

Board/Committee:	Community Board
Date of meeting:	Tuesday 8 th March 2022
Title:	Review of Streetscene Grounds Maintenance Service
Author:	Head of Streetscene
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To provide the Board with an overview on the performance of the Direct Service Organisation (DSO) following the decision to bring the service in house.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the overview and approves a full review in due course of the strategic direction of the service and associated, operational and staffing adjustments to further enhance service delivery.

1. Background

- 1.1 Since 1st April 2011 to March 31st 2021, the grounds maintenance service was delivered by Sodexo Horticultural Services through a partnership contract. The contract award was for an initial 10 year period with an option to extend by a further 5 years upon board approval.
- 1.2 On 22nd January 2020 the Community Board approved not to extend Sodexo's contract and to form a Streetscene Direct Services Organisation (DSO) for the delivery of the Councils grounds maintenance service.
- 1.3 Two months prior to the end of Sodexo's 10 year contract Tivoli Grounds Maintenance Services acquired Sodexo Horticultural Services. Tivoli Grounds Maintenance Services continued to deliver the grounds maintenance service until 31st March 2021 when the contract came to an end.
- 1.4 All staff previously employed by Tivoli on the grounds maintenance contract were transferred to Gosport Borough Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).
- 1.5 The Council made significant investment in purchasing new plant and equipment along with the leasing of new vehicles.
- 1.6 A key objective to ensuring a smooth transition of services from Tivoli to Streetscene was to ensure that all transferring staff were fully trained in health and safety, safe systems of work, risk assessments and machinery operations. This forward planning ensured that all operatives were out delivering services across the Borough by mid-morning on the day of transfer.
- 1.7 Overall, disruption to works schedules due to the mobilisation of the Streetscene Operations Team was minimal. Those operatives who transferred have embraced the need to mobilise quickly and adapted well to the change in their new working environment.

2 Report

2.1 Since 1st April 2021 the Council has primarily been operating the grounds maintenance service using existing work schedules from the contract. These are and continue to be adjusted as the service evolves and are monitored daily by the Streetscene Operations Manager and Supervisors to ensure there is minimal delay in reaching scheduled targets with minimum disruption where possible. Any initial delays or short falls that are identified may be rectified initially through staff working additional hours. There will also be ongoing reviews of plant and equipment to help reduce time spent on scheduled tasks which will enable and increase future development and improvements works across the Borough.

2.2 The overall performance has already improved with a notable increase in customer satisfaction and a reduction in complaints. Many members of public and Councillors have commented on increased performance and new initiatives including re-wilding schemes and tree planting across the Borough. Increased engagement with sports clubs and friends groups has also been encouraging with positive feedback.

2.3 The following graphs are derived from works schedule data. Work schedules are produced monthly for all scheduled tasks, based on a 20 day working schedule. Each Supervisor records the daily completed progress against the schedule. At the end of each month the data is analysed by the Operations Manager. Column 3 of the graph shows whether the schedule was completed on time, ahead of scheduled time or behind schedule. Where there is a minus shown, this indicates all work was completed ahead of schedule and the number of days. All other numbers suggest additional days that were required to complete the monthly schedule. The impact of the weather will always have a knock-on effect upon performance, as will public holidays.

2.3.1

West Grass Cutting (Verges) V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	-3	2	2
May	2021	2	19	2
June	2021	2	13	
July	2021	3	15	
August	2021	4	9	1
September	2021	3	10	
October	2021	-2	15	
November	2021	0	14	
December	2021	0	19	2
January	2022	-7	11	1

Total

2

127

8

2.3.2

East Grass Cutting (Verges) V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	0	2	2
May	2021	3	19	2
June	2021	2	13	
July	2021	3	15	
August	2021	6	9	1
September	2021	4	10	
October	2021	3	15	
November	2021	1	14	
December	2021	-7	19	2
January	2022	No grass cut	11	1

