

## GRASS CUTTING – PROPOSED CHANGES

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### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As part of the budget process for 2016/17 Members considered a range of Service Choices which had been designed to meet the significant reduction in available budget, due to drastically reduced funding.
- 1.2 One of the options that was approved through the budget process was RAMS01i – Reduced/Stop Grass Cutting. This proposal included reducing the frequency of cuts to some places and completely stop cutting grass in others, allowing the grass to grow wild. The specification for this service choice reduced the number of some grass cuts to one per year, carried out in October/November.
- 1.3 This option saved £18,000 as a part saving for 2016/17, and was taken pro-rata across the four administrative areas. The starting point for each of the four areas was different because different frequencies of grass cuts had previously been applied to each area. The 2015/16 frequencies and schedules had varied historically with further local adjustments having been introduced as part of the service review process carried out in 2011/12. The service choice process was carried out over a much shorter timescale than that that of the service review process and consequently did not include the member workshop sessions where members have historically played a significant part in the design of service delivery in their area. The attached appendix details the locations where grass cutting has been reduced to one cut per year.
- 1.4 This Service Choices proposal has resulted in significant representation being received by Elected Members and officers. Being alive to the fact that this is something which matters to our communities it is proposed that the same level of saving is maintained but that the specification is changed as follows:
- Areas removed from the 16/17 schedules will be reinstated
  - Areas cut only once a year in 16/17 will have the frequency increased where appropriate
  - Areas that received a reduced frequency of cuts in 16/17 will have the frequency increased where appropriate
  - Areas which experienced no change in the frequency of cuts in 16/17 will receive a reduced number of cuts (regard will be had to high amenity areas)

- 1.5 It is recommended that the Area Committee approve the amended grass cutting proposals detailed in the report.

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report sets out some of the representations received following one of the Service Choices policies RAMS01i (Reduce/Stop Grass Cuts).
- 2.2 This report also seeks approval to amend the previously approved policy and to revert to cutting all areas previously maintained but at a reduced frequency that can be accommodated within the available budget.

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Area Committee approve the amended grass cutting proposals detailed in the report.

### 4.0 DETAILS

- 4.1 As part of the budget process for 2016/17 Members considered a range of Service Choices which had been designed to meet the reduction in available budget. Across Roads and Amenity Services the service choice options were varied including: increasing income from a number of sources, innovative solutions such as LED street lighting which reduced the amount of energy consumed, three weekly bin collections which encourage more recycling and reduce the amount of waste to landfill and a number of policy choices which resulted in a reduction in service delivery. All of these proposals having been progressed to ensure that the council can deliver a balanced budget whilst maintaining as many key services as possible.
- 4.2 The £18,000 saving as part of option RAMS01i, as a part saving for 2016/1, was taken pro-rata across the four administrative areas. The starting point for each of the four areas was different because different frequencies of grass cuts had previously been applied to each area. The 2015/16 frequencies and schedules had varied historically with further local adjustments having been introduced as part of the service review process carried out in 2011/12. The service choice process was carried out over a much shorter timescale than that of the service review process and consequently did not include the member workshop sessions where members played a significant part in the design of service delivery in their area.

The attached appendix details the locations where grass cutting has been reduced to one cut per year.

- 4.3 This Service Choices proposal has resulted in significant representation being received by Elected Members and officers. Being alive to the fact that this is something which matters to our communities it is proposed that the same level of saving is maintained but that the specification is changed.
- 4.4 Representations received have generally been relating to the untidiness and general reduction in amenity in areas where grass has not been cut. It is felt that amending the specification would be beneficial and would reflect the views of our communities. This proposed change to specification would have no budget implication as the saving would still be delivered, only in a different way.
- 4.5 The starting point for each of the four areas was different with different frequencies of grass cuts applied to areas historically. The amended specification will continue on this basis, however, all areas previously cut in 2015/16 will be included within the new schedules, In order to make the changes but continue to deliver services within the approved budget the following approach will be taken:
- Areas removed from the 16/17 schedules will be reinstated
  - Areas cut only once a year in 16/17 will have the frequency increased where appropriate
  - Areas that received a reduced frequency of cuts in 16/17 will have the frequency increased where appropriate
  - Areas which experienced no change in the frequency of cuts in 16/17 will receive a reduced number of cuts (regard will be had to high amenity areas)
- 4.6 The appendix attached to the report detail the target cutting frequencies. The actual number will be determined by weather conditions.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report proposes to adjust the specification of grassland maintenance in response to the representations made in response to the representations made following the implementation of changes in 2016/17.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

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| 6.1 | Policy    | This report proposes to change a policy that was agreed through the budget process in 2016. |
| 6.2 | Financial | No financial implication as this proposal is cost neutral.                                  |
| 6.3 | Legal     | None known  |
| 6.4 | HR        | None known  |

6.5	Equalities	None known
6.6	Risk	None known
6.7	Customer Services	None known

**Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure** Pippa Milne  
**Policy Lead** Councillor Ellen Morton  
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**For further information contact:** Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Amenity Services  
Tel: 01546 604324

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - MAKI Grass Area proposed frequencies