

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 19 JUNE 2018

SUBJECT OF REPORT: PARKS AND STREET SCENE CONTRACT

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: JOHN FLANNIGAN, COMMUNITY AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICE MANAGER**

KEY DECISION: N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel considers the contents of this report which provides an update on the budget savings in the Parks and Street Scene contract.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

The 2018/19 Medium Term Financial Plan identified savings of £150,000 from the Parks and Street Scene contract. This report updates Members on how these savings have been delivered and the implications thereof.

2. POLICY

Quality Places

3. DETAILS

The Parks and Street Scene contract started on 1st April 2013 and was developed to enable the transformation of the delivery of grounds maintenance, tree surgery and street cleansing, in order to deliver significant budget savings (£750,000).

Combining the three contracts not only saved money but enabled us to pool resources providing the flexibility in service delivery that was needed after addressing such significant savings.

Success of this approach has been demonstrated by the ongoing awards of Green Flags and success in the Britain in Bloom awards.

The ongoing financial situation required savings of £150,000 from the contract for the 2018/19 MTFP.

The savings have been split proportionately between the grounds maintenance and street cleansing roles. The single tree team are not affected by these savings in order that their safety functions can continue to be delivered.

To make the MTFP saving, the following changes to the Parks and Street Scene contract

have therefore had to be implemented and the table below details this and the known and likely impact of these changes.

Area of work	Change	Implications
Street cleansing	Reduction of 1 x mechanical sweeper and driver	<p>Mechanical sweeping is the most cost-efficient way of carrying out cleansing of the highway as large areas can be swept and produce high standards. This reduction equates to approximately a 20% of capacity (5 sweepers to 4) and sweeping will also reduce by circa the same amount. The mechanical sweeper removed was the most versatile and bridged the compact and large mechanical sweeper sizes and could carry out work outside of Weston-super-Mare area as it was large enough to travel easily throughout the area. Consequently there is no cover for the remaining sweepers (2 large and 2 compact) and manual sweeping is required in areas previously covered by the mechanical sweeper removed, putting additional pressure on these crews.</p>
	Reduction in seasonal staff	<p>This approach enabled permanent staff to fulfil the role of seasonal staff who traditionally supplemented works in the town centre and sea front. This has been operating for 2 months and the high priority areas of the sea front and parts of the town centre has not been impacted. The permanent staff are more effective and motivated compared to seasonal staff. The transfer of staff to carry out seasonal work has had to be addressed by reducing other workloads such as frequency of bin emptying and removing litter bins in some areas. Even with this mitigation sufficient time cannot be freed up to cover previous work volumes and the reduction in capacity means that resource must be drawn from other areas such as some town centre cleansing operatives and mobile cleansing crews. This has directly impacted on the ability to respond so quickly to cleansing requests in the town centre together with wider requests such as fly-tipping.</p>

		Pro-active cleansing work such as weeding across the area will also be impacted.
Street Cleansing	Reduction of 1 x mobile team and vehicle	The removal of a pro-active cleansing team impacts on ability to carry out various cleansing work and spreads the remaining teams over a larger area. It also reduces resilience of the service especially during times of seasonal impact such as leaf and will impact on general cleansing work including response to collection of fly-tips and weed removal
Grounds maintenance	Reduction of 1 x ride on mower and driver (the contract now has 5 ride-on mowers)	This has increased the grass cutting cycle by approximately 4 days The grass cutting team have moved to seasonal hours meaning they work longer hours in the summer, when most work is required (and the days are longer) and shorter hours in the winter. This is an industry standard.
	Reduction of 1 x strimmer team (the contract now has 1 x strimmer team)	The remaining strimming team prioritises key sites and safety issues (e.g. visibility splays) Long grass is becoming obvious around 'obstacles' (e.g. benches, road signs, wall edges etc) The growing conditions described below has meant that it has been necessary to provide an additional, temporary team, to enable the grass cutting rounds to catch up.

External factors occur which can exacerbate the impact of these budget reductions.

For example, this year's late cold spell followed by early seasonal wet weather prevented early mowing and the ensuing warm weather has accelerated grass growth. Longer grass takes longer to cut. With favourable weather we expect to be back on track by mid-June.

Tall grass has environmental benefits because it can be important for biodiversity by creating refuge areas for insects and amphibians; and they also provide perfect foraging sites for birds to catch insects to feed their young and flowers for pollinators such as bees. However, tall grass in urban environments can cause dissatisfaction to some residents who prefer to see regularly mown grass.

Recent warm weather has also seen high visitor numbers who inevitably create larger volumes of litter and rubbish. This was removed in a timely way demonstrating that the contract can continue to address significant events, but had an impact on the cleansing work in other areas including towns and parks, as these were not able to be attended to so quickly due to a smaller remaining resource.

It is too early to provide detailed information on other examples but these could include the resilience to deal as effectively with weed growth, flooding, snow, high tides and leaf fall.

4. CONSULTATION

Options for delivering these savings were discussed with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and the Executive Member for the Environment.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

£150,000 of savings have been delivered.

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Parks and Street Scene contract contains clauses that enables variations to work volumes and contract spend.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- Tasks were removed from the contract that are intended to limit impact on people's safety
- There is potential for reputational risk as parts of the area will become untidier and this may be noticed.
- Keeping areas clean to a required standard is a statutory requirement and there is a risk of challenge if areas degrade.
- There could be knock on consequences in other services such as gully emptying because debris (including leaf fall) is not removed from the highway channel due to mechanical sweeper and mobile crew reduction. These areas of existing higher flood risk are known.
- There is a reduced resilience within the service due to less mechanical and manual sweeping resource and lower priority areas may be impacted including rural villages.
- Frequency of cleansing and response times to events will be impacted

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment was completed and no significant implications were identified.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The reduction in Parks and Street Scene contract service provision will have significant implications for the council's service delivery, both in terms of reputation and mitigation of financial penalties.

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None