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| GRASS CUTTING | 5 September 2017 |
| ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE | |
| FOR DECISION | |

| Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19) | |
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| Strategic Theme | Protecting & Enhancing Our Environment & Assets |
| Outcome | All environments in the area will benefit from proactive decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough |
| Lead Officer | Head of Estates |
| Cost: (If applicable) | See tables below |

Response to Notice of Motion. Item 21. Council Meeting 27th June 2017

‘That this Council works with its statutory partners, immediately, to permanently resolve the unsightly image of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Councils’ grass verges. Furthermore, the exact costings to carry out this operation solely by Council, if there is no co-operation from our statutory partners’.

Key Issues

For many years Council assisted DFI Roads in the upkeep of grassed areas, mainly within main town arterial routes. Council were paid approximately £55,000 (2014 prices) for 5 cuts per season (263,100m² of grass) on roundabouts and verges. This funding was withdrawn in 2015. Since then DFI Roads have not resumed full maintenance of these areas and have reduced the grass cutting operations further in other areas under their control. Regular discussions with DFI suggest that there is no plan to resume regular grass cutting in-house (DFI) or to pay Council to cut on their behalf.

Although only paid for 5 cuts, Council historically cut the DFI areas to the same frequency as Council owned open amenity grass – up to 20 cuts depending on rate of growth, weather and other factors. See Table 1 for historic arrangements.

| Arrangement pre-2015 with DFI Roads (using 2017 prices) | |
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| DFI Area maintained by Council | 263,100m ² |
| Cost per cut £ | £15,786 |
| Cost per season (20cuts) | £315,720 |
| DFI Roads payment | £78,930 |
| Nett cost to Council | £236,790 |

Table 1

As well as the 263,100m² of grass cut by Council, there was a further 201,600m² maintained within town speed limits by DFI Roads. Table 2 shows the cost to maintain the total 464,700m² (at 2017 prices)

| Cost to cut grass within urban area (inside speed limit) | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Total Area | 464,700m ² |
| Cost per cut £ | £27,882 |
| Cost per season (20cuts) | £557,640 |
| DFI Roads payment | £0 |
| Cost to Council | £557,640 |

Table 2

Options for Consideration:

1. Consider joining with other Councils to lobby for central government to resume regular grass cutting of verges and roundabouts under their control. This may include paying Councils to carry out this work.
2. Stop cutting areas which are the responsibility of DFI. (Saving £315,720 to Council.) DFI have stated that they will cut grass only once per season. Exceptions being sight safety zones at road junctions.
3. Cut areas which Council used to be paid for, at a cost of £315,720 (20 cuts).
4. Extend cutting regime to include all DFI areas within speed limit at a cost of £557,640 to Council.
5. Consider permutations of above options ie. reduced area, reduced frequency.

Recommendation: DFI have indicated that they will not be resuming regular grass cutting of verges and roundabouts in the short term. Council to consider options with a view to having a maintenance regime in place for 2018 season.