

# Manningham Parks and Reserves Benchmarking Report April 2016



Prepared by  
**Gilbert Consulting**  
with Manningham City Council

# CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>Objective.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Maintenance Items Surveyed .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Councils Surveyed .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria .....</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1	Litter Rating.....	5
5.2	Basic Infrastructure.....	5
5.3	Garden Beds .....	6
5.4	Grass Quality .....	6
5.5	Grass height.....	7
5.6	Overall Tidiness .....	7
<b>6.</b>	<b>Limitations of the Survey.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Overall SURVEY Rating's Table .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Sporting Reserves.....</b>	<b>10</b>
8.1	Sporting Reserves Litter .....	10
8.2	Sporting Reserves Basic Infrastructure.....	10
8.3	Sporting Reserves Grass Quality .....	11
8.4	Sporting Reserves Grass Height .....	11
8.5	Sporting Reserves Garden Beds .....	12
<b>9.</b>	<b>Major Reserves .....</b>	<b>12</b>
9.1	Major Reserves Litter .....	12
9.2	Major Reserves Basic Infrastructure .....	13
9.3	Major Reserves Grass Height .....	13
9.4	Major Reserves Grass Quality.....	14
9.5	Major Reserves Garden Beds.....	14
<b>10.</b>	<b>Pocket Parks .....</b>	<b>15</b>
10.1	Pocket Parks Litter.....	15
10.2	Pocket Parks Basic Infrastructure .....	15
10.3	Pocket Parks Grass Height.....	16
10.4	Pocket Parks Grass Quality.....	16
<b>11.</b>	<b>Overall Comparisons.....</b>	<b>17</b>
11.1	Overall Tidiness/Appearance .....	17
11.2	Sporting Reserves Overall – Litter.....	18
11.3	Sporting Reserves Overall - Grass Height .....	19

11.4	Sporting Reserves Overall - Grass Quality .....	19
11.5	Sporting Reserves Overall – Basic Infrastructure .....	20
11.6	Major Reserves Overall - Grass Height.....	21
11.7	Major Reserves Overall – Garden Beds .....	21
11.8	Major Reserves Overall – Litter .....	22
11.9	Major Reserves Overall – Basic Infrastructure.....	22
11.10	Pocket Parks Overall - Grass Height .....	23
11.11	Pocket Parks Overall – Litter .....	23
<b>12.</b>	<b>Manningham performance History .....</b>	<b>24</b>
12.1	Sporting .....	24
12.2	Major Reserves.....	25
12.3	Pocket Parks.....	27
12.4	Overall Tidiness & Appearance (all reserves) .....	28
<b>13.</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>28</b>
13.1	Sporting Reserves .....	29
13.2	Major Reserves.....	29
13.3	Pocket Parks.....	29
13.4	Specific Reserve & Activity Trends.....	30
13.5	Key Issues for Review .....	31

## 1. OBJECTIVE

To determine the overall performance, from a “community” perspective, of six (6) councils, parks and reserve maintenance and infrastructure and to establish an appropriate visual benchmark on which to compare Manningham’s performance and amenity.

The two key outcomes sought are to:

Compare Manningham’s performance with previous years and to ascertain the level of consistency or change in performance from year to year; and

Compare Manningham’s performance against five (5) other similar Victorian (metropolitan) councils to ascertain the relativity between their respective performances.

The survey extends the roadside “windscreen” survey into a “walk around” survey of the parks area to provide a comprehensive urban amenity benchmark to reflect either Manningham Maintenance’s overall performance or the priority of those areas given by Council in the presentation of the following park categories:

- Sporting Reserves;
- Major Reserves; and
- Pocket Parks.

## 2. MAINTENANCE ITEMS SURVEYED

The parks and reserves survey included assessment within the randomly selected sporting reserves, major reserves and pocket parks of the following key aspects:

- Litter;
- Basic infrastructure;
- Grass height;
- Grass quality;
- Garden beds; and
- Overall appearance (tidiness)

## 3. COUNCILS SURVEYED

The six councils surveyed were the Cities of Banyule, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash and Whitehorse.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The Parks and Reserve Infrastructure were assessed by a “walk around” approach to determine performance by a visual assessment in much the same way as a general user or visitor to that park or reserve would to determine the standard of maintenance.

The following is a summary of the methodology:

- Inspection of four (4) major reserves, four (4) sporting reserves and four (4) pocket parks within each council. The random selection process endeavoured to identify reserves with similar standards of sport played, e.g. football and/or cricket within councils surveyed;
- recording the rating of the various elements within each reserve and an overall appearance (tidiness) rating against the Assessment Criteria;

- The surveys of all reserves were undertaken on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015 to ensure minimal differences in standards due to weather conditions or maintenance frequencies; and
- Assessments carried out by persons experienced in parks and reserve maintenance and management and further independent to the Manningham Parks Maintenance operations.

Since 2008, the number of reserves assessed within each category for each council was increased from two (2) to four (4). This initiative was introduced to further improve the robustness and validity of the assessments and the resultant outcomes. The 2016 survey was undertaken in April to view parks at a time when drought, excessive rain and sunshine would not be a significant influence as has potentially occurred in some previous surveys.

## 5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The assessment of performance was by visually inspecting and recording landscape and horticultural performance against agreed assessment criteria. A score range of 5 to 1 was used with the higher the rating the higher the standard of maintenance/presentation observed at the time of the inspection.

The following tables identify the assessment criteria and the corresponding rating for that element within reserves and parks.

Basic infrastructure is included to better highlight the overall condition (maintenance level) of other key infrastructure assets within reserves as well as the horticultural assessments that would be viewed by the “community”. These infrastructure elements include such assets as car parks, fences, coach’s boxes, scoreboards, play equipment, toilet blocks, etc.

### 5.1 Litter Rating

An assessment of the extent of litter (paper, wrappings, cardboard, bags etc) within a reserve and the overall impact of that litter on the reserve’s appearance.

Rating	Description
5	No Litter
4	Some small amounts of scatted litter but not unsightly
3	Scattered amounts of unsightly litter
2	Significant amounts of unsightly litter
1	Excessive amounts of unsightly litter.



### 5.2 Basic Infrastructure

Overall assessment of condition of infrastructure elements in the reserve including such assets as fences, scoreboards, car park pavements, kerb and channel, toilets, coach’s boxes, cricket nets, furniture (seats/bins, etc).



Bends in fences, exposed fence footings, footpath/spectator pavement condition (potholes, repairs, etc) impact on the overall assessment.

Rating	Description	
5	Excellent condition (as new with no damage or deterioration).	
4	Very Good (minimal damage or deterioration)	
3	Satisfactory (some damage or deterioration of assets)	
2	Poor (Significant amounts of damage and or deterioration – unsightly and needs maintenance)	
1	Very Poor (generally unsuitable for purpose with major damage/deterioration requires urgent maintenance or replacement)	

### 5.3 Garden Beds



Overall assessment of garden beds located within a reserve having regard to the extent and healthiness of plants/shrubs and the extent of weeds.

The extent of bare patches and amount of mulch material also impact on the visual assessment rating.

Rating	Description	
5	Healthy plants, dense cover and no weeds and /or litter	
4	Healthy plants with some weed growth and /or litter	
3	Plants with some distress and/or some weed growth and /or litter	
2	Plants with significant distress and/or weed growth and /or litter	
1	Plants with excessive distress and/or weed growth and /or litter	



### 5.4 Grass Quality

Overall assessment of the health of the grass including the extent of coverage (bare patches) and the amount of weeds evident.

Rating	Description	
5	Suitable for use, vibrant dense grass cover with no weeds.	
4	Good grass cover with minimal patchy areas and/or weeds	
3	Good grass cover with some patchy areas and/or weeds	
2	Unsuitable grass cover with significant patchy areas and/or weeds	
1	Poor grass cover with excessive patchy areas and/or weeds	

## 5.5 Grass height

Overall assessment of the grass height had regard to the reserve use and the quality of the grass cutting and extent of windrows evident after mowing.

Rating	Description	
5	Excellent condition with even cut and /or no evidence of grass clippings	
4	Very good grass cut with minimal uneven grass height and/or some minor evidence of grass clippings	
3	Good grass cover with some areas of uneven height (missed cuts, wet areas etc) and evidence of grass clippings	
2	Unsuitable grass cover with significant areas of uneven height and/or significant evidence of grass clippings, impacting on the use of the facility	
1	Very poor grass cover, with excessive areas of uneven grass height and/or grass clippings significantly impacting on the use of the facility.	

## 5.6 Overall Tidiness

An assessment of the overall appearance tidiness/ of a facility having regard to all criteria factors including weeds, neatness, condition of infrastructure, grass quality and extent of graffiti. Is the facility and its associated infrastructure “cared” for and encourages use?

Rating	Description
5	Excellent – no weeds or litter. Edges trimmed and reserve and its furniture in excellent condition with no graffiti
4	Very Good with little litter and/or some weeds. Reserve furniture good condition and litter to no graffiti
3	Some scattered amounts of litter and/or some weeds, reserve furniture good condition, some graffiti.
2	Significant amounts of litter and/or weeds. Edges not trimmed and reserve furniture in poor condition (requiring maintenance) and/or graffiti
1	Excessive amounts of litter and/or weeds. No edges, reserve furniture in urgent need maintenance and/or extensive amount graffiti.

## 6. LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

The following lists the limitations of the survey and the results presented in this report;

- Evaluation of the parks and reserves based on a **visual** inspection. (no soil tests or other “technological means of assessing plant condition etc);
- The performance criteria (standards of each council) may not match that individual councils required priorities and performance/intervention levels;
- Survey does not assess or make comment on the adequacy of the infrastructure but focuses on the quality (presentation) of the infrastructure;
- The ratings recorded for each category is a score for that sample and may not reflect as a percentage the total picture within that category;
- Assessment undertaken during two (2) consecutive days of the week which may not reflect the maintenance programs of all councils; and
- The sample size for Parks and Reserves with four (4) sporting reserves, four (4) major parks and four (4) pocket parks inspected within each municipality.

The surveys were commenced in June 2000, with the most recent survey in 2016. Over a 3-4 year period up to 2009, the impacts of a long drought was most prevalent. During the 2010 and 2011 surveys more traditional weather for that time of year occurred with high rainfall and periods of warm weather, which provided extreme growing conditions for plants, grass and weeds. The survey for 2016 was undertaken in April to reduce the likelihood of these significant variances.

The six Councils surveyed are located within the regions of Yarra Valley Water and South East Water where water restrictions have prevailed over recent years. In response, all councils have undertaken extensive renovations and changed the grass types of their sporting ovals to reduce water usage. The majority of ovals inspected in 2016 have now been upgraded and well established as a result of these renovations and this was clearly reflected during the inspections.

Mid-week (Tuesday and Wednesday) was chosen for the inspections to allow time for councils to respond to high weekend usage so the results were not adversely influenced. This was considered especially important in the case of litter and grass cutting.



## 7. OVERALL SURVEY RATING'S TABLE

MUNICIPALITY	GRASS HEIGHT/QUALITY/GENERAL TIDINESS (Rating)														
	Sporting Reserve					Major Reserve					Pocket Parks				(RATING)
	Gen Litter	Basic Infr	Garden Beds	Grass Ht	Grass Quality	Gen Litter	Basic Infr	Garden Beds	Grass Ht	Grass Quality	Gen Litter	Basic Infr	Grass Ht	Grass Quality	Overall
<b>Apr-16</b>															
Banyule	3.8	3.9	3.5	4.1	4.1	3.6	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.3	4.1	4.0	3.0	3.4	3.8
Knox	4.5	4.0	3.9	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.0	3.9	4.3
Manningham	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.6	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.4	4.3	3.6	3.8	4.3
Maroondah	4.3	4.1	3.8	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.2	3.6	4.1	4.1	4.2	3.4	3.9	4.0
Monash	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.8	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.0	4.0	4.8	4.4	4.5	3.9	4.3
Whitehorse	4.1	4.3	3.8	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.4	3.8	3.4	4.5	4.0	3.8	3.4	4.3

The above table summarises the number of ratings recorded for the various assessment items with this Parks and Reserves benchmarking survey.

