

**30 January 2020****Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****HIGHWAYS ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS – RECOMMENDATIONS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for officers from Via EM Ltd. and the County Council to pursue the recommendations set out in this report.

**Information**

2. The recommendations set out below arise from the deliberations of the Communities and Place Review and Development Committee which took place at its meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2019.

**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.
  - The '*Reduced Grass Cutting Frequency for Rural Roads*' trials which have taken place over the last two years 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 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 2020.

## **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 a 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
- Possible additional sources of funding shall be explored, this may be in the form of a tree sponsorship scheme or grants from other organisations.

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.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

8. The recommendations set out above have been arrived at following due consideration of the available options by the Committee.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

9. 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 the proposals contained in paragraphs 3 to 7 above, being the findings and recommendations of this Committee should now go reported to Communities and Place Committee for consideration.

**Adrian Smith**  
**Corporate Director, Place**

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

## **Constitutional Comments (SJE – 23/12/2019)**

10. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Communities & Place Review & Development Committee to whom responsibility for the review and development of all functions falling under the remit of the Authority's Communities & Place Committee, including the planning, management and maintenance of highways as well as environmental awareness and sustainability, has been delegated.

## **Financial Comments ([DJK 30/12/2019])**

11. There are no direct financial implications from this report, there will be further discussions as to how future tree maintenance and increase in trees will be funded, through external finance by way of grant or tree sponsorship schemes.

## **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