

West Swindon Parish Council

Grounds Maintenance Update – July 2018

Introduction

The Borough Council's Grounds Maintenance team undertake the following work on behalf of the Parish Council:

- Amenity grass cutting and gang mowing
- Shrub bed maintenance
- Hedge cutting & maintenance (to include tractor and side arm work)
- Tree maintenance (using hand tools only from the ground) – as required;
- Inspection, maintenance and repairs to play areas

The Parish Council has agreed to fund an enhanced level of service provision from the 1st April 2017. This included an increase in grass cutting frequency (3 weekly) as well as provision of a seasonal maintenance team from May to September to undertake flexible and targeted shrub / hedge maintenance work as required (e.g. adjacent to footpaths / cycle ways).

In addition, since April 2018, a new dedicated team has been established at the request of the Parish Council to address a number of badly overgrown shrub beds, hedges and woodland areas.

Swindon Borough Council continues to maintain designated major routes and gateways into the town. Within West Swindon, these areas include the Great Western Way (Blagrove Roundabout through to Bruce Street Bridges).

Please note that these gateways are not maintained in accordance with the enhanced schedule funded by the Parish Council.

Report Details

Grass Maintenance

Streetsmart provides a 3 weekly grass cutting service between April and October subject to the prevailing weather and ground conditions.

The mowing season started later this year in mid-April due to the exceptionally cold and wet start to the season which meant that the grass was quite long when mowing commenced but overall, the new mowing equipment coped well with the long, wet grass and difficult ground conditions. A number of areas had to be left un-cut for a period of time until ground conditions improved but these were all rectified as soon as possible with staff working a number of Saturdays over this period to catch up (at no extra cost to the Parish Council). Indeed this was the most difficult start to a mowing season, weather-wise, that staff could remember.

Unfortunately, the five unit mowing machine did experience timing issues on its round and following feedback from the Parish Council, we made adjustments to its route as a temporary fix but further discussions will need to be held with the Parish Council to determine the best option for the future.

However, this difficult start to the season was followed with a pro-longed period of very hot and dry weather with little or no rainfall during May, June and early July with many grass areas turning brown and grass growth ceased in many areas due to the drought conditions although seed-heads and deep-rooted perennial weeds remained an issue.

The grass growth was so limited in places that mowing was suspended and staff were re-assigned onto other works within the Parish, for example additional follow-up mowing / strimming, cleaning around roundabouts and removing detritus from splitter islands to improve the visual appearance of the area. However we have to remain vigilant and be prepared to re-instate grass cutting immediately the weather conditions change and grass growth starts again.

Shrub and Hedge Maintenance

The main shrub and hedge maintenance work takes place between October and March although additional seasonal staff are taken on from July onwards to enable us to undertake targeted work to address overgrown shrubs and hedges which affect visibility sight-lines or cause an obstruction to pedestrians / cyclists.

As part of the additional funding resource provided by the Parish Council, we have been able to take the opportunity to address a number of long-standing issues with the shrub and hedge programme. In addition to the routine maintenance work, we are also taking the opportunity to chip some of the pruning's using a new small chipper machine. The resultant chippings are spread back over the ground as a mulch allowing us to spend more time working on-site rather than taking material back to the depot as green waste. Mulching also improves the visual appearance of the area as well as acting as a short-term weed suppressant. Where appropriate, we are also applying a new contact / residual herbicide to reduce early weed growth, again this should improve the visual appearance of the area.

A few photographic examples of this work can be seen at the end of this update.

Playground Maintenance

In addition to the routine inspection and maintenance of the 20 formal playgrounds within the Parish, we have also worked with the Parish Council to undertake some other improvement works. Typical work has included:

- Replacement of damaged play equipment
- Cleaned and painted play equipment
- Topped up an extra 80 cubic metres of play bark safety surfacing

A few photographic examples of this work can be seen at the end of this report

Non-Parish funded work

The following works are included for information purposes only to advise the Parish on other works funded by the Borough Council which have been undertaken or are planned to be carried out within the area.

- As of the 16th July, we have now started the first application of the highway weed control treatment in the West which will be completed by the 25th July. Again as with the grass growth, the unusual weather at the start of the growing season year delayed this first application. A second application will be dependent on the weather conditions and weed growth over the next few months but otherwise it is scheduled for September / October.

Rob Core (rcore@swindon.gov.uk)
Grounds Maintenance, Parks & Open Spaces
Service Manager
Street Smart
Communities and Housing
Swindon Borough Council
SN1 2JH

Appendix - Enhanced Tree/Hedge Service
Peatmoor Lagoon Car Park



Before



After

Flint Hill



Before



After



Before



After

Appendix – Playground Improvements



Before Painting



After



Before Painting



After



Refurbished Teen Shelter at Flint Hill



New Edging Boards and Topped up Bark

Appendix – Other Improvement Works



Footpath Repairs – Peatmoor



Footpath Repairs - Peatmoor