

Street Scene Grounds Maintenance

Service Improvement Plan

March 2009 – February 2010



Draft Version 1.1

The report comprises the following sections;

- Executive Summary
- Key Issues 2008
- Key Issues 2009
- Action Plan
- Appendices

1.0 Executive Summary

This document summarises the actions agreed between Leeds City Council, The ALMO's and Glendale Managed Services Limited for improvements to the Street Scene Grounds Maintenance Contract to be implemented in 2009/10.

The preparation of an improvement plan is a requirement of the contract between the two organisations and follows on from the documents produced each year, and will be submitted too to Street Scene Services Grounds Maintenance Programme Board in 2009.

The plan is a result of joint collaborative meetings held in November 2008 and January 2009 between Glendale and other Council Stakeholders.

It maintains the goals of providing an objective assessment of the performance of the contract to-date and provides for continuous improvement of the service delivered by Glendale and the management of the contract by the City Council.

The Contract commenced in March April 2005 for an initial period of 3 years, which has been extended by a further 2 years to February 2010. Due to the highly seasonal nature of the contract however, the majority of the work is done from March to October, which is the main grass cutting season. Therefore four out of the five annual contract periods have been completed.

This report deals with improvements that are to be made during 2009 by building upon the lessons learnt during 2008.

The summary of work completed in 2008 is as follows:

- Glendale cut in excess of 7 million m² of grass each cut equating to over 104 million m² during the period March to November 2008 across some 10,000 different sites in the City.
- Glendale maintained 659 rose and shrub beds.
- Glendale maintained some 20km of hedges throughout various sites in the City.

2.0 Update on 2008 key issues:

- ISSUE
To improve the training and development of the employees and involve Leeds City Council in the induction process.
- ACTION COMPLETED
During 2008 the induction process was altered. Smaller numbers of staff were employed over a longer period of time which allowed for more focused training. A representative from LCC did attend each of the induction meetings to help provide expectations from the client.

- ISSUE
Introduce Apprenticeships and NVQ training
- ACTION COMPLETED
Following discussions with two colleges, Glendale has enrolled 10 employees from the Leeds contract on to the Apprenticeship and NVQ course through Bishop Burton College. We have three staff studying the NVQ Level 3 Amenity Horticulture Supervisor course, six staff on the NVQ Level 2 Amenity Horticulture Course and one staff member carrying out the NVQ Level 2 Mechanics course.

- ISSUE
Retention of good quality staff over the winter period.
- ACTION COMPLETED
This issue is very much fund driven and Glendale is aware of the efforts put in by the client to try and obtain the necessary monies but still not as successful as we would like

- ISSUE
Improve Recruitment and Induction Programme
- ACTION COMPLETED
The recruitment programme has been started earlier. We also invited staff back to work to ensure experience within teams is maximised. There is also a formal induction programme including HR and Health and Safety procedures as well as more focused training

- ISSUE
Dedicated shrub teams with support from supervisor.
- ACTION COMPLETED
As agreed in the 2008-2009 Service Improvement Plan, there have been three dedicated teams to the shrub bed maintenance supported by a team leader and supervisor.

- ISSUE
Communication
- ACTION COMPLETED
Newsletters and Glendale Information Centre Updates are completed each month.

- ISSUE
Impress Stock
- ACTION COMPLETED
Suppliers have been identified and arrangements made. Impress stock has been in place during the 2008 season. The main benefits of this have been the avoidance of time taken for parts delivery which has subsequently reduced the down time of our machinery.

3.0 Issues to be addressed in 2009

Staffing

Due to the seasonal nature of the grass cutting contract, staffing continues to be a concern in terms of recruitment and retention of good quality staff. Based on the good practices of 2008 it is proposed to hold two staff recruitment days in early January 2009 and early indications are that these days are attracting a tremendous amount of interest. Following successful interviews staff will be selected to commence a new programme of enhanced on site training from February 2009.

Following the lessons learnt in 2008, it has been decided to decrease the numbers within each training group in order to achieve a more intense and thorough learning experience. It therefore follows that the number of actual intake groups will increase, and these are programmed in to run from mid February to mid April. (Appendix 1 details an induction programme for 2009.)

The work levels drop significantly during the winter periods resulting in the loss of the fixed term staff who may not return the following season. This means a loss of skill and experience at the contract which needs to be built up the following year, from less experienced staff. It is essential that Leeds City Council and the ALMO's examine available funding to enable a percentage of the fixed term staff to be retained for the following season.

Customer Expectations

Concerns have been expressed in earlier contract years that the general public are not fully aware of the details of the contract specification. This has lead to complaints and enquiries being received about non collection of grass cuttings and length of cut.

To assist in the education of the public, Glendale will continue it's commitment to attend residents meetings and area walkabouts to allow people to speak about issues they may have, but at the same time allow Glendale to educate residents regarding the contract specification and the challenges they face whilst cutting grass.

