

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date and Time - **Monday 18 March 2024 – 6:30pm**

Venue - **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea**

Councillors appointed to the Committee:

P.N. Osborne (Chair), Mrs V. Cook (Vice-Chair), J. Barnes (MBE),
Mrs M.L. Barnes, S. Burton, C.A. Clark, B.J. Coupar, C.A. Creaser, M.C. Legg,
C.R. Maynard and S.B. McGurk + 1 Vacancy.

Substitute Members: F.H. Chowdhury, N. Gordon, P.J. Gray, C. Pearce, J. Stanger

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To authorise the Chair to sign the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2024 and 19 February 2024 as correct records of proceedings.

2. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

The Chair to ask if any Member present is substituting for another Member and, if so, to declare his/her name as substitute Member and the name of the absent Member.

3. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

To consider such other items as the Chair decides are urgent and due notice of which has been given to the Head of Paid Service by 12 Noon on the day of the meeting.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

To receive any disclosures by Members of disclosable pecuniary interests / other registerable interests / non-registerable interests in matters on the agenda and the nature of any interest and details of any dispensations obtained. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.

5. PERFORMANCE REPORT: THIRD QUARTER 2023/24 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023) (Pages 3 - 20)

This agenda can be made available in large print, Braille, audiotope/CD or in another language upon request.
For all enquiries – please contact julie.hollands@rother.gov.uk
(Tel: 01424 787811)
Rother District Council putting residents at the heart of everything we do.

6. **CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE: TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP** (Pages 21 - 32)
7. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING AS AT QUARTER 3 - 2023/24** (Pages 33 - 46)
8. **TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION ON THE PEOPLE STRATEGY AND WORKFORCE PLAN**
9. **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT / SPECIFICATION** (Pages 47 - 104)
10. **LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP** (Pages 105 - 110)
11. **WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 111 - 112)

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Agenda Despatch Date: 8 March 2024

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 March 2024
Title:	Performance Report: Third Quarter 2023/24 (October – December 2023)
Report of:	Anna Evett, Corporate Programme, Risk and Improvement Manager
Ward(s):	N/A
Purpose of Report:	To monitor the delivery of the Council's Key Performance Indicators
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider these findings and recommend any actions to Cabinet, as necessary.

Background and Introduction

1. In January 2023, this Committee selected a set of measurements in order to shift performance monitoring back towards corporate operations and service delivery. It is important that Members remain assured that the various departments of the Council providing core services are functioning effectively, have sufficient resources, and delivering within expected parameters.
2. As a result, this Committee recommended to Cabinet the selection of 26 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), broken down into eight service areas as listed below:
 - Corporate Core
 - Customer Services
 - Environmental Health
 - Estates
 - Housing
 - Neighbourhood Services
 - Planning Development Management
 - Revenues and Benefits
3. In addition, Members will receive an annual report on the state of the district. This report will be wide ranging and will seek to ensure that Members are kept informed of changes to the profile, demographic, and housing and economic landscape of the district.
4. Please note that the recommendation made by this committee to amend the targets to 80% for P1 (percentage of major development applications determined in 13 weeks or agreed extension) and P2 (percentage of minor development applications determined in 8 weeks or agreed extension) was approved by Cabinet on the 11 December 2023.

Reporting by Exception

5. In order to focus on priorities, the narrative concerning performance against target will be by exception. This means a commentary from a Service Manager will be included when the performance is significantly above or below the target.

Exception: Corporate Core KPI CC1 % of Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) answered in 20 working days.

6. This measurement is the percentage of Freedom of Information Requests answered in 20 working days. The current target is 95% and the Quarter 3 performance is 89%.
7. 18% more requests were received in Quarter 3 (Q3) 2023 compared with Quarter 2 2022 and this has increased the response time.
8. The average response percentage is lowered by 13 FOIs that took 20 or more days to respond to due to their complexity. Whilst this indicator is under target, the additional time requested to deal with these is in accordance with section 10(3) of the Freedom of Information Act.
9. Out of the 151 requests received in Q3, there have been several customers who have made multiple requests which adds to the time to respond often because of increased complexity and legal involvement. See Appendix A for more information.
10. We are increasing our resilience in this area by training two additional officers to assist when needed, and we are looking at longer term options for data governance.

Exception: Telephone call answered by Customer Services (sum of received and abandoned calls)

11. This measurement is the number of telephone calls answered by customer services (sum of answered and abandoned calls) with the aim to reduce them against the baseline year, to monitor the channel shift towards the digital service.
12. 26% more calls were received in Q3 2023 in comparison to Q3 2022 with a slight increase in performance in terms of more calls answered and less call abandonments.
13. This indicates an improvement in performance but not a reduction in calls presented. However, KPI C5 (total number of customer contacts to the Council) shows an increase in digital contact at 55.83% versus traditional contact at 44.17%.

Exception: Revenues and Benefits - RB1 - Percentage of council tax owed for the year that has been collected and RB2 - Percentage of business rates owed for the year that have been collected.

14. Current performance is slightly down on the profiled rate but better than the corresponding period last year for Council Tax collection. The Business Rates collection is challenging, resulting in collection being down compared to the

same period in 2022/23. However, with the number of different reliefs available to businesses over the past few years it is difficult to compare collection year on year.

Performance Board

15. A Senior Leadership Team led Performance Board was established in July as part of the new Governance arrangements. This sits alongside the (officer led) Risk and Programme Boards to improve performance management, risk management and accountability in the Council. This brings together Heads of Service and relevant Service Managers to discuss performance and service risks collectively and individually across the Council. The individual sessions allow for a detailed look at any issues impacting performance and the collective sessions allow for any cross-cutting issues to be identified.

Office of Local Government's Local Authority Data Explorer

16. The Government has created a new Office of Local Government (Oflog) as part of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This new body is tasked with understanding and supporting Local Government performance. The intention is to improve data transparency in order to increase accountability.
17. Oflog, as it is commonly called, is in the process of creating the Local Authority Data Explorer. It is a dashboard or [online tool](#) with sets of key measurements selected by Oflog. However, more than half of the current set of measurements do not apply to district councils.
18. The sections for waste management and finance have measurements relevant to district councils. For Members' interest, we have supplied the published data for Rother District Council in Appendix B. Currently, what has been published is limited to the annual figures for 2021/22.
19. Oflog has pledged to add more service areas and expand existing areas 'as the metrics are developed'. Members may wish to consider if they want to monitor the data explorer's development and monitor the data it reports. Options might be reporting to this Committee or through the Members' Bulletin.
20. If Members (or residents) are interested in seeing published Local Government figures as well as a lot of contextual data, there are other publicly available sources. The Local Government Association provides the [LGInform](#) website. In addition, East Sussex County Council has a data observatory called East Sussex in Figures. These websites have both Local Government performance and many demographic, economic and environmental statistics relevant to providing services in wards, parishes, districts and county levels.

Conclusion


21. This report sets our performance against the agreed KPIs for the first, second and third quarters of 2023/24. It includes an update in the Government's approach to council performance.
22. Members are requested to consider the Council's performance and to pass recommendations for action to Cabinet for consideration, as necessary.




Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No



Chief Executive:	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Anna Evett
e-mail address:	anna.evett@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	A – Summary KPI Table B – Additional charts to support Customer Service KPI data C – OfLog Dashboard
Relevant previous Minutes:	Cabinet minutes 5th February 2024 Min ref CB23/65 Overview and Scrutiny Committee mins 22nd January 2024 ref OSC 23/44 Cabinet 11th December 2023 ref CB23/52 Overview and Scrutiny Committee 5th June 2023, 4th Quarter Performance 2022/23
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

Summary of All KPIs






A summary of the KPI performance is set out in the table below. Performance is compared to the previous quarter result and to the same quarter the previous year. Results that can be prepared monthly are included with the quarter's result.






KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary														
Corporate Core																				
CC1 - % of freedom of information requested answered in 20 working days		95%	87%	96%	89%	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q3 2023:</th> <th>Q3 2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FOI answered within 20 days: 89%</td> <td>FOI answered within 20 days: 94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FOI received: 97</td> <td>FOI received: 73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EIR received: 22</td> <td>EIR received: 27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SAR received: 1</td> <td>SAR received: 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total: 120</td> <td>Total: 102</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11 days average response time</td> <td>10 Days average response time</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q3 2023:	Q3 2022	FOI answered within 20 days: 89%	FOI answered within 20 days: 94%	FOI received: 97	FOI received: 73	EIR received: 22	EIR received: 27	SAR received: 1	SAR received: 2	Total: 120	Total: 102	11 days average response time	10 Days average response time
						Q3 2023:	Q3 2022													
						FOI answered within 20 days: 89%	FOI answered within 20 days: 94%													
						FOI received: 97	FOI received: 73													
						EIR received: 22	EIR received: 27													
						SAR received: 1	SAR received: 2													
						Total: 120	Total: 102													
						11 days average response time	10 Days average response time													
						<p>We received 18% more requests in Q3 2023 in comparison to Q2 2022 which has increased our response time. In addition to this our average response percentage is lowered by 13 FOIs that have taken over 20 or more days to respond to due to their complexity. Whilst this indicator is under target the additional time requested to deal with these is in accordance with section 10(3) of the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>FOI=Freedom of Information EIR= Environmental Information request SAR= Subject access request</p> <p>Out of the 151 requests received in Q3, there have been several customers who have made multiple requests which adds to the time to respond often because of increased complexity and legal involvement. The table below shows the number of multiple requests and the number of customers who have made them.</p>														
						<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Number of multiple requests by an individual</th> <th>Number of Customer making these requests</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Number of multiple requests by an individual	Number of Customer making these requests	2	7	3	3	4	2	
Number of multiple requests by an individual	Number of Customer making these requests																			
2	7																			
3	3																			
4	2																			





KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary										
Customer Services																
C1 - Telephone calls answered by customer services (= sum of answered AND abandoned calls) <i>Aim: channel shift towards digital</i>		Reduce (baseline year)	11,606	13,181	10,669	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q3 2023:</th> <th>Q3 2022:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Calls: 10,669</td> <td>Total Calls: 8,428</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Calls Answered: 7,087 (68%)</td> <td>Calls Answered: 5,592 (66%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Calls Abandoned: 3,582 (32%)</td> <td>Calls Abandoned: 2,836 (34%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average Abandonment time: 05:41</td> <td>Average Abandonment time: 07:30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>26% more calls were received in Q3 2023 in comparison to Q3 2022 with a slight increase in performance in terms of more calls answered and less call abandonments.</p> <p>Peak call abandonments occur on Mondays and Wednesday when the contact centre opens. Generally Monday is the busiest day of the week due to the weekend closure. Staffing levels are weighted based on these contact trends to ensure a good level of service.</p>	Q3 2023:	Q3 2022:	Total Calls: 10,669	Total Calls: 8,428	Calls Answered: 7,087 (68%)	Calls Answered: 5,592 (66%)	Calls Abandoned: 3,582 (32%)	Calls Abandoned: 2,836 (34%)	Average Abandonment time: 05:41	Average Abandonment time: 07:30
Q3 2023:	Q3 2022:															
Total Calls: 10,669	Total Calls: 8,428															
Calls Answered: 7,087 (68%)	Calls Answered: 5,592 (66%)															
Calls Abandoned: 3,582 (32%)	Calls Abandoned: 2,836 (34%)															
Average Abandonment time: 05:41	Average Abandonment time: 07:30															
C2 - Percentage of enquiries that are resolved on the first contact with customer services		85%	87.53%	85.82%	86.36%	<p>Our first contact resolution rates are performing as expected and meeting target.</p> <p>Areas with the highest non-resolution rates at point of contact are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Business Rates (NNDR)* • Planning • Licensing <p>*Business Rates is not an area Customer Services covers therefore any calls must be transferred direct to department to deal with. This lowers first contact resolution rates.</p>										
C3 - Average call waiting time for the contact centre		Reduce (baseline year)	00:11:57	00:06:33	05:58	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q3 2023:</th> <th>Q3 2022:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Average Wait time: 05:58</td> <td>Average wait time: 07:47</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Longest Wait time: 55:38</td> <td>Longest wait time: 59:24</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The average call 'wait to be answered' time for Q3 has improved in comparison to Q3 2022. There are still calls that do have to wait a significant amount of time to be answered with the longest being 55 minutes and 38 seconds. This highlights the importance of our channel shift to digital to help enable those customers to self-service and free up the availability of our Customer Services team to assist those who are unable to use a digital channel.</p>	Q3 2023:	Q3 2022:	Average Wait time: 05:58	Average wait time: 07:47	Longest Wait time: 55:38	Longest wait time: 59:24				
Q3 2023:	Q3 2022:															
Average Wait time: 05:58	Average wait time: 07:47															
Longest Wait time: 55:38	Longest wait time: 59:24															

KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary														
						Customers will also have a much better experience as a result of lower wait times. (MM:SS = minutes: seconds)														
C4 - Customers who say they were satisfied when surveyed (annual measurement)		85%	Not due	Not due	No data	No available data to provide this KPI indicator yet.														
C5 - Total number of customer contacts to the Council <i>Aim: channel shift towards digital</i>		Monitor (baseline year)	25,349	23,969	20,751	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Q3 Channel Breakdown</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Digital Channels</th> <th>Traditional Channels</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Self Service: 6,743</td> <td>Phone Calls: 7,087</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emails: 1,469</td> <td>Face to Face: 2,077</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contact Us: 1,194</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aiimee (Chat bot): 2,181</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total: 11,587</td> <td>Total: 9,164</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q3 Channel Breakdown		Digital Channels	Traditional Channels	Self Service: 6,743	Phone Calls: 7,087	Emails: 1,469	Face to Face: 2,077	Contact Us: 1,194	-	Aiimee (Chat bot): 2,181	-	Total: 11,587	Total: 9,164
						Q3 Channel Breakdown														
Digital Channels	Traditional Channels																			
Self Service: 6,743	Phone Calls: 7,087																			
Emails: 1,469	Face to Face: 2,077																			
Contact Us: 1,194	-																			
Aiimee (Chat bot): 2,181	-																			
Total: 11,587	Total: 9,164																			
						<p>55.83% Digital contact VS 44.17% Traditional Contact (Channel Shift Target 65% Digital).</p> <p>Our chat bot (Aiimee) is really starting to assist customers following its update on 13 December 2023, which includes better metrics. We are monitoring its performance closely and it is anticipated to help reduce phone contact as its usage grows. Customer expectation of a 24/7 service continues to grow and our chat bot is helping to support this. An example of its usage is during the Christmas office closure (23.12.2023 to 31.12.2023) when it provided assistance to 157 customers. This also resulted in fewer emails over this period and a reduction in staff (and associated costs) who would normally provided resilience cover. Please see Appendix B for further details.</p>														
Estates																				
E1 - Income from all assets		£2,375,310 (original figure of £2,429,510 reduced by £54,200 as Amherst Rd reclassified)	£2,408,642	£2,459,032	£2,502,095	Q3 sees an increase in income of £43,000 compared to the end of Q2; The tenant at 35 Beeching Road, Skinners Sheds, vacated the site on 28 February 2024. New 12-month occupation licences have been granted to three separate organisations, equating to an annual income of £31,200 as temporary use. This will limit the income losses whilst a new development proposal is worked up.														




KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary
		as not investment property)				
Environmental Health						
E1 - % of scheduled food inspections that were carried out	✓	90%	81%	79%	92%	Slightly above target at Q3.
E2 - % of service requests completed in the required timescale	✓	90%	88.2%	71.04%	93%	Slightly above target at Q3.
Housing						
H1 - Number of households either prevented (P) from homelessness or Relieved (R) from homelessness	✓	30 (quarter) 120 (year)	52: 26 P 26 R	49: 26 P 23 R	61: 36 P 25 R	The rise in the number of homelessness approaches continues to create challenges for the Housing Service. The investment in prevention work continues to have a positive effect and we have seen a significant rise in the number of preventions compared to the same quarter last year, there has been an increase of 96% from 31 to 61. There has also been an increase on Q2 2023/24, up by 24% from 49 to 61.
H2 - Average cost of placing household in temporary accommodation (TA)	✓	£1,200	£766	£1,154	£1,112	The average cost of TA per unit has reduced from £1,154 in the last quarter. The continued expansion of the TA Investment Strategy supports a reduction in the average cost per unit of TA, in the face of rising inflationary pressures. A recent internal review of the relative costs of RDC owned TA compared to private sector TA has confirmed that it costs the Council £7,000 less annually on average to use its own TA to than it does to use TA in the private sector.
H3 - Average weeks a household was in temporary accommodation before placement	✓	Currently no target but 15 from 24/25	23	16	20	The Council is limited in its ability to affect the various factors that increase homelessness and the number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA). It continues to be recommended that the Council focus on its homelessness prevention and relief measure as the key indicator of performance for the Housing Service (see H1). At the time of writing, the number of households in TA is 159. The reason for the increase in the number of weeks in TA this quarter is due to a number of larger sized households that had been in TA for an extended period of time due to the difficulty in securing 3 or 4 bedroom sized properties. In October, the Council was able to secure an increased number of this size of property due to some new build properties and private rented sector opportunities being identified. Therefore, several households with relatively long stays in TA secured permanent accommodation, increasing the average for the quarter.

KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary
Neighbourhood Services						
N1 - Missed bins per 100,000 collections		62	24	30	27	This represents a high level of performance particularly as December is always a challenging month with the impact of Christmas and increased tonnages and collection schedule changes.
N2 - Percentage of public land found with unacceptable levels of litter when surveyed		2.5%	n/a	1%	2.3%	Please note these are Tranche 2 results (Aug – Nov 2023) (2 of 3) NI 195 inspections are completed tri-annually. Tranche 3 is not available (Dec – March 2024). This score falls just inside the target. It is noted there is a need for increased focus on street cleansing to improve on future scores.
N3 - Percentage of public land found with unacceptable levels of detritus when surveyed		7%	n/a	8%	5.5%	Please note this is a Tranche 2 results (Aug – Nov 2023) (2 of 3) NI 195 inspections are done tri-annually. Tranche 3 is not available (Dec – March 2024). This score is positive given that part of the tranche is during leaf fall and natural build-up of detritus.
N4 - Fly tips recorded each month, cleared from public land (number)		69	62	57	61	This is a good result. Fly tipping can be more prevalent when we head into the winter months with longer hours of darkness.
N5 - Fly tip fines issued (number)		Monitor	17	7	0	No fly tip fines issued in Q3. NES experienced staff recruitment issues during this period which resulted in being unable to respond to fly tip reports in a timely manner. This meant RDC staff dealt directly with fly tips, investigated those that may contain evidence and passed evidence to NES as appropriate. NES are now up to full strength and training more staff to investigate fly tips, but presently most fly tips are of the type without evidence which makes training more difficult.
Planning Development Management						

KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary
P1 - Percentage of major development applications determined in 13 weeks or agreed extension		80%	100%	100%	82%	Meeting this target. However, it is anticipated that performance will increase with experience of officers. There is also a team leader position that is expected to be filled which will take this figure on an upward trend in the new financial year.
P2 - Percentage of minor development applications determined in 8 weeks or agreed extension		80%	81%	92%	94%	On the minors and others (normally combined under government target) these targets are being exceeded. Overall, the Service is exceeding its set target (this combines minors and others). It should be noted that as application numbers increase it will be important to keep a watchful eye on this. The team is currently working with dated software (Ocella) but funds for a replacement have been approved; this will be key in ensuring the targets continue to be exceeded. There are other products being considered that will help improve productivity and quality of work/decisions.
P3 – Major development planning appeals allowed by the Planning Inspector		10%	Nil	Nil	0	The service is doing well, and this can be attributed to the good quality of the Local Planning Authority's decisions.
P4 - Minor development planning appeals allowed by the Planning Inspector		30%	18%	23%	12.5%	The service is doing well, and this figure can be attributed to the good quality of the Local Planning Authority's decisions.
P5 - Total number of PS1 and PS2 planning applications (live cases)		349	284	294	243	This figure shows the number of applications on hand (at start of December 2023). This figure is expected to rise as we go into the busy periods.
Revenues and Benefits						

KPI Indicator	Status	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Commentary
RB1 - Percentage of council tax owed for the year that has been collected		Yr: 98.3%	30.02% (quarterly target 29.81)	57.1% (quarterly target 57.13)	84.20% (quarterly target 81.13)	Collection is slightly up on the same period for last year, although collection remains challenging and will continue to be closely monitored. (Quarterly target is the corresponding quarter from 22/23)
RB2 - Percentage of business rates owed for the year that have been collected		Yr: 98.3%	29.38% (quarterly target 29.71)	58.62% (quarterly target 59.17)	83.31% (quarterly target 84.57%)	The Business Rates collection is also challenging resulting in collection being down compared to the same period in 2022/23. However, with the number of different reliefs available to businesses over the past few years it is difficult to compare collection year on year. (Quarterly target is the corresponding quarter from 22/23)
RB3 - Average calendar days to process a new housing benefit claim		20	20.29	19.06	17.49	Current performance is just within target; however, the team continues to be short 2.5 FTE posts due to difficulties recruiting and delays in the setting up of a resilience contract. Therefore, remaining on target will be challenging and the impact of the vacant posts will likely be seen in future performance.
RB4 - Average calendar days to process a change to an existing housing benefit claim		14	9.18	16.65	13.65	Current performance within target.

Key:

Status	Symbol
Performance on target or better than target	
Performance not on target but improving towards target.	
Performance not on target and getting worse	
Not applicable, such as not measured at this frequency	N/A

ADDITIONAL CHARTS TO SUPPORT CUSTOMER SERVICES KPI DATA.

Percentage of contact by department in 2023

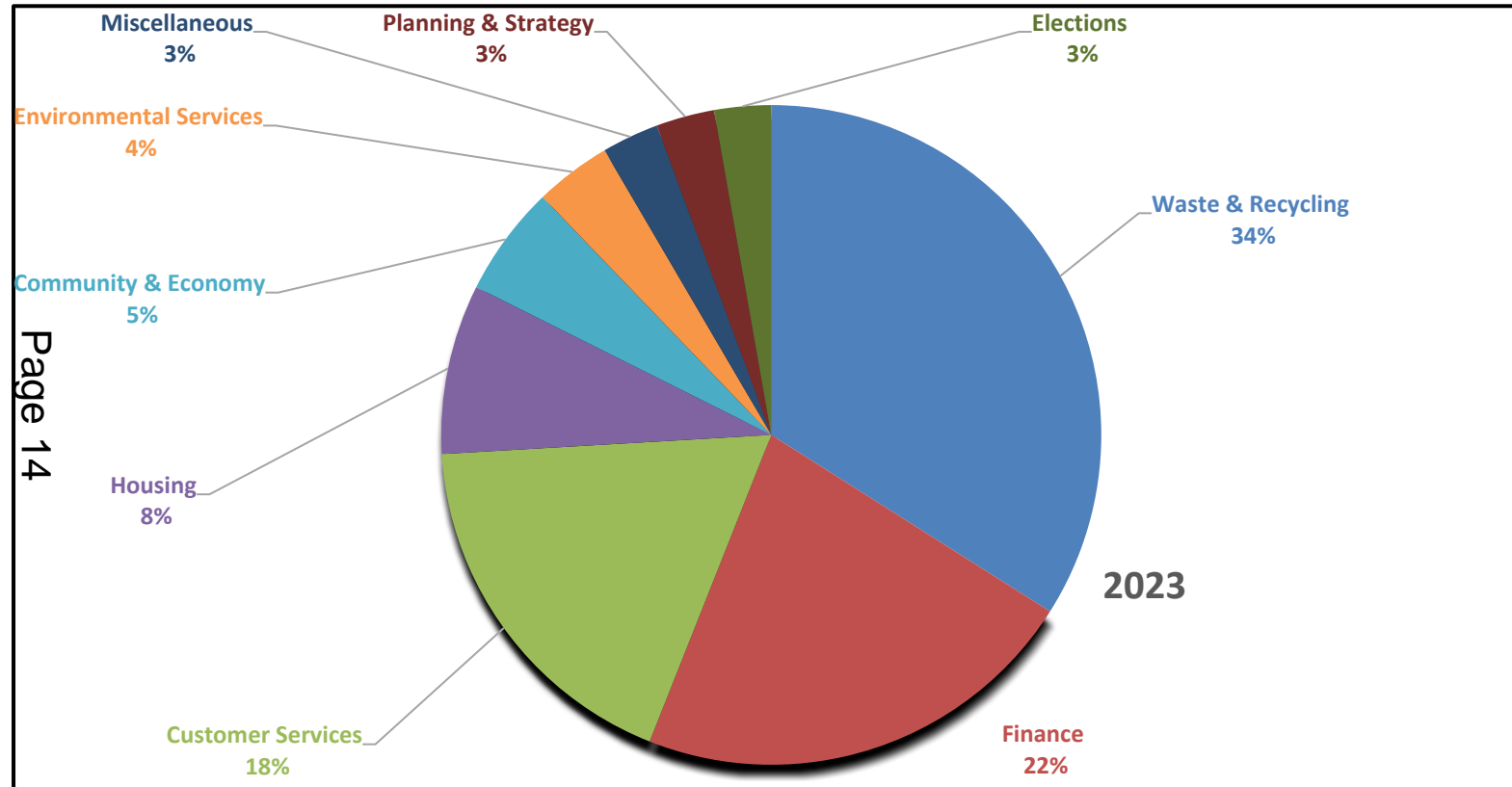
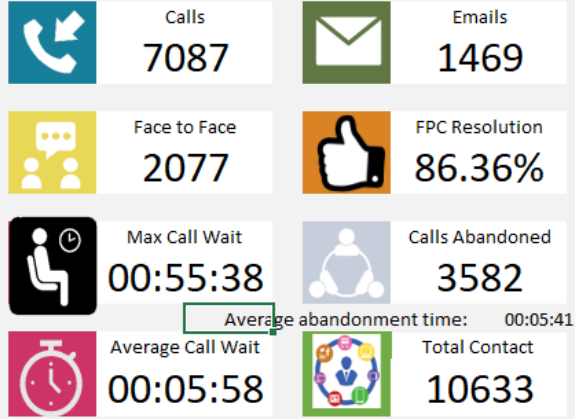


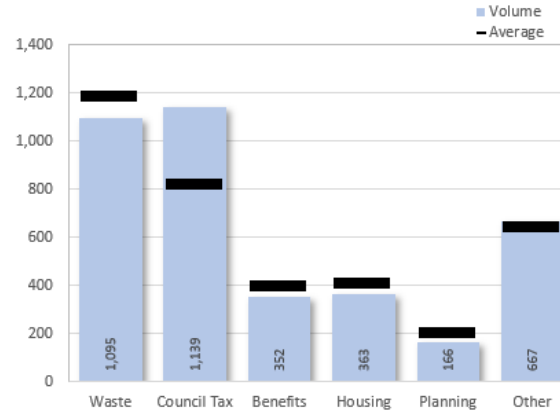
Figure 1NB - Finance covers both Council Tax and Housing Benefits combined.

Rother DC Contact Centre Dashboard (01 Oct 2023 - 31 Dec 2023)

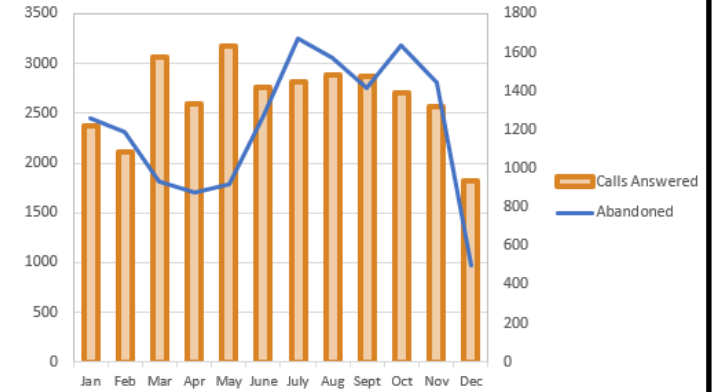
Contact Summary Q3 -Oct to Dec 2023



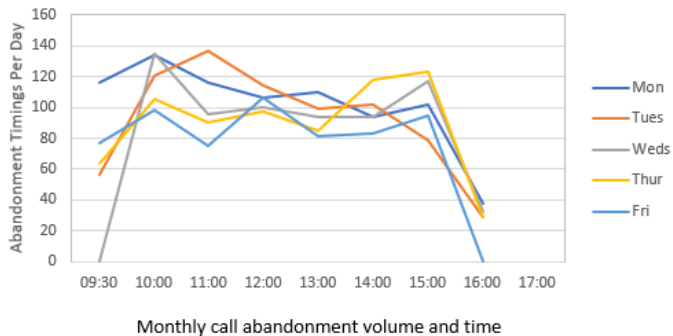
Q3 Average Contact Vs Yearly Average



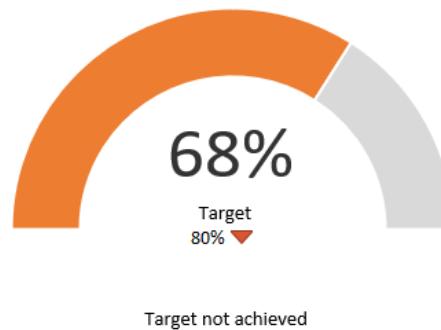
Calls Answered vs Abandonments



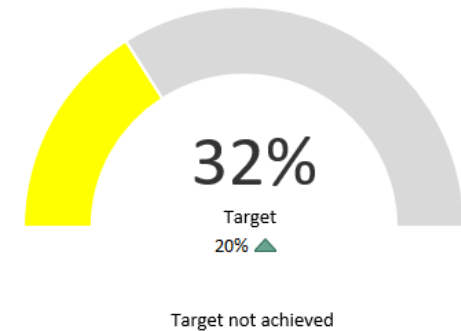
Abandonment Timings Per Day



Calls Answered %



Abandon %



Customer Services performance details for 2023

Month	Calls received	Calls Answered	Percentage answered Vs calls received	Calls Abandoned	Abandoned Percentage %	Average time to answer	Average abandon time	max wait time	Telephone calls by Area						Total
									Benefits	Council Tax	Elections (from April 2023)	Housing	Other	Waste	
Jan-23	3635	2377	65%	1258	35%	00:08:58	0:07:05	00:52:06	380	340	66	394	791	406	2377
Feb-23	3307	2116	64%	1191	36%	00:08:25	0:07:42	00:59:46	314	282	49	365	727	379	2116
Mar-23	3995	3059	77%	936	23%	00:15:26	0:06:14	00:50:46	467	478	147	445	1104	418	3059
Apr-23	3472	2597	75%	875	25%	00:25:07	0:04:43	00:37:47	346	380	120	363	999	389	2597
May-23	4100	3179	78%	921	22%	00:04:38	0:04:32	00:51:47	344	469	89	267	962	1048	3179
Jun-23	4034	2759	68%	1275	32%	00:06:07	0:04:49	00:42:06	309	334	22	321	922	851	2759
Jul-23	4491	2818	63%	1673	37%	00:07:22	0:05:47	00:58:40	224	717	15	352	851	659	2818
Aug-23	4457	2884	65%	1573	35%	00:06:29	0:04:54	01:03:22	242	820	82	333	836	571	2884
Sep-23	4285	2867	67%	1418	33%	00:06:12	0:04:42	00:46:47	265	786	156	391	794	475	2867
Oct-23	4338	2700	62%	1638	38%	00:07:34	0:05:52	00:55:38	266	749	110	396	787	392	2700
Nov-23	4007	2563	64%	1444	36%	00:06:27	0:05:13	00:52:33	258	698	54	352	765	436	2563
Dec-23	2324	1824	78%	500	22%	00:03:52	0:05:57	00:44:31	184	489	44	240	550	317	1824
Average	3870	2645	69%	1,225	32%	00:08:53	0:05:38	0:51:19	300	545	80	352	841	528	2645
Total	46445	31743		14702					3599	6542	954	4219	10088	6341	31743

Page 16

Chat bot performance information 13.12.2023 to 31.12.2023

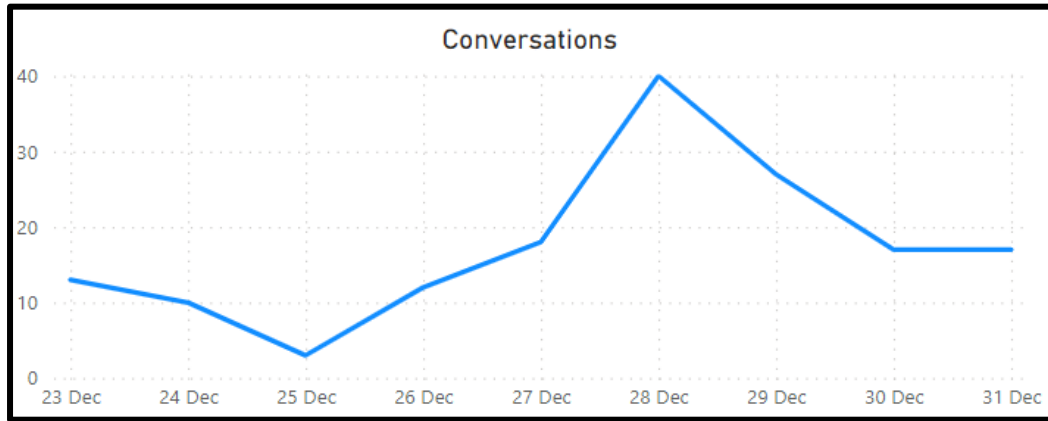


Conversations
270

Messages
570

Date Range
13/12/2023 31/12/2023

Volume and date of chatbot conversations over the period 23/12/23 to 31/12/23 (office closure).



