

TITLE	Officer Response to Grounds Maintenance Scrutiny Review
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 31 January 2019
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Environment, Libraries and Leisure - John Halsall

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report sets out the Officer Response to the 12 Recommendations set out in 2.1 to 2.12 of (Attachment 1). Officers will ensure that a suitable and fit for purpose Grounds Maintenance Service is delivered.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive consider:

- 1) the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee into the Grounds Maintenance Contract in Attachment 1;
- 2) the Officers' respective responses to each recommendation in the Background of this Report.

BACKGROUND

The Council's current Grounds Maintenance contract commenced in 2016 with a new contractor, ISS Facility Services (ISS was subsequently bought out by Tivoli Group, with the handover taking place in June 2018). The contract was awarded after a joint procurement exercise with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). The contract moved away from a traditional prescriptive model (i.e. a defined number of cuts) to an output/outcomes based contract.

The contract commenced on 1 April 2016. There were some issues in this initial year but there was a significant improvement in the service delivered by the contractor in 2017. However, in 2018 further problems arose and the Council received a significant number of complaints and negative coverage in print and social media.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee asked to review the contract arrangements and this was addressed at meetings held on 1 August, 19 September and 17 October. This review considered information about the service sought from residents, community groups and Town and Parish Councils. The Committee interviewed a number of key people including the Executive Member, the WBC Client Officers and a representative of the contractor. It also considered evidence from RBWM and Bracknell Forest Borough Council (BFBC).

A final report was prepared and considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 21st November 2018. This made a number of recommendations to be presented to the Council's Executive to help improve service delivery in 2019 and subsequent years. . These recommendations and the responses are set out below.

Recommendation	Officer Response
2.1 That the Executive Member and Director of Locality and Customer Services meet with senior management from Tivoli Group to discuss the operation of the grounds maintenance service and to emphasise the Council's expectations for service delivery in 2019.	Agreed – Meeting planned for January 2019.
2.2 That the Executive Member and Director of Locality and Customer Services liaise with their counterparts at RBWM to identify areas of common interest and concern and make joint representations to Tivoli Group as necessary.	Agreed - Annual meetings currently take place between RBWM & Wokingham Borough Council to review contract operations. The next meeting is planned for January 2019.
2.3 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services review the level of WBC's client monitoring/management resource available for the beginning of the next grass cutting season – March/April 2019.	Agreed – This will be discussed and agreed at the meeting on 20 th December 2018.

<p>2.4 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services review the contractual options available to the Council in the event of continuing underperformance by the grounds maintenance contractor.</p>	<p>Agreed - A briefing on this will be included in the O&S Report on 20th February.</p>
<p>2.5 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services explore options for co-location of the grounds maintenance client and contractor teams and review the weighting of Key Performance Indicators in the contract to emphasise the performance standard required for key public-facing elements of the service.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The colocation of Clienting staff will be considered within any redesign of Toutley Depot • The KPIs will be reviewed and form part of the O&S Report in February
<p>2.6 That the implementation of the Localities Service be used to explore opportunities for improved local intelligence and the development of local networks providing feedback on the operation of the grounds maintenance service.</p>	<p>Agreed – Work is already underway to deliver this in a partnership between Clienting and Localities.</p>
<p>2.7 That WBC Officers work with the contractor to seek input from appropriate specialist groups, including RSPB and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) in order to inform management plans for biodiversity sites (woodland, copse and thicket) across the Borough.</p>	<p>Agreed – Work has already started with our own Biodiversity Officer who already liaises with these respective external bodies to plan some selected areas for 2019.</p>
<p>2.8 That, as part of the 21st Century Council programme, opportunities for using new technology be explored in order to deliver more comprehensive, up to date information on grounds maintenance schedules, routes, performance and customer feedback.</p>	<p>Agreed – GM had been named as a priority to develop ESRI (the Council’s new mapping system) to help facilitate this.</p>
<p>2.9 That the Council continue discussions with Town and Parish Councils about the potential for further asset transfers and options for mutual support in relation to the grounds maintenance service, with regular updates to the Borough Parish Liaison Forum.</p>	<p>Agreed – This continues to be a priority and follows the successful transfers of open space to Charvil and Hurst Parish Councils.</p>
<p>2.10 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services submit a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting in February 2019, setting out the arrangements in place to</p>	<p>Agreed – A report will be delivered on 20th February.</p>

ensure an effective grass cutting service in 2019.	
2.11 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services submit a further report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting in October 2019, setting out details of performance issues and lessons learnt during the 2019 grass cutting season.	Agreed
2.12 That the Executive instruct Officers to provide updated guidance on the Council's approach to public consultation, in line with the commitments set out in the Council's Constitution and the relevant legal principles.	Officers will make available guidance relating to public consultation on the Council's web site and Intranet.

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)	£0	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	

Other Financial Information

The recommendations agreed will be progressed in line with the resource and budget available.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Not relevant

Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps

Place Clienting will fully resource this project.

Timeline for Review and Evaluation

Detailed in O&S Report

List of Background Papers

None

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Attachment 1 – Overview & Scrutiny Report

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