

# BUDGET CUT ASSESSMENT FORM

W12

<b>Budget Cut Assessment Form</b> <b>GROUNDS MAINTENANCE, HORTICULTURE, PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT</b>	Ref No W12	Responsible AD	Responsible Finance Manager	Responsible HR Manager	Responsible Lawyer	Responsible EIA Officer
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**Description of Proposal:**

This proposal covers a number of areas: grounds maintenance and horticulture, including grass cutting, shrub/hedge maintenance, leaf clearance, floral displays, general grounds maintenance work, repairs and maintenance, parks and open spaces, rural road grass cutting, weed control, Council house work including garden maintenance and sheltered accommodation.

The Council has health and safety responsibilities and also owes a duty of care to ensure that people do not come to harm when visiting parks and open spaces and needs to maintain sight lines for safe passage on the highway and playing pitches, as this service will continue to be offered. Apart from those duties the condition that the land is kept in has been more a matter of civic pride but this is now under considerable financial pressure. The proposals to reduce the service below are a judgement of what is believed to be the minimum level of resource to meet the Council's duty

- Grass cutting will be reduced by approximately 50% to a 30-day cycle including open spaces, parks and verges.
- Grass on the ring road will continue to be cut on a 10-day cycle.
- No floral displays except in sheltered housing, cemeteries and sponsored sites and those maintained by others.
- HRA land maintained to existing standards as this is a paid for service.
- Support to volunteers and voluntary groups will be through a Member-led approach, supported by one FTE post that will work with the various voluntary groups and Members. The overall coordination and support will be within Street Scene with both Brian Graham, Head of Environmental Services and Sandra Innes, Street Scene and Building Cleaning Manager taking on overall responsibility for the development and coordination of partnership work with the community.
- South Park will continue to be maintained to existing standards.

**Grass Cutting**

This includes grass cutting of all roadside verges, open spaces on housing estates, general amenity grass such as village green at Cockerton or grass within all parks across the Borough that are not sports pitches, e.g. Green Park, Stanhope Green, Denes, North Lodge Park, North Park, South Park, Alderman Crooks Park and all other large open spaces. These areas would only be cut every 30 days.

As the frequency of grass cutting is halved, grass will be longer and when cut remain in situ as present, however there will be significantly more grass left lying on open spaces, verges, parks, etc.

**Existing frequency:** Grass is generally cut on a 10-15 working day cycle.

**Frequency following cuts:** Grass will be cut on a 30 day cycle.

**Floral Displays**

All floral displays other than those in Sheltered Housing Accommodation and the Cemeteries would be stopped. Flowers will also continue to be provided on sponsored sites and those that will be maintained by others.

**Parks and Countryside Management**

This service currently looks after 7 local nature reserves (Maidendale, Drinkfield Marsh, Brinkburn, Rockwell, Geneva Wood, Brankin Moor, The Whinnies) as well as other local wildlife sites, e.g. Red Hall, Cocker Beck, Baydale, Faverdale, West Park, Lakeside and Snipe Pond, and the overall management of parks and play areas. This service is also responsible for organising and managing all the volunteer work of Environmental Services including Friends Groups, Street Champions, Countryside volunteers, Darlington Cares and other organisations/groups that wish to become involved in assisting in maintaining these areas. Alongside this the Parks and Countryside Management provides advice and guidance to Planning colleagues with regard to green infrastructure.

**Impact:** Responsibility for the management and coordination of work across all parks and countryside will move to the Head of Environmental Services supported by the broader management team. Discussions are ongoing with Durham Wildlife Trust with regard to opportunities for them to manage and take on responsibility for nature reserves. One full time member of staff will be retained to support the Member-led approach to volunteers and voluntary groups with the overall coordination and support providing within Street Scene from both the Head of Environmental Services and the Street Scene & Building Cleaning Manager.

**Cumulative Impact:**

Whilst resources have been reduced in the overall area of grounds maintenance and grass won't be cut as frequently as it currently is, the majority of services will continue through a revised model and working practices. There will be cumulative impact on the environment of this proposal alongside street cleaning, which will make the town a less attractive place to live and invest.

Human Resources Impacts		Asset Management Impacts	Decommissioning Costs	Cost Shunting
No. of posts to be deleted	7	Detail any released buildings/building space Identify disposal or requisition issues	In addition to HR and Asset costs identify any others e.g. early contract termination costs	Is there any known or potential to increase costs elsewhere within Council budgets
No. of potential redundancies	7	The formal part of South Park and buildings, as well as nature reserves could potentially be released, however there would be limited re-use of these spaces.	There will be costs associated with decommissioning vehicles, equipment and plant.	Stopping floral displays across the Borough will have a financial impact on the Nursery budget, which will reduce the overall surplus.
Estimated Redundancy & pension costs	£209,000	There will be range of vehicles, equipment and plant to dispose of.		There will be a significant increase in telephone calls to the Contact Centre and complaints.

Financial Summary					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Estimated reduction to budget	149,000	338,268	374,446	379,635	380,000
Redundancy Costs	209,000	0	0	0	0
Asset Implication					
Decommissioning Costs					
Known Cost Shunting					
Overheads	3,840	10,985	11,860	12,174	12,174
NET Budget Reduction	(56,160)	349,253	386,306	391,809	392,174

**Equality Impact Assessment**

Officers have considered the proposal's relevance to Darlington Borough Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. Councillors should note that an initial equalities impact assessment screening was conducted and determined that this proposal has no or negligible impacts on protected characteristics and therefore a full EIA was not undertaken.