

# CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GREEN SPACES OPERATIONS

### SERVICE



## OUTPUT SPECIFICATION

## Foreword

I'm very pleased to introduce this specification for Charnwood Council's operational maintenance in our parks and green spaces. The people of Charnwood can actually identify here those quality standards we aim to achieve right across our Borough, for residents, for the many visitors to our parks, green spaces and countryside, for our sports fields and playgrounds. Here also are the clear expectations for our professional staff, necessary for them to deliver the required services.

You'll see the specification sets these standards as "outputs" in preference to a less flexible arrangement of "inputs" based on frequencies. For example, "*Grass shall not exceed 65mm,*" rather than, "*Grass shall be cut twice per month.*" This means the grass is cut as often, or as little, as necessary to meet these standards.

The Council's parks and green spaces are a vital part of the regional green infrastructure. They contribute to the character of our towns, villages and parishes, and offer wonderful opportunities for leisure, sports, festivals, events and play, while at the same time providing a mosaic of habitats for wildlife. The attractiveness of our public realm has a direct influence on the success of our campaigns to promote culture and leisure, improve people's health, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, tackle climate change and attract visitors, new residents and inward investment into our Borough. It's important, therefore, that green spaces are maintained well and we're able to actually measure our success in achieving these quality standards and real customer satisfaction.

Whilst the specification sets clear standards for the maintenance service, the inspection system provides a mechanism to measure and monitor how well those standards are being achieved. We'll be asking customers and users, through planned consultations, for regular feedback, and so track everyone's satisfaction with our service delivery.

Our Green Spaces Operations Service has been reorganised to deliver a first-class service. They will strive to eventually meet these specification standards on every one of the several hundred sites they're responsible for maintaining. The inspection results will illustrate just how well they're performing, and how they improve continuously year on year.

I sincerely believe we'll all be delighted with their results through the coming seasons.

Councillor Peter Lewis

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure



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**Green Space Quality Inspection Service**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Green Spaces Operations Service- Our Vision:

*[Where we want to be in the future and what we want our people and customers to say about us]*

An integrated Service of high-performance teams working hard to deliver outstanding customer-focused maintenance services for green spaces, worthy of a local authority which is determined to achieve excellence.

### 1.2 Our Mission:

**We will achieve our vision by-**

- providing efficient, professional and value for money services
  - maintaining, managing and improving the built and natural heritage of parks, greenspaces and public spaces in our care
  - responding quickly and effectively to customer needs and feedback
  - contributing to the protection and care of natural habitat and species biodiversity
  - effectively managing the trees, woodlands and hedgerows in our care
- providing a support service which contributes to the rich culture of the area, especially its sports, leisure, heritage and natural environment



### 1.3 Output Specification

This output specification provides a description of the desired end results or outcomes of the green spaces operations service provision that are expected by the customers, end-users, and communities of Charnwood. It is not intended to be a set of instructions, but provides detailed guidance to the service provider and customer on the subject of the expected quality standards.

It is based on general standards for excellent local authority green spaces provision and incorporates the previous grounds maintenance contract specification standards.

The specification is linked to an inspection system as outlined in Appendix 2 and the service provider will be expected to set targets against an agreed baseline assessment and show continuous improvement towards achieving excellence over all sites. It is recognised that to achieve such a challenging set of specification standards on all sites at all times is unlikely, so the inspection system is based on improvement against a baseline.

These inspection results and track record will be published quarterly on the Councils website

In addition to the general specification, separate, but closely related, bespoke specifications can be developed for individual sites such as Loughborough Cemetery. Following consultation with stakeholders, these will be adopted as the standard against which we inspect and judge the quality of service delivery and will form the basis for customer charters for service user groups.

## **2.0 Green Spaces Operations Output Specification**

### **2.1 Values & Principles**

The Service Provider is expected to provide a high quality grounds maintenance service by employing professionally trained and skilled staff. It is important that all staff work to the specification in a spirit of partnership working rather than in a contractual or adversarial manner. It is expected that the maintenance regimes will be carried out with professionalism and pride, generating compliments rather than being a source of complaints.

#### **The Service Provider's staff will be expected to:**

- Promote and support the vision, values and priorities of the Council and the aims and objectives of all relevant strategies, service plans and programmes (e.g. Loughborough in Bloom). In particular, they will be expected to manage the causes and impact of climate change and promote sustainability by avoiding the unnecessary use of peat or chemicals, and by protecting and developing wildlife and habitats in the course of their work.
- Promote neighbourhood working and community involvement by being supportive to community groups, volunteers, etc. who wish to become engaged in green space issues.

- Act proactively, promptly and positively to address problems and issues as they arise.
- Be approachable and stay in touch with customers as the first point of contact with the Council.
- Take proactive responsibility for dealing with problems such as vandalism and graffiti as soon as discovered.
- Take pride in their work and produce high quality standards.

**Poor working practice and inappropriate conduct will be dealt with effectively by the Service Provider to eliminate practice such as:**

- Damage to sites by driving vehicles over grassed and other areas when ground or weather conditions are unsuitable.
- Damage to sites, vehicles and equipment as a result of proven negligence.
- Mowing and shredding clearly visible litter.
- Failing to lock/unlock designated sites.
- Failing to remove rubbish and/or tipping in grounds maintenance services, etc.
- Failing to work/deliberate time wasting in core hours.
- Poor Health and Safety practice.
- Inconsiderate driving/driving vehicles at excess speed.
- Inadequate warning signage e.g. Chapter 8 on roadways.
- Failure to deal immediately with health and safety hazards.
- Misconduct, e.g. theft from site, abusive behaviour, etc

### **3.0 General Requirements for parks, green spaces and public spaces**

Charnwood has a unique heritage of high quality green spaces that are still largely in good condition and state of repair.

A programme of investment and improvement is planned to develop centres of excellence for a range of leisure and recreational activities.

Many sites are important for heritage value, nature/biodiversity interest, involvement of local residents, sports and games facilities etc. They are rated as highly important by Council taxpayers and are used extensively for events and activities by families, footballers, bowlers, dog-walkers, community groups, etc.

Parks and green space users rely on high levels and standards of support and the service provider is expected to respond positively to initiatives, which bring the grounds and green space to life.

