Haydon Wick Parish Council
Thames Avenue
Haydon Wick
Swindon
SN25 1QQ

01793 722446
info@haydonwick.gov.uk
www.haydonwick.gov.uk

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces Committee
Date	8th July 2025
Report Title	Parks & Open Spaces Report
Agenda Reference	15
Author	Jason Watts, POS & Facility Manager Laura Cutter, Deputy Clerk/RFO, HR & Services Manager Georgina Morgan-Denn, Chief Officer/Clerk to Council & RFO

Officers Recommendation

1. To note the steps to date for restoring the verges of Elstree Way and Elsham Way junctions.
2. To consider available budgets and a possible recommendation to Full Council, if using General Reserves.

Background

In Autumn 2024, the hedges on Elstree Way and Elsham Way roundabout were cut down to ground level as part of the hedge reduction programme. Due to the location, being near school crossings and on a busy road junction, the health and safety of the area was taken into consideration. The area received several maintenance visits per year costing the Council £250.00 per visit in equipment and resourcing. It is anticipated there were eight (8) visits per year to this site. There has been no maintenance visit over the last 24 months and as such there has been no cost to Council, but site visits, along with Councillor and Officer time to rectify the issue.

The hope was that the hedges would regenerate naturally, to a manageable level, and be maintained within the 3-monthly schedules. The area was left for the season to see the regrowth. An artist impression of grass seeding the area and planting a low-level boundary hedge on the roadside was shared on social media which was received well by residents.

In Spring 2025, the area ground was cleared by an external contractor (neighbouring parish) as there was a lot of bramble and bindweed and planted with grass seed. In view of the extreme weather conditions, the grass seed didn't take well. There was then a week or so of heavy rainfall so the hope was that signs of new growth would start to appear.

Members of the Grounds Maintenance Working Party have been active in trying to look at solutions, manage residents' complaints and attend site visits. Committee now needs to consider the next steps and if we should use external contractors, what the budgetary impact is, if we do or if we leave the area for longer to see if it regenerates.

Consideration

This is one roundabout in the Parish and Members should consider if it will be setting a precedent and similar works will need to be undertaken on other roundabouts in the area. As such Council should consider whether it need to increase the Grounds Maintenance budget to incorporate remedial works and extra contingencies when looking at future budgets in October.

Budget & General Reserves
There is no budget allocated for a Grounds Maintenance project of this scale in 2025/26.

Current quotations are in the region of £12,500.00. After this work has been completed, the maintenance will be undertaken in our general maintenance schedules and require no external assistance.

This is an unforeseen expenditure, and Council could consider using its General Reserves? The early use of General Reserves during the current financial year is a decision that should not be taken lightly. While General Reserves are intended to provide financial stability and flexibility, their early use highlights the importance of careful ongoing monitoring of the Council's budget and spending priorities.

In May (FC 012B) it was reported that General Reserves should aim to be maintained at a level of between 3 and 5 months of net revenue expenditure (NRE) (as per the Financial Reserves Policy). The calculation for 3 to 5 months of NRE for the financial year ending 31st March 2026 is between £338,479 and £564,131. As of 1st April 2025, the General Reserves stand at £354,275 which equates to 3.14 months of NRE. £15,796 over the minimum 3 months reserve.

The Council remains committed to maintaining transparency and financial responsibility and will continue to review its financial position regularly to ensure the long-term sustainability of parish services and commitments. Measures are being considered to replenish the reserves in line with best practice guidelines and to mitigate the need for further early drawdowns.

A decision to use General Reserves for this project will be taken to Full Council.

Alternatively, we have looked at various budgets in the Parks & Open Spaces Budgets which we could not do in this financial year to cover this cost.

For example:

Weed Spraying – second application	£12,500.00
OR	
Decorative Flower Beds	£2,000.00
Bulb Planting	£500.00
Contingency Grounds Maintenance/Grass Cuts	£1,742.40
Tadpole Lane – Capital Project	£8,000.00
Play Area Wetpour Surfacing	£250.00
TOTAL OF THE ABOVE	£12,500.00