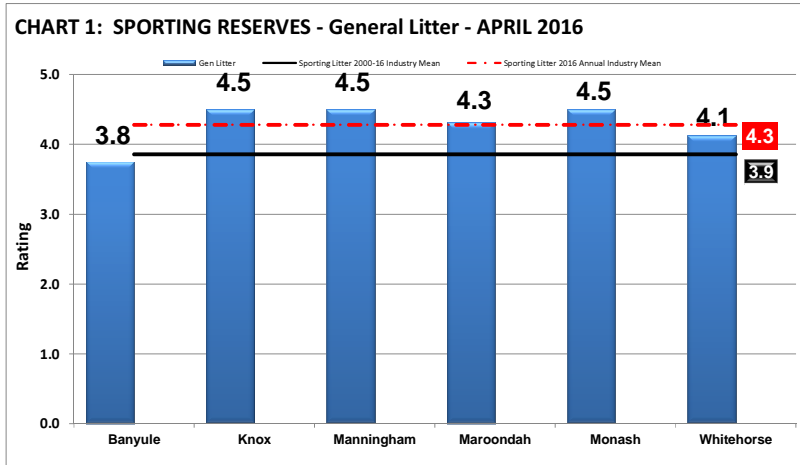


### Notes:

1. The higher the rating, the higher the standard of maintenance/presentation at the time of the survey.
2. Due to an overall lack of garden beds in pocket parks across all councils surveyed, garden beds have been removed from this park survey category in comparing performance against other councils, but will continue to be included to assess Manningham's performance history and trends in performance year to year.

## 8. SPORTING RESERVES

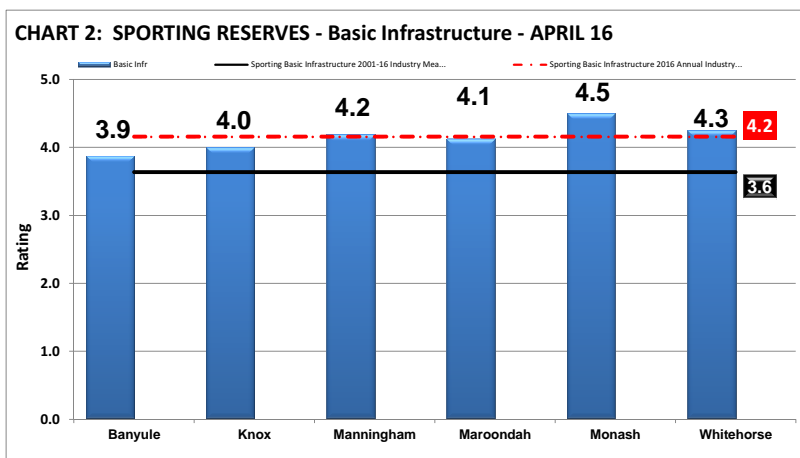
### 8.1 Sporting Reserves Litter



In terms of litter ratings, as in 2015 **Chart 1 (Higher the rating the better the quality/performance)** shows there was little variance between council ratings except for Banyule which scored lower. The Annual Industry Mean remains higher than the Overall Industry Mean even though the Overall Industry Mean increased by 0.1. This indicates an improvement in performance and higher standard presentation of the Sporting Reserves in 2016.

Manningham was in the higher range with Knox and Monash, while Maroondah and Whitehorse were slightly lower. These four councils were considered very good. Banyule had the lowest rating.

### 8.2 Sporting Reserves Basic Infrastructure



**Chart 2** reveals that of the randomly selected sporting reserves within each municipality, Monash and Whitehorse and were considered very good, with Manningham marginally less, but at the Annual Industry Mean.

Knox and Maroondah were slightly lower with Banyule the lowest indicating infrastructure assets generally in poorer condition.

Assets inspected include car park pavements (potholes, depressions, cracking and general condition), footpath areas, ground & other fences such as treated pine log fencing, cricket practice nets fencing, buildings especially standing areas adjacent to pavilions and coaches boxes, bollards etc.

Although there has continued to be an improvement in the overall ratings in previous years, with the Annual Industry Mean remaining significantly higher than the Overall Industry Mean, the Annual Industry Mean fell by 0.1 from last year. The results have a direct relationship to the level of renewal (generally capital expenditure and maintenance), and focus on infrastructure.



### 8.3 Sporting Reserves Grass Quality

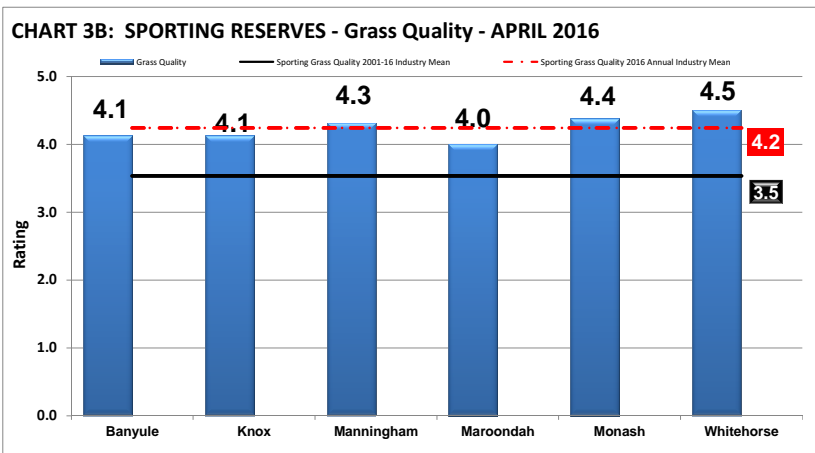


Chart 3B identifies the results from the site inspections and grass assessment of sporting reserves within each municipality for grass quality.

As indicated by a comparison between the overall Industry Mean and the Annual Industry Mean, the 2016 results show a significant improvement over the past years clearly reflecting the change in grass types, water management. Undertaking the survey later in the

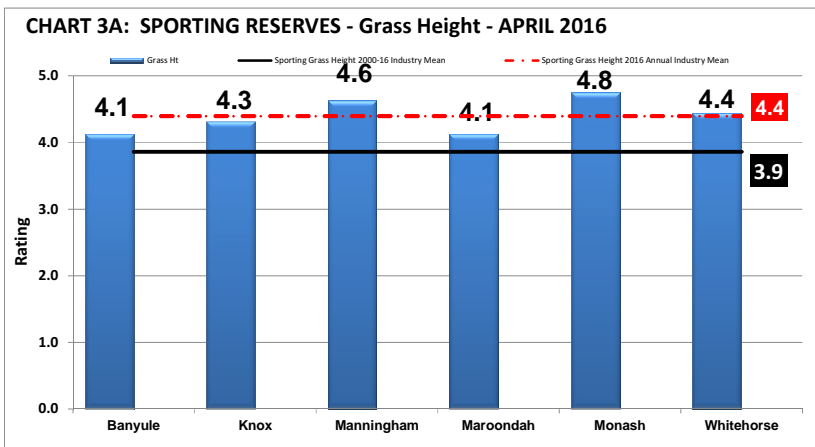
year (April) may also be an influencing factor.

Whitehorse, Monash, and Manningham sporting surfaces on average across the four reserves inspected, had very good grass quality above the Annual Industry Mean indicating dense grass with minimal patchy areas. It is noted that the Annual Industry mean fell by 0.1 compared with 2015.

Banyule and Knox also had good grass quality being just below the Annual Industry Mean. It was also observed that there was less variance in grass quality between five of the councils. The results for Maroondah, although still a good score, indicate lower quality grass presentation.



### 8.4 Sporting Reserves Grass Height

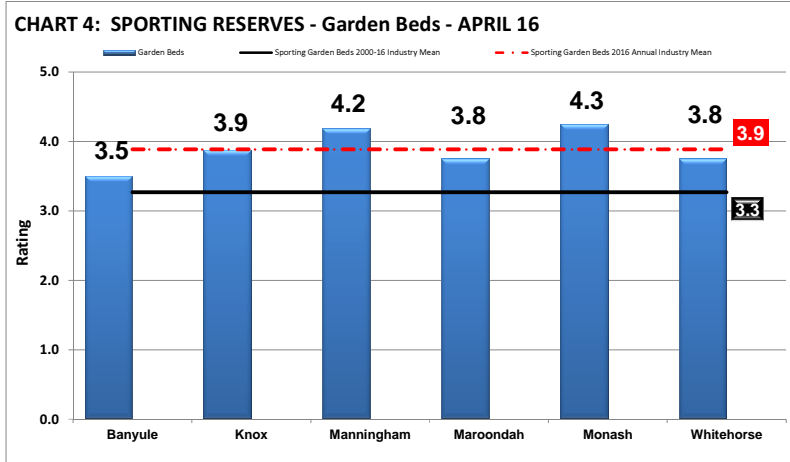


In terms of grass height, Chart 3A highlights that Monash continued to exhibit the highest average, closely followed by Manningham (much improved in 2016) indicating excellent grass cutting height with no windrows and an even height suitable for the sport being played.

Whitehorse was at the Annual Industry Level indicating very good cutting height followed by Knox just below the Annual Industry Mean.

Maroondah and Banyule were slightly lower indicating some uneven height and windrows in some reserves. The Annual Industry Mean is much higher than the overall Industry Mean indicating an overall lift in the standard in 2016.

## 8.5 Sporting Reserves Garden Beds



**Chart 4** highlights a wide variance in presentation levels of garden beds at sporting reserves. Banyule had significantly lower ratings indicating areas of weeds and/or plants with distress.

Monash rated the highest followed closely by Manningham, the only other council above the Annual Industry Mean. Knox rated equal to the Annual Industry Mean.

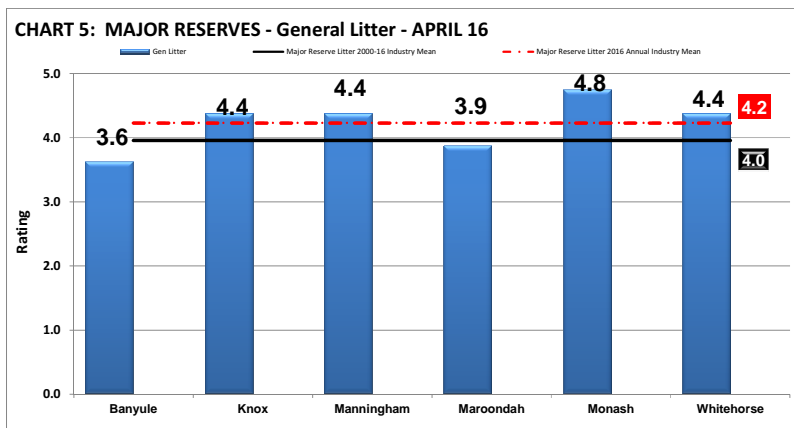
On average across all garden beds within Manningham, minimal weeds were present and plants were presented in healthy condition.

In terms of the **Annual Industry Mean** and the **Overall Industry Mean**, **Chart 4** indicates an improvement in performance in 2016 with each increasing by 0.1 compared with 2015. As previously documented, it was evident that improvements in the maintenance of the garden beds had occurred and were being maintained by the majority of councils.



