

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel

Date 22 October 2015

Report of: Director of Environmental Services

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

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the performance of the Council's 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 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 service is not a statutory obligation for the Council with the exception of the burial service operation. The key operations undertaken by the service 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 £1,262,400 as detailed below:

• Employees	£757,800
• Transport	£206,000
• Supplies and services	£173,400
• Internal recharges	£92,600
• Depreciation	£32,600
4. Hampshire County Council, under an agency agreement, contributes £164,500 for the maintenance of the Highway grass verges, shrub borders and hedgerows.

SERVICE OPERATION

5. The service is managed by the Operations Manager, assisted by the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor. The operational team consists of 27 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 to Thursday 8am – 4pm with a 3.30pm finish on Fridays. Occasional overtime is required to meet service demands and play inspections are currently carried out across 6 days per week Monday through to Saturday.

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. The work is seasonal, commencing in early March through to early November.
8. The Highway verges, small open spaces and areas of grass located around general housing estates are cut approximately every two to three weeks depending on weather and ground conditions. Follow up strimming of banks and clusters of obstacles is undertaken monthly. The remaining isolated obstacles 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 to maintain a playable surface.
10. Grass at the Council's cemeteries and sheltered housing schemes is cut a minimum of two occasions per month or as conditions allow. Due to the sensitive nature and high profile of these sites obstacles are strimmed during each maintenance visit and at times of peak growth the grass is sometimes collected to ensure these areas remain safe and attractive.
11. The Council operates an assisted garden scheme for approximately 200 elderly and disabled tenants. This scheme, that is free to qualifying residents, provides a monthly grass cutting service from March to October for residents who occupy Council properties and are unable to manage their gardens.

SHRUB AND ROSE BORDERS

12. The service maintains over 47,000 square metres of shrub and rose borders on Fareham Borough Council and Hampshire Highway land. Most sites receive two maintenance visits per annum with the main visit 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

13. This operation is undertaken by the Council's incumbent contractor, The Landscape Group at nearly 400 locations throughout the Borough. Over 44 kilometres (nearly 28 miles) of hedgerow are trimmed on a frequency of two occasions per annum. The first cut commences in July and continues through to the end of September and the second visit takes place between October and February.
14. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to disturb nesting birds and this is why we do not cut hedges between the peak bird nesting season March through to June unless it is an urgent health & safety matter.

FLORAL DISPLAYS

15. The service is responsible for the maintenance of over 200 lamp post baskets, planters, tubs and roadside troughs plus 40 shop front baskets. These seasonal displays provide colourful enhancements to a number of prime locations throughout the

Borough. The service also maintains over 40 flower beds that provide seasonal interest and enhance Fareham's prime parks, main roads and roundabouts.

SPORTING FACILITIES

16. The service is responsible for the maintenance of 17 adult and junior football pitches, 6 nine v nine youth pitches, 4 mini soccer pitches, 2 rugby pitches, 4 cricket pitches and 2 grass bowling greens.
17. The majority of the 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 that are carried out by The Landscape Group as part of the Hedge and Sports Pitch Maintenance Contract awarded in 2014.

BURIAL SERVICE

18. The Grounds Maintenance service provides a team responsible for the excavation and backfilling of graves and cremated remains in the Council's 8 working cemeteries that are located throughout the Borough.
19. The team prepare and dress the graveside in preparation for the interment and a member of the team will also attend each service to receive the burial documentation and to ensure there is a Council presence at the burial should it be required.
20. During 2014 the team carried out over 100 burials and more than 90 burials of cremated remains. For the first 8 months of 2015 the team have completed 89 burials and 75 cremated remains, suggesting that 2015 will be a slightly busier year for the service.

PLAY AREAS

21. The team is responsible for the inspection, maintenance and repair of the Council's 43 play areas, 6 skate facilities and 3 outdoor gyms. The facilities are located across all wards of the Borough and the inspections are currently undertaken across 6 days per week, Monday through to Saturday. As reported to the previous Streetscene Panel the inspection service has recently been reviewed and a new schedule will commence from 2 November 2015.
22. A full time play inspector is certificated to Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Operational standard and is employed to inspect and undertake minor repairs to the equipment and safety surfacing. An additional 4 members of the team are RoSPA trained to undertake basic inspections and provide cover for the full time inspector during holidays and absence.

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

23. Fareham has once again celebrated another year of success at the South and South East in Bloom awards held at the Amex Stadium in Brighton on 11 September. The Borough has received its 12th consecutive Gold award in the Small City category and was also the Small City category winner. In addition, Fareham received the Hampshire County Award for the highest marked entry in Hampshire.
24. Fareham's parks and gardens also came out with top awards as follows:

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

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

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

26. The service is currently preparing to be reviewed as part of the on-going Vanguard Intervention into Council services.

27. The team will continue to focus on providing a flexible service able to achieve a high level of customer service standards and to work proactively to maintain the Borough to the highest possible standards within the available resource.

28. Training needs continue to be identified and delivered to provide service resilience and opportunities for career development. In 2015 new starters have received manual handling training and update training has been provided to employees certificated to use chainsaws. Further update training is planned in November to renew the play inspection team certification.

RISK ASSESSMENT

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

Background Papers:

Play Area Inspection Review (Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel, 10 September 2015)

Reference Papers:

None.

Enquiries:

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