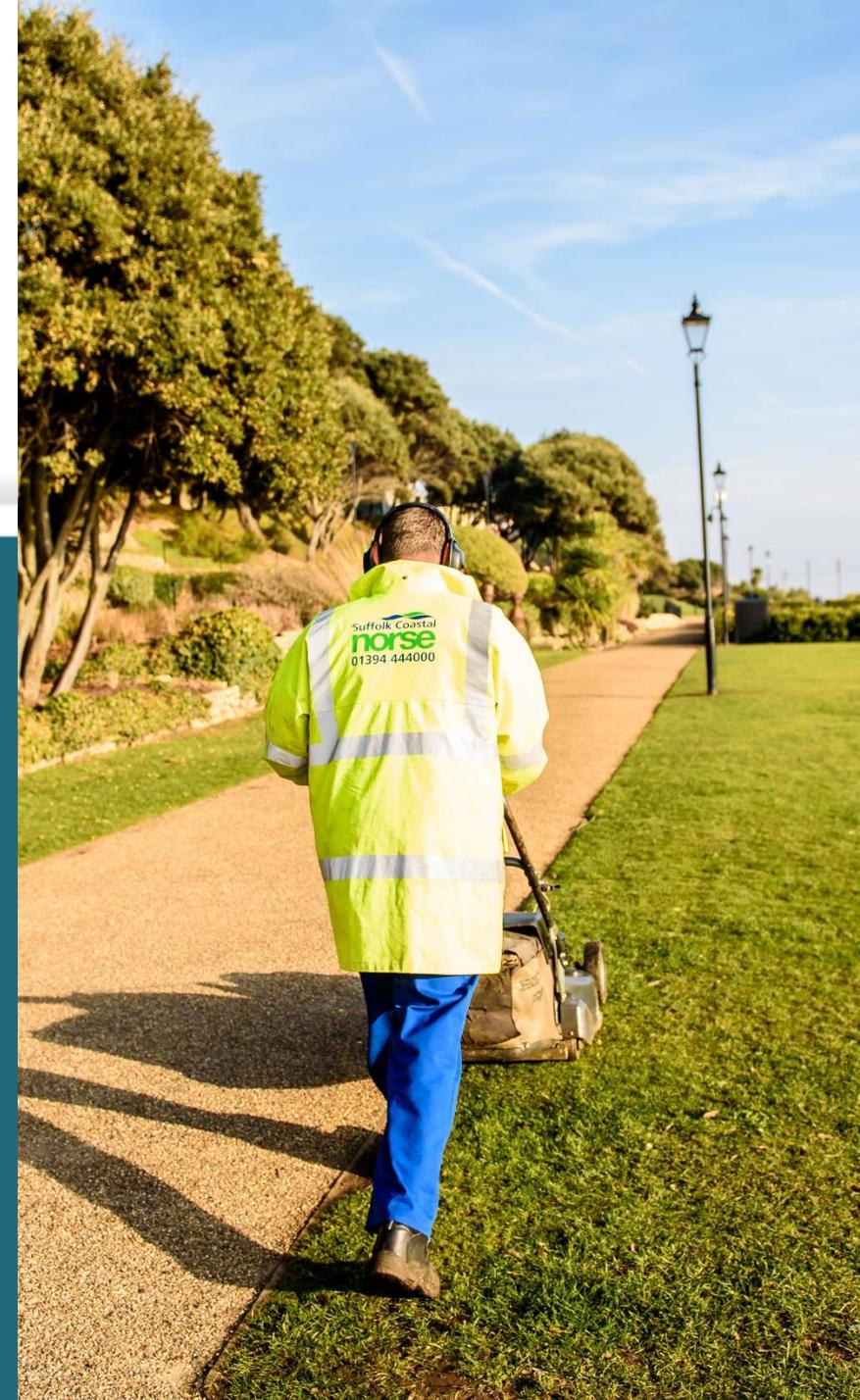




Grass Cutting Frequently Asked Questions

March 2017



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1. When do you start grass cutting and when do you stop?



This season (2017), our grass cutting cycles begin week commencing **13th March** and anticipate completing this first cycle on or around week commencing 10th April. Typically, the first cut of the season can take slightly longer, particularly if grass has remained active during the winter period.

The general information below is useful in responding to questions about previous or future seasons:

Depending on the weather, grass cutting in East Suffolk typically starts mid-March and continues until the season ends. The planned schedule involves dedicated teams focussed on areas throughout the growing season. These teams also undertake occasional urgent works in addition to the schedule.