## 9. MAJOR RESERVES

### 9.1 Major Reserves Litter



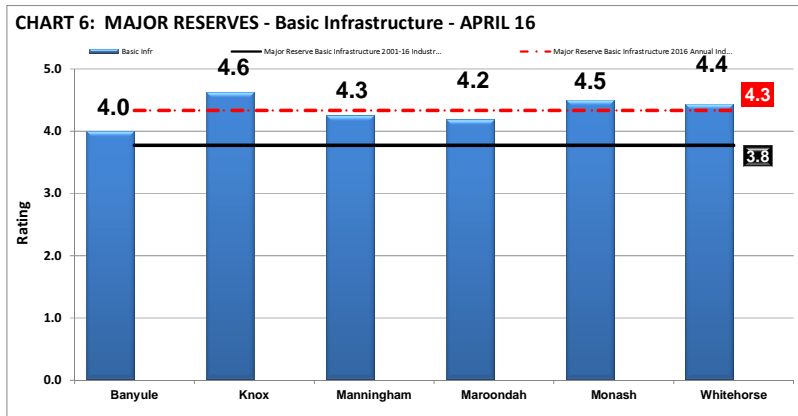
As per **Chart 5**, the level of litter (paper, wrappings, cardboard, bags etc) was generally good and very consistent with very little litter being evident at the majority of reserves inspected.

On average Monash had the cleanest reserves closely followed by Whitehorse, Manningham and Knox.

Maroondah and Banyule fell below the Annual Industry Mean.

The Annual Industry Mean remains higher than the Overall Industry Mean indicating a greater effort to control litter and improve presentation.

## 9.2 Major Reserves Basic Infrastructure



The results of the survey, **Chart 6**, indicate little variances in infrastructure across the councils surveyed. Monash, Knox and Whitehorse infrastructure was considered very good, with all above the Annual Industry Mean.

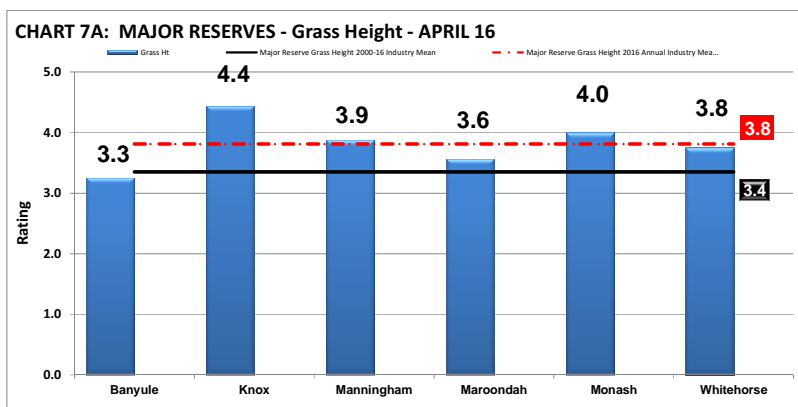
Manningham was only slightly lower being equal to the Annual Industry Mean, while Maroondah and Banyule were just below the Annual Industry Mean, indicating overall good condition/presentation of their infrastructure with some instances of damage or deterioration of assets.

Maintenance of gravel car parks had improved, but in some instances sealed car parks had potholes and/or cracking, which required maintenance and damage to signs.

The Annual Industry Mean remains higher than the overall Industry Mean indicating an overall consistent improvement in performance.



## 9.3 Major Reserves Grass Height

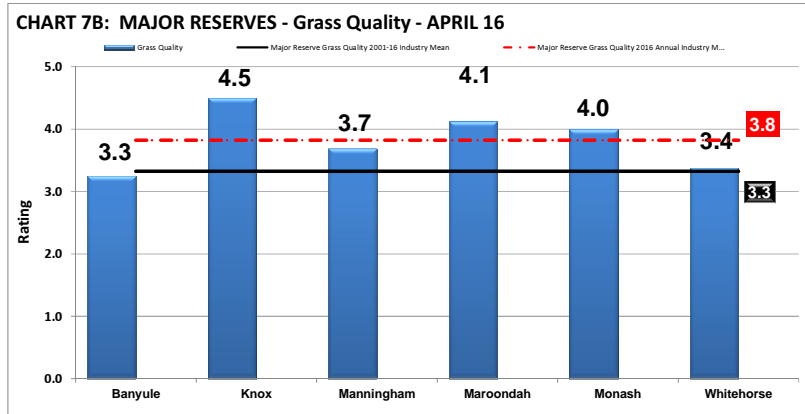


The overall ratings for **grass height**, as evidenced from **Chart 7A**, indicates a variation in performance across councils for their Major Reserves. Knox and Monash exhibited the most consistent good grass height followed closely by Manningham and then Whitehorse. The two exceptions were Banyule and Maroondah where the grass height was considered below average and impacting on their use.

Although the Annual Industry Mean is higher than the Overall Industry Mean indicating a continuing overall improvement, it was observed in the field a wide disparity in individual reserve presentations.

The Manningham results indicate some improvement in consistency in performance compared with 2015, with three of the reserves rating 4 (very good) and only one reserve rating 3.5 (good grass cover with some areas of uneven height). The lower ratings indicate either long grass/lack of mowing etc, which potentially impacts on the users of those reserves.

## 9.4 Major Reserves Grass Quality



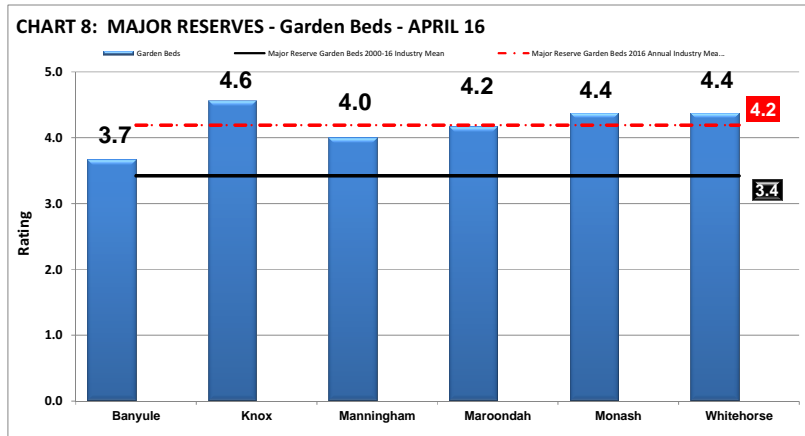
In terms of **grass quality** as per **Chart 7B**, the results indicate reasonable performance and consistency within Maroondah and Monash, with Knox the exceptional performer. Overall the reserves had minimal bare patches and or weeds.

Manningham was just below the Annual Industry Mean, with Banyule and Whitehorse results falling well below and considered average.

The Annual Industry Mean remains higher than the Overall Industry Mean indicating a general improvement in performance.



## 9.5 Major Reserves Garden Beds



**Chart 8** identifies a general consistency in the presentation of garden beds at Major Reserves reflecting the maintenance effort provided to those garden beds by each municipality.

The 2016 Annual Industry Mean remains much higher than the overall Industry Mean indicating an increase in overall performance (presentation) of garden beds within Major Reserves.

Knox, Monash, Whitehorse and Maroondah had the highest ratings, all at or above the Annual Industry Mean, indicating garden beds in good condition with minimal dead plants and weeds.

Manningham was rated slightly lower, although still a reasonable score, and Banyule rated the lowest, indicating the garden beds were, on average, in slightly poorer condition with distressed plants and/or weeds prevalent in some areas.

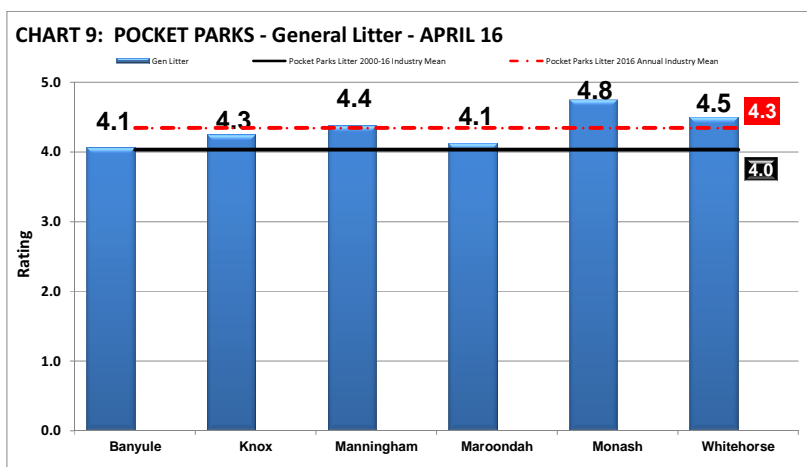


Overall, there was an overall improvement in the standard of the garden beds as evidenced by the 2016 Annual Industry Mean being higher than the 2002-2015 Industry Mean.

As evidenced in previous surveys the majority of garden beds in major reserves were now planted with low maintenance drought tolerant plants. The key impact on performance was the density of planting (some gaps), evidence of weeds and dead plants.

## 10. POCKET PARKS

### 10.1 Pocket Parks Litter



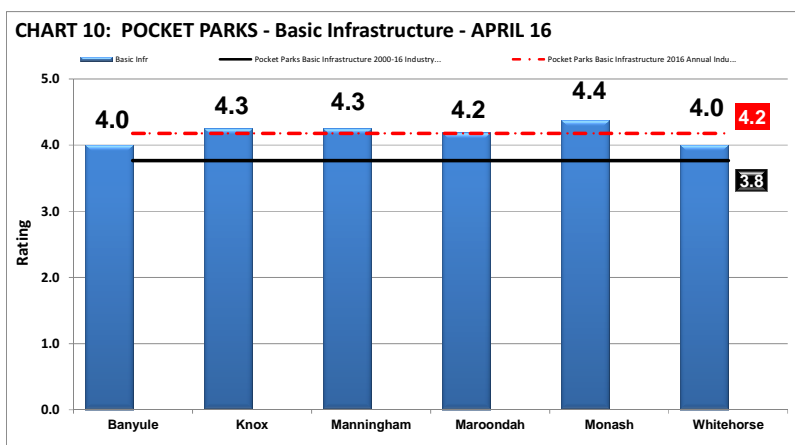
As per **Chart 9**, there was very little litter in the majority of reserves inspected with all councils scoring above 4. A rating of 4 or above indicates little to no litter present. Monash, Whitehorse and Manningham had the highest overall ratings with Knox, Maroondah and Banyule slightly lower.

Although the Overall Industry Mean is lower than the Annual Industry Mean, the Annual Industry Mean

dropped by 0.2 compared with 2015, indicating a drop in the overall performance compared to the previous survey.

### 10.2 Pocket Parks Basic Infrastructure

As evidenced in **Chart 10**, the Annual Industry Mean is higher than the overall Industry Mean indicating consistent improvement in performance.

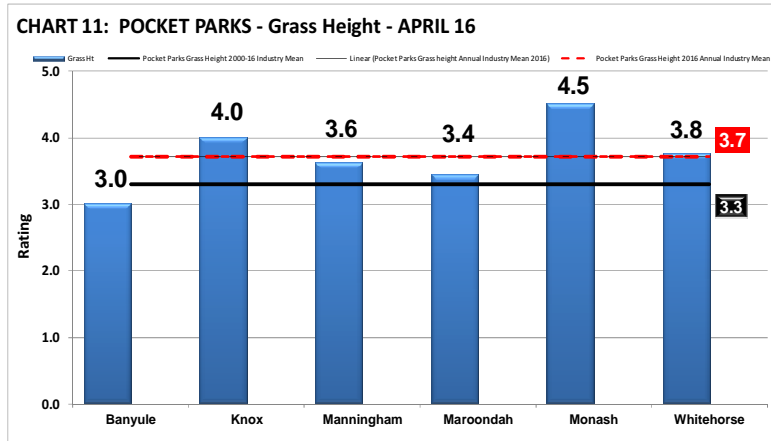


The Chart also identifies consistency in performance with all Pocket Parks infrastructure rated very good with scores of 4 or above. Monash, Manningham and Knox were rated highest closely followed by Maroondah, Whitehorse and Banyule.

It was evident that many councils had replaced aging infrastructure including playgrounds, fences/bollards and resurfacing paths.



## 10.3 Pocket Parks Grass Height



Similar to the previous two surveys, **Chart 11A** identifies a very inconsistent performance across all Councils in terms of grass height in Pocket Parks.

