

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 31 March 2008

**Subject:** Japanese Knotweed

**Report of:** Director of Environmental Services

**Contact officer:** Gary Harold 01942 404221

---

**Purpose / summary:** To inform Committee of the progress being made to develop a fully co-ordinated strategy for the management and eradication of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land and the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Committee's report to Cabinet on the 14 April 2007.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** The Japanese Knotweed Action Plan was accepted and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on the 14 April 2007, as commended by the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee No.2.

**Recommendation / decision:** Committee is requested to note the progress being made in achieving the tasks set out in the Japanese Knotweed Action Plan.

**Key Decision:** This report does not involve a key decision. This item is not included in the Forward Plan.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:	Potential for pooling of existing resources.
Staffing:	Within existing resources to date.
Policy:	
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes

Wards affected:

Borough wide.

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

---

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No \***

\* delete which applicable

---

**For Cabinet reports only:**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>X</b>		
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

---

**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	31 March 2008		

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 13 March 2008

## **Background:**

Cabinet, at its meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2007, accepted the recommendations of the report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee No2 'Japanese Knotweed' and the resulting action plan. In addition, they agreed that the Director of Environmental Services be tasked with delivering a "One Council" approach to dealing with the issues presented by Japanese Knotweed, and invasive weeds in general, through implementation of the action plan.

The recommendations contained in the report were:

1. To develop a co-ordinated approach for the management and eradication of Japanese knotweed.
2. To develop and publicise consistent advice and guidance on the management of Japanese knotweed and individual responsibilities concerning the prevention of spread.
3. To create a single point of contact (identify a corporate lead) for advice and information and develop reporting and recording mechanisms to assist mapping the extent of the problem.
4. To develop prioritisation criteria for treatment and adopt a consistent method of identifying the preferred solution.
5. To develop a corporate approach to treatment, utilising pooled resources from those who incur expenditure and procure an appropriate package of treatment to suit collective needs.
6. To explore opportunities for the creation of partnerships that will enhance our efforts to reduce the problem.

## **Proposals:**

The action plan is attached as Appendix 1, with progress reported on each of the key tasks. Members will note that most tasks have been completed or are in progress. Completion of the action plan is on target for the September 2008 milestone.

In summary, the action plan records that the key players in relation to Japanese Knotweed issues were identified and an invasive weeds working group established to identify resources and develop a "One Council" approach to implementing a strategy for the control and eradication of Japanese Knotweed infestations across the Borough.

The Council's Ecologist has looked at best practice elsewhere and incorporated lessons learned into the Council's freely available information sheet on Japanese Knotweed and contributed to the development of a Code of Practice on Invasive Weed Species on Council land. Committee can be assured that this Council's approach to dealing with Japanese Knotweed is far in advance of what is generally found in other local authorities across the country. In addition, Japanese Knotweed is found extensively on private land and, where it abuts Council land there is no legislative requirement for the landowner to treat. Consequently, the Council's efforts can be undermined in its attempt to eradicate a particular problem. Therefore, a realistic and pragmatic approach needs to be taken in dealing with invasive weed

issues, particularly given the potential for spread through wind blown seed, rhizomes and roots.

Legislation only deals with the wilful spread of Japanese Knotweed or, where it is deemed to cause a nuisance with potential to cause damage to property, and there is no provision for compelling landowners to eradicate stands of Knotweed on their land.

Publicity material has been prepared and disseminated through articles in the local press and Borough Life which sets out the issues outlined above.

The Invasive Weeds Working Group are actively considering the various options, within existing resources and subject to an adjustment to the Council's budget framework, for providing a point of contact for recording, mapping and monitoring the extent of the problem. A dedicated corporately funded resource may be needed in the future, particularly to identify priorities for action. In addition, the working group has been tasked with identifying the resources currently available together with an "in principle" agreement to consider budget pooling.

The outcome of these considerations will be reported to this Committee in due course.

Future work for the group includes liaising with relevant partners, including Railtrack, United Utilities and the Environment Agency to invite their collaboration in dealing with invasive weed problems where their land holdings abut Council owned land.

**Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:**

The Japanese Knotweed Action Plan was accepted and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on the 14 April 2007, as commended by the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee No.2, having considered various options for the control and eradication of that particular pernicious weed.

