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| <b>Subject:</b>           | Consultation response on the Forest Services' Proposal to manage Ash Dieback Disease                            |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 09 January 2018   |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Rose Crozier, Assistant Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department<br>Orla Maguire, Biodiversity Officer |

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| <b>Restricted Reports</b>                                |   |
| <b>Is this report restricted?</b>                        | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b> |   |
| <b>After Committee Decision</b>                          | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| <b>After Council Decision</b>                            | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| <b>Some time in the future</b>                           | <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| <b>Never</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/>  |

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| <b>Call-in</b>                               |   |
| <b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>  |
| 1.1        | The purpose of the report is to present the draft response to the Forest Services' Proposal to manage Ash Dieback Disease for Members to consider and agree.  |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>  |
| 2.1        | The Committee is asked to consider and agree that Officers respond to the Consultation supporting the Department's approach and specifically:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) agreeing to the discontinuation of issuing Statutory Plant Health Notices in favour of a voluntary approach and to</li><li>(ii) seek further guidance from the Department on the best practice management of ash trees woodlands where Ash Dieback has been confirmed.</li></ul> |

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| 3.0 | <b>Main report</b>   |
| 3.1 | The Forest Service is seeking views on its proposals to manage Ash Dieback Disease. Elected Members of the former Parks and Leisure Committee received an update on 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2013.   |
| 3.2 | Ash is a native species of major ecological importance, common in hedgerows and woodlands  |
| 3.3 | Ash Dieback, a disease of ash trees was first detected in Northern Ireland in 2012 on imported ash trees. The Department has been monitoring the presence of the disease since then, and are now finding the disease at widely dispersed locations across Northern Ireland despite efforts to contain and eradicate the disease.   |
| 3.4 | Since 2012 the Forest Service has spent over £0.5 million finding and destroying infected trees, but the disease is still spreading. The Department now considers that containment and eradication are no longer practicable.  |
| 3.5 | Consequently, the Department is consulting on a change of approach to discontinue the issuing of Statutory Notices requiring the destruction of ash trees affected by Ash Dieback. In addition, the Department will not seek Protected Zone status against Ash Dieback disease.  |
| 3.6 | <p>The Department proposes to implement the following measures to assist stakeholders manage Ash Dieback through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guidance on Ash Dieback which is available on <a href="http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/ash-dieback-disease">www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/ash-dieback-disease</a></li> <li>2. Funding support for the removal of infected plants and replanting through the Forest Protection Scheme. Forest Service intends to provide additional grant support to manage woodland affected by the disease.</li> <li>3. The Tree Check app which is available to download at <a href="http://www.treecheck.net">www.treecheck.net</a>: this allows the reporting of suspect tree pests and diseases to the Forest Service.</li> <li>4. The retention of legislative controls on ash plants for planting under the Plant Health Amendment Order (NI) 2012.</li> <li>5. Scientific research, on Ash Dieback and its environmental impact in Northern Ireland including research to identify trees which are tolerant to Ash Dieback</li> </ol> |
| 3.7 | In summary Forest Service intends to modify its approach to the management of Ash Dieback  |

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|      | by discontinuing to issue Statutory Plant Health Notices in favour of a voluntary approach.   |
|      | <u>Key issues</u>   |
| 3.8  | The Council agrees with the Department's approach and will incorporate training of Parks Staff and will support local environmental groups to report suspected instances of Ash Dieback across Belfast.   |
| 3.9  | Members should note that we are seeking further clarification on any resource implications to the Council and therefore this response is subject to any further updates on this matter.   |
| 3.10 | Officers will seek further guidance from the Department on the best practice management of ash trees and woodlands where Ash Dieback has been confirmed, specifically costs.  |
|      | <u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u>  |
| 3.11 | There may be financial implications for Council where Ash Dieback is recorded on Council lands. Once the financial implications are understood we would intend covering within existing budgets. However, if cost implications are significant a further report will be brought to committee. |
|      | <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>  |
| 3.12 | None associated with this report.   |
| 4.0  | <b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>  |
|      | None  |