

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **7 September 2017**

Report of: **Director of Operations**

Subject: **ANNUAL REPORT ON GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the performance of the Grounds Maintenance Service over the last year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes the content of this report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Grounds Maintenance Service plays a key role in delivering the Council's vision for Fareham of a safe and attractive place to live and work. The service forms part of the larger Operations Service within the Department of Streetscene and operates from the Council's depot at Broadcut, Wallington.
2. The majority of the operations undertaken by the Grounds Maintenance team are not a statutory obligation for the Council with the exception of the burial service. The key operations the team carry out within the Borough are as follows:
 - Grass cutting
 - Shrub and rose border maintenance
 - Hedge cutting
 - Floral display maintenance
 - Winter and summer sports pitch preparation and maintenance
 - Play area inspection, repair and maintenance
 - Burial service

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

3. The service operates on an annual revenue budget of £1,367,000 as detailed below:

• Employees	£816,000
• Transport	£245,000
• Supplies and services	£173,000
• Internal recharges	£77,000
• Depreciation	£56,000
4. Hampshire County Council, under an agency agreement that was revised in 2016 contributes £149,357 annually towards the maintenance of the Highway grass verges, shrub borders and hedgerows.
5. The service is managed by the Operations Manager, assisted by the Operations Supervisor. The Grounds Maintenance team consists of 28 full time employees, 1 apprentice gardener and 5 seasonal grass cutting operatives. During periods of peak demand a small number of temporary labour operatives are employed through local recruitment agencies.
6. The team operate a 37 hour week Monday – Thursday 8am – 4pm with a 3.30 finish on Fridays. Occasional overtime is required to meet any peak service demands.

GRASS CUTTING

7. The service is responsible for cutting over 2.5 million square metres of grass, most of which is cut every two to three weeks during the growing season. The operation commences in late February/early March and runs through to late October/early November.
8. The Highway verges, small open spaces and areas of grass located around housing estates are cut approximately every two to three weeks depending on weather and ground conditions. Follow up strimming of grass banks and clusters of obstacles is undertaken monthly. The remaining isolated obstacles, including trees and wall lines, are controlled by an annual herbicide application and occasional ad-hoc strimming.
9. Parks and large open spaces are cut a minimum of two occasions per month, or as conditions allow. Winter sports pitches are cut as required and as conditions allow to maintain a playable surface.
10. The Council's 13 cemeteries and churchyards and 28 sheltered housing schemes are cut at least twice a month or as conditions allow. Due to the sensitive nature and high profile associated with these sites, obstacles are strimmed during each maintenance visit and at times of peak growth the grass is collected to ensure these areas remain safe and attractive for the residents and visitors.
11. The Council operates an assisted garden scheme for approximately 165 elderly or disabled Council housed tenants. This scheme, that is free to qualifying residents, provides a monthly grass cutting service from March through to October for those unable to manage their gardens.
12. The Council receive an average of between 3 and 4 enquiries a week from Fareham's residents about the grass cutting service.

SHRUB AND ROSE BORDERS

13. The service maintains over 47,000 square metres of shrub and rose borders on Fareham Borough Council and Hampshire Highway land. The majority of sites receive two maintenance visits per annum. The main visit is undertaken during the winter months of November through to February. This visit includes weed control and formative pruning. A second visit is carried out during the summer months to control vegetation encroaching onto footpaths and roads.

HEDGE MAINTENANCE

14. The majority of this operation is undertaken by the Council's incumbent contractor, The Landscape Group. Over 46 kilometres (28 miles) of hedgerows are trimmed on two occasions per annum. The first cut commences in late June/early July and continues through to the end of September. The second cut is carried out between October and February.
15. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to disturb nesting birds and that is why we do not cut hedges during the peak bird nesting season of March through to June unless it is an urgent health & safety matter.
16. The current contract is due to expire in June 2018 and Officers are currently

investigating the options available to deliver the service going forward as part of the ongoing Vanguard review of the service.

FLORAL DISPLAYS

17. The service is responsible for the maintenance of over 200 lamp post baskets, 40 shop front baskets and various planters, tubs and troughs located throughout the Borough. These seasonal displays provide colourful enhancements to a number of prime locations adding to the 40 flower beds that help to enhance Fareham's prime parks, main roads and roundabouts.

SPORTING FACILITIES

18. The service is responsible for the maintenance of 18 adult and junior football pitches, 7 nine v nine youth football pitches, 4 mini soccer pitches, 2 rugby pitches, 4 cricket pitches and 2 grass bowling greens.
19. The majority of maintenance work for these facilities is undertaken by the Grounds Maintenance team with the exception of the winter sports pitch deep aeration and end of season renovation operations. This service is currently carried out by The Landscape Group as part of the Hedge and Sports Maintenance Contract awarded in 2014.

BURIAL SERVICE

20. The Grounds Maintenance service provides a team responsible for the excavation and backfilling of graves and cremated remains across the Council's 8 working cemeteries that are located throughout the Borough.
21. The team prepare and dress the graveside in preparation for the interment and a member of the team attends each service to receive the burial documentation and to ensure there is a Council presence at the burial should it be required.
22. During 2016 the team carried out 97 full burials (131 in 2015) and 99 internments of cremated remains (95 in 2015). In 2014 there were over 100 burials and 90 cremated remains.

PLAY AREAS

23. The team is responsible for the inspection, maintenance and repair of the Council's 44 play areas, 6 skate facilities and 4 outdoor gyms. The facilities are located across all wards in the borough and the inspections are carried out at each site on a frequency of 1-3 times a week depending on an analysis of the sites defect records.
24. To facilitate the above operation a full time play inspector is certificated to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) operational standard. The inspector is employed to inspect report and undertake the majority of repairs to the equipment and safety surfacing. An additional 4 members of the team are RoSPA trained to undertake basic inspections to provide cover for the full time inspector during periods of leave and absence.

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

25. It has been another successful year for the Borough at the South and South East in

Bloom awards held on 14 September 2016 at Ferneham Hall in Fareham. Fareham received its 13th consecutive Gold award in the Small City category and was once again category winner. The Borough also won the County award for the highest marked entry in Hampshire.

26. The quality of Fareham's parks and gardens also received top recognition in receiving the following awards:

- Holly Hill Woodland Park - Gold
- Sensory Garden of Reflection - Gold
- Westbury Manor Garden – Gold
- Warsash Common – Gold
- Civic Gardens - Gold

27. The service also helped Fareham retain Green Flag status for Holly Hill Woodland Park and the Sensory Garden of Reflection.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

28. The Vanguard intervention continues to review the grounds maintenance service alongside a larger review of all the Streetscene front line operations.

29. The team will continue to review operations and service demands to ensure it can provide a flexible operation able to achieve a high level of customer service whilst working proactively to maintain the Borough to the highest possible standards within the available resource.

30. Training needs continue to be identified and delivered to ensure the team are resilient and to provide opportunities for career development. During 2017, in addition to the on-going annual training for small plant and ride on mower operation given to any new recruits, several members of the team have been trained to operate safely on fast roads, Other training provided has included Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) training and Mobile Elevated Working Platforms (MEWPS) training.

31. The team's Horticultural apprentice is working towards his level 3 certificate in Horticulture and has been taken on as a permanent member of the grounds team.

RISK ASSESSMENT

32. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

Background Papers:

None

Reference Papers:

None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Mick Gore. (Ext 4459).