

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community		
DATE:	30/10/18		
TITLE:	Grass Cutting Review		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Post Implementation Review		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Culture, Heritage and Health		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Claire Thompsett		
OPEN/EXEMPT		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
<p>Following the implementation of the new grass cutting regime in the cutting season of 2016, the report is an update on the 2018 cutting season.</p> <p>The report includes detail of the service requests that were received during the season along with comparisons with 2016 and 2017 and breakdown of their origin and reasons for the request(s) and presents options and recommendations for a review of staffing, machinery, etc.</p>
KEY ISSUES:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Year on year comparisons of service requests including a breakdown of areas and origin of requests.2. Investigation into staffing levels in particular the difficulty in recruiting seasonal staff.3. How service delivery can be improved.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To keep the current grass cutting schedule
RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>That the Panel identifies which options would continue to provide an adequate grass cutting service and which would help to reduce the level of customer dissatisfaction and complaints.</p>
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>To respond to the high level of service request received over this season.</p>

Grass Cutting Update – 2018

Overall Summary

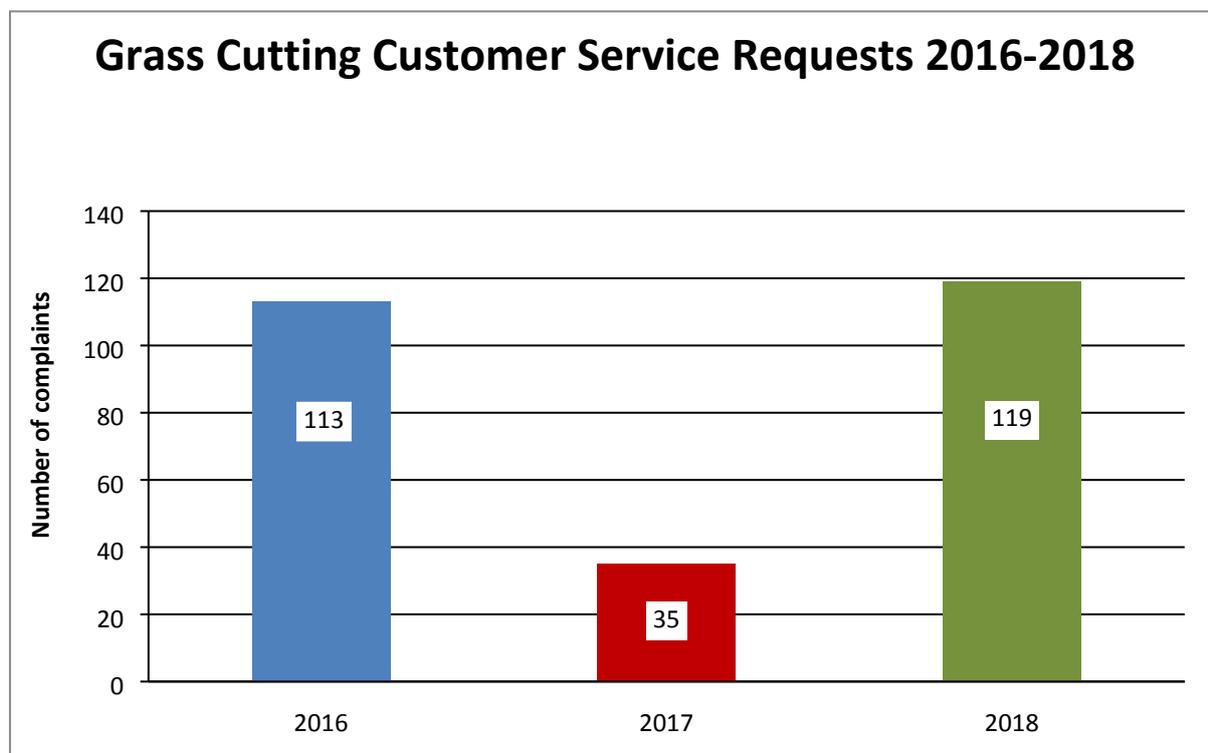


Figure 1.

