

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
3 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Officer: Danny Powell – Operations Manager

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Purpose

To report on Town Council grounds maintenance operations.

Introduction

Once again, my report starts with the ongoing hot dry weather we have been having this year. On the plus side this has reduced the grass growth, and we have been able to use staff to undertake some work earlier than normal. On the negative side, most of the grass on our fine turf surfaces and football pitches has been burnt off and this will mean a more intensive renovation programme will be required this autumn to get the surfaces back to standard for next year.

I expect our football pitches to lose a percentage of their grass coverage this season, as the season has started on dry dead grass and playing of games will wear this away quite quickly. This will then require more renovation next spring to replace the lost sward coverage.

The floral decorations across the Town have been kept alive by continuous watering, but at times we have had several baskets die and have had to replace them. The irrigation system in the Dingle has broken on several occasions and this has resulted in hand watering by staff to keep the plants alive.

The weather has had an impact on our tree stock across the town, with an increase in dead trees which require removal, trees already starting to shed their leaves and we have had a number of limbs falling from mature trees. Summer Branch Drop (SBD) is the spontaneous and unexpected falling of large, heavy branches from mature, apparently healthy trees during warm weather, often after a period of drought (see separate Report). The Tree Team have work that will occupy them till the end of the year.

Countryside Team

- The Ash die back survey is underway, this is around about 75% complete.
Hay cutting- have cut about 7.5ha of Meadows for hay- we have a reduced number of bails made this year because of the hot dry weather reducing grass growth.
Paths have been cut on the countryside sites.
Continued checking of the Beaver compound and health of the Beavers is ongoing.
- Wildflower areas once they had finished flowering and seeds produced have been cut down.
- Mowing of Rural areas which we maintain, has been carried out when required.
- Tree team have been carrying out tree maintenance along with their mowing rounds.

Amenity Team

They have produced some wonderful floral displays across the town in very difficult conditions.

During the 2 Britain in Bloom judging days, they were on hand to show the judges the sites they maintain. The Nursery has started to take cuttings ready for next season and have collated the number of bedding plants we need for next summer. The Spring Bedding is being produced in the nursery, to go out this autumn. Spring flowering bulbs have been ordered.

We will start to remove the summer bedding displays at the end of September/early October.

In the next few weeks, the pruning of shrubs across estate/ roadside beds will start.

From the start of the new school term Condover College pupils will return to the greenhouse 1 day a week and this year we are also accommodating pupil/pupils from Derwent College for 1 day.

Our seasonal waters have now finished and returned to school and college; I would like to thank them for their work in the Town Centre this summer.

Recreation Grounds and Formal Space.

The hot dry weather has reduced the need to cut our large grass areas and street verges this summer on a regular basis. The staff have been redeployed in the Old Cemetery strimming the grass down, which usually does not happen to November. They have also removed the Epicormic growth on the trees in the Quarry and have assisted in general maintenance on Recreation Grounds and in the cemetery.

With Schools returning this week, hedges have been cut and Sports pitch markings and the erection of goal posts has been carried out ready for the new school year. We are coming towards the end of our summer sports seasons and are now planning the end of season renovation programmes.

The football season on Town Council pitches has now started and staff have been getting the pitches ready. The Turf Tank marker is now in its second year and has reduced the time it takes to mark out pitches from scratch. A staff member marked out 18 pitches in 2 days on his own, in the past this would have taken 2 staff just over 5 days to accomplish.

We are aware that we may have to mow verges for a longer period this year as when rain arrives and the soil temperature is warm then grass will grow for a longer time period.

The long dry summer has meant that we have had no fixture cancellations, and the Evening League Cricket and Rounders Leagues are now finished. Bowls and Saturday Cricket have about 3 weeks to completion. As stated, before the weather will mean that we will have to overseed our playing surfaces more this year because of the grass dying.

Logistics Team.

- Hedge cutting across the Town has started and will take the next 4 months to complete.
- As the tractor cuts the hedges, staff are following behind to finish those pieces that are missed. Once this has been completed then we can look at hedges which need hand cutting.
- The Playgrounds have been very busy this summer, and maintenance is ongoing.
- The Mechanics have been carrying maintenance of vehicles and machinery.
- Stepping Up team have been out working across the Town (a separate report is going to be given).