

**Executive**

**24 November 2016**

Report of the Economic Development & Transport Policy & Scrutiny  
Committee  
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Transport and Planning

## **Protection of Grass Verges Scrutiny Review Final Report – Cover Report**

### **Summary**

1. This report presents the Executive with the final report of the Scrutiny Task Group looking at the Protection of Grass Verges (Appendix 1), incorporating their recommendations as endorsed by the Economic Development & Transport Policy & Scrutiny Committee (EDAT).

### **Background**

2. At an EDAT meeting in March 2016, Members received a scrutiny topic proposal around concerns about damage being done by motor vehicles to grass verges across the city. After considering a briefing paper the Committee agreed that damage to grass verges was a widespread issue widespread in the city and that a Task Group be appointed to carry out a scrutiny review.
3. The Task Group, comprising of Cllrs Fenton, Kramm, D Myers and Warters, met for the first time in late March 2016 and agreed the following remit:

### Aim

How City of York Council can work in partnership with residents to improve and protect the condition of grass verges from damage caused by motor vehicles.

## Objectives

- i. Understand the Council's current policies and procedures in relation to the management of grass verges and to what extent they are enforced.
- ii. Look at schemes that have been successfully used elsewhere and examine whether they can be introduced in York.
- iii. To better understand the reasons why people park on grass verges. (To hear from people who do park on grass verges and not just those who complain.)
- iv. To understand what consideration is given to car parking when planning applications are agreed, to include new built, extensions and conversions.
- v. To examine whether parking provision in the Local Plan is still effective and appropriate.
- vi. Assess what can be legally done in the most practical and cost-effective way to protect grass verges from the damage caused by motor vehicles.

## **Analysis**

4. Over a series of meetings the Task Group gathered the necessary information to support the objectives in the remit for the scrutiny review. The Final Report at Appendix 1 and its annex include a full analysis of the information gathered and the Task Group's conclusions. The review recommendations were endorsed by EDAT in early September 2016.

## **Review Recommendations**

5. EDAT and the Task Group recommends that the Council:
  - i. Continues to carry out its current policy to repair grass verges when reported as and when it deems it appropriate.
  - ii. Sets up a system to acknowledge and record complaints with a view to taking action against individuals and organisations where this is possible and practical.
  - iii. Ensures off-street parking provision is a consideration in the revised Local Plan

6. In an effort to encourage drivers not to park on or drive over grass verges and reduce the amount of damage to verges across the city, EDAT and the Task Group recommend:

iv. That the Director of City and Environmental Services:

- Promotes via My Account the need for a verge crossover where front gardens have been made into hard standing areas and offers residents the facility to construct a vehicle access crossing point, at their own cost.
- Offers reduced rates where a number of residents decide to proceed with construction of vehicle access crossing points or when other significant highways construction work is taking place in their neighbourhood.
- Arranges for an informative to be included in planning application documentation to reduce the risk of damage being caused to verges by contractor's vehicles during building work and if damage is caused during the course of any work it should be repaired on completion of the work and the verges reinstated to their original condition.

v. The Communications Team produces a pro forma letter to further promote community and neighbourhood pride and advise that it costs council tax payers £35 per square metre to repair damaged verges, which can:

- Be made available to ward councillors for distribution to drivers and residents when a particular problem is identified or reported;
- Be circulated to residents online or by text message via the new My Account system;
- Form the basis of a poster to be displayed in local libraries, community centres, other public buildings and included in relevant council publications.

7. Furthermore, the Task Group recommends that the Director of City and Environmental Services:

- vi. reviews, and where appropriate amends, the existing Council policy with regard to damage to grass verges and assesses staff resources required.
- vii. produces a menu of options to be made available to ward councillors, ward committees and parish councils so that they:
  - have an idea of the cost of various interventions that could be funded through ward budgets, such as installation of parking bays or repairs to damaged verges;
  - can focus on areas of greatest need dependent on a consensus of support from the local community and partner agencies.

### **Consultation**

8. The Task Group consulted with various CYC Officers responsible for planning and development control, highways and public realm. They also considered the views of interested residents and these are included in Annex A of the Final Report at Appendix 1.

### **Council Plan**

9. The scrutiny review addresses an ongoing issue for residents in a number of wards and attempts to identify a solution for those local communities. The review therefore supports the 'a council that listens to residents' priority of the Council Plan.

### **Risks and Implications**

10. There are no risks or implications associated with this cover report. Risks and implications associated with the review recommendations are detailed in paragraphs 86 and 87 of the Final Report at Appendix 1.

### **Recommendation**

11. The Executive is asked to endorse the recommendations made in the Protection of Grass Verges Scrutiny Review Final Report at Appendix 1.

Reason: So the Council can help address ongoing issues for a number of residents in various wards in the city.

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Report Approved  Date 7/11/2016

Wards Affected:

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Annexes

Appendix 1 – Protection of Grass Verges Scrutiny Review Final Report

(Annex A: Public comments – **online only** (*copy available on request*))