Summary 2016

The majority of service requests received were questions about the new grass cutting regime along with the grass being left too long between cuts and mess left by the machines after the cuts.

Summary 2017

The 2017 season saw a dramatic drop in customer service requests compared with 2016, most service requests were linked to grass becoming too long between cuts. When you compare 2017 to the previous season it is evident that the new grass cutting regime has been in the main accepted.

Summary 2018

This season has seen an increase in service requests but this is concentrated at the beginning of the season (first 6-8 weeks of grass cutting). This was due in the main part to the climatic conditions during this season along with some staffing issue (see main report).

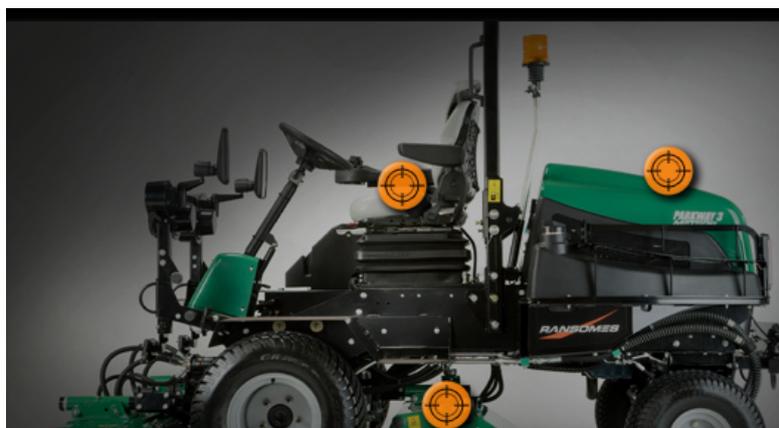
Background Information

Types of Machinery

Ransome Meteor Flail Mower

Major changes and financial constraints in the local authority have driven us to find more productive and cost effective methods of maintaining grassed areas.

There are presently five Ransome Meteors in the fleet which were purchased when the revised grass cutting regime was put in place in 2016, as there was a need to invest in a new type of machine that had the versatility to cut in numerous conditions but also leave an acceptable finish.



Meteor Cutting Heads

Robust mini flail head that can take a knock and keep on cutting:

- Can cut through tough grass and debris without suffering major damage.
- Sealed bearings and replaceable blades makes maintenance straight forward.
- Blade options available to tailor the cut to your conditions.



[CLOSE](#)

The cutting heads float like a cylinder, following ground undulations, preventing scalping and turf damage. The flail heads follow ground contours more precisely, are more resistant to debris damage and leave an acceptable finish, especially in wet and heavy growth exceeding that of cylinder and rotary mowers.

There are three machines shared between all teams in King's Lynn and surrounding villages, with one machine dedicated to the Northern Area Team (Hunstanton and surrounding villages) and one machine dedicated to the Southern Area Team (Downham Market and surrounding villages).

These machines are in high demand at the beginning of the season because of the growth conditions.

Ransome Highway 213 Cylinder Mower

This season the replacement schedule has included five new Ransome Highway Cylinder Mowers. Each dedicated to a grounds / neighbourhood team (Central, Gaywood, North Lynn, South/West Lynn and Southern area).

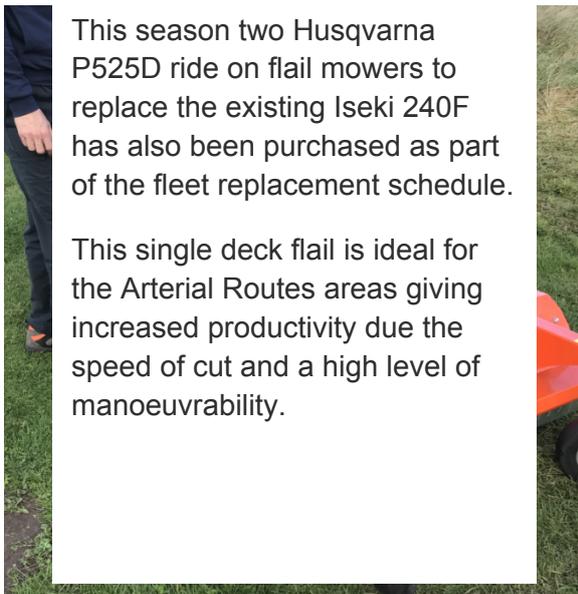


Before the change in the grass cutting regime these were main choice of machine due to the manoeuvrability, productivity and the finish of cut provided. This machine gives a closer cut and creates less arising's.

