

Wild Flower Sustainability and Grass Cutting Spotlight Review

Rec No	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation
1	That the Council give consideration to the Plant life Managing Grassland Road Verges guide and trial elements of the guidance at appropriate sites to assess the feasibility of adopting the guidance across the Borough	Assistant Director, Highways and Infrastructure	<p>A new Highways Asset Management strategy is due to be completed and published in the next 6 months. Within this there will be scope to identify a suitable, safe location where the guidance can be tested and trialled. Subject to the success of this trail we will develop proposals for rolling this approach out across the borough; seeking views from the public, business and other key stakeholders and agencies to ensure collective buy in and understanding of the approach. It should be noted that Road safety will continue to be the highest priority and this may influence potential options available.</p> <p>Trial to commence Spring 2022 once new Highway Asset Management Strategy is adopted.</p>
2	That the Council develop a communication plan regarding moving to a new approach to ensure that the public is clear about why changes to the way we manage road verges and green spaces have been made	Assistant Director, Environment & Operations Assistant Director, Highways and Infrastructure	<p>This to be picked up as part of responding to all of the other recommendations set out in the report.</p> <p>Timescales – Ongoing from March 2022</p>
3	That the Council consider undertaking a public consultation to gauge the views of residents regarding wildflowers, green space management and biodiversity to inform future plans and communications strategies in different communities		It is agreed that much wider engagement and discussion is needed with the public as to how we make best use of our open spaces and highway verges. Rather than commission a standalone consultation it is proposed that this be undertaken as part of the planned extensive consultation and

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			<p>engagement that will take place following the publication of the Council's Climate change strategy and the supporting action plan. This will ensure the best use of limited resources and potentially enable a much wider reach and bigger response to the planned consultation. The recommendations from the task group do make it clear that wild flowering and biodiversity must feature prominently in any planned engagement activities linked to the climate agenda.</p> <p>In respect of green space management, work is underway to develop a new parks and open spaces strategy. It is proposed that this document will provide a logical place to consider and incorporate the findings from the scrutiny review. This document will also be the subject of public consultation and engagement and officers would be pleased to ensure views are sought on the future management of our green spaces.</p> <p>Timescales – Ongoing from March 2022</p>
4	That the Council consider organising a stakeholder event as part of the Climate Change Commission to bring partners together to discuss biodiversity and green space management in the Borough	Climate Change Officer	The St Helens Climate commission contains representatives from a number of different organisations who are likely to be supportive of this recommendation. These include Mersey Forest, The Environment Agency and the NFU. This will be raised with the chair of the commission and put forward as a future agenda item.

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			<p>Timescale – Likely to be early 2022, noting that the commission currently meets on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>There is also scope for the commission to set up a specific working group. This may enable some specific focus to be given to biodiversity.</p>
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