

Key Decision Required:		In the Forward Plan:	
CSMT		Management Board	
Cabinet Informal Formal		Council	

July 2019

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PUBLIC REALM

A.3 – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE (INCLUDING WEED SPRAYING) IN TENDRING

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to the Committee the Council's procedures on Ground Maintenance (Including Weed Spraying)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Council's procedures for grounds maintenance and weed spraying are carried out by the open space team within the wider service area of Public Realm.
- The requirements are extensive and changing. New housing developments are increasing the requirement for more open spaces, play areas, sports and leisure facilities that all require maintenance.
- The service is affected by factors outside of the service such as weather, crime / anti-social behaviour.
- The service is dependent upon support from other Council service areas.
- The service has pockets of excellence, is innovative and undertakes initiatives to improve efficiencies and to improve the wider public realm and the reputation of the Council

The service is undergoing a service wide restructure in order to

- Improve the services provided.
- Establish a service structure and appropriate delivery mechanisms that are fit for purpose.
- Deliver service efficiencies and savings.
- Address duplication of work and any lack of co-ordination of management between different service areas within Public Realm and the barriers to synergy that this creates.
- Apply more business focus on services where appropriate.
- Introducing flexibility and succession planning.

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Our Council / Our Community

- Deliver High Quality Affordable Services
- Make the most of our Assets
- Support the vulnerable
- Transform the way we work

Our Opportunities

Supports

- Vision for economic growth and prosperity
- Our Coast
- Tourism

Our Challenges

- Improving poor infrastructure
- Reducing budgets while delivering key services

Our Values

Innovative, flexible professional staff committed to delivering excellence

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The grounds maintenance work including weed spraying is conducted within the Public Realm department of TDC.

The Public Realm service was introduced in 2016 and followed a major restructure of tier three officers and five years of reduced budgets to local authorities from central government.

The service is an amalgamation of two services.

- Parking and Seafronts
- Open Space and Bereavement

In 2016 budget working parties initiated a reduction of ongoing revenue budgets within Public Realm in the region of £170,000 pa

CURRENT POSITION

The Council is required to undertake the grounds maintenance including weed spraying of:

- Housing areas – 104
- Open Space & Garden Areas – 310
- Urban Highway Verges – 369 roads, part funded by ECC
- Highway Weed Spraying kerbs and gutters (792km which equates to Clacton to Dundee) and 150 Hectares which equates to 125 full size football pitches)
- Recreation Areas – 29
- Council Buildings – 9
- Seafront Areas across the District (including cliffs at Clacton, Holland, Frinton and Harwich & Dovercourt
- Car Parks – 14
- Cemeteries & Crematorium – 5 sites including grave digging
- A Total of 878 different works sites
- Arboriculture works to approximately 10,000 trees on TDC land
- Arboriculture work to Highway trees paid for by ECC
- Floral bedding of approximately 150,000 plants each year

DETAILS OF REQUIREMENTS

Housing areas

- These are located across the district and also include sheltered housing areas such as Greenfields, Groom House. The most concentrated housing area is the Percy King Estate at Clacton and maintenance includes grass cutting, shrub bed maintenance, and tree maintenance and weed control.

Open Spaces

- These are located across the District and range from high class formal gardens to small grass areas within housing estates.

Grass Verges and Highway Trees

- This task is carried out on behalf of the highway authority Essex County Council
- Payment for verge cutting is for 2 cuts per annum. However TDC usually manages up to 10 cuts per year.
- The tree maintenance and weed spraying budgets are used in full to meet the requirements.
- Residual costs for additional grass verge cutting are met from TDC budgets.

Highway Weed Spraying

- This task is carried out on behalf of Essex County Council and usually only takes place where the road is kerbed and or has a tarmac or slabbed path. The amount of kerbs equates to driving from Clacton to Dundee in Scotland and the footpath area is likening to 125 full size football pitches. This operation is carried out twice annually however the herbicide stipulated by Essex County Council has no residual effect so weeds growth has to be present. Herbicide cannot be sprayed in wet or windy conditions and the staff applying are required to be in possession of a certificate of competence.
- The highway authority pays for the twice annual spraying of weeds but not their removal and disposal.

