
To: INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD

On: 7 NOVEMBER 2018

Report by: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Heading: COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF GRASS CUTTING ARISING

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In June 2018 the Council discussed a motion on the Council's grounds maintenance service and agreed for the Director of Environment & Infrastructure to bring back to the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board a report on the cost of adding collection boxes to the grass cutting machinery and, where possible, collecting and disposing of the grass cuttings.
- 1.2 The Council's StreetScene service currently only collects grass cutting arisings from high amenity areas of Paisley Town Centre. This followed previous Council decisions on the Council's grounds maintenance service going back to the late 1990s.
- 1.3 Grass arisings could be lifted from the majority of the Council's grass/open space asset as maintained by the Council's StreetScene service. The existing grass cutting equipment cannot be converted to collect grass arisings. In order to lift grass cutting arisings the grass cutting equipment would require to be replaced. The estimated cost of the capital investment being £1 million.
- 1.4 Grass cutting arisings are difficult to lift if grass is too long. If the Council wished to lift and dispose of grass cutting arisings then the grass would require to be cut more frequently. The process of collecting grass arisings is also slow compared to the current grass cutting approach undertaken by the StreetScene service. Both the increased frequency of collection and reduced productivity would result in an increase in labour resource to cut and maintain the Council's grassed areas.

- 1.5 As a result, additional staffing costs of up to £700K would be required, reflecting the increased cutting frequency and the reduced productivity.
 - 1.6 It is estimated the service would uplift around 12,000 tonnes of grass arisings per annum at a disposal cost of £600,000 per year.
 - 1.7 As set out in paragraph 1.3 to 1.6 the annual cost of the introduction of the uplift of grass arisings and the appropriate disposal of these cuttings would cost the Council an additional £1.3 million annually (revenue costs) with an initial investment of up to £1 million in new equipment (capital cost).
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2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board:

- 2.1 Notes the cost of adding collection boxes to the grass cutting machinery and the additional costs of the collection and disposal of the Council's grass cutting arisings on an annual basis.
 - 2.2 Notes a review of the StreetScene grass cutting services will be undertaken during the winter of 2018/2019, as set out in paragraph 5.1 of this report.
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3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Environment & Infrastructure undertakes grass cutting of all Renfrewshire Council owned grassed areas. The Council is responsible for cutting over 5,000m² of grass in over 1,000 locations.
- 3.2 Since the late 1990s, there have been a number of service changes to the grass cutting service provided in Renfrewshire. In the late 1990s, the Council agreed to stop collecting grass cutting arisings. In 2001 this was refined to reintroduce the collection of grass arisings in high amenity areas in Paisley Town Centre. This involves specialist equipment with collection boxes.
- 3.4 The current grass maintenance regime was implemented following a review of StreetScene Services, which was carried out between June 2010 and April 2012. This review delivered savings of £2.1 million, achieved through revised service specifications for Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance and introducing "4 on 4 off" shift patterns for the StreetScene workforce.

4. Adding Collection Boxes & Uplifting Grass Cuttings

- 4.1 The majority of open space grass areas cut and maintained by Renfrewshire Council are capable of having the grass cutting arisings lifted and disposed of. There are 3 main aspects to consider if grass arisings were to be lifted:

- The type of equipment required;
- The frequency of grass cutting and the time required to collect; and
- The cost of disposal.

Grass Cutting Equipment

- 4.2 It would not be possible to retrospectively fit grass boxes to the current grounds maintenance equipment used for grass cutting. This includes ride-on machinery and manually operated machinery.
- 4.3 The cutting and lifting of arisings would require new machinery. In order to do this, it would require a one-off investment in new and different equipment capable of collecting and lifting grass arisings. New grass cutting machinery would be required to uplift the arisings and additional vehicles would be required to transport the increased machinery to sites and for the disposal of grass cuttings. This is estimated, at a one-off capital investment cost, of £1 million, with recurring replacement costs for vehicle replacement.

Grass Cutting Frequency and Productivity

- 4.4 Grass cutting arisings are difficult to lift if grass is too long. If the Council wished to lift and dispose of grass cutting arisings, then the grass would require to be cut more frequently. The time taken to cut and collect grass arisings would be significantly greater as operations are slower than the current grass cutting equipment, and this would reduce the current level of productivity. It is estimated that this additional service requirement would increase staffing costs by £700,000 per annum.

Disposal Costs

- 4.5 The collection of grass cuttings arisings would increase green waste disposal. Currently the cost of disposal for green waste is around £50 per tonne. It is estimated this would generate an additional 12,000 tonnes of grass cutting arisings per annum at a cost of £600,000 annually.

5. Review of Grass Cutting Service

- 5.1 The current grass cutting service was last reviewed in 2010/2011 and introduced in 2012. During the winter of 2018/2019 the service will be reviewed. The aim of the review being to reflect the inputs and activities undertaken and the outcomes achieved to deliver the needs of communities within the current service resources.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In summary, it is estimated that to uplift grass cutting arisings throughout Renfrewshire and dispose of these appropriately through a waste transfer station, would require an initial investment of up to £1 million in new equipment (capital cost), with a £1.3million increase in annual revenue costs.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – Notes the cost to the Council to uplift grass cutting arisings is a recurring £1.3 million revenue cost and a £1 million investment in new grass cutting machinery.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning** – None
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – Testing and a full procurement exercise would be required to deliver the required machinery to achieve this change
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers - None

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