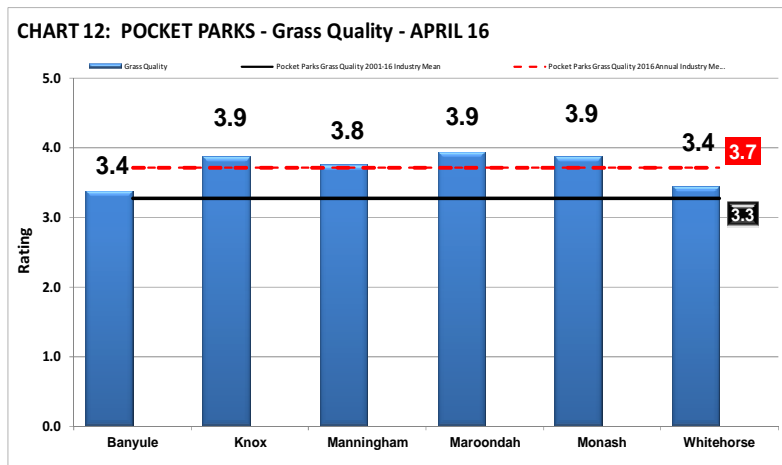
Having regard to the time of the survey (April) there was considerable grass growth and the variable results may be due in part to the scheduling of mowing of the reserves.

Monash, Knox and Whitehorse were the best performers, being above the Annual Industry Mean, indicating good consistent grass height.

Manningham, Maroondah and Banyule each had one reserve considered very poor with long grass affecting the score and the pocket parks use.

The Annual Industry Mean was higher than the overall Industry Mean indicating improved performance this year.

## 10.4 Pocket Parks Grass Quality



In terms of grass quality, **Chart 12** highlights a greater consistency in performance over the six councils surveyed.

Knox, Maroondah, Monash and Manningham were clearly rated highest and at or above the Annual Industry Mean.

Whitehorse and Banyule were rated the lowest with evidence of lower quality grass (bare patches and excessive weeds).

The Annual Industry Mean was higher than the Overall Industry Mean indicating an improvement in overall performance.



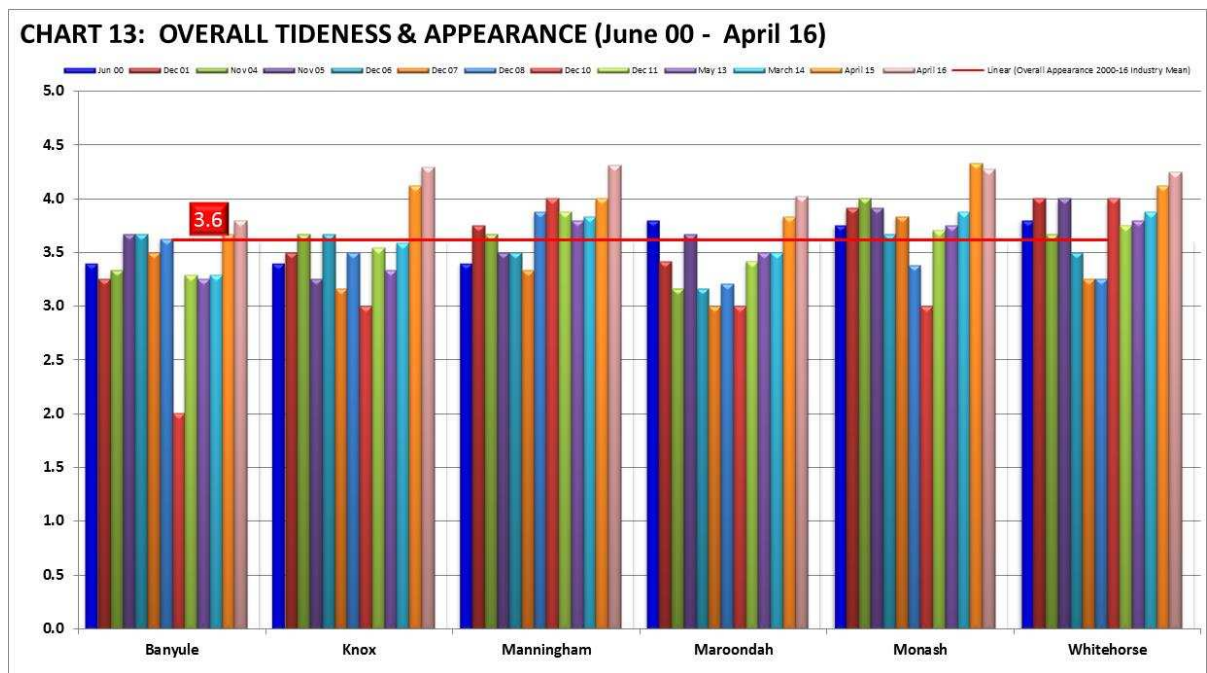
## 11.OVERALL COMPARISONS

Over the past 16 years, thirteen (13) specific parks and reserves surveys have been undertaken albeit at varying times of each year, to assess the overall performance of randomly selected sporting reserves, major parks and pocket parks.

The surveys were undertaken in June 2000, December 2001, November 2004, November 2005, December 2006, December 2007, December 2008, November 2010, December 2011, May 2013, March 2014, April 2015 and April 2016. Since December 2001, the surveys have been undertaken either late November or early December and during the middle of the week to obtain greater consistency in assessing the results and determining any key trends. This was changed in 2013 as it was considered the summer period provided extremes in terms of heat and growth with rain during these warmer months. The aim in 2013 was to achieve greater consistency and evenness in workload.

To give an appreciation of the changes in performance (ratings) for the key elements over this period, the survey results of the key elements inspected have been compared over this 16-year period.

### 11.1 Overall Tidiness/Appearance



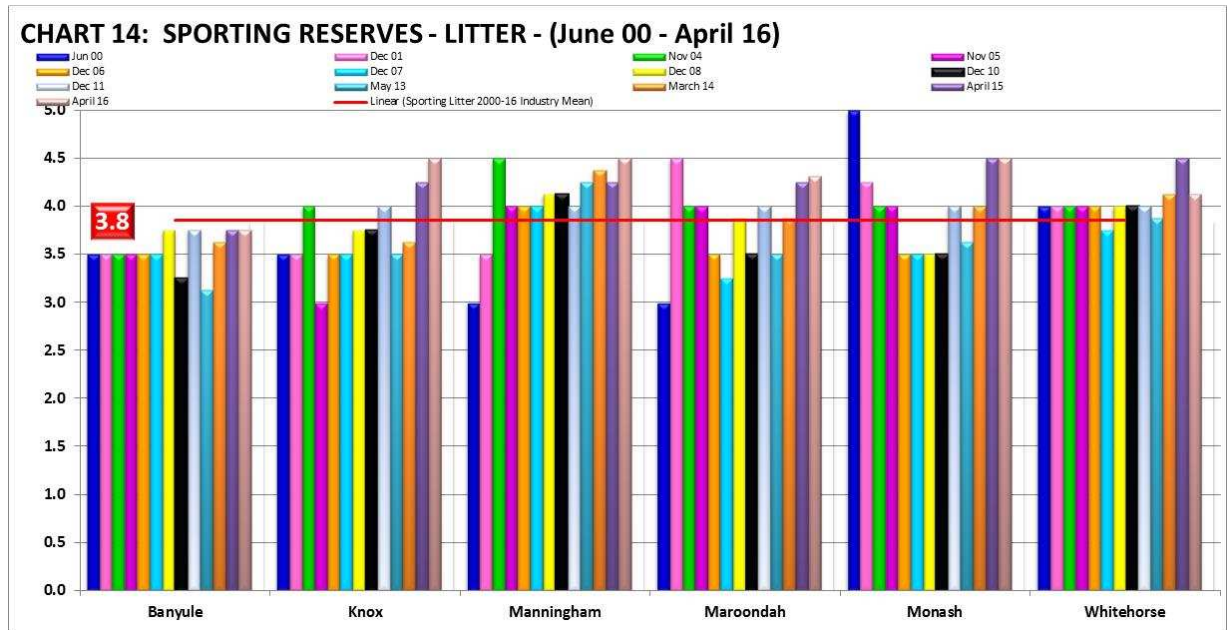
To better gauge the relative performance of each municipality in terms of **tidiness/appearance** for **all** reserves assessed (sporting, major and pocket), the ratings within each municipality were averaged to determine an overall “Tidiness/Appearance” rating. The overall tidiness/appearance considers the extent of litter, presentation of infrastructure such as pathway edges etc and provides a “first” impression when a user enters the reserve. “Clean and well kept”.

The outcomes are summarised in **Chart 13**. As evidenced by the Chart over the previous three surveys there has been a very consistent performance improvement for each council, with all, except for Monash that remained the same as 2015, showing further improvement in 2016.

Knox, Manningham and Whitehorse achieved the same high rating as Monash indicating they all continue to provide good quality appearance of its reserves especially over the past five year period and continues to be well above the Industry Mean.

Banyule and Maroondah also continued to improve achieving scores in 2016 higher than the Industry Mean.

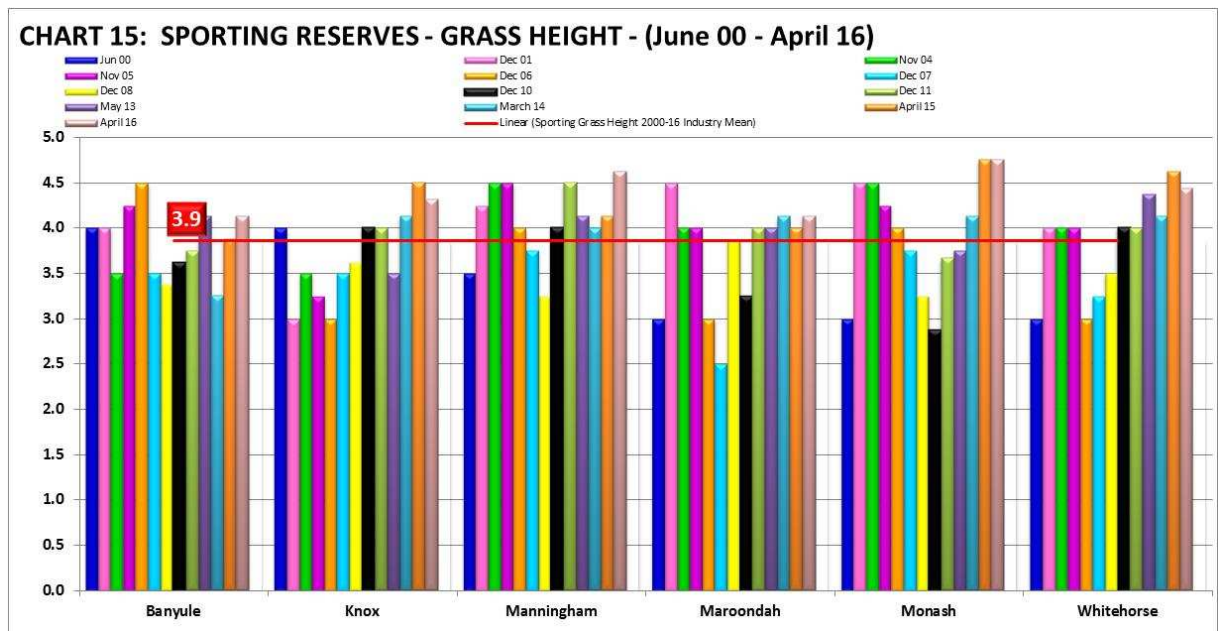
## 11.2 Sporting Reserves Overall – Litter



In terms of litter within Sporting Reserves, **Chart 14** indicates that Manningham has very consistent good performance over a long period and above the Overall Industry Mean, with the 2016 rating improving from last survey.