Chat bot performance information 23.12.2023 to 31.12.2023 (office closure)

Page 17



Conversations 157	Messages 230
-----------------------------	------------------------

Date Range

23/12/2023 31/12/2023

Waste Management							
Indicator (click for source data)	Financial year	Rother	Wealden	Hastings	Eastbourne	Median of Rother's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours	England median
Household waste recycling rate	2021-22	46.5%	48.9%	31.2%	38.9%	46.3%	41.9%
	2021-22	469.8 kg per household	452.5 kg per household	505.1 kg per household	432.7 kg per household	438.7 kg per household	501.1 kg per household
Residual household waste	2021-22	2.8%	3.8%	4.2%	5.3%	2.4%	5.5%
Corporate & Finance							
Indicator (click for source data)	Financial year	Rother	Wealden	Hastings	Eastbourne	Median of Rother's CIPFA Nearest Neighbours	England median (Districts)
Non-ringfenced reserves as percentage of net revenue expenditure	2021-22	67.0%	257.6%	431.2%	165.1%	164.6%	146.4%
Non-ringfenced reserves as percentage of service spend	2021-22	70.3%	295.7%	123.3%	95.2%	157.2%	131.0%
Total core spending power per dwelling	2021-22	£233.88	£249.79	£284.38	£261.23	£231.35	£242.19
Level of band D council tax rates	2021-22	£207.10	£197.44	£276.17	£256.74	£192.44	£192.56
Council tax revenue per dwelling	2021-22	£1783.07	£2070.99	£1269.40	£1521.62	£1681.70	£1556.44
Debt servicing as percentage of core spending power	2021-22	5.7%	3.7%	27.7%	31.6%	4.0%	10.2%
Total debt as percentage of core spending power	2021-22	218.6%	465.8%	537.1%	1336.0%	127.5%	457.5%
Number of upheld complaints	2021-22	5.4 per 100,000 population	0.0 per 100,000 population	3.3 per 100,000 population	3.0 per 100,000 population	1.1 per 100,000 population	1.1 per 100,000 population
Council tax collection rates (in year)	2021-22	98.0%	96.7%	95.0%	96.3%	97.9%	97.4%
Nondomestic rates collection rates (in year)	2021-22	97.0%	93.9%	94.8%	96.4%	97.3%	97.4%

* CIPFA refers to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the professional body for people working in public finance.

CIPFA creates groups of similar local authorities termed 'nearest neighbours', based on a range of criteria, to help local authorities make reasonable comparisons. Relevant factors include being a borough or district council, similar population size, rural against urban and so on. Geographic location is not a factor and most of the authorities are from other regions in the country. The term neighbour does not refer to other authorities in Kent and Sussex, but how similar the district is to Rother. **But, as the detail is available for our neighbours, this information has now been included in the table just to add context and for interest purposes only.**

Median is the figure that appears at the halfway point or the middle of any sequential list of figures. It is often a similar number to the average, but the figure is not calculated the same way. Using median removes the risk of an average being distorted by outliers in the data, especially extreme outliers. A good example is where using the average income for an area can be raised by just a few people having a multi-million income and disguising a more accurate portrait of the general population. Using median means a more accurate representation that half of the residents earn less and half of the residents earn more. For example, in Rother in 2021 the average gross annual earnings for all residents was £30,171 but the median gross annual earnings were £22,401.

This page is intentionally left blank

Rother District Council

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 18 March 2024

Title: Annual Report of Rother Community Safety Partnership

Report of: Richard Parker-Harding, Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To provide an annual report on the work of the Safer Rother Partnership to address issues of Anti-Social Behaviour, crime, and Community Safety across Rother.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make any recommendations arising from the report to the Chair of the Safer Rother Partnership for consideration; and
- 2) the Council’s work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour, crime reduction and Community Safety be noted.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this annual report is to provide information on the work of the Rother Community Safety Partnership [known as the Safer Rother Partnership (SRP)] for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review, scrutinise and make reports or recommendations to the responsible authorities of the SRP in-line with the Council’s statutory responsibilities, under sections 19-21 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.
2. The Council has designated the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the Council’s Crime and Disorder Committee with responsibility for scrutinising crime and disorder and community safety matters and meets in this capacity at least once a year.
3. The report also includes information about the Council’s own responsibilities and actions related to community safety and anti-social behaviour (ASB).
4. The Community Safety Partnership’s (CSP) responsible authorities are: Rother District Council (RDC), Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS), East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Probation Service and NHS Sussex.
5. Councillor Jimmy Stanger is RDC’s nominated representative, Chair of the SRP, Co-Chair of the Joint CSP Board with Hastings and Councillor Brian Drayson is the Council’s representative on the Board of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Performance of the Safer Rother Partnership 2023/24

6. The Rother Joint Action Group (JAG) (an officer operational group) meets monthly to oversee the delivery of the local priorities for Rother which in 2023/24 were:
 - ASB and Youth Crime – by working in partnership to reduce the occurrence and impact of young people involved in crime and ASB and as victims.
 - Drug Related Harm including drug supply (both local and county lines) and the impact on the local community. Including partnership work with drug treatment and support agencies.
 - Rural Crime, including specific types of crime e.g. theft of farm and large plant machinery and cross border crime.
7. It was agreed that domestic abuse, business crime, the impact of the cost of living crisis and road safety would be included, but not as priorities.
8. Rother JAG continued to support and deliver work to address issues that are business as usual through the work of partnership agencies e.g. there are joint partnership meetings which Council officers facilitate, organise and participate in to deliver work on:
 - Cuckooing (multi-agency case management of complex cases in Rother in last 12 months).
 - Domestic Abuse including the White Ribbon Campaign.
 - High and Medium Risk ASB and all Hate crime cases - multi-agency case management of High and Medium Risk cases in Rother and ASB Case Reviews for Rother (and Wealden as part of our shared service).
 - Modern Slavery – Operation Discovery.
 - Road Safety.
 - Professional/Safeguarding/and case meetings.
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Case Reviews.
9. Rother JAG also supported and delivered work to address issues that come about through the work of partnership agencies and are operational priorities e.g. Operation Radcott (Camber), Herbrand Walk, Serious and Organised Crime, Safeguarding, Multiple and Complex Needs cases, Community Tensions and protests around Northeye and immigration, Shoplifting and other Business Crime types, Rural Crime, Hate Crime Awareness Week, ASB young people project, films and infomercial and ASB tools and powers, Drug Related Harm, Civil Parking Enforcement, Fly Tipping, Criminal Damage, Fire setting.
10. The work plan for Rother JAG for 2023/24 is attached as Appendix A.
11. The joint Board meets quarterly to identify changes in crime and ASB of strategic significance to both areas, wider trends and review the work delivered against these priorities. The Board is co-chaired by Councillor Jimmy Stanger and his Hastings Borough Council counterpart.
12. During 2023/24, the Safer Hastings and Rother Partnership Board priorities were:

Protecting Vulnerable People

- a. Raise awareness and implement measures to deter Violence Against Women and Girls and meet the requirements of the Serious Violence duty.

- b. Raise awareness and encourage reporting of concerns of modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation.

Making the Streets and Businesses safer

- a. Tackling street related crime and ASB.
- b. Deliver campaigns for Road Safety.

Identifying Those at Risk of Harm

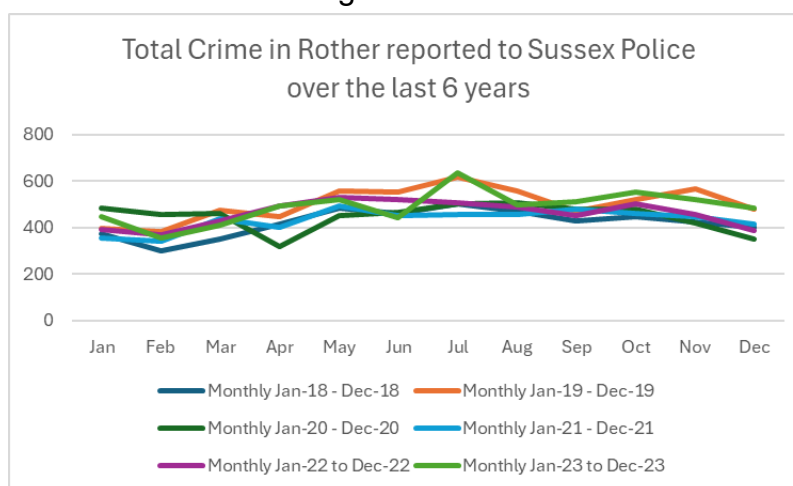
- a. Ensuring those with substance misuse issues, particularly those who have experienced multiple disadvantage, are supported.
- b. Not condoning domestic abuse to all (White Ribbon).

Crimes Reported

- 13. The time frame used for most data presented in this report is 12 months rolling year ending 31 December 2023. The date may be compared to the previous rolling 12 months to the year ending December 2022, or over several years which will be highlighted where relevant.
- 14. There were 5,879 crimes in Rother reported to Sussex Police during the 12 months to the end of December 2023. Which is 355 more than the previous 12 months. This is a similar pattern in East Sussex as a whole, Wealden and Sussex. All areas except Hastings have seen an increase in reports.

Total Crime Across East Sussex	% increase	Number of reports	Increase
Eastbourne	16.8	11,057	1,588
Hastings	-0.3	9,692	- 31
Lewes	0.1	5,850	8
Rother	6.4	5,879	355
Wealden	6.4	6,880	412
East Sussex	6.3	39,358	2,332
Force (Sussex)	7.6	136,193	9,561

- 15. Over the last six years the level of crime reported to Sussex Police for Rother has remained fairly consistent considering COVID restrictions and guidance. The lowest rolling year was to the end of January 2019 (5,068) and highest rolling year to end of January 2020 (6,112); the figures for the year end December 2023 sit within this range.



16. There are some crime types we would wish to see increases in reporting, as they demonstrate confidence in people feeling able to report and referrals can be made to support services e.g. Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime. There were 1,882 reports of Domestic Violence crime in the year ending 31 December 2023.
17. The Council, Police, social housing and support agencies continue to work with cases presented. Higher risk cases are discussed at the Hastings and Rother Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and CGL [Alcohol and drug advice and info from Change Grow Live](#) provide support for higher risk and more complex cases.
18. SRP delivered another successful White Ribbon campaign which included a webinar presented by [Hourglass](#) the UK's only charity focused on the abuse and neglect of older people. Note: the 1,882 reports to Sussex Police will contain multiple reports about the same individuals and lower level cases will be offered support from a range of other agencies including victim support.
19. There slightly fewer reports of Hate Crime (all categories) 130 in total. SRP agencies supported an LGBTQIA+ event organised by the Police at the De La Warr Pavilion as part of Hate Crime awareness week.
20. Reports of ASB to the Council, Police and housing providers continue to be managed by these agencies. Complex cases require significantly more work by the Council and all partners, often include safeguarding, mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.
21. Rother continues to have excellent working relationships with the key agencies and resilient and resourceful staff and structures, e.g. the monthly multi-agency Hate and ASB and risk assessment group and case reviews, have enabled complex cases to continue to be dealt with effectively. We are seen as an example of good practice in the way we work in Rother. Rother is an active member of pan Sussex working groups for ASB and [ECINS - Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems](#) replacement. Reductions in reporting of ASB Nuisance are mirrored in East Sussex. There were the following ASB cases reported to police during for the year to the end of December 2023:
 - ASB Personal 149 (+50)
 - ASB Nuisance 751 (-20)
 - ASB Environmental 66 (+8)

ASB Tools and Powers including ASB case Reviews have been the focus all CSPs and through active participation in the pan Sussex ASB working group the Rother Community Safety Team have worked on a consistent approach across Sussex which demonstrated significant areas of good practice in line with the ASB Action Plan published in 2023.
22. There have been increases in reporting of shoplifting across Sussex (65%) with a significant increase in Eastbourne 196.6% (1,272 reports) Rother saw an increase of 182 reports (391 in total) which is an 87.1% rise. In April/May the Police and Council will be introducing an online reporting scheme called [Disc - A Crime Information-Sharing System For UK Business & Rural Communities \(discagainstcrime.com\)](#) to support retailers and businesses report crime and receive reports on successful prosecutions and interventions.

23. In 2023/24, the SRP funded a range of projects to address priorities in Rother. Funding for the partnership projects comes from the Office of PCC £35,077.
- Airtime agreement for deployable CCTV cameras used by Sussex Police in Rother.
 - Contribution to Domestic Homicide Reviews.
 - Hire of Variable Messaging Signs during Sussex bonfires and for road safety initiatives.
 - Young People's Voices films on ASB and an Infomercial on ASB supported by key agencies working to address ASB which was funded from Safer Streets 5 funding.
 - Hate Crime Awareness Event for LGBTQIA+ to build trust and confidence in police, the Council and other agencies.
 - Equipment and materials for the youth space at the Pelham.
 - Mural at Sutton Place – previously a graffiti hot spot.
 - Doorbell CCTV for victims of crime, ASB, Domestic Violence and Hate Crime living in social housing.
 - Removal of signage contributing to community tension.
 - Equipment and resources for Fire Service Cadets.

