

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 OCTOBER 2021**

MANAGEMENT OF GRASS VERGES – PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide a progress report on the Management of Grass Verges Task and Finish Group, established by this Scrutiny Committee to assist the development of a new operational policy in relation to the management of grass verges; and to consider the most appropriate way to progress the work required to develop the policy.

Summary

2. At a meeting of the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee held on 25 February 2021, Members received a report which set out the current position adopted by the Council in relation to the management of grass verges (**Appendix 1**).
3. Members of the Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be established to assist the development of a new operational policy in relation to the management of grass verges.
4. An initial meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 9 April 2021 and the notes of the meeting are attached (**Appendix 2**).
5. Members will be aware that the planned work of the Task and Finish Group did not proceed and so Members are requested to consider the options available to progress the work required to develop a new operational policy to manage grass verges in Darlington as outlined in paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 of the main report.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee consider the options available to progress the work required to develop a new operational policy in relation to the management of grass verges.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Andrew Casey : Extension 6701

Hannah Fay : Extension 5801

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Wellbeing	This report has implications on the Health and Wellbeing of residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	Not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan through the involvement of Members in contributing to the development of operational policy.
Efficiency	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. At the initial meeting of the Review Group on 9 April, 2021, Members entered into a discussion in respect of options available to deter, prevent or accommodate parking and also enforcement options. A discussion was also held in respect of the draft assessment process and Members reviewed the draft verge damage assessment form.
8. Members agreed to undertake a table top exercise to trial the draft verge damage assessment form on a number of locations in their wards, covering various circumstances. It was also agreed that the task and finish group would be reconvened to review the results of this exercise and finalise the assessment process.
9. At the first meeting of the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee for the 2021-22 Municipal Year, Members agreed to continue with the Task and Finish Group. In order to proceed, Members are requested to consider the options outlined below.

Options 1 – Member Led Approach

10. A small group of Members be sought to carry out the previously agreed action whereby a tabletop exercise covering some or all of the following scenarios:
 - (a) Narrow road with no off-street parking
 - (b) Narrow road with off-street parking (issue caused by visitors and delivery drivers)
 - (c) Streets around schools and other gathering spots, sports fields, leisure centres etc
 - (d) Tree lined street
 - (e) A road where verge damage occurs but residents don't complain
 - (f) A road where we receive a lot of complaints but there is minimal damage to the verge i.e. couple of tyre marks on the grass
 - (g) Residents crossing verge to access drive with no vehicle access crossing in place
 - (h) Wide roads but people still bumping up onto verge even though there is space to park on the road
 - (i) Verge damage is occurring on a busy main road where cars park off the carriageway to maintain traffic flow.
11. The form then be developed and a guidance note, and flowchart be developed for issue to all Members. Members to make detailed comments and recommendations on the content of the form and the process. Officers amend the policy which is then considered by Scrutiny Committee.

Option 2 – Officer Led Approach

12. Officers develop a guidance note and flowchart based on the draft assessment to form an operational policy and guidance for all Members. Scrutiny Committee review and make recommendations and approve final policy.