

Grounds Maintenance Contract - Summary of Specification Changes

ISSUES RAISED AT MEMBER WORKSHOPS	ACTION TAKEN	ANTICIPATED IMPACT ON COST
<p>Need to reflect the priority given to waste services to meet the requirements of the Environment Act, and pressure to increase recycling, by ensuring the grounds maintenance contract mitigates risks of increased costs in the future.</p> <p>Ability to redeploy staff if needed, e.g. assist with snow clearance work or fewer grass cuts in hot weather.</p> <p>Flexibility required on grass cutting – i.e. include flexibility so we can change the number of cuts if not needed.</p>	<p>The contract includes a ‘flexibility clause’ which sets out that the contractor will be expected to have a flexible approach, both in terms of their day-to-day operations and when considering service changes. This allows for a positive approach to future specification changes, business continuity, ad hoc operational changes, for example due to weather, and any operational changes that would reduce negative environmental impacts.</p> <p>See also notes on Cost Management below.</p>	<p>This will reduce the need for additional spend, and increase cost control, by moving existing resource wherever possible.</p>

<p>Making things 'Greener' / environmental / climate change considerations</p>	<p>A specific 'Environment' clause has been included. This sets out the importance of minimising any negative environmental impacts of these services, and maximising opportunities for delivering environmental benefits.</p> <p>For example, the Contractor will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asked to outline their plans to reduce carbon, with reference to the Council's 2030 carbon neutral plan - Asked to maximise operational efficiency - Required to consider decarbonisation of their fleet when replacing vehicles - Asked to use electric / battery tools and equipment - Asked to embrace opportunities to minimise negative environmental impact and to offset environmental impacts <p>Although we are specifying the use of electric tools wherever possible, we are not specifying electric vehicles at the start of the contract. They are significantly more expensive, which would be reflected in contract costs. We have however included a clause which requires the contractor to consider introducing more environment-friendly vehicles whenever any vehicles are being replaced. At that stage, and subject to operational effectiveness and affordability, they would be introduced. This is consistent with our Waste / Cleansing contract. Smaller plant and equipment will be electric powered from the start of the contract, wherever practical/possible.</p> <p>The Performance Management Framework will include assessment of environmental performance, including the way the Contractor delivers their services (e.g. fleet used, operational efficiency).</p>	<p>Environment-friendly improvements can increase costs, or can save money. Any changes would be subject to the Council's agreement if there were financial implications. Decisions would be made based on affordability at the time as well as the environmental benefits.</p> <p>By not specifying an all-electric fleet at the start, we avoid the significant increase in costs this would bring about.</p> <p>By requiring consideration of non-diesel vehicles as they are replaced, we retain the option later on, subject to affordability at the time.</p>
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Support for rewilding and more environmental planting	<p>It isn't possible to eradicate single-use plastics from these services at this time. The Contractor will be required to aim to minimise the use of single-use plastics, and to use (or to work towards using) more sustainable plastic goods (e.g. black sacks in litter bins)</p> <p>Disposal options for the waste (including green waste) arising from the works are set out in the specification, and the Contractor is encouraged to find the most environmentally friendly disposal option dependent on waste type.</p> <p>Individual specification items have been included to encourage more environment-friendly services, e.g. amended hedge cutting frequencies and sustained wildflower areas (and providing an opportunity for increasing these areas later on), and reduced annual floral bedding which is less environmentally friendly.</p> <p>There will be no use of peat within the contract.</p>	
Ensure targeted spraying of weeds and flexibility to change method if more environmentally beneficial option becomes available.	Use of chemicals has been minimised and the specification includes targeted spraying as opposed to blanket spraying. The requirement to embrace more environmentally friendly technologies as they emerge has been included.	This is not expected to have an impact at the start of the contract. Financial implications for any changes to methodology will be assessed as they arise.
Keeping Things Cleaner – this emerged as a medium / high priority	Specific areas of the specification have been upgraded to allow more frequent sweeping and washing (of signs, bins etc).	This will incur costs, however frequencies have been increased only where it is felt to be necessary, and in some cases this will remove the current 'reactive'