The work of the service provider is crucial in “setting the stage” for activities and events, so these sites should therefore be afforded due respect by operatives who should strive to deliver high quality workmanship to the people of Charnwood.

**These areas should provide:**

- a) A clean, safe, well presented, welcoming environment for users and visitors.
- b) Buildings / shelters /site furniture that are clean, properly presented and correctly positioned.
- c) Bins that are never full.
- d) Playgrounds in safe working order, regularly inspected and complying with statutory guidelines.
- e) Sites free from vandalism, graffiti and litter.
- f) Sites free from dog fouling on paths and areas of high public usage.
- g) Pathways that are clean, free from litter, debris with gullies and grids in good working order.
- h) Sites fully accessible during opening hours and facilities which are available and fit for purpose.
- i) Sites at which, during periods of snow and ice, reasonable precautions are taken to make the site safe.

**3.1 Customer Care**

Staff should respond positively to incidents and enquiries or complaints from service users/customers and members of the public, and when possible resolve the problem immediately on site.

Where immediate solutions are not feasible, details of customers / green space users name / address etc., should be taken, to ensure future contact and feedback.



We would encourage the development of positive relationships between staff and customers including proactive consideration for those with special requirements.

### **3.2 Tidy Work Practices**

All work within the green spaces should be carried out with the least inconvenience to customers and users; piles of debris should be cleared from paths and walkways and be removed as soon as is practicable and by the end of the working day.

Designated composting sites within parks and green spaces should be located out of sight of customers and maintained in neat and tidy condition and be free from any offensive smells.

### **3.3 Signage**

Green space signage relates to all signs installed by the Council, ranging from those which prohibit certain activities to promotional signage.

All of the above should be both clearly visible and free from dirt, with graffiti removed and maintained to corporate standards.

Inappropriate and out-of-date signs and notices should be reported for removal.

### **3.4 Footpaths**

Paths should be clean, tidy and free from litter, detritus, weeds and dog fouling. Those paths that are identified as important and well used on staffed sites should be inspected each working day, to ensure they meet the standard.

These designated paths should be free from ice and snow. All gullies should be safe, free from debris and maintained in good working order.

Footpaths should be fit for their designated purpose. Areas prone to flooding, with surface coat problems, potholes etc. should be reported and any immediate remedial action should be taken.



### **3.5 Buildings**

Designated buildings will be kept in clean, tidy, and safe condition. Minor repairs / maintenance and general caretaking, will be carried out by staff, and major problems will be reported promptly.

### **3.6 Toilets**

Toilet facilities should be available during designated opening hours.

They should be clearly signed, clean, graffiti-free, well lit, and free of unpleasant odours, stocked with toilet paper and soap with hand drying facilities and mirrors.

All cubicle doors should be in full working order and be fitted with appropriate locks.

Toilet seats, sanitary ware, and plumbing should be clean and in good working order.

### **3.7 Graffiti & Vandalism**

Immediate removal of evidence of graffiti and vandalism is known to discourage repeat incidents.

Action should be taken immediately for the removal and/or repair of graffiti / vandalism upon discovery. Offensive graffiti should be removed within twenty-four hours of discovery (or reported on same day) and all other graffiti within the Council's prescribed response times

### **3.8 Litter**

On designated sites the park/cemetery/green spaces should be maintained in a litter-free condition and all bins should be available for use and not be full or overflowing. All sites will comply with the Environmental Protection Act cleanliness criteria and Charnwood Council's Waste Management specification.

### **3.9 Leaf Clearance**

On open space areas leaf and tree litter shall only be removed from paths, ornamental lawn, flower beds, sports playing areas etc. in order to prevent slip hazards, damage to fine turf/plants or interference to play. Special attention shall be given to fine turf areas, equipped play grounds, tennis courts etc. The service provider shall be liable for the costs of repair and re-instatement caused by failure to provide

### **3.10 Anti-Social Behaviour**

Anti-social behaviour in parks and green space cannot be accepted or ignored.

The degree of severity can vary, but Green Spaces Operations Service staff should address minor incidents and problems, as and when observed.

Incidents that are more serious should be reported immediately to facilitate further action.

### **3.11 General Reporting**

We would encourage staff to report any incidents, observations, or suggestions, which could contribute to the continuous improvements of the service using the appropriate forms or methods.

Where damage or irresolvable issues are encountered these should be reported immediately to the line manager.

### **3.12 Parks Furniture**

All parks and green space furniture should be clean, tidy and maintained in a condition fit for its purpose.



### **3.13 Dog Fouling**

All areas of the green space shall remain free from dog fouling to allow visitors to enjoy all facilities without fear of contamination.

Staff should assist this aim by removing contamination from specified sites and by ensuring that dog bins are emptied regularly and by talking to dog owners about the Councils aims.

It is expected that Service Provider staff will report offenders to their line managers, Park Wardens or Parks Service staff following any warnings to offenders.

### **3.14 Locking / Unlocking grounds maintenance services**

All park and green space facilities should be accessible during the stated opening hours. This requires all gates to be locked and unlocked at the appropriate times.

Staff must close designated gates/doors immediately after themselves on every occasion where security requires it.

### **3.15 Site Specific Requirements**

There are a number of features in our parks, gardens, green spaces, and other sites that are unique (e.g. special surfaces, herbaceous borders, rockeries, aviaries etc). The associated work requirements for these features will be detailed in site-specific documents.

## **4.0 Ornamental Landscape Features**

There are a number of landscape features, which are dynamic systems ranging from newly planted to fully or over-mature features, which require regular and appropriate maintenance. Such maintenance requires on-the-spot judgements to be made based on the professional expertise of the operatives and recognised good practice. These features include:

- Floral bedding
- Rose beds
- Shrub beds (Volume, Naturalised and Ornamental)

### **4.1 Seasonal Floral Bedding**

These important green space features represent a much-loved aspect of local identity, bringing colour and interest to improve a neighbourhood's quality of life. Planting in prepared ornamental feature beds provide floral colour for two seasonal schemes (spring and summer):

- Completed beds must comply with specified design to provide uniform display over full area of the bed.