Husqvarna P525D Single Deck Flail Mower

This season two Husqvarna P525D ride on flail mowers to replace the existing Iseki 240F has also been purchased as part of the fleet replacement schedule.

This single deck flail is ideal for the Arterial Routes areas giving increased productivity due the speed of cut and a high level of manoeuvrability.



Toro Proline H800 Cut and Collect Mower



Also new this season is a replacement cut and collect Toro Proline H800 ride on machine replacing an ISEKI 240.

This machine is used mostly within the main parks to cut areas inaccessible by the tractor mowers. This is a multi-functional machine as it enables the collection of leaves during the autumn/winter months which is particularly useful in our parks and churchyards.

Grass Cutting Update - 2018

Who had submitted service requests?

Origin	No.
Public	94
Parish Council *	5
BC Cllrs	2
Not ours to maintain	18

*Parish Councils

- Heacham
- Walsoken
- Methwold
- Barton Bendish
- Tilney St Lawrence

What were the customer service requests relating to?

- Length of grass
- State of grass after cuts
- Grass arising's left on pathways

Overall No. of service requests received for 2018: 119 (18 of which are not ours to maintain)

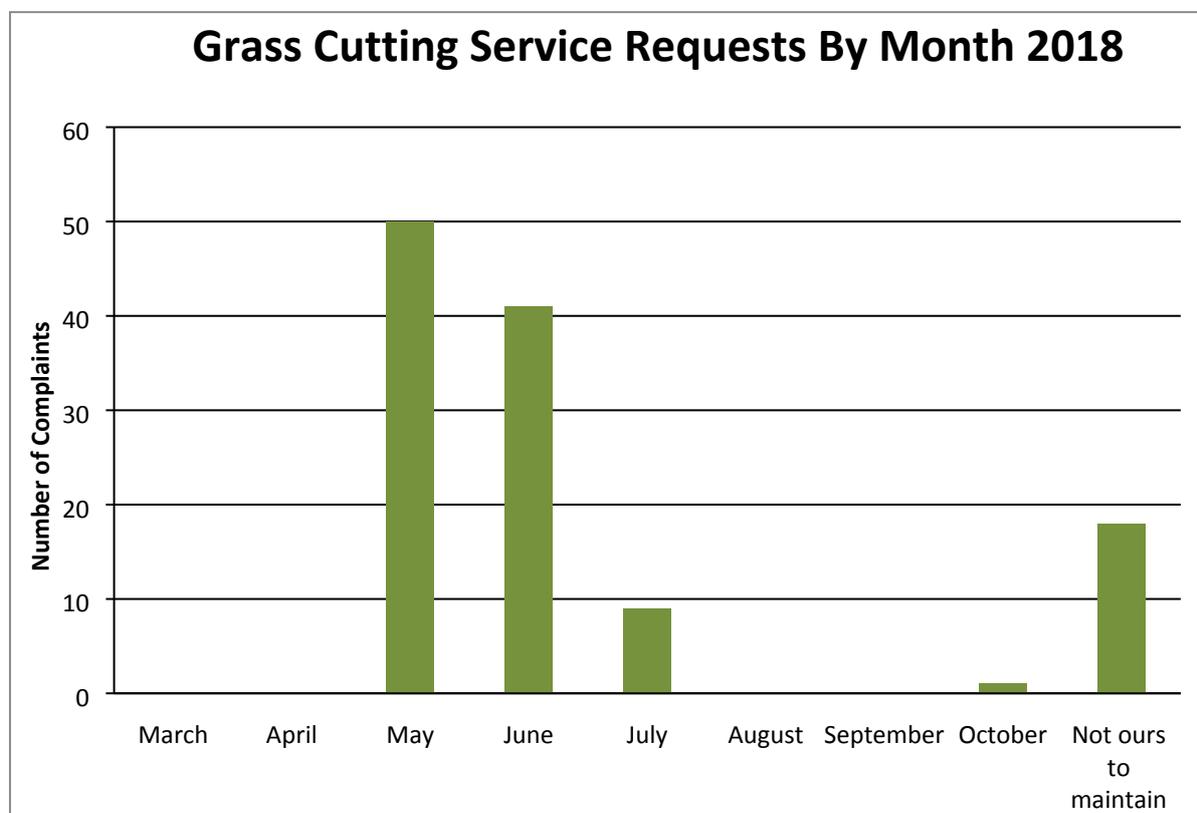


Figure 2.

Why did this occur?

- Due to the cold temperatures and high rainfall the cutting season started later than planned as the ground in many places was too wet for the ride-on mowers to access.



- The cutting season began in the last week of April and was combined with a period of warmer than average weather causing the grass to grow rapidly, which caused an increase of service requests (May / June).
- To add to this situation staffing levels were lower than required (see table below) as it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit season staff. There were also some permanent members of staff (one team leader) on long term sick leave.
- This is the case across a number of service areas including Car Parks, Leisure and Resort Services and it is an issue that is being looked into.

Staffing

Team	Permanent Actual	Seasonal Actual	Permanent Required	Seasonal Required	Fully Staffed
Arterial Routes	2	0	2	0	✓
Northern Area	2	1	3	2	✗
Central	5	1	5	2	✗
Gaywood	3	0	3	0	✓
North Lynn	4	0	4	1	✗
South/West Lynn	2	0.5	3	1	✗
Fairstead	2	0	0.5	0	✗
Walks	2	4	2	4	✓
Southern Area	2	3	2	3	✓
Crem / Cem	3	1	3	1	✓
Total	27	10.5	29	14	

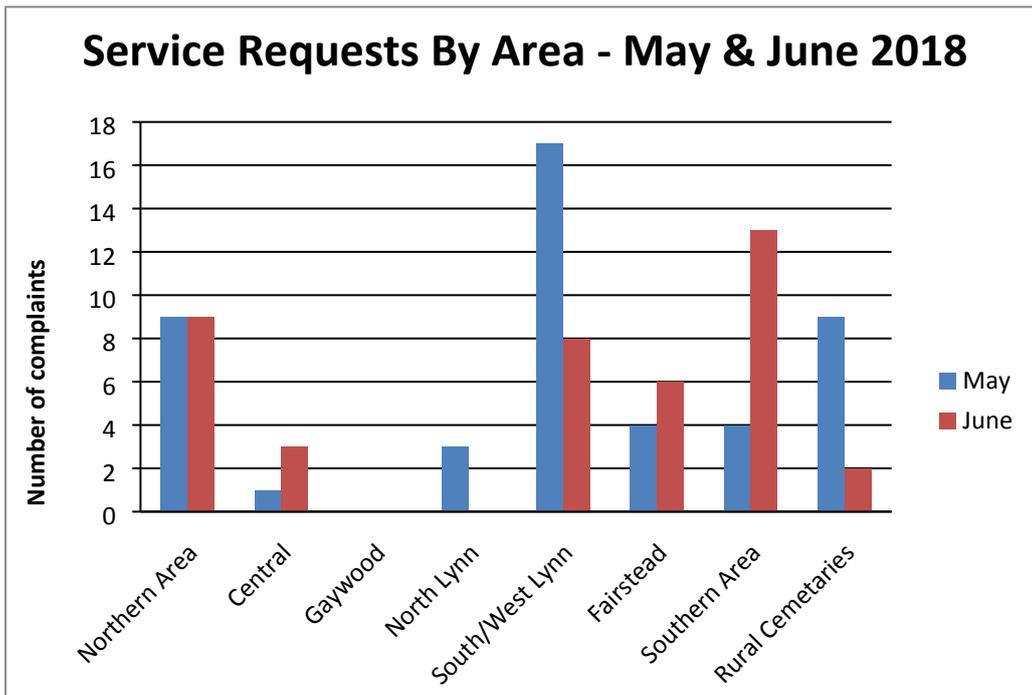


Figure 3.

