

Grass cutting in Windsor

Grass cutting on Borough managed land, including parks and open space, cemeteries and highways verges, is carried out as part of the Grounds Maintenance contract, which is with Tivoli.

There are a range of different types of management for grass within the Borough, depending on the location, and use of, different areas. The frequency of cuts depends on the area and type of grass.

The timing of grass cuts will vary depending on the weather conditions and grass growth each year. This year we had the wettest March since 1981, which made it challenging to cut during that month. Last summer there was little growth in the middle of summer due to the very hot weather, with growth in the spring and autumn. In 2021 with a mild, damp Autumn, grass was still being cut in the week before Christmas. However, in general the growing season would be thought of as March to October, with some seasonal variations.

Highways verges are split into urban and rural routes. Areas cut as urban grass will be cut between 10 and 14 times in a year, depending on the growing season. Other areas are rural grass which are cut 3 times a year. Urban and rural grass cuts are not carried out as cut and collect, and grass is left to rot down. We also have conservation grass on some verges, which are cut and collected once per year. There are also areas with nectar bars, which are cut and collected in April and October.

Within the parks and open spaces, there are several different grass classifications, with different cutting requirements depending on usage and how the grass is managed. These include:

- ornamental grass, which is maintained between 10 and 25mm in areas such as Alexandra Gardens;
- monthly grass cuts, where the grass is cut to 50mm on a monthly basis during the growing season;
- amenity grass maintained between 20 and 50mm; conservation grass, cut once a year in August, with the arisings removed after a few days;
- summer meadow grass Cut to 50mm in April & May then cut & lifted in August;
- wildflower areas Cut & collected to 50mm in April & in October;
- spring meadow Cut to 50mm in June & remove arisings & then cut monthly to 50mm;
- nectar bars Cut & collected to 50mm in April & in October.

There are also grass sports facilities for tennis, archery, adult and junior football, adult and junior rugby and cricket wickets and pitches for county and club level which are maintained and prepared to the required standard for each sport ready for use for games and practice.

In cemeteries there are also a mixture of grass cutting regimes, with the entrances to cemeteries box cut and other areas cut fortnightly or monthly. There are also some areas of cemeteries managed more with wildlife in mind, in older sections, with areas of grass left uncut for parts of the year.

This year has been a challenging year for grass cutting and, particularly on grass verges, has not met the expected standards. These issues have been highlighted with the contractor and there is an action plan in place to improve the grass cutting and bring the grass back into the expected standards. There are extra resources being put into the grass cutting to ensure that improvements are made. Borough officers are working very closely with the contractor across parks, open spaces, verges and cemeteries to ensure that they are managed to the high standards expected.

There have been gaps within the Officer team managing this contract due to staff retiring, which have taken some time to fill, requiring several rounds of recruitment and changes to job descriptions to find suitable candidates. However, the team is now fully staffed at all levels and contract monitoring is robust, with Borough staff working with the contractors to make sure that the contract is being fully delivered.