

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Proposed approach for the Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance service review.</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Executive on 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
<b>WARD</b>	(All Wards);
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framaliccio
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Environment, Sport, and Leisure - Ian Shenton

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That Executive:**

- a) Approves the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:**
  - That the reduction of litter bins and frequency of emptying some bins is not implemented.
  - That the proposed service reductions on Pages 8 - 11 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee report be approved.
- b) Notes that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task & Finish Group later in 2023/24, to scrutinise the provision and emptying of litter bins across the Borough and submit its recommendations to the Executive in due course.**
- c) Approves all necessary contract and financial adjustments with all necessary public information amended and appropriate proactive communications to all necessary stakeholders.**
- d) Approves the reduction of the service base budget to achieve the required savings subject to approval.**
- e) Notes the results of the public consultation (Appendix 1 of this report).**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council, like many others, is experiencing significant financial pressures due to inflation, capped increases of Council Tax and being the least funded unitary authority in the country. In comparison to other Unitary authorities, residents in Wokingham Borough receive around £400 less per household each year. In total this amounts to £30m less for Wokingham residents. The inflation, budget pressures and other associated care cost pressures now raise the need to implement financial savings as required. If the savings are unable to be achieved this will place an even further budget pressure on the Council.

The current street cleaning and grounds maintenance services operate via two separate contractual arrangements and the total annual expenditure is sizable. The street cleaning annual contract value is c.£1.4m; grounds maintenance is c.£1m per annum.

A report was submitted to Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, please refer to the link below:

<https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b14827/Proposed%20Approach%20for%20the%20Street%20Cleaning%20and%20Grounds%20Maintenance%20Service%20Review%2002nd-Oct-2023%2019.0.pdf?T=9>

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, resolved the following recommendations at its 2<sup>nd</sup> October meeting for the Executive to consider and note: -

- Recommended to the Executive that it does not approve the removal of litter bins and reduced emptying of some bins.
- Recommended to the Executive that the proposed service reductions on pages 10 and 11 of the Overview and Scrutiny report to be approved.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also resolved to establish a Task & Finish Group later in 2023/24 to scrutinise the provision and emptying of litter bins across the Borough and to submit its recommendations to the Executive in due course.

This report incorporates Scrutiny's recommendations and seeks the Executives approval of this report.

### **Background:**

Throughout the spring and summer, work was undertaken with Wokingham Borough Council officers and the street cleaning contractor Urbaser to scope areas where savings could be made. A similar process was undertaken with the ground's maintenance contractor Tivoli. It was identified that there could be significant savings for both street cleansing (c.£200k – excluding the removal of litter bins) and grounds maintenance (c.£100k), however the current contractual work would have to be reduced. This saving would provide the £200k needed to correct the budget for the service, plus an additional contribution to P&G savings. In July, the changes were carried out by the respective contractors to realise the savings, however the method of implementation was not compliant with established Council protocols and this oversight meant that a formal decision-making process was revisited with the carrying out of formal consultation and a paper to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of a decision being taken by the Executive.

As part of this process, a Borough wide consultation ran from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> August to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September. Over 1,650 responses were received which covered all aspects of savings and outlined the potential impacts. The full results of the consultation can be found in Appendix 1. Further, engagement with Town and Parish Clerks, and the CLASP (Caring, Listening and Supporting Partnership) was undertaken which also elicited constructive and insightful comments received from the

consultation which were considered and where possible incorporated into existing activities, these are included in the appendix and are summarised below:

- Campaigns to support behaviour changes to prevent litter and fly tipping.
- Increasing Anti-Social Behaviour enforcement (fixed penalties for littering).
- Increasing support for volunteer groups participating in environmental clean-up initiatives.
- Increasing joint initiatives with Town Councils to support town centre presentation.

In addition to the public consultation, a discussion was held with CLASP to understand how the changes could affect those with disabilities. This feedback has helped shape the Full Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 2).

Consultation with Town and Parish Councils has also been undertaken with three sessions in August and September. There were several positive and constructive suggestions for a collaborative way forward such as possible local support i.e: assistance of staff to undertake some services such as litter bin emptying. The opportunity to conclude these discussions and explore efficiencies, service improvements and localising some services should continue. However, the litter bins were the key concern, and this was echoed in the public consultation. Other areas of proposed reductions raised concerns but not to the same levels.

It is apparent that more collaborative and innovative service changes could be incorporated, subject to further discussions and there was a detailed debate on these issues at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. In addition, there could be an opportunity to include a targeted “hot spot” or “deep cleanse” in some areas of the Borough. There are several ‘encroachment’ issues within the Borough that require attention and this approach will assist in providing a resolution. This would include community involvement, utilising national campaigns as a “springboard” such as Keep Britain Tidy, working with volunteer groups, local Members to focus resources (for litter picking, sign washing, jet washing, road sweeping, weed removal etc). As stated, this work needs to be assessed and its value determined.

#### **Proposed Innovations to bring forward:**

The detailed debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified a number of opportunities for the service to implement, to mitigate any required reductions as laid out in this report. The detail of some of the discussed elements needs to be worked through and shared with partners and stakeholders for their views before finalisation and implementation. However, it is useful for the Executive to understand the broad outline of what will be worked through:

- **Task and Finish Group:** Scrutiny proposed a Task and Finish Group to look at the provision and emptying frequencies of litter bins across the Borough and to submit its recommendations to the Executive. Those recommendations may wish to consider issues such as: -
  - Current policy for litter bins – (appropriate, under or over provision).
  - Right bin right place, reallocation, too many, right type of bin.

- Do we or could we recycle more from our litter bins?
  - Inefficient administrative layers? Who provides bins for parks, highways, Parish and Towns, private providers – can we all be more efficient?
  - Sponsorship and commercialising – can we obtain support for existing bins or costs (sponsorship) etc?
  - Private companies doing their bit? – can we encourage, “nudge” require private companies to improve their litter collections, especially in our main centres.
- **Deep Cleansing and Voluntary Groups.** As a service we could collaborate more and work with and support partners in our communities more effectively. We should be increasing our presence in: -
- Organising ‘hot spot’ cleans in local neighbourhoods. These should be programmed, led by local Members, and bring in voluntary groups to assist, especially around national campaigns, or in advance of local events such as Britian in Bloom, local festivals, and events. This area of work is part of neighbourhood renewal, town centre economic improvement and linking the council more closely to its local leaders and communities work such as jet washing, litter picks, sign cleaning, bin cleans, weed clearing. Often offer visible improvement in neighbourhoods if supported by groups and organisations and with the council acting as the “convener” to the event and provides equipment, guidance, and necessary insurance guidance.
  - Encouraging, supporting, and nurturing litter pick group with guidance, supply of equipment, training, and removal of litter bags, supporting latent demand in communities.
- **Customer Information.** The quality of our public information and service information should be improved and reviewing with our Customer Services team / contractors and staff to provide more effective information. We provide a good level of detail on the Council’s website, this should be reviewed, with a focus on accessible mobile information should be implemented. As a council we receive numerous customer contacts relating to grass cutting. Providing location and map-based information that can be accessed from standard smart phones should be our aim. Examples include:
- When the grass is programmed to be cut by area
  - Has the grass been cut, or if delayed when rescheduled?
  - What is the standard and frequency of cutting to be expected?
  - What can the resident do if somewhere has been missed or not cut appropriately.
- **Key Contractors.** We have begun to improve our working relationships with our key contractors through programmed meetings with their Directors, Senior Managers, and the Portfolio Holder. The meetings will provide updates and information exchanges, help understand local to national issues, sharing what

is happening that we could benefit from in other councils, and allow us to tackle collectively some of the larger issues such as improving:

- Contract Management
- Decarbonisation
- Apprenticeships
- Efficiency
- Service quality linked to resources
- Quality of service information, feedback, and responsiveness to Government Policy etc

This will allow improvements and suggestions to be incorporated into operations and provide greater confidence for our contracts to move from a control to a partnership relationship.

### **Consultation response:**

The consultation results have indicated the 'asks' versus the pressures facing Wokingham Borough Council and why they have to be undertaken. There are concerns raised across all proposals, primarily the reduction of litter bin infrastructure and emptying, which was debated in detail at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with reference to the recent consultation results (Appendix 1).

