

Green spaces report, for PC meeting on 15 September 2025

1. We now have the report from Future Nature WTC, the ecologists we engaged earlier this year. There are no surprises, and the conclusions are set out elsewhere with the meeting papers. The recommendations include woodland management to improve structural diversity and phased removal of some ash with dieback adjacent to paths for health and safety reasons.
2. I have inspected all the trees next to the paths in the Spinney and Nature Reserve with Simon Green of Green Trees Ltd and also with former colleagues from The Parks Trust. It is never possible to say definitively a tree is 100% safe or indeed that a diseased tree will fall in the next few months. But with our combined experience I feel confident we have identified those trees and branches that present a significant risk to the public at the moment.
3. I propose we tackle them this autumn as part of the current grant funded project. I propose we use Green Trees Ltd again as they represent good value. I suggest we engage them to do five days work at the end of October which will cost £3,900 plus VAT. The priority will be to work on the trees that are clearly hazardous, adjacent to the main paths. In the Spinney this will mainly involve removing large branches from some of the mature ash trees, many of which are now showing signs of ash die back disease. We will need to continue to monitor the woods as ash dieback advances and be prepared for further expenditure each year.
4. As well as the work required on health and safety grounds, I hope Simon will also be able to do a little more thinning to let more light into the woodland and the stream, as recommended by the ecologist. He won't be able to do much in five days, and the rest of the work recommended in the report will need to be done in the coming years by volunteer working parties, supplemented by specialist contractors as and when we can afford it.
5. To complete the current project and claim the grant from the Community Board we have commissioned Black Dog design of Buckingham to design an illustrated map of the central part of the village showing the main footpaths and historical features such as the Spinney, moat and mill, the 'Rec, Church, Pub, Mem Hall and Village Green. This will be printed onto two panels which we have ordered from Greenbarnes Ltd. We will install the panels on the Rec where three footpaths meet near the Hall and just inside the gate on the path from Wood End to the Spinney. They will each have 'you are here' marked.
6. I am delighted to report we have found a local resident who is a keen history buff, and a good writer, to research and write up the history of the village, which we can place on the village website. Snippets will go on the interpretive board with a QR code to link it to the website.

7. The Village Trust has provided a grant to pay for a couple of trees to be cut back in the Garden of Peace and for the tree stumps in there to be ground down. Chris Hooper is organising this work.
8. Most of the trees and shrubs planted in February/March this year have survived but, not surprisingly, we lost a few of the bigger trees to the drought. We will need to replant approximately 12 this winter at a cost of around £4.50 each.
9. I propose to lead a walk for residents on Saturday 11 October to discuss the work we need to do over the coming years and to listen to residents' ideas and answer questions. We'll take in the Nature Reserve, Millenium Wood, Garden of Peace, and Spinney. In particular I want to show people the dead ash trees where they are next to paths and explain why in some places the trees need to be thinned and/or coppiced. NB This will be before we have Green Trees come in to do the tree work later in October.

David Foster
8/9/25