

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	A6 TOWNS FORUM	Item 9	Page 1 of 4
Report Originator	Brendan Coleman – Environmental Care	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
Wards Affected	ALL	13 th September 2017	
Title	HIGHWAY VERGE MAINTENANCE		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members of the A6 Towns Forum on the Summary of Grass Verge Maintenance and Grass Cutting in relation to KBC.

2. INFORMATION

2.1 Highway Verge Maintenance

Highway verge maintenance is the responsibility of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) as the Highways authority. Kettering Borough Council (KBC) cut the grass on their behalf of NCC; until 31st March 2011, NCC funded 5 cuts across all towns and villages.

2.2 Following a budget review in 2012, Northamptonshire County Council reduced their budget for verge maintenance and, subsequently, only fund 2 cuts a year. Kettering Borough Council continues to maintain the level of the subsidy it provides, in order to maintain higher standards than can be achieved from the County Council's budget alone.

2.3 There has, however, been a significant reduction in service due to Northamptonshire County Council's budget cuts in this area. There will be fewer mowers allocated to verge maintenance, meaning that the number of cuts has been reduced; consequently grass verges have appeared longer than in the years prior to the NCC budget reduction. In addition, the functions of strimming around obstacles and blowing the grass back onto the verge, is no longer be carried out.

2.4 These changes have not and do not affect the standard of service the Borough Council provides in its parks and open spaces or on housing estates where it is the landowner, which are unchanged from previous years.

2.5 Below is a summary of grass cutting carried out by KBC and NCC:-

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	A6 TOWNS FORUM	Item 9	Page 2 of 4
------------------	-----------------------	-----------	----------------

Area of work	Work funded by 	Work funded by 	Overall service
Highway verges inside built up areas - Kettering and Barton Seagrave	2 cuts	5 cuts	7 cuts
Highway verges inside built up areas - Desborough, Rothwell, Burton Latimer and villages	2 cuts	5 cuts	7 cuts
Rural roads outside 30mph limits	3 cuts	None	3 cuts
KBC parks and open spaces	Nil	Weekly or monthly cuts depending on area	10-30 cuts per year
Housing amenity land	Nil	Weekly or monthly cuts depending on area	10-30 cuts per year

2.6 Parks gardens and cemeteries

Kettering Borough Council manages 191 hectares of parks, gardens and cemeteries.

2.7 Grass areas

Grass is cut on a cyclic programme during the growing season. This is of a sufficient frequency to fulfil the primary function of each area. Thus for example, gardens adjacent to dwellings are maintained to a different standard from that in a wildflower meadow. Grass clippings are removed from the footways within 1 day of cutting. Fallen leaves are removed from grass areas before they have a significant effect upon grass growth.

2.8 Shrubs beds

Shrub beds are maintained substantially free of litter, debris and weeds. Shrubs are maintained for their ornamental value according to species. Shrubs adjacent to footways are maintained so as to avoid causing obstruction to pedestrians. Borders and kerbs of graves will be kept substantially weed-free, and weeds removed before they seed.

2.9 Perimeters

Hedges are cut with due regard to the nesting season of birds, and according to the nature and constraints of each hedge. Fences and gates are maintained in a condition suitable for their purpose.

2.10 Furniture

Benches and bins will be maintained in good repair, and bins emptied regularly. Where benches or bins are vandalised and cannot be repaired immediately, they will be removed until such time that they can be replaced.

2.11 Play Area maintenance

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	A6 TOWNS FORUM	Item 9	Page 3 of 4
------------------	-----------------------	-------------------	------------------------

Play areas are inspected on a daily basis for litter and to check the equipment is in good working order. A qualified play equipment engineer also carries out a weekly inspection. If play equipment is found to be damaged, repairs will be carried out on site where possible. More severely damaged equipment will be removed or secured against further use, until it can be repaired. Any items that are beyond repair will be removed from the site. ROSPA also carry out 6 monthly inspections of our play kit.

2.12 Floral Displays

Kettering Borough Council manages over 1000 square metres of seasonal flower beds containing 18,000 plants replaced twice each year. In addition hanging baskets, barrier planters and tower planters are provided in the Borough each year containing 12,000 plants.

2.13 Annual bedding

Displays are focussed on two main times of year, summer (planted in May) and spring (planted in autumn). Litter, weeds and dead flower heads will be removed to maintain the beds in a tidy condition.

2.14 Hanging Baskets

These are provided during the summer months. They are attached to lamp posts, special columns, buildings, railings and as part of the streetscape. Watering and other maintenance will be undertaken before 8am to avoid disruption to traffic and to shop customers.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

4. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

None

5. FINANCE and HR RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	A6 TOWNS FORUM	Item 9	Page 4 of 4
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7. RECOMMENDATION

That the forum notes the contents of the report.