For example, a location may be cut at the end of a monthly cycle (as part of scheduled planning) and will receive its final cut that much later; using the monthly cycle, all areas receive an equal attention.

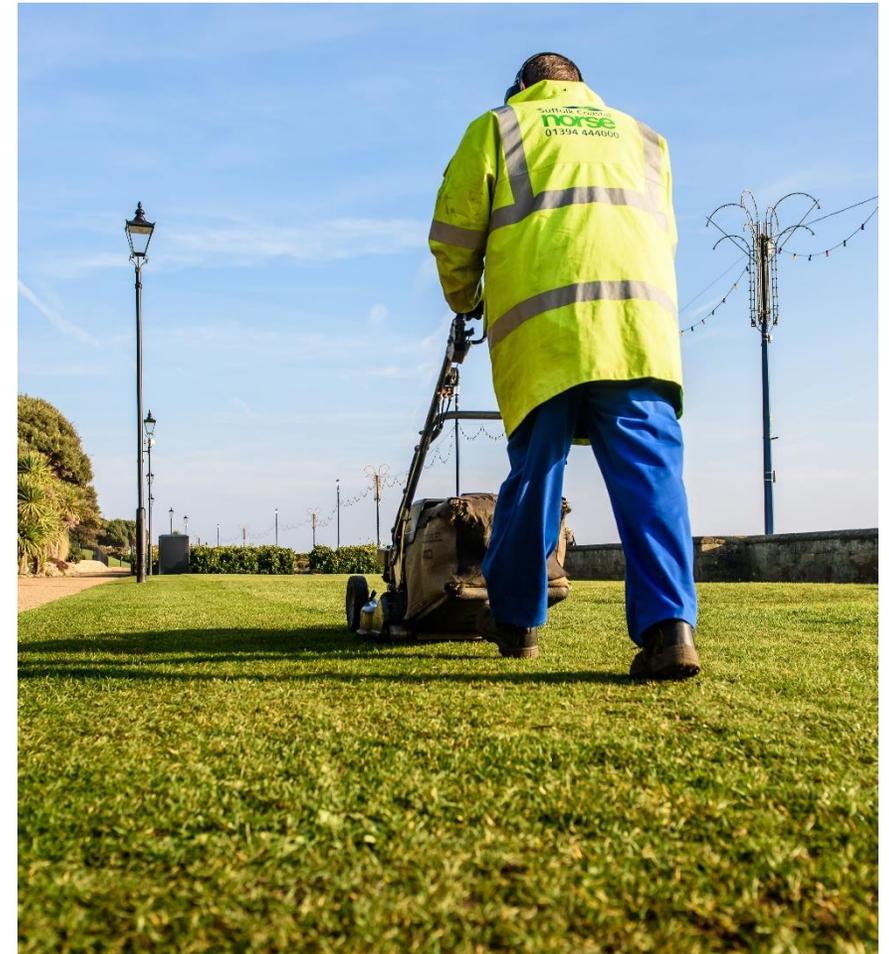
NB: Given that in recent years the growing season has lengthened with warmer year-round temperatures, there have been occasions where cutting has been carried out earlier and later than the above. Any consideration for excess growth is undertaken within current resources.

2. Will the standard of grass cutting this year vary from previous years?



We have now had three consecutive mild winters and though grass cutting actually commenced earlier in 2016 than 2015, this year we are expecting a colder period which may delay cutting until mid-March. It is notoriously difficult to predict grass growth, particularly at the beginning of the year, and while we generally keep to consistent cutting schedules, when grass growth is at its peak it can appear we are doing something different.

Thick grass as well as rain can slow the schedule down, as it takes longer to cut and the height of the grass through this speed of growth becomes more obviously noticeable.