The main feedback suggested that implementing the changes would result in the Borough looking 'worse off' as compared to the status quo. For example, there is a risk that litter bins overflow, footpaths become dirtier, and the grass becomes longer, town centre appearance declines (for analysis of the comments refer to Appendix 1). This could result in greater contact by residents to enquire/complain and therefore generate additional work.

It is for this reason, after considering the feedback from Town and Parish Councils, the public consultation and Overview & Scrutiny Committee's advice, this report recommends that the proposed reduction of the litter bins and reduction of emptying frequency is not implemented. All other service reductions as laid out in the report to be implemented as soon as practicable.

### **Context:**

Wokingham Borough Council is corporately reviewing how to tackle financial pressures that it faces for now and into the future. The Executive Revenue Monitoring report has indicated that there is likely to be an overspend on Council budgets could be greater than £3m in 2023/24 despite nearly £12million savings being made in this year's budget. Several other Councils are facing financial difficulties, and the priority is to avoid this occurring at Wokingham Borough Council. Further savings will need to be made to ensure we have a robust and balanced budget next February for 2024/25.

We are facing huge financial challenges, like all local government organisations across the UK, to ensure vital services are protected and our residents receive the help and support they need to keep their families safe.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting families, but it is also having a detrimental effect on local councils, as well as local businesses. The long-term impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis has put unprecedented pressure on our vital services.

Increases in demand for statutory services for residents, including those with special education needs and disabilities, have also left us struggling financially. Energy costs are also increasing for the council and this, together with the rise in inflation, has resulted in the cost of providing council services to rise significantly.

Due to this, the Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance contracts have been considered to realise savings.

Wokingham Borough Council acknowledges the responses within the public consultation especially regarding the removal of the litter bins and noting the other concerns raised relating to Environmental Services and where there are opportunities for improved engagement to allow a greater understanding and the opportunity for greater resident input. It is worth noting that a consultation, while not a referendum, informs a proposed course of action. The full analysis of the consultation is contained within Appendix 1.

The public consultation received 1,650 responses and engaged with Town and Parish Councils and CLASP. There were a number of concerns raised for the removal of the litter bins (Question 3). It should also be noted that engagement with Towns and Parish Councils has been undertaken and positive discussions are ongoing.

This report seek approval from the Executive, noting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recent recommendations to accept this report. Noting the feedback from the consultation, savings in year 1 (excluding the litter bins - £80k saving) would be year 1 c.£198,000 and for year 2 c.£295,000 to be achieved taking into account any one-off mobilisation costs. The proposals to change the way street cleaning and grounds maintenance is undertaken is outlined as follows:

- Reduce the frequency of grass cutting from six cuts to four cuts per annum.
- Reduce the frequency of weed spraying from three times per year to two times per year.
- Reduce the frequency of mechanical road sweeping throughout the Borough.
- Reduced town centre cleaning by 30%.
- Reduced cleaning around bottle banks from twice a week to once per week.

In reaching this position, the Council is seeking to balance its financial pressures and respond where possible to the views of its residents, of which 97.68% of respondents were Borough residents and take note of the Scrutiny Committees views on this issue.

The key benefits of these proposed changes are to enable the Council to balance budgets, support residents that in most need and improve the biodiversity of the Borough, but where possible reflect the responses in the consultation and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> October position.

The following table provides a summary of the proposals, risks, mitigation, and consultation outcome, and subject to the approval of the Executive arrangements with our contracts will be put in place as quickly as possible to revert to the new standards, this will require the: -

- Amendment of contracts and orders
- Revise the value of future task orders.
- Briefing colleagues in customer service and updating information on the Council's website.
- Leading on service enhancements (as detailed previously in this report).
- Briefing Town and Parish Councils and leading on opportunities for any support, mitigation, or devolved responsibilities if possible.
- Briefing town centre and other business groups and leading on opportunities for any support, mitigation, or devolved responsibilities if possible.

**Proposed Service reductions for implementation:**

The table below details the proposed service reductions for approval and implementation, following the consultation, Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2023 and liaison with Towns and Parish Clerks. Therefore, the Executive is recommended to approve the implementation of the proposals below, as soon as practicable and that any necessary reduction of the service based budget is made to realise the savings, and that the necessary contractual amendments will be made and general information on the councils web site etc is implemented as soon as possible.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Risk / Consultation concerns</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Consultation Outcome</b>
Reduce weed spraying to twice per year	More weeds growing which looks visually unattractive. Weed roots could damage hard surfaces increasing maintenance costs.	Work with the contractor to target known and potential areas for weed growth. Monitor the network, conclude any redesign of services, and introduce hot spot areas to support environmental improvements where possible.	64.01% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  35.99% did not support
Reduce cleaning of bottle banks to once per week	Dumped rubbish could affect the environment and wildlife. Visual impact. Possible H&S concerns from broken glass.	Comms behaviour change campaign, ASB enforcement, adjusting the frequency of bottle bank collections to prevent 'overflows,' monitoring and possibly adjusting the cleaning for busier sites.	70.22% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  29.78% did not support

Decrease the total budget we spend on cleaning Wokingham and Woodley town centres by 30 per cent and prioritising high footfall areas.	Increased litter and detritus, potential impact to the environment and wildlife.	The existing town centre barrow operative will still clean Wokingham and Woodley town centres. Monitor the cleaning over the first three months and possibly adjust if needed. Monitor the network, conclude any redesign of services, and introduce Hot spot areas to support environmental improvements where possible.	57.31% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  42.69% did not support
Clean non-town centre retail areas once a week and to focus on high footfall areas.	Increased litter and detritus, potential impact to the environment and wildlife. Visual impact.	Monitor the cleaning of the areas and possibly adjust if needed. Monitor the network, conclude any redesign of services, and introduce Hot spot areas to support environmental improvements where possible.	67.79% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  32.21% did not support
Clean all roads other than town centre roads every seven weeks.	Increased litter and detritus, potential impact to the environment and wildlife. Visual impact.	Monitor the cleaning of the areas and possibly adjust if needed.	70.20% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  29.80% did not support
Clean footpaths every 12 weeks and to prioritise busier areas.	Increased litter and detritus, potential impact to the environment and wildlife. Visual impact.	Monitor the cleaning of the areas and possibly adjust if needed.	51.49% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  48.51% did not support
Litter pick on the A329M four times a year.	Increased litter, potential impact to the environment and wildlife. Visual impact.	Monitor the cleaning of the areas and possibly adjust if needed.	63.33% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  36.67% did not support



Litter pick on the A33 once every year.	Increased litter, potential impact to the environment and wildlife. Visual impact.	Monitor the cleaning of the areas and possibly adjust if needed.	54.69% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  45.31% did not support
Reducing grass cutting on verges and smaller open spaces from six times per year to four times per year - play areas, sports pitches and larger open spaces would be cut more than four times a year. Sightlines for traffic would also be cut more than four times a year to ensure visibility for road users. Rural highways verges that are sightlines are currently cut two to four times per year and will remain unchanged.	Increased grass growth between cuts could make dog faeces removal difficult. Potential of ticks. There could be visual amenity impact.	Changing rotary cutting machinery to 'flail head' cutting machinery will reduce the size of cut grass. This machinery will also cut the grass quicker. Monitor the network, conclude any redesign of services, and introduce Hot spot areas to support environmental improvements where possible.	56.70% liked, accepted, neutral or didn't like it but understood the need for it to happen.  43.30% did not support

**What service reductions are proposed for consideration by Executive on 26 October 2023?**

The Grounds Maintenance contract totals c.£1m per annum and the Street Cleaning contract totals c.£1.4m per annum.

The proposals are designed to maximise financial savings and to implement the new frequencies as soon as operationally appropriate.

1. Street cleaning (to generate savings of £83k in year 1 and £180k in year 2 saving excluding the removal of litter bins): The proposals made for consideration by Executive are: -
  - Reduce weed spraying from three times per year to twice per year as soon as operationally appropriate.
  - Reduce cleaning around bottle banks from twice per week to once per week as soon as operationally appropriate.
  - Decrease the budget spent by 30% on Woodley and Wokingham Town Centres as soon as operationally appropriate.

- Reduce cleaning in non-town centre retail areas to once per week as soon as operationally appropriate.
- Standardise, as soon as operationally appropriate, the cleaning of all network roads on a seven-weekly basis. Currently, the cleaning schedule varies from fortnightly to five times a year.
- Reduce the cleaning of footpaths from every six weeks to every 12 weeks, as soon as operationally appropriate.
- Reduce the cleaning of the A329M from every month to four times per year as soon as operationally appropriate.
- Reduce the cleaning of the A33 from twice per year to once per year as soon as operationally appropriate.

