



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on grass cutting and horticultural maintenance of sites not owned by Belfast City Council
<b>Date:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> December 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that concerns have been raised about the maintenance of open spaces in the Belfast City Area that are not owned by Belfast City Council.
1.2	Members will also be aware that Council agreed to enter into an arrangement with Transport NI (TNI) to provide grounds maintenance to a number of sites (Michael Ferguson roundabout, Stewartstown Road and on the roadside verges at Kingsway Dunmurry, Knock dual carriageway and at the top of the Cregagh Road, all of which are under the ownership and responsibility of Transport NI).
1.3	Whilst this arrangement has been in operation for three years, it is recognised that the condition of many of these open spaces, rather than contributing to the attractiveness and

	vibrancy of the city and local neighbourhoods, have become a problem as they are not effectively maintained. Consideration is now being given to what other options are open to us, partners agencies and local communities to maintain open spaces.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note that an audit of open spaces has taken place as part of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy and a review of the Growing Communities Strategy is in progress. Both strategies will be formally considered by Committee in the coming months prior to public consultation. To address the maintenance of open spaces not owned by Council, further work is required, building on both strategies, to determine priorities, what resource is available outside of Council and what is feasible for local communities to undertake through volunteering. It is proposed that in order to test feasibility and to grow capacity, some pilot projects are undertaken in 2018/2019. A further report on the scope and detail of pilots will be presented at a future committee subject to Committee agreeing to this approach.</li> <li>Officers will undertake a review of the grass cutting arrangements already in place with Transport NI and seek to establish how this can be enhanced or improved for the year 2019/2020 building upon the work outlined above. Officers will meet with Transport NI in the near future and a report will be brought back to committee with recommendations for the 2019/2020 financial year.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	As part of recent work to develop a Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, a process has been undertaken to provide an audit of open spaces in the city. The audit assessed open space provision, accessibility and potential future action based on the city's growth strategy and includes parks, playing fields, playgrounds and civic space. The Belfast Open Space Strategy is due to be considered formally by committee in the coming months.
3.2	Based on the above work it is proposed that further work is undertaken in each area to assess the need for maintenance of open spaces not owned by Council, to develop a clear understanding of priorities and to explore options to address the issues. This further work is set in the context of Council's significant financial constraints and incapacity of Council alone to address the issues but also recognising the need to examine alternative solutions.
3.3	The review of the Growing Communities Strategy has been progressed and is also due to be considered by Committee in the coming months. In the context of maintaining non Council open spaces in local areas, there is opportunity to assess how this is addressed

	<p>through volunteering and the development of increased capacity in communities building on and complementing community assets such as community gardens and allotments. The development of a framework to support this will take time therefore an incremental phased approach is proposed with the intention of piloting some projects in local areas in 2018/19.</p>
3.4	<p>The provision of environmental maintenance including grass cutting within the public road boundary is the responsibility of TNI and the levels of this service are set out the TNI's published Road Maintenance Standards.</p>
3.5	<p>However, due to the financial constraints being faced by the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI, Members will be aware that environmental maintenance service delivery has been reduced with grass cutting limited across all areas and further cutting only undertaken in respect of road safety such as visibility splays at junctions. Grass cutting arrangements have been supplemented by Council since 2016/17 with Council providing five cuts per annum to the following four sites on the basis that each organisation contributes resources within existing budgets :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Ferguson roundabout</li> <li>• Kingsway Embankment, Dunmurry</li> <li>• Knock dual Carriageway</li> <li>• Cregagh Road with the Knock dual carriageway.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>It is proposed that Council Officers will meet with representatives from the Department of Infrastructure to review the current arrangements and to discuss opportunities to improve or enhance these arrangements.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial Implications</u> No financial implication at this stage.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.