

## **Excerpt of Draft Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny-26/11/2012**

### **Report of the scrutiny task group - Grass Verges**

The chair of the scrutiny task group introduced their final report on grass verges. In her introduction, she thanked officers, members of the working group and the county council for all their contributions. In particular she thanked John Rees, Ubico Ltd - Environmental maintenance manager and Tony McNamara, CBC Community parks development officer for their input and they were in attendance at this meeting to answer any questions. She added that the Cabinet Member Sustainability had been engaged in the review. She highlighted the recommendation regarding information on the website which she felt was critical to the overall success of the improvements being put forward. She asked the committee to consider whether they now want to these recommendations to go directly to Cabinet or whether they wished them to have a wider debate in Council.

In the discussion that followed members commended the task group for engaging the county council in the review and on an excellent report. They were concerned that the bye laws regarding parking on the grass verges could not be enforced as this was a frequent source of complaints from residents. They would welcome any action that could be taken on this.

There was some discussion about biodiversity. The chair of the working group assured members that there were no cost savings associated with wild flower borders and they would not be positioned so as to block views from private driveways. The suggestion to seek sponsorship for wild flower borders was noted.

In response to a question from a member, officers confirmed that typically two cuts would be missed whilst waiting for bulb foliage to die down and the next cut would then be timed for May or early June.

Regarding the practice referred to in 4.4 of blowing the cut grass off the pavements and back onto the verges, a member suggested that a more sensible practice would be for someone to follow on with a brush and spade and a black plastic bin liner and gather up the cuttings for composting. Officers advised that this would be very costly and impractical in view of extent of the verges being considered. Their priority must be to ensure the pavements are clear and the council would not be liable for injuries to persons from slipping on the cuttings.

The chair thanked the task group for an excellent piece of work.

**Resolved that the recommendations of the scrutiny task group on grass verges be endorsed and forwarded to Cabinet in December.**