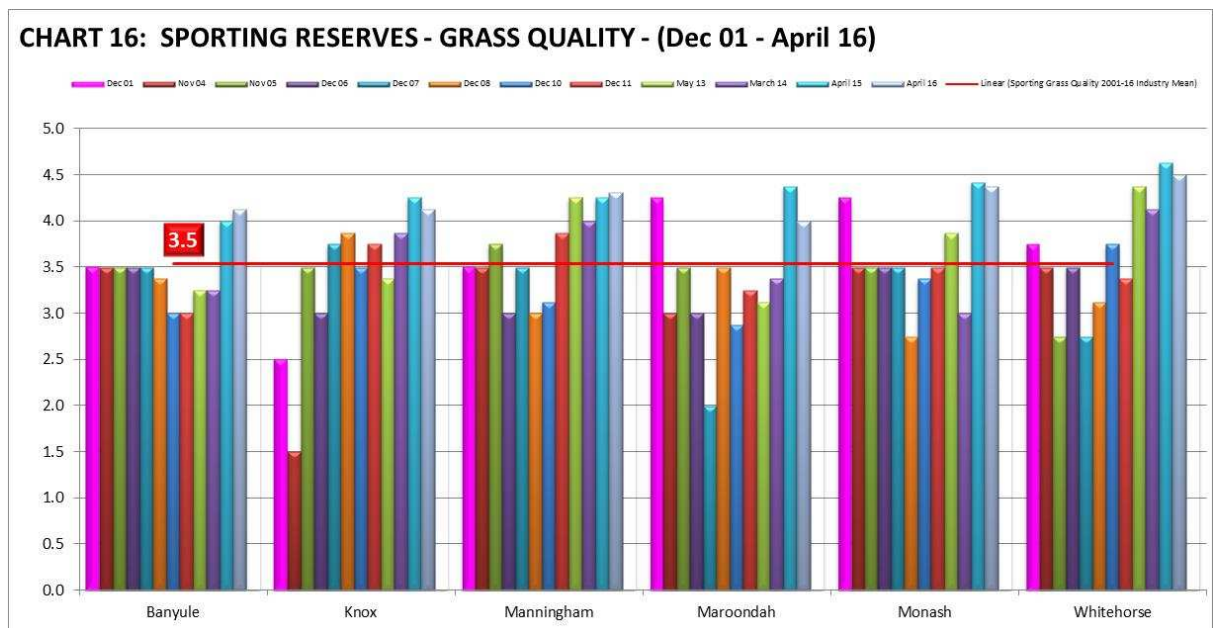
Knox and Maroondah’s performance increased with Banyule and Monash remaining the same as 2015. Whitehorse decreased between surveys and may indicate inconsistent litter collection practices.

## 11.3 Sporting Reserves Overall - Grass Height



**Chart 15** highlights that there has been a steady improvement in Whitehorse, Monash and Knox over many years with 2016 showing Monash the same this year and Whitehorse and Knox decreasing. Banyule and Manningham achieved further improvements in 2016, while Maroondah has remained relatively steady over the last five years. Manningham continues to be above the overall Industry Mean. These results reflect significant efforts over the past five years to upgrade sporting surfaces to meet the changes in managing reduced water usage.

## 11.4 Sporting Reserves Overall - Grass Quality



In 2000, the assessment of grass quality and grass height was undertaken as one overall rating. Since 2001, these two key aspects have been assessed individually to better reflect the performance of two different activities.

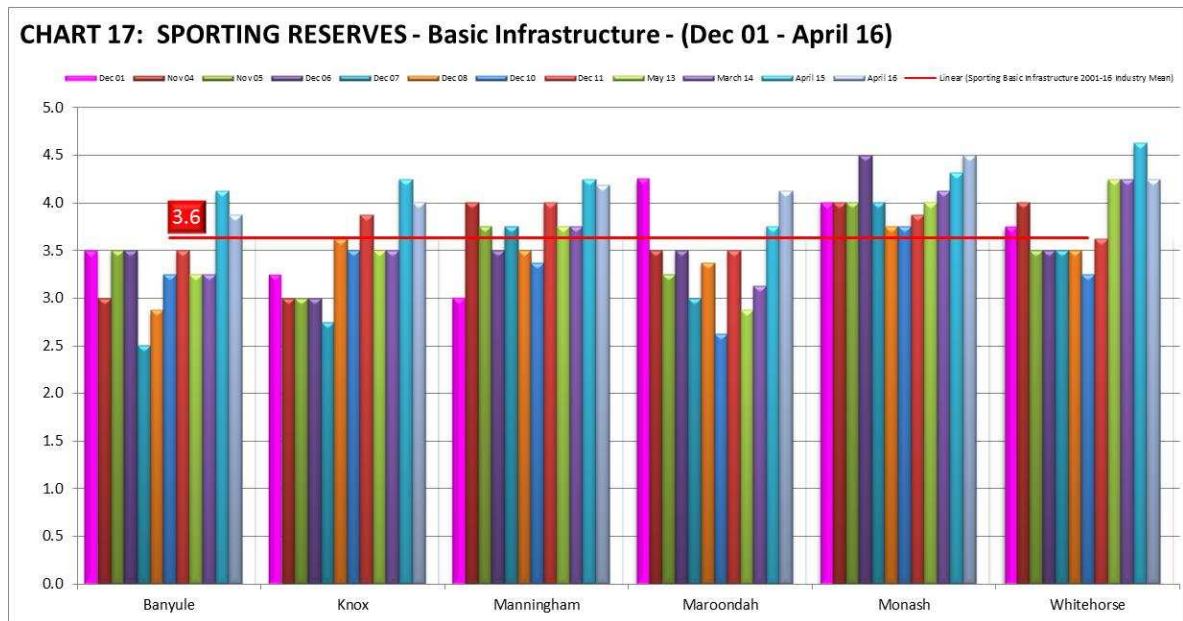
In terms of **grass quality**, the inspections are seeking to identify consistent grass coverage across the whole ground (no bare patches) with no weeds etc that may adversely impact on the use of that reserve. As evidenced in the adjacent photo, rough surfaces may cause cricket balls etc to not run straight and adversely impact on the fielder.



**Chart 16** identifies very significant variations in performance between surveys especially in the period 2007-2011 where many reserves were being subjected to severe drought and as a consequence refurbishment to new grass types.

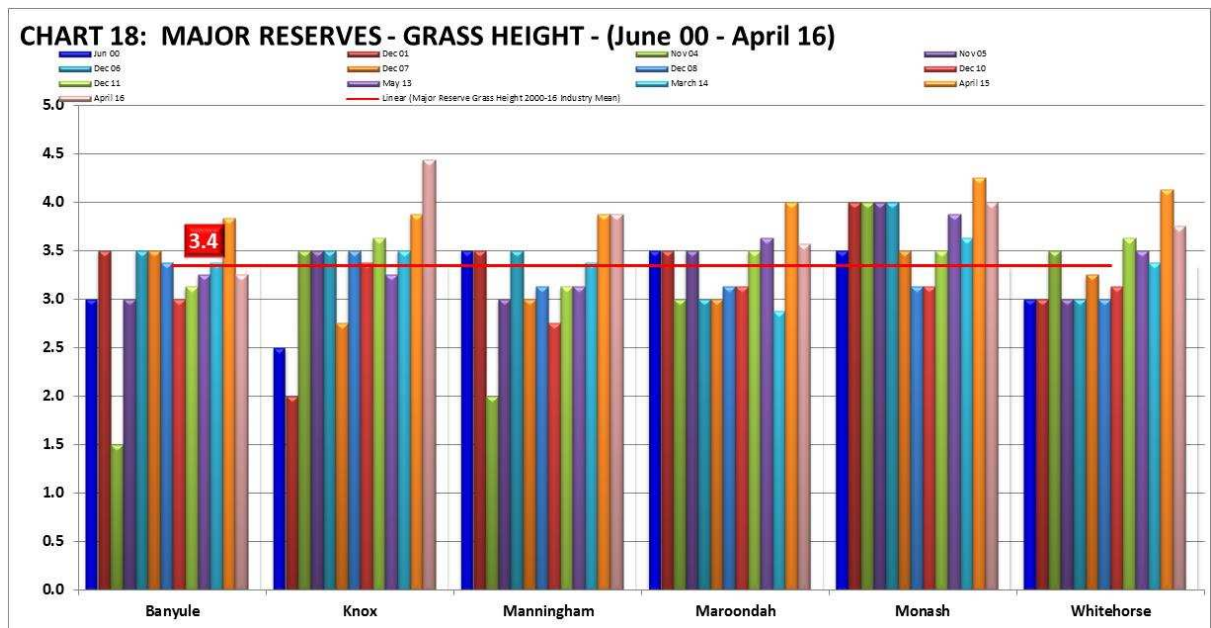
Manningham and Banyule demonstrated improved grass quality over the previous year, with all the other councils showing a decrease in grass quality compared with 2015. Manningham has consistently performed above the Overall Industry Mean over the past five surveys.

## 11.5 Sporting Reserves Overall – Basic Infrastructure



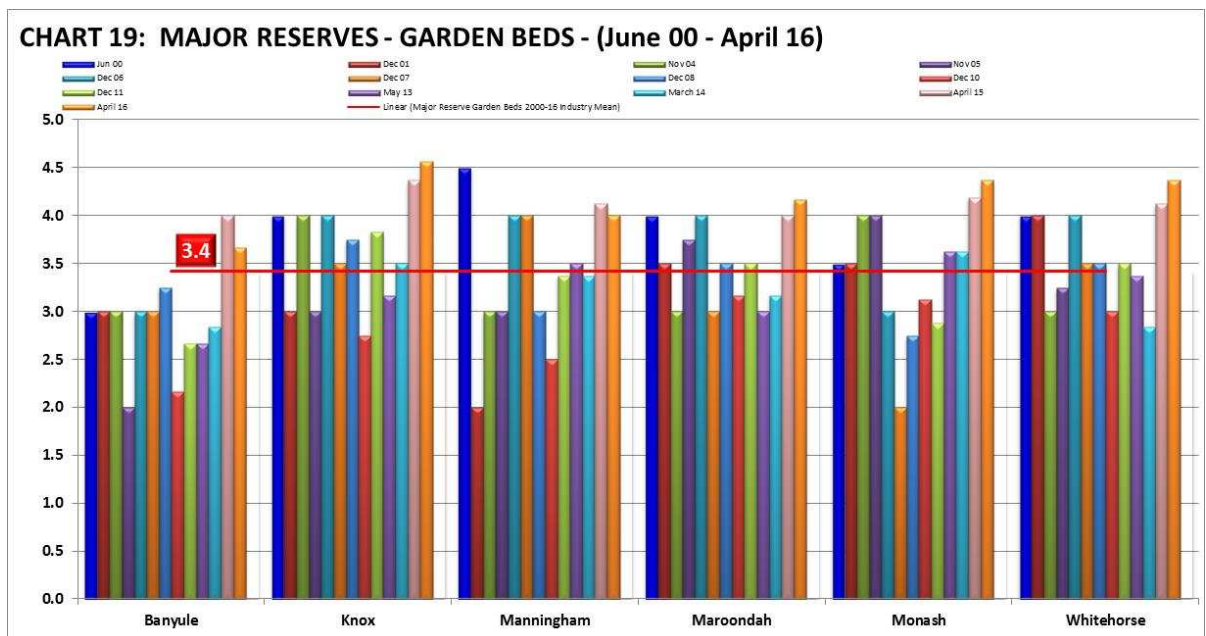
As evidenced in **Chart 17**, over the past four surveys Maroondah and Monash have consistently improved their infrastructure with Monash achieving the highest score for 2016. All councils are providing infrastructure in very good condition and all are well above the Overall Industry Mean. Manningham along with Banyule, Knox, and Whitehorse showed a slight decline from 2015 to 2016, although Manningham remains one of the better performers.

## 11.6 Major Reserves Overall - Grass Height



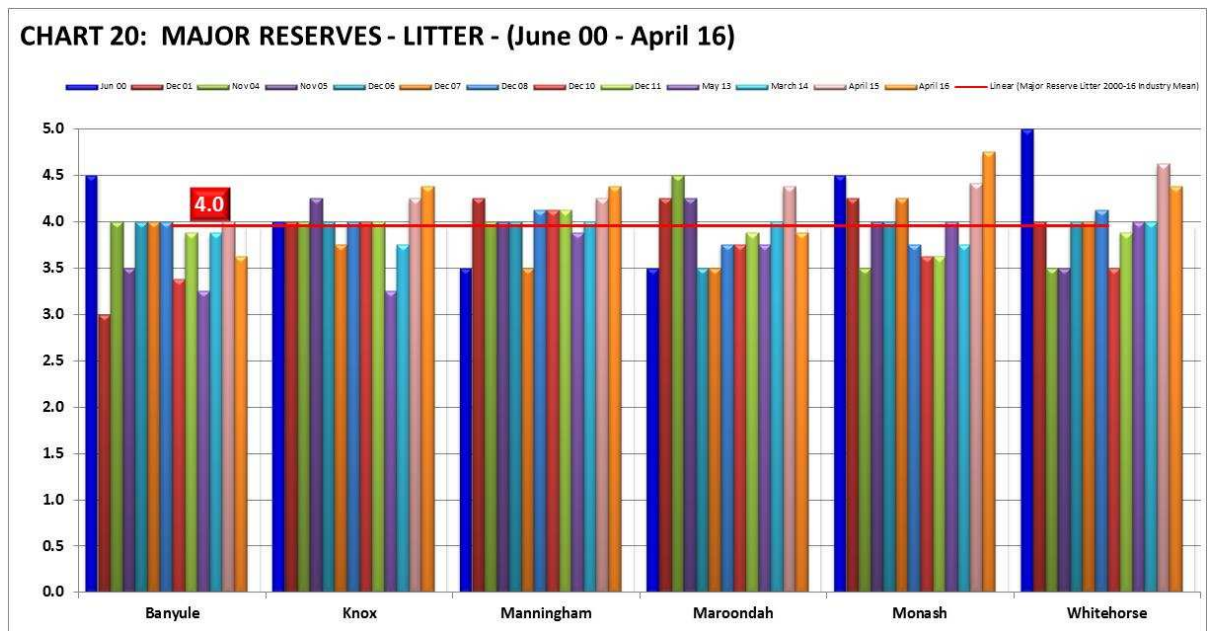
**Chart 18** indicates that apart from Knox and Manningham a decline in ratings was recorded across the other four councils since the last survey. Apart from Banyule, above average ratings were achieved across the other five councils. Knox achieved the largest improvement and highest rating since the last survey.

## 11.7 Major Reserves Overall – Garden Beds



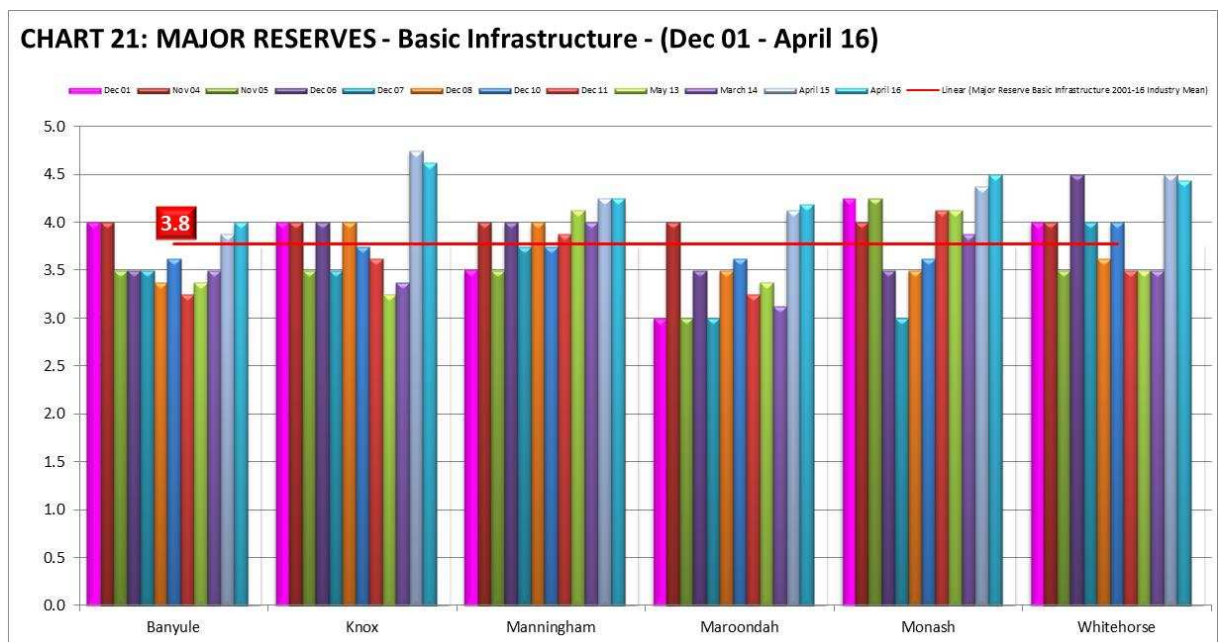
**Chart 19** highlights that apart from Banyule and Manningham, a consistent improvement across the other four councils surveyed. Manningham and Banyule both experienced a slight decline in performance since the last survey. All councils achieved ratings above the Overall Industry Mean.

## 11.8 Major Reserves Overall – Litter



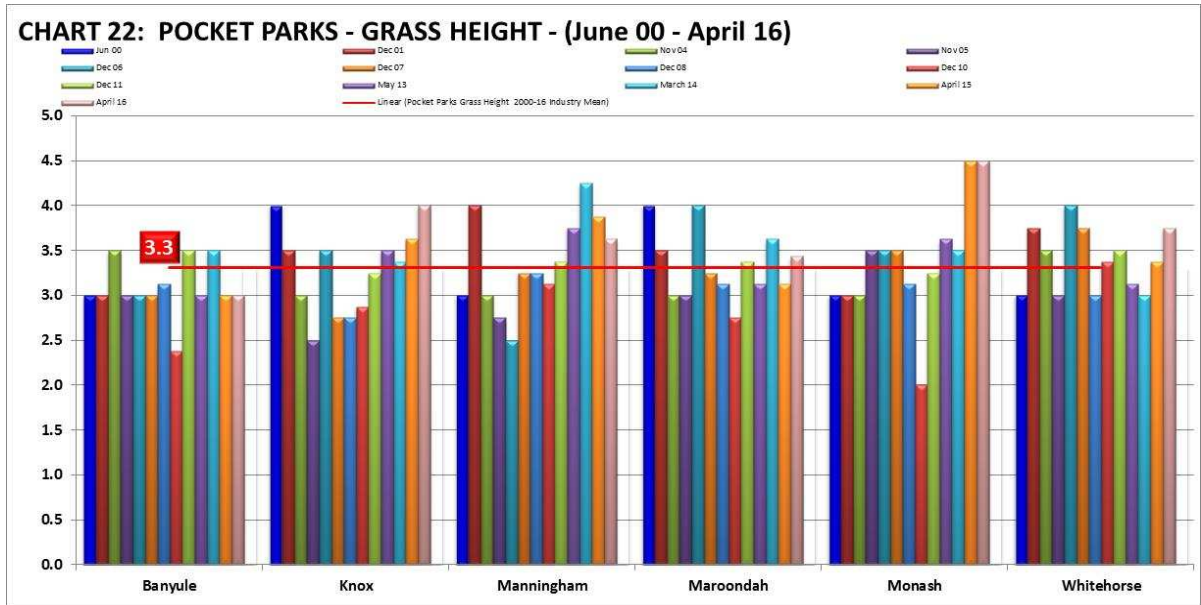
**Chart 20** highlights that the results for 2016 indicate inconsistency between the councils with four achieving above the overall Industry Mean, and two councils, Banyule and Maroondah, falling below. Manningham, Knox and Monash experienced improvement over the last survey results.

## 11.9 Major Reserves Overall – Basic Infrastructure



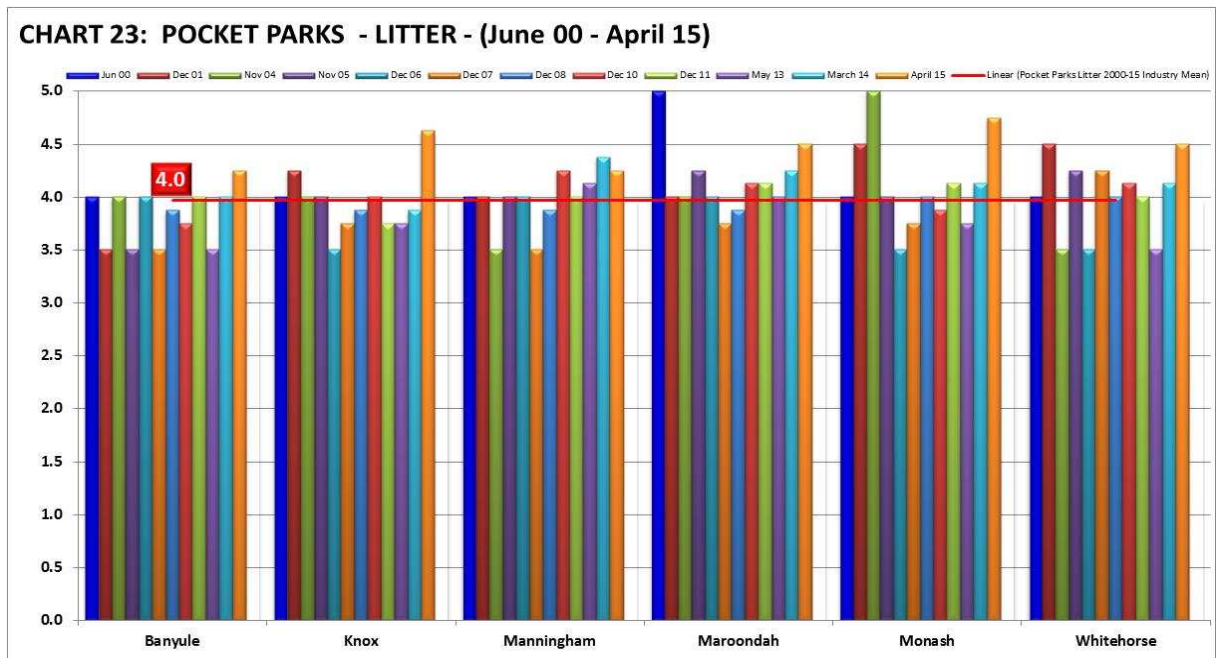
As indicated in **Chart 21**, a comparison between 2015 and 2016 results indicate consistency for all councils, and all achieving ratings above the Overall Industry Mean in 2016. Manningham and Monash continue to have very good ratings extending over a long period indicating very consistent presentation (renewal and maintenance) of their Infrastructure. The Chart also highlights that Knox, after many years of decline, is maintaining the higher standard of presentation of their assets set in 2015. There continued to be evidence of the trend commenced 2014 of many councils progressively replacing some of their infrastructure especially fencing/bollards, repairs to seats and in some instances renewal of playground equipment in major reserves is continuing.

## 11.10 Pocket Parks Overall - Grass Height



**Chart 22** highlights that the level of performance for Grass Height in 2016 continues to be inconsistent across all councils. Manningham showed a slight decline in performance compared to the previous two surveys, although it still remains well above the overall Industry Mean. This indicates that although Manningham is maintaining a strong focus on this element, attention to the current downward trend needs to be monitored.