- Varieties of plants to be used, including bulbs, should be true to type, healthy, free of pest and disease, and in prime condition at the time of planting.
- Beds must be well prepared, watered, with a well-structured soil in good condition, to good horticultural standards, to produce good display and plant vigour throughout the season.
- Beds must be maintained, watered and fed to a high horticultural standard throughout the year, and be aesthetically pleasing, free from litter, weeds, pest and disease.

## **4.2 Hanging Baskets and Containers**

These important features also represent a much-loved aspect of local identity, bringing colour and interest to improve public spaces and a neighbourhood's quality of life. They are important to the attractiveness of the area contribute to the promotion of tourism and inward investment. Planting in prepared containers/hanging baskets provide floral colour for the summer months only.

- Completed containers/hanging baskets must be safely installed and comply with specified design to provide good display over the full area of the containers/hanging baskets
- Varieties of plants to be used, including bulbs, should be true to type, healthy, free of pest and disease, and in prime condition at the time of planting and installation.
- Containers/hanging baskets must be well prepared, watered, with a well-structured soil in good condition, to high horticultural standards, to produce good display and plant vigour throughout the season.
- Containers/hanging baskets must be maintained, watered and fed to a high horticultural standard throughout the season, and be aesthetically pleasing, free from litter, weeds, pest and disease.

## **4.3 Rose Beds**

Rose beds in parks and green spaces have been created to provide a traditional high quality summer display of colour and fragrance. They are important design features, which contribute significantly to the character and beauty of the site often reflecting a particular era, and as such should be subject to careful and considerate maintenance regimes. They should be maintained to provide:

- Uniform plant coverage of the bed area.

- Healthy plants free from pest, disease and herbicide damage.
- Maximum flowering encouraged by deadheading.
- Maintenance to a high horticultural standard throughout the year aesthetically pleasing, free from litter, debris, leaves and weeds.
- Good soil condition and husbandry, which should be achieved by the addition of appropriate organic material and fertiliser.
- Plants which are pruned to good horticultural practice, to enhance and promote healthy flowering and general plant vigour.

#### **4.4 Shrub Beds (Volume)**

These landscape design features are distributed throughout the Borough on open space sites etc. They contribute greatly to the character and appearance of the local area, providing structure, colour, form, and texture to the landscape. This in turn makes the area attractive for residents and visitors and helps to attract business and inward investment. Proper maintenance ensures their attractiveness and longevity. They should be maintained to provide:

- Uniform plant cover at all times.
- Removal of dead / diseased material.
- Pruning as required to eliminate nuisance, overhanging and intrusive growth.
- Pruning for access/security/sight-lines - it may be necessary to prune shrubs out of specification due to police or council request on any public site. In this case the specification for hedges will be used.
- Pruning shall be carried out as required by species for health, growth, vigour and flowering - It is anticipated that annual pruning will be required for the following species:
  - ~Buddleia
  - ~Cornus
  - ~Forsythia
  - ~Willow

Beds maintained throughout the year are to be aesthetically pleasing, free from litter, weeds, pest and disease, including debris and self-seeded saplings.

#### 4.5 Shrub Beds (Ornamental)

These beds are normally situated in parks and green space or high-profile sites to provide structure and form to a landscape design and to provide seasonal interest and displays of texture, colour and fragrance. They provide major horticultural features in their environment, and should be dynamically managed to ensure maximum ornamental year-round display and plant interest.

- **Pruning for access/security/sight-lines** – It may be necessary to prune shrubs out of specification due to Police or Council request on any public site. In this case the specification for hedges will be used.

Shrub beds should be maintained to ensure:

- Uniform plant cover at all times
- Removal of dead/diseased material
- Pruning as required to eliminate nuisance, overhanging and intrusive growth.
- *Pruning as required by species for health, growth, vigour and flowering* in accordance with good horticultural practice. It is anticipated that annual pruning will be required for the following species:

~Buddleia

~Cornus

~Forsythia

~Willow

~Shrub Roses

- Maintained throughout the year, these beds should be aesthetically pleasing and free from litter, weeds, pest, and disease, including debris and self-seeded saplings.
- Cultivated or mulched soil surface – fresh, pleasing soil tilth, weed and litter free.

#### 4.6 Shrub Beds (Naturalised)

These beds are provided to give a semi-natural/ natural effect, encouraging:

- Wildlife via natural urban habitat; and
- Natural leaf-fall to be retained.
- They should be maintained to provide an aesthetically pleasing and safe environment free from litter, debris, noticeable weeds, and actively managed to encourage desired planting (which may include wild flowers and naturalised bulbs).
- *Pruning for security /sight-lines-* it may be necessary to prune shrubs out of specification due to police or council request on any public site. In this case the specification for hedges will be used.



## 5.0 Grassed Areas

All grassed areas have been classified as follows:

- Ornamental
- Amenity
- Volume
- Long grass regime
- Sports

### 5.1 Ornamental Grassed Areas

These areas of fine quality turf are normally situated in high profile areas adjacent to features such as flowerbeds, buildings, rose gardens etc to provide an aesthetically pleasing backdrop. It is expected that these areas would require a weekly mowing frequency regime. These areas should provide:

- Grass no longer than 35mm. (1.5 inches)



- No shorter than 15mm. (3/4 inch)
- Uniform cut including perimeter edges / obstacles.
- Striped finish where appropriate.
- Clean, clipping-free, litter and debris-free finish.
- Green healthy looking sward, free from unsightly weeds / moss / bare patches- all year round.
- Paths and surrounds, free of clippings.
- Edges to beds should be maintained to provide neatly trimmed, tidy and aesthetically pleasing perimeters, sympathetic to the site's design.

## **5.2 Amenity Grass**

These are areas of good turf usually situated in parks, green space and gardens, where an above-average quality finish is required. It is expected that these areas would require a mowing frequency regime of 7-8 working days. These areas should provide:

- Appearance of healthy sward with few unsightly weeds or bare patches
- No litter, debris, or unsightly heaped clippings .
- To provide a welcoming and useable area for park and green space users, including informal games and picnics.
- Height of grass should be between 25 and 65mm. (1-2.5 inches)
- All areas uniformly cut including perimeter edges and obstacles.
- Paths and surrounds free of clippings.
- Edges to beds should be maintained to provide neat, tidy and aesthetically pleasing perimeter, sympathetic to site's design.