- Looking at the number of service requests by area (Figure 3.) and the staffing levels per team it is possible to see that those teams that were short of staff saw an increase in service requests.
- By the end of June the teams had visited all areas and the second/third cuts produced a cleaner finish. This is evident by the reduction in service requests (see figure 4)
- From mid-July to the end of August saw a heat wave reducing the growth rate of the grass therefore reducing the amount of service requests. This period saw our teams having to concentrate on watering duties to keep all floral displays and new trees within the Borough blooming.
- September and October have seen a return to normal conditions with very few service requests.
- To date (12th November) we are still grass cutting as the autumn is un-seasonably warm.

Comparison of seasons since the introduction of the new grass cutting regime

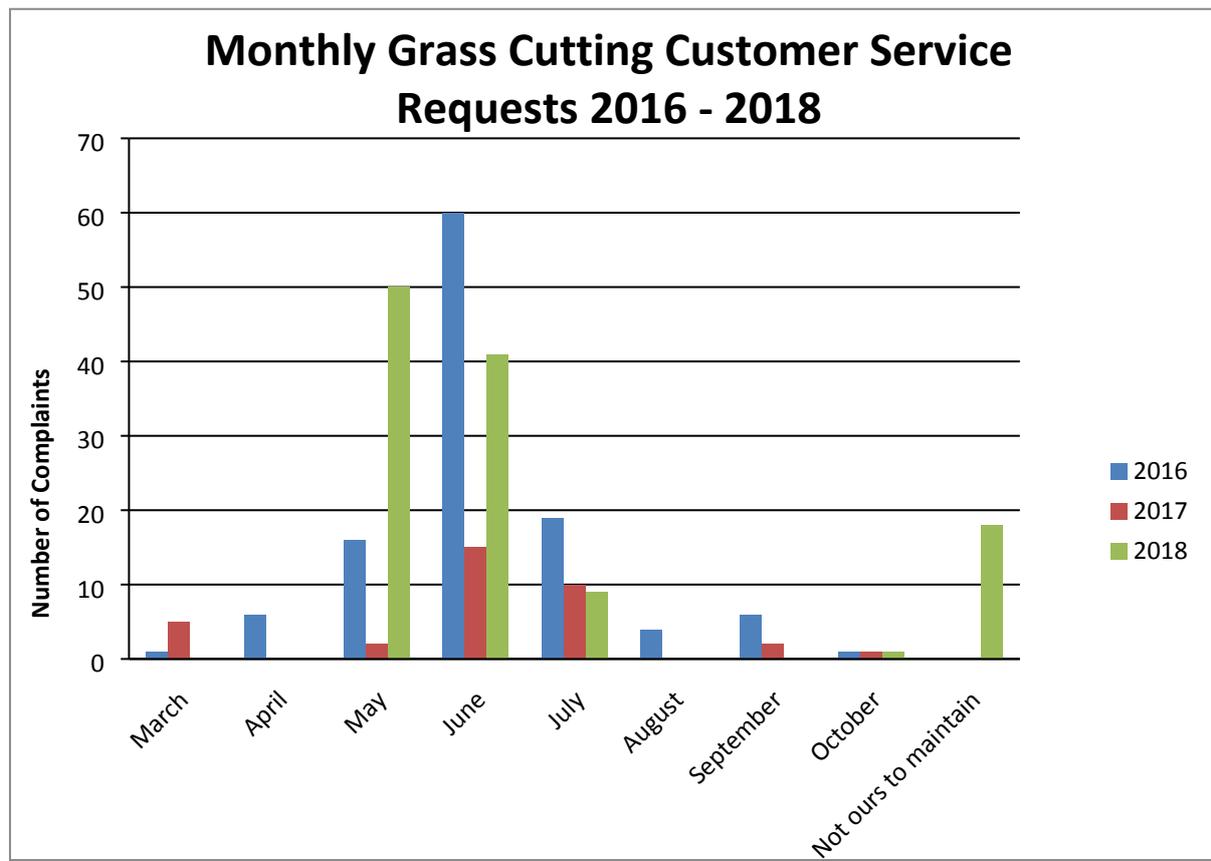


Figure 4.

