

## **Roadside Maintenance Discussion Document**

At the August PC meeting, Cllr Aughey, Fletcher and Morgan were asked to prepare a report surrounding the issue of future of Roadside Maintenance in the Parish:

### **Background:**

There has been a noticeable deterioration in the state of our roadsides evidenced by:

- Comments to TA during daily walks through Hatt :
  - half a dozen comments how shabby the area is looking
  - Grass / verge maintenance – Carlton Villas
  - Weeds in the road
- Postman commented that knee high wet grass makes access to the post-box in Sunnybanks
- Facebook discussions and heated comments re roundabout and A388 verges
- Conflicting vociferous views from Parish Councillors

Most homes within our community have gardens which, in general, are well tended and stocked with a variety of native and exotic plants and create a sense of order and tidiness in our villages. Beyond the settlement boundaries there are traditional hedgerows and verges with a variety of plants, shrubs and trees, all appropriate in their setting.

However, within our settlements, especially in Hatt, the thoroughfares are becoming invaded by perennial weeds and the grass in the green spaces along Carlton Villas and Vollards lane can have more in common with meadows than managed public spaces. Also, the recent, more sustainable management of the A388 has received a mixed response. Some people appreciate the wildflowers for their appearance and their contribution to the ecosystem. Others see them as untidy and a risk to pedestrians because of reduced visibility.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage the PC to take a view about how our roads and roadsides are managed and to come to a decision about what, if any, changes should be made.

### **Observations**

We have been told that County Council funding is tightening and this is manifesting itself as follows:

- CCC cut the verges in July and the subsequent hot weather delayed the regrowth – but the rain in recent weeks has begun to make the issue apparent again.
- Weeds are growing in the road gutters and along the kerbstones
- We do not know the schedule of future works on verges and green spaces. (We are awaiting a reply from Paul Allen, CC)
- There appears to be no regular road-sweeping service

## Options for the future

We have split these into two sections: the residential streets within the village boundaries, and the A388.

### 1) A388:

Maintenance will almost certainly remain the responsibility of CC because of the impositions and restrictions imposed by the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*. Although we can have some influence over Cormac's activities they will manage these areas according to their resources and the imperatives of national and local policy. The PC needs to consider the balance between perceived best policy (i.e. managing roadside verges to encourage the return of native flowers) and popular opinion when petitioning Cormac. CC's introduction of a Green Infrastructure Policy/Strategy or Pollinator Plan may well lead to the imposition of a maintenance regime that will be more acceptable to the more eco-aware.

### 2) Residential areas.

- We could do nothing and accept the situation as an inevitable result of austerity and disinvestment.
- We could supplement Cormac's work
  - To do more of what they do and
  - To do things they have stopped doing (e.g. weed spraying)
  - Both options would need to be funded through the precept.
- Individuals could be encouraged to take responsibility for their local space
- Groups of individuals taking responsibility for their group space
- Community Right to Challenge – If the PC feels it can run a service more effectively than CC then it has the right to bid to run that service and some funding is available to support this. Contracts could be placed with a private provider or a Community Enterprise Organisation. The latter would support the local economy and create the potential to raise funds for other community initiatives.
- Best Kept Village Scheme run by the CPRE. This awards prizes to well-kept villages and could be an incentive to encourage community involvement. Unfortunately, CPRE tend to promote a village environment that is not nature-friendly.
- We could team up with neighbouring Parishes and generate economies of scale.

### Note:

There are diverse views concerning these issues, even within the PC. The purpose of this paper is to provoke a discussion within the PC so a decision can be made about the way forward. We have tried to make the document as objective as possible. Individual views, whether personal opinions or informed by evidence, can be aired during discussion.