## 11.11 Pocket Parks Overall – Litter

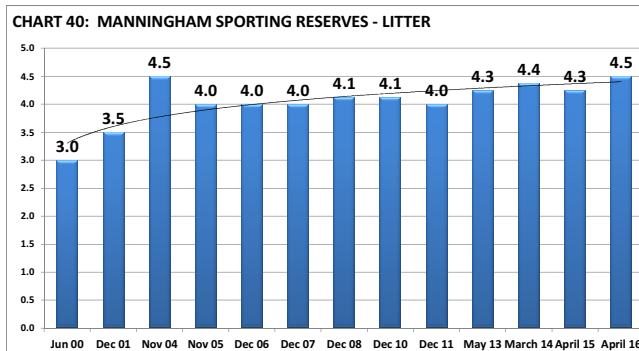


The overall ratings for 2016, as evidenced in **Chart 23**, indicate relative consistency and high level of performance across all councils and further a review of each individual reserve results confirm this consistency. Knox, Monash and Whitehorse achieved the highest percentage increase compared with 2015 survey results. Manningham demonstrated consistency in this area. Minimal litter was evident across all 24 pocket parks inspected.

## 12.MANNINGHAM PERFORMANCE HISTORY

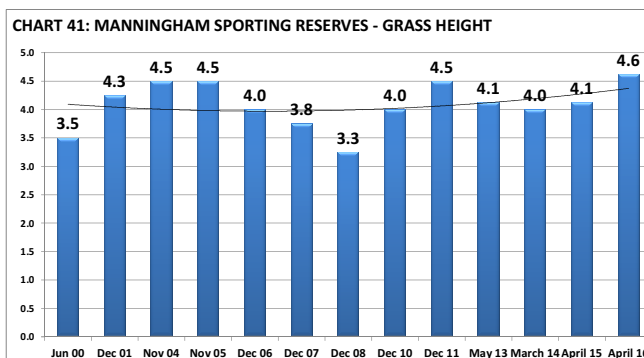
The benchmarking survey has now been undertaken over an extended period (13 surveys) and to better gauge how Manningham's performance has trended, the results of these surveys have been compared and observations made as follows.

### 12.1 Sporting



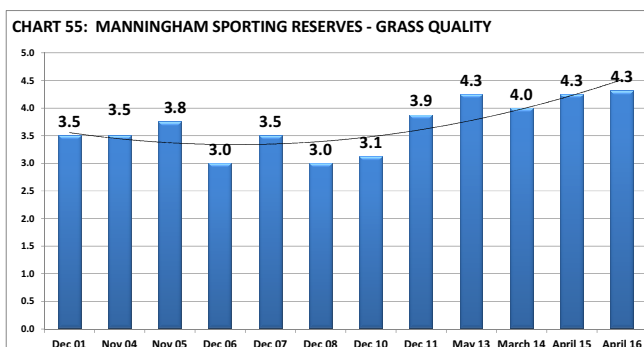
**Chart 40** indicates an overall continuous improvement trend in **litter** since 2005 with very consistent high standard results achieved.

The 2016 results indicate an improvement in the standard with overall very minimal litter present.



**Chart 41** indicates an overall very good performance in **grass height** except for the 07-08 period. Since 2010 the results have been consistently higher indicating consistent grass height with minimal grass clippings evident. This year saw a further improvement on the 2015 survey which had reversed the drop in performance trend over

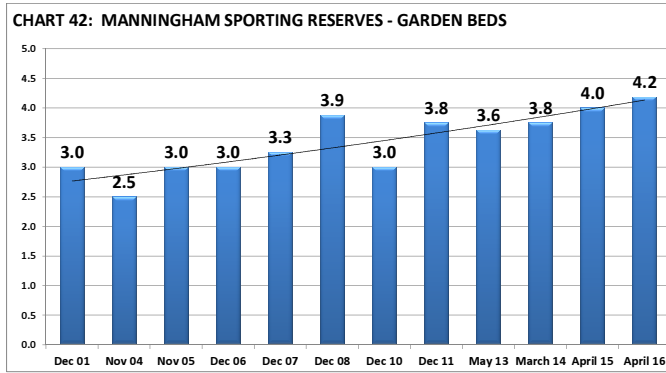
previous surveys. The reserves remain in very good condition for the intended use.



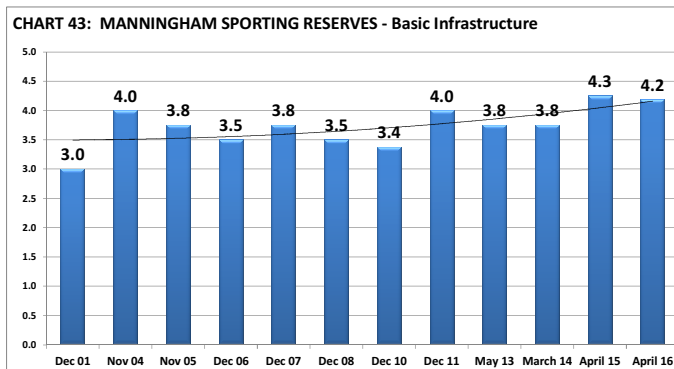
Whist the trend line in **Chart 55** indicates a steady improvement in **grass quality** from 2008 to 2013 with a marginally reduced result in 2014. The result for 2016 maintains the upward trend.

Between 2005-2008 the impacts of the drought are most evident and also this was a period when major refurbishment works were being undertaken on the playing surfaces. The results of the past five surveys indicate a consistently good performance.



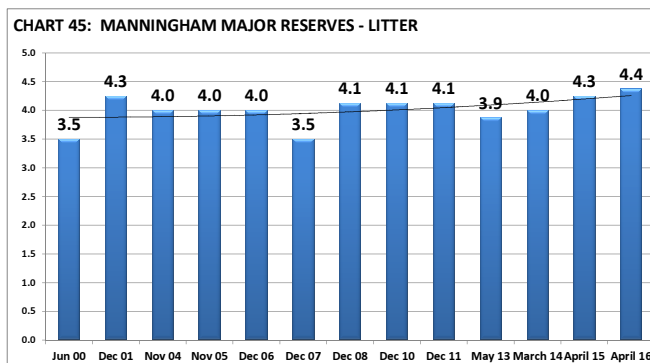


**Chart 42** indicates a strong trend of improvement in **garden beds** within sporting reserves over many years. Appears 2010 results were an aberration and the last five years healthy garden beds with minimal weeds/distressed plants evident.

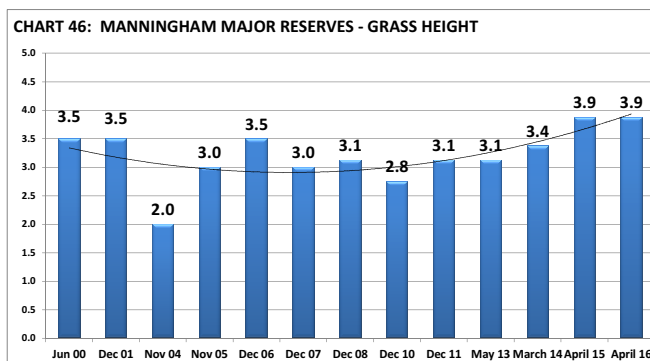


**Chart 43** indicates relative consistent performance for **basic infrastructure**. The downward trend between 2007 and 2010 has been corrected with minimal performance change between the peak of 2011 and 2014. The 2016 survey shows a slightly lower score than the peak of the 2015 survey.

## 12.2 Major Reserves



**Chart 45** indicates very consistent good performance over a long period. Dec 07 appears to have been an aberration. The 2016 results continue the upward trend from 2013, indicating minimal litter and very good presentation of major reserves in terms of **litter management**.

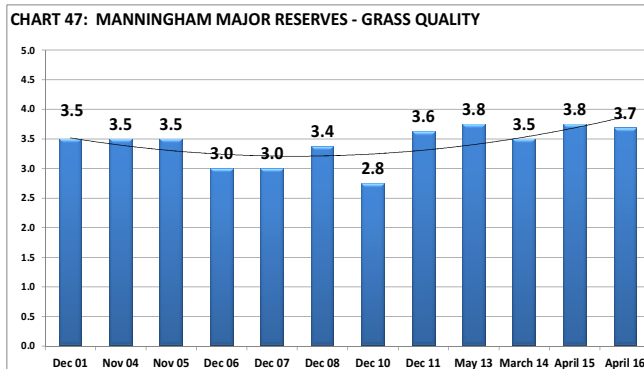


**Chart 46** indicates that whilst in the early surveys there were significant inconsistencies the past five surveys indicate continued improved performance in terms of **grass height** within these larger open reserves.

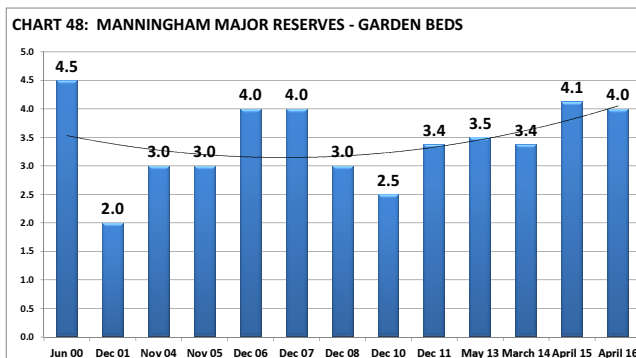
Grass height ratings around 3 indicate grass heights are starting to impact on usage.

The results would have been higher, however Finns reserve had grass height impacting on its use.

The level of inconsistencies for grass height in Major Reserves continues to be present, but the inspections do indicate overall improvement. Marshall Avenue, Ruffey Lake Park and Jenkins Park were very good.



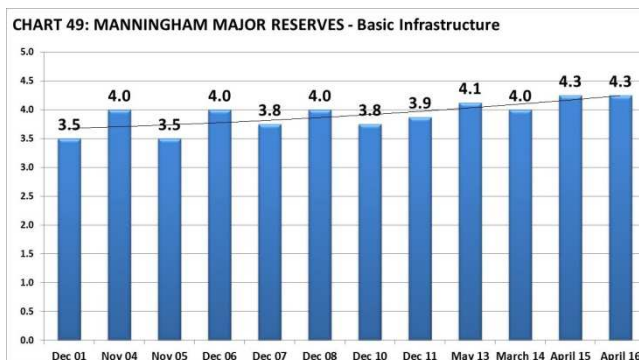
**Chart 47** trend line for **grass quality** indicates a steady improvement with the results for 2016 showing a slight reversal of this trend. Finns Reserve and Ruffey Lake Park had the lowest ratings of the four parks surveyed.



**Chart 48** indicates a slight decline in garden beds since the last survey, albeit the standard remains high with healthy plants with only occasional weed growth and /or litter.

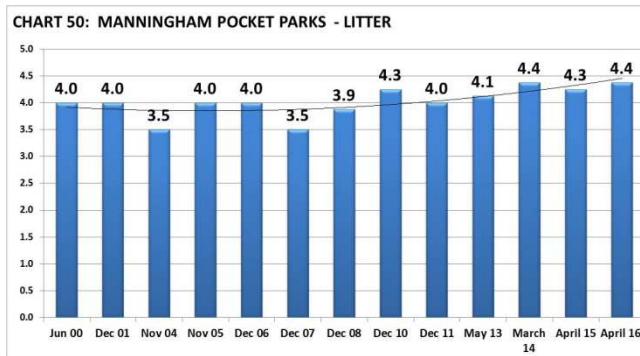
The garden beds at Finns Reserve were considered very good (healthy plants, minimal weeds) especially having regard to the high use of this reserve.

The garden beds at Marshall Avenue continue to be below average with signs of plant distress and weeds within the garden beds.

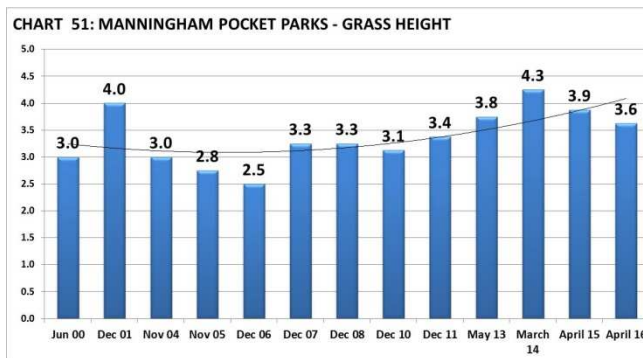


In terms of **basic infrastructure** (car parks, fences, bollards, etc) **Chart 49** indicates very consistent presentation over a long period with infrastructure continuing to be renewed and maintained.