Total **15** **127** **8**

2.3.3

East & West Parks & Open Spaces V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	-1	2	2
May	2021	1	19	2
June	2021	1	13	
July	2021	-3	15	
August	2021	-4	9	1
September	2021	2	10	
October	2021	2	15	
November	2021	-1	14	
December	2021	No grass cutting	19	2
January	2022	No grass cutting	11	1

Total **-3** **127** **8**

2.3.4

East Shrub Bed Maintenance V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	4	2	2
May	2021	3	19	2
June	2021	2	13	
July	2021	3	15	
August	2021	2	9	1
September	2021	2	10	
October	2021	3	15	
November	2021	1	14	
December	2021	-2	19	2
January	2022	-3	11	1

Total **15** **127** **8**

2.3.5

East Shrub Bed Maintenance V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	2	2	2
May	2021	3	19	2
June	2021	2	13	
July	2021	3	15	
August	2021	2	9	1
September	2021	2	10	
October	2021	2	15	
November	2021	1	14	
December	2021	-2	19	2
January	2022	-3	11	1

Total **12** **127** **8**

2.3.6

West Housing Maintenance V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	2	2	2
May	2021	0	19	2
June	2021	3	13	
July	2021	2	15	
August	2021	1	9	1
September	2021	2	10	
October	2021	2	15	
November	2021	0	14	
December	2021	-2	19	2
January	2022	-3	11	1

Total **7** **127** **8**

2.3.7

East Housing Maintenance V's Schedule				
Month	Year	Plus / Minus Days	Wet Days	Public Holiday
April	2021	1	2	2
May	2021	1	19	2
June	2021	2	13	
July	2021	2	15	
August	2021	0	9	1
September	2021	2	10	
October	2021	1	15	
November	2021	1	14	
December	2021	-4	19	2
January	2022	-3	11	1

Total **3** **127** **8**

2.3.8

Complaints & Compliments			
Company	Year	Total	Type
DSO	2021/22	16	Complaint
DSO	2021/22	15	Compliment

2.4 Since the creation of the DSO we have carried out over £78k of additional works. The additional work has been varied from masonry restoration work, pothole repairs, fencing & garden services to litter bin installation along with many other different types of works. The majority of this work would have normally been delivered through external contractors. The financial benefits of carrying out these works in-house are clear along with the time to arrange these works having been significantly reduced by avoiding the requirement to produce detailed specifications and procurement which has reduced reaction time to complete the additional work.

2.4.1

Additional Works - August 2021 to February 2022		
Client	Value of works	Number of projects
Streetscene	£51,192.00	58
Housing	£17,248.00	14
Property Services	£1,350.00	5
Other GBC department	£1,655.00	1
External clients	£7,380.00	3
Total	£78,825.00	81

2.4.2

Current DSO costs V's Tivoli (Sodexo)			
Company	Year	Cost	Period
Sodexo	2017/18	£1,033,715.29	12 months
Sodexo	2018/19	£1,143,243.81	12 months
Sodexo	2019/20	£1,146,918.44	12 months
Tivoli (Sodexo)	2020/21	£1,147,411.42	12 months
DSO	2021/22	£962,357.96	10 months

2.5 Since 1st April 2021 all routine, unscheduled and emergency works have been closely monitored by the Head of Streetscene and the Streetscene Operations Manager.

2.6 With the DSO having now been operating for the last 10 months and in particular through the busier summer season it is now an appropriate time to undertake a formal review of the Streetscene Operations Service. The review should include the following subjects to ensure productivity and

performance levels are at a standard that meets our customer needs:

- Operational performance
- Possible restructure/expansion of the work force
- Staff Training
- Plant & Equipment
- Vehicles
- Depot Facilities.
- Recruitment
- Environmental Impact

The review should also look to carry out benchmarking with other direct service organisations within Hampshire.

2.6.1 Compare the DSO's performance levels by comparing current KPI's (Uniform data) to the previous contractor (Tivoli & Sodexo) KPI's.

2.6.2 Review entire DSO staff structure to identify if any labour short falls that may have had a direct impact on customer satisfaction and planned improvements as part of the original strategies. Increased demands on the current structure to carry out additional works that were not part of the original contract has also had an impact on current resource levels and will also be high on the review agenda along with future progression planning.

