

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces Committee
Date	4 th Nov 2025
Report Title	Parks & Open Spaces: Grounds Maintenance End of Season Audit: Grass Cutting & Shrubs / Hedges
Agenda Reference	10C
Author	Jason Watts, Facility & POS Operations Manager

Officers Recommendations

1. To note the end of season Grass & Shrub / Hedge Cutting Audit

Background Grass

The weather conditions allowed cuts to commence from 01-04-25, after considerations from the previous year we acquired additional support from a local contractor to create a positive start to the season, this had a considerable impact and allowed our team to complete rounds one and two on plan with no major concerns.

Rounds one and two cuts were carried out at an increased mower deck height, this had been recommended through experts within the parish and therefore carried out as a trial, we deemed the trial to be successful as the results showed the expected results, less initial growth and less grass spillage onto pavements and roads.

There is no doubt that the weather was on our side this year and this was beneficial to data collection as we were able to use these perfect conditions to establish real time analysis of cut timing, going forward this will allow us to accurately set schedules and improve our overall grass cutting operations. Due to these exceptional conditions grass cutting was suspended for almost six weeks, despite this our team still achieved the 10 cuts required. We will now monitor the growth rate and act accordingly.

In addition to our regular mowing schedule, we have now added path cutting at Tadpole Field to improve resident access, this has been received well, and we intend to continue this throughout 2026/2027.

During this season we were able to increase exposure to new mower operatives, this allowed local knowledge, routes and expectation to be gained, this benefits our existing mower operatives and increases the flexibility of the team going forward. Further operative training will be achieved before the start of the next season.

A grounds maintenance party meeting took place on Friday 17th Oct with both Councillors and Staff to discuss the past season. Examples of both positive and constructive feedback were given, and this will be implemented into the next cutting season.

The wildflower areas have been cut by an experienced local contractor; this will improve the seeding process and improve the flowering going forward.



Lessons learnt this Season (April 25 – Oct 25)

1. Strimming: The equipment has now come to end of life with three battery failures and multiple head replaced therefore a budget aspiration will be submitted to allow replacement at the start of next season.
2. To work smarter and more efficiently by conducting regular meetings with the lead operatives to review performance and set objectives.
3. Additional cuts at Tadpole Field paddock will be required to enable maintenance and control.
4. Mower maintenance has been improved with the introduction of a daily maintenance check sheet; this ensures that all grease points and necessary checks are completed before usage. It also allows the team to identify concerns before the concerns become failures.

Improvements planned for next Season (April 26 – October 26)

1. To increase our trained mower operators from five to six to improve team flexibility during annual leave.
2. Operating from the new Grounds Maintenance Facility on the Old Blunsdon Road will save time and fuel.
3. Continue additional activity support at the start of the season
4. Continuous improvement through data collection.
5. Updating the ground maintenance schedules and improving communications and transparency to residents.
6. Continue to lift the deck height at the start of the season to avoid hidden objects and excessive growth.

Background Shrub & Hedges

The team has continued to cut low level shrubs between April & October whilst also supporting our reactive operations. Since 31st Aug the team has also been cutting high level hedges along with low level shrubs. After investigations we established that there were areas of Mouldon Hill that required hedge reduction, this was carried out at the end of nesting season to reduce any impact to wildlife within the area.

We are now starting to reap the rewards from our initial shrub and hedge cutting efforts as we enter the maintenance stage in many areas. With data collection we can confirm that our shrub & hedge cutting cycle timing is 16-17 weeks per round, resulting in a target of 3 rounds per year. Aspirations are being considered as to whether this can be reduced to the 12 week turnaround that we set out to achieve earlier in the season.

School areas were scheduled within school leave times to allow maintenance of shrubs around road crossings and pathways leading to schools to allow safe passage for pedestrians.

Lessons learnt this Season (April 25 – Oct 25)

1. Mouldon Hill layout and responsibilities confirmed.
2. Flail blade life confirmed to be 18 months.
3. Continuous improvement through data collection.
4. Updating the ground maintenance schedules and improving communications and transparency to residents.



Improvements planned for next Season (April 26 – October 26)

1. To increase our trained tractor operators from four to five to improve team flexibility during annual leave.
2. Build Mouldon Hill maintenance into our regular schedule.
3. Identify areas that require shrub & hedge reduction or removal.
4. Continue to target school areas and routes during half term timing.
5. Set flail blade timing to improve cut conditions