

28th August 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 of the activities of the Grounds Maintenance trading operation for the period 1st of April to 30th June 2007.**

2 Background

- 2.1** The Grounds Maintenance trading operation performs contracted and ad-hoc maintenance mainly for Parks and Open Spaces and Burial Grounds and also for local Housing Associations and private individuals.

3 Business Performance and Update

3.1 Workload

The section is carrying out its summer maintenance programme including grass cutting and collection, flower bed maintenance, weed control and litter picking. Additional budget funding of £35,000 to increase the frequency of grass cutting in cemeteries from previous years is being used to fund increased overtime being worked allowing the section to improve the utilisation of equipment.

The section continues to monitor its performance in all areas. In monitoring business performance the section has again contributed data to the APSE performance network for 2006/07 and when results are published later in the year the section will be in a position to bench mark results with comparable local authorities.

Grounds Maintenance current contract with SBHA, ends on 2nd of March 2008 and if not renewed would result in an income reduction in the current year. We are currently in negotiation with SBHA to extend this contract.

3.2 Budget

A £29k budget trading surplus has been set for the year.

3.3 Updated Projections

The section is currently forecasting a trading surplus of £7k for the year.

3.4 Resources

A report on the future sourcing of plants previously grown at the Glenraig Nursery in Peebles is being prepared and will be presented to a future trading operations sub-committee meeting.

3.5 Staffing

The section has 86 full time permanent manual staff and recruits 50 seasonal staff for approximately twenty six weeks per year to cover the increased work load during the growing season. The recruitment and retention of seasonal staff continues to present a challenge to the section and the use of agency staff may have to be considered to fill short term seasonal vacancies in future years. The particularly wet weather conditions in the first quarter have made staff planning particularly difficult.

4 apprentices have been recruited and their induction has taken place. Applications for the four posts were received from in excess of 70 applicants. These are initially two year fixed term contracts, funded through natural wastage of other posts.

3.6 Training

Core skills training continues to be delivered to all staff in the section. An application has been lodged with Investors in People for accreditation.

3.7 Health and Safety

The health and safety arrangements in the section are currently under review. A programme of training and reassessment of health and safety assessments relevant to the section is ongoing; these include 40 generic risk assessments, 50 COSHH assessments, 30 manual handling assessments. These reviews are annual and are due to be completed by the end of the year.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The budget trading surplus of £29k has been reduced to a forecast trading surplus of £7k following a revision of the income forecast for the year.

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 The area had 21 entrants (up from 17 in 2006) in the Scotland Floral Gateway competition and 2 entrants in the national Beautiful Scotland competition (Galashiels and Peebles) the second round of the competition being judged on 6th August. The Ground Maintenance team continue to assist local communities who participate in civic award schemes and competitions and are encouraged by the increasing participation of communities. A presentation on the civic schemes will be given by the Parks and Open Spaces Manager.

8 Risk Commentary

8.1 Recruitment and retention of seasonal staff remains a challenge for the section, due to competition in the local employment market.

8.2 Risks associated with the closure of the Glenraig nursery are considered to be

minimal following a thorough review of options.

- 8.3 Two significant contracts with local RSLs are due for retendering this financial year, Elidon Housing association and SBHA. The latter has initiated a discussion over a contract extension.

9 Recommendations

9.1 I recommend that the Trading Operations Sub-Committee:

- (a) Agree the contents of this report

Approved by

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

Author(s)

Name	Designation

Background Papers:

ADD AS APPROPRIATE

Previous Minute Reference: