

18 JUNE 2007

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TRADING OPERATION

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To update the members of the Trading Operations Sub-Committee on the performance of Ground Maintenance for the period 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007 and an update on current issues for 2007/08.**

2 Business Performance and Monitoring 2006/07 Financial Outturn

- 2.1 The Grounds Maintenance trading operation performed contracted maintenance mainly for Parks and Open Spaces and Burial Grounds and also for local housing associations and private individuals in 2006/07.
- 2.2 The section continues to monitor performance in all areas ensuring that all customer complaints are recorded and addressed. We will continue to benchmark performance against other councils contributing data to the APSE performance network. This allows us to focus on areas where we need to improve our competitiveness.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 provides an analysis of income and expenditure for the year with a net break-even position achieved as forecast. External income is £55k less than forecast due to the loss of an NHS contract (£35k) and a general reduction in external ad-hoc work in the year. Expenditure on employee costs has a corresponding reduction of £53k with other small variances being recovered from additional client charges.

3 Business Update

- 3.1 The section has now started its summer program with seasonal employees having been recruited and trained to commence from April. Recruitment of seasonal staff is proving extremely difficult with increased competition from the retail sector. Permanent trainee gardeners are currently being recruited with the posts being established under the Modern Apprenticeship scheme with formal training to achieve an SVQ in horticulture being provided. It is planned to extend the employment period for seasonal staff in 2007 to ensure resources are available to cope with an extended growing season as experienced in 2006. Additional funding was secured in the 2007/08 budget to fund this initiative.
- 3.2 Core skills training as detailed at the meeting of 12th March 2007 have been completed for permanent staff 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 Appraisals of all full time manual staff have been undertaken in the first quarter of the year.

3.4 Re-tendering for external contract work for the 2007/08 season is now complete with terms of business changed to cash in advance where possible. A 7.5% price increase has been applied to all contracts with none declined. The SBHA contract which accounts for approx. 70% of external income is due for renewal next year.

3.5 Preparations are underway for the provision of summer bedding plants. However for the longer term and with the closure of the Glenraig nursery, a number of options are being considered including buying in plants or a full or partial relocation of the nursery facility. A full report on bedding plant procurement is being prepared for the Trading Operations Standards sub-committee and the Executive Committee for consideration.

4 Issues and Risk Commentary

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

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

5 Consultation

5.1 The Heads of Financial Administration, Corporate Administration, and Legal Services have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report. Head of Corporate Finance has also been consulted and his comments will be tabled at the meeting.

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 Financial implications and Summary

8.1 The Grounds Maintenance trading operation is forecasting a surplus of £24k for 07/08

9 Recommendations

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
Jason Hedley	Parks Manager

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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