

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)

Date: 21st October 2013

Subject: Grounds Maintenance Contract – Tracking of recommendations/desired outcomes

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review of the Council's grounds maintenance contract last year.
2. Since 2012/13, all Scrutiny Boards have been encouraged to clearly identify desired outcomes linked to their recommendations. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. However, the Board is also asked to consider whether the original recommendations are still relevant in terms of achieving the associated desired outcomes. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to:
 - Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
 - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review of the Council's grounds maintenance contract last year.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In June 2012, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board acknowledged a request for Scrutiny in relation to the new grounds maintenance contract. In taking forward this request, the Scrutiny Board reviewed the key issues that had arisen during the initial stages of contract delivery, the reasons for these and any actions taken to help address such issues in the future.
- 2.2 In November 2012, the Board published a report setting out its findings, recommendations and desired outcomes following its review of the new grounds maintenance contract.
- 2.3 Since 2012/13, all Scrutiny Boards have been encouraged to clearly identify desired outcomes linked to their recommendations. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. However, the Board is also asked to consider whether the original recommendations are still relevant in terms of achieving the associated desired outcomes. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 A standard set of criteria has been produced to enable the Board to assess progress. These are presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 3.2 To assist Members with this task the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, has given a draft status for each recommendation. The Board is asked to confirm whether these assessments are appropriate and to change them where they are not. Details of progress against each recommendation is set out within the table at Appendix 2.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The activities considered by this report support the Best Council Plan 2013 - 17 objective to ensure high quality public services that are efficient and locally responsive. They also support the City Priority Plan 2011-15 priority to protect the distinctive green character of the city.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations. Progress in responding to those recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review of the Council's grounds maintenance contract is detailed within the table at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration.

6 Recommendations

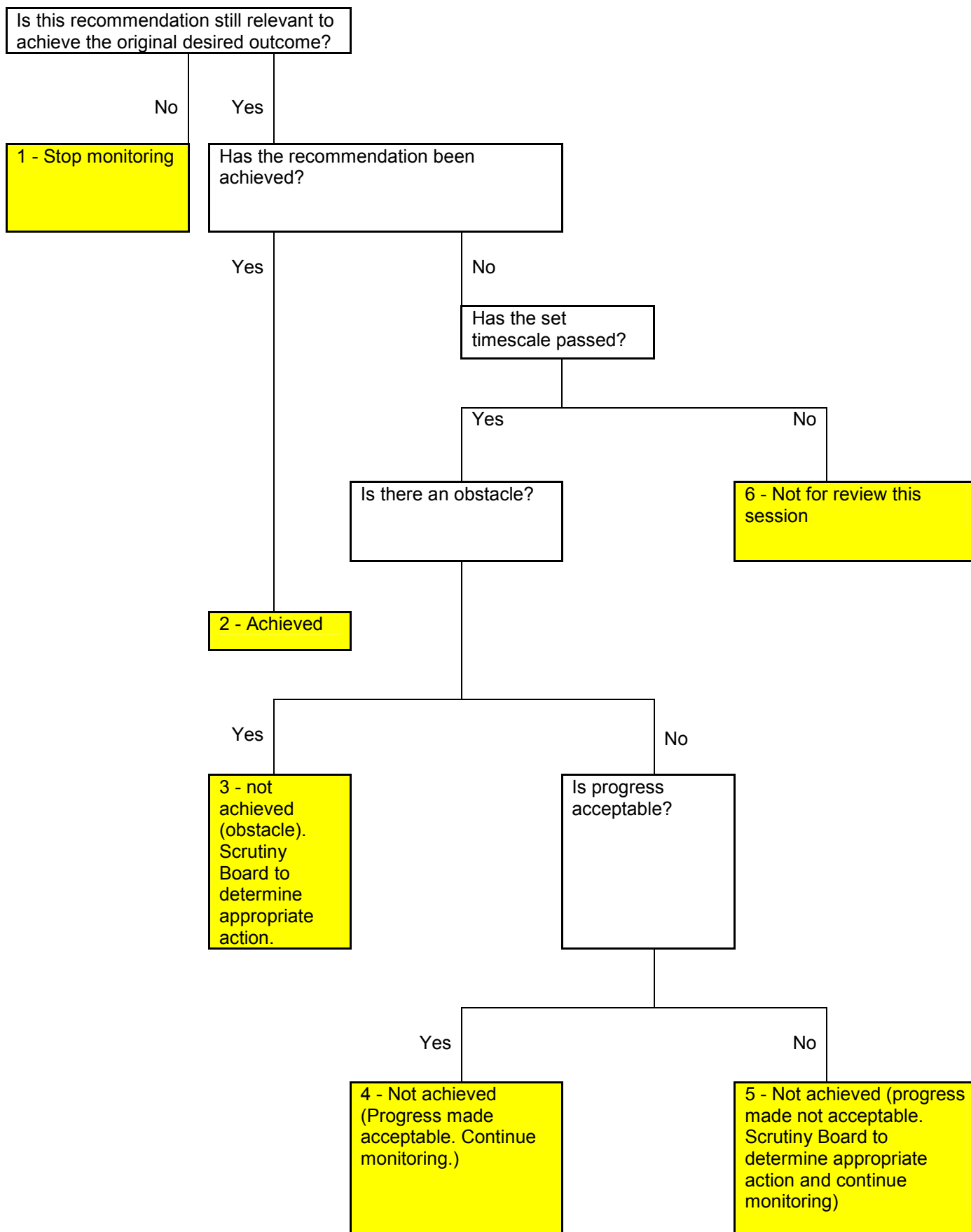
- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
 - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be Considered by Scrutiny Boards



