

Suburban Trees

The meeting took place in The Priory Room, CBC Civic Offices, on 12th February 2013

Present: Councillor Margaret Phipps (portfolio holder); Steve Duckett CBC; Carolyn McPhie CBC; Giles Moir CBC; Clive Sinden CBC; Jim Biggin West Christchurch RA

CBC Policy Framework within which the stock is managed and maintained

We would like to make this policy available to residents by (a) posting it on our website and (b) printing and distributing copies for appropriate households that don't have computer access.

The policy can be found on Dorset-For- You at: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/treemanagement>

It's too large a document to print off for delivery to households but appropriate sections could be reproduced as and when needed

TPO Guidance Notes

In June 2008 we worked with CBC to produce a set of guidance notes to be given to residents as background reading whenever a question was raised over the treatment of a tree covered by a TPO. CBC does not appear to be distributing those notes to residents although now, as then, it continues to maintain that its Officers are not allowed to offer advice to residents. This strikes us as an unreasonable position.

CBC asked for a copy of the guidance note and we have sent a copy to them. Because legislation changes in the field from time to time printed leaflets are liable to become out of date reasonably quickly. There is information on Dorset-For-You at: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/treemanagement>

Or residents might be sensible to contact the Arboreal Association at: <http://www.trees.org.uk>

CBC is not comfortable giving advice about specific trees because the tree might become a topic of dispute between the resident and the Council. There was general agreement that solicitors did not always make purchasers aware of the duty they assume when purchasing a tree covered by a TPO. CBC will look into amending their response to property searches when one is undertaken on a property that contains a tree covered by a TPO

The CBC Planning Committee

What are the criteria that govern the submission of a tree application to CBC Planning Committee rather than a decision based upon Officer Opinion alone? Does CBC make applicants aware of these criteria? How many such applications have been submitted to Planning Committee in each of 2010, 2011 and 2012?

The criteria for submission to the Planning Committee are either (a) referral by the Ward Councillor or (b) 12 or more letters of objection to the Officer recommendation (NOT 12 or more letters of support). There has been no such referral in the last 2 years which suggests that residents are not aware that such a course of action is open to them

An Aging Tree Stock

Everybody appears to agree that a great many of our pine trees situated in residents' back gardens are, in tree terms, of a very similar age and will thus all die at broadly speaking the same time. Addressing this issue has been built into the St Catherine's Hill Management Plan but has not been addressed as far as these trees are concerned, many of which are covered by a CBC inspired TPO. There appears to be scope here for a rolling programme of replacement utilising private funds.

Everybody does agree that the problem cited is a real one and that it exists across Christchurch, not just on St Catherine's Hill. Unfortunately doing something about it presents practical difficulties. At the moment residents who agree to plant a replacement tree to compensate for one that is lost do not always honour their commitment and enforcement is both resource heavy and time consuming.

It was widely felt that a quota system would be abused initially by the handful of residents anxious to fell a tree covered by a TPO and would then be ignored in subsequent years thereby failing to solve the problem .

The idea of a tree management plan was floated under which a resident would first plant a replacement tree and then some years later would request permission to fell the "offending" tree (permission for which could not be guaranteed at outset).

The idea was left on the table for Residents Associations to consider

Dorset County Council

You have indicated that a number of troublesome trees are the responsibility of DCC rather than CBC, those that damage roads and pavements being a specific example. We take it from this that we should in future refer such matters direct to DCC without prior reference to CBC and that CBC neither needs nor wishes to take any part in subsequent discussions and actions arising from those discussions

CBC confirmed that our understanding is correct

Jim Biggin

February 2013