

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SPECIFICATION (FOR NEW CONTRACT FROM 1/9/2026)</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>CAROLINE BIRD, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER (PROGRAMME)</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the specification for the Grounds Maintenance contract prior to commencing procurement, with specific reference to comments received in the All-Member workshops.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Council has two contracts for street scene services: street cleansing and grounds maintenance, and waste collections. Both of these contracts end on 31 August 2026. Work has commenced on procuring new contracts which will commence on 1 September 2026. They are being realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste and street cleansing, and a separate grounds maintenance contract.
- 2.2 The work involved is extensive, and includes reviewing and updating all the specifications for the full range of works that will be delivered as part of the new contracts.
- 2.3 This has involved consultation with all Members, as well as reviewing the specifications against changes in law, changes in best practice and environmental awareness and 'lessons learned', as well as trying to avoid significant increases in costs and maximising cost control.
- 2.4 The resulting significant changes to the waste / cleansing specification were reported to Members in autumn 2023. The waste / cleansing procurement process is now underway.
- 2.5 The grounds maintenance specification is now drafted. A summary of changes is attached as Appendix A for Committee's information. The summary matches changes to feedback received from Members in the All-member workshops that took place in late 2022 / early 2023. The review has considered and rewritten every requirement within the current specification. The changes in Appendix A are just those material changes which may be noticeable to service users or are significant in other ways. Many other changes have been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, ease of operational use and understanding.
- 2.6 Of special note, this report also draws attention to the fact that the Council will require its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the Real Living Wage as

a minimum (currently £12 per hour). This requirement relates to both the waste / cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 These contracts have been in place since 2006, and although variations have been made since that time, it was necessary and appropriate to carry out a full review of the specifications so that the services the Council delivers from September 2026 reflect the Council's strategic priorities, changes in legislation, and accepted best practice.
- 3.2 All of this is against a background of ever-increasing demand on limited budgets and unpredictable inflation, meaning that strategic priorities and aspirations have to be finely balanced with managing the significant potential for increased costs.
- 3.3 The programme, including procurement timetable, have been designed to ensure there is sufficient time in the mobilisation period for the successful contractor to purchase the specialist vehicles and equipment needed to deliver services from September 2026, and for the resolution of the TUPE process.
- 3.4 Grounds maintenance services include grass cutting (verges, amenity land and some Housing land, parks and open spaces), tree planting and maintenance, maintenance of hedges, shrub beds and flower beds including roundabouts, maintenance of our public parks and open spaces and key Council facilities such as cemeteries (including burials), crematorium and leisure centres, works to communal areas of allotments, weed management and play area inspections. This includes works on behalf of other Council departments, and on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council Highways.
- 3.5 As part of the process, works previously directly contracted out by the Housing Department (the Garden Assistance Scheme, Voids Clearance Service and Miscellaneous Garden Services) and by Property Services (Play Area Repairs) are being brought under the umbrella of this contract.
- 3.6 These are all highly visible services which make a difference to our residents and the street scene, day in and day out. It is vital that we specify the works to meet our legal duties and our customers' needs, to reflect the Council's strategic aims (including the environmental agenda), to encourage efficient operations, and all while managing the significant risk of rising costs.
- 3.7 Specification development is just one element of this significant project. There are a number of work streams, involving officers across the organisation, which are making good progress against a challenging timeline. These include data collection and verification, Terms and Conditions of the contract, ensuring a compliant procurement process, and consultation with all services that interact with the services.
- 3.8 At the start of the consultation programme, All-member workshops were established. Following the All-Member Workshops, officers committed to presenting a summary of the final specifications to Policy Scrutiny Committee and Executive prior to commencing procurement.

#### **4. All-Member Workshops**

- 4.1 Three 'all Member' workshops were held, on 28 September 2022, 31 October 2022 and 30 January 2023.
- 4.2 Workshop 1 provided Members with background information, and a briefing on the financial challenges and other challenges facing the Council, such as the potential implications of implementing requirements of the Environment Act 2021. It set out the timeline for the following two workshops and the formal decisions that would be required.
- 4.3 The slides from workshop 1 were circulated to all Members after the meeting.
- 4.4 Workshop 2 concentrated on Members' high-level priorities, such as environment, quality, staff terms and conditions, social value, in order to inform development of workshop 3 and wider development work. Members were unanimous in their wish to see 'being greener / environmental issues' as a high priority in service development. There was a clear acceptance of the need to prioritise waste services, with reference to new legislation as mentioned in 4.2 above and the environmental impacts that waste collection arrangements have. The management of open spaces, which is included in the grounds maintenance contract, was second priority, behind waste but ahead of street cleansing.
- 4.5 A summary of the outcomes from workshop 2 was shared with all Members after the meeting.
- 4.6 Workshop 3 focussed on specific issues, informed by the strategic discussions at the previous workshop. This gave Members the chance to expand on their vision for those strategic priorities, and to raise any specific operational issues that they would like to see considered.
- 4.7 A summary of the outcomes from workshop 3 was circulated to all Members after the meeting. Members were invited to pass on any other specification – related comments they may have, within the few weeks following the meeting.