- The 2016 season saw an increased level of service requests as this was the first year of the new regimes with less cuts so this was to be expected.
- The 2017 season saw a reduced number of service requests proving that the new regime has been accepted and in a “normal” growing season is successful.
- This season (2018) has seen a spike in service requests at the beginning of the season due to the wet spring and the immediate warm weather making it difficult with our staffing/machinery to complete the first cuts to everybody’s satisfaction. From July onwards we received little or no service requests for grass cutting issues.

Our Issues

- High level of calls to CIC at the beginning of the season
- Machinery too heavy on waterlogged land
- Exceptional grass length at the beginning of the season due to weather conditions
- Consistency of cut/ mess left behind during first cuts
- Team moral / Job Satisfaction
 - No benefit to work overtime as only single time offered.
- Long Term Sickness
- Difficulty recruiting staff

What can we not change?

- The climatic conditions that vary season on season.

How can we improve the service?

- Train street cleansing operatives (Rural fly-tipping) in grass cutting duties to help during the beginning of the season.
 - Gives us flexibility
 - Concerns about safety – less frequent usage of equipment
 - Acceptance that fly-tipping reaction time will be longer.
- Look at our recruitment process
 - Annualised hour's contracts
 - Remove the permanent seasonal advertisement from the BCKLWN website
 - It becomes ignored by possible applicants.
 - More flexible contracts – shorter or longer to accommodate different types of applicants (students etc.)
 - Request to recruit for seasonal staff earlier so we are interviewing in early January.
 - Second wave of recruitment if we don't fill the necessary positions over Easter period
 - Students June – September?
 - Application process is very strict for seasonal roles
 - A reduction in the requirement to make shortlisting and leave it to the operations managers to select for interview.
 - Shorten the recruitment process for returning seasonal staff.
- Offer some form of incentive for our permanent staff to work overtime
 - They currently receive single time pay for overtime

Our achievements

This season the POS department have been heavily involved in working towards the Green Flag, Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom Campaigns

- **Green Flag Award Winners 2018/19**
 - The Walks
 - Tower Gardens
 - Boston Square
 - Esplanade Gardens
 - Mintlyn Crematorium

- **Britain In Bloom Award Winner 2018**

- Hunstanton – Costal Town - Gold Award

- **Anglia In Bloom Award Winners 2018**

- Hunstanton - Costal Town – Category winner and Gold Award
- Kings Lynn - Small City – Category winner and Gold Award
- The Walks – Best Public Open Space – Category winner and Gold Award
- Mintlyn Crematorium – Category Winner and Gold Award
- Hardwick Cemetery – Gold Award
- Downham Market – Silver Gilt Award
- South Wootton – Small Town - Gold Award
- Biodiversity Award – Wootton Park/ South Wootton – Gold Award
- Floral Display by an individual/community award – May Cottages Kings Lynn
- Garden for Special Needs – Bridge for Heroes Kings Lynn
- Grow your own award – South Wootton Infants School



Other Departmental Responsibilities

- All street cleansing duties across the Borough
- Creating and looking after the Boroughs Floral Displays



- The POS department are integral to the running of many events within the Borough from providing barriers, bins and post event clean up to running whole events.

Some of our events and events we support:

- Plant and Craft Fair
- Freedom Parade
- Peter Pan in the Walks
- Music in the Bandstand
- GEAR
- HANSA Festival
- Lantern Walk
- Celebrate Kings Lynn Family Fun Day
- EACH Bubble Rush
- Festival Too
- Pride in the Park
- Heritage Day
- Soap Box Derby
- Fawkes in the Walks
- Remembrance Day
- All Town Centre Events