Recreation Grounds

- In the main the Councils Recreation grounds are located in Clacton, Frinton and Walton and Harwich and Dovercourt staff carry out preparation of grass sports pitches including football , rugby grass athletic tracks and cricket pitches

Cemeteries and Crematoria

- The Council operates cemeteries at Clacton, Kirby, Walton and Dovercourt as well as the Crematorium at Weeley. The role of the cemetery staff includes the burial process which on average happens 2-3 times a week and the ongoing up keep of the cemeteries. In addition to these areas the Open Spaces team also maintain a number of Closed Churchyards under Section 215 Local Government Act 1972 including Harwich, Dovercourt, Clacton and Frating. The grounds at Weeley Crematorium have been included in 'In Bloom' portfolios and currently hold a Green Flag which is a charter mark for parks and open spaces organised by the Tidy Britain campaign.

Seafronts and Cliffs

- Within the District each area has differing sea fronts, at Harwich and Dovercourt these are mown on a regular basis from Harwich Green to Earham's Beach at Frinton and Walton the grass is cut between beach huts on a regular basis but the remainder is left to grow, at Clacton the vegetation mainly tamarisk is cut to the ground during the winter months on a 3-4 yearly cycle

Arboriculture work

- The Council employs its own tree gang to carry out maintenance and removal of

trees throughout the District. Maintenance may involve pruning trees to retain them in their current position or removing branches that are causing a nuisance. Removal of trees takes place when they are deemed dead, dying or dangerous.

- The maintenance of woodlands including ancient woodland

Brook Country Park

- Was opened in June 2010. The area of the park is 14 hectares (Approximately 35 acres) of rough grass- land with scattered blocks of young trees. There are a network of grass paths throughout the park and an all-weather access path for less mobile visitors. Since the park opened a number of ponds have been created and a maze. The park provides informal, quiet countryside recreation for the public and contributes towards the bio-diversity of the area.

Holland Haven and Naze Country Parks

- Extensive maintenance including ongoing working with Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England and Hamford Water and Walton Backwaters including boat patrols

Additional 5 pocket parks

- Frietuna Wood
- Cranleigh Close
- Owls Flight Dell
- Brook Park
- Carisbrooke Grove

Public Car Parks

- 14 of the 40 public car parks require weed spraying, general grounds maintenance including grass cutting / shrub maintenance

SUMMARY

The Council receives an annual contribution in the region of £100,000 pa for the cutting of grass verges on the highway, tree management on the highway and weed spraying on the highway from Essex County Council.

The remainder of all grounds maintenance work is carried out from TDC budgets to maintain TDC owned land and assets.

The service has met the challenge of reduced revenue budgets and increased workload in recent years by being willing to embrace change and to consider new ways of working.

The quality of service delivery cannot be maintained to precise standards at all times due to the many variances affecting it.

These can range from unfavourable weather conditions at the wrong time of year, the ability to recruit the right people at the right time to supplement peak periods, the extent of new housing development, the extent of anti-social behaviour affecting the service – including traveller incursions, increased road congestion from increasing numbers of parked vehicles and many others.

The service continues to strive to meet the demands made of it and has also managed to introduce new initiatives both in play areas and open spaces as well as the introduction of volunteer workers and new types of equipment.

The service also has achieved notable recognition for excellence in sports pitch management (groundsman award), gold medal winning at the Little Bentley garden Show,

Green Flag awards and safer parking awards.

The wider Public Realm Service is a relatively new Tendring District Council service and as such is about to undergo a new service restructure in order to meet the demands of the service both currently and for the future.

Good Public Realm is characterised as being able to

- Promote human contact and social activities and benefit physical and mental health.
- Be safe, welcoming, and accommodating for all users.
- Have design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
- Promote community involvement.
- Reflect the local culture or history of the area where possible.
- Relate well to bordering uses.
- Be well maintained.
- Have a unique or special character.

The Public Realm service in TDC aims to manage and operate all its service areas including the maintenance of grounds and weed spraying in order to meet these aspirations.

APPENDICES

[None. Power Point for information](#)