

TOLLESHUNT KNIGHTS PARISH COUNCIL

FELLING OF THE OAK TREES ADJACENT TO THE VILLAGE HALL

For some considerable time there has been an ongoing insurance claim between Tolleshunt Knights Village Hall Management Committee and Tolleshunt Knights Parish Council regarding subsidence of the Village Hall. After lengthy investigations the two insurance companies involved have now agreed that the three oak trees adjacent to the Hall are implicated in the damage. Two options have therefore been given to the Parish Council as owners of the trees – to fell all three oaks and treat the stumps to prevent regrowth, or to install root barriers.

The Parish Council has always hoped to save the trees, but the cost of root barriers has proved prohibitive. The quotes received for such work range from £35,000 to £60,000 with a guarantee of only six years. It is possible that if root barriers were put in the same problem could arise again in the future. The Parish Council has received independent legal advice that it has no other option than to fell the trees, a decision which has been taken with the very greatest reluctance.

The main source of income for the Parish Council is the annual precept received from Maldon District Council. This must cover all the Council's expenses throughout the year. The precept for 2024-2025 was set at £15,000, giving the Council approximately £10,000 from its reserves to deal with the oak trees. All expenditure by the Council must be within the legal powers granted by statute to local authorities in order to give good value and openness in the spending of public money. It can therefore be seen that the Council is not in a position, either financially or legally, to spend a such a large sum of public money on the root barriers. Furthermore, the insurers have advised that subsidence of the Hall is continuing and the trees must be dealt with quickly or the Parish Council could be liable for any further damage.

The felling of the trees will take place during the school holidays, and further details will follow.

V Banyard (Parish clerk)