



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on grass cutting at sites not owned by Belfast City Council
<b>Date:</b>	3 March 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager (South)

<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>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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	The committee will recall update papers presented at the meeting on 4 <sup>th</sup> June 2019 and 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2019.
1.2	On 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2019, after discussion, the Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>noted the updated information regarding grass cutting at sites not owned by Belfast City Council;</li><li>agreed that officers would investigate ways as to how the McKinstry Road Roundabout could be addressed, including the potential of hiring a private contractor to cut the grass on a single occasion, and any associated issues and provide an update to the Committee at a future date; and</li></ul>

1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting with full details relating to the initial proposals regarding potential sponsorship schemes.</li> </ul> <p>This report provides an update for Members and outlines the development of the project regarding the potential for sponsorship of roundabouts and verges, in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>note the proposals regarding sponsorship, with view to a report being brought to the Committee with final details</li> <li>agree the piloting of a scheme at 2 sites (1 commercial sponsorship site and 1 community site) is trialled in each of the 4 neighbourhood areas in the city consider and identify sites across the city that might be considered for an initial trial of the sponsorship scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Members will recall from the October 2019 report that since 2016/2017, the Council has supplemented grass cutting arrangements for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport NI, by providing five cuts per annum at five sites in Belfast.</p>
3.2	<p>Members will further be aware that the maintenance of these sites requires financial resources via the departmental budgets.</p>
3.3	<p>In order to identify opportunities for the Council to help defray these costs, officers have undertaken benchmarking with other UK councils operating similar schemes, and met with officers from Department of Infrastructure (DfI) Roads Service to investigate the opportunities to generate income via a sponsorship scheme.</p>
3.4	<p>Officers from DfI have proposed that, in conjunction with BCC officers, areas throughout the Belfast City Council area that might be suitable for seeking sponsorship opportunities will be mapped.</p>
3.5	<p>DfI Roads Service have recommended that once these areas have been agreed, a licence agreement will be developed, which will detail the responsibilities between the two organisations, the terms and conditions of the agreement, and any agreed timescales.</p>

3.6	Officers will consider facets of the scheme that will become the responsibility of the Council under the licence agreement, including selection criteria for potential commercial sponsors.
3.7	Officers consider that the scheme will include two facets. Firstly, businesses will have the opportunity to undertake the environmental maintenance of a roundabout or verge in the vicinity of their business themselves (or via a subcontractor), or, businesses will provide financial assistance to the Council for the area's maintenance, in exchange for acknowledgement signage.
3.8	Secondly, the scheme will provide opportunities for communities to undertake maintenance of grassed areas in and around their local areas. If agreeable and subject to the appropriate legal agreements being in place we envisage that communities would assume ground maintenance responsibility for these areas with no financial support from the Department.
3.9	The scheme thus has the potential not only to generate additional funds to supplement existing maintenance budgets, but could also improve the appearance of roundabouts and verges, improve the image of Belfast as a vibrant location for businesses and community groups, promote the range of businesses already located locally, and provide opportunities for communities to contribute to the appearance of their local environment.
3.10	Given that this is a new activity in Belfast, it is intended to test the market to ascertain whether there is an appetite among resident groups and businesses for such sponsorship opportunities via a public request for expressions of interest. It is recommended that a first tranche of c. 2 sites, ie 1 commercial sponsorship site and 1 community site, is trialled in each of the 4 neighbourhood areas in the city. Officers would welcome input from Members to identify or nominate areas that might be suitable.
3.11	Depending on the success of this first tranche, it may be possible to extend the scheme more widely. In the future, the use of a tender process to attract bids from businesses interested in key sites might enhance income generating opportunities for the council.
3.12	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The development of a sponsorship scheme for roundabouts provides an opportunity to generate additional external funds to supplement existing maintenance budgets.</p>

3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None