Applications for a [Community Safety Grant](#) can be made to the Joint Action Group

24. Environmental Services and Licensing and Community Safety staff, the Police and other agencies continue to carry out successful operational and education initiatives across Rother and Wealden to address e.g.:
- ASB, neighbour disputes and High and Medium risk cases are managed through the monthly Hate and ASB Case Review meeting.
 - Community safety issues arising at beaches across Rother, including illegal immigration, protest groups, sleeping in vehicles, noise nuisance, ASB and specific summer operations in Camber and at Herbrand Walk.
 - Crime, safety and risk for events managed with partner agencies through SAGs.
 - Licensing and ASB issues in both public houses and businesses.
 - Modern Slavery through Project Discovery.
 - Safeguarding of both adults and children through case reviews and multi-agency work and fulfil the Council's duty and responsibilities.
 - Counter Terrorism, PREVENT and the PROTECT Duty (Martyn's Law).
 - Serious Violence Duty.
25. The Community Safety Team (CST) also work with other Council departments to both fulfil the Council's duty and responsibilities and cases and enquires from residents and Members, such as Housing (e.g. Domestic Abuse cases, Multi Agency Public Protection and other offenders, victims of Hate and ASB and Rough sleeping and Homelessness), Planning and Planning Enforcement (e.g. neighbour disputes, ASB and criminality), Customer Services (e.g. Safeguarding and assessment of need for callers to the Council).
26. During 2023, a significant amount of work has been required by Rother's community safety team to deliver the transition phase of the Public Facing CCTV changes for Rother. Sussex Police informed the Borough, District, Parish, Town and City councils that the current agreement for Public Facing CCTV will end on 1 April 2024. This would bring Sussex in line with other areas

of the country where Public Facing CCTV is owned and run by local authorities and businesses. In order to facilitate this change:

- Sussex Police will hand back ownership of public facing CCTV to local authorities/areas.
- A pan Sussex working group was established.
- The new scheme requires the replacement of nine cameras and purchase of routers and recorders at a one-off cost of £42,941 (procured under the current agreement with Sussex Police).
- New contracts would be agreed with a different supplier, significantly reducing the revenue costs for use of the cameras from the 1 April 2024.
- Sussex Police will continue to monitor all 12 Public Facing CCTV cameras across Rother (and Sussex).
- The formal offer from Sussex Police for Data Governance support is being finalised and expected by the end of February 2024. Sussex Police will handle all Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests which relate to the existing cameras.

27. Funding has been secured from the SRP and Safer Streets funding through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to replace nine cameras in Bexhill, Sidley and Battle and provide the routers and equipment required for the new scheme. Additional funding is available to pay a proportion of the running costs (not electricity) in year 1 (2024/25). Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council has agreed to take on the funding for Public Facing CCTV for Bexhill and Sidley from April and discussions are underway with Battle Town Council about their three cameras.

28. In previous years the SRP has also purchased cameras for Council-owned properties, community groups and re-deployable cameras for police operations. All of which assist in the reduction and detection of crime and ASB.

2024/25

29. SRP JAG will agree its priorities for 2024/25 at its March meeting and will be using an analytical product provided by the Police to focus resources on those crimes and victims that have the highest risk or behaviours and that have the biggest impact on the community of Rother. In addition, the JAG will evaluate:

- Rother Crime and ASB data.
- Monitoring and evaluation provided to the OPCC.
- The results of future consultation with residents and businesses as part of the violence reduction and contextual safeguarding work being carried out.
- Local and East Sussex Policing priorities.
- East Sussex and Pan Sussex risk assessments and plans.

30. Priorities will be reviewed after the election to the OPCC in May 2024 and the launch of their priorities for the following four years. Funding of the SRP is conditional on delivery against these as well as delivering local priorities.

31. However, the work and priorities outlined in this report will continue to be delivered by both the Council and the SRP going forward.

Crime and Disorder

32. The report highlights the work of the CSP (the SRP) and Council officers to:

- prevent crime and disorder;
 - reduce the impact of ASB and crimes;
 - mitigate the negative impact on the quality of life of residents, businesses, and visitors; and
 - deliver crime and ASB duties.
33. Under s17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities, amongst others, have a duty to exercise their functions with 'due regard' to the need to prevent crime and disorder in their area.
34. Within this work there are duties and roles for the Council and partners under other legislation, including those for ASB, safeguarding adults and children, domestic abuse, licensing, modern slavery, Counter Terrorism, PREVENT, PROTECT, Serious Violence and reflect the work of many Council departments e.g. Environmental Health and Licensing, Housing, Customer Services, Planning Enforcement, Neighbourhood Services.
35. "Crime and disorder scrutiny functions", in relation to a council, means functions that are, or, but would be, exercisable by the crime and disorder committee of the Council under sections 19, 20 and schedule 8 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.
36. Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2021 makes changes to section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requiring CSPs to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence.

Environmental

37. It is well documented that crime and ASB have a negative impact on the quality of life and residents' perceptions of the area they live in. There are also environmental implications in connection to e.g. fly tipping, graffiti, misuse of land under planning regulations, drug supply, cultivation or manufacture and paraphernalia, derelict and dangerous buildings.

Equality and Diversity

38. Given the nature of Crime and Disorder, ASB and community safety, the work of the Council and partners reflects the need for consideration of vulnerabilities and protective characteristics in case management, reduction of crime and working with victims and offenders. This also includes work with communities that have protected characteristics to build trust and confidence in services e.g. Hate Crime Awareness and dealing with community tensions.
39. The Council and partner agencies have specific safeguarding responsibilities, and a significant investment is made by all parties to take a holistic approach and consider equality and diversity in all work and initiatives. The Council also participates fully in both local and East Sussex wide safeguarding work including complex cases, modern slavery, domestic homicide, ASB and hate crime casework and offender management.

Legal Implications

40. See section under Community Safety for duties and powers and Data and Governance connected to the new Public Facing CCTV contract if not adopted by Battle Town Council by 1 April 2024.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

Chief Executive:	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Carol Studley, Community Safety Co-ordinator
e-mail address:	Carol.studley@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	A – JAG Work Programme 2023-24 B – Public Facing CCTV Cameras
Relevant previous Minutes:	-
Background Papers:	-
Reference Documents:	-

JAG WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24		
Date of Meeting	Subject – (Part A) Main Item in Bold	Chair
18 April 2023 (10:30-12:30)	a) Northeye proposal and community tensions b) ASB occurrences and new guidelines	Carol Studley
13 June 2023 (10:30-12:30)	a) Northeye proposal and community tension b) ASB new guidelines action plan and ECINS c) CCTV and Sussex Police proposal d) Attendance by ESFRS (operational managers)	Grant Virgo
11 July 2023 (10:30-12:30)	Update on priorities – Northeye proposal and community tensions Update on White Ribbon 2023 Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning of projects & use of JAG funds. 	Carol Studley
5 September 2023 (14:30-16:30)	Update on priorities – DISC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on vehicles at Hebrand Walk Update on JAG applications 	Carol Studley
3 October 2023 (14:30-16:30)	Update on Priorities – Actions and key themes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northeye proposal and community tensions Update on White Ribbon 2023 Plus 	Carol Studley
14 November 2023 (10:30-12:30)	Update on Priorities – Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Ribbon updates Hate Crime week feedback Update on Civil Parking Enforcement and the benefits compared to previous year. Feedback on Op Radcott, Herbrand Walk and Summer season 	Grant Virgo/ Richard Breeze
12 December 2023 (10:30-12:30)	Update on Rural Crime Team Presentation Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging issues and interventions for Christmas and New Year 	Richard Parker-Harding
9 January 2024 (14.30-16.30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northeye update -protests, community tensions and Home Office DISC Business Crime scheme 	Carol Studley
13 February 2024 (10.30-12.30)	Update on Priorities - Drug Related Harm and Rural Crime Plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northeye update -protests, community tensions and Home Office 	Carol Studley
12 March 2024	Priority setting for 2024-25	TBC

(10.30-12.30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority areas of work for 2024/25 • Review of funded projects and outcomes achieved. 	
---------------	--	--

Items for Consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning of Projects 2023-24 • Communications Strategy • Report from SHARP Road Safety Group to the JAG • Violence Against Women and Girls in Rother • Changes to ASB Guidance and Practice

Priorities for the year 2023-24 Agreed at the JAG meeting 7 February 2023

The Safer Rother Partnership focus for 2023-24 would be:

- **ASB and Youth Crime** – by working in partnership to reduce the occurrence and impact of young people involved in crime and ASB and as victims.
- **Drug Related Harm** including drug supply (both local and county lines) and the impact on the local community. Including partnership work with drug treatment and support agencies
- **Rural Crime**, including specific types of crime e.g., theft of farm and large plant machinery and cross border crime.

It was agreed that **Domestic Abuse, Business Crime, Cost of Living Crises** and **Road Safety** would be included, but not as priorities.

Emerging issues identified in January meeting for 2023 – list of issues:

- Asylum dispersal – agreed regular Agenda item.
- End of Covid funding and impact on homelessness
- Cost of living crisis
- Licenced Taxi driver CCTV consultation
- Child Crime & Sexual Exploitation training.
- Warm Spaces and safeguarding.

PUBLIC FACING CCTV LOCATIONS

Cantelupe Road / Sea Road, Bexhill

Channel View Road West, Bexhill

Devonshire Square, Bexhill

Sackville Road, Bexhill

Town Hall Square, Bexhill

Ravenside Retail Park, A259

Brett Drive, Bexhill

Ninfield Road, Sidley

Ninfield Road / Smith and Humphreys, Sidley

South roundabout A2100 and Marley Lane, Battle

Previously the 1066 Public House near the Square, Battle

North roundabout A2100 and A271, Battle

This page is intentionally left blank

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 March 2024
Title:	Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring as at Quarter 3 - 2023/24
Report of:	Duncan Ellis – Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To note the estimated financial outturn for 2023/24 based on expenditure and income to the end of Quarter 3, 31 December 2023.
Officer Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

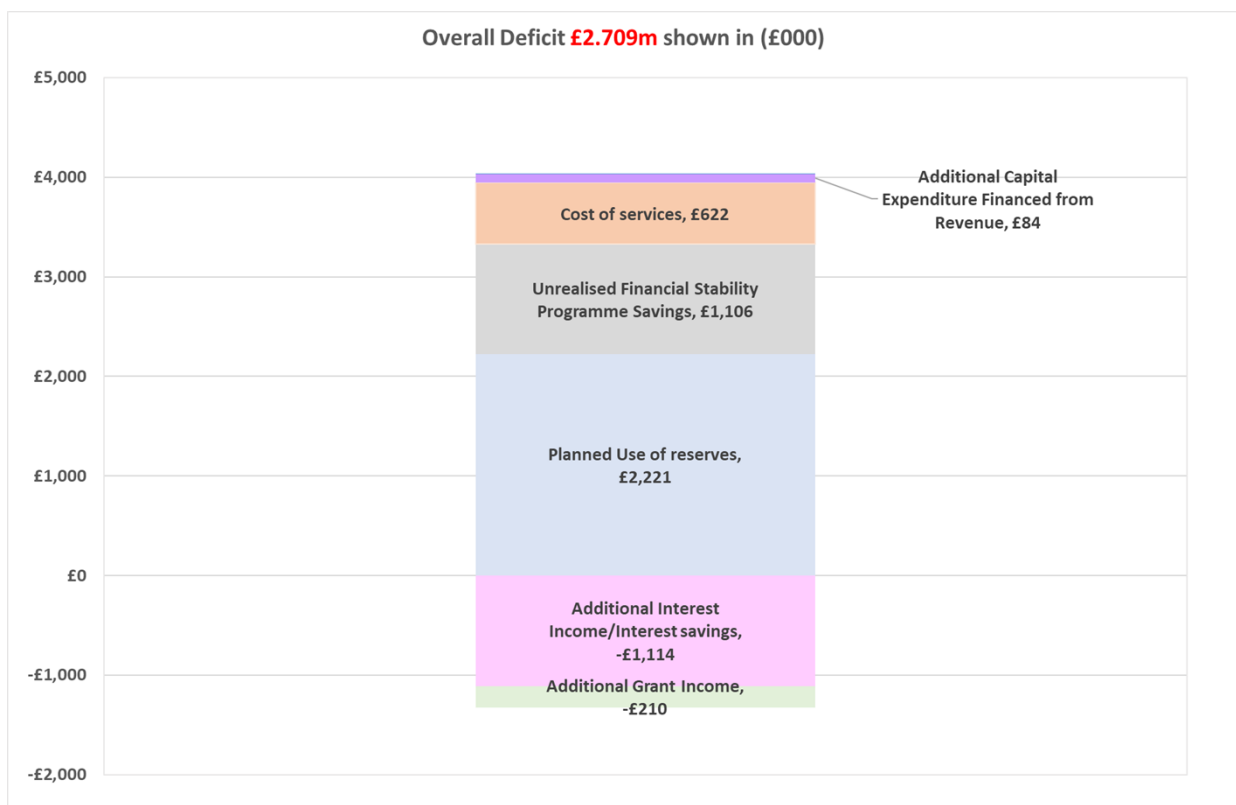
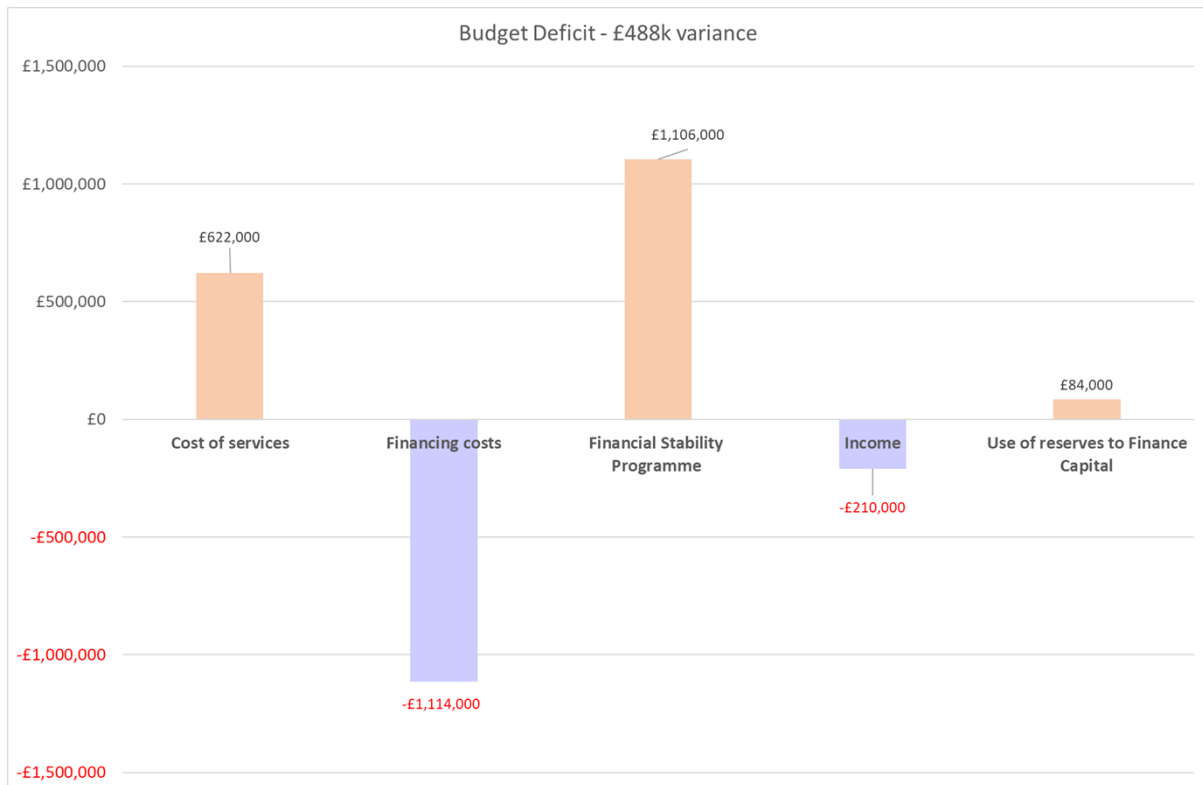
This report, considered by Cabinet on 5 February 2024, has been referred to this Committee for Members' information. The report has been reproduced as submitted to Cabinet.

