

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Report to Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee – 4th July 2018

Title: Grass Cutting Operations

Author: Head of Operations – Roger Tait

Reason for Report

The following request was made by Cllr Gary White, Chair of Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee;

. Grass cutting, review of why the department is now running over 2 weeks behind schedule, what actions have been put in place in order to pull this back, how long this will take and what financial support from Cabinet is required to achieve this.

Officer response:

In essence, the prolonged winter and late spring has resulted in grass cutting operations falling behind schedule in many areas of the Borough. This is not confined to Borough Council operations, many other landowners (Aspire Housing, Staffordshire County Council, private estates etc) are experiencing the same difficulties as can be seen if you look around the area.

We normally commence with the first cut in early to mid-March, but with the snow and wet ground conditions, we were unable to commence until April. We then experienced a spell of warm weather which caused a surge in grass growth after the first cut had been completed. This type of seasonal and weather-related issue is not unusual in the grounds maintenance field, and we normally recover as we move through the season.

The Streetscene mowing teams are deployed at present, and are working their way around the scheduled mowing routes as fast as possible. The northern team (Madeley is situated in the northern area and was last cut w/c 14th May) are currently in Chesterton and Crackley and will then follow the scheduled route to Kidsgrove, Audley and Madeley. The current warm, dry weather (forecast for the next week or so) is helping by slowing down further grass growth and the team feel that we should be able to catch up over the next couple of weeks.

The northern team have experienced some further difficulties relating to long term sickness absence (3 operatives) and minor machinery breakdowns, therefore we are deploying 2 of the weekend cleansing crew onto mowing operations on Saturday to help catch up, and will consider moving one of the southern team mowers onto the north next week if necessary. We are also moving the Probation team onto litter picking the mowing routes in advance so that this can help speed up the grass cutting.

I appreciate that you, along with other members in the other northern area wards, may be receiving complaints from residents regarding the grass cutting service, but I hope the above explanation allows you to allay their fears and reassure them that we are catching up and moving resources around wherever possible (taking into account other competing priorities

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such as daily street cleansing duties and support to recycling collections) to help complete the current schedule.

Information provided relates to the position as at 13 June 2018. A Verbal update on progress will be provided at the meeting on 4th July 2018.

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