

**Date:** 01 August 2019

**Title:** Report Item 14 – Dutch Elm Disease

**By:** K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

**Purpose:** To provide an update on ESCC withdrawal of support

**Recommendations:** a) To note the report  
b) To consider amending the parish council grant scheme to make good the shortfall in support

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In July 2016 the council considered subsidising parish residents faced with the cost of felling diseased elm trees. Anecdotal evidence suggested that householders were less willing to have trees felled now that the subsidy from East Sussex County Council had been reduced from 75% to 25%.

Information was gathered on the number and condition of elms in the parish. It was noted that the majority of elms remaining in the parish were either on highway land or on National Trust land, and those in private gardens were relatively small. It was estimated that there were 20-30 clumps in private gardens, each of which would cost approx. £250 for Climpsons (the ESCC contractor) to remove. On this basis, the approximate exposure to the parish council if all trees were contaminated would be 25 clumps x £250 x 25% = £1,600. It was noted that Eastbourne Borough Council paid 50% towards the removal of infected trees, so that if the parish council and the county council each paid 25% in the parish, there would be parity with Eastbourne. An article was issued in the parish magazine advising residents of the signs of the disease and the need for swift remedial action.

Accordingly in October 2016 the council reached the following decision:

**RESOLVED** - To approve the payment of a conditional subsidy to private householders in the parish for the felling of diseased elm trees, with immediate effect and on the following conditions:

- Works should be ordered by East Sussex County Council and invoiced to their contractor
- Works should be carried out quickly following notification of the disease
- Elms felled under the scheme should be replaced with disease resistant native trees (available free of charge from the Conservation Foundation)
- The subsidy to be capped at 25% of the cost, a further 25% to be paid by ESCC and 50% by the householder.
- Felling carried out prior to October 2016 but since April 2016 could be considered for a retrospective subsidy on a discretionary basis.

Unfortunately, the county council's DED Officer has recently informed the Parish Council that ESCC will no longer be able to provide finance towards felling and removal.

The problem continues to spread: three more trees have recently been reported to ESCC by a resident:

- One in the grounds of the Old Parsonage adjacent to the A259
- One in the adjacent Birling House in Gilberts Drive.
- Also in Gilberts Drive outside 9 The Fridays is another tree: one went the year before last and was never removed, although reported, and now another tree has gone near to the dead tree. All these and some previously reported at Friston appear to be on ESCC land.

In these circumstances, the parish council is invited to consider revising the terms of their grant scheme.