Introduction

1. This report updates Members on the Council's financial position as at the 31 December 2023 and forecasts a provisional outturn for 2023/24. The Revenue Budget and Capital Programme statements are summarised in Appendices A and B respectively. The impact of the forecast on the Council's Reserves is summarised in Appendix C. The report also includes a brief update on the Collection Fund performance.
2. The presentation of the Revenue Budget reflects the revised management reporting structure.
3. A virement has been applied to the Neighbourhood Services budget to reflect the recognition of the Homelessness Prevention Grants (HPG) received, totalling £473,000, in the total cost of services, where previously this was shown in the total income section of the Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement as a non-specific revenue grant.

Overall Position

4. The forecast outturn for the 2023/24 financial year is based on the position as at 31 December 2023 and indicates a forecast deficit position of £2.709m at 31 March 2024, against a budgeted deficit of £2.221m, which is a variance of £488,000. The first graph, below, shows the breakdown of the forecast variance to budget and the second graph shows the breakdown of the overall deficit.



Revenue Budget

- The Revenue Budget forecast as at the 31 December 2023 indicates a deficit of £404,000 against the approved budgeted drawdown from Reserves of £2.045m resulting in a forecast reserve drawdown of £2.449m. The position is detailed in Appendix A and the main variances are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Cost of Services - £622,000 forecast deficit (£920,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). (Detailed below).

Chief Executive – forecast Deficit £539,000 (£569,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2)

6. **Chief Executive** – £167,000 deficit (£160,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). The forecast includes spend in respect of one-off severance and recruitment costs along with agency cover for statutory officer posts to be funded from reserves. This is partly offset by a vacancy saving.

a. Chief Finance Officer – £4,000 deficit (£27,000 deficit at Quarter 2). Audit fees for the year have risen by £53,000, which was agreed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments body (PSAA). There is an underspend of £120,000 in relation to the unfunded element of the corporate pension costs which is funding agency expenditure of £53,000 to cover interim appointments in key posts. An amount of £7,000 of additional expenditure on computer software has also been incurred.

b. Democratic Services and Elections – £327,000 deficit (£345,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). The movement from the previous quarter relates mainly to a reduction in the forecast of the final costs for the local elections in May 2023.

c. Human Resources – £40,000 forecast deficit (£36,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). £10,000 of the deficit relates to unrealised anticipated savings on National Non-Domestic Rates for the Town Hall and £27,000 on premises related costs, in addition, £10,000 of rental income will not be realised. Net unrealised staff turnover £6,000 contribute further to the deficit. A saving of £3,000 on the cost of postages offsets part of the deficit.

Deputy Chief Executive – forecast Surplus (£124,000) [(£9,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]

7. **Deputy Chief Executive** – (£18,000) forecast surplus [(£8,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. This is made up of additional income.

a. Environmental Services, Licencing and Community Safety – (£25,000) forecast surplus [(£8,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. The surplus is due to additional income from fixed penalty notices offset by a small reduction in food export certificate income (net additional income of £45,000). In addition to unrealised salary turnover savings of £21,000, backdated payments totalling £24,000 were made to officers in respect of car allowances. Receipts from the repayment of Disabled Facilities Grants totalled £21,000 and may be used to offset capital costs incurred in prior years.

b. Revenues and Benefits – (£130,000) forecast surplus [(£62,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. The surplus is due to an estimated net underspend on staff costs of (£60,000) in respect of vacancies, offset by backdated car allowances, recharged administration costs (a £36,000 saving) and an increase of £100,000 on housing benefit overpayment recoveries. In addition, increased IT costs are £46,000, a proportion of which was covered by New Burdens funding (£12,000) which shows in other income. Increased departmental administration and subsidy claim testing costs are £20,000.

c. Internal Audit – (£3,000) surplus (no forecast surplus/deficit at Quarter 2).

d. Digital and Customer Services – £27,000 forecast deficit [(£15,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. Net salary cost increases total £58,000 which includes the cost of agency cover for vacancies, the vacancy savings target built into the budget and a provision for elements of service redesign. Unbudgeted systems inflation costs of £5,000 will be incurred. Overall cost pressures have been offset also by surplus income of (£13,000) from printing services and the receipt of a grant of (£6,000) in relation to E-Government, for the Council achieving the gold standard. Other net savings total £13,000.

e. Corporate Programme and Improvement – £22,000 forecast deficit (£21,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). This is due to additional staffing costs.

f. Corporate Policy and Projects – £3,000 forecast deficit (£63,000 forecast deficit at quarter 2). The deficit is due to additional staffing costs.

Director – Place and Climate Change – forecast Deficit £207,000 (£360,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2)

8. **Director - Place and Climate Change** – £2,000 forecast deficit (unchanged from Quarter 2). The deficit relates to additional costs of attendance at conferences.

a. Planning Development Management - £68,000 forecast deficit (£123,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). The deficit is due to £140,000 of staff-relating costs, which are net of salary savings, the costs of agency staff and unrealised staff turnover savings. There is a forecast £17,000 of additional systems costs and planning appeal costs awarded against the Council of £22,000 as well as additional expenditure of £9,000 on planning advice from East Sussex County Council (ESCC). On the fees and charges side, cost pressures have been partially offset by unbudgeted surplus income of (£145,000) from planning performance agreements and planning applications but are reduced by a forecast deficit of £19,000 on land charges income. A Planning Skills Delivery Grant of £100,000 from Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), designed to be spent on processing backlogs in planning applications, will be spent on a combination of two, 1-year fixed term, posts (£60,000), and the balance will be used to offset some of the external agency costs incurred during the current financial year to deal with the backlog.

b. Planning Policy – £56,000 forecast deficit (£35,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). Additional net staffing costs of £61,000 are forecast, comprising of net additional staffing costs and unrealised staff turnover savings. It is proposed that the anticipated grant of (£27,000) in respect of biodiversity net gains in conservation and preservation, is utilised on the recruitment of a temporary post of Ecology Officer. Additional Community Infrastructure Levy income of £10,000 and Section 106 monitoring fees of £16,000 will reduce the overall deficit.

c. Neighbourhood Services – (£233,000) forecast surplus [(£205,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. The surplus is made up of a number of elements where savings have been made or income is expected to exceed the budget: savings on the Grounds Maintenance Contract (£100,000), unbudgeted car park income (£230,000), additional waste collection income and additional

savings on core waste contract due to new pricing starting in Quarter 2 (£212,000) and other net savings on repairs and maintenance (£23,000). These savings and income increases are offset by additional costs of car park resurfacing works of £55,000, unrealised anticipated savings from devolvement of public conveniences to parishes of £145,000, an outstanding shortfall on recycling property numbers of £50,000, £18,000 of costs relating to new air pumps at Bexhill Leisure Centre, a loss of £13,000 on cemetery fees income and unbudgeted health and safety electrical works of £22,000 and expenditure of £10,000 on a new mains motor in museums. There is also forecast a net overspend of £19,000 on unrealised budgeted staff turnover savings and backdated car allowance payments offset by a reduction in seasonal staffing costs, due to adverse summer weather.

d. Climate Change Strategy – £1,000 forecast deficit (unchanged from Quarter 2). The deficit is due to additional training costs.

e. Housing – £249,000 forecast deficit (£433,000 forecast deficit at Quarter 2). The deficit is primarily due to estimated costs of temporary accommodation amounting to £608,000 reduced by through net rental income receivable in respect of the properties purchased to help reduce the deficit (£52,000) and applying additional Homelessness Prevention Grant of (£132,000). The deficit has also been offset by funding in respect of the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grants (£142,000). Forecast savings on the UKRS and the ARAP schemes for resettlement are forecast to be in the region of (£58,000), and any surpluses at the year-end will be transferred to earmarked reserves. Other net costs are £25,000, some of which will be covered from reserves.

f. Regeneration – £64,000 deficit [(£29,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]. The forecast deficit is due to consultancy engaged in Quarter 3 to review the viability of capital schemes in the light of high borrowing costs and other inflationary pressures: the cost of £91,000 will be met from revenue spend to save (Medium Term Financial Strategy [MTFS]) reserves at the year-end. A further initiative, again funded from revenue reserves, relates to the employment of an electrician to undertake minor works across the district, at a cost in 2023/24 of £43,000, which includes transport and equipment costs. Other net property-related costs, including condition surveys (including RAAC concrete), staffing and unrealised vacancy savings, total £24,000. These cost pressures are partly offset by net unbudgeted rental income (£92,000).

Net Financing Costs – forecast Surplus (£1,114,000) [(£1,110,000) forecast surplus at Quarter 2]

9. As reported in previous quarterly monitoring reports, the budget was calculated on the assumption that the pace of the Council's Capital Programme would accelerate significantly after the pandemic. However, due to the significant increase in borrowing rates over the last year, the Capital Programme is being fundamentally reviewed to ensure that each scheme can still deliver the anticipated outcomes and remain affordable to the Council. As a result of this pause, the anticipated borrowing has not been required. Consequently, interest due to be paid is lower than expected by (£471,000). This is partially offset by the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which is forecast to be £291,000 higher than anticipated. Members should note that financing costs will be subject to a detailed review as part of assessing the affordability of the Capital Programme.

The review will be crucial in determining future programme deliverability, particularly in view of historically high inflation and high interest rates.

10. Interest income from investments is expected to yield an additional (£734,000), of which (£534,000) is in respect of an increased focus on treasury management activity and higher interest rates since the budget was calculated and (£200,000) due in interest on loans to the housing company.
11. The budgeted contingency is shown as a surplus for the purposes of the report.

Financial Stability Programme (FSP) – forecast Deficit £1,106,000 (£906k forecast deficit at Quarter 2)

12. Several small savings are being forecast by the end of the financial year, currently driven mainly by Neighbourhood Services and IT. However, more savings to the end of the year are not expected to be achieved in the current financial year. The MTFs removed the current FSP and replaced it with a new 'Fit for the Future' financial resilience programme, which is designed to close the budget gap over the medium-term period through making efficiencies, savings and increasing income to help support frontline services. The forecast deficit has increased by £200,000 since the previous quarterly report as these savings are being made in the services directly and not in this part of the statement.

Income – forecast Surplus (£210,000)

13. Since the budget was approved, the Council have received several small, unbudgeted, grants from the DLUHC, mainly in respect of New Burdens Grants and additional Section 31 Grants.

Capital Programme

14. The Capital Programme comprises a range of strategic projects that span more than one year and many operate for several years or have recurrent investments. Projects that have not spent all their allocation in the year of inception have the remaining funding carried forward into future financial years, profiled based on the anticipated expenditure for the project. The Interim Section 151 Officer is continuing to work with Heads of Service and elected Members to undertake a fundamental review of capital schemes which currently amount to more than £157m. The table below shows the profiling of the capital programme at 31 December 2023:

	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Capital Expenditure	28,514	68,699	23,553	8,694	28,183	157,643
Funded by:						
Capital Receipts	2,100	60	50	0	0	2,210
Grants & contributions	10,476	7,209	14,927	7,589	1,625	41,826
CIL	513	1,484	1,321	850	0	4,168
Borrowing	8,997	20,699	125	125	125	30,071
Capital Expenditure Charged to Revenue	1,229	247	130	130	130	1,866
Borrowing & Loan for RDC Housing Company Ltd	5,000	39,000	7,000	0	26,303	77,303

	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Section 106	200	0	0	0	0	200
Total	28,514	68,699	23,553	8,694	28,183	157,643

15. The revised 2023/24 budgets (see Appendix B) have been derived from reviewing the project cashflows and assessing the expected position at this time. Up to £20.1m is forecast to be spent in this financial year. During Quarter 3 the following budget increases/decreases were applied to the Capital Programme:

Scheme	Increase £ (000)	(Decrease) £ (000)	Revised overall budget £ (000)	Reason for change
Camber Welcome Centre		(69)	943	Reallocation of funds in respect of a Changing Places Toilets (CPT) grant to Egerton Park CPT.
Pebsham Toilets		(54)	0	As above.
Egerton Park Changing Places Toilet (CPT)	123		123	As above.
Planning Software (Invest to Save)	359		359	The implementation of new planning software, to be funded from the current capital budget for Invest to Save initiatives.
Invest to Save Initiatives		(359)	346	As above, to fund the costs of a specific Invest to Save initiative.
Air Quality (Pollution) Monitor	29		29	Purchase of an air pollution monitor, funded from a DEFRA grant.
Micro Woods Community Grants	27		27	
Community Orchards Community Grants	49		49	
Total Scheme increases/(decreases)	587	(482)		
Funding				
Grants and contributions	228	(123)		
Capital Expenditure Charged to Revenue	0	0		
Borrowing	359	(359)		
Capital Receipts	0	0		
Total Funding increases/(decreases)	587	(482)		

Additions to the Capital Programme

16. The Mount View Street Development scheme was completed in 2020/21. At that time the scheme was completed no accruals were made for outstanding expenditure. Subsequently, in 2023, a payment was made in respect of

valuation work, at a cost of £42,500. To enable this to be financed, it is requested that Council approves the reinstatement of this scheme to the capital programme and the additional budget of £42,500, to be funded from borrowing (as per the original programme item).

Capital Programme - Forecast outturn 2023/24

17. The table at Appendix B notes a Revised Budget for the year of £28.5m. The forecast outturn for the year at Quarter 2 is £20.1m, a variance of (£8.3m) or 29% of the programme. Most of this forecast underspend is attributable to schemes which have progressed more slowly than expected or have been paused pending review, with only a small amount of savings forecast on schemes which have been completed. An updated Capital Programme for 2023/24 and the remainder of the MTFS period will be considered by Council in February. Forecast variances over £50,000 are shown in the table below:

Scheme	2023/24 capital programme budget £ (000)	2023/24 forecast outturn £ (000)	2023/24 forecast variance £ (000)	Commentary
Corporate Document Image Processing System	87	1	(86)	When staffing resources allow, areas such as housing, planning and the estate will be progressed.
Rother Transformation ICT Investment	117	40	(77)	This scheme is mainly for the movement of the data centre. There is a requirement for additional hardware, which is not expected to be purchased until 2024/25.
Community Grants	260	130	(130)	The budget was increased by £130k in the 2022/23 outturn. There is a long lead time between a scheme being approved and works carried out. It is anticipated that £130k will be granted in the current financial year, with other approved grants likely to be advanced in 2024/25.
Rural England Prosperity Fund	230	110	120	The business grant scheme is being launched in January 2024 and the award of grants is not likely to take place until early in the 2024/25 financial year.
CIL Scheme 1 Village Hall Energy Project	342	142	(200)	There has been no spend to date on this scheme. Village halls have only just been asked to make a bid; they then have three months to bid and six months to complete the works. £100k is forecast for the remainder of the year, but this will be dependent upon the bids received, the time it takes to enter in agreements and when the work takes place (after which funding is advanced).
Beeching Road Hotel and Foodstore Development	104	30	(74)	This scheme is not going to go ahead in its current format, and alternatives are being reviewed by external consultants.
Barnhorn Green GP Surgery and Industrial Development	3,313	528	(2,785)	There has been slower progress than anticipated on this scheme. The scheme now has planning consent and

Scheme	2023/24 capital programme budget £ (000)	2023/24 forecast outturn £ (000)	2023/24 forecast variance £ (000)	Commentary
				has completed RIBA Stage 4. Construction is not expected until the second half of 2024/25.
Blackfriars Housing Development - infrastructure only	5,084	6,148	1,064	Overall scheme budget has been increased to £21,000k. Scheme to be completed in 2024/25 within the revised budget and the spend in 2023/24 is a forward spend on the 2024/25 budget allocation.
RDC Housing Company Ltd Investment (RDC loans)	5,000	2,465	(2,535)	This is the funding from the Council to the RDC Housing Company. Drawdown of funds is only when required.
Development of Council owned sites	213	4	(209)	This is a budget which is held to finance suitable sites, which will have their own scheme.
King Offa Residential Scheme	359	213	(146)	This scheme is largely complete, with some residual works to clear the site, and prepare for possible disposal.
Community Led Housing Schemes - Cemetery Lodge	200	0	(200)	Difficult operating conditions in the residential development sector have impacted on the proposed scheme, which will delay the Council's own costs and transfer of the lodge and development land into 2024/25.
Camber – Old Lydd Road	140	41	(99)	There are some uncertainties about when this site will be disposed of, and the remaining costs in 2023/24 relate mainly to legal fees.
Bexhill Leisure Centre – site development	78	0	(78)	This is linked to the King Offa site and the costs relating to this are under review.
Fairlight Coastal Protection	67	11	(56)	This scheme will be carried out in the spring when conditions are better.
Disabled Facilities Grants	2,006	1,893	(113)	An additional allocation of £161k for 2023/24 has been added to the budget, as notified at the last meeting. Expenditure on grants and payments in respect of occupational therapist advice, as well as a provision for administration costs means that the budget is forecast to be largely spent by the end of the financial year.
Housing – Temporary Accommodation Purchase	6,362	5,824	(538)	This scheme is progressing well, but there is a delay between identifying suitable properties and making and completing the purchase thereof.
Invest to Save Initiatives (Financial Stability Programme)	346	12	(334)	Limited schemes are in progress and will become part of the Fit for the Future initiative in the MTFS from 2024/25.
Planning Software (Invest to Save)	359	0	(359)	The budget moved from the Invest to Save Initiative Scheme will be incurred over the next 18 months. Some costs may be incurred in 2023/24, but most of the costs will be incurred in 2024/25.

