



Cllr Jeff Osborn with the residents of Lilac Grove, Trowbridge. Photo: Trevor Porter

Extra Teams Drafted As Trowbridge Residents Complain Over Council Grass Cutting

Residents are concerned that Balfour Beatty Living Places has not learned from the problems that arose when the company secured Wiltshire Council's £150 million highways contract last year.

Trowbridge town and Wiltshire councillors Jeff Osborn and Graham Payne say they have received dozens of calls and emails from residents in Trowbridge complaining about uncut grass.

Cllr Osborn has had more than 20 residents in his Grove Ward contact him about the issue, while Cllr Graham Payne has had a similar number get in touch with him in the Drynham Ward.

Some of the worse affected areas included the estates around College Road, Brook Road and Wiltshire Drive, while Cllr Payne also had complaints about the grass in Elm Grove Playing Field. Resident Jean Fletcher said grass near her home in Lilac Grove, Trowbridge, was knee-high in places. She said: "It's terrible. They have not cut the grass near the corner of my house at all this year and they didn't come round for the final cut before winter last year."

The grass was cut on Wednesday, but Mrs Fletcher was unimpressed.

She said: "What a mess. It's been cut but the grass is left on top. I think I might start building a hay rick."

Another resident Derek Adams, who is chairman of College Estate Residents' Association, said: "I don't know what they are playing at, but it is not good enough. There doesn't seem to be any routine, it's a shambles.

"We understand there were problems when Balfour Beatty first got the contract as it was new. They did well during the flooding at Christmas, but now the grass has been allowed to get out of control again."

A council scrutiny committee investigated the controversial contract, which attracted criticism when it was taken on by Balfour Beatty in June 2013, after residents complained about uncut verges and hedgerows.

The report from the scrutiny committee in January said the contractor's performance was satisfactory, but highlighted areas for improvement.

Cllr Osborn, who first called for the contract to be investigated before Christ-mas, said: "They initially had teething problems, which was not great, but understandable, but you would have expected them to have got it right by now."

"I thought that we were getting somewhere after setting up the scrutiny committee and Balfour Beatty told me they were on top of things, but they haven't done what they said they would."

Cllr Payne added: "I have had more complaints this time than I did when we had the problems last year. We are not getting a good service."

A BBLP spokesperson said: "We started urban grass cutting in early March, however, we recognise that a number of urban grassed areas need further work."

"We have drafted in three extra teams to focus on the west of the county, and a grounds maintenance specialist has been recruited to manage the work."

A Wiltshire Council spokesman said: "BBLP have scheduled additional resources. We are confident these changes will deliver an improved performance."

Wiltshire Times, Friday, 9 May 2014

Balfour Beatty Not Keeping Grass-Cutting Promises, Wiltshire Council To Be Told

Grass going uncut by Wiltshire Council's highways contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places will be raised at full council tomorrow, after councillors received dozens of calls from residents.

Trowbridge town and Wiltshire councillors Jeff Osborn and Graham Payne have had calls and emails from residents in the town over the past few weeks complaining about long grass.

Cllr Osborn said he has had more than 20 residents in his Grove Ward contact him about the issue, while Cllr Graham Payne has had a similar number get in touch with him in the Drynham Ward.

Melksham Without and Wiltshire councillor Terry Chivers has also received complaints from residents in his ward and is even considering putting forward a motion of no confidence in Balfour Beatty. Cllr Chivers said: "Enough is enough, we have had so many promises from this company, and they have broken them all, they just aren't up to the job."

A council scrutiny committee investigated the controversial £150 million contract, which attracted criticism when it was taken on by Balfour Beatty in June 2013, after residents complained about uncut verges and hedgerows.

The report from the scrutiny committee in January said the contractor's performance was satisfactory, but highlighted areas for improvement.

Wiltshire Times, Monday, 12 May 2014 by Andy Baber, Senior reporter for Trowbridge