

6. **Grounds Maintenance Specification (for new contract from 1/9/2026)**

Caroline Bird, Community Services Manager (Programme):

- a. presented 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
- b. explained that the Council had two contracts for street scene services, street cleansing and grounds maintenance, and waste collection. Both contracts would end on 31 August 2026. Work had commenced on procuring new contracts which would commence on 1 September 2026. They were being realigned and packaged as two separate contracts: waste and street cleaning, and a separate grounds maintenance contract
- c. advised that reviewing and updating of the specification involved consultation with all members, as well as reviewing the specifications against changes in law, changes in best practice and environment awareness and 'lessons learned' as well as trying to avoid significant increases in costs and maximising cost control
- d. further advised that the changes to the waste/cleansing specification were reported to Members in autumn 2023. The waste/ cleansing procurement process was underway
- e. referred to the grounds maintenance specification at appendix A of the report which summarised the material changes that would be noticeable to service users or were significant in other ways. There were many other changes that had been made in the interests of cost control, clarity, ease of navigation, and ease of operational and understanding
- f. stated that the Council would require its contractors to pay their staff in accordance with the Real Living Wage as a minimum
- g. invited members questions and comments.

**Question:** How would the Council ensure that there was transparency during the tendering process so that it was open to public scrutiny?

**Response:** Officers were confident that the procurement process would be undertaken in a clear, fair and transparent way. Support would be provided from both Legal and the Procurement Officer to ensure that all requirements were met.

**Question:** Would the Council check that Contractors were paying their staff the real living wage?

**Response:** Yes, it was a requirement that had been included in the specification and would be monitored by the Council.

**Question:** How would the Council ensure that the same standards were being met by a sub-contractor?

**Response:** The requirements of the contract would also apply to sub-contractors. At the outset the Council would ask the contractor how they would manage sub-contractors if any elements of the contract were sub-contracted. The terms and conditions of the contract would be the same for a sub-contractor and would be enforceable.

**Question:** How would the costs be managed and stress tested?

**Response:** Officers had a duty to minimise risk to the Council as much as possible. The type of contract ensured that a schedule of prices was included to reflect the scope of the contract. A flexibility clause had been included in the contract via the open book method. Also, monthly monitoring of prices would take place.

**Question:** What would be the length of the Grounds Maintenance Contract?

**Response:** The duration of the Grounds Maintenance contract would mirror the waste contract, in that the initial contract period would be 8 years and seven months.

**Question:** Would in-cab technology be included in the contract?

**Response:** The Grounds Maintenance contract specification would require the supplier to provide in-cab technology.

**Question:** Why had decarbonisation of the fleet not been included in the contract specification?

**Response:** It was an aspiration but it was expected to be too expensive and the right technology was not available yet. There was a clause included in the contract which requested that the contractor considered introducing more environment friendly vehicles whenever vehicles were being replaced, and to include the Council in the business case and decision.

RESOLVED that the Grounds Maintenance Specification (for new contract from 01/09/2026) be supported.