2.6.3 Look at staff capabilities to identify what additional skills will be required to meet the objectives of the original strategies. Identify the needs of individuals to carry out tasks that require nationally recognised qualification and certification. The average age of the work force is over 50 and there will be a need to introduce new members to the team with the introduction of possible apprentices.

2.6.4 Where plant and equipment was purchased via the procurement portal, some items purchased did not meet with expectation. Hand held, battery powered equipment did not meet the contract requirements commercially and at best some of the equipment would only be used in a domestic environment. Many manufacturers agree that battery powered equipment needs further improvement before it can replace the more conventional petrol driven equipment. Although we very quickly exchanged the battery powered equipment for petrol driven equipment, a detailed review of all current equipment will be required and a close look at any new or proven innovations that may reduce time on scheduled task will need to be considered for future purchase. The environmental impact on future purchases will also need to be considered.

2.6.5 The current fleet of vehicles fit well with in the current staff structure and tail-lifts are a welcome addition. Vehicles will need to be reviewed and in-line with any possible staff structural changes and possible changes as and when the DSO take on more detailed and complex works.

2.6.6 Having a depot more central to the Borough and having better access has been a welcome change in comparison to the Westfield Road Depot. Although budget capital has already been requested

for the next phase to upgrade the long barn and Countryside buildings, the review will need to look at other possible advantages that may be capitalised on by other departments or further upgrades may be required for expansion of other services including a tree surgery department.

2.6.7 It is very important to start with enough labour on day one of any new Grounds Maintenance contract, especially when a contract starts when the grass is rapidly growing. Any delays in employing necessary seasonal staff could have had a significant impact on performance. Seasonal staff recruitment was not possible through GBC due to the complex recruitment process and significant delays would have been unavoidable to ensure labour could start as near as possible to the 1st April. Recruitment of seasonal staff was achieved with the use of Portsmouth City Council Agency as this was considered to be the most cost effective and quick solution. The review will need look at better ways to manage recruitment and possible comparisons to the private industry recruitment process should also be considered. All the current DSO workforce are employed locally giving the added benefit of the local economy.

2.6.8 The environmental impact of fertilisers and chemicals is always considered at the time of purchase and where possible application of both products are reduced to a minimum. Also high on our agenda is how we recycle green waste and where it can be used. The benefits and the impact of rewilding will need to be carefully monitored over the next few years. A review of the services provided by the DSO will be an opportunity to help reduce climate change impacts when carrying out grounds maintenance services.

3.0 Risk Assessment

3.1 Increased pressure on the current DSO resources to undertake additional in-house work will have a negative impact on the day-to-day scheduled service and as a result reduce customer satisfaction.

3.2 The current DSO labour has a varied skill set which include: City & Guilds level 2 horticulturalist, painter and decorator, engineer, metal fabricator and general builder. However, these skills are only limited to a few staff. If skill levels are not increased and should any of the current skilled staff leave their current employment this would not only reduce the DSO capability to carry out skilled tasks but reduce response times to carry out repairs and instalments of new features.

3.3 Plant and equipment has to be selected and tested to ensure it is appropriate for the required task. This carries the risk of purchasing equipment that is not fit for purpose.

4.0 Conclusion

The DSO has now been established and has already improved the grounds maintenance services however, additional opportunities have been identified which would further enhance the service, improving even more of its efficiency and value for money.

Financial Services comments:	None
Legal Services comments:	None
Equality and Diversity:	Grounds maintenance services are universally provided to all residents of Gosport.
Climate Change implications:	None for the purpose of this report.
Crime and Disorder:	None
Service Improvement Plan implications:	Provision of an effective grounds maintenance service across the borough.
Corporate Plan:	To deliver effective services by using a commercial approach to ensure our services deliver what they need to in the most effective way possible, providing value for money.
Risk Assessment:	Refer to paragraph 3 of this report.
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	None
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