
TRADING OPERATIONS SUB COMMITTEE

ITEM 5(d)

5 MARCH 2007

REPORT BY HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the members of the Trading Operations Sub-Committee of the activities of the Grounds Maintenance trading operation for the period 1st April to 31st January 2007.

2 Business Performance and Monitoring

- 2.1 The Grounds Maintenance trading operation continues to perform contracted maintenance mainly for Parks and Open Spaces and Burial Grounds and also for local housing associations and private individuals.
- 2.2 The section is nearing completion of its winter work programme which includes shrub and hedge maintenance, litter picking, pitch maintenance, tree pruning and ad-hoc work in response to issues raised during the year.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 provides an analysis of income and expenditure for the first ten months of the year and of the projected outturn for 2006/07 compared to budget. Forecast income for the year of £3,388k is £38k greater than budget. Forecast expenditure of £3,388k is £39k greater than budget. The resulting break-even position is £1k less than budget. The additional income arises from an increase in client charges, to recover core skills training and early recruitment of seasonal staff as well as higher than expected depreciation, interest, maintenance and fuel costs.

3 Business Update

- 3.1 Recruitment of seasonal staff has started with a gradual filling of positions from 19th March 2007. It is planned to extend the employment period for seasonal staff in 2007 to ensure resources are available to cope with an extended growing period. This will be restricted in line with the additional funding made available in the 2007/08 budget.
- 3.2 Core skills training as detailed at the meeting of 15th January 2007 are underway in the department and will be extended to include seasonal staff. Discussions have commenced with providers in advance of delivering a similar programme in the winter period next year.
- 3.3 Four apprentices will be starting early in 2007/08 with the posts having been established under the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme where Scottish Executive funding is provided for formal training e.g. SVQ in horticulture.
- 3.4 Retendering for external contract work for the 2007/08 season is in progress and indications are that all existing contracts are likely to be retained.
- 3.5 Preparations are underway for the provision of summer bedding plants. However for the longer term and with the potential closure of the Glenraig nursery, a number of

options are being considered including buying in plants, relocation to Wilton Lodge park in Hawick and having a shared service arrangement with Midlothian Council who appear to have spare capacity at their Vogrie Park facility. A full report on bedding plant procurement is being prepared and will be made available to the Trading Standards sub-committee and submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The Grounds Maintenance trading operation is forecasting a break-even position for 06/07 after client charge increases to cover additional operating costs. Full analysis of this forecast can be seen in Appendix 1.

5 Consultation

5.1 The Heads of Corporate Finance, Financial Administration, Corporate Administration, and Legal Services have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report.

6 Equality

6.1 There are no equality issues directly associated with this report.

7 Environment

7.1 An audit has been completed on the issue of the bio-diversity duty as previously outlined.

7.2 Discussions continue with colleagues in Planning and Economic Development about those bio-diversity actions which are realistic and achievable and those which due to varying constraints are not.

8 Risk Commentary

8.1 Bedding plant procurement continues to be a risk but is being addressed as detailed in 3.5 above.

8.2 The recruitment and retention of our skilled workforce remains a risk to the department.

9 Recommendation

9.1 I recommend that the Trading Operations Sub-Committee:

a) agree the contents of this report

b) approve the projected outturn as revised approved budget.

Approved by

Name	Designation	Signature
Callum Hay	Director of Technical Services	[insert signature]

Author(s)

Name	Designation
John Cook	Head of Environmental Services

Associated Papers: Appendix 1, 2 & 3.

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Collette Lamb can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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