

3 September 2020**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****RECOMMENDATIONS ON HIGHWAYS ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Communities and Place Committee as to the recommendations of the Communities and Place Review and Development Committee and the corresponding proposals set out in paragraphs 3 to 7.

Information

2. The recommendations set out below were ratified by the Communities and Place Review and Development Committee during its meeting on the 30th of January 2020 and have now been brought to the Communities and Place Committee for consideration.

Frequency of Roadside Grass Cutting

3. The following recommendations relate to roadside grass cutting:
 - The grass cutting frequencies set out in the County Council's Highway Network Management Plan shall remain unchanged.
 - The Committee recognises that the grass cutting frequencies currently set out in the Highway Network Management plan are amongst the least intensive in the region.
 - Officers shall liaise with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to identify verges which would benefit from being cut later in the year.
 - The '*Reduced Grass Cutting Frequency for Rural Roads*' trials which took place in 2017/18 and 2018/19 shall be discontinued, these trials have delivered no appreciable benefits and the best practice guide - *produced by Plantlife* - suggests they may actually be counterproductive. The discontinuation of these trials will result in the verges concerned returning to their original cutting frequency i.e. two cuts per year. The best practice guide recognises that a two-cut management approach can help suppresses coarse grasses which are detrimental to the colonisation of verges by wild flowers.

The Use of Grass Cuttings in Biodigester Plants

4. The Committee recognises that economic and regulatory restrictions make the collection of grass cuttings from road side verges for use in biodigestion plants unviable at present. Officers shall continue to monitor this situation to see how it evolves and attempt to work with other Authorities to overcome these difficulties.

Wild Flowers

5. The following recommendations relate to wildflower planting:
 - The County Council shall seek to increase the extents of its wildflower planting across the highway network,
 - Horticultural advice shall be sought to select the most appropriate species for future planting and the arrangements necessary for the maintenance of wildflower beds.
 - Officers shall seek to engage with communities, Parish Councils, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Members to seek their preferences about the future locations for wild flower planting.
 - Additional wildflower planting shall be introduced in an incremental fashion, this initiative shall commence in 2021.

Weed Spraying

6. The following recommendations relate to weed spraying:
 - The Committee acknowledges ADEPT's advice that the use of Glyphosate - *according to the manufacturer's instructions* - remains entirely legal and that no realistic or cost-effective alternatives to its use currently exist.
 - Officers in both Via EM Ltd. and the County Council shall continue to review possible alternatives to the use of Glyphosate.
 - Officers in both Via EM Ltd. and the County Council shall review the implications arising from the possible re-licencing of Glyphosate in 2022.
 - Via EM Ltd. and the County Council shall build upon their current contract management arrangements and introduce robust checks to ensure that where glyphosate is used it is done effectively, these checks shall place an emphasis on weed spraying works undertaken by sub-contractors working on behalf of Via EM Ltd.

Tree Maintenance

7. The following recommendations relate to tree maintenance:
 - The County Council shall seek to increase the number of trees on both its highway network and its green estate, options are currently being developed to facilitate this
 - Via EM Ltd. and the County Council shall collaborate with other partners such as District Councils to increase the numbers of trees
 - Officers shall develop a tree planting sponsorship scheme which will be available to members of the public and organisations who express a wish to participate.
 - Via EM Ltd. shall seek to improve the public's perceptions of its arboreal works, this shall include the production of a number of short videos that will be available

on-line. These videos shall explain why it is sometimes unavoidable that trees are removed for the sake of public safety and demonstrate the service's other day to day operations such as pollarding, removing epicormic growth, crown lifting etc.

Corporate Environment Strategy Action Plan

8. Subject to Committee's approval of the recommendations set out above, such proposals will then be put forward for incorporation into the County Council's Corporate Environment Strategy Action Plan along with the timeframes for their implementation and measures to assess whether they have been delivered successfully.
9. **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**
10. The recommendations set out above have been arrived at following due consideration of the available options by the Committee.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that Committee accept the recommendations contained in paragraphs 3 to 7 above, being the recommendations of the Communities and Place Review and Development Committee and that a further report with detailed specific, costed proposals for the various elements of the report is presented to Committee for consideration during 2020.

Adrian Smith
Corporate Director, Place

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Martin Carnaffin – Contract Manager, Tel: 0115 9774229

Constitutional Comments (SJE 05/08/2020)

12. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Communities & Place Committee to whom responsibility for the planning, management and maintenance of highways, as well as environmental awareness and sustainability, have been delegated.

Financial Comments (SES 19/08/2020)

13. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.
14. A further report with detailed specific, costed proposals for the various elements of the report will be presented to Committee for consideration during 2020.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Nottinghamshire County Council's Highway Network Management Plan
<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/110443/highwaynetworkmanagementplan.pdf>

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All