

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 February 2019
Subject:	Grass Cutting Improvement Plan
Report of:	Grass Cutting Improvement Plan Working Group
Corporate Lead:	Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Clean and Green Environment
Number of Appendices:	1

Executive Summary:

At its meeting on 27 November 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to establish a Member Working Group to consider the improvements that had been made through the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan and to identify further actions that needed to be taken to ensure that suitable arrangements were in place for the 2019 growing season.

The report of the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan Working Group is attached for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

To ADOPT the report of the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan Working Group and to RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE that it be APPROVED.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To ensure Member involvement in the implementation of the plan.

Resource Implications:

There are no direct resource implications arising from the report at this time, although future aspects of consideration could have resource implications. Should resource needs arise - either revenue or capital - these will be subject to a further report and consideration in the wider context of the Council's financial operating environment.

It should also be noted that the Borough Council continues to subsidise the cutting of County Highways-owned land in 2019/20 at an estimated cost of £44,000. The sustainability of maintaining this position in the longer term will need to be considered in light of pressures on the grounds maintenance service and the significant deficit within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications:

None in respect of this report.

Risk Management Implications:

Grass cutting is a high profile service and any service failings impact on the reputation of the Council.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Any risk management implications arising from the individual recommendations will be considered as part of the implementation process, if appropriate.

Environmental Implications:

Considered as part of the work of the Working Group.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Following an unacceptable level of complaints being received about grass cutting from members of the public in the early part of 2018, the Executive Committee expressed concern about the level and quality of grass cutting across the borough. In response, a Grass Cutting Improvement Plan was adopted by the Executive Committee with responsibility for monitoring given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had detailed discussions about the grass cutting service, and the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan, at its meetings on 17 July and 4 September 2018. From those discussions, it was apparent there was some detailed work to be done, in particular on the future standard of the service, number of cuts, level of cut in different areas, resources etc. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for a further report on the plan monitoring and implementation to be submitted to its meeting in February 2019; however, prior to this, it was felt important to involve Members and get their feedback and views on various aspects of the service, including the future level of service, Key Performance Indicators etc.
- 1.3** Accordingly, a small Working Group was established to work with the Head of Community Services on all aspects of the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan.

2.0 GRASS CUTTING IMPROVEMENT PLAN WORKING GROUP REVIEW

- 2.1** The Working Group met on three occasions and considered the improvements that had already been implemented as a result of the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan including:
- grass cutting maps were now up to date and broadly accurate;
 - grass cutting rounds were in the process of being put into a logical order to ensure the best use of the crews time, therefore minimising travelling time;
 - all equipment was now included on a maintenance programme; and
 - increased and effective supervision is in place.
- 2.2** The Working Group also heard from partners at Ubico representing the Tewkesbury Borough contract and the West Oxfordshire contract; this allowed Members to compare the level of resource afforded to these two contracts and to contrast the outcomes that were achieved.
- 2.3** As a result of the work undertaken by the Working Group, a number of recommendations have been developed and are set out in the report attached at Appendix 1.

2.4 The Working Group has also developed a suite of Key Performance Indicators, including grass cutting standards, which are outlined in the attached report.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 Not applicable.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Representatives from Ubico and Gloucestershire County Council attended the first meeting of the Working Group.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 Considered as part of the work of the Working Group.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 Considered as part of the work of the Working Group.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27 November 2018.

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Head of Community Services
01684 272259 Peter.Tonge@tewkesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix A – Report of the Grass Cutting Improvement Plan Working Group