

Review of the Grounds Maintenance Budget

Report by the Director of Communities - John Mitchell

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information relating to a review of the Grounds Maintenance budgets for the in house Grounds Maintenance service for Adur & Worthing which was formed on the 1st January 2013.
- 1.2 The report also provides information on some of the initiatives that the Service has implemented since the in house Service was formed.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) on 27th September 2012, a recommendation to create a single in house grounds maintenance service for Adur & Worthing from 1st January 2013 was approved.
- 2.2 For Worthing, this meant an end to its 10 year grounds maintenance contract with Continental Landscapes Ltd on 31st December 2012.
- 2.3 Adur's grounds maintenance of its Parks, Open Spaces and Cemeteries was already delivered in house.
- 2.4 At the same JSC meeting, the proposal for saving a net £500,000 from the Worthing grounds maintenance budget was also approved as part of the Worthing medium term financial plan.

3.0 Joint Grounds Maintenance Service

- 3.1 A new staffing structure was designed and implemented to reflect the new joint in house service being provided from 1st January 2013, with the reduction in staff numbers that resulted being managed through the Voluntary Redundancy process.
- 3.2 Since 2013/14 , the Parks section like all other Council sections has seen its annual revenue budget reduced year on year as part of both Councils savings plans and

the Service has had to proactively look at other innovative ways to deliver its service to the local community whilst trying to protect front line staff wherever possible.

- 3.3 To achieve this, Service Managers have introduced following consultation with the respective Cabinet Members for the Environment a raft of changes to how the grounds maintenance service is delivered to achieve the saving plan target. These have included:

4.0 Rethinking Parks

- 4.1 Both Councils provided a very traditional Parks service model prior to the joint in house service being created where all decision making and maintenance was provided by the Council with minimal community involvement which in some cases no longer met the changing communities needs and demands.
- 4.2 The Rethinking Parks project provided a model where the local community and user groups are able to be fully involved in being able to radically redesign the delivery of these services in a way that increases community involvement in the co-design, ownership and running of the services.
- 4.3 To accelerate the implementation of this project, both Councils in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) submitted in 2014/15 a successful bid for £100,000 of external funding for our Rethinking Parks project from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Transformation Challenge Award.
- 4.4 The funding has offered the opportunity to employ two full time project workers to increase the levels of community involvement in both Councils Parks and Open Spaces through providing volunteering opportunities, supporting the setting up of new Friends of groups, create a Adur & Worthing greenspace forum and helping to provide training and tailored support for existing groups.
- 4.5 There are presently 29 active Greenspace groups operating across Adur & Worthing, an increase of 7 since the Rethinking Parks project started.

5.0 Worthing Allotment Management (WAM)

- 5.1 A real greenspace success story in Worthing has been the formation of Worthing Allotment Management (WAM) to self - manage 6 out of 7 of Worthing Councils allotment sites.
- 5.2 This follows the successful self-management trial of West Tarring allotment site over 2013/14. WAM is run and managed by Worthing allotment tenant volunteers for the benefit of all Worthing allotment tenants and is now fully responsible for the management and maintenance of the 6 allotment sites they run under a 5 year Service Level Agreement with the Council. WAM have taken over these responsibilities that used to be carried out by the Council, allowing the Service to reduce considerably its expenditure on managing the allotments.

6.0 Enhancing Biodiversity across Adur & Worthing

6.1 The Parks section is always striving to enhance biodiversity across Adur & Worthing and improve local flora and fauna. Initiatives include :

- Reduce and alter mowing regimes where appropriate for the benefit of wildlife
- Reduce pesticide use , introducing green alternatives
- Changing from traditional seasonal bedding displays to vibrant, colourful displays that encourage pollinators to flourish (i.e. wildflower meadows)
- Creating habitats within greenspaces for wildlife to thrive
- Continue to maintain both Councils tree stock to enhance the landscape, reduce pollution and make the community areas greener.

6.2 These initiatives have also enabled the Councils to lower its maintenance costs whilst also improving the local environment. It must be noted that it remains challenging to alter significantly the current maintenance regimes in place for fine turf areas - bowls, Par 3 course, cricket wickets etc. without affecting the quality of play, however Officers continue to monitor greener ways of delivery being researched by the Sports Turf Research Institute.

