

## **Development of the Grounds Maintenance Service, (Peter Joyce- Head of Green Spaces)**

### **Synopsis of Report:**

**To advise on progress made with the implementation of new grounds maintenance procedures in 2023 on Englefield Green.**

### **For information only**

**To note progress in relation to the maintenance of Englefield Green**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The report is to advise the Committee on progress with grounds maintenance in Englefield Green following the termination of the old contract arrangement.

## **2. Report**

- 2.1 There was some disruption to the cutting of grass on the Green and the cricket outfield earlier this season. The Green was cut on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April, but owing to the rapid rate of growth at that time, the grass looked neglected by the following week. The intention had been to cut on the following Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May. However, the tractor used to cut the Green and outfield suffered two mechanical breakdowns, and work had to be suspended until the weekend whilst a mobile mechanic carried out repair works. Regular discussions were held with the cricket club to ensure that everything possible was done to cut the outfield for the scheduled match on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May. Co-operation between the Council, the Cricket Club, and the Football Club resulted in the outfield being cut in time for the Sunday match. In addition, the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor cut the Green to allow the planned Englefield Green picnic to go ahead in the afternoon.
- 2.2 Unfortunately both March and April were exceptionally wet with over 190 mm of rain falling across the two months. This combined with high spring growth rates resulted in exceptionally high and uneven grass. However, it was agreed with the Cricket Club that the outfield grass would be cut every Thursday, and it has been possible to maintain this schedule. As a result of this situation, a communication path has been opened between the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor and the Cricket Club, which should lead to a far better understanding of both future requirements and maintenance standards. This is, of course, dependent upon ground and weather conditions. In addition, the grass on the Green has been cut regularly.
- 2.3 Considerable strides have since been made with the operation of the grounds maintenance service. A new tractor will shortly be delivered and will be fitted with wide rotary and cylinder cutting decks. In addition, a new wide angled mower has been delivered, and has already been used on the Green to give a better finish as well as providing flexibility in the eventuality of the tractor suffering mechanical breakdown. In addition, three additional staff are being licensed to use this larger machinery, and additional gardeners have been hired.

These changes should result in a much-enhanced service, particularly in the 2024 season, when it is intended to commence cutting in late winter with a full complement of staff and machinery.

- 2.4 The cutting of the cricket outfield will continue to be effected once per week throughout the playing season dependent upon ground conditions. This will normally occur on Thursday. Cutting of other lawn areas will be carried out once per fortnight throughout the growing season. It is intended to commence cutting very early in the year in 2024 given the rate of growth in the March to May period this year, and in recent years. Cutting of the ditch will be carried out twice per annum. New equipment has been ordered for grass cutting, including a tractor with trailed gang units. A wide-angle mower is also now in operation, giving a degree of operational flexibility in the eventuality of breakdown. Additional staff are being externally trained to operate this machinery to increase resourcing in future.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Maintaining Englefield Green and offering a clean and welcoming open space is in accordance with the Boroughs Corporate Business Plan.

### **4. Resource implications/Value for Money**

- 4.1 Machinery purchased will ensure that a better lawn finish and increased frequency of cutting can be achieved in future.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 None.

### **6. Equality implications**

- 6.1 None.

### **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 A more attractive environment can be maintained for local residents and users of the Green using improved working methods and machinery.

### **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 The Committee are requested to note new arrangements for the grounds maintenance of Englefield Green.