

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

12 March 2012

Report of the Director of Highways and Transportation

Part 1- Public

Matters For Information

1 HIGHWAY SOFT ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Summary

An update on planned levels of service for weed control highway during 2012/13.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Members are reminded that as a result of the economic climate and subsequent reduction in funding the County Council undertook a review of soft landscaping service. The outcome was an amendment in the frequency of cuts and treatments. The table below sets out details and frequency of the activities.

Vegetation Type	What this means	Frequency of cut/treatment
Urban Grass	Grass located next to roads or footpaths, normally within the town or village centre and 30 mph limit.	8 times per year
Rural Swathe Grass	The metre or so wide strip of grass right next to the road edge and is normally outside the 30mph limit.	Once per year
Visibility splays	Grass that is adjacent to a road junction and is within the sight line for drivers turning in or out	2-3 times per year
Shrub beds	Areas of low planting mainly in estate roads	Weed and trim once per year
Weeds	Pavements or kerb lines that have historically been susceptible to weed growth	Spray once per year

Vegetation Type	What this means	Frequency of cut/treatment
Hedges	KCC hedges on the highway (NB. KCC has very few hedges as most are privately owned on property boundaries and are therefore the sole responsibility of the land owner).	Cut once per year

1.1.2 In 2012/13 Highways and Transportation will carry out one programmed weed spray to hard surfaces in Kent through the KCC approved contractor. The KCC H&T Landscape team will work with TMBC to determine the timing of the one spray.

1.2 Summary

1.2.1 Highways and Transportation will carry out one weed spray in 2012/13 on most highway hard surfaces. The surfaces typically include pavements and kerbs and channels. We do not spray the edges of pavements if there is grass or other vegetation on that edge.

1.2.2 In 2012/13 the weed spray will take place from mid-May to mid-July. The exact timing of the spray will depend on the level of weed growth and weather conditions.

1.3 Information on Soft Landscaping – Weeds

1.3.1 The chemical used to spray hard surfaces is Glyphosate. It is the most commonly used weedkiller and is marketed as safe to its users and to members of the public and harmless to the environment.

1.3.2 Glyphosate will only kill weeds which have been sprayed. Weeds which emerge after the spray will not be killed. That is why we try to time the weed spray when there is optimal weed growth. However it generally takes two to three weeks to spray a whole district so some areas will have more weed growth than others at the time of spraying.

1.3.3 Weather conditions are also important. Glyphosate will not be effective if sprayed when it is raining. The 'rainfast' period is the time which is required between spraying and rainfall for Glyphosate to be effective. Newer products have made it possible to spray Glyphosate up to six hours before rain and still be effective.

1.3.4 We do not spray weed killer in windy conditions because of the possibility that the spray will damage vegetation other than weeds. After spraying it typically takes ten days to two weeks for weeds to show signs of die-back.

1.3.5 Invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed and injurious weeds such as Ragwort on highway verges are also treated. We maintain a list of affected areas and these normally receive two to three sprays per year. There are other treatments for Japanese Knotweed and Ragwort, however, they are usually much more expensive. We aim to control Japanese Knotweed but we do not aim to eradicate Ragwort because it has wildlife value. Defra has produced a Code of Practice for Ragwort and further information can be found at www.defra.gov.uk.

1.4 Conclusion

1.4.1 We carry out selective monitoring of weed spraying. If weeds have not died back in approximately two weeks then we will require the contractor to return and spray the areas missed. In addition we will follow-up enquiries which suggest weeds have not died back after spraying.

1.4.2 We understand your concerns about the reduction in service and its impact on the general appearance of the borough however the standards being implemented are the ones we are able to afford within the available budget.

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 Not applicable.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 The level of programmed week spraying is what KCC is able to provide within the available budget.

1.6.2 KCC H&T has published a guide for residents who wish to help us control weeds. The document can be found at:
http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads_and_transport/highway_maintenance/trees_hedges_and_verges.aspx

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 There may be an increase in public concern about the aesthetic appearance of certain areas of the public highway. The service provided is what we currently can afford.

Background papers:

Nil

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