Scrutiny Grounds Maintenance Review (November 2012)

Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not achieved (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p>Recommendation 1 That the Director of Resources and Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods establish a separate budget to enable the Grounds Maintenance Team to schedule immediate grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas pending clarification of land ownership and formal allocation of future maintenance responsibility.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That necessary grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas is scheduled immediately for action.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed, although a budget needs to be identified to enable these areas of land to be brought up to standard, then maintained on an ongoing basis, which will be sought by trying to identify efficiencies in the contract.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>This issue is currently being managed without the need to identify a dedicated budget line. From April 2013 the budgets for Grounds Maintenance operations have been delegated to Parks and Countryside and are no longer split along the former ALMO boundaries. This flexibility allows for a more holistic approach to asset management that to date has meant that assets are being included in the contract where appropriate. It is important to note that a level of due diligence is required before instructing works to ensure</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	<p>that the land is in public ownership. Once this is established then the contractor has been instructed to undertake works with the funding arrangements resolved later. When land is found to be in private ownership then action is considered using formal enforcement powers where costs can be recovered.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with each of the internal clients to explore a move towards an extended shrub maintenance service (6 shrub visits) and a fortnightly grass cut frequency (16 cuts in one season) in order to achieve a better quality of service.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That the specification for grounds maintenance and shrub maintenance is fit for purpose in delivering a good quality service.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed in principle as adopting good horticultural practice, but would require an additional contribution from each client to deliver the improvements. Following discussion that took place at the street scene grounds maintenance programme board on 17th December 2012, it was agreed that Aire Valley Homes and Belle Isle Tenants Management Organisation would trial increased shrub and rose bed maintenance in 2013. This will provide an evidence base to inform a review in the light of visible benefits and resident feedback in order to help determine resource prioritisation.</p> <p>With regard to grass cutting frequency it is not proposed to alter the frequency of mowing at this stage, other than to retain the increased frequency of grass cutting on 'premium' sites, in response to customer concerns raised during 2012. For other grass, it was agreed that a flexible approach to phasing will be adopted in 2013 that will use climatic conditions to direct the overall frequency that may increase above 13. For example a cold spring and a hot, dry summer would enable reduced frequencies, conversely a mild winter and wet summer would require additional mowing activity.</p>		

	<p>Current position:</p> <p>Given the realignment of contract and budget control to Parks and Countryside as described in the update to Recommendation 1 above, it was decided to take the opportunity to introduce revised frequencies city wide. The revisions introduced from April 2013 provided a contingency to instruct a maximum of 14 grass cuts for amenity grass (28 cuts for premium amenity), and a doubling of shrub bed maintenance visits to 4 per annum. The major shrub pruning operations will still take place during the 4th quarter visit with the emphasis of other visits being to remove weeds and litter and keep shrubs 'in check'. However the dry summer in 2013 has only required the instruction of 13 cuts as there was little apparent grass growth during the middle of the summer.</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that asset holders consult with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds is determined in consultation with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed and consultation will take place with Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on any proposals on the future use and maintenance of shrubs beds.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>This is the current situation and local consultation is undertaken on planned changes to shrub beds prior to removal.</p>	<p>3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action.</p>	

