

To:	Cabinet Member for Community Services
From:	Darren Lanes, Head of Street Scene and Leisure
Director:	Robert Styles, Direct of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services

BRIEFING NOTE: EXECUTIVE - NON-KEY DECISION

COMMISSIONING OF GROUNDSCONSULTING (PART OF WCL LTD)

Summary of Issue:

Establishing background information to inform the future assessment of the Strategic approach to the retender of the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

Recommendation:

To commission GroundsConsulting to undertake an initial options review for the retender of the Borough Council’s Grounds Maintenance Contract. This is to include, service delivery options, current market conditions, a high-level costing and time frame delivery model and the potential for more sustainable and environmental additions and improvements.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council’s current Grounds Maintenance Contract is due to expire on the 31 December 2024. The Contract broadly encompasses the maintenance of council owned outdoor facilities, including parks, open spaces, play areas and sports pitches. The contract also incorporates the maintenance of Tonbridge Cemetery (including Burials), Tonbridge Castle Grounds, Tonbridge Memorial Garden and the maintenance and management of the Council’s tree stock.
- 1.2 The current contract was initially awarded for five years with the potential for a further five-year extension. Following previous Member approval, the five-year extension was granted though no further extensions are provided for within the contract beyond 31 December 2024. The current annual contract cost is iro £600k.
- 1.3 Prior to commencing any detailed work, the strategic approach to the delivery of services and procurement will need to be established and this could include procurement options such as in-house provision, joint partnership contracts and Local Authority Trading Companies. Should the Council wish to explore these options in detail in the future it will be imperative to undertake initial scoping work as soon as possible in order to inform future discussions on the

strategic approach and allow enough time to then fully review the contract documentation and procure the new service.

2.0 Main Issues

2.1 Following discussion at the Council's Management Team it is considered that current internal staff would not have the appropriate skills or time to undertake the work required and highlighted above. Initial liaison has been undertaken with an external company, GroundConsulting (Part of WCL Ltd) to assess the support that could be offered in this regard and the potential cost.

2.2 The cost of this piece of work is £4,887.50 and the broad aspects that will be looked at through this proposal are.....

- To assess the feasibility of alternative options of service delivery of TMBC's Grounds Maintenance operation;
- To advise the Council of the state of the current market in the Grounds Maintenance Sector and the likely competitive nature at the time of retender;
- To provide a desktop, high-level indicative costing model and timeline for delivery (based on our research, library of data and previous, recent exercises we have undertaken) should the Council wish to either:
 - o deliver services in-house;
 - o through a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC); or
 - o continue to externalise the service; and
- Outline the realistic potential for more sustainable, "green" and environmental additions and improvements in service delivery which could be included to the operation and the expected cost implication and timelines of these.

3.0 Legal Advice

3.1 The work recommended will provide data and evidence to support discussions on the future strategic approach to procurement.

4.0 Financial and Value for Money implications

4.1 In liaison with full Management Team and the Director of Finance and Transformation it is proposed that the cost of the work (£4,887.50) be funded through the Council's Invest to Save budget allocation.

4.2 Prior to the signing and issuing of the final Decision Notice, The Cabinet Member for Community Services is also requested to liaise with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property to seek their comments and approval to the use of the Invest to Save budget as referenced at 4.1 above.

5.0 Risk Assessment

- 5.1 The recommended work will place the Council in a more informed position when discussing the future strategic approach to the Grounds Maintenance retender.

6.0 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 6.1 No direct impact from the work proposed.

7.0 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

- 7.1 We do not consider that this matter needs to be considered by O&S/ SSC before a decision is made.

8.0 Communications

- 8.1 No media/press engagement proposed.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 To support the recommendation highlighted above.

10.0 Annexes

- 10.1 None