

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 9</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2017</b>	<b>CATEGORY:</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>INTERIM STRATEGIC DIRECTOR</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>ADRIAN LOWERY EXT. NO. 5764</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>REVIEW OF THE USE OF STRIMMING AS PART OF THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

1.1 The Committee is recommended to note and discuss the information contained in this report and to advise Officers of any areas they wish to be referred to relevant Committees for consideration

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

2.1 As part of its annual work plan the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested a report on the Council's use of weed killer as an apparent alternative to strimming. This report has been prepared to facilitate discussion on this matter.

## **3.0 Detail**

3.1 The Council introduced weed spraying to grassed areas around eight years ago primarily to reduce the exposure of operatives to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and to reduce the requirements for strimming.

3.2 The current practice is to use herbicides to kill grassed areas around obstructions such as fences, post and street furniture, creating a buffer zone, in order that ride on mowers can cut grassed areas more efficiently.

3.3 This practice has reduced operatives use of strimmers, the herbicide application takes place twice a year, whereas strimming would be required on each maintenance visit between 9 and 16 per year dependent on location.

3.4 Whilst the impacts of HAVS have been reduced following the introduction of better equipment, better health surveillance and better monitoring, the practice of using hand blowers to blow cut grass back onto plots from pavements and paths has utilised the resources that would previously undertake strimming. This was in response to dissatisfaction expressed at the grass cuttings covering adjacent areas.

- 3.5 Over this time period there has also been a significant increase in the volume of work required of the grounds maintenance service as a result of the increase in public open spaces, highway verges and play/sports facilities of a total of 94,310m<sup>2</sup>, which equates to cutting a further 1.5 million square meters during the summer period.
- 3.6 Due to the rapid growth of the residential offer within the District it is likely that the grounds work load will continue to expand.
- 3.7 The additional volume of work has been absorbed within the existing resources; and without the herbicide approach having been adopted this would have proved very difficult.
- 3.8 To revert back to the use of strimming on each visit will require either additional resources or a reduction in current maintenance regimes.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The additional resource requirement would be four additional men and two additional vehicles along with additional plant, equipment including Personal Protective Equipment and clothing.
- 4.2 The approximate cost of reverting to strimming is £107,000 per year at the current standard of service.

#### **5.0 Corporate Implications**

- 5.1 This issue does not relate directly to any relevant targets within the current Corporate Plan
- 5.2 There are no legal implications; however, the Government has issued Weeds, best Practice Guidance for Integrated and Non-chemical Amenity Hard Surface Weed Control, which does require local authorities to give consideration to alternative means of weed control.

#### **6.0 Community Implications**

- 6.1 An improvement to the aesthetic appearance of the District will have direct community benefits.