7.0 Reshaping Service Delivery

7.1 The Head of Environment and Service Managers have been working to streamline service delivery, whilst at all times protecting front line staff and have introduced the following measures / initiatives to work towards this aim.

- Restructure of Environment Division staffing structure to reflect changing service demands and contribute to the Division's Saving Plan targets
- Deletion of Park Attendant Posts and introduced self-management of season tickets and daily play for Worthing bowls clubs to mirror the system already successfully in place in Adur
- Stopped the practice of grounds maintenance staff being allowed to use Council vehicles to travel to and from the workplace, reducing fuel and vehicle maintenance costs.
- Cut significantly overtime payments through empowering sporting clubs to take on basic weekend maintenance tasks
- Secured Service Level agreements to provide a grounds maintenance service for Worthing College and Adur Homes
- Retained the grounds maintenance of South Downs Leisure sites through a 5 year Service Level Agreement
- Increased the number of external works contracts that the Service undertakes
- Procuring more effective and flexible use plant and machinery

8.0 Adur - Grounds Maintenance Budget Review

ADUR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE BUDGETS							
	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	2015/16	2016/17
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Salary costs	371,192	385,560	427,063	445,262	461,038	472,535	396,539
Severance costs	0	7,512	0	0	0	34,563	0
Premises	450,330	374,432	84,343	55,058	277,900	277,049	283,060
Transport	117,025	82,473	151,832	105,506	155,171	120,404	112,445
Supplies & Services	167,890	125,182	152,381	162,262	152,986	126,360	130,381
Income	-518,463	-418,513	-491,971	-451,118	-477,873	-479,550	-441,206
Total Controllable Costs	587,975	556,646	323,648	316,970	569,222	551,362	481,219
Support costs	125,915	2,423	388,412	401,441	178,778	178,778	171,841
Capital costs	80,900	84,640	104,000	90,330	99,230	99,230	126,830
TOTAL COSTS	794,790	643,709	816,060	808,741	847,230	829,370	779,890

- 8.1 In 2013/14, in the first year the joint in house grounds maintenance service was formed, the total cost for the Service returned £151,081 under the budget set of £794,790 at £643,709.
- 8.2 In 2014/15, in the second year the total annual cost for the Service returned £7,319 under the budget set of £816,060 at £808,741.
- 8.3 For 2015/16, the Service is forecast to be under budget by £17,860.
- 8.3 For all three financial years, the in house Grounds Maintenance Service has been formed, the Service has come in under budget in Adur.

9.0 Worthing - Grounds Maintenance Budget Review

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	2015/16	2016/17
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Salary costs	747,705	773,492	634,625	654,714	637,545	635,863	734,545
Severance costs	0	55,091	0	0	0	33,619	0
Premises	192,780	339,548	433,091	276,780	634,790	698,640	642,300
Transport	215,245	151,692	173,988	121,038	187,219	145,247	211,605
Supplies & Services	325,030	325,284	268,719	282,748	275,244	366,603	290,839
Income	-1,013,367	-759,781	-669,880	-666,847	-606,117	-745,308	-667,044
Total Controllable Costs	467,392	885,326	840,542	668,432	1,128,681	1,134,663	1,212,245
Support costs	651,078	723,075	595,288	610,717	340,169	340,169	265,015
Capital costs	139,310	179,400	203,610	203,610	222,990	222,990	233,850
TOTAL COSTS	1,257,780	1,787,801	1,639,440	1,482,760	1,691,840	1,697,822	1,711,110

- 9.1 It was noted in the JSC report - 27 September 2012 that the £500,000 savings target set for Worthing would take some time to be achieved and that the full £500,000 may not be achieved in Year 1.
- 9.2 As it happens, in 2013/14, the Service returned £530,027 over the set budget, resulting that none of the savings target set was achieved.
- 9.3 This resulted in the Service being put under enhanced monitoring for 2014/15, with the Service Manager receiving additional support from the Head of Finance, the Service Accountant and the Cabinet Member for Resources - Worthing.
- 9.4 In 2014/15, with the benefits of the service changes outlined above starting to materialise, there was an underspend of £156,680 and the Service was released from enhanced monitoring.
- 9.5 For 2015/16, the Parks service is scheduled to be over budget by £5,982, with the biggest factor for this due to one off severance costs following the recent Environment Division restructure.

