



*By email*

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:** KB / LC

**Date:** 16 June 2020

**Customer Services:** 03330 162 000

**Email:** james.mallinder@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Dear Town / Parish Clerk

### **Grass Cutting**

On behalf of East Suffolk, I would like to thank you and your communities for your understanding and support for Norse in their change in working practices due to the restrictions of Coronavirus.

During the period of complete lockdown, East Suffolk Council had to re-train and allocate grounds maintenance crews to support with other essential services. We therefore only cut areas that presented a health and safety issue, making sure that road junctions were cut to ensure visibility and access to residents' properties.

Now that restrictions have started to ease and with some significant growth of grass, we have an opportunity to manage some areas of open space differently with a focus on biodiversity. This is particularly the case in those areas where longer grass is beneficial to wildlife; we have seen some areas that have become havens for invertebrates and pollinators, and we would like to preserve these where we can.

It has been the intention of East Suffolk Council to identify areas where a more conservation-based approach to cutting could promote biodiversity. It is one of the areas of opportunity that the council wanted to explore after declaring a climate emergency and drafting our environmental vision. Whilst we could not have foreseen the Coronavirus crisis, one of the effects of reducing the frequency of cutting has been that several uncut areas have effectively started to 're-wild' over the past two months, with anecdotal examples of increases in insect and pollinator levels, and increases in the numbers of wildflowers.

Conversely, there are undoubtedly areas – particularly in more residential areas – where we need to start cutting again. Some areas alongside residential walls and paths are becoming overgrown, unkempt, and offer little biodiversity value.

We will therefore take the following actions:

- We've identified 41 'conservation areas', where we will aim to manage the land differently, and not cut until the end of the season. These areas have been chosen on the basis that a this change is likely to be uncontroversial for local residents, that it presents no safety

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LEGAL ADDRESS East Suffolk House, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1RT

POSTAL ADDRESS Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ

issues, and that the space is at a scale that will provide an environmental benefit to wildlife. A full list of these areas is attached to this letter.

- Our trial of managing grass more sustainably in certain churchyards has been well received, so we will move to do this permanently.
- All Other areas will be cut according to the normal grounds' maintenance schedule (early Spring and Autumn).

In return we ask if you could monitor these areas removing litter and making sure invasive plant species do not dominate the grasslands.

We are also providing the logo below which could be used in any of your communication about this policy along with being placed on a sign to be fixed at the designated areas. This will notify residents and visitors as to why the grass is being allowed to grow.



Further information on caring and monitoring such areas can be found at [www.plantlife.org.uk/uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk)

East Suffolk Council is committed to promoting environmental sustainability and ensure responsible stewardship of our open spaces – the smallest of changes will have an impact over time.

If you have any questions, or are aware of any other larger areas of open space that we may want to include as part of a conservation approach to grass cutting, then please contact me via our Head of Operations, Kerry Blair. He can be emailed at [Kerry.Blair@east Suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Kerry.Blair@east Suffolk.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

*James Mallinder*

**James Mallinder | Cabinet Member for The Environment**  
East Suffolk Council