

## **Questions and Responses from Opposition Leader**

### **Executive Committee - Tuesday 5 March 2024**

#### **Item 8: Tree and Woodland Strategy 2023-33**

**From: Councillor Moore**

- 1. The 2023-24 approved budget for Ash Die back is: “Ash Die Back Tree Replacement £237,630 (GF Capital programme)”**

**“Reduction in Ash Dieback Budget HRA (£153,000)(HRA MTFP)”**

**Please can you clarify if £302,000 is an accurate figure to be rolled forward and the budget book components that make up that figure?**

#### **Response:**

The General Fund Ash Die Back capital budget 24/25 was originally set at **£201,700** however, expenditure in quarter three was lower than anticipated so we will be rolling over more than **£201,700**. General Fund Capital doesn't change unless an underspend is declared which it hasn't been.

The HRA budget is a combined budget covering all tree and hedge works costs, including but not exclusively Ash Die Back. The **£153,000** reduction in the HRA MTFP relates to a change in the spending profile. It is not a reduction in the overall budget. The rate of Ash decline in Exeter has not been as fast as originally predicted, but the levels of infection are expected to remain the same and the programme will need to last longer. As a result, the budget has been profiled out to provide adequate Ash Die Back funding beyond 23-25FY. There was an underspend in the HRA budget in 22/23 of £300k, which got carried forward, but early in 23/24 officers reported that **£300,000** wasn't needed in year and has now been profiled out to provide budget of **C. £100,000** pa in 2027/28, 2028/29 and 2029/30.

Collectively its anticipated that General Fund and HRA budgets for 2024 -25 will exceed **£302,000**.

- 2. How much has been spent on ash die back from each of the General Fund and HRA budgets during 2023-24?**

#### **Response:**

General Fund Ash Die back expenditure is being reported in Q3 at £30,000. Costs for Ash Die Back are not separated out in the HRA Tree works budget, but the total expenditure set out in Q3 of 2023-24 is reported at **£167,000**.

- 3. How much is allocated in the HRA budget for ash die back management in 2024-25?**

**Response:**

Approved budgets for 24/25 are **£201,700** for general fund and **£132,770** for HRA, but these will be updated by any underspend in 2023/24.

**4. Please provide a breakdown on the expenditure for each year on the Northbrook Wild Arboretum?**

**Response:**

Work on Northbrook Arboretum started in earnest this financial year with DWT undertaking a mixture of ground work to level out the artificial features of the former golf course, bulb and tree planting and ground preparation for wild flower meadows. So far invoices have been paid to the total of **£16,096** (exc. VAT). A further invoice is expected shortly for the remainder of the work completed during this financial year.