



Subject:	Control of Japanese knotweed – update.
Date:	10 th April 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Environmental Health Manager, City and Neighbourhood Services Department

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

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The People and Communities Committee meeting of 6 February 2018 considered a motion by Councillor McReynolds. The motion called on the council to do more to assist individuals whose homes are negatively impacted upon by Japanese Knotweed and should therefore write to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to see if they would be content to co-fund a Belfast City Council 'not for profit' service to treat properties across Belfast'.
1.2	An action arising from the Committee meeting was therefore for officers to consider the feasibility of this request. This paper serves to provide an update to Members regarding preliminary work that has been undertaken in the intervening period.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Committee is asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the content of this report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that Japanese knotweed is one of thirty-five plant species that have been proscribed via Article 15 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 for the purposes of preventing their planting or growth in the wild. The relevant authority is the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).</p>
3.2	<p>Methods for the control of Japanese knotweed are typically grouped into physical controls, involving the mechanical removal or deep burial of the plant, together with the installation of growth barriers, or chemical controls involving the use of herbicides such as glyphosate, 2,4 D, Triclopyr or Picloram. Chemical treatments routinely have to be repeated until no regrowth is observed (usually for between 3 to 5 years), although it should be noted that glyphosate based herbicides are readily available from DIY stores.</p>
3.3	<p>In terms of treatment approach, it is considered that the council would have to determine, or seek professional advice regarding the most expedient method to control or eradicate a Japanese knotweed infestation; either excavation, burial or chemical treatment. Such advice may however have legal implications, particularly given the issues around the potential impact of Japanese knotweed on the sale of properties or the depreciation of assets. It is additionally considered that it would be difficult to forecast the likely demand for a knotweed treatment scheme as there is limited information available on the incidence of invasive species across Belfast.</p>
3.4	<p>In terms of offering a chemical treatment service, the council could opt to appoint a commercial contractor to deliver a <i>'not for profit'</i> type service or it might seek to deliver such a service on an equivalent financial basis from within existing staff resources, although this capacity does not presently exist. Any option could have significant financial impact on revenue estimates for the Council. It is considered however, that mechanical removal or deep burial would have to be undertaken by a specialist contractor and that excavated materials would have to be disposed offsite to an appropriately licensed landfill site, with attendant haulage and disposal costs.</p> <p>In order to determine the council's vires for establishing a Japanese knotweed treatment</p>

3.5	<p>scheme for the city, officers have sought the views of the council’s Legal Services regarding potential treatment approaches and on the likely risks associated with such a scheme.</p>
3.6	<p>In addition, in order to determine NIEA’s views on the establishment of a Japanese knotweed treatment scheme, council officers have written to their counterparts in NIEA regarding the manner of the scheme delivery and regarding the potential for part-funding for such a scheme.</p>
3.7	<p>Finally, officers are presently undertaking a review of how GB councils manage Japanese knotweed, including whether any councils offer a treatment service for residents.</p>
3.8	<p>It is proposed that officers will complete the above-mentioned research and provide a further report to Committee containing recommendations or options for a Belfast treatment scheme.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The provision of a ‘not for profit’ treatment service has not been included within existing revenue estimates for the 2018/2019 financial period. Any option could have significant financial impact on revenue estimates for the Council. It is anticipated that there may be significant administrative and financial resource implications should the council wish to establish a commercial contractor led ‘not for profit’ Japanese knotweed treatment scheme or if the council wished to provide an equivalent scheme from ‘in house’ resources.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or good relations issues associated with establishing a Japanese knotweed treatment scheme.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None