**2. Grounds maintenance (c.£115k saving):** The proposals made for consideration by Executive are: -

- Reduce the grass cutting on verges and smaller spaces from six times per year to four times per year as soon as operationally appropriate.
- Play areas, sports pitches and larger open spaces would be cut more than four times a year, to ensure an appropriate length of grass for their use as soon as operationally appropriate.
- Urban highway verges that are sightlines for traffic would also be cut more than four times a year to ensure visibility for road users. as soon as operationally appropriate
- Rural highways verges that are sightlines are currently cut two to four times per year and will remain unchanged as soon as operationally appropriate.

**LEGISLATION:**

The Council, as a local authority, has a legal duty under the provisions of Section 89(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that its land (or land for which they are responsible) is, as far as is practicable, kept clear of litter and refuse.

The deposition of litter and refuse will continue to be a challenge for landowners to address generally as well as through scheduled or response timescales. The proposals for changing the way the borough is cleaned is not envisaged to generate a significant impact. Mitigations have been put in place as detailed below and there is a strong commitment to adjust the cleaning regime if appropriate and necessary.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative***

**that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.**

	How much will it save	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (23/24)	£49k as partial four months saving (December - March)	N/A	Revenue
Next Financial Year (24/25)	(c.£83k for Street Cleaning and c.£115k for Grounds Maintenance)  £198k total saving	N/A	Revenue
Following Financial Year (25/26)	(c.£180k for Street Cleaning and c.£115k for Grounds Maintenance)  £295k total saving	N/A	Revenue

#### **Other Financial Information**

If the proposed savings are not approved and implemented, this will place revenue pressure on the Council of the value of the savings shown in the table above.

#### **Legal Implications arising from the Recommendation(s)**

The legal implications are set out in the main body of the report.

#### **Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation**

A public consultation has been carried out and a considered response to the consultation provided, with further engagement with Town and Parish Councils and with Care organisations to determine the Council's final approach, a report was presented to Scrutiny 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023, and Scrutiny recommendations are included in this report.

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken (see Appendix 2)

#### **Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030**

Enhancing biodiversity, green spaces, and nature-based adaptation such as increased flood defences from absorption.

#### **Reasons for considering the report in Closed Session**

Not applicable.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appendix 1: Full consultation response.</li><li>• Appendix 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment.</li><li>• Scrutiny Report of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 <a href="https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b14827/Proposed%20Approach%20for%20the%20Street%20Cleaning%20and%20Grounds%20Maintenance%20Service%20Review%2002nd-Oct-2023%2019.0.pdf?T=9">https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b14827/Proposed%20Approach%20for%20the%20Street%20Cleaning%20and%20Grounds%20Maintenance%20Service%20Review%2002nd-Oct-2023%2019.0.pdf?T=9</a></li><li>• Appendix 3: Draft minute relating to this item from the Community &amp; Corporate Services O&amp;S Committee – to follow</li></ul>

<b>Contact:</b> Richard Bisset	<b>Service Place &amp; Growth</b>
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b> richard.bisset@wokingham.gov.uk

## Appendix 1: Consultation Analysis

### Proposed changes grounds maintenance and street sweeping contracts.

21 September 2023

1,650 responses

Are you responding as				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A Wokingham borough resident		97.68%	1601
2	An elected borough councillor		0.43%	7
3	A town or parish councillor		0.61%	10
4	Representing an organisation		0.43%	7
5	Completing the survey for someone else		0.12%	2
6	Other (please specify):		0.73%	12
			answered	1639
			skipped	11

How important are the areas where we are considering changes to you?						
Please remember that we cannot maintain services as they currently are due to the need to make savings, so it would be helpful if you could prioritise services rather than rate them all of the same importance.						
Answer Choices	Not at all important	Not so important	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important	Response Total
Litter bins	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	55.56% 5	33.33% 3	9
Weed spraying	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	8
Bottle banks storage area cleaning	0.00% 0	12.50% 1	37.50% 3	37.50% 3	12.50% 1	8
Town centre cleaning	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 1	44.44% 4	44.44% 4	9
Non-town centre cleaning	0.00% 0	25.00% 2	12.50% 1	62.50% 5	0.00% 0	8
Road sweeping	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	44.44% 4	0.00% 0	22.22% 2	9
Footpath cleaning	0.00% 0	33.33% 3	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	22.22% 2	9
A329M and A33 cleaning	0.00% 0	28.57% 2	71.43% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	7
Grass cutting	0.00% 0	22.22% 2	22.22% 2	33.33% 3	22.22% 2	9
					answered	9
					skipped	1641

## Litter bins

1. Below are the litter bins we have identified for removal. If you don't think a bin should be removed, please tell us why.

Remember that we will need to remove around 150 litter bins, so if we remove any from the list below, we will need to find others to add.

The survey gave a list of 170 litter bins across Wokingham borough identified for removal and ask for comments. 687 respondents commented on the litter bins. 963 skipped the question.

Every litter bin received comments, with the fewest comments being 19 and the most 91.

The comments from this question will be used to re-evaluate the list of litter bins identified for removal, along with the comments from the question asking if there are any other litter bins we could consider removing (Q3).

2. We are proposing to empty all highway litter bins once a week, excluding town centres which will continue to be emptied more frequently.

Currently 550 bins in the borough are emptied twice a week, and the rest are emptied once a week.

Reducing how often we empty litter bins could increase litter around the bins. We could put up notices asking residents to take litter home with them if the bin is full to help prevent this.

What do you think of this proposal?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it		4.24%	58
2	I can accept it		18.26%	250
3	I am neutral on it		6.21%	85
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen		21.48%	294
5	I don't support it		49.82%	682
			answered	1369
			skipped	281

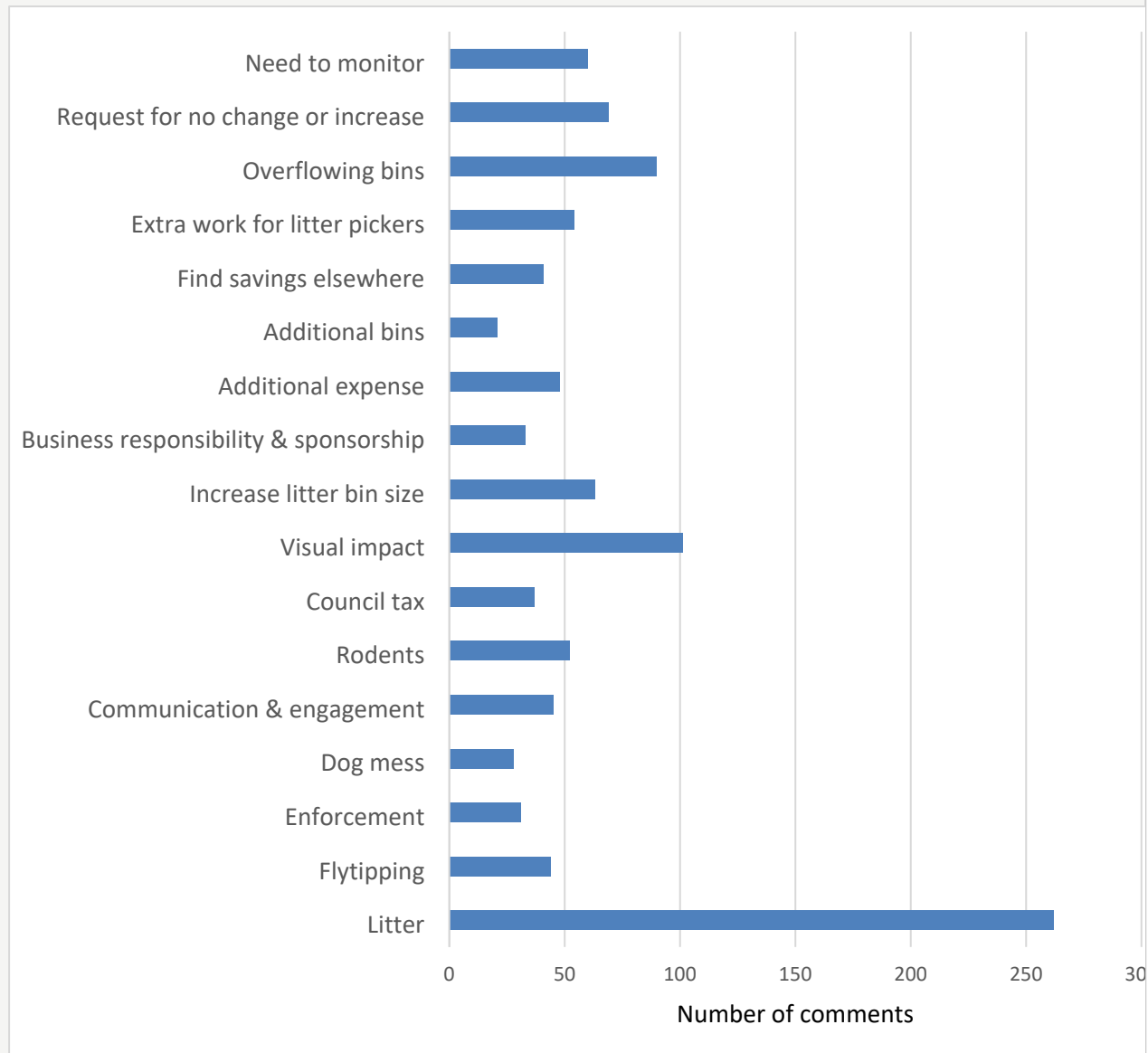
3. Are there any other bins you think we should consider removing or reducing how often we empty?