10.0 Joint - Grounds Maintenance Budget Review

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	2015/16	2016/17
	Budget £	Actual £	Budget £	Actual £	Budget £	Forecast £	Budget £
Salary costs	1,118,897	1,159,051	1,061,687	1,099,976	1,098,583	1,108,398	1,131,084
Severance costs	0	62,604	0	0	0	68,181	0
Premises	643,110	713,980	517,434	331,838	912,690	975,689	925,360
Transport	332,270	234,165	325,820	226,544	342,390	265,652	324,050
Supplies & Services	492,920	450,466	421,100	445,010	428,230	492,962	421,220
Income	-1,531,830	-1,178,294	-1,161,852	-1,117,965	-1,083,990	-1,224,857	-1,108,250
Total Controllable Costs	1,055,367	1,441,972	1,164,190	985,403	1,697,903	1,686,025	1,693,464
Support costs	776,993	725,498	983,700	1,012,158	518,947	518,947	436,856
Capital costs	220,210	264,040	307,610	293,940	322,220	322,220	360,680
TOTAL COSTS	2,052,570	2,431,510	2,455,500	2,291,501	2,539,070	2,527,192	2,491,000

10.1 The above chart shows the Grounds Maintenance budget summary has a joint service.

10.2 In the Environment Division overall, there are other Service areas where additional income is forecast, notably Bereavement Service and Beach Huts through increased fees and charges.

11.0 Summary

11.1 Overall following the recent restructure, the Service is now in a better shape to maintain the Parks & Open Spaces across Adur & Worthing within the revenue budget set and continue to deliver the initiatives outlined above in this high profile service area.

12.0 Legal

12.1 Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Councils must make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

12.2 Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Council shall have the power to do anything (whether or not involving expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions.

13.0 Financial implications

13.1 The grounds maintenance service was given a target saving of £496k as part of the 2013/14 budget round. Subsequently, the budget was increased by £300k as part of the 2014/15 budget round to give the service additional time to make the initial savings target set by members.

13.2 Since this time the service has made substantial contribution to the Council's financial strategy identifying £81k savings for the 2015/16 budget and £147k for the 2016/17 budget round. The total found to date is £424k and is on track to meet the initial target set for the service. This excludes the savings generated from the Beach Hut and Bereavement Services.

14.0 Recommendation

14.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress made in meeting the budgets set for the joint in house Grounds Maintenance service.

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the initiatives and new ways of service delivery introduced by the Service.

Local Government Act 1972

Background Papers:

Joint Strategic Committee - 27 September 2012 - Future Grounds Maintenance Services

Joint Strategic Committee - 3 March 2014 - Rethinking Parks - A proposal to support enterprising Communities & Wellbeing in Adur & Worthing

Joint Strategic Committee - 3rd December 2015 - Outline 5 Year Forecast and Savings Proposals

Joint Strategic Committee - 2nd December 2014 - Outline 5 Year Forecast and Savings Proposals

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Schedule of Other Matters

[To be completed on all reports. If no issues are identified under a heading then it should read "Matter considered and no issues identified."]

1.0 Council Priority

1.1 The Service helps to contribute to the Council's objectives of Cultivating Enterprising Communities and Becoming an Adaptive Council.

2.0 Specific Action Plans

2.1 The Service helps to contribute to :
Create new social businesses, joint ventures and service delivery models that encourage and support the long term development of enterprising communities.

3.0 Sustainability Issues

3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified. The Service continues to strive to operate in an Environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.

4.0 Equality Issues

4.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

5.0 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

6.0 Human Rights Issues

6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

7.0 Reputation

7.1 [Is the proposal likely to have an impact on the reputation of the Council(s)]

8.0 Consultations

8.1 Extensive consultation with user groups and the local community has been undertaken during the Rethinking Parks project and has been used to shape the project's aims.

9.0 Risk Assessment

9.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

10.0 Health & Safety Issues

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

11.0 Procurement Strategy

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

12.0 Partnership Working

12.1 Partnership working is key to the on-going and future management and maintenance of both Councils Parks and Open Spaces. Strong partnerships continue to be developed with The Conversation Volunteers (TCV) and a large number of Greenspace User Groups.