

## **REDUCTION OF PARKS' MAINTENANCE**

### **Budget Saving £450k**

This option sets out a change in maintenance regime where:

- Rural verges are left for wildlife and only cut once a year except for sight lines.
- Further areas of parks and open spaces will be left for wildlife and as wild flower meadows.
- Some areas will be cut on a 3 week cycle instead of the existing 2 week cycle.
- A staff restructure will include the integration of grass cutting across the Highway and Parks and Countryside Teams and further savings in the Development Team.
- A reduction in bedding displays which will only continued on key sites.
- A reduction in the pre-planned maintenance programme.

### **RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS**

Wirral Council faces significant budget pressures and the Parks and Countryside Service have been asked to investigate options for significant financial savings.

### **IMPACT**

The main potential impacts are anticipated to be as follows:

- A more diverse range of flora and fauna in verges and some parks and open spaces.
- Less colourful floral planting in some parks and on many roundabouts.
- An increase in public enquiries to the Council about grass cutting and decrease in customer satisfaction as many local people are used to, and like, close mown grass across the Wirral.
- The proposed reduction in pre-planned maintenance will result in some infrastructure projects being achieved on a longer time scale or not at all as other priorities become essential. This will gradually lead to a further decline in the parks infrastructure for example paths, play areas, fences and walls. There are likely to be more trips and falls as the parks' infrastructure declines.
- The staff restructures will mean that less staff will be managing less maintenance in a more efficient manner and the Development Team will share responsibilities across the team. The staff will be reduced by four seasonal operations staff and one Development Team staff.

### **MITIGATION**

Sight lines will be maintained on the highway verges for the health and safety of all users of the highway network.

Cutting the grass once a year will necessitate the purchase of appropriate machinery as part of the Parks Modernisation Programme.

Adequate resources and protocol would need to be in place to deal with enquires about the new standards and to ensure effective engagement with Elected Members and local people.