If so, please clearly state the location (ideally using the unique reference number from the interactive map above) and the reasons why you think it should be removed or reduced.

This question received 309 responses, with most suggesting one or more bins to add to the list. The suggested litter bins will be evaluated against the original criteria with the other bins. 1,341 respondents skipped this question. We will use this information to re-evaluate which litter bins are most suitable for removal.

#### 4. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our litter bin proposals?

This question received 835 responses. 815 respondents skipped this question.



#### Key themes:

- Concerns regarding the visual impact across the borough
- How we communicate and provide information to the public to promote positive behaviours
- A desire to look at opportunities to enforce against antisocial behaviour including littering and fly tipping.
- Support of community and voluntary work, empowering and encouraging residents to look after the public realm, which so many of them already do. There was concern that a change in service regarding the litter bins might put pressure on existing volunteers.
- Look at how we monitor any changes and our contractors to be flexible to the demands across the borough

**Weed spraying.**

5. What do you think of the option to reduce weed spraying to once a year?

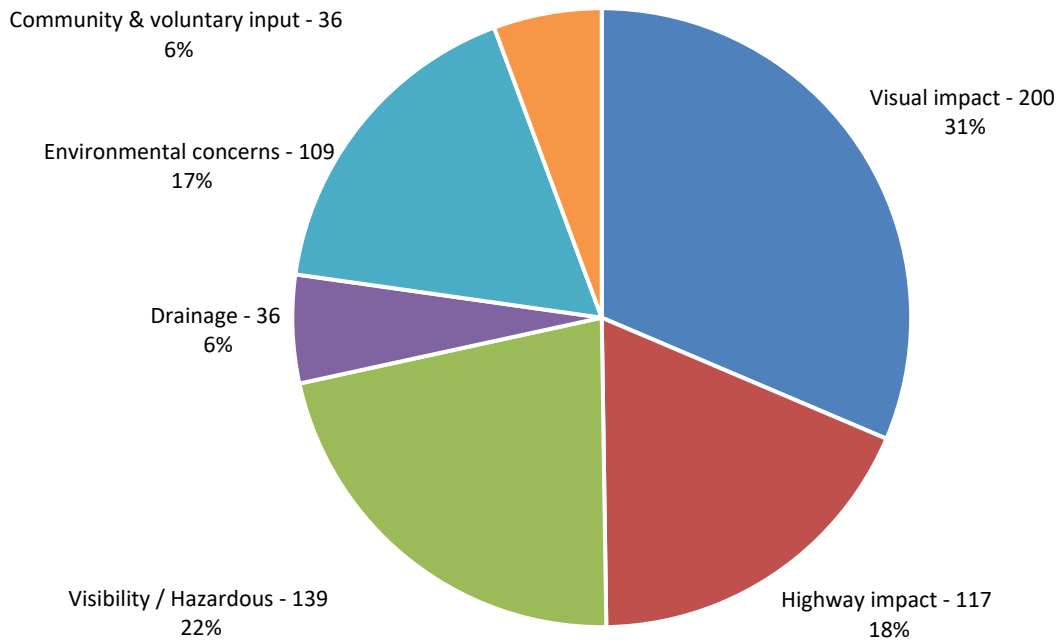
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	9.55%	154
2	I can accept it	13.95%	225
3	I am neutral on it	7.13%	115
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	11.41%	184
5	I don't support it	57.97%	935
		answered	1613
		skipped	37

6. What do you think of the option to reduce weed spraying to twice a year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	10.64%	171
2	I can accept it	25.95%	417
3	I am neutral on it	7.09%	114
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	20.35%	327
5	I don't support it	35.97%	578
		answered	1607
		skipped	43



7. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our weed spraying proposal?



This question received 795 responses. 855 respondents skipped this question.

**Key themes:**

- Recognition that a reduction in weed killer will have a positive impact on the environment.
- Concern that weeds may impact visibility (any sightline issues will be addressed)
- Questions made regarding the possible impact of a reduction in spraying would have on the highway surfaces.

**Bottle bank area cleaning**

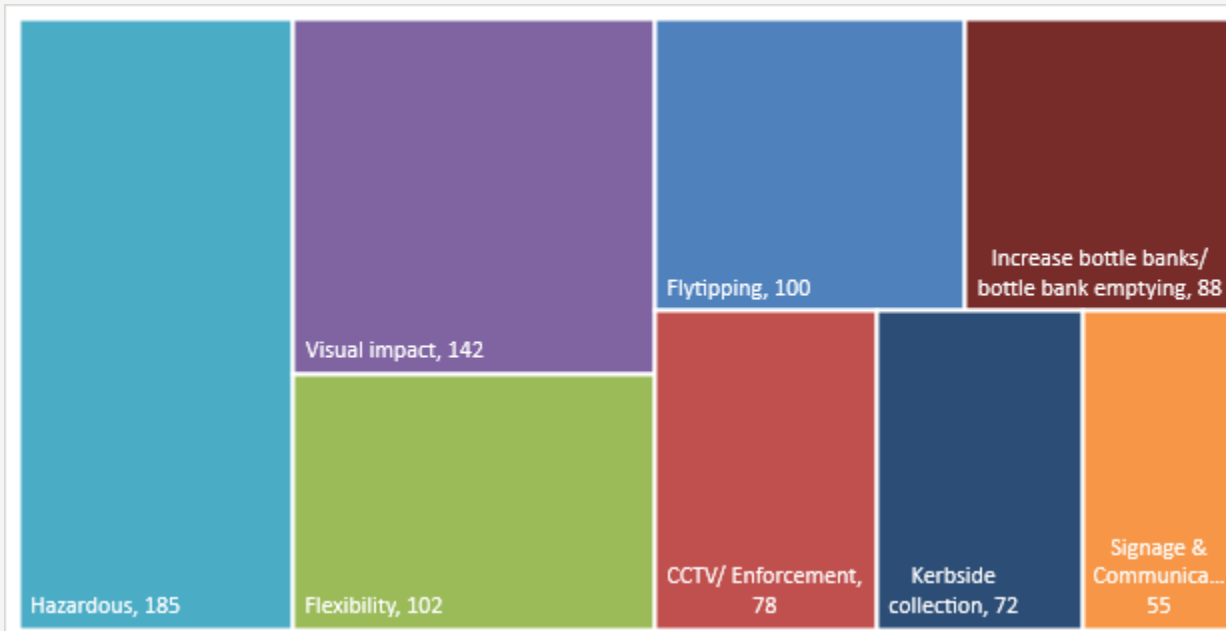
8. What do you think of the option to reduce cleaning around bottle banks to once every two weeks?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	3.75%	61
2	I can accept it	15.98%	260
3	I am neutral on it	6.33%	103
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	14.38%	234
5	I don't support it	59.56%	969
		answered	1627
		skipped	23

9. What do you think of the option to reduce cleaning around bottle banks to once a week?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	9.84%	159
2	I can accept it	29.76%	481
3	I am neutral on it	7.36%	119
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	23.27%	376
5	I don't support it	29.76%	481
		answered	1616
		skipped	34

10. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our bottle bank cleaning proposals?