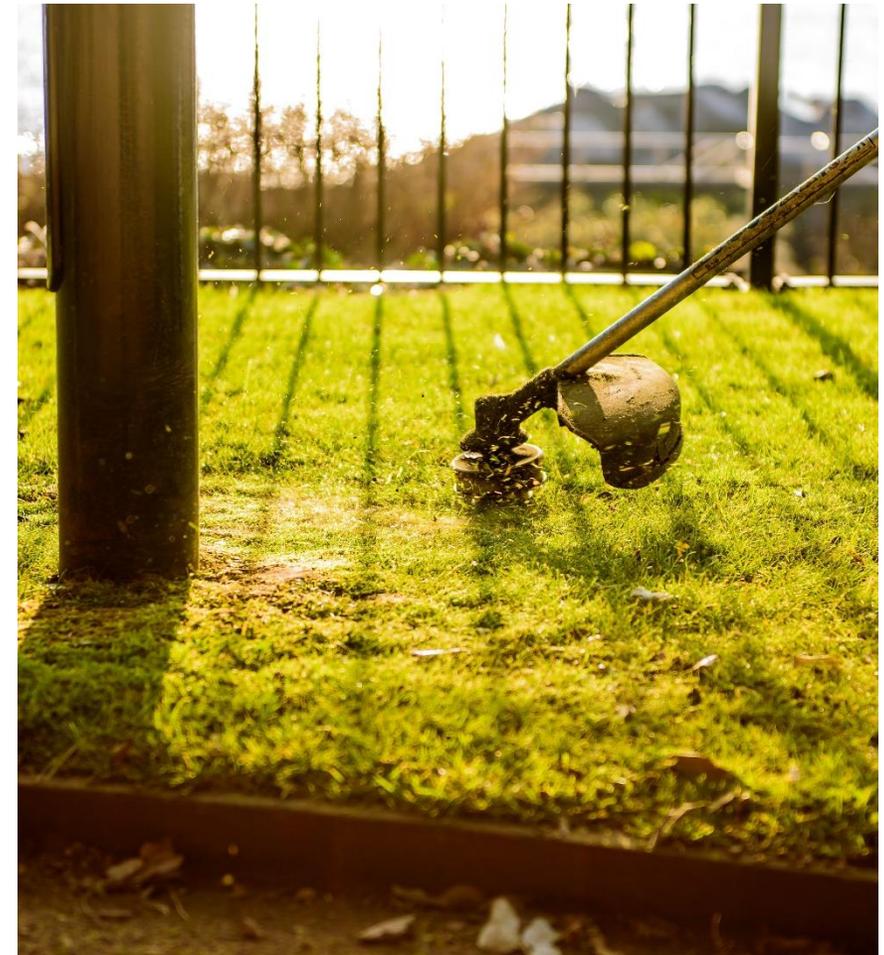


3. Has the service been cut this year and if so is it to save money?



There are no plans at present to reduce the amount of resource provided to undertake grass cutting in 2017 and resources remain similar to previous years.

We aim to cut all grass across the whole district a minimum of 8 times during the season, which equates to around once per month. There will naturally be some variation, due to the weather for example, but this is the frequency for the majority of locations.



4. I am confused as to what the various agencies do in respect of grass cutting across the district?

Suffolk Coastal
norse

Waveney
norse

Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Norse – the Councils’ operational services partners undertake cutting of grass on public open spaces across the districts.

Norse also carries out grass cutting on behalf of Suffolk County Council on its highway verges within Towns and Parishes and additional cuts are paid for by East Suffolk (SCDC and WDC) to “top up” the County set frequency.

Highway grass on the main trunk roads and areas outside of the main towns is generally carried out either by Suffolk County Council or Highways England.



5. Why not have extra resources ready when the grass is growing strongly?



There will always be a grass spurt (or even spurts) during a growing season, although it is unfortunately very difficult to predict and consequently to apply extra resource.

It would be inefficient to invest in additional resource at the start of the season, so we use a tested method of utilising seasonal operatives who can be applied during peak growth periods.

To confirm, additional resource *is* applied during peak growth.



6. Why do you not collect grass like you used to do?



We have never collected grass on verges, communal areas or open spaces. When grass is growing slowly, it can appear that we have collected cuttings as there is little to show, but when the grass is long then the arisings (cuttings) are more apparent and visible.

However, arisings do not kill that which is underneath and new grass soon shows as the arisings quickly breakdown.



7. You say you cut the grass approximately once a month but the grass in my area has not been cut for months...

Suffolk Coastal
norse

Waveney
norse

As previously mentioned we do operate to a schedule for the district grass cuts so you should see our teams on a monthly basis.

If you feel an area of grass has not been cut when generally similar areas in your neighbourhood have, please do let us know.



8. Why are some green areas cut more often than others?



There are a few areas cut more often, like formal open spaces near sea fronts and some main routes, however given the total area covered, these represent an extremely small percentage.



9. Why is my Churchyard cut so infrequently and what happens within Cemeteries?



Where East Suffolk has responsibility for Churchyards (they have no responsibility for the church itself), the grass is cut just four times a year, spread over the growing season. This was reduced in recent years as a cost saving. Some Churches raise additional funds to increase the number of grass cuts, whilst others have used the lower frequency to provide an attractive and more biodiverse enclosed space.

In the majority of cases within Cemeteries, burials take place within 'Lawn sections' which mean the grass will be maintained approximately every two weeks. Currently and unlike some authorities, we do not use herbicides around memorials as we believe this can detract from the cemeteries' overall appearance and can be distressing for mourners.