**Conclusions:**

Committee are requested to note the good progress made to date in achieving the tasks set out in the Japanese Knotweed Action Plan and endorse the future work of the Invasive Weeds Working Group in its efforts to develop a "One Council" approach to dealing with the issues presented by invasive weeds and, in particular, Japanese Knotweed.

## Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section:

Policy/Service Area:

Person Completing Form:

Date:

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race			Disability		
Ethnicity			Gender		
Age			Religion		
Class			Sexual Orientation		

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Timescale	
Responsibility	
Comments	

**Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?**

Departmental Service Plan	
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review
-------------------------

## Appendix 1

### Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Review – Japanese knotweed Action Plan

**Aim: To develop a “One Council” approach to the management of Japanese knotweed in Wigan**

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Progress on tasks</b>
1	Identify and allocate responsibility to an appropriate Chief Officer for Japanese knotweed to act as Corporate Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify Chief Officer.</li> <li>• Communicate Cabinet decision.</li> </ul>	12 April 2007	Cabinet	Decision to task the Director of Environmental Services with delivering on the action plan made by Cabinet on 12 April 2007.
2	Develop a co-ordinated strategy for the management and eradication of Japanese knotweed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key players in relation to Japanese knotweed issues.</li> <li>• Develop a vision for Japanese knotweed management.</li> <li>• Identify resources for strategy implementation.</li> <li>• Develop performance monitoring framework.</li> </ul>	May 2007	Corporate Lead	<p>Key players identified in ES, WLCT, LAPD, CYPS AND WLCT to form invasive weeds working group.</p> <p>Vision developed to control the spread of invasive weeds, in particular, Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>Work has commenced to identify Departmental</p>

					resources to be pooled for the most cost effective "One Council" approach to implementing the action plan. Performance monitoring will follow from the establishment of a unitary budget.
3	Develop and publicise consistent advice and guidance on the management of Japanese knotweed and individual responsibility concerning the prevention of spread.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify current advice and information sources.</li> <li>• Identify best practice.</li> <li>• Revise and enhance advice and information material.</li> <li>• Develop a communication strategy for publicity.</li> </ul>	June 2007	The Council's Ecologist	<p>The Council's Ecologist has attended Conferences and Seminars on best practice in Japanese Knotweed control and eradication.</p> <p>Best practice has been incorporated into the Council's freely available Information Sheet on Japanese Knotweed.</p> <p>Articles have been placed in the local press and Borough Life</p>

					to publicise the problem of invasive weeds.
4	Create a single point of contact for advice and information and develop reporting and recording mechanisms to assist in mapping the extent of the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify nominated contact.</li> <li>• Identify appropriate software package.</li> <li>• Communicate reporting and recording facility as appropriate.</li> <li>• Monitor and track progress on reports.</li> </ul>	June 2007	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	<p>The Invasive Weeds Working Group are actively considering the various options, within existing resources and subject to an adjustment to the Council's budget framework, for providing a point of contact for recording, mapping and monitoring the extent of the problem. A dedicated corporately funded resource may be needed in the future, particularly to identify priorities for action.</p> <p>An invasive species recording form is available together with a Code of Practice</p>

					which sets out the procedure for dealing with invasive weeds on Council land.
--	--	--	--	--	---

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Progress on tasks</b>
5	Develop prioritisation criteria for treatment and adopt a consistent method of identifying the preferred solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree priority criteria with key players.</li> <li>• Agree method of identifying preferred solution.</li> <li>• Communicate process to interested parties.</li> </ul>	September 2007	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	The working group has now been established to take this task forward.
6	Develop a corporate approach to treatment, utilising pooled resources from those who incur expenditure and procure and appropriate package of treatment to suit collective needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify resources used currently.</li> <li>• Seek commitment to pooling of resources from budget holders.</li> <li>• Develop specification for treatment package.</li> <li>• Seek an appropriate method of delivery through a market testing process.</li> </ul>	January 2008	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	<p>The working group has been tasked with identifying the resources currently available together with an “in principle” agreement to consider budget pooling.</p> <p>WALH has prepared a comprehensive report to its Management Team setting out the options dealing with Japanese Knotweed. This is to be considered in more detail by the invasive weeds working group.</p>

7	Explore opportunities for the creation of partnerships that will enhance efforts to reduce the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify relevant partners with land ownership responsibilities.</li><li>• Invite collaboration through development of shared objectives and priorities.</li></ul>	September 2008	Chief Assistant Planning Officer (Environment)	Initial contacts made.
---	---	--	----------------	--	------------------------