

Road Side Hedges

I am asking the parishes and towns to assist in helping maintain access to their areas by working with local landowners in trimming back private hedges and trees at this time of year.

We are asking towns and parish to remind landowners to:

- trim hedges and trees to ensure growth does not obscure the view of road signs.
- trim roadside hedges to maintain visibility for road users, particularly at junctions and on the inside of bends.
- trim any hedge that directly abuts a road, footway, cycleway or public right of way so that growth does not prevent the passage or affect the safety of the highway user, including cyclists and pedestrians.
- remove dead or decaying trees and other growth that may fall across the highway.
- remove branches and other growth that may prevent the passage of high sided vehicles or obstruct light from a public lamp (street light).
- ensure the highway (including the footway and drainage features) is left clear of debris from the cutting operations.

Who undertakes the work?

It is easier for all concerned if landowners/occupiers maintain their own trees and hedges to a good standard.

What if the landowner/occupier fails to undertake the work?

We ask town and parish councils to make every effort to encourage owners and occupiers to cut their hedges.

Where roadside growth is becoming a problem the Council may serve a notice on the owner/occupier requiring the necessary work to be completed within a stated period. Failure to comply may result in the Council undertaking the work and claiming back the cost incurred.

Parish Steward Scheme

Just a reminder about completing and returning the Priority Sheets. I know there has been some requests for just site meetings, without prior notification. We are reviewing the process in six months. So we would be grateful if you could continue with the promoted systems and submit any comments for our consideration.

Protecting Grass Verges

Placing boulders, bollards, parking etc. on highway verges, without following the appropriate application process, can not only reduce the verge to an unsightly state, but it can also cause a hazard to other motorists. We do not promote or support these activities on grass verges, unless there is a justified reason.

There are defined processes in place for anyone wishing to use the Council's verges and these must be followed. The council can take action against anyone not following the appropriate steps. All uses of the highway verge will need to be approved by the appropriate highway officer.

Japanese Knotweed and Other Invasive Weeds

The council has a specialised contractor for the control of invasive weeds on its land and anyone who identifies the plant or other invasive weed should report the matter through the MyWiltshire System via the Web or App under 'grass, hedges and shrubs' section, alternatively phone the council.

The control of Japanese Knotweed relies on the death of the extensive rhizome system, which usually takes a number of years. This can result in a duplication of reports, as there can be an expectation that the plant will be immediately controlled. The council apologises for any inconvenience this causes, but this delay is part of appropriate approach to controlling this invasive weed.

Wiltshire Council has an effective Japanese Knotweed management programme which undertakes, where possible, herbicide treatment. All cut or pulled stems of Japanese Knotweed are treated with extreme care as they can potentially re-sprout and cause spread. They are usually kept on site, or disposed of in a licensed landfill site that can carry out deep burial to prevent spread onto other sites.

Streetscene Service Details

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 89 the council has to ensure that the highway or road is, so far as is practicable, kept clean. The Secretary of State issues a code of practice for the purpose of providing practical guidance on the discharge of the duties imposed.

I attach the guidance.

Wiltshire Council endeavors to deliver to the Code.

When clearing high speed roads, with the legal requirement for traffic management signage, note that this can significantly slow litter collection. There are sometimes many months notice required, or on Highway England roads, A36 or A303 we have to book road space.

However, in many areas Traffic Management is not required and this should be done in compliance with the Code. The council can be challenged on its performance.

As you will see from the Code of Practice we are driven by reports of litter. When an area gets to a said standard we must litter pick that area.

All reports, whether from an officer or member of the public, are captured on the council's MyWiltshire System.

The council then can be audited on the reports made and its action taken.

However, if the report concerns matters outside of the code, then this could be a local decision (parish or town council) on whether to provide this service.

Every litter report made on the MyWiltshire system will be open to scrutiny. If the litter is at the standard stated in the Code then the council should make arrangements for that collection, providing it is practicable.

However, issues such as weed removal, graffiti, leaf fall etc. sit outside the Code and hence councils (county or local) then decide the level of service to be provided as this will be a discretionary service and a decision is made on the action to be undertaken.

This is why Wiltshire Council works with town and parishes to ensure issues do not slip through the net. But we do recognise that it is difficult, where some local councils undertake additional services and others do not. But Wiltshire Council will provide a consistent service across the county guided by the Code. As we should not provide additional service in one area and not all. The local council should decide if they wish to fund and provide extra services over the Code.

Grass, Hedge & Shrub Maintenance

With the arrival of the shortening daylight hours, comes the change in our ground operations from grass cutting to hedge/ shrub maintenance. We will begin hedge and shrub maintenance during October, with all grass cutting arrangements ceasing to support the grounds service. No further grass cutting will take place until March/ April.

Wet winter weather preparation

With the advent of autumn we will inevitably see wetter weather and a greater risk of flooding.

We are reassuring residents we are doing all we can to be ready for any adverse weather. We are also reminding community groups and residents to consider how a wet winter may affect them, and to prepare by taking the appropriate action.

If a resident thinks a gully is blocked superficially, with leaves or grass, they can, with care on the highway, clear it themselves. If the blockage is not easy to clear or they have any other concerns, these can be reported to us using one of the following methods:

- On line at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/mywilts where you will be able to leave your email address and receive updates.
- Or using the MyWiltshire app on a smart phone, again you will receive updates.
- By telephone on 0300 456 0105 – the customer services team will give you a log number

Link to flooding page:

Residents can also manage their own flooding risks. Further advice is available from The Environment Agency on this <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood>