

2025/26 Budget Equality Impact Assessment

1. The Project

Directorate:	Place
Theme or area:	Grounds Maintenance
Lead Officer:	John Flannigan
Date:	20 November 2024

Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2025/26 Budget reduction (£)	2026/27 Budget reduction (£)	2027/28 Budget reduction (£)
PD06	Grounds Maintenance – Reduce the grounds maintenance element of the Parks and Street Scene contract by 10%	£125,000		

Description of the project:

Grounds maintenance and tree works includes all operations involved in managing parks and open spaces. This includes management of vegetation, such as grass cutting and tree works along with the management of water bodies, sports pitches and wildlife areas. It also includes vegetation management (including trees) on the adopted highway but not highway infrastructure.

A 10% cut of this budget has been proposed which equates to £125,000.

Grounds maintenance activities are delivered geographically in what is called north and south which reflects the different resource requirements and the need to have staff based locally to minimise travelling between sites and the depot.

The proposed reduction in contract activity reflects this geographic allocation of resources.

The contract was not designed to remove small portions of tasks. The decision has therefore been made that discrete tasks are removed from the contract to make the saving.

Town Councils have been approached to ask that they fund the reinstatement of these tasks for the period 2025/26 until the current contract with Glendale ends.

A new grounds maintenance contract is being prepared for April 2026 and during its preparation the whole management of open spaces will be reviewed with the possibility that Town and Parish Councils will manage parks and open spaces.

Summary of changes:

The table below identifies the three tasks that are proposed to be stopped which will make a saving of £125,000. The table also includes the impacts of this.

Activity	Task
Horticultural team	Maintenance of our high-profile sites for example Italian Gardens, Pier Square, Grove Park, Clarence Park WSM. Scotch Horn, Nailsea. Lake grounds and Port Marine in Portishead. They attend to the finer horticultural side of maintaining our most popular sites and attend to hedge/shrub bed maintenance, hand cutting, weeding, back edging as well as providing support for our annual In Bloom competition.
1 x north ride on mower	This is one in a team of three that carries out grass cutting in Clevedon, Nailsea, Portishead, Yatton, Ham Green/Pill, Long Ashton, Failand & Flax Bourton. They also litter pick the verges before they are cut and carry out winter maintenance tasks such as leaf clearing.
1 x south ride on mower	This is one in a team of two that carries out grass cutting in Weston, Worle, Milton, St Georges, Wick St Lawrence, Locking, Hutton, Elborough Village and Uphill. They also litter pick the verges before they are cut and carry out winter maintenance tasks such as leaf clearing.

The impacts of these cuts are described in the table below. They describe the impacts in terms of seasons.

Activity	Summer impacts	Winter impacts
North and south ride on mower. One to be removed in the north and one in the south	Significant reduction in the grass cutting standard. Long grass takes longer to cut and it is estimated that the cutting cycles would be in the region of every 30 working days or every six weeks possibly even longer. This cycle would significantly increase when either of the two operatives are on leave. Vehicle being off the road for repairs/maintenance would compound matters	The grass cutting teams attend to winter works out of season. Removing leaves from parks, paths and roads would take longer and less would be done. Less of the backlog of work such as pathway clearance, hedge/shrub cutting and other reactional work would get completed

	<p>Issues with sightlines at junctions in towns and villages.</p> <p>Areas of open space becoming unusable for general use and recreation. The gang mower cuts our large and medium/large sized parks and open spaces and the sit on mowers cuts the areas that the gang mower can get to on the same sites.</p> <p>More arisings being left on site with arising on verges inevitably ending up on paths and in roads</p>	<p>Overall, less flexibility within the contract to attend to emergencies or additional work in general.</p>
Horticultural team	<p>There is no back up for this team so everything would stop.</p> <p>No horticultural maintenance in our formal park, on ornamental roundabout or hedges/shrubs cut by hand in any of our main sites or any other sites in Weston, Clevedon, Portishead or Nailsea.</p> <p>No support Green Flag judging or In Bloom.</p> <p>Significant reduction in flexible/reactive maintenance to path clearance or other work in response to complaints.</p> <p>Less flexibility within the contract as a whole</p>	<p>Significantly less winter works such as leafing and dealing with a backlog of work which couldn't be attended to during the summer.</p>

Other issues to note is that the contract does not require holiday or short-term sick cover because it was not affordable. These cuts will therefore significantly affect resilience especially in the south where there will only be one mower operative remaining. This means that when they are on holiday, or are sick, no mowing will take place. The resulting longer grass will take more time to cut, and it is estimated that the cutting cycles would be in the region of every 30-35 working days, possibly even longer. This cycle would significantly increase when this one lone operative is on leave.

Other operational changes are under review. For example, if this reduction of service takes place one approach would be to keep the parks and open spaces usable by mowing them on a 2-3 week cutting cycle. To enable the time for this would mean that highway verge mowing would be significantly reduced to every six weeks (and then entirely at the end of the season) to maintain sightlines and paths.

There is no resource available to offset the work that will not be carried out by the Horticultural Team.

Are any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?

No

If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?

Budget Proposal	Year of assessment	Budget Reference

If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

+ = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)		X				X
People from different ethnic groups				X		
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)				X		
People who are LGBTQ+				X		
People on a low income				X		
People in particular age groups				X		
People in particular faith groups				X		
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:				X		

3. Explanation of customer impact

The impact for people that use parks and open spaces or pass alongside highway verges will be an obvious visual reduction in maintenance and a general appearance of decline. This will be experienced by all residents.

More significantly will be impacts on access for disabled people. Uncut verge edges, or uncut vegetation alongside paths and desire lines could impede access. We will prioritise work to remove vegetation in areas that are affected but with our remaining resources it will be extremely difficult to address issues in a timely way, especially if it is an abundant growing season.

These impacts described in this EIA could be fully mitigated if the Town Councils agree to fund the work during 2025/26.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

We will develop a communications plan that describes the impacts for all residents. We will also develop a bespoke communications plan for disabled people, working with disabled people's groups, which will explain what is happening and why, but also how to contact us where there is a specific issue that needs resolving.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? Yes

Explanation of staff impact

If yes, please describe the nature of the impact, including how many posts could be affected, please state whether they are vacant, or filled permanently or temporarily.

There is no impact on North Somerset Council staff.

Four permanent contractor posts will be lost to make this saving.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

For example are you moving the location of a service that may also be impacted upon by a change to public transport provision.

No

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Need to advise disabled people of potential access impacts.	Communications plan to describe impacts for disabled people	Paul Hillman	February 2025

To develop a method for disabled people to contact North Somerset Council where a particular access problem arises	Create a process for disabled people to contact North Somerset Council with specific issues.		
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7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? Yes

Please note that if this assessment indicates a potential 'medium' or 'high' impact on any protected or significant group a further, more detailed assessment will be required.

If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed? Jan 2025

Service Manager: John Flannigan

Date: 20 November 2025