

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 25 JULY 2019

**Question to Helen Fisher
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By David Brookes

Question

Where wild flowers have been sown on or adjacent to the road verges, does the contractor moderate their cutting regime to allow the wild flowers to finish flowering and go to seed, encouraging further biodiversity within our landscape in both urban and rural highways?

Reply

Several years ago, the highways team worked with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to review rural grass cutting specification and help protect local biodiversity. Across the Staffordshire Moorlands there are significant lengths of rural verges that are cut just once each year in late September / early October in order to preserve the self-seeded wild flowers. Elsewhere, rural highway verge cutting is kept to just one swathe width (approximately 1m), or full visibility splays at junctions, and carried out 2 or 3 times per year to maintain highway safety.

In the urban areas most grass verges are maintained by Borough, District and Parish Councils through effective two-tier working arrangements. The County Council makes a financial contribution to meet minimum highway safety requirements in terms of visibility splays and to prevent excessive overgrowth adjacent to footways. However, the frequency, extent and timing of the grass cutting is determined by the respective local Councils to meet different local needs, including balancing local biodiversity and amenity value.