

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE – UPDATE FOR 2023/24

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Operational Board Meeting on 22 September 2022 considered a report from the Head of Capital Works supported by Streetpride's Manager for Grounds Maintenance, which provided an update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service during 2022/23 and proposing actions to deliver service improvements in 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the service updates in 2023/24.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure the Operational Board is informed of to the proposed and delivered service improvements in 2023/24.

4. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Background

The Operational Board Meeting on 9 June 2022 considered a written response from the Head of Capital Works to a question raised by a Leasehold Board Member about the performance of the Grounds Maintenance Service, mainly focusing on the frequency of grass mowing visits during the first three months of the growing season resulting in several sites being untidy in appearance.

The outcome of the debate, a referral of the Grounds Maintenance Service to debate at Main Board.

- 4.2 The Main Board Meeting on 28 July 2022 considered a written an update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service. Noting the improvements to the Service delivered since the Operational Board Meeting on 9 June 2022.and providing some direction on areas to be considered when reviewing the future direction of the Service.

The Main Board recommended that the Operational Board continue to pursue a resolution to the issues with the quality of the service.

- 4.3 The Operational Board Meeting on 22 September 2022 considered a written report from the Head of Capital Works supported by a presentation by the SP Service Manager for Grounds Maintenance and Arboriculture, providing an update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service during 2022/23 and proposing actions to deliver service improvements in 2023/24.

The Operational Board noted the update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service and recommended that:

- Officers from DCC and DH provide potential options that can be shared with the Operational Board to put to customers with a view to changes in the 2023/24 growing season.
- Existing staffing levels to be maintained and that any improvements to the service from the actions listed in the report be monitored.
- The proposal to Invest in an additional 4 staff at a cost of approx. £120,000 a year be rejected.

4.4 **Proposed actions to improve the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service**

The aim of both DH and DCC is to deliver a good quality, cost effective service for its customers, that is flexible and able to respond changes in workload across its service area throughout the seasons.

Staffing

Currently DCC have 5 vacancies covered by agency, with 3 staff on long term absences, so are in a reasonable position in the current season staffing wise. To address the staffing issues, on an ongoing basis, and strive to maintain a full establishment, DCC continue to implement a number of initiatives:

- They have made some changes to their recruitment style by attending several recruitment shows where they've had their own stands to attract applicants.
- They have open on-going running job adverts on the Derby City Council jobs pages.
- They've installed a jobs notice board towards the entrance of the Stores Road depot to catch potential footfall.
- To assist with the above, they have streamlined the recruitment process, namely the forms that need to be completed, to be much more user friendly trying not to dissuade applicants.
- They have met with their agency arm, to explore a mass recruitment drive to permanent staff.
- Work in partnership with organizations such as Broomfield College to widen opportunities.

Resourcing Activities 2023/24

Reorganisation of the existing establishment to ensure that the team is more dynamic and flexible, responsive to the needs of the service. Labour resource configured is as follows:

- Garden Maintenance Service (4 Teams x 2 Staff) = 8Nr. GMS runs reorganised to pick up the former 5th team run.
- Grounds Maintenance Service (2 Teams x 10 Staff) = 20Nr. GM team altered to two larger teams. GM runs altered to be more evenly split.
- Dynamic Flexible Team (4 Staff) – Delivering additional seasonal mowing support / shrub Work/ spraying = 4Nr. The Team will also supplement the GMS teams as required.
- **Total 32Nr**

DCC are re-aligning the start and finish times of all teams during the week, such that we get a longer working day on Fridays, increasing productivity.

Weekly Whitespace job reporting, was introduced last year, has improved the quality and quantity of information on progress across the city, allowing both Derby Homes and DCC to make intelligence led decisions and optimise runs.

Progress on both workstreams is updated weekly through an activity programme supplied by Streetpride to the Estates Maintenance Team.

The aim of the above actions is to increase the labour resource on mowing activities during the peak of the growing season.

Service Specification Update 2023/24

Grounds Maintenance

The grass cut started earlier than normal in February 2023 to get on top of the winter growth. This has proved successful.

Grounds Maintenance

GM team 1 – currently 69% of way through cut 8 (August 2023). Records show 3.5 weeks between last 2 cuts.

GM team 2 – Just completed cut 8 (August 2023). Records show 3 weeks between last 2 cuts.

This time last year (August 2023) the GM teams were 50% through cut 6.

Generally, the shrubs and spraying of weeds, whilst having received attention over the winter are not where we all would like them. It was anticipated that we would have a dry spell at some point over the summer. This would have allowed for a diversion of some of the staff. We have now planned to move some staff to create a small team in August 2023, as was outlined in 4.4. It will mean that visits between

grass cuts being extended, and the time taken to get around the city will have an impact, but we will continue to monitor and adjust this.

Garden Maintenance Scheme

Again, the teams started earlier than normal (February 2023)

GMS team 1 - currently 13% of way through visit 9.

GMS team 2 - currently 11% of way through visit 9.

GMS team 3 - currently 12% of way through visit 9.

GMS team 4 - currently 19% of way through visit 9.

Records show 3 weeks between last 2 cuts on all 4 teams.

This time last year (August 2023) the GMS teams were 60% through visit 7.

Wildflower Areas

Additional wildflower planting has been introduced to add more vibrancy and biodiversity, to 11 locations in the city. These are widely a success, although 1 did not take, with a mix of annuals and perennials. We will also look to increase this number over the coming seasons.

Plant & Equipment

Reduced Van Fleet – teams continue to be reorganised where possible to reduce to number of vehicles used keeping costs down. There will be some reduction in spend as off hiring some vehicles and this is ongoing. This will have a trade-off, of reduced operational flexibility etc. This will need to be balanced going forwards.

Equipment – Due to the age of some of the ride on mowers (2020), in line with their planned depreciation, it will mean 6 machines will require renewal. Currently the machinery of this nature is Capitalised, due to the anticipated lifespan and cost. The renewals are planned to be in place for March 2025, once costs are finalised.

5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

6. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The proposals included in section 4.4 represent a continuation of staffing and equipment at current budgeted levels. Therefore, costs are expected to be contained within planned budgets for 2023/24.

The recharge from Streetpride to Derby Homes is based on an open book arrangement.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

- Consultation
- Legal and Confidentiality
- Council
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Health & Safety
- Risk
- Policy Review

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting, please contact:

Richard Holman / Estates Maintenance Manager / 01332 888702 / Email Richard.holman@derbyhomes.org

Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

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| Managing Director | Maria Murphy | 04.09.23 |
| Governance (checked) | Chloe Gaskell | 04.09.23 |