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3. The possible solution of how to ensure the tree (immature or whip) will be watered given the planned location was to ask a number of possible contractors/outside bodies to undertake the watering. Enquiries were made of a private contractor (£20 per visit); the Parish Lengthsman (£20 per visit); and Bartley Horticultural Society (I expected to be in a position to provide their response verbally at the Council meeting on December 8th 2022)

I estimate that the likely cost of planting the tree based on the above will be somewhere in the range of £400-£500 (for the tree; protective frame; and watering pipes).

Estimating the cost of the watering is not a simple task as during prolonged periods of wet weather it may not need watering at all whereas in dry periods it may (in its early life) require watering on a weekly basis or even more frequently. Guidance via an internet search suggests watering daily for the first week after planting; then twice a week for the next month or so; then gradually less frequently until, after about five weeks watering once every 1-2 weeks. This might be needed for at least a year. The guidance from the internet suggests that "A tree that is about one inch (2.5cm) in diameter will take about 18 months to establish, requiring about 1.5 gallons (5.7L) of water at every watering. A tree that is 6 inches (15cm) in diameter will take some 9 years and need about 9 gallons (34L) at each watering. On that basis it would be prudent to budget a further £500 for the first year after planting.

Given that the £1,000 budgeted for spending on the Platinum Jubilee is being spent on the "Jubilee Clock to be install at the Parish Hall the funds needed for the tree will have to come from General Reserves. A further sum will need to be designated in the reserves to cover the potential cost of replacement etc during the ten years that the Parish Council will be responsible for the tree before Forestry England will adopt it.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

I met with a Senior Ecologist from FE at the site of the existing "Bartley Oak" on August 4th 2022. The most suitable location for the "replacement" based on the topography was identified by her and she has kindly prepared a draft submission to be sent to the Verderer's Court if the Council agrees to planting and maintaining the tree. In addition, if the Verderer's Court agrees to the request, FE will deal with arranging the licence for the tree between themselves and the Council; and obtaining assent from Natural England. A copy of the draft submission is attached.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the information above, Council to decide if it wants to proceed with the planting of a replacement tree for the Bartley Oak and agreed a budget that the Clerk can use to purchase the agreed tree; protective frame; water pipes; and cover the watering cost for the first year.

In addition, the Clerk to be authorised to arrange and sign the required agreement with Forestry England

David Rigby
Clerk to Copythorne Parish Council
December 5th 2022