

## SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Robert Walker, Director of Place

**To:** Councillor Peter Coupland, Portfolio for Finance

**(Author:** Emily Spicer, Environmental Services Manager)

**Subject:** Highway verge and amenity grass cutting

**Purpose:** To seek approval to establish formal arrangements to maintain highway verge and amenity grass within the wards of Spalding.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That the Council's Grounds Maintenance Team is commissioned to undertake grass cutting for amenity purposes within the wards of Spalding for the 2017 season.
- 2) That funds of between £7,000 and £10,000 are released from the contingency budget of the Spalding Special Expenses Account

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Both urban and rural grass cutting within the public highway is the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council in its capacity as the local Highway Authority. South Holland District Council has undertaken this work on behalf of the County Council's behalf over the last two decades through a direct agreement.
- 1.2 In 2016/17, Lincolnshire County Council confirmed that a formal decision had been taken to reduce the level of funding for grass cutting on its verges and amenity areas from 7 to 2 safety cuts per annum. Due to the type of machinery required to service 2 cuts per year, South Holland District Council at that time were not in a position to enter a new formal agreement with the County Council, who subsequently contracted with a third party.
- 1.3 At a meeting of Spalding Town Forum in May 2017, members agreed to discuss the possibility of funding additional highway verge and amenity grass cutting in the wards of Spalding from the Spalding Special Expenses Account in light of the decision taken by Lincolnshire County Council. It has been confirmed in writing by Cllr McLean as Chairman and on behalf of the Spalding Town Forum that they would like the Spalding Special Expenses Account to be used for this purpose.
- 1.4 Lincolnshire County Council, in its capacity as Highway Authority, would retain responsibility for safety related cutting. South Holland District Council would not be duplicating or replicating this responsibility but would be providing additional cuts – for the 2017 season – for amenity purposes.

### **2.0 OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Do nothing.
- 2.2 That the Council, funded through the Spalding Special Expenses account, undertakes high way and amenity grass cutting within the wards of Spalding for the 2017 season.

### 3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 It is recommended that the option to fund highway and amenity grass cutting in Spalding is approved for 2017. If agreed and subsequently implemented, a visual improvement to the highway verges and amenity areas will be achieved.

### 4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

- 4.1 Improvement to the visual amenity within the wards of Spalding.
- 4.2 Increased customer satisfaction/decrease in customer complaints.

### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

- 5.1.1 There are no overall detrimental environmental impact arising from South Holland District Council conducting this activity.

#### 5.2 Constitution & Legal

- 5.2.1 Lincolnshire County Council have a duty to maintain the highway in its capacity as the local Highway Authority. The County Council have reviewed their arrangements in this respect for grass cutting of verges and amenity areas and have confirmed that 2 safety cuts will be undertaken in order to meet this duty.
- 5.2.2 In order to provide enhanced amenity areas South Holland District Council may undertake additional activities under the general power of competence, under the Localism Act 2011 together within any relevant specific power.
- 5.2.3 As described above, Lincolnshire County Council would retain responsibility for safety related cutting. South Holland District Council would not be duplicating or replicating this responsibility but would be providing additional cuts – for the 2017 season – for amenity purposes only.

#### 5.3 Corporate Priorities

The service review will deliver against the following corporate priorities:-

- To have pride in South Holland by supporting the district and residents to develop and thrive;
- To provide the right services, at the right time and in the right way;

#### 5.4 Financial

The cost of undertaking 7 cuts within the remainder of the grass cutting season to the areas identified as falling under highways verges and amenity areas in Spalding would be £7,728.21.

Additional budget will be dependent on the amount of grass clearance needed after the first cut has taken place.

## 5.5 Health & Wellbeing

Improving the visual amenity of the wards of Spalding will improve the wellbeing of residents.

## 5.6 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.6.1 This report has been produced following a request from the Spalding Town Forum.

5.6.2 On release of the funds, the necessary arrangements and actions may be undertaken.

## 6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All Spalding wards are affected.

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Background papers:-

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### Lead Contact Officer

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**Key Decision:** No

**Exempt Decision:** No

**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**