

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Grass Cutting Delivery Plan for Spring 2019</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee on 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	John Halsall, Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Sarah Hollamby, Director of Locality and Customer Services

<p><b>OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>To ensure that the Grounds Maintenance Service/Contract with Tivoli is fit for purpose so that residents can enjoy well-maintained open spaces, play areas, outdoor sports facilities, amenity areas and highway verges across the Borough.</p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Management Committee consider the Officers Response to their 12 recommendations agreed by the Executive on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 as detailed in Appendix 1.</li> <li>2. That the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Management Committee consider the actions and mitigations to deliver an appropriate grass-cutting programme in 2019 and beyond as detailed in this Report and Appendices.</li> </ol>
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee was asked to review the contract arrangements for the grounds maintenance service and this was addressed at meetings held in August, September and October 2018. A final report was prepared and considered by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Management Committee on 21st November 2018 and this made a number of recommendations to the Council's Executive on 31<sup>st</sup> January. This report updates the OSC about the actions and mitigations undertaken to address its recommendations in order to deliver an effective grass cutting service commencing in March 2019 and then ongoing. This has focussed on working with the contract provider Tivoli to develop an action plan to address those issues which have contributed to a lower standard of service delivery in previous years, and also on identifying additional measures to ensure that the contract is effectively monitored and communicated to customers. A series of scenarios have also been tested to ensure that the measures in place are robust to help secure an effective grass cutting service going forward.</p>

## **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 that were presented to the Council's Executive on 31<sup>st</sup> January.

### **Analysis of Issues**

The Overview & Scrutiny Review focussed on three main areas. These are detailed below along with a summary of the response to each one:

1. *Were there problems with the structure of the Council's Grounds Maintenance contract?*

Response: Officers have reported that they feel that the Contract is fit for purpose subject to appropriate correctional aspects (addressed below).

2. *Were there problems with the way the Council's contractor was delivering the service?*

Response: Officers have concluded that there were problems in relation to available resources, especially around the ability to react quickly at times of high demand.

These issues have been addressed below.

3. *Were there problems with the way the Council monitored and managed the contract?*

Response: Officers have accepted that this contract would benefit from more comprehensive monitoring. To support this, staff from the Localities Service will conduct additional monitoring to act as an early warning system to understand where any shortfalls are being experienced so that resources can be re-allocated by Tivoli, Countryside Service or through partnerships with Wokingham and Earley Town Councils.

## Next Steps & Action Plan

The O&SC recommendations that were agreed by the Council's Executive are set out in Appendix 1 together with a summary of how the OSC recommendations have been addressed. This demonstrates the significant progress that has already been made against the recommendations.

An action plan has been produced by the Council working with the contactor Tivoli (see Appendix 2). The action plan focuses on the measures that will be put in place before the commencement of the next grass cutting session and then throughout this period and in future years. The action plan focusses on identifying the key risks (Appendix 3) that have impacted on the delivery of an effective service and ways these risks can be mitigated. Actions in the action plan include:-

### *Contractor Actions (Tivoli)*

- Early recruitment and training of staff
- New machinery to be commissioned ready for the start of the grass cutting season
- Existing machinery being serviced for the start of the grass cutting season
- Sub-contractor relationships to be developed as a contingency on a rapid response
- A clear communication plan from Tivoli to WBC allowing early warnings on any grass-cutting issues

### *WBC actions:*

- Development of a coherent and dynamic communications plan (Appendix 6) to include early warnings for delays or any other issues to Members, residents and Parish/Town Councils
- Development of a contingency to employ the Countryside Service to carry out work on play areas to supplement Tivoli to prevent extended delays as experienced in 2018
- Development of a contingency to work in partnership with Town Councils to employ their own staff or known third party contractors on appropriate work in their own respective areas

Works to implement the action plan commenced at the beginning of January and to date, there has been good progress against this. For example, Tivoili has confirmed that staff recruitment has commenced and that machinery is starting to be serviced and procured. In addition to the activities contained in the action plan, officers have also put in place ways to more effectively monitor the contract. The Current KPIs (Appendix 4) have been reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose, and a new set of KPI's (Appendix 5) have been produced. The main change proposed focuses on KPI 6 grass cutting. On the basis that we cut approx. 4.4million sqm grass in parks and verges across the Borough, Officers propose to double the threshold for KPI 6 from 24 bona fide complaints per annum to 50 bona fide complaints per annum. The previous KPI was not based on any technical assessment of what would be acceptable or achievable and is considered to be unrealistic. Increasing this to a more achievable and reasonable number will enable the contactor to have a meaningful target but to compensate for this, Officers propose increasing the reliance on achieving this by 200% as a reflection of its importance. This means that if this target is not reached the loss

of payment to the contractor would increase from £800 to £1,600 as opposed to £800 greater reflecting the importance of this element of the service.

Progression of the action plan throughout the grass cutting season will be closely monitored by the Council. The Council’s Localities Officers are being trained to identify any issues for early resolution and to ensure that the service is being delivered effectively. In addition, regular liaison and meetings have already been undertaken and will continue to be held between the Council’s contract team and the contractor Tivoli to hold them to account and to adhere to the formal complaints process. Also, to ensure there is an auditable complaints and default record.

The review of the grounds maintenance contact has emphasised the need to communicate more effectively with customers. In order to enable this, we have developed a communications plan (Appendix 6) and updated the FAQs (Appendix 7). In order to ensure that the contractor is responsive to address any customer concerns, the process to resolve these has been looked at and revised (see Appendix 8). The process shows the Customer Journey from first contact by a resident either by phone to Customer Delivery or on line, moving through to the Tivoli contact and then feedback to the resident upon resolution. This is the preferred way for residents to contact the Council using Microsoft Dynamics with all complaints being registered against KPI 6 (grass cutting complaints).

### **Grass Cutting Scenarios and Mitigation in Place**

In addition to the above measures, officers have reviewed the previous issues with grass cutting to identify any risks that could impact on effective service delivery even with the successful implementation of the action plan, effective monitoring, and the improved performance framework and communications plan. These risks are those things that the council has less control over, and a number of scenarios associated with these risks which relate to staffing issues, weather/condition problems and machinery issues, have been tested as set out in Appendix 9.

### **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	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	N/A

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
None
<b>List of Background Papers</b>
None

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