This question received 750 responses. 900 respondents skipped this question.

**Key themes:**

- Concerns regarding hazards associated with broken glass (any safety concerns would be addressed as a priority)
- Desire to be flexible depending on demand and use of the area.
- Consider how to address fly-tipping and use enforcement to keep these areas clear.
- Interest in kerbside collection

## Town centre and retail areas sweeping

11. What do you think of decreasing the total budget we spend on cleaning Wokingham and Woodley town centres by 40 per cent and prioritising high footfall areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	2.90%	47
2	I can accept it	14.00%	227
3	I am neutral on it	9.49%	154
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	17.88%	290
5	I don't support it	55.73%	904
		answered	1622
		skipped	28

12. What do you think of decreasing the total budget we spend on cleaning Wokingham and Woodley town centres by 30 per cent and prioritising high footfall areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	3.64%	59
2	I can accept it	18.82%	305
3	I am neutral on it	9.38%	152
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	25.48%	413
5	I don't support it	42.69%	692
		answered	1621
		skipped	29

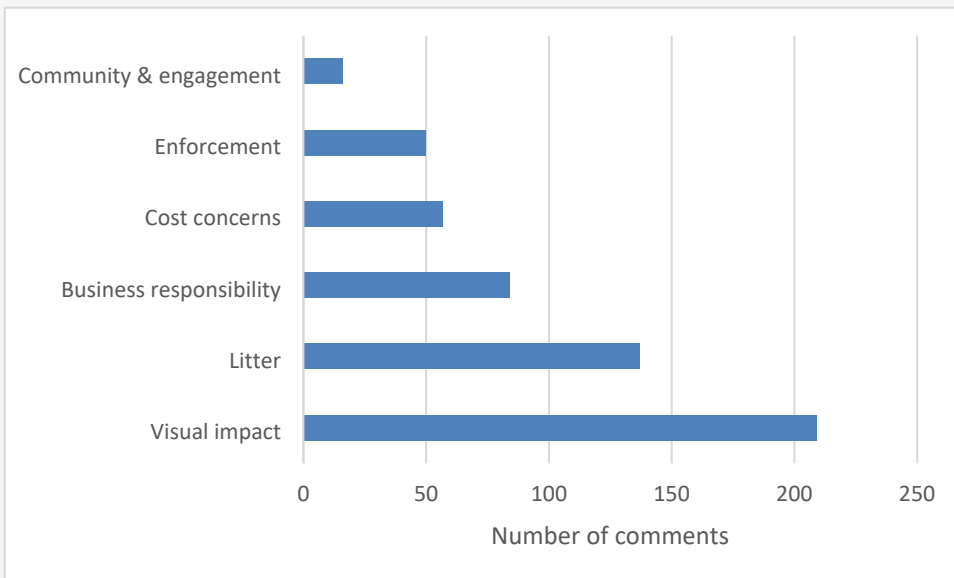
13. What do you think of the option to clean non-town centre retail areas once every two weeks and to focus on high footfall areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	3.11%	50
2	I can accept it	14.91%	240
3	I am neutral on it	9.19%	148
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	18.26%	294
5	I don't support it	54.53%	878
		answered	1610
		skipped	40

14. What do you think of the option to clean non-town centre retail areas once a week and to focus on high footfall areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	6.16%	99
2	I can accept it	24.75%	398
3	I am neutral on it	10.51%	169
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	26.37%	424
5	I don't support it	32.21%	518
		answered	1608
		skipped	42

15. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our town centre and retail areas cleaning proposals?



This question received 645 responses. 1005 respondents skipped this question.

**Key themes:**

- Concern that there will be a visible impact in these high footfall areas including an increase in litter.
- Litter bins should not be removed in these areas.
- Working with local businesses is important, particularly in areas where the litter comes from the business.

## Road sweeping

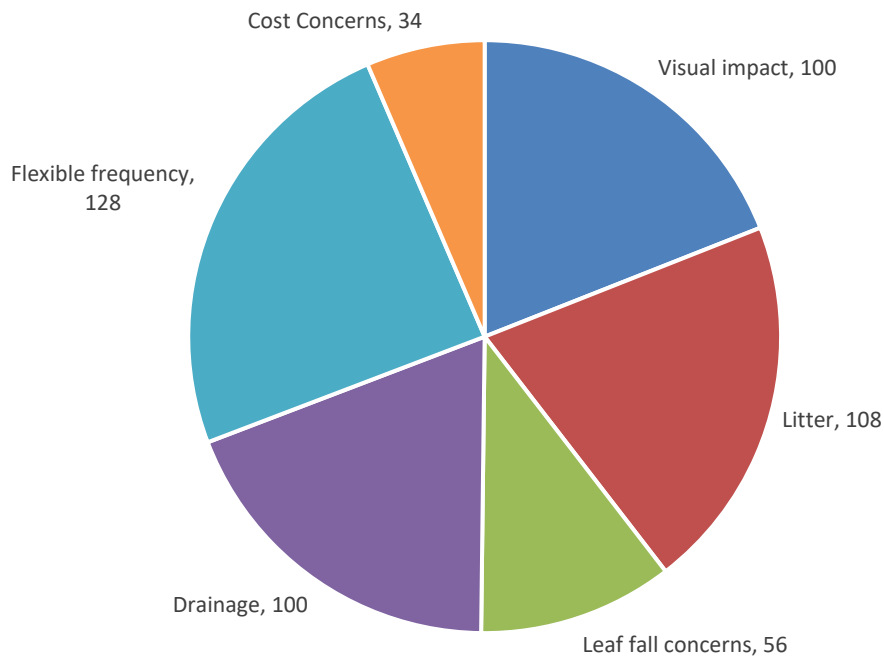
16. What do you think of the option of cleaning all roads other than town centre roads every nine weeks?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	3.83%	62
2	I can accept it	18.55%	300
3	I am neutral on it	10.39%	168
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	17.63%	285
5	I don't support it	49.60%	802
		answered	1617
		skipped	33

17. What do you think of the option of cleaning all roads other than town centre roads every seven weeks?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	5.90%	95
2	I can accept it	27.75%	447
3	I am neutral on it	11.55%	186
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	25.02%	403
5	I don't support it	29.80%	480
		answered	1611
		skipped	39

18. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our road cleaning proposals?



This question received 553 responses. 1097 respondents skipped this question.

**Key themes:**

- Visual impact and feel across the borough.
- Look at how we monitor any changes moving forwards and be flexible to minimise the impact on drainage and respond to seasonal factors such as leaf fall