		approach to additional cleansing, thereby making costs more predictable.
Careful consideration specifying appropriate tree maintenance	All aspects of the tree specification have been reviewed and updated to reflect modern practices with a focus on tree health and environmental impact. Adherence to British Standards and / or European Standards have been specified. (Approaches to tree maintenance will be reflected in a new Council policy for tree care, due for review Summer 2024.)	This is not expected to have an impact on costs. Most tree works are ordered works rather than routine works, and as such, officers can make maintenance decisions, and time works, bearing in mind available budget.
<p>Review grass cutting frequencies for amenity and Housing.</p> <p>There are some benefits to close cut grass (e.g. playing, picnics and dog walking) – we need to keep a balance.</p> <p>Quality of grass cutting (seed heads left after mowing).</p>	<p>We have undertaken a review of all grass areas to ensure the specifications for each type or site best reflect their use, whilst minimising inputs and maximising environmental benefits where appropriate. This includes streamlining the number of cuts, which will maximise efficiency by reducing the number of rounds and equipment required.</p> <p>We have consulted with internal and external stakeholders (e.g. Housing, LCC) to ensure consistency wherever possible, for example by aligning grass cutting routines.</p> <p>Rotary mowers, as opposed to cylinder mowers, have been specified for verge mowing, to reduce the number of seed heads visible after cutting.</p> <p>The grass cutting specifications have been reviewed, and grass cutting quality is included in the Performance Management Framework.</p>	Aligning routines is a more efficient way of working and should therefore help keep costs lower.

THINGS INCLUDED TO HELP MANAGE COSTS	
Up to date, clear and accurate site information / data will be provided so that bidders understand the scope of the work, which minimises risk.	Helps reduce tendered prices (Without accurate information, bidders may apply 'contingency' in their prices to cover unknowns, or assume a higher demand than will actually be the case. This could be significant across the whole contract).
More detailed pricing scheme of rates provided, to ensure we only pay for what we use and therefore increase cost control, e.g. providing dayworks rates by the half hour, not hour.	Officers will have more cost control when ordering works
Disposal requirements and options have been developed to help minimise disposal costs.	This should help minimise disposal costs, which can be significant.
Throughout the whole process, specifications have been written so as to maximise efficiency, flexibility and cost control, and to avoid unnecessary work.	The purpose of this is to control costs so far as reasonably practicable.
THINGS INCLUDED TO HELP INCREASE EFFICIENCY / CUSTOMER SERVICE	
These are very visible services, with a presence across the city. The contractor's staff will be required to report any issues they come across where they are working, even if not directly involved with their services, to bring issues to the Council's attention faster and more efficiently.	
The contractor will be required to put in place 'in-cab technology', integrated with our own IT systems, which will mean that updates from grounds maintenance crews will be reported immediately to their own office and to the Council. Community Services and Customer Services staff will have relevant information much faster, so they can better deal with customer enquiries. Community Services staff will have more accurate and timely updates relating to completed tasks and routines to help with performance management.	The current contracts do not have use of this technology as a requirement, and so this is an extra expense. However it is the norm for contractors to use this technology, and so it's expected that most if not all bidders would

		use it routinely in any case to ensure efficiency, mitigating any cost impacts.
	The fly tipping process has been reviewed and streamlined to be clearer on what the Contractor is expected to do proactively, on what cases should be passed to PPASB, to avoid double-reporting of cases and to make monthly reporting easier.	No impact or modest reduction in demand expected.
	More detailed specification, to aid clearer understanding for contractor and Council and avoid 'grey areas' and the risk of misunderstandings.	This could also have cost benefits.
OTHER POINTS OF NOTE		
Housing Garden Assistance Scheme, Void Clearance and Misc. Garden Services	<p>These services are currently delivered under a contract run directly by the Directorate of Housing. Under the new arrangements they will be included in this new consolidated Grounds Maintenance contract.</p> <p>There have been changes in the interests of clarity and operational efficiency. Points of note are:</p> <p>Garden Assistance Scheme (GAS):</p> <p>Grass cutting has been reduced from eight occasions to seven occasions per year, in line with similar areas elsewhere in the specification. This should help with the organisation of grass cutting rounds and is felt to be sufficient for those areas.</p> <p>Hedge cutting was reduced from three times per year to twice a year, to bring it in line with hedge cutting in communal areas and across the rest of the city. This causes some concern to the Lincoln Tenants' Panel and in response the new contract will provide options for both frequencies to provide flexibility and to</p>	<p>Bulk purchase of services should bring cost benefits.</p> <p>Alignment of some frequencies will bring about operational efficiencies.</p>

