



Development Control Committee	Thursday, 22 November 2018	Matter for Information
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Report Title: **Ash Dieback in the Borough: Strategy and Action Plan**

Report Author(s): **Michael Bennetto (Arboricultural Officer)**

Purpose of Report:	This report is to inform Members about the tree disease 'Ash Dieback' and how it will be addressed within the Borough.
Report Summary:	As a Borough of the wider Leicestershire County, the Council would look to follow the Leicestershire County Council Ash Dieback Action Plan in addition to other guidance from the Forestry Commission, the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), The Tree Council and other technical guidance notes as applicable.
Recommendation(s):	That Members note the contents of the report and appendix.
Responsible Strategic Director, Head of Service and Officer Contact(s):	<p>Stephen Hinds (Director of Finance & Transformation) (0116) 257 2606 stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Michael Bennetto (Arboricultural Officer) (0116) 257 2697 michael.bennetto@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Corporate Priorities:	Effective Service Provision (CP2) Green & Safe Places (CP4)
Vision and Values:	Accountability (V1)
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	The Council as a tree owner has a direct responsibility to ensure that its trees do not pose a danger to the public or property and are managed appropriately.
Financial:	The costs within Leicestershire County Council's Action Plan are for the whole County. As it is currently unknown how many trees fall under the ownership of this Authority, the financial impact has not yet been calculated. Once this calculation has been completed provision will be made within the Council's budget as necessary.
Corporate Risk Management:	Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1) Reputation Damage (CR4) Failure to Respond to a Significant Incident (CR7)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable.

Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There may be health and safety implications as a result of Ash Dieback.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	None.
Background Papers:	New Guidance on Managing Ash in Woodland in Light of Ash Dieback (October 2018)
Appendices:	1. Ash Dieback Action Plan, Leicestershire County Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ash dieback, sometimes known as 'Chalara', affects ash and other *Fraxinus* species of tree. It is caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*.
- 1.2 The fungus arrived from Asia into Europe during the 1990's and has spread rapidly. While the first official record in Britain was only as recently as 2012, anecdotal evidence suggests its arrival here over a decade earlier.
- 1.3 This invasive fungus causes a range of symptoms from leaf and branch dieback to death of *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash) trees and other *Fraxinus* species. Once infected, a high proportion of trees will die. A few ash trees may survive the infection because of genetic factors which give them tolerance of, or resistance to, the disease but the percentage of the UK's ash trees that are likely to be resistant to the fungus is unknown (as at the middle of 2018). Evidence from mainland Europe suggested that only 10% of trees were found to be moderately resistant to the disease, with 1-2% having high levels of resistance.
- 1.4 Other *Fraxinus* species which are not affected by ash dieback are susceptible to a pest called the Emerald Ash Borer, which is currently progressing through Russia towards Europe. It is also in the United States where it has killed hundreds of millions of ash trees since 1990.
- 1.5 All trees in the Borough are situated on land which is affected by human activities. These activities often encroach onto the living environment of trees and therefore some form of management is required during their life span.

2. Information

- 2.1 As a Borough of Leicestershire County, the Council would look to follow the Leicestershire County Council Ash Dieback Action Plan as applicable (**Appendix 1**) as well as guidance from Forestry Commission (FC), DEFRA, The Tree Council and other technical guidance notes as may be applicable. The FC has recently published updated guidance for managing Ash in woodlands, separate advice will shortly be produced on management of non-woodland ash, particularly those adjacent to roads and rights-of-way, providing a suite of guidance for managers and regulators of trees. It should be noted that the Leicestershire County Council Ash Dieback Action Plan covers the whole County and therefore the costs

contained within that document relate to the whole County. The actual cost to the Borough Council will be determined by the outcomes of the work described below.

- 2.2 With regard to the surveying of trees for ash dieback, the first stage is to establish the land for which the Council is responsible. Legal Services has compiled an exhaustive index of sites that are within OWBC ownership and/or responsibility. This now needs to be mapped and digitised so that it can be added onto the tree survey software, this is something IT services can do however it is of course resource dependant.
- 2.3 Sites can then be zoned according to usage and footfall in order to triage the survey roster, with significant size/age trees to be surveyed as a priority and each subsequent visit adding more detail. For example, it is not necessary to plot and survey a young tree in good condition or even in poor condition if the potential for damage and target occupancy is sufficiently low.
- 2.4 Opposed to the targeted surveying of ash trees, it would be more expedient to survey all trees within the Council's ownership; as well as structural weaknesses there are many other pests, diseases and disorders that affect a whole host of species, many of which pose greater risk to persons and property than Ash dieback. Resources need to be used efficiently, addressing risks to health and safety as a priority. As a fungus that acts through dysfunction (i.e. dieback) the symptoms of ash dieback are quite pronounced unlike many subtle decay fungi such as those that affect the principle root structure without any apparent visual indicators of ill health.
- 2.5 There is growing evidence that once trees are infected by *H. fraxineus*, and the disease has progressed sufficiently, the trees become susceptible to colonisation by secondary pathogens such as *Armillaria spp.* (honey fungus). These secondary pathogens can result in butt or root rot, destabilisation of the tree making them prone to falling, and may ultimately be the final cause of tree decline and death.
- 2.6 With regard to trees affected now, guidance is to judge each case on their merits taking into account health and safety and environmental benefits. By retaining as many ash as practicable, it is hopeful that resistant stock can be found. Even where conservation is a key objective the potential risk to people from dead and dying trees must always be assessed and appropriate action taken.