

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

09 February 2021

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 WILDFLOWER STRIP ON AMENITY OPEN SPACE

Summary

This report considers the potential introduction of wildflower strips on areas of amenity open space. The report identifies a potential trial location in Tonbridge and suggests further liaison with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to consider additional borough wide opportunities in the future.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 A number of Members have raised the potential of introducing wildflower strips on amenity open space and/or allowing the grass to grow longer by reducing the frequency of cuts. Both with an aim to support increased biodiversity.
- 1.1.2 In considering such an approach a number of issues need to be taken into account including location and ownership of the land, response from residents, littering and dog fouling, financial implications and significantly the impact on the ground maintenance contract.

1.2 Proposed Trial

- 1.2.1 In order to consider the matter further it is felt appropriate to identify a location to use as a trial and feed in the lessons learnt into a future report.
- 1.2.2 A suitable location has been identified in Darenth Avenue Tonbridge and the proposed amenity space is shown in **Annex 1**. The area has been inspected by the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership which considers it a good choice for letting the verge grow long by altering the cutting frequency. The sward has quite a few herbs visible in it already such as red clover and black medic which may provide a nectar source for bees and butterflies.
- 1.2.3 It is proposed to trial this area to be cut twice a year in March and September for the main body of the open space and cutting the edges against the road and path 15 times as per the current contract. The 2 cuts will be 'cut and mulch' leaving cuttings on site to avoid collection costs and additional carbon implications of extra transportation. The latter issue also needs to be considered when bringing

forward any future proposals given the Council's current target for Carbon neutrality.

- 1.2.4 The ground maintenance contractor has been consulted and based on this being only one site has confirmed there will be no financial implications for the trial. Medway Valley has also offered to prepare text for an interpretation panel explaining why the grass is not being cut so regularly.

1.3 Future report

- 1.3.1 There are clearly a range of issues that will need to be considered in looking at additional sites in the future and the outcome of the trial this year will assist in this regard. It is proposed that a report be developed with the assistance of the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, in liaison with the Council's grounds maintenance contractor, and that both the report and potential options be considered at a future meeting of this Board.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 The Council's grounds maintenance contractor has confirmed that the one-off trial can be delivered at no additional cost. Consideration will, however, need to be given to any financial impacts of extending this approach to other areas within the borough or any other proposals arising from the future report.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 None

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Asset Management, Biodiversity & Sustainability, Climate Change and Community

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:

- 1) the proposed trial of a wildflower strip on amenity open space at Darenth Avenue be progressed.
- 2) liaison be undertaken with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and the Council's grounds maintenance contractor with a full report being

considered at a future meeting of this Board on the potential of wider borough proposals.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Darren Lanes

Nil

Robert Styles

Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services