



Subject:	Update on grass cutting at sites not owned by Belfast City Council
Date:	4 June 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>At the People and Communities Committee meeting held on 4 December 2018, it was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">officers would undertake a review of the grass cutting arrangements already in place with Transport NI and seek to establish, in conjunction with Transport NI, how these could be enhanced or improved for the year 2019/2020, this would also give consideration to a further site at McKinsty Road;

1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in order to test feasibility and grow capacity, pilot projects would be undertaken in 2018/2019 and that a further report on the scope and detail of pilots would be submitted at a future meeting; and • a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would include recommendations for the 2019/2020 financial year. <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update Members on progress achieved in relation to the review of current grass cutting arrangements; • advise Members of the current arrangements in place for grass cutting at sites not owned by Council; and • seek Members agreement to include an additional site at McKinstry Road within existing arrangements, subject to the City and Neighbourhood Services Department finding the additional financial resource via in year adjustments.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the continued actions which are being undertaken as part of the ongoing review of grass cutting arrangements, at sites that are not owned by Council; • note that a further report in relation to the review of grass cutting arrangements will be presented to Committee at a future meeting; and • agree to the inclusion of a site at McKinstry Road within the grass cutting arrangements Council currently operates with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>A review of current grass cutting arrangements in relation to sites not owned by Council has commenced. The review is exploring viable opportunities to enhance existing provisions, including the design and delivery of pilot projects, development of an improvement plan and, in conjunction with colleagues from Corporate Communications, consideration is being given to funding options such as sponsorship schemes.</p>

3.2	<p>As part of the review, discussions with representatives from the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI have been held and this engagement will remain ongoing to inform enhancements regarding future arrangements.</p>
3.3	<p>The draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy was agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 March 2019 and it is anticipated that the draft Strategy will be released for public consultation within the next few months. The Strategy will support future neighbourhood based plans and the ongoing grass cutting review by helping to inform future approaches to address the need for maintenance of open spaces not owned by Council.</p>
3.4	<p>As Members will be aware, the provision of environmental maintenance, including grass cutting within the public road boundary, is the responsibility of Transport NI and the levels of this service are set out in TNIs published Road Maintenance Standards.</p>
3.5	<p>Given the ongoing financial challenges faced by the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI, Members will also be aware that environmental maintenance service delivery has decreased and, as a result, grass cutting has been reduced across all areas with further cutting only undertaken in respect of road safety such as visibility splays at junctions.</p>
3.6	<p>Since 2016/2017, Council has supplemented grass cutting arrangements for Department of Infrastructure and Transport NI, by providing five cuts per annum at the following sites, on the basis that each organisation contributes resources within existing budgets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michael Ferguson roundabout;• Kingsway Embankment, Dunmurry;• Knock dual carriageway; and• Cregagh Road with Knock dual carriageway.
3.7	<p>It is proposed that a further site at McKinstry Road is included within the existing arrangement Council currently operates with Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI. The arrangements regarding this site would be on a similar basis as the sites detailed in point 3.6 above, i.e. that Council provides a maximum of five cuts per annum with each organisation contributing resources within existing budgets.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>

3.8	<p>It is estimated that the annual cost of grass cutting at the McKinstry Road site will be £5,000. Members are asked to note that this additional resource is not included as part of our 2019/2020 estimates. Should members agree to include this additional site, the financial resource will have to be found via in year departmental adjustments. Ongoing resource commitments will be progressed within existing resources.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>At this time there are no equality, good relations or rural needs assessment implications associated with this work.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	None