**Footpath cleaning**

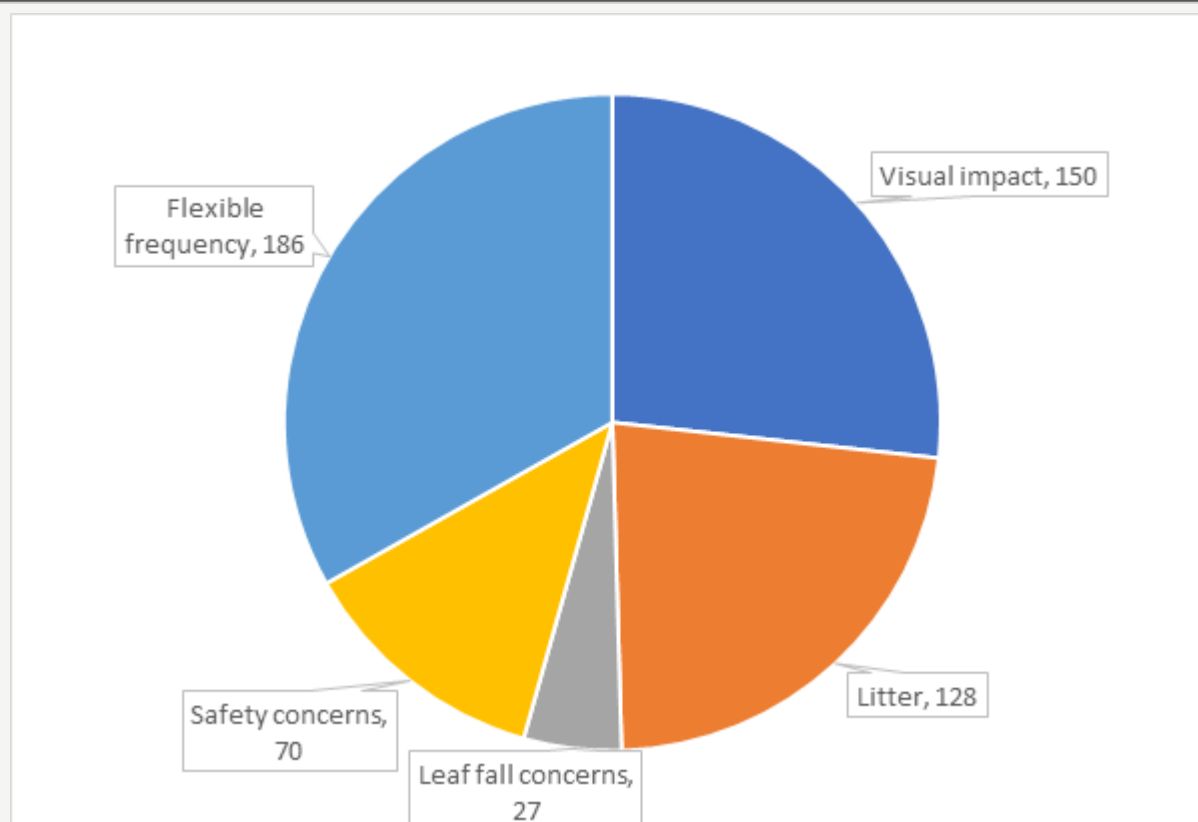
19. What do you think of the option to clean footpaths every 14 weeks and to prioritise busier areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	2.48%	40
2	I can accept it	10.85%	175
3	I am neutral on it	6.82%	110
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	13.52%	218
5	I don't support it	66.34%	1070
		answered	1613
		skipped	37

20. What do you think of the option to clean footpaths every 12 weeks and to prioritise busier areas?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	3.53%	57
2	I can accept it	18.53%	299
3	I am neutral on it	7.62%	123
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	21.81%	352
5	I don't support it	48.51%	783
		answered	1614
		skipped	36

20. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our footpath cleaning proposals?



This question received 644 responses. 1006 respondents skipped this question.

**Key themes:**

- Visual impact and feel across the borough.
- Concerns regarding an impact on safety
- Look at how we monitor any changes moving forwards and be flexible to consider seasonal factors such as leaf fall

**A329M and A33 cleaning, including litter picking and road sweeping.**

21. What do you think of the proposal to litter pick on the A329M three times a year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	4.29%	69
2	I can accept it	15.62%	251
3	I am neutral on it	9.77%	157
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	16.18%	260
5	I don't support it	54.14%	870
		answered	1607
		skipped	43

22. What do you think of the proposal to litter pick on the A329M four times a year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	5.84%	94
2	I can accept it	22.68%	365
3	I am neutral on it	9.88%	159
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	24.92%	401
5	I don't support it	36.67%	590
		answered	1609
		skipped	41

23. What do you think of the proposal to litter pick on the A33 once every other year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	1.26%	20
2	I can accept it	7.91%	126
3	I am neutral on it	11.06%	176
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	11.18%	178
5	I don't support it	68.59%	1092
		answered	1592
		skipped	58

24. What do you think of the proposal to litter pick on the A33 once every year?

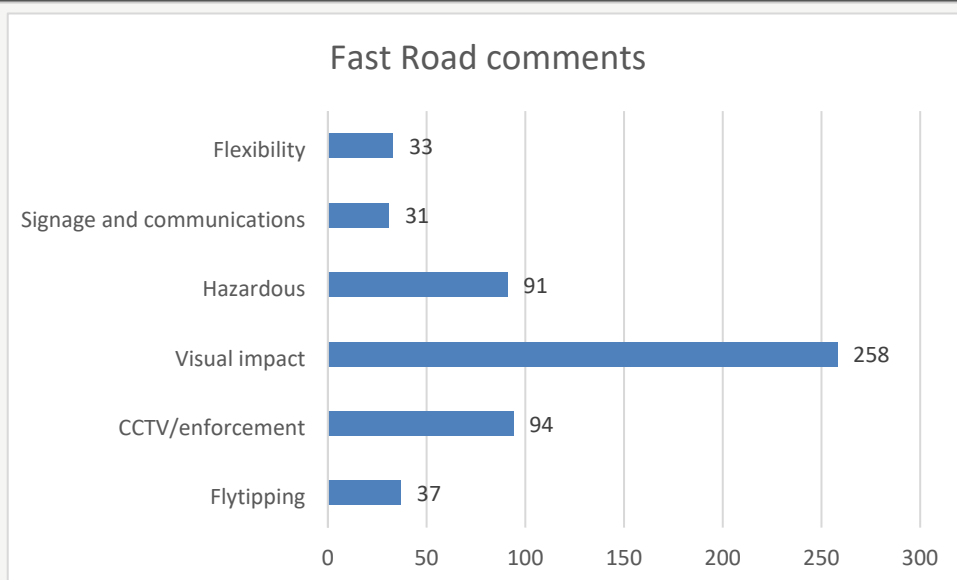
Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
----------------	--	------------------	----------------



24. What do you think of the proposal to litter pick on the A33 once every year?

1	I like it		3.67%	59
2	I can accept it		16.59%	267
3	I am neutral on it		11.19%	180
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen		23.24%	374
5	I don't support it		45.31%	729
			answered	1609
			skipped	41

25. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our fast roads cleaning proposals?



This question received 570 responses. 1080 respondents skipped this question.

**Summary of key themes:**

- Concerns raised about how these areas will look to visitors.
- Desire to reduce littering through enforcement and communications.
- Concerns regarding safety implications (any obstruction or hazard identified would be addressed as a priority)
- Feedback received asking us to monitor any changes and be flexible.

## Grass cutting

26. We currently use a grass height-based approach to cutting across the borough, with five inches being the standard. This generally means the grass is cut about six times per year.

We are proposing the following:

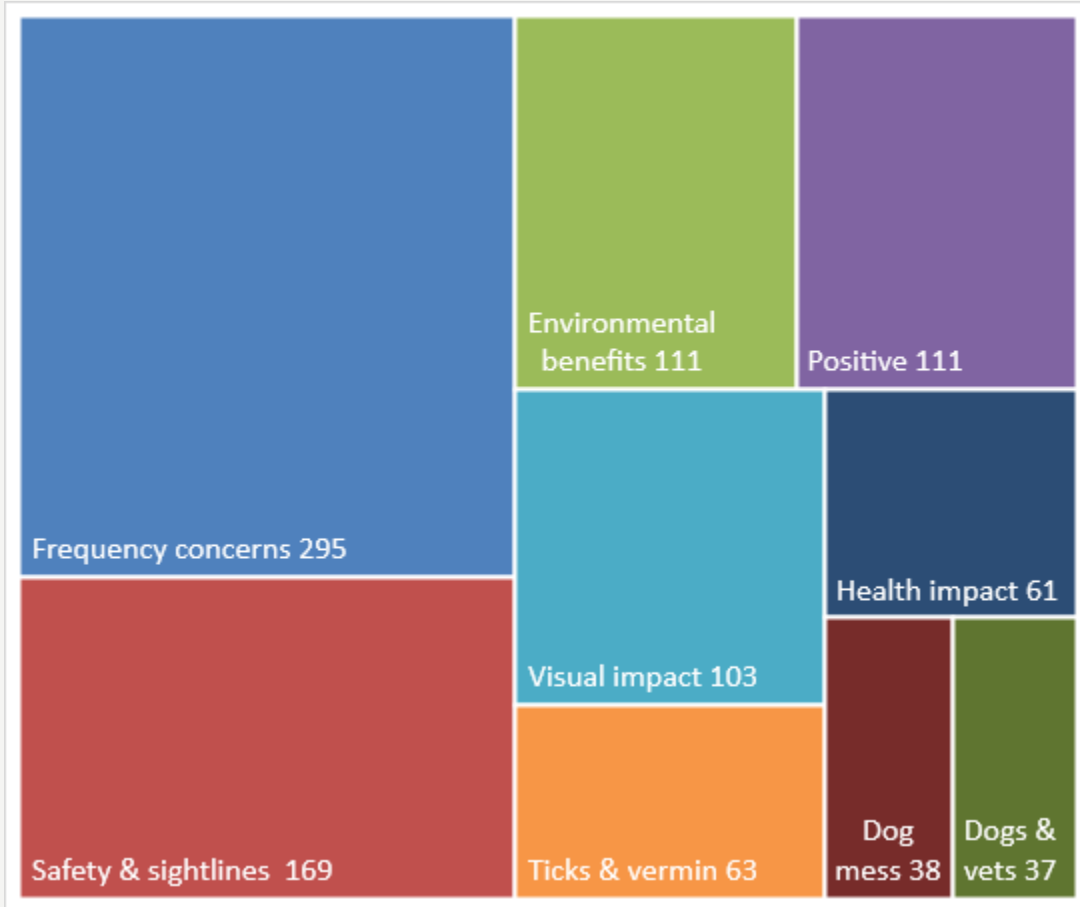
- Verges and smaller spaces would be cut four times a year.
- Play areas, sports pitches and larger open spaces would be cut more than four times a year, to ensure an appropriate length of grass for their use.
- Urban highway verges that are sightlines for traffic would also be cut more than four times a year to ensure visibility for road users.
- Rural highways verges that are sightlines are currently cut two to four times per year and will remain unchanged.