## **5.3 Volume Grass**

This type of turf is found on housing estates, open spaces, recreation grounds etc., and comprises of the majority of grassed areas in Charnwood. It is crucial to the image, appearance and success of Charnwood B.C. that these areas are properly maintained. These areas should provide:

- Neat, attractive appearance all grass uniformly cut, including perimeter edges and obstacles.
- Free of all unsightly litter, debris, and clumps of clippings
- Grass height between 25-85 mm. (1- 3.5 inches)
- Paths and surrounding edges free of clippings at all times
- Use of herbicide for grass edging is permissible by agreement, but in compliance with neat and attractive appearance.
- Edges to beds should be maintained to provide neat, tidy and aesthetically pleasing perimeter, sympathetic to site's design.

#### **5.4 Long Grass Regimes**

##### **Cut and Not Clear**

These are areas maintained for fire hazard reduction and minimum cost to deter fly tipping, for example, or to prevent reversion to scrub land.

All herbage to be reduced to 50mm (2 inches) and no longer than 75mm (3 inches)

All fly tipping to be reported and removed from area on request.

##### **Rural Road Verges**

Many rural roadside verges are maintained to fit the character of the surrounding countryside. They should be kept in good order by ensuring that safety, hygiene, and nature conservation needs are dealt with effectively and sensitively.

- Grass height should be maintained between 100 (4 inches) and 600mm (24 inches) to allow highway traffic to have clear sight line at all times.
- All fly tipping and debris to be reported and removed if instructed.
- All road channels should be free of grass and related debris at all times. Most of the years mowing is required during the months of May and September.

#### **5.5 Naturalised Bulb Areas**

Bulb areas in grass are provided to give seasonal impact, colour and interest. They

are much loved by the public, and require both careful and knowledgeable maintenance. This is to ensure that they do not degenerate over time. Plants must be allowed to complete their growth cycle before mowing takes place.

- The first cut should take place at least six weeks following the **completion** of flowering but no more than eight weeks.
- All clippings should be removed from site.
- The area should then revert to the regime of the surrounding grass.

## **5.6 Leaf Clearance**

On open space areas leaf and tree litter shall only be removed from paths, ornamental lawn, flower beds, sports playing areas etc. in order to prevent slip hazards, damage to turf/plants or interference to play. Special attention shall be given to fine turf areas, equipped play grounds, tennis courts etc. The service provider shall be liable for the costs of repair and re-instatement caused by failure to provide this service effectively

## **5.7 Hedges**

Hedges have many functions in the design of green space, including compartmentalising sites, screening, shelter etc. They should be maintained to suit their purpose, be aesthetically pleasing, and cause no problems to users.

## **5.8 Ornamental Hedges**

- Hedges should be cut back to designated size with any extension growth no longer than 300mm (12 inches). The top of the hedge should be level and even, with in the design of the site requires stepped or specially shaped profiles.
- The profile of the hedge should be narrower at the top compared with the base, to encourage uniform, compact growth, well furnished to the base and to prevent damage from snow and be uniformly cut along its length.
- Any dead or diseased plant material should be removed and gaps in the hedge should be replenished and protected to ensure continuous cover in a timely fashion.

## 5.9 Field Hedges

- Hedges should be kept to a designated size with any extension growth no longer than 600mm (24 inches). The top of the hedge should be level.
- The profile of the hedge should be narrower at the top compared with the base, to encourage uniform, compact growth, well furnished to the base and to prevent damage from snow.
- Any dead or diseased plant material should be removed and gaps in the hedge should be replenished and protected to ensure continuous cover in a timely fashion. The hedge and base should be free of litter, debris, clippings and weeds.
- Due consideration should be given to bird nesting and nature conservation issues in the management of these hedges and hedgerows (*See Nature Development section*).

## 5.10 Sports Requirements

The service provider will be responsible for many outdoor sports facilities in green spaces. These provide opportunities for the public to take part in sports and games, as part of the Council's aim to promote healthy lifestyles. The end users will expect the service provider to be supportive and helpful in the timing and overall provision of a high quality service.

- Sports Fields / Rugby / Soccer and Mini Soccer surfaces will be maintained to the standards required of volume grass.
- Rugby pitches maintained to similar standard but grass height cut to **100mm – 150mm** (4-6 inches) during playing season.
- All pitches to be marked with clear white lines in accordance with the sports' rules and requirements and be visible from 25 yards at the time of play.
- Where provided, posts will be safe, straight, vertical, painted and installed in accordance with rules and requirements of the pitch and sport.
- Evidence of a maintenance programme will be required to achieve a well-drained, true and playable surface throughout the season. (For guidance, when ground conditions are acceptable, a program of spiking, harrowing, rolling, sanding of eroded areas and divot replacement will be required and this may vary from site to site).

- During the growing season the playing surface should be maintained to provide a uniform green, healthy sward consistent with the requirements of the sport.
- On designated sites, changing facilities will be cleaned and prepared to ensure they are clean and in good working order and to users' satisfaction.

## 5.11 Bowling Greens

Bowling greens are very popular games facilities that should be maintained to a level fit for a high standard of play. Greens should be available by 10.30am each working day and, preferably, should be cut on club match days.

- The grass sward should be maintained in a healthy, uniform, weed and disease free condition. The grass should be evenly cut, striped across the whole of the surface and no higher than 5mm (3/16ths inch) during the playing season.
- Grass height should be no longer than 10mm (1/2 inch) outside of the playing season.
- Surface should be even and free draining, with no minor defects, which affect the playability of the green. This will include the dispersal of worm casts from the surface of the green.
- The edges of the green should be trimmed neatly and be no longer than 10mm (1/2 inch).
- A channels shall be maintained around the perimeter of the green according to site requirements and be kept free from litter, debris and weeds.
- Where channel boards are provided they should be complete, sound, painted, neat and tidy condition and properly aligned in the channel.