Scheme	2023/24 capital programme budget £ (000)	2023/24 forecast outturn £ (000)	2023/24 forecast variance £ (000)	Commentary
Payments to Parishes - CIL	171	85	(86)	The last payments have been made in respect of a CIL-funded scheme at Ticehurst village hall. No other schemes are in the pipeline for this financial year.
Egerton Park Changing Places Toilet (CPT)	123	54	(69)	This is funded through DLUHC's Changing Places Toilets (CPT) scheme. Recent DLUHC approvals have moved funding for this scheme from Camber Sands Welcome Centre and Pebsham Toilets. The scheme is expected to complete in 2024/25.
Camber Sands Welcome Centre	0	211	211	This scheme is progressing and is expected to spend more than its current allocation for the year, with reprofiling of future years' budget required to offset the spend in 2023/24, which has been incurred on design fees.
LUF De La Warr Pavilion Project LUF Grant	2,021	759	1,262	The project has experienced delays in the appointment of external consultant but is expected to be delivered within its overall budget. An application for Heritage Lottery Funding has been made to expand the scope of the scheme and this is awaiting decision.

Impact on Reserves

18. The forecast impact on Reserves is a drawdown of £2.449m for revenue, which is £404,000 higher than the planned use of £2.045m, and £0.260m for capital which is £84,000 higher than the planned use of reserves.

Collection Fund

19. The collection rate as at the 31 December 2023 for the Council Tax part of the Collection Fund was 84.20% of the collectable debit, which is 0.07% higher than the corresponding figure in 2022/23. The budgeted yield is 85.65%, which is 0.47% lower than the same period in 2022/23. Collection performance is shown below:

	2023/2024	Equivalent Period 2022/2023
Collectable Debit	91,688,863.33	86,508,652.81
Income Received	77,198,350.82	72,783,157.27
Income Received as a % of Collectable Debit	84.20%	84.13%
Budgeted Yield (at 98.3% Collection)	90,130,152.65	84513438.24
Income Received as a % of Budgeted Yield	85.65%	86.12%

20. The collection rate as at the 31 December 2023 for the Business Rates part of the Collection Fund was 83.31% of the collectable debit, which is 1.26% lower than the corresponding figure in 2022/23. Collection performance is shown below:

	2023/2024	Equivalent Period 2022/2023
Collectable Debit	16,684,146.49	17537638.14
Income Received	13,899,713.50	14831271.11
Income Received as a % of Collectable Debit	83.31%	84.57%
Amount outstanding for the year	2,784,432.99	2,706,367.03

21. Collection rates have held up well despite the squeeze on finances following the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, although business rates are showing a larger, adverse difference in the income received as a percentage of collectable debt, when compared to last year, which may be an indication that the income target may not be met at the year end. The current economic situation may well lead to a decline in future collection rates, which will have an adverse impact on the income that the Council receives from Council Tax and Business Rates.

Conclusion

22. The forecast outturn on the Revenue Budget at Quarter 3 2023/24 is a deficit of £2.709m, which is £488,000 greater than the approved planned use of Reserves.
23. The Council's Capital Programme has a forecast outturn of £20.1m.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Duncan Ellis
e-mail address:	duncan.ellis@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A Revenue Budget Forecast Appendix B Capital Programme Forecast Appendix C Reserves
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.

REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 FORECAST AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

Line	Rother District Council General Fund Summary	Revised Budget 23/24 Q3 £ (000)	2023/24 Q3 Actual £ (000)	2023/24 Q3 Forecast £ (000)	2023/24 Q3 Variance £ (000)
1	Deputy Chief Executive	331	210	313	(18)
1a	Environmental Services, Licensing & Community Safety	676	587	651	(25)
1b	Revenues & Benefits	1,308	1,953	1,178	(130)
1c	Internal Audit	165	123	162	(3)
1d	Digital & Customer Services	1,899	1,140	1,926	27
1e	Corporate Programme & Improvement	94	80	116	22
1f	Corporate Policy & Projects	354	298	357	3
2	Chief Executive	354	373	521	167
2a	Chief Finance Officer	1,483	1,027	1,487	4
2b	Democratic Services	652	819	979	327
2c	Human Resources Services	512	379	552	40
3	Director Place and Climate Change	115	87	117	2
3a	Planning Development Management	658	484	726	68
3b	Planning Policy	471	567	527	56
3c	Neighbourhood Services	5,942	3,552	5,709	(233)
3d	Climate Change Strategy	120	85	121	1
3e	Housing	2,134	1,317	2,383	249
3f	Regeneration	(863)	(1,138)	(799)	64
4	Total Cost of Services	16,404	11,943	17,026	622
5	Interest from Investments	(586)	(585)	(1,320)	(734)
6	MRP	224	0	515	291
7	Interest payments	1,106	489	635	(471)
8	Budget Contingency	200	0	0	(200)
9	Salaries turnover	0	0	0	0
10	(i) Increase income - Property Investment Strategy				
11	(ii) Increase income (net) - other	(69)	0	0	69
12	(iii) Lean and Demand	(180)	0	0	180
13	(iv) Service Prioritisation	(762)	0	0	762
14	(v) Reduced Staffing Structure	(95)	0	0	95
15	Net Cost of Services	16,242	11,848	16,856	614
16	Income Special Expenses	(751)		(751)	0
17	Net Business Rates and Section 31 Grants	(4,699)		(4,849)	(150)
18	Non-specific Revenue Grants	(1,097)		(1,157)	(60)
19	Council Tax Requirement (Rother only)	(7,650)		(7,650)	0
20	Total Income	(14,197)		(14,407)	(210)
21	Total revenue budget Surplus (-)/ Deficit (+)	2,045		2,449	404
22	Contribution from revenue to capital expenditure	176		260	84
23	Funding gap/(Surplus) - Amounts to be drawn from reserves (+) or Amounts to be contributed to reserves (-) to balance the budget	2,221		2,709	488

Impact on Reserves

24	Opening Balance	12,828		12,828	0
	less reserves movement in year:				
25	Reserves funding for revenue purposes	(2,045)		(2,449)	404
26	Reserves funding for capital purposes	(176)		(260)	84
27	Total Reserves Funding in year	(2,221)		(2,709)	488
28	Closing Balance	10,607		10,119	488

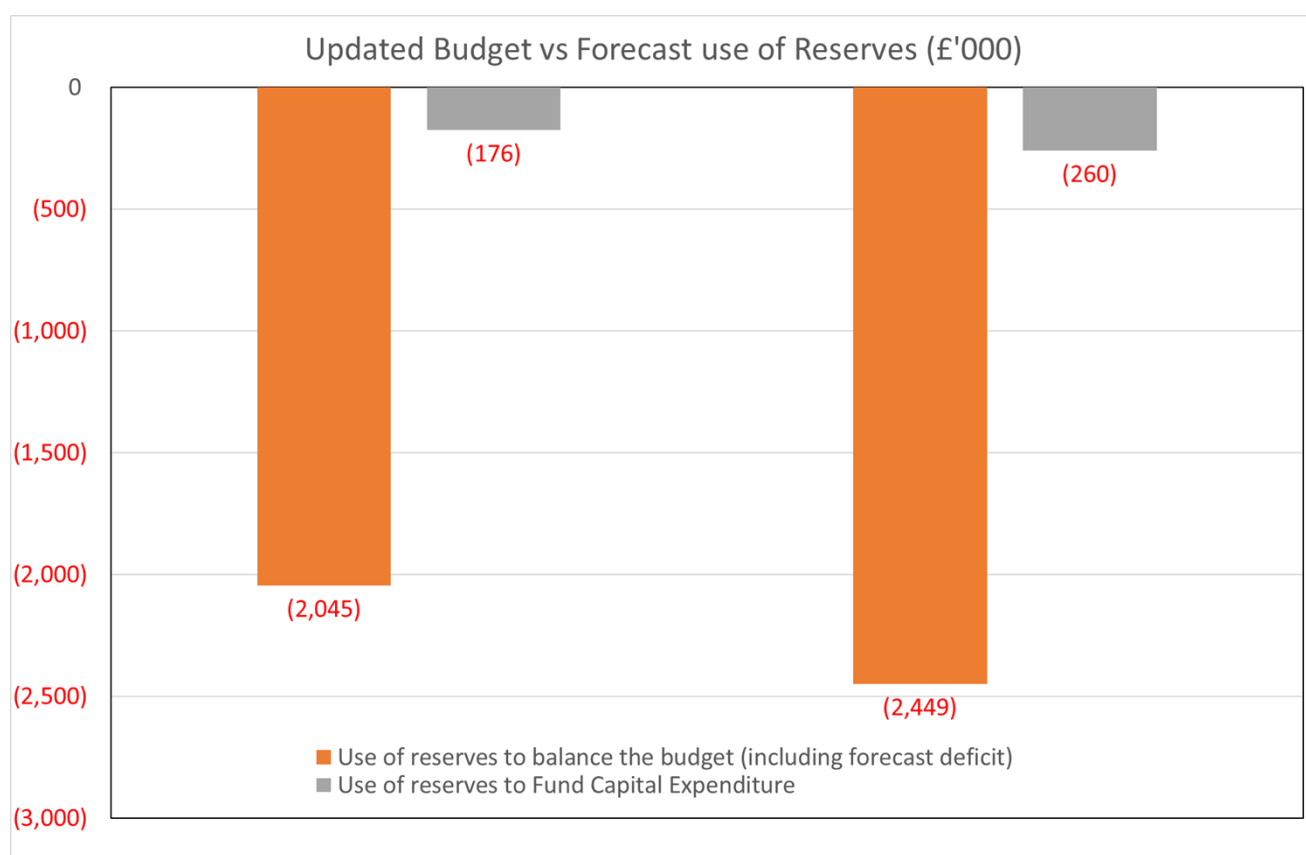
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 FORECAST AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023/24 Budget Updated	2023/24 Q3 Actual	2023/24 Q3 Variance	2023/24 Q3 Forecast Outturn	2023/24 Q3 Forecast Outturn Variance
	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)	£ (000)
Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration					
Other Schemes					
Corporate Document Image Processing System	87	1	(86)	1	(86)
Rother Transformation ICT Investment	117	0	(117)	40	(77)
Community Grants	260	39	(221)	130	(130)
Development of Town Hall Bexhill	0	2	3	0	1
Rural England Prosperity Fund	230	10	(220)	110	(120)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	33	33	(1)	33	(1)
CIL Scheme 1 Village Hall Energy Project	342	42	(300)	142	(200)
Property Investment Strategy					
Beeching Road Hotel and Foodstore Development	104	26	(78)	30	(74)
PIS - Beeching Park Estate	428	428	(0)	435	7
PIS - Beeching Road 18-40 (Creative Workspace)	0	7	7	(0)	(0)
Barnhorn Green GP Surgery and Industrial Development	3,313	328	(2,985)	528	(2,785)
Housing Development Schemes					
Blackfriars Housing Development - infrastructure only	5,084	3,948	(1,136)	6,148	1,064
RDC Housing Company Ltd Investment (RDC loans)	5,000	1,890	(3,110)	2,465	(2,535)
Development of council owned sites	213	4	(209)	4	(209)
King Offa Residential scheme	359	151	(208)	213	(146)
Mount View Street Development - Housing	0	43	42	42	42
Community Led Housing Schemes - Cemetery Lodge	200	0	(200)	0	(200)
Camber, Old Lydd Road	140	5	(135)	41	(99)
Housing and Community Services					
De La Warr Pavilion - Capital Grant	56	59	3	59	3
Bexhill Leisure Centre - site development	78	0	(78)	0	(78)
Fairlight Coastal Protection	67	0	(67)	11	(56)
Disabled Facilities Grant	2,006	1,299	(707)	1,893	(113)
Sidley Sports and Recreation	0	-8	(8)	0	0
New bins	135	87	(48)	157	22
Bexhill Promenade - Protective Barriers	0	0	(0)	0	(0)
Housing - Temporary Accommodation Purchase	6,362	4,414	(1,948)	5,824	(538)
Bexhill Promenade - Outfall pipe	191	0	(191)	191	(0)
Bexhill Leisure Centre - refurbishment	30	17	(14)	17	(14)
Micro Woods Community Grants	27	0	(27)	0	(27)
Community Orchards Grants	49	0	(49)	0	(49)
Capital - Sidley House Open Space Improvements - Parks LUF	71	56	(16)	72	0
Egerton Park CPT	123	0	(123)	54	(69)
Camber Sands Welcome Centre	0	133	133	211	211
LTA Tennis Court Refurbishment - Egerton Park	105	5	(100)	105	(0)
Strategy & Planning					
Payments to Parishes - CIL	171	85	(86)	85	(86)
Resources					
New website development	8	2	(6)	8	(0)
Invest To Save initiatives (Financial Stability Prog)	346	12	(334)	12	(334)
Planning Software (Invest To Save)	359	0	(359)	0	(359)
LUF De La Warr Pavilion Project LUF Grant	2,021	213	(1,808)	759	(1,262)
Capital - LUF Programme	0	0	0	0	0
LUF Heart of Sidley Programme	271	39	(232)	242	(29)
Air Quality (Pollution) Monitor	29	0	(29)	0	(29)
Boiler replacements at admin buildings	95	80	(15)	80	(15)
Total Capital Programme	28,514	13,451	(15,063)	20,143	(8,371)
		47%		71%	29%
Funded By:					
Capital Receipts	2,100				
Grants and contributions	10,476				
CIL	513				
Borrowing	8,997				
Capital Expenditure Charged to Revenue	1,229				
Borrowing and Loan for Rother DC Housing Company Ltd	5,000				
Section 106	200				
Total Funding	28,514				

RESERVES

Reserves forecast	2023/24 Updated Budget	Q3 Forecast	Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Opening Balance	12,828	12,828*	0
Use of reserves to balance the budget (including forecast deficit)	(2,045)	(2,449)	(404)
Use of reserves to Fund Capital Expenditure	(176)	(260)	(84)
Forecast balance	10,607	10,119*	(488)

*As per draft 2022/23 Outturn (of which £3.7m relates to the Grants Reserve and £1m to the NNDR Volatility reserve)



Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny
Date:	18 March 2024
Title:	Grounds Maintenance Contract – Specification
Report of:	Deborah Kenneally, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To review the draft contract specification for the new grounds maintenance contract.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to review the draft contract specification as per Appendix 2 and subject to no suggested amendments, officers be authorised to commence the tender process without further recourse to Cabinet.

Cabinet had considered this report at their meeting on 4 March 2024. The report and recommendation arising are reproduced below and the Minutes of that meeting (Appendix 3) should be read in conjunction with this report.

