

27.3.25 Agenda item 11 A Proposal regarding replacing the missing Common Maple Tree on Jubilee Square in Wem

As the Town Council will know there has been a tree missing on the Jubilee Square for some years now. The previous one/s died and there has been rumour and speculation as to why this was ranging from it's previous use as a lorry park to the actions of a stall holder/s on Market Day.

This is a Shropshire Council owned space, created as a legacy for the town by the former North Shropshire District Council (NSDC) from some money it distributed as the Unitary Shropshire Council was formed in 2009. It needs this tree replacing, so I asked the SC Tree Officer to look into this possibility when she did a tour/s of the town to look at our town trees on public spaces, streets and play areas. Amongst SC sites looked at were Lowe Hill Road and Play Area, Isherwoods Way and Jubilee Square.

As regards Jubilee Square she saw no reason why one shouldn't be replanted as the other were all looking healthy and growing in similar spaces nearby. They would have adequate space for rooting and flourishing over the years. She added:

'The problem for the replacement tree in the market square, is that specific varieties with particular growth habits are required because of the constraints of these sites. A small Field maple with branches down to ground level in the market square is not really suitable. A standard or heavy standard with a clear stem of about 1.5m is needed for this location and it needs to be a variety with a compact crown, as all the others are. I have spoken to colleagues about the prospect of supplying you with the special tree varieties we talked about, e.g. the compact variety of Field Maple and two similar ones for Isherwoods Way. 30/8/22. Nursery bred varieties of field maple (*Acer campestre*) are generally suitable for somewhat confined urban planting locations. Suitable varieties might include 'Streetwise', 'Elsrijk' or 'Queen Elizabeth'.

In the last couple of weeks I was told that 'there are no trees left for SC to supply for this financial year through the LATF grant – they've all been allocated and distributed all of them to schools and STAR Housing. The planting season is almost over now, unless you can get containerised tree stock and can plant it fairly quickly. If we get a dry spell you'll have to water the newly planted tree regularly – at least a watering can each visit – possibly every other day. This should be kept up for at least the first two or three summers after planting, until the tree establishes a strong root system that can find its own source of ground water.'

The senior tree manager went on....'whilst I'm afraid the Tree Team has no budget to purchase trees we'd be happy to offer support in terms of species selection and planting / maintenance advice, if you were able to source your own tree. I can't guarantee we could have someone available to help plant it on the day, much as that would be nice. We've lost three officers over recent times and not been able to replace them due to MTFs savings targets.'

I had previously arranged in principle for the Wem P3 group to plant this tree, change the soil in the hole and for SC to give their approval for this. SC would also (if they could) have someone from the small team available to help/advise of the day of planting. Because there were no free trees available at this time from SC I was then in discussion with various donors who would be willing to help pay for this. However, time is of the essence as the planting season for this year is nearly at an end!

This being the case I approached a local tree firm and asked if they could get hold of a suitable tree for the square. They came back to me and gave me the quote provided. On the basis of this I then contacted the Town Clerk and asked if the Town Council would in a position to help with this project. She reminded me that we had some money in one of our budgets for tree planting. This hasn't all been allocated this year.

If this quotation is acceptable to the Town Council I should like to propose that we ask this firm to undertake the task of planting a replacement tree that matches the others in the Jubilee Square so that there is no further delay, because the spot is becoming a trip hazard, sinking and looks somewhat untidy because there is now a gap in the original design for this public space.