## 5.12 Cricket

Cricket is a popular summer sport, which is very dependent on good quality grounds maintenance. Cricket areas typically consist of an outfield, square and the wicket, which is prepared for an individual game. It is important that the playing surface of the wicket is safe, in addition to being suitable for play. The correct measurements and dimensions for marking out are critical.

## 5.13 Grass

- All out field areas should be maintained to ornamental grass standard.
- The cricket square should be clearly identified and maintained in a healthy, uniform, weed and disease free condition. The grass should be evenly cut across the whole of the surface and no higher than 10mm (1/2 inch) during the playing season.
- Grass height should be no longer than 15(3/4 inch) mm outside of the playing season.
- Surface should be even and free draining, with no minor defects, which affect the playability of the green. This will include the avoidance of worm casts from the surface of the square.
- Prior to a cricket match a wicket will be prepared to provide a safe, sound and correctly marked playing surface to regulation size and standards. The grass should be evenly cut across the whole of the wicket and no higher than 3mm (2/16 inch). No stripes will be visible to prevent advantage being given to bowlers.
- After the match, the wicket will be repaired to enable recovery for further matches in the season.



#### **5.14 Artificial Cricket Wickets**

- Sand filled carpet surfaces should be maintained in a clean, tidy and playable condition, free of moss, weeds and debris and with neat edges.
- Any damage to the carpet should be repaired immediately.
- Prior to a match, the surface should be inspected to ensure it is suitable for play and all markings are clearly visible.
- At the end of each season, the pitch should be inspected to identify any remedial work that may be required prior to the next season.

#### **5.15 Tennis**

Tennis is a popular game especially during the summer months and porous hard surface courts are provided in many parks. The quality of the maintenance of the court and surrounds influences the usage, and therefore the income, both from casual play and from coaching sessions.

- Throughout the designated playing season the court and surrounds should provide a well-drained, level surface, fit for play and free from litter, debris, weeds and moss.
- The area should be clearly marked in accordance with the rules of the game.
- Tennis posts and nets should be in good working order and set at the correct playing height.
- The surround netting should be safe and in good repair.

#### **5.16 Golf**

This site provides the potential for a high quality golf experience and must be managed and maintained with care.

In addition, the facilities are capable of generating substantial amounts of income and the service provider must ensure that all effort is made to allow the recreational and financial opportunities to be fully exploited.

- The general grass areas surrounding the facility should be maintained to amenity standard.
- All fairways and tees should be maintained to ornamental grass standard.

- The greens should be maintained in a healthy, uniform, weed and disease free condition.
- The greens should be evenly cut across the whole of the surface and no higher than 5mm (3/16ths inch) during the playing season.
- Grass height should be no longer than 10mm (1/2 inch) outside of the playing season.
- Surface should be even and free draining, with no minor defects, which affect the playability of the green.
- This will include the avoidance of worm casts from the surface of the green.
- The holes should be re-cut and moved on a regular basis to avoid undue wear and tear.
- Course furniture including tee markers, directional markers and flags should be in good condition and available at all times during playing hours.
- Bunkers should be maintained with an evenly raked surface, which should consist of soft, non-staining sand to a depth of 50mm, (2 inches) free from litter, debris, dog fouling and weeds.

## **6.0 Playgrounds**

Playgrounds are essential recreational and social provision for the development of play in childhood. Good maintenance and vigilant inspection of these facilities is essential to ensure a safe and rewarding experience for the children who use them.

- Site staff on a daily basis should submit following a safety inspection, a fully completed inspection form for each playground.
- Play facilities should be maintained in a safe condition and fit for purpose.
- Equipment should be kept free from graffiti and the play area should be free from litter, weeds, debris, glass and dog fouling.
- Any safety hazard identified should be resolved immediately or the equipment/ area be taken out of public use.
- Rubberised safety surfaces should be maintained in a clean and tidy condition free from moss, litter, debris, glass and dog fouling.
- Bark safety surfaces should be maintained to a depth of 300mm (12 inches), evenly distributed, raked, and not compact to allow maximum impact absorption and free from litter, debris, glass, weeds and dog fouling.



## **7.0 Hard Surfaces**

These surfaces include car parks, tennis courts, multi-sports areas, Swan Maze etc. They should be maintained to be fit for use at all times.

- Non-grassed areas (e.g. Tarmac, Paved and Cinder) within the immediate area of the sites are to be maintained to provide safe, clean weed and litter and leaf-free surfaces.
- The edges of grassed areas shall not be allowed to overgrow or encroach by more than 50mm (2 inches).
- The edges of ornamental and sports hard surfaces shall not be allowed to overgrow or encroach by more than 25mm (1 inch).
- Gullies and drainage systems shall be maintained in good working order.
- Fence lines shall be free from weeds including self-sown trees and weeds.

## **8.0 Ponds & Water Features**

Ponds and water features can make an attractive asset to any area of open space. However, they can attract a lot of litter. It is important therefore that all water areas are kept clean from litter, leaves and other debris. When accumulations cannot be reached safely, they shall be reported, so that arrangements can be made to have it cleared.

## **9.0 Nature Development**

The following can provide valuable natural habitats for wildlife:

- Local Nature Reserves and other designated wildlife sites
- Parks and recreation grounds
- Playing fields and open spaces
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Woodlands
- Hedgerows and ditches
- Allotments,
- Sports grounds, golf courses, etc.

**Local Authorities' responsibility for biodiversity has been steadily increasing over the last few years. No longer can the subject be considered an optional add-on that can be disregarded when resources are tight. The legislation is a complex of national and European legal requirements but overarching the**

**provisions for particular sites and species is the duty now placed upon local authorities (and all public bodies) by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the NERC Act).**

**This states that:**

***‘Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.***

The Service Provider is expected on all sites to be aware of the importance of effective habitat management and achieving a balance between recreational use of public greenspace and its valuable contribution to biodiversity.

When maintaining Charnwood’s green spaces, appropriate management regimes shall be in place for designated and identified sites or parts of sites in addition to a general duty of care for habitats and wildlife. All areas shall be managed to conserve and enhance green infrastructure networks to support a wider variety of habitat and species. The Service Provider and its staff are expected to:

- Carry out the most appropriate management regime depending on the sites location, user groups and environmental quality.
- Value, protect and increase the diversity and quantity of flora and fauna.
- Ensure that habitats are not disturbed or damaged.
- Avoid fragmentation and isolation of habitats.
- Develop relationships and partnerships with owners and user groups of greenspace to encourage best practice management and understanding of nature conservation.
- Service providers should seek appropriate advice on site management when needed.

