

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces Committee
Date	2 nd June 2026
Report Title	Shrub Bed Removals – Voyager Drive & Garsington Drive
Agenda Reference	15
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Proposer: Councillor V Manro
Seconded: Councillor L Stevenson

Recommendations

1. To consider removing the shrub beds at the two locations listed below and replacing them with grass seed for easier ongoing maintenance, improved visibility, and a more manageable long-term street scene approach.
2. To delegate authority to officers to arrange removal works, soil preparation, and reseeding at the appropriate seasonal time.
3. To monitor both locations following reseeding to ensure successful grass establishment and identify any further maintenance requirements.

Background and Rationale

The two shrub bed locations identified within this report have generated repeated maintenance concerns over a sustained period. The current planting arrangements are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain to an acceptable standard using routine operational resources. In both locations, the shrub beds regularly become overgrown, obstruct pedestrian routes, and create ongoing reactive maintenance demands on the Parks & Open Spaces team. The proposal to replace the shrub beds with grassed areas is intended to provide a more practical and sustainable long-term solution. Grass areas can be maintained through existing routine cutting schedules and are significantly easier to inspect, maintain, and keep tidy throughout the year. This approach also improves visibility, accessibility, and general appearance within the local streetscene.

Outside area of 27 Voyager Drive

This location has experienced recurring issues since November 2022. The existing bramble growth and low-level shrub planting frequently become overgrown and extend into pedestrian access points and gates. Residents have repeatedly raised concerns regarding the area becoming untidy and difficult to pass, particularly during periods of rapid seasonal growth. The current planting arrangement also creates challenges for operational maintenance staff. The shape and density of the shrubs require more labour-intensive cutting and repeated reactive visits throughout the growing season. Despite ongoing maintenance, the area quickly returns to an overgrown condition due to the nature of the planting and limited accessibility within the bed itself.

Replacing the shrub bed with grass seed would provide:



- Easier and more consistent ongoing maintenance
 - Reduced reactive maintenance visits
 - Improved pedestrian access to gates and footpaths
 - Better visibility and natural surveillance
 - A cleaner and more open appearance within the street scene
 - Reduced likelihood of bramble regrowth and unmanaged spread
- The proposed grassing would also better align with surrounding verge and



Outside 1 Garsington Drive

The shrub bed outside 1 Garsington Drive presents a separate but similar long-term maintenance issue. The existing hedge growth regularly expands through the resident's metal railing, making it difficult to access and cut effectively.

This creates operational difficulties for staff attempting to maintain the hedge safely and consistently. The restricted access around the railing increases maintenance time and reduces the effectiveness of routine cutting. As a result, the area can quickly appear untidy between maintenance visits.

The proposal to remove the hedge and replace the area with grass seed would:

- Simplify ongoing maintenance requirements
- Reduce staff time spent on difficult hedge cutting
- Improve the appearance of the location throughout the year
- Prevent vegetation growing through railings and fencing
- Reduce future complaints regarding overgrowth
- Allow the area to be incorporated into existing grass cutting schedules

Financial and Operational Considerations

The proposed removal works would involve an initial one-off cost associated with vegetation clearance, disposal, topsoil preparation, and reseedling. However, over the longer term, the grassed areas are expected to reduce operational maintenance demands and provide better value for money through simplified upkeep arrangements.

Current shrub and hedge maintenance at these locations often requires more specialist or time-intensive work compared to standard grass cutting operations. Grass maintenance can be delivered more efficiently using existing parish equipment and scheduled cutting programmes.

Environmental Considerations

Whilst shrub planting can provide biodiversity value in suitable locations, these specific areas are small, heavily managed urban frontage beds that currently provide limited ecological benefit



due to repeated cutting, overgrowth issues, and their proximity to highways and pedestrian routes.

Where practical, officers should consider reseeding using a durable grass mix suitable for urban verge environments. Opportunities for replacement biodiversity planting elsewhere within the parish should continue to be explored through wider Parks & Open Spaces projects where locations are more suitable for long-term establishment and management.

The residents have a metal railing, and the hedge regularly grows through it. It's not the easiest to cut.

Consider removing and replacing with grass seed for easier maintenance.



Conclusion

The proposed removal of the shrub beds at Voyager Drive and Garsington Drive is considered a practical and proportionate response to ongoing maintenance and accessibility concerns. Replacing these areas with grass seed would create a cleaner, easier to maintain, and more sustainable street scene arrangement while reducing recurring operational pressures on the council's maintenance teams.