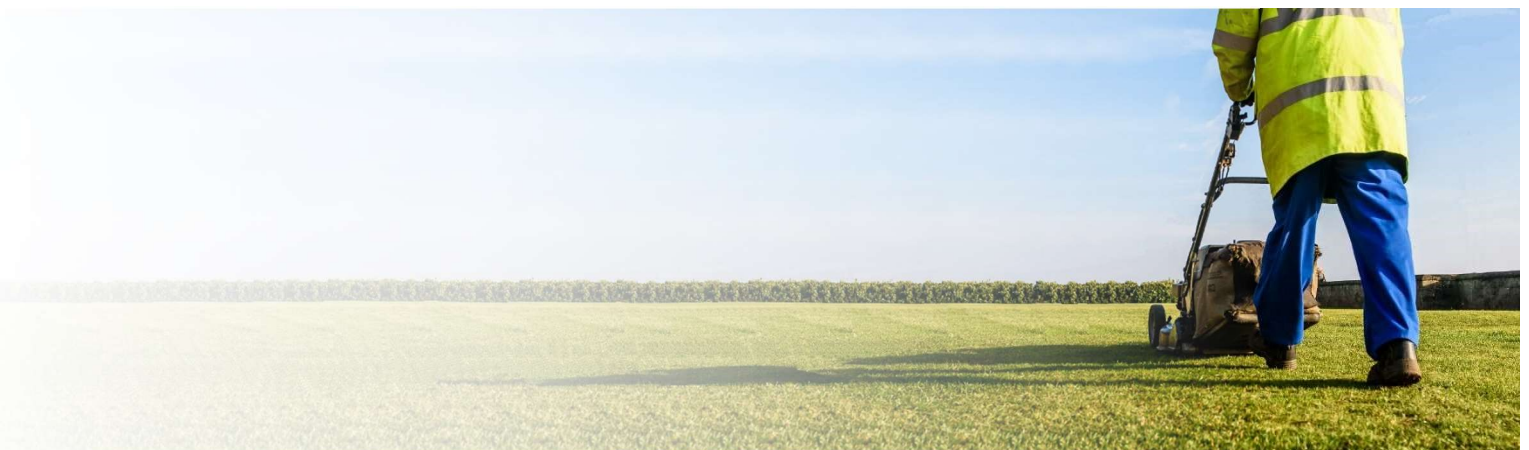


GRASS CUTTING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Prepared for East Suffolk Council Stakeholders
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1. When do you start grass cutting and for how long?

In general, depending on the weather, grass cutting in East Suffolk typically will start around mid-March and continue until the season ends (usually October).

The first cut of the season will typically take slightly longer, particularly if grass has remained active during the winter period with the first cutting cycle largely completed around mid-April.

If your location is one which is cut at the end of a monthly cycle (as part of scheduled planning) it will receive its final cut of the year that much later; using the monthly cycle, all areas receive equal attention.

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.

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 schedules. Any operational consideration for excess growth is undertaken within existing resources.

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

The answer is always likely to be yes as it is notoriously difficult to exactly predict grass growth, particularly at the beginning of the year when peak growing (“flushes”) will occur, so while generally the standard shouldn’t change over the whole season, the period when grass will be at its longest will likely vary.

Thick grass as well as rain can slow the schedule down, as it takes longer to cut and the height of 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 this year and resources remain the same as in previous years.

We aim to cut all grass across the district between 7 and 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.

We mow grass equal to nearly



football pitches each year

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

East Suffolk Services Ltd – the Council’s operational services partner - undertake cutting of grass on public open spaces across the district.

They also carry out grass cutting on behalf of Suffolk County Council on its highway verges within Towns and Parishes, with the majority of additional cuts paid for by East Suffolk District Council to “top up” the County set frequency.

Highway grass on trunk roads and areas outside of the main towns is generally carried out either by Suffolk County Council or Highways England and will generally be cut less frequently than those in urban areas.



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

There will always be grass flushes during a growing season, although it is very difficult to predict and consequently to apply extra resource.

It would be inefficient to invest in additional resource where the ‘grass flush’ can be for a relatively short time however resources are redirected during peak growth periods.

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.

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...

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, such as formal open spaces near sea fronts and some main routes, however given the total area covered, these represent an extremely small percentage. In recognising the value that our green spaces can provide for wildlife, you may also see some grass areas left longer (also see section 10). If you would like to suggest an area that could be left longer to support our wildlife; please get in touch.

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

Churchyards can provide beautiful and unique green spaces often rich in wildflowers and providing refuge to a variety of birds, mammals and insects. This is particularly important in urban settings where there may be fewer such opportunities and the Council's approach is to carry out less cutting wherever possible but with path edges and desire lines managed to assist with access and ensure these valuable assets can be enjoyed by parishioners and visitors alike. We are always interested in having a conversation with parishes and churches about the best way to manage churchyards for wildlife.

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 a cemetery's overall appearance and can be distressing for mourners.

Due to the restrictions in space, during the process of grass cutting, arisings can sometimes be distributed or blown onto memorials. We endeavour to keep this to a minimum and while unavoidable, we feel this is less intrusive than using herbicides.

In older sections of cemeteries where burials still take place, cutting is less frequent than 'Lawns' but they are still cut 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. With many of our natural areas under threat, why not leave areas of grass uncut to benefit wildlife?

We recognise the benefits that longer grass can have for bees, beetles and caterpillars of various moths and butterflies and for predators such as birds, bats and hedgehogs.

As one might expect, we do receive requests for the grass to both be cut short and also to be left long; dependent on one's viewpoint, we perfectly understand that each approach may well be considered differently.

As we have said, there are examples where we do leave grass longer such as in cemeteries, churchyards, open spaces and some wider verges, which are not immediately adjacent to property. Where areas are managed for conservation, these are generally cut once at the beginning of the season and once at the end. As East Suffolk Services Ltd predominately only cut grass in towns, historically public expectation is that grass adjacent property and urban streets is cut shorter. Given the area that we cover, you will appreciate it would be difficult to respond to every individual request for something different and as any urban area is likely to affect more than a single resident, some form of consensus is required.

If you do feel strongly about this, contact with your local Councillor or Town Council may help provide a better understanding of local opinion on this matter.



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



Whilst we feel it inappropriate to use herbicides within Cemeteries and Churchyards, 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 mowing the verge 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.

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

If we experience conditions similar to late spring of 2016 for example, where we received torrential rain followed by warm and humid conditions, grass growth is always going to be a challenge as it equally would be with a resident's own lawn. During such extreme conditions, the grass in our public areas, will appear longer and we need to balance providing the service to the District, whilst ensuring whatever we do represents Value for Money.

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 an improved standard.

13. Why do I see your staff cutting grass on land that doesn't belong to the Council?

In addition to working in partnership with East Suffolk District Council, East Suffolk Services Ltd have a large number of contracts with private landowners and commercial organisations, such as schools and the managers of local industrial and residential estates. These works are paid for by the landowners concerned, via separate contract arrangements with us.

If you are responsible for the management of commercial or residential land holdings and would like a quotation for grass cutting or other grounds maintenance from us, please call us on 03300 166111.