	<p>allow more frequent maintenance if it is necessary and affordable at a later date.</p> <p>Miscellaneous Gardens Service:</p> <p>This is a new service, which will provide the mechanism for officers to order one-off works that sit outside of the GAS / Voids Service. This could include works requested and paid for by Housing tenants (e.g. to help a tenant who isn't on the GAS but is currently unable to do their own garden, or additional works for a tenant on the GAS).</p> <p>Communal areas:</p> <p>Grass cutting increased from 16 times a year to 17 times a year to bring it in line with parks and gardens across the city and to provide operational efficiency.</p> <p>'Cut and Collect' grass cutting added to provide opportunities for 're-wilding' (wildflower areas).</p> <p>Once a year, moss will be removed from treated areas.</p> <p>Hard surfaces in communal areas will be swept quarterly.</p>	
Play Area Repairs	<p>This service is currently delivered under a contract run directly by Property Services. Under the new arrangements it will be included in the Grounds Maintenance contract.</p> <p>This will further improve efficiencies between the play area inspection regime (which is a part of the current grounds maintenance contract) and the resulting repairs.</p>	Bulk purchase of services should bring cost benefits.

	No significant changes to the specification for play area repairs are expected.	
LCC Highways grounds maintenance works (Under Service Level Agreement)	<p>This work will continue to be delivered through the Grounds Maintenance contract.</p> <p>At time of drafting conversations are ongoing with the County Council. Indications are that LCC want to see an improvement to their current required standards in highway shrub bed maintenance and they are giving consideration to there being a greater emphasis on highway tree works.</p>	<p>Bulk purchase of services should maintain cost benefits.</p> <p>LCC works are all funded by LCC.</p>
Performance Management Framework	We have undertaken a review of the Performance Management Framework, to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This provides the structure by which the Contractor's performance is monitored and managed.	No cost impact.
Environmental Protection Act Code of Practice Zone review	<p>The Code of Practice for Litter & Refuse dictates the standards and response times for cleaning streets and relevant land, based on their 'zone' (the use and busy-ness of the area). This affects amenity land, parks and open spaces as well as public highways.</p> <p>We have undertaken a city-wide review to ensure that the allocated zones still meet the legal definitions (which have been revised since the current contract began). This has changed the category of many streets and land in the city, meaning that the vast majority are in the HIGH or MEDIUM zones. This is an increase in priority for many areas. However at the same time, the legal response times have increased (giving us longer to respond to 'Grade Drops' – that is accumulations of litter).</p>	The relaxed response times to grade drops, together with the specified efficient working practices should help mitigate increased costs as far as possible.

Some examples:

Hartsholme Country Park was categorised as Zone 1 in the current contract and is 'HIGH' in the new specification (both are the highest categories, reflecting how busy the park is). Under the current arrangements, this gives up to 6 hours to respond to a litter Grade Drop. Under the new contract we will have up to 6pm (if reported by 1pm) or by 1pm the following day.

The Arboretum and Boutham Park were categorised as zone 3 in the current contract and 'HIGH' in the new specification (reflecting the increased use and popularity of these parks in the intervening period, as well as the change in zone definitions). Where currently we have up to one week to respond to litter Grade Drops, we will have until 6pm (if reported by 1pm) or by 1pm the following day.

South Common, West Common and Cow Paddle were categorised as zone 3 in the current contract and are 'MEDIUM' in the new specification (reflecting the changes in zone definitions). Where currently we have up to one week to respond to a litter Grade Drop, we will have until 6pm the following day.

(Note that in these examples, the response times are based on the worst litter accumulations – a Grade D. Response times for a Grade C drop are currently faster. Under the revised rules, and therefore the new specification, response times are the same for Grade C and D drops.)

The specification has been developed in such a way as to ensure legal compliance as a minimum and to maintain current standards as far as possible whilst managing costs.

Social Value	<p>In accordance with our legal obligations and the Council's Social Value Policy, we have suggested Social Value options for Contractors to develop in their bids. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting volunteer works - Allowing their own staff to volunteer in the City of Lincoln - Purchasing ethically sourced goods - Assessing the environmental impact of their suppliers 	<p>Contractors will include SV costs in their overall prices, however we have made every attempt to minimise the impact of this, by encouraging them to consider low / no cost activities, and by suggesting low / no cost SV actions that would make a difference.</p>