



Derby City Council

**Communities Scrutiny Review Board
11 September 2017**

Report of the Acting Director, Partnerships,
Planning, Transportation and Streetpride...

ITEM 5

Grass Cutting – Sports Pitches, Open Spaces and Verges

SUMMARY

- 1.1 Board Members have asked for a report setting out current grass cutting arrangements and seeking an explanation for longer grass on sports pitches, open spaces and verges during July 2017
- 1.2 This report sets out the current grass cutting arrangements and targeted frequencies and also explains some of the challenges the service faced during July.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the current grass cutting arrangements including frequencies.
- 2.2 To note the actions being taken to ensure that the service can operate as efficiently as possible and to note the issues that have provided challenges this year.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure that Board Members and others are aware of the expected level of service that is provided in respect of grass cutting.
- 3.2 The service continually faces challenges with many of them, particularly those related to weather conditions, being beyond our direct control. Within the budget provision that exists the service seeks to provide the best possible service.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Current grass cutting frequencies are once every 3 weeks for residential verges and open spaces including within parks and once every 2 weeks for sports pitches. Sports pitches will, where growing conditions dictate, be cut more frequently if necessary in order to ensure that the required standards for use of the pitches is met.
- 4.2 The current overall spend on Grounds maintenance is approximately £2million per year, this includes grass cutting, emptying of dog waste bins, watering of flower beds, park sweeping, marking out of sports pitches and hedge cutting.
- 4.3 We have been experiencing mixed weather with hot temperatures and heavy rainfall; this provides ideal growing conditions for grass. The wet weather has also meant that some surfaces are too soft to support the weight of mowing vehicles and this can affect our ability to deliver the level of cutting frequencies that have been planned.
- 4.4 To meet the targeted cutting frequencies within the level of resources that we have we are forced to cut grass in many locations even when it is wet. Wet grass behaves differently when cut than dry grass with cuttings clumping together. Delaying cutting means that grass gets longer and this too brings challenges.
- 4.5 In addition to the challenges posed by unusual weather conditions there are a number of other factors that affect the service's ability to deliver. These include excessive levels of litter on park areas which need to be picked prior to grass cutting and the spike in work load from flower bed planting.
- 4.6 The service currently has a number of vacancies that have been difficult to recruit to. This has an effect on the daily functions of the service but also reduces our flexibility when responding to changing situations. The service is planning a more targeted recruitment process to bring staffing levels up to the full complement. The service is also developing a new approach to bring apprentices into the service and to help ensure that there are better options for recruiting and retaining staff. These initiatives will help the service in future years.
- 4.7 The current overall spend on Street Cleansing is approximately £2.9million per year, this includes litter picking, emptying of bins, road sweeping, footway sweeping, graffiti removal, trade, fly-tipping removal and all associated costs for resource, plant and equipment. Street Cleansing frequencies vary across Derby depending on the need of the area, for example: the City Centre is cleaned 7 days a week, majority of Normanton and Arboretum is cleaned twice a week excluding Normanton Road which is daily, Sinfen is once a week, Allestree and Mickleover are once every 6 weeks.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	David Gartside, Acting Director
For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Simon Aitken 01332 641506 simon.aitken@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications

Appendix 1

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1 N/A

Legal

2.1 N/A

Personnel

3.1 We are recruiting existing vacancies and looking at the opportunity to bring on board a number of apprentices.

IT

4.1 N/A

Equalities Impact

5.1 N/A

Health and Safety

6.1 N/A

Environmental Sustainability

7.1 N/A

Property and Asset Management

8.1 N/A

Risk Management and Safeguarding

9.1 N/A

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1 This also underpins the Councils current strategy for raising achievements and skills, where young people can achieve their full potential.