

Formal response to the review of the new grounds maintenance contract conducted by Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) in November 2012.

Recommendation	Response
<p>Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Resources and Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods establish a separate budget to enable the Grounds Maintenance Team to schedule immediate grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas pending clarification of land ownership and formal allocation of future maintenance responsibility.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed, although a budget needs to be identified to enable these areas of land to be brought up to standard, then maintained on an ongoing basis, which will be sought by trying to identify efficiencies in the contract.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with each of the internal clients to explore a move towards an extended shrub maintenance service (6 shrub visits) and a fortnightly grass cut frequency (16 cuts in one season) in order to achieve a better quality of service.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed in principle as adopting good horticultural practice, but would require an additional contribution from each client to deliver the improvements. Following discussion that took place at the streetscene grounds maintenance programme board on 17th December 2012, it was agreed that Aire Valley Homes and Belle Isle Tenants Management Organisation would trial increased shrub and rose bed maintenance in 2013. This will provide an evidence base to inform a review in the light of visible benefits and resident feedback in order to help determine resource prioritisation.</p> <p>With regard to grass cutting frequency it is not proposed to alter the frequency of mowing at this stage, other than to retain the increased frequency of grass cutting on ‘premium’ sites, in response to customer concerns raised during 2012. For other grass, it was agreed that a flexible approach to phasing will be adopted in 2013 that will use climatic conditions to direct the overall frequency that may increase above 13. For example a cold spring and a hot, dry summer would enable reduced frequencies, conversely a mild winter and wet summer would require additional mowing activity.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that asset holders consult with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed and consultation will take place with Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on any proposals on the future use and maintenance of shrubs beds.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Parks and Countryside, the internal clients, Locality Management and Continental to review existing litter picking responsibilities and opportunities for more joined up working. That this review is undertaken immediately and an update report brought back to Scrutiny in January 2013.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed and the report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) meeting in December 2012 highlighted that consideration is being given for Continental to expand litter collection to cover adjacent hard surfaces where applicable in co-ordination with street cleansing activities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews where any additional services provided by Continental could lead to further cost savings, with particular attention given to potential winter operations. That this review is undertaken immediately, with an update brought back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2013.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed. Locality managers have commissioned Continental to undertake bulk leaf clearance and other cleansing works normally undertaken via temporary staff to support staff retention within Continental.</p> <p>This issue has also been discussed at the streetscene grounds maintenance programme board. Budget holding clients have indicated that they are unable to prioritise funding for Continental to undertake additional winter works. However, clients are asking Continental to tender for individual environmental projects as well as quote for ad hoc work on assets that need additional work to meet specifications.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the contract monitoring processes to identify efficiencies and consistency.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed, and a review will be undertaken of existing monitoring processes to ensure a balanced, consistent and efficient approach commensurate with the outcome of monitoring results.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that Parish and Town Councils are proactively engaged in the contract monitoring process for the grounds maintenance contract.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed, and Parish and Town Councils will be invited to contribute to monitoring activity as part of the overall review alluded to in recommendation 6.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 – That the Chair of the Member Development Working Group includes grounds maintenance as part of the Member Development Programme and Induction Programme to promote greater awareness of the expectations of the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Member Development Working Group will be discussing how best to take forward this recommendation during the Member Development Working Group meeting on 31st January 2013.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 9 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Area Management Teams to ensure that Area Committees receive regular updates regarding the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area. Such updates are to include an overview of key issues raised within their areas; how such issues have been dealt with; and any new or pending contract variations that will impact upon their area.</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed. A report to Area Committees is being prepared for the February/March round of meetings that will include a performance review of the first year of the contract as part of the Parks and Countryside annual report. Representatives from Parks and Countryside have been identified to attend Environment Sub-Group Meetings where issues can be raised relevant to each area and responses given, as appropriate.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Communications and Marketing and the internal clients to develop a Communications Strategy aimed at promoting public awareness of behaviour that is obstructive to the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service (e.g. parking on public verges).</p>	<p>This recommendation is agreed, and it is proposed that this takes place ahead of the grass cutting season in 2013.</p>