Due to the restrictions in space, however, this does mean that during the process of grass cutting, arisings can be distributed or blown onto memorials. Whilst we endeavour to keep this to a minimum, it is unfortunately an unavoidable consequence of this approach, but one we feel less intrusive than the use of herbicides.

In traditional (older) sections of cemeteries, where burials still take place, cutting is less frequent than 'Lawns' but it is our aim, whilst it has been less frequent in the past, to still cut these on a regular basis.

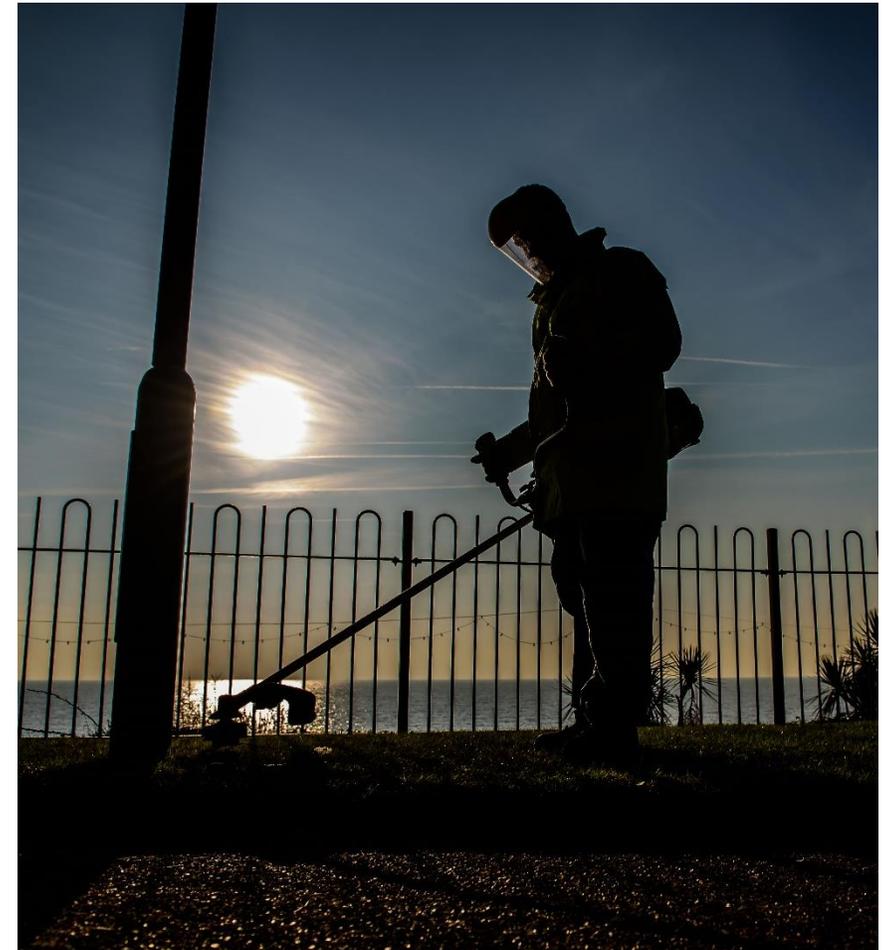
There are also some areas which by their very nature lend themselves to being managed for the benefit of conservation. These areas will appear longer in order to allow the plants and insects the full benefit to this approach.

10. Why is it that herbicides appear to be used on other open spaces?’



Whilst we feel it inappropriate to use herbicides within cemeteries, using them around lampposts on a highway verge for example, can dramatically reduce the amount of strimming required. This allows more time to be spent on the actual mowing of the verge itself and eliminates the damage that strimming would otherwise cause.

We are only able to use products which comply with Government legislation and all staff that undertake such operations are licenced to do so.



11. If you fall behind with grass cutting, when would you expect to catch up?



If we experience conditions similar to late spring of last year, where we received torrential rain followed by warm and humid conditions, grass growth is always going to be a challenge. It is a fair assumption that if those who cut their lawns at home are having to do this weekly, the grass in our public areas is going to appear longer and unfortunately there has never been the resource to deliver the service to this kind of frequency.

It is perfectly reasonable that during periods of rapid growth questions are raised about frequency, but generally with the onset of drier conditions in the Summer and colder conditions in early Autumn, growth will slow to the extent that the same monthly cutting cycle will be sufficient to leave a reasonable standard.



Contact Us

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For town and parish councillors that liaise direct with Norse officers, please continue to liaise with those same officers.

