

REPORT FOR DECISION No-Mow May

Stuart Legg, Parks and Estate Manager

Parks and Estate Committee Meeting 30th May 2023

Recommendation

Members do not amend the councils' grounds maintenance policy to include No-Mow May.

Background

A request has been submitted by a member of the public for the council to participate in No-Mow May in the future. They have also asked the Town Council TC to take the lead for its promotion to local schools, businesses and home owners.

The proposal

For the town council (and others) to stop mowing all sites during the month of May. The idea being that not grass cutting will allow more plants to flower increasing the food availability for pollinators. Thus increasing biodiversity.

Issues

The intention of No-Mow May is admirable: Don't mow your lawn in May, let your grass and plants grow and bloom to provide food and shelter for essential pollinators like bees and butterflies early in the season, when such necessities may be scarce. As an approach, it does have its critics, not least on the environmental side. Even supporters of No-Mow May concede not all lawns are suitable and other alternative approaches would be more ecologically beneficial.

The town council currently has a grounds maintenance policy in place which will need to be amended should members wish to stop all grass cutting for the month of May.

The Town Council has very little land it owns and/or manages. The areas of land in Warminster where No Mo May might be more appropriate are either privately owned or maintained by Wiltshire Council who have their own grounds maintenance and environmental policies.

Factors for members to consider:

- The councils grounds maintenance policy already includes many areas which are not currently cut in May.
- The council already has sites where wildflower mixes have been planted to increase biodiversity. (Lake Pleasure Grounds flower beds, around the play area and tennis courts in the LPG, At the far end of the park on the bank, Minster Church yard.) This could be seen as a more sustainable alternative to No-Mow May.
- Long grass brings with it issues with litter and dog fouling. These create risks which are unacceptable in many of the town councils sites (Play areas and the Lake Pleasure grounds).
- The town council employs staff whose primary roll during May is grass cutting. Alternative work would need to be found.
- Once cutting resumed in June there would be additional cost to the town council with overtime required to try to get on top of the very long grass. Not to mention the fact that the equipment the town council purchased is not designed to cut grass of this length.
- Large amounts of cut grass left after mowing would undoubtedly cause issues with safety surfaces in play areas and could possibly create major issues with the splash pad.

While the Town Council is very much in favour of supporting bee corridors and such like, It is not clear that it is best placed to lead in the promotion of this to schools and businesses. Schools primary links are with Wiltshire Council and the town council doesn't

have a data base of local businesses.

It should be noted that the Town Council already has a policy of encouraging people to rewild part of their garden. The council could add information about No Mow May to its website and social media.

Officers believe it would be more beneficial for primary promotion of No-Mow May to come from local environmental groups. They could approach Wiltshire Council and The Warminster Business Network, Housing Associations and local media outlets.

Summary

Officers do not believe the town council should participate in No-Mow May. The town council already plant many areas with wild flowers to help pollinators and increase biodiversity. Officers believe that where there is a sound grounds maintenance policy in place benefits of No-Mow May are far outweighed by the negatives.

Recommendation

Members to resolve not to implement No-Mow May on Council managed land. Members to resolve to include information about No-Mow May on the Council's website and social media.

Legal Implications and Legislative Powers

The Council has the power to provide this service under the General Power of Competence.

Environmental Implications

None

Risk Assessment

Any required risk assessments will be carried out prior to any work being undertaken.

Crime and Disorder

Careful consideration should be given to any scheme to ensure antisocial behaviour is not likely.