

TITLE	Grounds Maintenance Contract Review
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 19 September 2018
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny is one of the checks and balances which ensure that the Council and its partners make and implement effective decisions. It is a key element in the decision making process which ensures transparency and accountability.

The grounds maintenance service aims to improve quality of life by maintaining quality parks, play areas and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity across the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to consider:

- a) the community feedback, set out in Annex A to the report, as part of the ongoing review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract;
- b) the evidence submitted by witnesses at the meeting;
- c) the evidence submitted in relation to the Committee's Key Lines of Enquiry (Annex B);
- d) any issues arising from the site visit held on 18 September 2018;
- e) suggestions for further witnesses to be invited to the next meeting of the Committee on 17 October 2018.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At its meeting on 1 August 2018, the Committee commenced a review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract. In order to provide additional evidence for the Committee, Officers published a Call for Evidence via print and social media.

The report sets out details of the submissions received following the Call for Evidence (Appendix A). It also reminds Members of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) agreed by the Committee and Officer responses to the KLOE (Appendix B).

Background

At its meeting on 1 August 2018, the Committee commenced a review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Committee agree the following Terms of Reference for the review:

- a) To understand the key terms of the Council's grounds maintenance contract with Tivoli Group Ltd (who took over this year, having bought out ISS Facilities Services Landscaping).
- b) To understand the operation of the joint management arrangements between Tivoli, WBC and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- c) In relation to grass cutting, to understand the delivery of the service in terms of frequencies, timings, local priorities, complaints handling and communication with stakeholders.
- d) To understand how the grounds maintenance service works with key partners such as Town and Parish Councils and local community groups.
- e) To consider performance management of the grounds maintenance contract in relation to performance indicators, targets, penalties, monitoring, financial control and reporting to Members.
- f) To consider the financial elements of the grounds maintenance contract within the context of the financial challenges facing the Council.
- g) To understand how other Council's deliver grounds maintenance services and consider examples of best practice.
- h) To consider the potential for service improvements, improved communications and partnership working within the context of the challenges facing the Council.

Call for Evidence

In order to understand the views of residents, community groups and Town and Parish Councils, the Committee published a Call for evidence via print and social media. The Call for Evidence stated:

"The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is undertaking a review of the Council's grass cutting service. The new service commenced in April 2016 and aimed to provide a more flexible service which responded to local needs and priorities. However, there have been a number of complaints about the quality and effectiveness of the service which has led to the review.

The Committee would like to hear the views of residents, Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups about the frequency and quality of grass cutting across the Borough. This could include the timeliness and frequency of cuts, the quality of the work, disposal of grass cuttings, impact of wildflower areas, information on the Council's website, complaints handling or any other issues".

A number of residents, Community Groups and Town/Parish Councils have responded to the Call for Evidence. Their feedback is attached at Annex A to the report for Members' consideration.

Key Lines of Enquiry

The Committee also agreed a set of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) which would act as a framework for the review. The KLOE are set out at Annex B together with Officer comments and responses. The KLOE responses are supported by an extract from the Grounds Maintenance contract specification and a copy of the 2014 consultation exercise.

Witnesses

A number of witnesses have also been invited to attend the meeting. The witnesses are:

- Peter Fry – Tivoli Contract Manager;
- Jane Hartley – Charvil Parish Council;
- Peter Baveystock – WBC Service Manager, Cleaner and Greener Services;
- Emma Pilgrim – WBC Performance Officer, Cleaner and Greener Services.

Site Visit

Several Members will also be attending a site visit on 18 September 2018, looking at the operation of the grass cutting service across the Borough.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	NA	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	NA	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
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To be considered as part of the discussions.
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Cross-Council Implications

Overview and Scrutiny impacts on all Council services and the work of key partners.

List of Background Papers

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 1 August 2018
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Contact Neil Carr	Service Democratic Services
Telephone No 0118 974 6058	Email neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk
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