On designated and identified sites the service provider shall:

- Use less intense maintenance practices where appropriate such as differential mowing, leaving leaves under hedgerows and woodland edges and reducing the area of short sward amenity grassland.
- Use organic means of pest control.
- Use native species of trees and shrubs and plants where possible.
- Allow fallen leaves to remain on soil to provide humus.
- When raking up leaves leave them in a sheltered corner to encourage wildlife.
- Put up and maintain bird boxes and bat boxes.

## **9.1 Hedgerow Management For Wildlife**

Hedgerows are important as wildlife habitats and as corridors linking areas of ecological value. A hedgerow is a row of trees and shrubs which is maintained as a barrier by periodically cutting into the stems in order to bend the shrubs/trees over to form an unbroken line. Shoots will then be produced along the length of these

stems. This process is known as laying. Following laying a hedge can be maintained by trimming for 10 to 20 years. If hedgerows are not periodically laid they will eventually evolve into rows of trees and shrubs which have little effect as barriers and reduced wildlife value. Some hedgerows have accompanying ditches which shall be kept maintained in order to enhance biodiversity and ensure good drainage.

- Hedges will be periodically laid in order to retain their value as barriers and as wildlife habitat. 100m of hedge will be laid per year as directed by the supervising officer.
- Hedge trimming shall take place from January to the end of February to avoid disturbance to bird's nests, which are present from March to August.
- From September through to December berries are present on shrubs such as Hawthorn, Elder, Holly and hedgerows containing these species are important food sources for wintering birds and animals. Therefore, trimming shall not be carried out during this time on species, which provide winter food or shelter.
- Field hedges and hedgerows shall be trimmed on a two to three-year rotation, rather than annually, to ensure that thick nesting cover is available and to boost berry crop and populations of over wintering insects.
- Trimming all hedges on any one site in the same year shall be avoided if possible.
- The base of hedges and trees except on designated and identified areas should not be subject to chemical treatment so that ground flora can develop unhindered thereby increasing the plant diversity of the hedgerow.
- Maintain hedgerow ditches, inlets and outlets to allow necessary drainage etc. but ensure minimum amount of disturbance to allow wildlife such as birds, small mammals and amphibians to remain undisturbed especially during breeding/hibernation periods.

*NOTE: The nests, eggs and young of breeding birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If an intentional offence is committed, it can attract a fine of up to £5,000 per nest or egg destroyed, and /or a custodial sentence of up to six months.*

## **9.2 Trees And Shrubs**

The environmental benefits of trees and woodlands are great, but so are the responsibilities of the management and the possible consequences of negligence. Any direct contact with the public on site shall be handled tactfully and referred to the Senior Technical Support Officer if necessary.

Whenever work is carried out on trees owned by the Council, it shall be in accordance with good arboriculture practice (in particular, BS 3998) and all current health and safety regulations. Any pruning undertaken shall not be detrimental to the general health, shape and character of the tree concerned. The Council's Senior Technical Support Officer shall offer detailed advice on site when needed.

- In identified areas blocks of rough grassland shall be allowed to develop around patch planted trees to create biodiversity banks
- In identified areas, deadwood shall be left as habitat piles in sheltered corners that will not be disturbed.
- On identified sites, dead and dying trees shall be retained where they are not a hazard to support important insect communities, hole-nesting birds and provide bat roosts.

### **9.3 Ponds, ditches and water features**

During the past 100 years the UK countryside has lost almost 70% of its ponds and ditches, consequently those on public owned greenspace are of increasing value to wildlife. As well as managing the ponds and water features themselves it is important to have regard to the maintenance of bank side vegetation.

- Ponds, ditches and water features can attract litter that can be detrimental to their appearance and functioning. It is important therefore that all water areas are regularly kept clean from litter and other debris.
- Inlets and outlets shall be kept in good working order. Outlets and sluice gates shall be kept free from obstructions at all times.
- On smaller ponds floating leaves shall be raked off and where possible some of the leaves that have sunk to the bottom of the water shall be removed. Removal of leaf litter shall take place in the autumn.

All other work on ponds and water features, as listed below, shall be carried out under instruction from the supervising officer or according to the specific requirements of the appropriate site management plan

- Marginal vegetation surrounding ponds shall be cleared in patches in rotation (according to individual management plans) so there is always a succession developing from bare mud.
- Where necessary barley straw shall be used in order to control excessive algal blooms. Barley straw will be applied between February and April.
- Removal of excess vegetation in order to retain suitable areas of open water shall be carried out between October and January. The area of open water to be maintained in respect of each pond shall be determined by the supervising officer or as set out in the appropriate management plan

- When clearing out vegetation no more than one-third of any species shall be removed in one year. Vegetation shall be removed in wedges covering no more than a third of the area of the pond per year. Vegetation which has been removed shall be left on the side for at least a day to allow any creatures to return to the pond.
- Invasive floating species such as Lemna and Azolla sps, shall be cleared as completely as possible from the open water surface when requested.
- Where specified a 2m wide strip of tall vegetation is to be retained along the edge of brooks and watercourses. This strip shall be cut biannually with different sections being cut annually in rotation in accordance with management plans. Vegetation shall be cut in late August and removed from the site.
- Where bank side willows and other trees have been pollarded in the past these shall be re-pollarded on a 20 year cycle, ensuring that there are always some mature pollards present on a site to provide habitat for invertebrates.
- Appropriate permission and advice shall be sought from the supervising officer prior to clearing out or applying weed killers around ponds or waterways especially in the case of problem weeds such as Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed.