<p>Recommendation 4 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Parks and Countryside, the internal clients, Locality Management and Continental to review existing litter picking responsibilities and opportunities for more joined up working.</p> <p>That this review is undertaken immediately and an update report brought back to Scrutiny in January 2013.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That there is a joined up approach between the Council and Continental for undertaking litter picking services across the city.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed and the report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) meeting in December 2012 highlighted that consideration is being given for Continental to expand litter collection to cover adjacent hard surfaces where applicable in co-ordination with street cleansing activities.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>Continental are once again to be engaged in winter litter picking work supporting locality management in meeting their seasonal pressures. To this end areas of land have been identified that cause particular problems and are often a cause for concern from the public and elected members during winter months when grass cutting operations are not taking place on high priority arterial routes into the city. There is a further advantage in utilising Continental as they are equipped to put in appropriate traffic management arrangements. Examples of the type of work involved includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuter routes leading into the city centre with a speed limit of 30mph (eg, Woodhouse Lane) • Main commuter routes outside the city centre with speed limits above 40mph • Junctions / roundabouts leading from motorways such as Tingley Common, which feeds traffic to the White Rose Centre and Elland Road football ground. • Routes which would require implementation of traffic management to carry out the works (eg Stanningley, Drighlington Bypass) 	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
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<p>Recommendation 5 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews where any additional services provided by Continental could lead to further cost savings, with particular attention given to potential winter operations. That this review is undertaken immediately, with an update brought back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2013.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: Utilising available resources to obtain greater added value of service by Continental.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed. Locality managers have commissioned Continental to undertake bulk leaf clearance and other cleansing works normally undertaken via temporary staff to support staff retention within Continental.</p> <p>This issue has also been discussed at the street scene grounds maintenance programme board. Budget holding clients have indicated that they are unable to prioritise funding for Continental to undertake additional winter works. However, clients are asking Continental to tender for individual environmental projects as well as quote for ad hoc work on assets that need additional work to meet specifications.</p> <p>Current position: Continental staff are being engaged to undertake litter collection, rubbish removal, ginnel clearances and cut back of Horticultural features during the winter. In addition they will be given the opportunity to compete for additional works in line with the councils approved procurement procedures.</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the contract monitoring processes to identify efficiencies and consistency.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That contract monitoring is conducted efficiently and there is parity between the contract monitoring processes of the ALMOs and Highways.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed, and a review will be undertaken of existing monitoring processes to ensure a balanced, consistent and efficient approach commensurate with the outcome of monitoring results.</p> <p>Current position: The delivery of contract monitoring is now undertaken by Parks and Countryside with some resource TUPE transferred to the service in April 2013 from the ALMOs. The approach taken this year has been to be much more intelligence led using referrals from ward members, Town and Parish Councils, and individual residents to direct</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	<p>monitoring activity. Comparison of queries regarding performance or quality during March to August 2013 have indicated a reduction of 21% when compared to the same period in 2012.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 7 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that Parish and Town Councils are proactively engaged in the contract monitoring process for the grounds maintenance contract.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That contract monitoring is conducted efficiently and there is parity between the contract monitoring processes of the ALMOs and Highways.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed, and Parish and Town Councils will be invited to contribute to monitoring activity as part of the overall review alluded to in recommendation 6.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>As set out in the response to recommendation 6 above a revised approach to monitoring has been introduced for 2013. Concerns raised by Town and Parish councils have been used to direct monitoring activities thereby directly influencing the quality achieved in the local area. In addition there remains an option for Town and Parish Councils to take on the control of this work in their respective areas should they wish to do so.</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8 That the Chair of the Member Development Working Group includes grounds maintenance as part of the Member Development Programme and Induction Programme to promote greater awareness of the expectations of the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.</p> <p>Desired Outcome That all Elected Members are fully aware of what is expected from the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>The Chair of the Member Development Working Group will be discussing how best to take forward this recommendation during the Member Development Working Group meeting on 31st January 2013.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>At its meeting on 31st January 2013, the Member Development Working Group discussed how best to get the information out to Members and agreed it would be better to circulate the information via Area Committees at the start of a municipal year.</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	<p>With the introduction of Area Lead Members in May 2013, Member Development and the Citizens and Communities directorate are developing an induction programme for Area Lead Members. As such, the issues surrounding grounds maintenance will be incorporated into this programme for Environmental Area Lead Members.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 9 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Area Management Teams to ensure that Area Committees receive regular updates regarding the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area. Such updates are to include an overview of key issues raised within their areas; how such issues have been dealt with; and any new or pending contract variations that will impact upon their area.</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That Area Committees are regularly updated on the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed. A report to Area Committees is being prepared for the February/March round of meetings that will include a performance review of the first year of the contract as part of the Parks and Countryside annual report. Representatives from Parks and Countryside have been identified to attend Environment Sub-Group Meetings where issues can be raised relevant to each area and responses given, as appropriate.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>As described in the January update the Annual reports were submitted to Area Committees to inform them of performance of the contract. A performance update will be provided to the February/March 2014 round of area committees with a particular focus on grass cutting operations during the 2013 season. Nominated Parks and Countryside officers are also attending the Environment Sub groups to provide ongoing liaison with regards to any emerging concerns ahead of the next annual report round. Whilst this does not include a formal performance report, officers are briefed ahead of attendance at these meetings in order that they are able to provide verbal feedback on matters relating to the performance of the contract. Any specific queries raised at meetings that the officer attending is not able to deal with are followed up and a response given.</p>	<p>3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action</p>	

<p>Recommendation 10 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Communications and Marketing and the internal clients to develop a Communications Strategy aimed at promoting public awareness of behaviour that is obstructive to the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service (e.g. parking on public verges).</p> <p>Desired Outcome: That public behaviour does not obstruct the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service.</p>	<p>Formal response (January 2013):</p> <p>This recommendation is agreed, and it is proposed that this takes place ahead of the grass cutting season in 2013.</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>Highways and Transportation have produced a briefing and options paper examining the issue of parking on verges. This examines not only the issue of obstructing maintenance but considers the more damaging and costly effects on the infrastructure and buried services. The paper does note that this behaviour is often due to the design limitations of estate road and parking provision and requires significant capital investment to address. Nevertheless, there are issues with regard to public behaviour and it is intended that work will be conducted in this regard ahead of the 2014 grass cutting season.</p>	<p>3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action</p>	
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