

Appendix A
Streetpride: Leisure & Community Services
Review of Grounds Maintenance and Weed Killing Operations October / November 2012

1. Background information

1a. Customer contacts pre and post budget saving implementation.

Month	No contacts 2012	3 year average 2009, 2010, 2011
April	106	100
May	141	97
June	215	128
July	193	143
Aug	238	113
Sept	159	92
Total	1052	727

45 % Increase in contacts in 2012 compared to 3 year average (2009-2011)

1b. Customer contacts for 2012 by type

Month	Grass Maintenance	Hedge Maintenance	Horticultural Features	Pesticides	Sports Maintenance	Other	Total
April	92	4	7	0	0	0	103
May	119	8	6	0	0	0	133
June	128	36	22	2	2	17	207
July	96	52	25	0	1	14	188
Aug	144	44	32	0	1	11	232
Sept	86	43	18	0	1	3	151
	665	187	110	2	5	45	1,014
3 Year	337	126	116	3	2	29	613

Average							
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2. Key Issues

2a. Grass cutting: What's changed? 2010/11 cut every 2 wks; 2011/12 cut every 3 wks; 2012/13 cut every 3 wks (Apr-Jul) then every 5 wks (Aug – Oct); (2013/14 **cut every 5 wks**) *except in parks and recreation grounds which is still every 2 weeks*

Impact	• Grass grows longer between cuts • Significantly more grass clippings after each cut • Cut is less effective (e.g. sections can appear uncut / spring back up after mowers have moved on) and certain areas need a double cut which slows operations and affects ability to deliver the schedule. • Increased breakdown of smaller machinery due to inability to cope with longer grass. • Reduced capacity to deal with pressures created by extreme weather conditions • Reduction in skills base affects flexibility of the whole team to carry out scheduled work during sickness / leave. • Increase in shredded cans, bottles, litter as more difficult to remove prior to cutting • Significant increase in complaints from residents and Ward Members • Increase in accumulation of litter due to longer grass • Deterioration of the general environment • Increase in manager / supervisor time responding to contacts and related impact on service management tasks.
Risks	• Increased risk of slips due to long grass falling onto paths and increased clippings being blown onto paths and more difficult to see surface hazards, possibly leading to increase in insurance claims • Increased risk of fire during dry weather • Service's ability to attract new clients • Council and service reputation
Actions already taken	• Teams rescheduled and working arrangements adjusted to ensure as efficient deployment as possible
Suggestions for improvement of the service within budget	• Selective reduction in the areas that are 'fully maintained' in order to release some capacity (e.g. Parks and Highway verges) • Reduce the impact of leave and sickness by adapting process for seasonal recruitment • Revert to a standardised 37 hour week (impact of this needs to be investigated)

	• Split shift pattern and 7 day working pattern - both require supervision and management by permanent staff. Equipment costs mostly remain the same but staffing costs increase to an unaffordable level. • Broaden skills of remaining full time staff in order to cover leave / sickness etc • Burn in certain football pitch lines with chemical on a selected site to trial whether it would be cost effective at the end of the season for the following season • Change to flail head mowers from rotary mowers on pedestrian machines to help cut long grass on the five week grass cutting cycle • Continue to develop structured approach to the use of volunteers • Explore opportunities to introduce 'cut and remove' by third party (e.g. farmer for hay crop)
Invest to save options	• Purchase specialised grounds maintenance equipment at the end of the current contract (2015). This proposal would require a maintenance contract and the level of investment would be high in the first year.

2b. Weed killing: What's changed? 2010/11 – 2 treatments per year; 2011/12 – 1 treatment per year; 2012/13 – 1 treatment per year;
(2013/14 – 1 treatment *per year*)

Impact	• Areas sprayed early in schedule experience regrowth. • Increase in build up of detritus on highway • Increased weed growth • Contribution to the deterioration of highway • Damage and trip hazards in block paving, steps, etc • Deterioration of the general environment • Significant increase in customer contacts • Removal of one large mechanical sweeper (3 sweepers down to 2, Aug. 2012) means reduced frequency leading to increased detritus which in turn leads to increased weed growth
Risks	• Problem will increase year on year - the less we sweep detritus the more weed will grow the following year. • Not removing the dead weeds adds to the detritus issue. • Slipping hazard on some footways • Access issues on some narrow footpaths • Loss of customers / income • Council and service reputation
Actions already taken	• Some weekend working to support catch up due to wet weather (can't spray when wet) • Invest in Billy Goat sweepers to deal with cigarette butts and hard to reach litter (e.g. under benches) and remove detritus from footways. £1800 each - one purchased, if successful further 2 may be purchased.
Suggestions for improvement of the service within budget	• Explore efficiencies created by integrating operation with grounds maintenance schedules • Store weed kill in a dedicated container at Hellaby to save time on current travel to store at Kiveton Park.
Invest to save	• Further investment in Billy Goat sweepers x2

options	Invest in weed spraying attachment for large mechanical sweepers to reduce weeds in channels
2c. Shrub/Flower Beds & Hedges: What's changed? Reduced resource means this schedule is too large to be completed in any one year.	
Impact	- Over 300,000m2 of shrub beds (pruning, weeding and hoeing) only 60% of these receive 1 visit per year. Priority is given to health and safety, schools, parks and high volume contacts - Increased growth - Deterioration of the general environment - Significant increase in customer contacts - Potential deterioration of sight lines and increase in road safety issues
Risks	- Problem will increase year on year - the less we visit the more the beds will overgrow - Health and safety issues regarding pedestrian movements - Increase in anti social behaviour. - Litter, weeds and detritus in shrub beds causing increase in reports of vermin. - Deterioration of gateways and impact on businesses and visitors
Actions already taken	- The teams have been reorganised to ensure as efficient deployment as possible. - End of year removal of certain shrub beds and replace with grass seed. Established list for potential removal should further funding become available. - Shrub bed areas prioritised for action based on customer contacts and individual street scene issues.
Suggestions for improvement of the service within budget	- Establish a long term programme of works to remove shrub beds that are overgrown and can't be maintained on a regular basis. - Review flower beds in parks with view to reducing number / size - Flexible working in Waste Management Service may release some resources to accelerate the programme of shrub removal / reduction.
Invest to save options	Mechanical removal of shrub beds to achieve an expedient efficient method of operation at a rate of approximately £10 per m2 and replacement with soil and seed to allow for easier maintenance. An evaluation of the condition of the shrub beds needed to establish which areas can be removed and which remain because they are beneficial to the neighbourhood and therefore need increased maintenance

2d. Rural Verges: What's changed? 300 miles of verges previously cut on two occasions during the summer growing season (April to October), now cut over a 32 week period (May to June and October to March).

Impact	• Change in operations means some areas are now cut out of grass growing season. This year increased growth due to wet summer caused problems for areas cut early in the year. Many areas now require further attention. • Removal of litter from the rural verges increasingly difficult as increase in height of grass makes removal prior to cutting very difficult.
Risks	• Problem will increase year on year - the less we visit the more the grass will overgrow • Health and safety issues for path and road users • Council and service reputation
Actions already taken	• Teams have been reorganised to provide staff to carry out this activity as efficiently as possible. • Evaluation of operation to establish if alternative method could be employed. Traffic Management experts being consulted.
Suggestions for improvement of the service within budget	• Explore reinstatement of part or whole of summer cutting schedule • Equipment is leased for 32 week to deliver the rural cuts.
Invest to save options	• Wild flower planting to reduce maintenance costs.