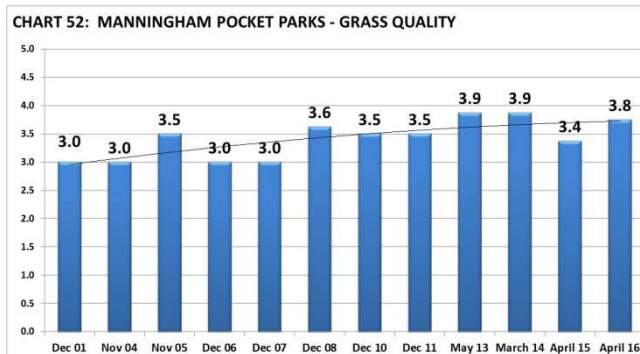
## 12.3 Pocket Parks



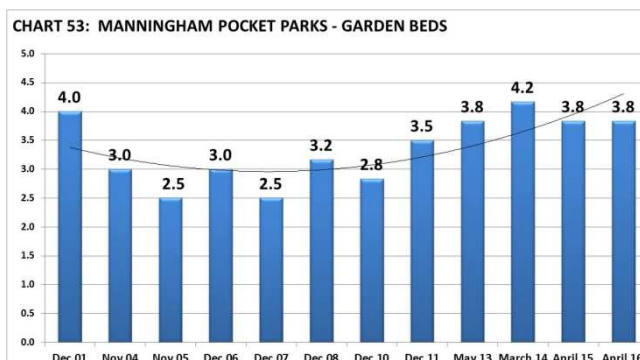
**Chart 50** indicates relatively consistent good performance for litter within Pocket Parks and a trend line that is improving especially since the 2007 survey. This trend is continuing with the 2016 results equaling the 2014 highest recorded result. Good examples are Mandalla Street, Green Gully Street and Mossdale Court, which were very clean and neat.



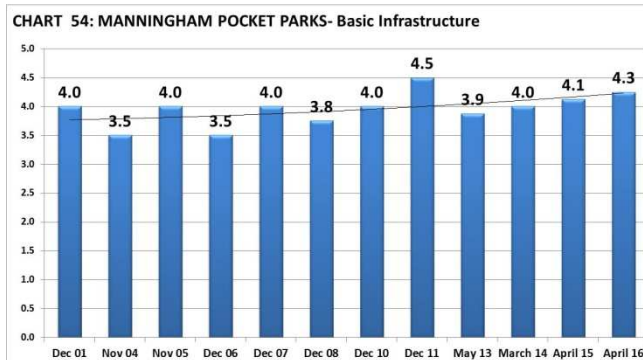
**Grass height**, as indicated in **Chart 51**, demonstrates a steady decline compared with the 2014 peak. The 2016 inspections revealed some variation in results across the four reserves inspected, with Mandalla Street and Green Gully with some areas of uneven height (missed cuts, wet areas etc).



**Chart 52** trend line indicates steady improvement in the **quality of grass** coverage at the pocket parks inspected with the 2016 results improving on the 2015 low score. Two pocket parks had good grass cover (Mossdale and Green Gully Reserve) with the other two (Renshaw and Mandalla) with some patchy areas and weeds.



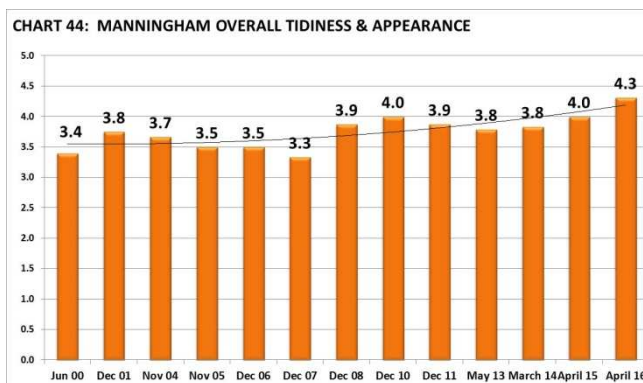
Whilst **Chart 53** highlights a significant drop in garden bed performance between 2001 and 2007 and since 2007 there has been a significant improvement in garden bed presentation except the 2015 and 2016 results indicate further improvement is necessary to maintain the upward trend. E.g. Mandella Street Reserve was again given a lower rating.



**Chart 54** highlights very consistent good presentation/maintenance of **infrastructure**. Overall average ratings around 4 indicate very good infrastructure with only some minor damage. Mandalla Street Reserve and Green Gully Reserve achieved the highest scores of the four parks surveyed.

## 12.4 Overall Tidiness & Appearance (all reserves)

**Chart 44** indicates the overall assessment for tidiness/appearance of all reserves (Sporting, Major and Pocket). It reflects the overall “initial” impression a user/visitor may have upon walking into/through a reserve.



Over the past seven surveys very consistent presentation has been achieved, with 2016 achieving the highest rating recorded. There was little evidence of litter, minimal weeds, pathways well defined (edges trimmed) and overall impression of

reserves well maintained in all aspects. It should also be noted that Manningham was well above the Overall Annual Mean of 3.6.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS

The assessment of parks and reserves performance was based on condition ratings within specified criteria in the categories surveyed. This process reflects the condition of the visible infrastructure, as could be expected to be observed, by the many users of these parks and reserves. Arguably, this is how a member of the public would view the level of performance of these elements if they had visited each site.

Whereas the sample size has been increased to four (4) reserves per Council per reserve category, the sample size is not large. The results should however provide an overview of performance especially when comparing the performance changes between the various surveys.

The survey was undertaken on consecutive days, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016, in an endeavour to limit potential variances in performance due to the impacts of weekend usage and weather changes and to improve the overall consistency in results. Note that Tuesday was sunny and Wednesday was overcast with some showers.

It should be noted that this year’s inspections occurred at a time where rainfall and warm weather occurs and where growth could be expected.

**Over the 13 surveys** to date, Manningham’s performance for **overall tidiness and appearance** of all reserves has remained relatively consistent over the last seven years with further improvement in 2016. Generally, all reserves were well presented and tidy.

The following is a “snap shot” of the 2016 survey results.

## 13.1 Sporting Reserves

**Litter** - Continues to provide high standards with further improvement in the level of service from last year and well above the overall Industry Mean.

**Basic Infrastructure** - Good and well above Industry Mean. Very consistent ratings over all surveys, even though a slight decrease in rating from last year, reflecting a need for continuous focus on regular renewal of infrastructure.



**Grass height** - Consistent ratings over many years, overall good and well above Industry Mean with an increased rating in 2016.

It is noted that grass height is very dependent upon the timing of the mowing.

**Grass quality** - Excellent and well above Industry Mean. Ongoing improvement over five surveys with the drop in 2014 regained in 2015 and steady in 2016.

**Garden Beds** - Manningham continued to improve in 2015 with further gains in 2016 presenting a higher standard when compared to most other councils surveyed (except Monash and Whitehorse). Significant improvement over past five surveys.

## 13.2 Major Reserves

**Litter** - Continues to provide consistent high standards (over past seven surveys) and above Industry Mean with further gains in 2016.

**Basic Infrastructure** - Consistently good and continuing improvement trend, with 2016 same as 2015.

**Grass height** - 2016 results indicate some inconsistency in grass height continues within the four reserves inspected, with 2016 result the same as 2015. The overall result remains well above the overall Industry Mean.

**Grass quality** - Good quality, with a slight drop from 2015. Finns Reserve and Ruffey Lake Park the lowest ratings, but maintaining good performance overall for the past five surveys and above the overall Industry Mean.



**Garden Beds** - Good and well above Industry Mean. Past five surveys indicate consistent performance, albeit Marshall Avenue Reserve average results in 2016 has influenced the overall results, which are marginally down on 2015.

## 13.3 Pocket Parks

**Litter** - Very good and consistent over 13 surveys. Above overall Industry Mean and 2016 results excellent with improvement on last survey. Requires vigilance to maintain the expected standard.

**Basic Infrastructure** - Overall, very good, above overall Industry Mean. Continued trend of improvement of higher ratings since 2013, with further improvement in 2016.

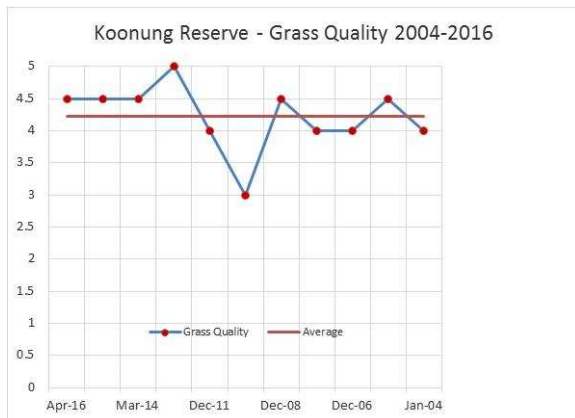
**Grass height** - Consistently above the overall Industry Mean for the last four surveys, but a steady decline compared with the 2014 peak. Rated second highest in 2015 survey, slipped to fourth highest in 2016. Mandalla Street and Green Gully lower ratings reducing the overall score.

**Grass quality** - Improvement in performance since last survey with Green Gully Reserve and Mossdale Court Reserve influencing the higher score. 2016 result well above the overall Industry Mean.

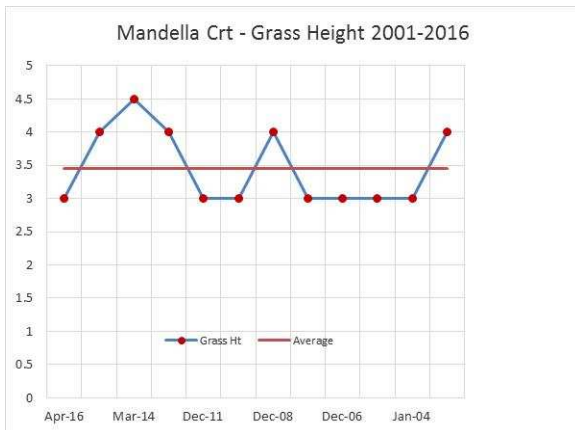
**Garden Beds** - Overall good. Maintained the same level of service as 2015, with an upward trend in performance.

### 13.4 Specific Reserve & Activity Trends

The following Charts and brief comments relate to specific reserves and key elements that have been assessed over a long period. It highlights specific reserve performance over this period.



Koonung Reserve grass quality is a key factor in its use as a high standard sport reserve. As evidenced over the past four years significant improvement has occurred with a peak results in 2013 and a little lower in 2014 and 2015. This overall improvement has occurred even though the surveys have been undertaken at varying times during this period.



Mandella Court Reserve has been assessed since the start of the benchmark surveys in December 2001. Grass height remained relatively poor until 2011 and since then a steady improvement has occurred with the highest rating in 2014 and a little lower in 2015.



In terms of Basic Infrastructure at Marshall Avenue reserve, very consistent results have been achieved over a long period indicating a continued focus on renewal and maintenance of these assets.

## 13.5 Key Issues for Review

In summary evidence from the survey in 2016, suggest that the overall presentation of Manningham's reserves has improved, with some areas plateauing and slight decreases in level of service identified this year. The challenge is to reverse any falls in ratings and maintain that high standard such as **litter management, garden beds** across all park categories, and **grass height and quality** in Sporting Reserves.

The issue of inconsistency in grass quality and grass height across Pocket Parks and Major Reserves requires addressing to achieve a higher overall standard of presentation.

In terms of **Basic Infrastructure** evidence indicates that although a high standard is presented, the 2016 results showing a plateauing in Major Reserves, slight decrease in Sporting Reserves and improvement in Pocket Parks, the issues of maintaining a high consistent and comparative standard with other councils, particularly in Major Reserves and Sporting Reserves will be challenging over the next few years as the 2016 survey observed a trend, first identified in 2015, of a high level of new and upgraded infrastructure across the other councils.