Introduction

1. The Grounds Maintenance (GM) contract with Idverde commenced on 1 December 2012 for 10 years and was subsequently extended for a further two years and, as the contract does not allow for a further extension, will expire on 30 November 2024.
2. The current contract includes all aspects of GM including litter picking and bin emptying, maintaining play areas, parks, open spaces, and water courses (including Egerton Park Lake), and Bexhill and Rye cemeteries.
3. The maintenance of trees is not included in the GM contract and is generally managed under a separate call-off contract with Elite Arborists or other qualified contractors as appropriate.
4. The Idverde contract is performance based and consists of 'routine work' which forms part of the contractually agreed costs, and 'non-routine work' which is often awarded to Idverde but can be awarded to another suitably qualified contractor outside of the Idverde contract.
5. 'Routine work' accounts for planned work and includes items such as play area inspections, litter picking, bin emptying; maintenance in parks (such as Egerton Park and Manor Barn Gardens), seafront gardens (such as West and East Parade in Bexhill) and rural open spaces; maintenance of cemeteries; grass cutting and hedge cutting; sports pitches and fine turf.

6. 'Non-routine work' accounts for responsive works which includes items such as grave-digging, play area repairs, health and safety work, ad hoc resident / Councillor requests, water courses, fencing/boundary work, vandalism, travellers.
7. Excluding smaller items such as car parks, churchyards and toilets, the GM contract budget for 2023/2024 'routine work' is approximately £860k (including cemeteries) and 'non-routine' is approximately £138k.
8. The maintenance of public grounds, including parks, open spaces and sports pitches is not a statutory duty for the Council and so qualifies as a discretionary service that can be withdrawn or reduced if necessary. The Council has a budget deficit of some £3.8 million in 2024/2025 and is seeking to make savings where possible across the Council to reduce this funding gap, and specifically to achieve savings in the GM contract.
9. Within the Idverde contract year (1 December to 30 November), savings of £100k from July 2023 until 31 March 2024 have already been achieved through changing various activities such as additional reductions in bedding and planting. These changes will continue to realise savings of circa £50k until the contract ends on 30 November 2024, achieving a total contract saving of circa £150K from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024.
10. Further savings will be made from December 2024 until 31 March 2025 with the introduction of the new contract. This brings the overall budget for the contract for 2024/2025, excluding smaller items such as car parks, churchyards and toilets, to approximately £526k for 'routine work' and approximately £122k for 'non-routine' work.
11. It should be noted that the two cemeteries Bexhill and Rye generate income through charges for burials, internments, donated seats and trees and memorials. The operation of these sites is self-financing as the charges are set at a level to cover the operational costs, including the maintenance of the grounds. Therefore, other than a few minor tweaks already completed, these sites will not experience reductions in GM going forwards.

New grounds maintenance contract

12. Due to the aforementioned budget funding gap of circa £3.8 million, officers have set a budget for the new GM contract of £250k per annum for 'routine work', excluding cemeteries.
13. The maintenance of sports grounds/pitches, including bowling greens, are one of the most expensive aspects of the 'routine works' and it is therefore desirable for their maintenance to be completed by the clubs. Officers are working with the sports clubs that use RDC grounds to agree leases and/or licences to handover the GM of sports pitches to the clubs. Individual meetings have been held with all the clubs and ongoing discussions have been largely positive to date.
14. As it will take time for leases to be completed, and some facilities cannot be leased on account of not having a permanent physical boundary, it has been agreed with the Council's legal representative that in the short term licences will be progressed for the football and cricket pitches, and leases for the bowls

greens, thereby ensuring that handover can take place before a new contract starts on 1 December 2024.

15. The clubs have been informed that if a lease/licence is not in place from the 1 December 2024 the grounds will become unfit as sports facilities and the grounds will be included in the new contract as having a basic grass cut for use as a recreation ground (with the exception of bowls greens that will have an occasional cut).
16. Limited capital funding may be available to support clubs in purchasing basic GM equipment, including lawn mowers if required, or to make other improvements such as storage provision.
17. Due to the nature of 'non-routine' works it is felt the budget for this work needs to be protected and so will remain at the current level of approximately £122k per annum, and as previously mentioned, the cemeteries fees and charges covers their GM costs and so this budget will remain at circa £120k per annum, both allowing for inflation.
18. When added together the total budget for 'routine works', 'non- routine' works and cemeteries totals £492k per annum (plus annual inflation) - a substantial saving when compared to the budget of £902,950 in 2022/2023 and £995,380 in 2023/2024. However, as the new contract will not commence until December 2024 most of the savings achieved will be delivered in the 2025/2026 financial year. It should be noted that these are the direct contract costs and do not include costs for items such as officer time, management supervision and back-office support.
19. It is proposed the new contract specification for 'routine works' would not be based on performance but rather frequency of service and numbers of contract staff allocated certain jobs to keep costs down. For example, instead of maintaining grass to an agreed height the grass would be cut fortnightly or once a month depending on the location and time of year.

Soft market test (SMT)

20. In order to understand the market appetite for the new contract and what GM services could be provided within the £250k 'routine works' budget, officers have worked with the East Sussex Procurement Hub to complete a 'soft market test' (SMT), inviting GM contractors to give us an indication of what basic services they can provide and to inform the Council's decisions going forwards.
21. A copy of the SMT and accompanying specifications can be seen at Appendices 1, 1A, 1B and 1C. These include GM specifications for routine work and both cemeteries, details of possible storage facilities and indication of task sizes.
22. The SMT was open for expressions of interest between 12 and 31 January 2024. There were 20 views of the SMT and several written responses were received.
23. The SMT returns provided useful information for consideration when drafting the final documents for the live tender due to go on the procurement hubs' portal in April 2024 and feedback included the following:

- The ideal contract length to be for as long as possible to train and develop workforce.
 - Feedback indicates it would be most advantageous to offer 5 years with an option to extend for a further three years, then two years and finally one year.
 - Recruitment and staff retention could be challenging in the current climate.
 - Due to volatility in prices, contractors would wish an annual contract indexation linked to CPI.
 - Sufficient time should be allowed for the procurement of equipment and vehicles of at least 3 months.
 - The service delivered could cover priority tasks within the £250k such as play area inspections, litter picking and emptying of litter bins, grass cutting, Egerton Park and Bexhill seafront but at a lower frequency and reduced number of staff. The appearance of the sites would therefore suffer and may lead to complaints.
 - Depot space may be required at an additional contract cost.
 - There would be limited investment in carbon neutral initiatives due to the budget requirements.
24. It is proposed that the new contract is procured for five years, with the ability to extend for a further three years, then two years and finally one year, therefore ten years in total. Ideally the contract will allow for as much flexibility as possible for future devolvement of GM to Parish and Town Councils and changes to the annual budget.
25. Officers will seek to procure a contract that will complete as many critical services as possible such as, and in order of descending priority, play area inspections, emptying of litter bins, litter picking, grass cutting to a basic length and hopefully maintaining high visitor use at sites such as Egerton Park, Bexhill seafront, and planted areas. Cemeteries will continue to be maintained to their current specifications and ad hoc work will continue as necessary.
26. It should be noted that the changes residents will inevitably experience in the GM may generate negative feedback to the Council when implemented. This has been partly addressed by the recent budget consultation and officers will endeavour to mitigate this further through advanced communications to residents nearer the time of implementation when officers are clearer on the impact.

Options considered

27. Bringing aspects of the maintenance in house has been considered and could compliment work that is contracted out by using the RDC maintenance team for certain tasks not able to be covered in the £250k. However, the maintenance teams' resources are limited, and equipment would need to be purchased and training provided.
28. At the present time there is no business plan, capital investment or revenue budgeted to bring the whole service in house. When considering the potential of bringing the whole service in-house in the future, consideration should be given to what is currently achieved through using external contractors who benefit from economies of scale and spreading fixed costs and equipment across contracts. The Council would need to consider costs to transfer staff across to local authority pay scales and pension scheme under the Transfer of

Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE). When a service is operating to a set fixed cost, as in this case, it is arguably more cost effective to outsource the basic service until such times as officers can investigate further what future aspirations are for grounds maintenance and what part the parish and town councils might play in providing this service.

29. Consideration has been given to what future role RDC Parks Officers can play e.g. completing in-house play area inspections. Training would be required to meet the stringent health and safety regulations and insurance requirements for this work. Depending on a review of the frequency of inspections, this work would probably require one Full Time Equivalent staff resource to complete inspections to the required standard for approximately 30 sites across the district.
30. The size of the budget deficit dictates that savings are required in the very near term and there is little evidence to suggest that savings would be made quickly, if at all, by bringing the contract in-house at this time.
31. There may be potential in the future for seeking synergies with partner authorities who have brought their GM in-house.
32. The timeline for the procurement of a new GM contract is as follows:
 - Confirm final specification February 2024
 - Obtain Cabinet approval 4 March 2024
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee 18 March 2024
 - Issue tender April 2024
 - Evaluations of tender submissions June 2024
 - Intention to award contract letter sent July 2024
 - 10 day standstill period
 - Contract award August 2024
 - Contract mobilisation 1 September 2024
 - New contract start date 1 December 2024

Conclusion

33. Although it is not a statutory requirement to maintain grounds, aspects of the service, such as our parks, play areas and seafront are important to maintain for the enjoyment and health and wellbeing of our residents, and in attracting visitors and supporting local businesses. In addition, if the play areas are to remain safe and accessible for children and young people, and our cemeteries are to continue in their current condition, it is important that a suitably qualified contractor is appointed to deliver this service.
34. It should be noted that residents will notice a significant change to much of the district's parks, grounds, and open spaces. Communication in advance to residents to explain the coming changes and reasons why will be critical to engender understanding and reduce complaints.

Financial Implications

35. The council has a £3.8 million budget gap and GM is a non-statutory service that can be reduced to a more affordable level.

36. The new GM contract will support the Council's requirement to reduce the budget deficit whilst providing a basic service in priority tasks.
37. When added together the total budget for 'routine works', 'non-routine' works and cemeteries totals £492k per annum (plus annual inflation)- a substantial saving when compared to the budget of £902,950 in 2022/2023 and £995,380 in 2023/2024. However, as the new contract will not commence until December 2024 most of the savings achieved will be delivered in the 2025/2026 financial year. It should be noted that that these are the direct contract costs and do not include costs for items such as officer time, management supervision and back-office support.

Legal Implications

38. The Council's legal services, provided by Wealden District Council will be required to provide appropriate terms and conditions for the new GM contract.

Risk Management

39. Reputational: The new GM service provision will mean that areas of the district will not appear as well-kept and this may generate complaints from residents and visitors as well as potentially impacting negatively upon tourism and businesses. This may generate an increase in complaints to the Council.
40. Savings may not be achieved if the non-routine budget becomes overspent due to ad hoc health/safety and vandalism works.
41. There is a risk that due to the nature of the proposed new contract the Council will not receive any tenders and so be unable to appoint a contractor. In this situation the incumbent contractor would be approached to extend their services until an alternative service delivery is identified.

Human Resources Implications

42. TUPE requirements will need to be considered between the outgoing and incoming contractor.

Environmental

43. Areas of parks and open spaces that are less well tended will impact the environment, sometimes for the better by increasing biodiversity and other times for the worse with the potential for increasing vermin. Reducing GM can have benefits for biodiversity including increased plant and wildlife species. Reducing the use of machinery will also reduce emissions as less fuel will be used. Long grass can however act as a litter and dog fouling trap, the clearance of which can be more costly and time-consuming.

Communications

44. Clear and advanced communication of the changes to Parish and Town Councils, Councillors and the districts' residents will go some way to engendering understanding and reducing complaints. Officers will seek to use appropriate methods of communication including MyAlerts and social media to manage residents' expectations.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	Yes/No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes/No
Crime and Disorder	Yes/No	External Consultation	Yes/No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	Yes/No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	Yes/No

Chief Executive:	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Deborah Kenneally – Head of Neighbourhood Services
e-mail address:	Deborah.kenneally@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Soft Market Testing Appendix 1A – Cemeteries Specification Appendix 1B – GM Available Premises Appendix 1C – GM Task Totals Appendix 2 – Draft Specification
Relevant Previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.

Appendices 1, 1B and 1C can be found at the following link: [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday 4th March 2024, 6.30 pm - Rother District Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

Rother Cemeteries Specification

The greatest care must be taken in the appointment of staff, any of whom may, by conduct or demeanour, detract from the atmosphere of reverence which is appropriate to the site.

All staff employed in the operation must be suitably aware of the sensitive nature of the cemetery. The Contractor is to impress upon their staff the need to act, dress and behave in a respectful manner on all occasions, having regard to the function of the Cemetery and to be particularly respectful of the feelings of the mourners and people visiting the Cemetery.

It may be necessary, prior to and during interments, for the Contractor to cease working within the vicinity so as not to be a source of distraction or to cause inconvenience or annoyance to the mourners.

The Contractor shall undertake all work within the Cemeteries as per specification, in addition of staff following the code of practice and legislation as appropriate: "The Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration Code of Safe Working Practices for Cemeteries".

Members of the grave digging team must have undertaken a Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (COTS) or hold an equivalent NVQ.

Grass Maintenance - Summary

Grass Cutting Machines:

- Must be of an appropriate type to achieve the specified standard of maintenance.
- Be correctly adjusted to give a clean cut without damaging the grass and of a type that will minimise damage or compaction to the grass surface.

Each Cut:

- Move all movable items, i.e. litter baskets, seats and replace after cutting to the original or suitable alternative position to permit grass re-growth or repair.
- Ensure that all litter collection including dog excrement has taken place prior to mowing; (under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act, dog faeces are included for removal).
- Allow for strimming around obstacles, but avoid causing bare patches or damage to plants.

Ornamental Grass:

- Cut to a height of 12mm and remove arisings using a cylinder mower with a minimum of 80 cuts per metre, or an approved rotary mower with collection facility, to remove stalks.
- The height of growth must not exceed 25mm throughout the year.
- Leaf Clearance.
- Rake off and remove all leaves and debris from grass monthly from mid-October to January.
- Deliver all arisings to composting site(s) or to tip at contractor's expense.

High Amenity Grass:

- Cut to a height of 25mm and leave arisings.
- The height of growth must not exceed 50mm.
- Where hard standing areas i.e. paths/steps adjoin grass areas, arisings are to be blown back onto grass areas by means of mechanical blowers.
- Ensure all adjoining hard areas are free from arisings before leaving site.
- Clear all leaves and debris from grass at a frequency that prevents any damage to the sward.
- Deliver all arisings to composting site(s) or to tip at contractor's expense.
- Strim edges around wall/fence bases and obstacles throughout the growing season.
- All obstacles to be maintained to a maximum height of 50mm.
- All semi-mature or newly planted trees shall be trimmed by non-erosive methods.

Amenity Grass:

- Cut to a height of 50mm throughout the growing season and leave arisings.
- The height of growth must not exceed 100mm.

- Height of cut on areas may be varied by the Contract Officer, subsequently maintain these areas to the specified height throughout the year.
- Trim edges around wall/fence bases and obstacles throughout the growing season.

Environmental Areas:

- A few environmental areas exist, identified for their ecological interest, and as such have important, specific maintenance requirements in promoting biodiversity.
- Some areas in this category simply act as a green corridor on or between green space.
- Where any wildflowers are noted on site, the Contractor is to notify the Contract Officer.

EA1

- Cut once each year in early September to a height of 75mm and leave cuttings.

EA2

- Cut twice a year, the first cut being undertaken during the second two weeks of April and the second cut at the end of August to a height of between 75mm and leave cuttings.

Hedge maintenance:

- Trim once per year in October.
- Trim carefully and neatly under normal maintenance to regular line and shape.
- Maintain existing dimensions and form unless otherwise instructed by the Contract Officer.
- Remove current growth rather than old wood.
- All hedges must be inspected for nesting birds prior to cutting. The typical bird nesting season is March – August. Any hedges found with nests either in use or in the process of being built should not be maintained until nest is abandoned. Clarification can be sought from the Contract Officer.

