

Essential Reference Paper “B”

SCRUTINY REMIT: East Herts Grounds Maintenance Contract Procurement - Scrutiny Task & Finish Group

OBJECTIVE:

To allow Members to discuss and agree the proposals for the new grounds maintenance contract and specification prior to tendering the contract in 2018/19.

BACKGROUND:

The Council’s current grounds maintenance contract with John O’Conner Ltd is to be re-tendered in 2018/19, with a commencement date of 1 January 2020.

Officers want to use the experiences of the previous contract to review the existing contract and specification and tender works that meet the needs of East Herts going forward and would like Members to assist in this process.

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:

- **Explore the scope of a new contract & define functions in relation to customer expectations and cost** – Has the current mix of operations and specifications met the needs of our customers and stakeholders? Are there key areas of service provision which could be improved upon or adjusted? For example; frequency of grass cutting, removal of grass clippings, frequency of hedge pruning, litter picking, dog waste bins, maintenance of football pitches, play areas, floral bedding, play area inspection and maintenance, weed control on hard surfaces. Have our objectives for the contract changed since it was let?
- **Confirm any proposed contract and / or specification changes** – Having determined the outline scope of works; agree significant changes to proposed contract standards such as grass height and hedge cutting frequency. This will include some benchmarking against neighbouring authorities.
- **Review market testing data and agree tender format** – the scope and level of standards chosen will affect the potential cost of

the new contract. A specialist consultant will provide some guidance on how these decisions might affect the price along with changes in market conditions. They will also advise options in relation to industry trends in this competitive market to choose the most appropriate style of contract and tender approach. The recent assessment has already discounted the option of combining grounds maintenance with the emerging waste services contract.

- **Review ‘top up’ arrangement** – the Council currently maintains County Council verges in order to achieve a consistent standard of maintenance across the district (not including A roads). The County pay the Council an amount equivalent to the cost they have calculated to achieve their “safety” standard. The Council fund the additional cost required to cut to our amenity standard, thus meeting customer expectations of a “tidy” district. Should the Council continue to finance this?
- **Consider the continuation of enhanced maintenance to County roundabouts** which are funded through a separate sponsorship contract
- **Consider Network Homes confirmation that they will not require services** through the current agency agreement arrangement in the new grounds contract. Should the Council include a tendered option in the contract to provide such a service in the event that one of the local housing associations might require this in the future?
- **Chemical Weed Control** - Consider future grounds maintenance constraints should glyphosate weed control be outlawed. Should the tender seek rates for mechanical options to provide weed control in shrub beds without reliance on herbicides?
- **Bowling Green** – Consider alternative ways of managing and funding the provision at Hartham Common?
- **Added Value** – Explore areas of provision which can be expanded upon or added to the contract to optimise the potential resources available; e.g. bailiff activities to manage fishing permit scheme, issuing fixed penalty notices for litter and dog fouling under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, building links with communities, electronic contract monitoring and vehicle tracking systems and apprenticeship schemes.

OUTCOMES:

- Evidence based recommendations that will inform the Executive decision regarding the specification and re-tender of the grounds

maintenance contract.

- A grounds maintenance contract and service that is fit for purpose and provides value for money for residents.

CONSTRAINTS:

- Members are not being asked to write the new contract specification, but rather will be asked to discuss the questions raised above and agree the Council's priorities going forward.
- The contract does not include the maintenance or inspection of trees, closed churchyards or infrastructure repairs (steps, paths etc.).
- The Council's budget for the grounds maintenance contract is limited and some improvements may not be feasible on cost grounds

WITNESSES (individuals)

- Ian Sharratt – Parks & Open Spaces Manager
- Council's consultant assisting with the preparation and retendering of the contract. (To be confirmed as consultant currently being procured)

EVIDENCE

- Background information on the current grounds maintenance contract performance – Performance Indicators
- Information from HACO sub group (ParksHerts) on other Authorities' grounds maintenance specifications
- Information from a specialist consultant exploring industry trends, market analysis and contract styles.
- Consultation with HCC on potential for new agency agreement

METHOD:

Task & Finish Group
Three meetings with 3 or 4 weeks
between each meeting (Evenings)

DATES:

TBC - September 2017 to January
2018

SITE VISIT:

No

DATE:

N/A

MEMBERSHIP: TBC	

SUPPORT:	
Scrutiny Officer:	Fiona Corcoran / Claire Pullen
Lead Officers:	Ian Sharratt / Rowan Perrin / Jackie Bruce

EHC Corporate Priorities: how this item helps deliver the Priorities <i>delete as appropriate</i>	
Priority 1 - Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities	Residents living active and healthy lives
Priority 2 - Enhance the quality of people's lives	Attractive places
	Future development best meets the need of the district and its residents
Priority 3 - Enable a flourishing local economy	Support for our businesses and the local economy

CfPS ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES: <i>delete as appropriate</i>
1. Transparent – opening up data, information and governance
2. Inclusive – listening, understanding and changing
3. Accountable – demonstrating credibility