East Dean & Friston
Parish Council

Date: **01 February 2024**

Title: **Report Item 11 – Response to ESCC Rural Grass Cutting Service for 2024/25**

By: **S Adeniji (Parish Clerk)**

Purpose: **To consider the proposals from ESCC**

Recommendations: **To consider a response Rural Grass Cutting Service for 2024/25**

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1. In the summer the parish council agreed to self-deliver urban grass-cutting services for 2024/25 within the parish. This is a separate proposal and it relates to the rural grass-cutting services.

2. Over the past 3 years, a trial of reduced rural grass-cutting has been undertaken by East Sussex County Council (ESCC in selected Parish and Town Councils) across the County. This was as part of the "Rural Verges as Wildlife Corridors - Trial of Early Season Reduction in Rural Grass programme" which aims to reduce cutting rural verges or change the schedule in line with wild plant cycles.

3. As agreed at the Lead Member for Transport and Environment meeting on 11th December 2023, ESCC has formally adopted this as a policy, so that the reduced rural cuts (excluding single track lanes for safety) are available to all Parish and Town Councils to opt in to.

   There are two Rural Grass Cutting options as follows:

4. **Option 1 - Standard Rural Grass Cutting Service – No change**
   Two cuts per annum of a 1 metre wide swathe along the verge plus visibility areas cut for visibility at junctions and for safety on the inside of bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation.

5. **Option 2 - Environmental Enhancement Service (reduced rural service)**
   Excluding single track lanes, the first cut at the start of the season to be only visibility cuts for safety at junctions and on the inside of bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation. The second cut later in the season will be visibility plus a 1 metre wide swathe along the verge.

6. **Future Changes to Rural Grass Cutting**
   Please note, that the option decided on by the parish council this year will become the default option going forward. ESCC will not ask the parish council each year

which rural grass cutting option it wishes to take forward. Should the parish council wish to change options, the council can email ESCC, and this can be implemented the following season. The parish council would not be able to change options part way through the grass cutting season.

7. Please note, in both options safety remains a priority. The parish council can report any visibility or safety issues to the SLO to investigate and rectify as necessary.

8. Response Deadline
   If the parish council wishes to opt into the Environmental Enhancement Service (reduced rural cuts), ESCC must be informed of the decision **by Friday 23rd February 2024**, otherwise, they will default to Option 1 – Standard Rural Grass Cutting.