#### **5. Specification Development**

- 5.1 Over the past year, officers have held an intensive series of focussed workshops, each looking at a specific area of the services, and referencing the current contract arrangements, changes in law, best practice, customer expectations, changes in technology available, 'lessons learned', and importantly, how we could contain costs and maximise our cost control. The outcomes of the All-Member Workshops were considered in these workshops.
- 5.2 Appendix A summarises the resulting material changes to the specification, referring them to Members' aspirations from the workshops.
- 5.3 Changes relating to grounds maintenance on Housing land will be discussed with Lincoln Tenants Panel on 31 July 2024. Any changes arising from that will be reported to Executive as a verbal update to this report.

## **6. Real Living Wage**

- 6.1 The Council is a recognised 'Living Wage Employer', accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. To be accredited, an employer has to have plans in place to pay its contractors the Real Living Wage when contracts are renewed, as well as to pay its direct employees the Real Living Wage.
- 6.2 It is therefore a requirement of the Council's accreditation that it makes the Real Living Wage payment a requirement of both the waste / cleansing and the grounds maintenance contracts.

## **7. Strategic Priorities**

### **7.1 Let's drive inclusive economic growth**

A well maintained, green city is an attractive place for businesses to grow and thrive.

### **7.2 Let's reduce all kinds of inequality**

Attractive, well maintained open spaces and street scene benefit everyone. Our public open spaces are essential for the health and wellbeing of our communities. They are places to relax, to exercise, to volunteer and build skills, to see and appreciate wildlife, to socialise, to de-stress, to play, to be a part of the community, and all free at the point of use. The appropriate, skilled maintenance of these places, along with our efforts to maximise access for all, is a vital part of encouraging people to use, enjoy and benefit from these places.

### **7.3 Let's enhance our remarkable place**

These services contribute significantly to our remarkable place in visual and environmental terms. Well-managed green spaces, in public open spaces as well as the street scene, make a significant difference to our enjoyment and appreciation of a place. Through this contract we will ensure the appropriate, sensitive management of greenspaces, with consideration for maximising wildlife benefits where possible, and avoiding detrimental impacts.

### **7.4 Let's address the challenge of climate change**

These services contribute towards the Council's climate change aspirations, in terms of the efficiency of their operations, consideration of environmental issues strategically and operationally (minimising damage and maximising environmental benefits), utilising the most environment-friendly methods of disposing of arisings, and by helping the general public to appreciate and celebrate our environment.

## **8. Organisational Impacts**

### **8.1 Finance**

As presented in all three All-member workshops, cost management is essential throughout this project given the financial climate and the scale of these services.

The development of specifications and terms and conditions has, by necessity, given serious consideration to managing areas of potential cost increases.

The specifying of the Living Wage requirement is likely to have financial implications. It isn't possible to predict the scale of this impact.

After following the required procurement processes, and a final price being determined, this will need to be factored into the Council's overall medium-term financial plan. It is likely to have significant implications, but these will not be known until tenders have been received and evaluated.

## **8.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules**

As far as it is simply presenting the specification for work, there are no legal or procurement issues relating to this report. Officers from Procurement and Legal services are members of the project board to ensure that the Council is fully legally compliant in all regards.

## **8.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

An Equality Analysis is included at Appendix B. There are no negative impacts as a result of these specification changes.

## **8.4 Significant Community Impact and/or Environmental Impact**

These services are high profile and impact the city's residents' and visitors' enjoyment of their environment. The services currently enjoy high satisfaction rates.

Environmental impacts have been considered throughout the specification development process, in terms of the services provided, and the way they are provided. This is set out in Appendix A.

## **9. Risk Implications**

- 9.1 Throughout the specification development process, officers have weighed legal requirements, Members' strategic and operational aims, customer expectations and the need for close cost control. The resulting specification ensures that the Council is fully legally compliant and will continue to provide reliable services, ensuring an appropriate degree of flexibility, whilst minimising risks of escalating costs. It isn't possible to predict what prices will be submitted by bidders, especially given the

current financial climate, but all efforts have been made to avoid unnecessary increases, and to ensure maximum cost control in the resulting contract.

## **10. Recommendation**

10.1 Members note the report and provide comments, if any, to Executive.

<b>Is this a key decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Do the exempt information categories apply?</b>	No
<b>Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?</b>	No
<b>How many appendices does the report contain?</b>	Two
<b>List of Background Papers:</b>	All Member workshop presentations and reports
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