

Meeting of the Environment & Leisure Committee

Monday 5 June 2023

Agenda Item 7.3

TO NOMINATE TWO MEMBERS TO WORK WITH THE ESTATES TEAM, TO REVIEW THE OPEN SPACES GRASS CUTTING SCHEDULE AND FUTURE SUPPORT TO 'NO MOW MAY'

1.0 Overview

- 1.1 There were mixed views last year about some of the grass cutting areas left for 'No Mow May' and longer term wildflower areas, which resulted in some residents loving the initiative and then in contrast the council receiving a number of complaints.
- 1.2 Due to pressures on the grounds team this spring, as a result of a very wet April, equipment issues and staffing shortages, the Grounds staff had to prioritise the areas cut. This resulted in some of the smaller patches and thoroughfares being picked up in the last couple of weeks. A number of residents thought we had left these smaller areas and corners to grow as wildflower areas and subsequently received complaints, because the areas had been cut.
- 1.3 Uckfield Town Council took the open space grass cutting contract in-house in 2022. It is to be expected that there will be a period of settling into the new work schedule, and ensuring the equipment used by the Town Council is sufficient for the job. We also didn't anticipate the staffing shortages during this period.
- 1.4 Some of the areas for discussion include: Lashbrooks Road, Wilson Grove (West Park), the green on Linden Chase, Fin Field, Harland's Pond and surrounding areas (including Swift Close and Mallard Drive).
- 1.5 It is therefore a perfect opportunity for councillors to work with staff to review the original open space grass cutting schedule. We have a detailed schedule that was previously used for the tender process when tendering for the contract. This will help to determine which areas we could be left for pollination in 2024.

2.0 Mixed views on grass cutting

- 2.1 One resident was wholly against leaving any of the areas uncut in the Harland's area for a number of reasons, one being with a fear of getting ticks and/or treading on dog mess in the long grass effecting their enjoyment of being outside and for the sake of the weeds becoming out of hand. However, other residents in Linden Chase and Wilson Grove, are very keen to adopt a 'No Mow May' approach, to allow for wild flowers and tiny habitats and pollen producers to take hold. One resident in Wilson Grove has also made a request that any complaints in the future can be met with a firm "No" (Mow May) response.
- 2.2 The following weblink provides details of the No Mow May initiative:

<https://www.countryfile.com/news/no-mow-may-why-you-should-lock-up-your-lawnmower-on-1st-may/>

3.0 Verge cutting

- 3.1 To clarify grass verges are cut by East Sussex Highways and the Town Council contributes a sum in the region of £4.5k per annum to retain the five to six cuts of urban verges. There are initiatives that East Sussex Highways run where residents

can apply for a 'wildlife verge.' This is an initiative that could be considered by the Town Council as part of its own grass cutting schedule.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to nominate two councillors to work with office staff to review the current grass-cutting schedule for open spaces and report back to Environment & Leisure Committee in the coming months.

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