#### **9.4 Grasslands with high nature conservation value**

A range of grassland management regimes, aimed at preserving and enhancing biodiversity, have been developed for use on designated wildlife sites or parts of more formally managed sites set aside for wildlife. Larger areas, which constitute the remnants of semi-natural species rich grassland, are managed under Environmental Stewardship Agreements with DEFRA. Grassland areas on other wildlife sites are maintained to provide a mosaic of habitats. All other work grassland, as listed below, will be carried out under instruction from the supervising officer or according to the specific requirements of the appropriate site management plan

- Meadows and other large areas of species rich grasslands are managed to preserve and enhance species diversity. This is achieved through a combination of hay cuts and, where appropriate, grazing with cattle.
- Management of areas of rough/long grassland identified in site management plans shall involve an annual 'hay cut'. Subsequent to the annual removal of hay crops areas of long grass shall be cut to meet the volume grass specifications (excluding the use of herbicides on path edges) up until the first week in

April. The grass shall then be left to grow until the end of July or as otherwise stated in the site management plan. At the appropriate time, or upon direction of the supervising officer, the grass shall be cut and removed. The grass shall then be cut to meet volume grass specifications for the rest of the season. Spot weed control shall be used where necessary to control unwanted vegetation. Fertiliser shall not be applied to these areas.

- Short grass areas on wildlife sites shall be managed to meet the volume grass specifications excluding the use of herbicides on path edges.
- Paths are to be kept mown to a height of 50mm to allow easy access to grounds maintenance and service users.

## **9.5 Designated plantations and wildlife sites**

Trees plantations, and other sites which are managed for wildlife, play an important role in enhancing biodiversity. These trees and shrubs will have a less formal appearance than trees and shrubs on more formally managed sites. Except where it is required that paths and site lines are kept clear, trees and shrubs should not be cut back annually. All other work on these sites, as listed below, shall be carried out under instruction from the supervising officer or according to the specific requirements of the appropriate site management plan

- Shrubs shall be thinned where necessary and coppiced periodically in order to maintain vigour and control size. Dead wood shall not be removed from trees unless it constitutes a real risk to health and safety
- Shrubs on wildlife sites shall be coppiced on a ten year rotation, or upon direction of the supervising officer, with no more than 50% of shrubs on any one site being coppiced in any one year.
- Following coppicing the shrub block shall be kept free from weed for the first three years following coppicing. No herbicides shall be used on these sites, unless approved by the supervising officer.
- In identified areas, deadwood shall be left as habitat piles in sheltered corners that will not be disturbed.
- On identified sites, dead and dying trees shall be retained where they are not a hazard to support important insect communities, hole-nesting birds and provide bat roosts.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Pictorial Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Sites**

The Output Specification is set in the context of important recent developments in the improvement and management of open space and greenspace, and their role in regeneration, health promotion, social cohesion and cultural development.

The role of the Green Spaces Operations Service is to prepare our greenspace for community and customer use and to set the stage for events, sports, games and recreational opportunities for all.

The desired eventual output is greenspace which is pleasant, clean, green and safe:

#### **Footpaths**



An example of a satisfactory, clean and tidy footpath.



Examples of poorly maintained steps and footpaths

## Graffiti on Buildings and Walls



Offensive graffiti should be removed within twenty four hours



Graffiti on buildings and infrastructure is unacceptable, it should be reported or removed according to the specification within the Council's response times.





**Leaf Clearance:**



An example of an unacceptable accumulation of leaves on an ornamental grassed area



Examples of acceptable practice of ornamental hedge maintenance can be seen in the above and below photographs



## Parks Furniture



Unsatisfactory, poorly maintained green space furniture which is rusting and rotting



An example of well maintained park furniture that is clean, tidy and safe for children.

## Ornamental Landscape Features: Seasonal Floral Bedding

Satisfactory examples:



Good summer seasonal floral display with good edging-off.



Satisfactory newly planted summer seasonal floral design and display with an example of a well-trimmed hedge.



Satisfactory summer seasonal floral design and display with some gaps due to vandalism, but barely acceptable weed growth

**Unsatisfactory examples:**



Unsatisfactory preparation, planting and maintenance of seasonal floral display.



Unsatisfactory preparation and maintenance of a seasonal bedding display.



Poor seasonal floral bedding maintenance and weed control damage.

### **Rose Beds**

**Satisfactory examples:**



Satisfactory rose bed design and maintenance. There is no evidence of mulching and there are some gaps. Good quality mowing.



Close up of satisfactory rose bed maintenance

**Unsatisfactory examples:**



Unsatisfactory rose bed maintenance Large gaps probably due to misuse of herbicide and poor maintenance

**Shrub Beds (Volume)**

**Unsatisfactory:**



Unsatisfactory pruning of a Laurel



Unsatisfactory pruning practice in a semi-naturalised area.

### **Shrub Beds Naturalised**



A good example of a naturalised shrub border, providing a habitat for local wildlife



This shows a satisfactory herbaceous border

**Grassed Areas**



An example of an ornamental grassed area that is clean, tidy and well designed and maintained with a pleasing view, but some unsatisfactory floral displays.



An example of an ornamental grassed area that is clean, tidy, well designed and maintained in dry conditions, but with some mower damage.

**Amenity Grass**



Left: An example of well maintained amenity grass with acceptable leaf fall

Right: An example of grass with barely acceptable accumulations of clippings

**Volume Grass**

**Satisfactory:**



Good example of strimmed area around base of tree without damage to bark surface.



Good examples of reformed edges on different sites.

**Unsatisfactory:**



Unacceptable grass cutting on a volume site.





Unacceptable roadside verge maintenance

### **Sports Requirements**



This shows an unacceptable obstacle spraying and strimming on a volume / amenity site within sporting facilities.

### **Bowling Green**



Above is a well maintained bowling green

## Cricket Ground



Good example of a well prepared cricket wicket and square

## Tennis Courts



Unsatisfactory tennis court. Moss has gathered in the corners of the court, leaves and tree litter have been also left to gather and have not been swept up.

## Golf





Fig. 35 shows a well maintained golfing green however Fig. 36 shows an untidy, problematic golf tee area.

## **Playgrounds**



The above images show well-maintained playgrounds which are safe, clean and tidy for young children.

## Pond and Water Features



The top water feature has an excessive growth of pondweed which would need removal on instruction. The lower photos show algal growth build-up due to infrequent sluice gate clearance.



## **Appendix 2**

### **GREENSPACE QUALITY INSPECTION SYSTEM**

This inspection system is a fundamental building block of the Green Spaces Operations Service performance management system at Charnwood.