We are also proposing to increase the areas where we allow the grass to grow long and cut annually. This would benefit biodiversity and pollinators across the borough, reduce our carbon emissions and provide savings.

What do you think of these proposals?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I like it	14.79%	241
2	I can accept it	18.11%	295
3	I am neutral on it	6.51%	106
4	I don't like it but understand the need for it to happen	17.25%	281
5	I don't support it	43.34%	706
		answered	1629
		skipped	21

27. Do you have any other suggestions or comments about our grass cutting proposals?



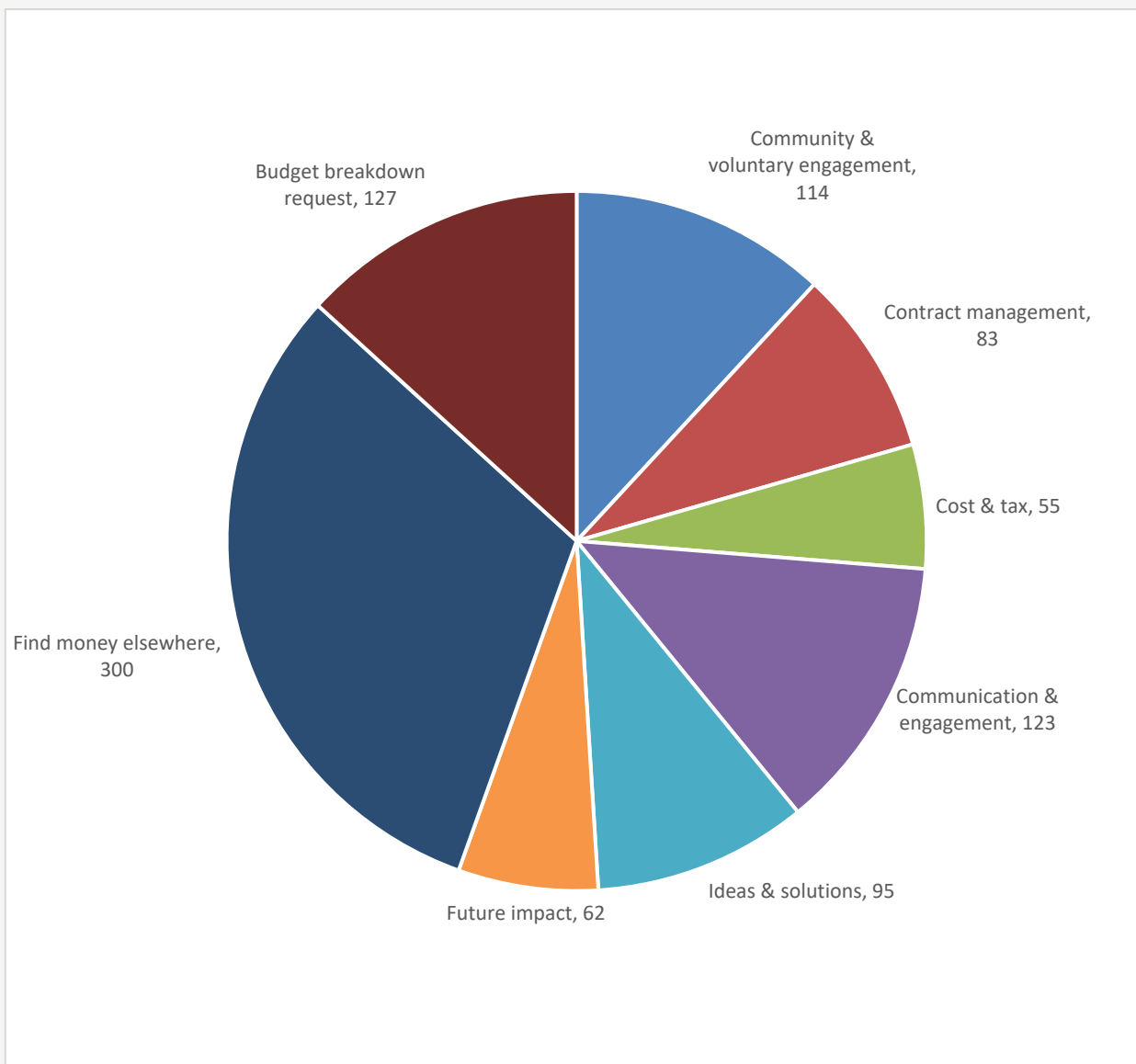
This question received 775 responses. 875 respondents skipped this question.

**Summary of key themes:**

- Benefits – recognition of the environmental benefits of changing how we cut grass.
- Sightlines – sightline issues from vegetation and grass should be prioritised.
- Dog mess – it's important to retain the litter bin emptying schedule so owners will clean up after their dogs.
- Health impacts – cutting the grass less often could worsen hay fever.
- Flexibility -- need to be flexible and balance the management of these areas to ensure health and safety issues are addressed and the grass in amenity spaces is short enough for the intended use

## Any other ideas to make savings.

28. Do you have any further comments on any of these issues, including other ways we could make savings in these areas?



This question received 775 responses. 875 respondents skipped this question.

### **Summary of key themes:**

- Desire to minimise impacts on visible services which impact the wider community.
- Request to have a clearer understanding of budgets across the council.
- Ideas and solutions to assist the council.
- Opportunities for the council to engage with the community and volunteers.
- Importance of communicating and engaging with the public

### **Comments:**

- Find money elsewhere – 300 respondents suggested we find the required savings elsewhere.
- Budget breakdown request – 127 respondents wanted more information about the council's budget to give informed suggestions on how else the council could find these savings.

28. Do you have any further comments on any of these issues, including other ways we could make savings in these areas?

- Communication and engagement – 123 respondents mentioned the importance of how we communicate and provide information to the public as well as how we make reporting issues easier.
- Community and voluntary engagement – 114 respondents suggested we engage with the community and voluntary organisations to support a cleaner and greener environment, such as expanding and supporting schemes such as the adopt-a-street programme.
- Ideas and solutions – 95 respondents suggested creative ideas to find the savings, such as giving examples from other local authorities or abroad.
- Contract management – 83 respondents suggested the council better manage existing contracts to find the savings.
- Future impact – 62 respondents pointed out that there may be future impacts that could negate any savings from these proposals, such as increases in littering and fly-tipping.
- Cost and tax – 55 respondents said they pay their council tax for these services or that they would be willing to pay more council tax to keep them at their current levels

## About you (optional)

29. What town or parish do you live in?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Arborfield and Newland		1.53%	20
2	Barkham		2.52%	33
3	Charvil		1.45%	19
4	Earley		17.35%	227
5	Finchampstead		8.72%	114
6	Hurst		0.92%	12
7	Remenham		0.00%	0
8	Ruscombe		0.92%	12
9	Shinfield		5.12%	67
10	Sonning		0.99%	13
11	Swallowfield		0.76%	10
12	Twyford		4.89%	64
13	Wargrave		1.07%	14
14	Winnersh		7.57%	99
15	Wokingham		26.83%	351
16	Wokingham Without		3.90%	51
17	Woodley		14.45%	189
18	Don't know		0.61%	8
19	Outside Wokingham borough		0.38%	5
			answered	1308
			skipped	342

