

Chelmsford City Council has adopted a new grassland maintenance strategy. The new approach complements the current meadow and wildflower maintenance regimes and involves reducing the frequency of grass cutting in various areas in Chelmsford.

These areas include parks and communal green spaces, general recreational areas, common land, green corridors, country parks, residential open spaces and roadside verges.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does it all work?

Each area or part of the area identified will be assessed and categorised before being assigned to the appropriate mowing and maintenance schedule.

This means that the mowing schedule varies from area to area, and some areas will be mown less frequently than others. Decisions will be made based on location, highway sightlines, safety, visibility, and other practical considerations.

For example, verges in high traffic/footfall areas will be maintained more regularly compared to local nature reserves.

2. Why is the council adopting this new grass-cutting policy? Isn't the old method good enough?

The new method is a more sustainable, evidence-based scheme aimed at increasing our local biodiversity (e.g wildlife, insect and plants species) and protection of wildlife habitat. Many local councils around the UK have adopted similar policies and it's time for Chelmsford City Council to do the same.

3. How did the Council come to this decision?

The new approach is part of the larger Chelmsford Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan 2018-2036, following the Council's [Climate and Ecological Emergency](#) declaration back in July 2019. For roadside verges, the new approach takes into account the recommendations found in [Plantlife 2019 – Managing Roadside Verges](#).

4. How will the Council ensure my area is not neglected with litter and dog fouling?

The Council will continue to litter pick and wider cleaning as required and some areas will still be visited for mowing.

5. What is the council's plan to tackle weeds?

Pernicious or invasive weeds will be dealt with as they are now, but the whole idea of the new approach is to encourage species diversity - in other words, more "[weeds](#)" and less mono-culture grassland.

6. Is there a monitoring system in place to measure the increase in biodiversity after the implementation of this new strategy?

With relaxed mowing regimes, the increased variety of flowering wildflowers will be quite noticeable. The council plans to undertake some ecology surveying in a number of areas and will be able to draw on this to make comparisons.

7. Tall grass and plants will become a traffic hazard and obstruct traffic signs

Roadside verges will be managed in a practical and safe way, depending on the areas. Areas where tall grass could become hazardous to traffic or impede highway sightlines will be cut on a more regular basis.

8. The council is only doing this to save money

Contrary to popular belief, reducing the frequency of grass cutting will not “save money”. It may reduce some ongoing maintenance cost to a certain degree but cutting a large area of vegetation once or twice a year can cost as much as frequent grass cutting. On top of that, there is the ongoing cost of regular maintenance visits to litter pick and cleansing operations.

9. What about hedges and trees?

The new approach does not include hedges and trees.

10. Wouldn't it be difficult for ramblers and dog walkers to navigate certain areas?

A pathway or desire path will be created in areas popular for walking and outdoor activities.