

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE – PROPOSALS FOR 23/24 YEAR

Report of the Head of Capital Works

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Operational Board Meeting on 22 September 2022 considered a written report from the Head of Capital Works supported by a presentation by Streepride's 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.
- 1.2 The Operational Board noted the update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service during 2022/23 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 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.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Report is to provide Operational Board with a series of proposed actions to deliver service improvements in 23/24.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the proposed actions, listed in section 4.4 of this Report, to deliver service improvements in 2023/24.

3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure the Operational Board is informed of and given consideration to the proposed actions to deliver 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 report from the Head of Capital Works, providing an update on the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service in 2022, 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 Board recommended that the Operational Board continue to pursue a resolution to the issues with the quality of the service and that it would be useful to have a presentation from the Grounds Maintenance Service to discuss the challenges from their perspective.

- 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 Streepride's 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 during 2022/23 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 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 Derby Homes and Streetpride 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. To achieve this the following actions are proposed (some of which are already underway).

Staffing

Currently, Streetpride has just one vacancy, so is in a good position heading into the season staffing wise. To address the staffing issues, on an ongoing basis, and strive to maintain a full establishment, Streetpride have implemented a number of initiatives:

- Owing to retirements and leavers ahead of the mowing season, they made some changes to their typical 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 their jobs pages.
- They've installed a jobs notice board towards the entrance of the Depot to catch footfall.
- They held a recruitment event on the Market Place in last year where Streetpride showcased their plant and equipment to highlight what they do in a bid to attract applicants.
- 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 Staffline (not their agency arm but the wider organisation) to explore a mass recruitment drive to permanent staff.
- Work in partnership with organisations such as Broomfield College to widen opportunities.
- Closer monitoring of staff has ensured that sickness absence has fallen during 2022/23.

Resourcing Activities

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 as follows:

- Garden Maintenance Service (4 Teams x 2 Staff) = 8Nr. GMS runs reorganised to pick up the former 5th teams 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 etc = 4Nr. The Team will also supplement the GMS teams as required.
- **Total 32Nr**

Streetpride 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, introduced last year, has vastly improved the quality and quantity of information on progress across the city, allowing both Derby Homes and Streetpride 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, as required, but having the flexibility to assist on garden maintenance should grass growth slow.

Service Specification

Winter Works

- The aim is to grub-out a number of shrubs that are past their best and make good by seeding over. This will improve the appearance of these sites as well as free up resources going forwards for other winter work activities.
- Barking-up is to be reduced as this often can look messy as it spreads across walkways and can contribute to weed growth over time.
- Reduce edging.
- The above 3 points will help us re-task resources onto activities including:
 - Shrub pruning
 - Hedge reduction
 - Weed control
 - Mowing (due to the change in climate we are still mowing, where the ground allows, into the winter season).

Leaf Collection

Where practicable, leaves are to be mulched on-site and all walkways cleared.

Wildflower Areas

Additional wildflower planting to introduce more vibrancy/biodiversity.

Plant & Equipment

Reduced Van Fleet – Teams have been 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, where possible. This will have a trade-off, of reduced operational flexibility etc. This will need to be balanced going forwards.

Equipment – No additional equipment is required with these proposals.

Section 6 of this Report details the current financial position on the Contract

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:

Ian Yeomans / Head of Capital Works / 01332 888601 / Email ian.yeomans@derbyhomes.org

Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Finance Director	Michael Kirk	27.02.2023
Company Solicitor	Taranjit Lalria	28.02.2023
Head of Service (Operational Board reports)	Ian Yeomans	15.02.2023