

# COUNTING COST OF TREE ROW

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THE amazing saga of the Stratford Park trees is costing Stroud ratepayers thousands of pounds as indecisive councillors call extraordinary meetings on a regular basis to discuss the controversy.

The district's policymakers voted for "traffic calming" measures to save the Stratford Park beeches from the axe.

But the next day the authority's planners agreed instead the trees should ultimately still be felled.

The committee infighting has astounded public onlookers and left even some behind-the-scenes council officers amazed.

Leading tree campaigner Ron Birch said: "One of the difficulties that always exists in observing Stroud district council is that so much is going on underneath the words that are actually being said. Some of it is intra-party, and some inter-party, and when you add personal vendettas the words and issues are almost irrelevant."

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by Jo Barber

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Mr. Richard Ollin, SDC chief executive said: "The fact that the county surveyor has changed his mind and backed the "calming" is in my opinion a material consideration. However, there is an obvious conflict between the views of the various committees.

Now yet another expensive special meeting has been called for Monday night to try and solve the controversial stalemate over the trees.

Such extraordinary gatherings normally cost around £1,000 a time in councillors' expenses, of £19.50 each, per occasion though members have to actually claim the cash. It is not sent to them automatically.

Also their travelling expenses, officer's time, and the costs of keeping Ebley Mill warm and lit into the night have to be included in the final bill.

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