

Shrub Maintenance

1. Background

- 1.1 From 2017, the Parish Council has followed the its legal deed with Swindon Borough Council to maintain shrub beds with an annual maintenance cut. Additional visits will be made as and when there are obstructions to sight lines or the public highway.
- 1.2 For over a decade, shrub beds have not had routine chemical herbicide treatments, routine weeding or replanting. As a result, over time shrub beds have become full of self-seeded plants and weeds or have become sparse. Where shrub beds have become sparce, some have been removed and returned to grass. Eg. Entrance to Symonds.
- 1.3 The Parish Council receives a few complaints regarding the condition and/or volume of planting in shrub beds every year, and these are usually from the same households. Complaints are always investigated with a site visit and if there are any issues such as obstructions to visibility or safe passage of pedestrians, they are dealt with. Where the main concern is that the appearance is not acceptable or in keeping with how residents perceive it should be maintained, no action is taken outside of the annual cut.
- 1.4 For illustration, recently a complaint has been received regarding Highland Close, Ramleaze in relation to the volume of weeds and grass growing in a shrub bed – see below:





2. Detail

Maintenance options:

- 2.1 Many of the complaints relate to self seeded grass and weeds which are not routinely treated. The Parish Council could instruct the team to provide routine regular weeding either by hand or with chemical suppressants. Shrub beds could be replanted and mulched to attempt to reduce the surface area for weeds. Either or both approaches would be more labour intensive than the current annual cut and additional resources would be required.
- 2.2 The Parish Council could opt for a shrub bed overhaul with new planting and stripping out on a case by case basis.
- 2.3 The shrub beds that receive the most complaints are not those that are practically or technically in the 'worst' condition, so a form prioritization would need to be considered.

3. Financial Implications:

- 3.1 The Parish Council has allowed a budget of £1500 for Highways Small Projects which could be used for this purpose. This may cover the cost of additional shrubs and mulch but would not allow for additional staff resources.

4. Recommendations:

- 4.1 Councillors note the information in the report and consider whether to instruct the team to consider a different way of working in the maintenance of shrub beds.

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