

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	20 October 2020
Title:	Grass Cutting
Contact Officer:	Andrea Oughton, Asset Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree the proposed changes to the grass cutting regime. .

Background

2. Since 2008 the Town Council has been undertaking the annual grass cutting of approximately 50,000sqm of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) urban grass areas within the town under an Agency agreement of Delegated Functions. The Town Council has approximately 100,000sqm of its own grassed areas to maintain.
3. Grass cutting is carried out on a fortnightly basis throughout the grass growing season with an average of 16 cuts per annum.

Proposal

4. The Open Spaces Working Group (OSWG) met on 25 August 2020. One of the topics on the agenda was to consider the current grass cutting regime within the parish and identify areas where cuts could be reduced to two per annum (an early and late cut) and managed to cultivate greener / wildflower meadow areas.
5. The OSWG met again on 24 September 2020 and agreed the following areas be put forward to the Community Leisure & Recreation Committee for approval.
 - Area on Priest End, near the Prebendal (subject to approval from Dwina Gibb and OCC)
 - A4129 (Bypass – town side) from corner of Roundhead Drive to Chinnor / Howland Road roundabout. Cut 1.5m verge and sight lines at junctions. Wider verge cut between Vane Road and Kingsey roundabout to allow pedestrians to walk safely away from the road.
 - Queen Elizabeth Circle, outer edges cut less frequently.
 - Triangle of land next to skate park – footpaths to be cut.
 - Area on Langdale Road
 - Churchill Crescent – roadside
 - Towersey Road – cut sight lines at junctions
 - Towersey-Pickenfield footpath
6. It is intended to commence the new cutting regime / management from 2021. This will be an initial experiment with progress reported back via the Open Spaces Working Group.

Resource Appraisal

7. Volunteers will be needed to monitor identified areas, record wildflower species and identify where further wildflower sowing is required. It is anticipated this will be a joint project with members of Thame Green Living.

8. Careful messaging around the change in management of identified areas will be needed. Information to be shared via TTC newsletter, social media, Thame Green Living, signage to be displayed at each site.
9. New equipment may be required to better manage the sites e.g. larger flail, scarifier, purchase of wildflower seeds.

Risk Assessment

10. Town Council receives an increase in grass cutting complaints if areas are not managed satisfactorily.
11. Insufficient number of volunteers to monitor sites.
12. Accumulation of litter in areas left to wild along the by-pass.

Legal Powers

- The local Government Act 1972, s101.

Recommendation:

- i) To approve the new grass cutting regime and management of areas listed in section 5 of the report.*