Although team leaders check each site upon completion for quality, a more robust independent system has been developed to monitor how well the specification standards are being met. The system is based on regular inspections of sites and there are a variety of features and criteria which are given a score for the quality of maintenance. The quality standard against which the site is judged are those set out in the Green Spaces Operations Service Output Specification.

There are thirty key sites – significant parks and open spaces which have a range of distinct features which will have been selected as indicators of the overall service quality and are of sufficient high profile to warrant regular inspection. These are listed for judgement/scoring on an inspection form, all of these sites will be inspected quarterly.

Other sites are divided between housing and open spaces (non-housing) and of these sites random batch samples will be chosen for inspection quarterly. These sites have similar features and have a generic score sheet.

All Sites will be scored on the basis that they meet the minimum required standard as set out in the specification. Extra points are available for work above minimum standard.

As the number of sites inspected increases over a period of time the track record will show patterns of improvement or decline in service quality. These will be attributable to teams and individuals, who will be accountable for their performance. Results will be made available on the Council's website.

Below are examples of inspection scoring summary sheets, guidance notes for inspectors, key site-specific score sheets and generic score sheets for housing and open spaces sites.

Currently Green Spaces Operations and Development staff (sometimes accompanied by Housing Officers) carry out the inspections.

The inspection system, based on successful systems in other Councils, is still in its development stage will be refined with experience and usage.

## Charnwood Council Key Sites Inspection

The inspection scores are summarised in the table below. They have been colour coded on a traffic light system. Green is good, amber needs some attention and red for unsatisfactory. Details follow this page.

Scores: 75%+ = Green; 65-74% = Amber; Below 65% = Red.

No.	Site	Inspection score No 1	Inspection score No 2	Inspection score No 3	Inspection score No 4
1.	Shelthorpe Golf Course				
2.	Derby Rd. Playing Fields				
3.	Fishpool Way Barrow upon Soar				
4.	Loughborough Leisure Centre				
	Charnwood Council Offices Southfields				
6.	Nanpantan Sports Ground				
7.	Queens Park				
8.	Loughborough Cemetery				
9.	Stapleford Park + Extension				
10.	Southfields Park				
11.	Loughborough Parish Church				
12.	Park Rd. Sports Ground				
13.	Holt Drive Rec.				
14.	Shortcliffe Park				
	Derby Rd Depot				
16.	Kirkstone Drive Park				
17.	Jubilee Park				
18.	Dishley Pond				
19.	Morley Quarry				
20.	Gorse Covert				
21.	Castle Park Mountsorrel				
22.	Cumbrian Way				
23.	Stafford Orchard				
24.	Charnwood Water				
25.	Stonebow Meadows				
26.	Great Central Rec.				
27.	Millennium Park Barrow upon Soar				
28.	Sidings Park				
29.	Soar Valley Leisure Centre				
30.	Radmoor Road Rec.				
	<b>AVERAGES %</b>				

# Charnwood Green Spaces Operations Inspection Scheme

## Inspection Scoring Guidance Notes

0	<b>Failure</b> – Fails to meet any of the specification standards and requires considerable work to reach standards required
1-1.9	<b>Very Poor</b> – Fails to meet any of the specification standards but could be put right with reasonable effort
2-2.9	<b>Poor</b> – Only just meets a few of the specification standards but fails most
3-3.9	<b>Extremely unsatisfactory</b> – meets a few specification standards, no evidence of effort to meet rest
4-4.9	<b>Very Unsatisfactory</b> – meets few specification standards some evidence of effort to meet others
5-6.9	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> – meets some specification standards, some evidence of effort to meet others
7- 7.4	<b>Partly satisfactory</b> – meets some specification standards, some details to be completed to meet specification
7.5-7.9	<b>Satisfactory</b> – meets all specification standards adequately
8-8.4	<b>Good</b> – meets some specification standards well, others adequately
8.5-8.9	<b>Very Good</b> – meets all specification standards well
9-9.9	<b>Excellent</b> – meets all specification standards exceptionally well
10	<b>Outstanding</b> – meets all specification standards exceptionally well and exceeds in some areas

Date:

Site name: Queens Park

Category	Comments	Score
Grass areas (ornamental)		
Grass (amenity)		
Bowling Green		
Shrubs		
Carillon Tower area		
Ornamental Beds		
Containers		
Hedges		
Trees		
Water features		
Signage		
Litter clearance		
Leaf & plant debris clearance		
Seating		
Litter & dog bins		
Paths		
Pond/sluices		
Compound		
Staff presence & approachability		
Feeling of security		
Wildlife care		
	<b>Total</b>	



Date:

Site name: Southfields Park

Category	Comments	Score
U5s play area		
Skate-board area		
Grass areas (ornamental)		
Grass (amenity or volume)		
Shrubs		
Roses		
Seasonal Beds		
Containers		
Hedges		
Trees		
Signage		
Litter		
Leaves & debris clearance		
Seating		
Litter & dog bins		
Paths		
Buildings		
Wildlife care		
	<b>Total</b>	
General		

# Housing sites Summary Sheet

<b>Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing Sites</b>			
<b>Dates from</b>		<b>To</b>	
<b>Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

Housing Site:

Date:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score</b>
Channels & paths		
Volume Grass		
Shrubs/Roses		
Hedges		
Trees		
Litter, leaves Etc		
	<b>Total</b>	
General		

Housing Site:

Date:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score</b>
Channels & paths		
Volume Grass		
Shrubs / Roses		
Hedges		
Trees		
Litter, leaves Etc		
	<b>Total</b>	
General		

# Open Spaces Summary Sheet

<b>Major Open Spaces Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Open Spaces Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

<b>Horticultural Improvement Team Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

<b>Sports Turf Team Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

<b>Loughborough Litter Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

<b>Charnwood Litter Average %</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Score</b>

**Other maintained Site:**

**Date:**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score</b>
Channels & paths		
Ornamental Grass		
Sports Marking		
Posts/nets etc		
Amenity Grass		
Shrubs / Roses		
Seasonal Bedding		
Hedges		
Trees/epicormic		
Litter, leaves Etc		
Other		
	<b>Total</b>	