During 2008 some ALMO's carried out customer expectation surveys as part of the procurement process leading to a new grounds maintenance contract. It is important that the full results of these surveys are given to Glendale, to enable them to identify areas of the service that need to be looked at to

ensure continuous service improvement, as far as the existing specification allows.

Mechanical

The nature of the Leeds grass cutting contract relies very heavily on machinery that is used over and above the usual limits during the cutting season. Our objective is to ensure that down time of machinery is minimal and reduce our reliance on hired equipment.

Building on the capital expenditure of 2008 the Glendale board has approved £52,500 further capital expenditure, this has lessened our machinery hire requirements further.

One of the main problems identified during earlier seasons was the delay in parts delivery for machines. To remove this problem one of the Key Actions was setting up an 'Impress Stock' System. We have worked closely with suppliers to secure this benefit and it has worked well at the Horsforth depot ensuring machinery down time is reduced and kept to a minimal. We now need to ensure it is fully implemented at the Beeston depot.

Full winter servicing schedule will be in place prior to the start of the cutting season along with a planned maintenance schedule for the coming season, to ensure machinery is serviced and maintained on a regular basis.

Flexibility

There has been a trend noted within the quality of the grass cut from the third cut onwards. The third cut is the first 10 day cut cycle but coincides with the 'flush' in the growth rate of the grass. This coupled with the additional pressure to cut the standard grass within the 10 day cycle can lead to a poorer quality in the cut.

During 2009 Glendale will look at the practicalities of building in a 12–13 day cycle during this period where appropriate, with a view to lessening the pressure on meeting the 10 day deadline and ensuring that the quality is reached. This would move the finish date for the thirteenth cut from 16th October 2009 to 5th November 2009. However, due to the contract expectation and past agreement that a 10 day cutting cycle need to be maintained, any change would need to be agreed between Glendale and Leeds City Council to avoid altering the number of cuts delivered in the season.

Weather

The grass cutting in 2008 has suffered from even worse summer weather conditions than in 2007. The torrential rain has caused delays with the cutting schedule. We have encountered problems with the growth of the grass, and due to the specification of the contract has meant that large amounts of arisings have been left in situ, which has left grass areas looking untidy. This situation has been felt throughout the country with all grass cutting contracts suffering.

During 2009 it is intended that where a decision has to be made between leaving grass uncut or causing asset damage, then client agreement will be sought through the regular client and contractor reporting lines.

Innovation

Glendale are continually working with all the key manufacturers in this sector to look at the range of equipment and the suitability for the nature of our work. It is recognised that the machines working on the Leeds contract are pushed harder than any other similar contract in the country.

The machinery presently used on the contract was approved for use by Leeds City Council prior to the contract start date. Due to the nature of the areas being cut it was deemed that rotary mowers would be the preferred option as they have reduced maintenance costs.

WNW Homes had received comments from residents regarding quality of the grass cut and sanctioned Glendale to trial a cylinder mower in one particular area over 2 cutting cycles. The trial proved a success with regards to improved quality, unfortunately a decision was made not to implement this regime due to the increase costs associated with this type of machine.

To this end we will be aiming to trial new machines throughout the Leeds area at every opportunity including banking machines.

4.0 Action Plan

The action Plan will provide a means of measuring the actions to take forward in to 2009 to assist with the continued improvements of services. (See appendix 2.)

For and on behalf of Glendale Managed Services Limited

Regional Director

For and on behalf of Leeds City Council

**Steve Smith
Head of Environmental Services**

APPENDIX 1



DRAFT COPY
Induction Plan – 2009 Season
Group One
Leeds 070

Monday 16/02/09	AM	<p><u>Horsforth</u></p> <p>08.00 – All staff arrive at the Horsforth Depot (8No)</p> <p>08.15 – Fire Procedure/Welfare</p> <p>08.30 – Split into 2 groups. A- Company induction KO/DF B- HR Induction</p> <p>09.15 - B- Company Induction KO/DF A-HR Induction</p> <p>10.15 – 15 min break</p> <p>10.30 – Manual Handling Course – L Greenwood/G Podmore</p> <p>11.15 – Issue of PPE to all staff Tour of Depot if required Photographs for ID cards</p>
	PM	<p>12.00 – 12.30 Lunch</p> <p>12.30 – 4.00pm Training on small equipment Blowers and Strimmer</p>
Tuesday 17/02/09	All day	<p><u>Horsforth</u></p> <p>Training – G Podmore, L Greenwood,</p> <p>Dependant on staff being taken on can be split so that dedicated ride on drivers can have specific training from trainers</p>
Wednesday 18/02/08	AM	<p><u>Horsforth</u></p> <p>Training – G Podmore/L Greenwood Continued training for new teams. Opportunity to spend more time on particular machines.</p>
	PM	<p>On site training under supervision of Supervisors/Team Leaders</p>