

Cabinet Member for City Services

12th March 2018

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor J Innes

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Ward(s) affected:

Wainbody

Title:

Petition – Request for the Clearance of Land at the Rear of the Properties in Alfriston Road, Finham

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 15 signatures which was submitted to Coventry City Council. The petition is supported by Councillor Sawdon and requests that the Council clear up the land that is in the Council's ownership to the rear of the properties in Alfriston Road, Finham

The petition reads:-

We call upon Coventry City Council to clear up the land which is in the Council's ownership to the rear of the properties in Alfriston Road, Finham, CV3 6QD and community using the spinney.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for (City Services) is recommended to:

- 1) Note the large number and area of similar woodlands and spinneys owned and managed by the City Council.
- 2) Note the resource implications of clearing the spinney at the rear of Alfriston Road.
- 3) Note the valuable wildlife habitat and resource provided by the spinneys and their undergrowth.
- 4) Agree that the Council continue to retain the spinney understory vegetation and that no action is taken to clear the site.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Request for the Clearance of Land at the Rear of Properties in Alfriston Road, Finham

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The petition refers to an area of land located in at the rear of properties on Alfriston Road, Finham. The area is defined as Stonebridge Highway Spinney within the Council's Greenspace Strategy and includes a range of mature tree species including Ash, Pine, Lime and Poplar. The Stonebridge Highway Spinney covers an area of approximately 1.7 hectares.
- 1.2 The Council owns and maintains 40 woodland areas and spinneys covering an area of approximately 296 hectares. This makes up 22% of all park and open space land managed by the Councils Park Service.
- 1.3 Characteristically these woodland and spinney areas support an understory of vegetation which includes a range of plant species classified as semi-natural and typical for sites like this. This woodland plant understory is an important food source for honey bees and bumblebees and other wild animals. Bramble leaves are eaten by certain caterpillars and some grazing mammals, especially deer. When mature, the berries are eaten and their seeds dispersed by several mammals, such as fox and badger and small birds and several species use Bramble as protective cover when hiding from predators or disturbance by human activity. Nationally, there are over 450 rare and threatened species of plant, insect and bird which are associated with scrub habitat.
- 1.4 Over the years intensive land management practices or developments have substantially reduced this important vegetation, making patches of woodland understory more valuable where they have been left. The Councils Park Service have worked to retain this wildlife resources making an important contribution the City's biodiversity.
- 1.5 These woodland and spinney areas are extremely popular and well visited by the City's community providing a range of recreational opportunities such as walking, dog walking, jogging as well as bringing people into contact with nature. A network of informal pathways are maintained through these areas allowing and encouraging access.
- 1.6 Reductions in Government spending has meant that the City Council has been faced with some difficult decisions on the level of front line service provision including park and woodland maintenance. The funding allocated to the Greenspace and Streetpride Service was reduced in 2015 by £1.5 m which represented 25% of the overall budget. This resulted in a review and reduction in maintenance operations across the City. This funding reduction clearly restricts our ability to undertake any additional low priority operations which are outside essential routine and scheduled maintenance works.
- 1.7 The cost of clearing and disposal of the spinney understory alone has been estimated at £6,000 and requiring approximately 148 man hours. This operation would need to be undertaken annually to ensure the understory was kept clear and represent a considerable demand on limited resources and a long term liability. These works would not be considered a priority and would draw both financial and staff resources away from more essential operations such as grass cutting and street cleansing operations.
- 1.8 In the past the Service has rejected similar requests to clear understory vegetation from other woodland and spinney sites. The clearing of this site would set a precedent making other requests difficult to refuse and for which we have no allocated resources.

- 1.9 In addition to its limited operational value the clearance of the understory would be highly questionable given its value as a wildlife resource.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The option to do nothing has been rejected. The Council will continue to maintain its tree stock in accordance with an established tree management programme, maintain an informal open path network through woodland and spinney areas and provide a contribution to supporting wildlife.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 There has been no consultation on this matter.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

- 5.1. Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

- 5.2. Legal implications

There are no Legal implications at present.

Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry and contribute greatly to improving the quality of life to those that live and work in the City, helps address health inequalities and provides valuable wildlife habitats.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Continued maintenance of the site will be delivered using existing resources.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

No equality impact assessments have been undertaken.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

No direct impact

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Greenspace Service will continue to foster close partnership engagement with local residents and voluntary groups.

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

Graham Hood
Head of Streetpride and Greenspace

Directorate:

Place

Tel and email contact:

Tel: 02476 83 2194
Email: graham.hood@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Maggie Morgan	Accountant	Place	27 th Feb 18	28 th March 18
Names of approvers for submission: (Officers and Members)				
Michelle Salmon	Governance Services Officer	Place	28 th Feb 18	28 th Feb 18
Rob Parkes	Team Leader, Place, Legal Services	Place	27 th Feb 18	27 th Feb 18
Andrew Walster	Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services	Place	28 th Feb 18	1 st March 18
Councillor J Innes	Cabinet Member for City Services	-	1 st March 18	1 st March 18

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