30. What sex/gender do you identify as?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Female		51.37%	674
2	Male		44.51%	584
3	Transgender		0.08%	1
4	Prefer not to say		3.05%	40
5	Other (please specify):		0.99%	13
			answered	1312
			skipped	338

### 31. How old are you?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	17 or younger		0.00%	0
2	18-20		0.23%	3
3	21-29		1.00%	13
4	30-39		6.17%	80
5	40-49		14.89%	193
6	50-59		21.45%	278
7	60 or older		56.25%	729
			answered	1296
			skipped	354

### 32. What race or ethnicity best describes you?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Arabic		0.08%	1
2	Asian/British Asian: Bangladeshi		0.15%	2
3	Asian/British Asian: Chinese		0.31%	4
4	Asian/British Asian: Indian		2.15%	28
5	Asian/British Asian: Pakistani		0.08%	1
6	Black/British Black: African		0.23%	3
7	Black/British Black: Caribbean		0.00%	0
8	White: British		86.25%	1123
9	White: Other		4.30%	56
10	Mixed race		0.61%	8
11	Gypsy/Traveller		0.00%	0
12	Prefer not to say		4.22%	55
13	Other (please specify):		1.61%	21
			answered	1302
			skipped	348

### 33. What do you consider your religion to be?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Buddhism	0.08%	1
2	Christianity	49.42%	640
3	Hinduism	0.93%	12
4	Islam	0.15%	2
5	Judaism	0.31%	4
6	Sikhism	0.69%	9
7	No religion	37.07%	480
8	Prefer not to say	9.42%	122
9	Other (please specify):	1.93%	25
		answered	1295
		skipped	355

### 34. Which of the following terms best describes your sexual orientation?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Asexual	1.10%	14
2	Bisexual	1.10%	14
3	Gay	0.78%	10
4	Lesbian	0.24%	3
5	Heterosexual/Straight	79.51%	1013
6	Prefer not to say	14.29%	182
7	Other (please specify):	2.98%	38
		answered	1274
		skipped	376

### 35. Have you undertaken any form of sex/gender reassignment?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	0.00%	0
2	No	89.55%	1123
3	Prefer not to say	10.45%	131
		answered	1254
		skipped	396



36. Are you currently pregnant or have you given birth within the last year?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	0.47%	6
2	No	74.11%	942
3	Not applicable	18.96%	241
4	Prefer not to say	6.45%	82
		answered	1271
		skipped	379

37. Do you have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	17.61%	224
2	No	72.41%	921
3	Prefer not to say	9.98%	127
		answered	1272
		skipped	378

## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form: the full impact assessment

### 1. Process and guidance

The purpose of an EqIA is to make sure that the council is meeting the needs of all our residents by ensuring we consider how different groups of people may be affected by or experience a proposal in different ways.

The council has a two stage EqIA process:

- Stage 1 - the initial impact assessment
- Stage 2 - the full impact assessment.

This form is for use at Stage 2 of the process. If an officer is undertaking a project, policy change, or service change and a negative impact has been identified at Stage 1 on a protected equality group then a full impact assessment must be completed.

Guidance and tools for council officers can be accessed on the council's Tackling Inequality Together intranet pages.

54

Date started:	September 2023
Completed by:	Richard Bisset
Service:	Place Clienting
Project or policy EqIA relates to:	Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Services
Date EqIA discussed at service team meeting:	September 2023
Equality Improvement Plan approved:	
Signed off by (AD):	Steve Brown
Sign off date:	September 2023

### 2. Consultation

During the initial impact review, it was found that some protected equality groups might be negatively impacted by the proposal. To further understand the potential impacts and decide what actions might be needed, the relevant equality groups should be consulted.

Please complete the table below.

Equality group	Date of consultation	Potential negative impacts identified	Changes or actions based on feedback from consultation
<p>55</p> <p>Age</p>	<p>August 2023</p>	<p>Longer grass could potentially cause a nuisance for residents, also may be hidden objects in longer grass.</p> <p>Negative impact of possible decrease in usable space</p> <p>Detritus and fallen leaves on footpaths could increase slipping.</p>	<p>It is expected that pedestrians are to keep to the footway and therefore there are no direct implications. The potential negative impacts are limited to aesthetics. The cutting regime will be monitored alongside any Service Requests through the Council's systems which is used to monitor the queries and response time.</p> <p>The Councils 'Cleaner and Greener' Team in conjunction with the ground's maintenance contractor will carefully plan the changes with a view to limiting the impact on the residents and visitors as far as is reasonably practicable. As appropriate we will include within the implementation plans the inclusion of grass pathways through the greenspaces, and the mowing of edges of surfaced paths. There will also be options around residents and community groups to support their local area. Note: Mowing of sightlines for safety purposes are</p>

			<p>not proposed to be part of this saving option and will continue to be cut</p> <p>The Councils 'Cleaner and Greener' Team in conjunction with the Street cleaning contractor will carefully plan the changes with a view to targeting known areas and adjusting the cleaning regime as far as is reasonably practicable.</p>
Disability	August 2023	<p>Longer grass could potentially affect mobility for people with mobility and visual impairments.</p> <p>Blind and partially sighted: Negative impact in that longer vegetation and could hide potential hazards (e.g., dog faeces, trip hazards), especially to those in this group.</p> <p>Asthma sufferers: Mixed impact on those suffering from substantial Asthma. There will be a positive impact arising from the decrease in use of fossil fuel burning mowing machines, and in the long term from increase tree growth leading to increased air quality on average, however this will be balanced in some situations with increased levels of pollen from unmown grass.</p>	<p>It is expected that pedestrians are to keep to the footway and therefore there are no direct implications. The potential negative impacts are limited to aesthetics. The cutting regime will be monitored alongside any Service Requests through the Council's systems which is used to monitor the queries and response time.</p> <p>We will advise residents of the changes to grass cutting and there could be higher levels of pollen during certain periods of the year. Residents should check the pollen count and plan their visit accordingly.</p>

		<p>(It is important to note, the initial research carried out by PollerGEN regarding cutting and pollen does state that it requires further research to analyse the impact it may have on health.” There are a number of conditions to consider (e.g., amount of exposure, location etc) so imagine it would be difficult to quantify.)</p> <p>Detritus and fallen leaves on footpaths could increase slipping.</p>	<p>The Councils ‘Cleaner and Greener’ Team in conjunction with the Street cleaning contractor will carefully plan the changes with a view to targeting known areas and adjusting the cleaning regime as far as is reasonably practicable.</p>
Gender reassignment	N/A		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A		
Pregnancy/Maternity	N/A		
Religious belief	N/A		
Race	N/A		
Sex	N/A		
Sexual Orientation	N/A		
Socio-economic disadvantage	N/A		

### 3. Equality improvement plan

The project owner must complete an Equality Improvement Plan. This improvement plan sets out the actions to minimise or remove negative impacts. It should also be used to action any opportunities to promote equality and understanding between communities that have been identified throughout the assessment.

The improvement plan should be a 'live document' and be updated and reviewed throughout the delivery of the proposal.

The improvement plan comprises:

- A. an assessment table.
- B. an implementation table.

**Please complete Table A now and keep Table B up to date throughout delivery of the proposal.**

**Table A: Assessment table**

58	<b>Equality group</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Expected outcome from actions</b>	<b>Responsible owner</b>	<b>How will the delivery of your actions be monitored</b>	<b>Review date (s)</b>
	Age and Disability	If the street cleaning and grounds maintenance proposals are approved, then additional information will be communicated to residents. (Easiread compliant) and these will also be available in any language	Monitor the cleansing regime and make adjustments where required. Review enquiries to assess any particular areas that require attention.	Richard Bisset	Review of enquiries	January 2024

**Table B: Implementation table**

<b>Notes from implementation</b>	<b>Actions completed</b>	<b>Impacts eliminated or mitigated</b>

**4. Conclusion, sign-off & Publication**

The completed EqIA must be reviewed by the management team for your service and submitted for sign-off to the relevant Assistant Director or project sponsor. The EqIA must then be attached to the project or policy paper to be considered by the Executive or other relevant committee and will be published to the council's website.

**Please complete the table below:**

59

Date of executive paper publication:	October 2023
How do you intend to communicate any changes to the affected groups?	Policy on website and general communications across the borough. Targeted communications will be undertaken
Date of communication:	November 2023

This page is intentionally left blank