



Report On The Replacement of Four Street Trees in The Avenue

Background

In October 2024, the Council resolved to replace four street trees in Minehead Avenue and delegated authority to the Town Clerk to spend up to £8,000 to complete the works (*Minute 2024/169*).

The agreed species was *Tilia cordata* 'Streetwise', with planting planned to coincide with the removal of one failing tree by Somerset Council.

Progress stalled due to internal restructuring at Somerset Council, but officers have now indicated they expect to proceed with their contractor for tree removal between mid-February and early March. This creates a narrow window for Minehead Town Council to coordinate the additional works.

Summary of the Agreed Project

- Somerset Council will remove one failing tree and leave a 1-metre stump in line with their policy.
- Minehead Town Council intended to appoint the same contractor to:
 - reduce that stump to ground level;
 - grind out the stump;
 - grind out three additional 1-metre stumps.
- A local contractor would reinstate and level the surrounding areas, preparing four planting pits.
- Four *Tilia cordata* 'Streetwise' trees would be supplied and planted, each with new protective metal cages.
- The Town Council would take responsibility for 10 years of maintenance (watering, epicormic growth control and formative pruning) under a Section 96 agreement of the Highways Act 1980, after which responsibility would revert to the highways authority.

Current Position

The sequence of removal, stump grinding, reinstatement and planting needs to be coordinated tightly to avoid missed contractor availability or increased cost.

Prior approval has ensured the Town Clerk can confirm orders immediately once Somerset Council issues its final date.

Additional Notes

- The original Avenue tree cages have since been repurposed elsewhere (e.g., Blenheim Gardens), necessitating new cages for this project.
- Any new cages purchased will remain valuable for future planting schemes.
- Somerset Council has changed contractors for the tree-removal works, which means a new quote for the stump-grinding element is required.

Revised Costings

Item	October 2024 Price (ex VAT)	Revised Price (ex VAT)
4 × Tilia cordata 'Streetwise', heavy standard (16-18 cm diameter, Collected Locally)	£871 (This was for 14-16 cm diameter, delivered)	£980
4 × Full Guards (Galvanised & Painted, delivered)	£895	£900
Stump grinding for 4 × trees	£1,000	£1,200 (Note: only a ballpark quote at this time)
Tarmac reinstatement / making good around 4 × pits	£3,730	£4,460
Treegator watering bags (2 bags per tree, delivered)	Not originally costed	£180.29
Total	£6,496	Circa. £7,720.29

Financial Considerations

- Sufficient funds exist within the Avenue Tree Replacement Earmarked Reserve to cover the majority of the revised project cost.
- Should any element not be fully met from this reserve, the balance can be funded from relevant operational budgets, including the Devolution Budget, as the project forms part of the Council's ongoing programme of devolved-service arrangements relating to highway verge and tree management.

Legal Considerations

- The planting and maintenance of trees on the public highway must be carried out under a Section 96 Agreement of the Highways Act 1980, which allows a town or parish council to plant and maintain trees, shrubs and similar features on the highway with the consent of the highway authority.
- Highway authorities normally require a Section 171 Licence for excavation in the highway. Somerset Council have confirmed they will not charge for this licence in this

instance and that it will be issued to and completed by, the contractor carrying out the reinstatement and planting works.

- Compliance with highways safety requirements, reinstatement standards and traffic management arrangements (where required) will form part of the contractor's responsibilities.
- As the works involve public highway surfaces and sub-surfaces, all activity must meet Somerset Council's specifications, and evidence of the contractor's street-works competence will be required.

Recommendation

That the Council notes the update on the Minehead Avenue tree-replacement project, including the anticipated commencement of works by Somerset Council between mid-February and early March, and that the Council considers increasing the Clerk's delegated authority from £8,000 to a maximum of £11,000 to enable delivery of the works based on the revised costs for reinstatement and planting.

Ben Parker

Town Clerk

January 2026