

To receive a report from the Service Delivery Department

Grounds Maintenance

As winter months draw to an end, spring is now just around the corner, we will therefore be finishing our winter work schedule this month, all pruning of formal hedges and perimeter hedge rows and cutting back of shrubs will be completed. Regular litter picking and emptying of the bins continue as normal with no issues to report.

The number of complete grass cuts, will be closely managed and monitored this year; for years the number of cuts completed in the closed churchyard area have significantly exceeded the number covered by the grounds maintenance agreement, at considerable cost to Saltash Town Council. *Therefore the proposal is to reduce the number of cuts from 14 to 6 cuts per annum. The first cut of this year is scheduled for week commencing 27th February.*

Pre-determined wild flower areas and meadows will be left to develop and nurture growth around the internal perimeter of the Churchyard.

Pathways

Work is ongoing to clear and maintain all internal pathways to ensure safe access into and through the Churchyard for all visitors.

To this end, the pathway at the side entrance in Farm Lane requires attention, root growth from the ash tree located just inside the gates has pushed up the tarmac and damaged the pathway surface, creating a potential trip hazard. This hazard is highlighted to churchyard visitors by displaying clear hazard signage that forms part of the Service Delivery regular health and safety checks. *In the meantime, quotes are to be obtained to address the uneven and potential trip hazards caused by tree roots. The works to be undertaken will raise the pathway with a special method that doesn't harm the trees and allows for future growth. Due to the next JBB meeting being held in October, it is recommended that delegated authority be given to the Town Clerk to appoint a contractor to carry out health and safety works at the earliest opportunity up to a maximum cost of £2,192 within budget allocated to budget code 6108 Trees Survey & Tree Maintenance for the year 2022-23.*

The ash tree that has created the issue is not in good condition and is suffering from ash die back disease, the Town Councils contracted Tree Warden carried out a Tree Survey week commencing 20th February reporting that the tree is to be felled. The full Tree Survey Report is due to be received by Friday 3rd March.

STC Tree Wardens have been advised, they have now inspected the tree themselves and attached is their report and findings.

It is proposed that the JBB Committee agree the scope of works delegating to the Town Clerk to obtain three quotes for the works to be undertaken up to a maximum of £500 to be allocated to budget code 6108 Trees Survey & Tree Maintenance for the year 2023-24.

Finance

Budget Code: 6108 Trees Survey & Tree Maintenance

Budget Availability 2022-2023: £2,192

Budget Availability 2023-2024: £2,413

Memorial Management

Health and safety inspections continue weekly, our next quarterly memorial inspection will be completed in week commencing 20th February, before our first scheduled cut begins. We have reviewed the process of how to isolate any unsafe memorials and identify these hazards to ensure absolute minimum risk to all visitors and maintenance workers, this will be implemented following our quarterly inspection.

The legal requirement for Memorial Headstones is that, they must be inspected every 5 years, however, our internal inspections will continue on a quarterly basis, due to the substantial risk of injury they present, our full detailed individual memorial inspection audit is scheduled for week commencing 6th March, 2023.

General Site Maintenance

Scheduled maintenance tasks are ongoing, works include improving site security and access.

End of Report
Service Delivery Manager

Saltash Voluntary Tree Wardens Report

Re Ash tree in Saltash St Stephens Churchyard SX417582

We refer to the ash tree immediately inside the pedestrian gate in Farm Lane. It is of high amenity value to the many users of both the cemetery itself and of Farm Lane, being the main significant tree along the wall at that end of the cemetery, and of good shape.

We noticed in 2022 that the tree is clearly affected by ash die-back, affecting the smallest branches all over the tree. There is epicormic growth (new, vertical branches which is the tree's response to significant damage) on one low branch overhanging the dustbin area, and another overhanging the road. We note that the tree's roots are lifting the tarmac path of the cemetery.

Clearly the tree will at some stage require felling to avoid risk to the public. We (AW, JA) inspected it again on 21st February 2023. We would like to make two observations:

1. We strongly urge that a replacement tree be planted nearby, such as on the grass area between the notice board and the bins. A hawthorn would be trouble-free, long lived, suitable for a cemetery and excellent for wildlife. The lower branches might need to be removed over time (lifting the crown) to provide more than adequate headroom to walk under.
2. We are not experts on assessing risk, and always defer to the County Tree Officer for the area, Steve Harding. In general, the current policy for trees affected by ash die-back is to remove any branches that are at risk of falling but not fell the whole tree until necessary – providing only that the remaining branches are strong enough to support the arborist safely, during the felling. It looks superficially as though that might apply here – i.e. some pruning of the most affected branches could give the tree another year or two of life, and another year or two of pleasure to the community. The Committee might like to consider asking for another professional opinion.

Adrian White

Jo Allen