- Remove weeds including ivy and bramble, grass and litter when removing clippings.

Shrub beds:

- Maintain grass edges to the specified standard indicated for the surrounding grass areas.
- Visit shrub beds at monthly intervals throughout the year to ensure beds are being maintained as specified and in a clean condition.
- At all times the beds and paths shall be left in a clean, tidy condition immediately following completion of any operation.
- All shrub areas are to be kept free of litter throughout the year and the Contractor is to allow for collection and immediate removal.
- Prune shrubs at correct time of year relevant to the species.
- Clean site and cultivate beds to leave a smooth weed free tilth on completion.
- All pruning and weeds to be kept clear of adjacent pathways and removed on the same day.

Rose Beds/Head Borders:

- The beds should be clean with an open structure and sharp edges.
- The plants should be disease and pest free and maintained to maximise their decorative appearance.
- Carry out low, medium, or long pruning as dictated by the type and variety using well maintained, sharp pruning tools (excluding hedge trimmers).
- Remove dead blooms from Hybrid Tea and Floribunda roses during the flowering period, excluding those grown for decorative hips.
- During November cut back long stems on current year's growth by one third.
- Hand weed beds throughout the year.
- Remove all fallen leaves from the beds.

- The phrase 'hand weed' includes removal of weeds by hand and hand-hoeing using a Dutch hoe, causing minimum disturbance to mulch/soil surface. Do not hoe deeper than 25mm.
- Leave beds and surrounding grass areas in a neat condition.
- The use of residual herbicide is not permitted on rose beds.
- During April supply and apply granular rose fertiliser at 50gms per square metre.
- Maintain roses free from pests and diseases by applying chemical controls to top and underside of foliage.
- Maintain grass edges to the specified standard indicated for the surrounding grass areas.
- Where there is evidence of shortage of nitrogen, phosphate, or potash, supply and apply compound fertiliser.
- Where there is evidence of magnesium, iron or manganese shortage, take remedial action.

Seasonal Bedding/Perpetuity Graves:

- Planting shall be undertaken twice a year in October and May.
- Clear the previous season's bedding, including bulbs, corms, and tubers.
- In preparation to receive summer bedding, dig over all the beds carefully remove perennial weeds and litter and remove all arisings.
- Supply and apply to all beds approved slow-release general fertiliser with NPK Ratio 16.8.12 at 50gms per square metre during preparation.
- In preparation to receive Spring bedding, supply and apply compost as agreed with Contract Officer to a full even depth of 50mm over the whole area of the beds and dig into a depth of 225mm (or such lesser depth as the Contract Officer shall instruct).
- Remove all dead flower heads, remove all litter, thoroughly hand weed and lightly hoe all beds throughout the year.
- Maintain grass edges to the specified standard indicated for the surrounding grass areas. Remove all arisings from the bed and surrounds.

- Maintain vertical edge of 50mm around the grass edge of the bed.
- Keep all beds free from fallen leaves and remove all arisings.
- Keep all bedding plants free from pests and disease by applying appropriate approved chemical controls.
- Do not use sprays during windy and/or drought conditions.
- Water to maintain optimum growing conditions in all beds throughout the growing season ensuring adequate water penetration and avoid puddling of the surface.
- Hoe not later than the next working day.
- Supply and apply organically based liquid feed. Allow for three applications during the growing season to all summer bedding.
- Remove flower heads and stems from species used for foliage effect.

Litter:

- Collect all litter, including stones, bricks, cardboard, plastic, paper, confectionery wrappings, bottles, cans and containers or any visible or offensive debris, including arisings from fly tipping, (up to one cubic metre consolidated).
- Dog/animal faeces are to be collected and removed from site using mechanical means on a rolling weekly programme. Allow for immediate graffiti removal under this item.
- During the growing season arrange for litter collection to take place immediately before regular mowing.

Litter Bins:

- All collected litter should be bagged and sealed and removed immediately to contained storage facilities, ready for disposal to approved tip.
- Litter bins are to be cleaned monthly to remove dirt; attention must be paid to both internal and external surfaces.
- Lubricate hinges and locking mechanisms after each clean.

Tree Wells:

A 1m vegetation free base must be maintained around young trees in lawn areas to prevent strimmer damage.

Snow and Ice clearance:

When requested by the Cemetery Officer snow and Ice removal and the application of salt (supplied by cemeteries officer) may be requested.

Locking and unlocking of gates:

The Contractor shall undertake the locking and unlocking of entrance gates at Bexhill Cemetery only, as required. The gates shall be unlocked at 08.00am and locked half an hour prior to sunset or 08.00pm, whichever is earlier, Monday to Sunday including Bank Holidays. The Contractor shall ensure that no gate is locked earlier than the official closing time and that no members of the public are locked inside the Cemetery. Closing Times Notices are supplied and placed on the gates by the Cemetery Officer.

Bexhill Chapel of Remembrance:

At Bexhill Chapel of Remembrance the glass display case shall be kept clean and polished. All chairs, ledges and fittings shall be dusted off and wiped with a lightly moistened cloth (including cleaning fluid). The floor shall be cleaned with a lightly moistened mop using a mild floor cleaning fluid.

The condition of plants and flowers within the Chapel shall be continually monitored and any that are dying are to be removed. Any memorial pot plants in the Chapel shall also be checked and watered as required.

Book of Remembrance:

Every day of the year The Book of Remembrance shall be turned to the correct page by 08.30am. Extreme care shall be taken; white gloves shall be worn and afterwards the display cabinet shall be locked again.

Grave Matting:

New dressings are to be supplied by the contractor at the start of the contract period and adequate supplies of clean dressings are to be maintained. The Contractor is to supply and provide for the provision to maintain, clean, and dry the matting at their own expense. Equipment to undertake this requirement can be stored at the Cemetery subject to approval by the Cemetery Manager and H&S requirements and any manufacturer's recommendations are met.

Muslim Burials:

Provision is to be made in preparation for any Muslim burial required over a weekend or Bank Holiday. Depending on when notification of burial is received,

provision of resources required for digging, dressing and preparation of grave may be required on the weekend and/or bank holiday, where the grave space will need to be prepared the previous day. Suitably qualified staff will be available to undertake required duties.

Grave Digging:

Lockable lids are to be attached to the shoring in place of covering the graves with boards.

Grave Spoil:

- A spoil board is to be placed adjacent to the grave and all necessary covers employed to protect any adjacent memorial in line with the Institute of Burial and Cremation and Administration Code of Safe Working Practices for Cemeteries. Any spoil mound adjacent to the grave shall be completely covered with grass matting.
- At Bexhill Cemetery the grave spoil should be removed to the compound in the Contractors yard.
- Storage on site of small amounts of spoil for use in topping up sunken graves may be allowed, in areas approved by the Contract Officer. On a monthly basis the Contractor must remove any spoil from the site that is more than the original amount agreed, to an approved tip at his own expense.

Grave Digging Specification/Non-Routine Work:

- The Contractor will in addition to specified horticultural works be required to undertake works relating to the interment of the deceased.
- In carrying out such work the Contractor and his staff shall exhibit a caring attitude, showing respect to both mourners and staff employed by funeral directors, and others visiting the cemetery or burial ground.
- The Contractor shall provide an efficient communication system throughout the period of this contract, to ascertain the details of any funerals, interment of ashes etc. which may be forthcoming.
- The maintenance costs and charges arising from the use of any communication system shall be the responsibility of the Contractor.
- The Contractor will be informed both verbally and in writing of the date and time of each interment, location, coffin size and depth of burials.

-
- ***At least 48 hours' notice will be given for burials and 24 hours' notice for the interment of ashes, with the exception of Muslim burials which may, when possible, take place within 24 hours notice.*** (Details re. procedures in respect of interments, will be supplied by the Cemetery Officer).
 - The confirmation of the exact location of the grave space is to be agreed on site with the Cemetery Officer after receipt of the above notification.
 - The Contractor shall make due allowance in his tendered rates for grave excavation to cover all costs associated with the location of graves prior to interment.
 - The Contractor shall have the grave ready for confirmatory measurement at 9am on the day of the interment.
 - The Contractor shall confirm these details with the staff responsible for carrying out the excavation, in writing, on a form to be provided by the Cemetery Officer (it is of paramount importance that the Contractor considers the thickness of any timbering, shielding etc.)
 - All such works must conform with the current Health and Safety regulations.
 - Thorough risk assessments will be carried out prior to commencement.
 - On receipt of instructions from the Cemetery Officer the Contractor may be required to excavate a few spare graves within the Cemetery.
 - Such works shall be paid for at the Contractor's Tendered Rates which shall include for maintaining the safety of these excavations until such time as they are utilised.
 - The location of graves within the Cemetery can be identified by reference to the Cemetery plans held by the Cemetery Officer.
 - Prior to carrying out any excavation, turf removal or similar operation the Contractor shall place boards assembled to form 3-sided grave tidy with flooring in positions on the adjacent open space or grave space.
 - In the latter case the utmost care should be taken to avoid damage to or contamination of the Memorial.
 - Before carrying out any excavation the Contractor shall examine adjacent memorials to ensure that they are in a safe condition, in the event of any memorial being unsafe or damaged the Contractor shall immediately inform the Cemetery Officer.

- If the monumental mason does not remove the memorial on the grave to be excavated in sufficient time to allow the Contractor to commence the excavation, the Contractor shall immediately notify the Cemetery Officer who may instruct the Contractor to remove the memorial to a place of safe storage.
- Memorials adjacent to the excavation site shall be protected during excavation and back filling operations with boards and tarpaulins provided by the Contractor.
- In the event of there being insufficient space adjacent to the grave to accommodate spoil the Contractor shall remove spoil to a position within the burial ground as directed by the Cemetery Officer. The Contractor shall make sufficient provision within his rates to cover for such eventualities.
- Having first identified the correct location of the grave to be excavated, the Contractor shall lift the turf from the site to the final dimensions of the finished grave, and shall place the turf safely for reinstatement, on an already settled grave.
- The Contractor shall lift the turf from the site to the final dimensions of the finished grave, and shall place the turf safely for reinstatement, on an already settled grave.
- Having removed turf, the Contractor shall now excavate the grave to the required dimensions.
- All spoil excavated shall be stored at least 0.75 metres away from the edge of the grave.
- In carrying out his work the Contractor shall take steps to ensure that no adjoining or underlying remains are disturbed and during excavation the Contractor shall ensure that the grave is adequately shored using tools equipment and materials to be supplied by the Contractor.
- If, during the excavations the Contractor unearths any human remains, then the work shall be suspended, and the Cemetery Officer notified immediately.
- In carrying out his work the Contractor shall take steps to ensure that no adjoining or underlying remains are disturbed and during excavation. The Contractor shall ensure that the grave is adequately shored using tools, equipment, and materials to be supplied by the Contractor.
- Throughout the excavation of the grave the Contractor shall ensure that two members of his staff are in attendance, one to act as banks man and

to assist as required in the event of any accident; except that this requirement shall be deemed not to apply during the excavation of the first one metre depth of the grave.

- Having completed the excavation, the grave shall be securely covered, to remove any element of danger to persons entering the burial ground, this task shall be undertaken on every occasion where a grave is to be left open prior to an interment.
- The cover shall be removed prior to the following operations taking place.
- It is a requirement of this Contract that prior to the covering of the newly excavated grave the Cemetery Officer and Contract Manager shall physically measure the grave to ensure that it complies in all respects with the instructions issued to the grave diggers.
- In Rye cemetery the graves are dug on the day of the burial and therefore a cover is not used.
- The costs of expediting these checks shall be deemed to have been included in the rates submitted for the excavation of graves.
- Prior to the arrival of the cortege the following tasks shall be undertaken, final preparations being fully completed no less than 1 hour prior to the arrival of the cortege at the burial ground.
- The grave shall be emptied of any water that has collected within it during or after excavation, and a layer of grass cuttings or wood shavings shall be spread across the bottom of the grave.
- Stout boarding provided by the Contractor shall be laid both sides of the grave to a minimum width of 400mm to provide a firm footing for the coffin bearers. In addition to this place a large sheet of board 2m x 1m over this also.
- The platform and the grave sides shall now be draped with artificial grass matting provided by the Contractor.
- The matting shall be arranged so that the sides of the grave are completely covered and that the surrounds are covered to an area extending 60cm.
- Beyond the edges of the grave, grass matting shall be pegged as required and shall be neatly and tidily arranged.

- The matting and webbing will be purchased and supplied by the Contractor and will be always maintained in a clean condition.
- When required the Contractor should make allowance for washing of such matting to keep it presentable.
- Any spoil mound adjacent to the grave shall now be completely covered with artificial grass matting (which will be purchased and supplied by the Contractor), all storage boards being similarly covered. This should be always kept clean.
- The area around the grave shall be cleared of any debris or litter leaving the site in a tidy and presentable condition.
- A quantity of dry friable soil shall be placed at the head of the grave. This should be stored in a wooden container and be supplied by the Cemetery Officer.
- Lowering webbing (normally two pairs, occasionally three) and putlocks (Bearers) shall now be placed in position. Local Funeral Directors require putlocks and webbing to be laid out on ground adjacent to the grave head or foot (whichever the more appropriate access point) for webbing up. A further set of putlocks are also placed across the centres of graves to assist the interment ceremony. Sometimes a 3rd set of webbing may be required and due allowance should be made for this.
- Whilst the grave is uncovered and prior to the arrival of the funeral party a member of the Contractor's staff must remain at the grave side to ensure public safety, until the Cemetery Manager or representative arrives at the grave. This member of staff shall remain present on the site to provide any assistance that may be required in the event of the collapse of the grave or shoring and to ensure the safety of those attending the funeral, consequently, he must remain in such a position that he has a clear view of the grave itself. During the burial any staff not directly required shall remain out of sight of mourners, and no mechanical operations shall be undertaken within the hearing of the mourners. Any tools and equipment shall be out of sight of the funeral party.
- Immediately after the cortege has left the site the grave shall be backfilled. During backfilling spoil shall not be allowed to fall onto the coffin in such a manner that it may cause damage. During the backfilling, spoil shall be consolidated at every 30cm depth. The surface of the grave should finally be mounded to produce a uniform and smooth mound of curved cross-section standing 50cm proud of the surrounding surface and the turf replaced on the grave. All work is to be completed on the day of burial. During June to Mid-September (incl.) the turf removed

from the ground shall not be replaced after mounding, but instead the grave shall be over-soiled and seeded at the rate of 20gms/m².

- On re-opened graves where the Contractor is unable to achieve the legally required minimum of 3ft of soil backfilled above the coffin lid either:
 - i. Where 2ft or more of soil above the coffin lid can be achieved a clay backfill must be made.
 - ii. Where only less than 2ft of soil above the coffin lid is possible a concrete layer midway between the coffin and the grounds surface should be laid as a seal.

Where subsidence takes place to a depth greater than 100 mm below the level of the surrounding turf on a grave whether excavated by the Contractor or not, then the Contractor shall infill the depression, making good with seed/turf as appropriate for the time of year and shall make do allowance in his Tendered Rates for all such remedial works. This work is to be co-ordinated in conjunction with the Cemetery Officer's requirement.
- The Contractor will be required to compile a list of all sunken graves noticed during his operations and provide such list to the Cemetery Officer in the first week of March and September for retention within the Cemetery records.
- Having completed tasks associated with the grave all excess spoil shall be removed from the site to a place of storage agreed with the Supervising Officer or disposed of to the Contractor's tip.
- After mounding, floral tributes shall be carried from the laying out area and placed on the grave in a careful and attractive manner.
- Any memorial which has been soiled during the excavation or backfilling of the grave should now be thoroughly cleaned as should the area around the excavation.
- All lowering webbing grass matting and other equipment should now be cleaned and returned to the Contractor's store.
- All floral tributes should be removed from the grave for disposal 14 days after the funeral or shall be removed at such time prior to the expiry of the 14-day period as they become unsightly.
- All tools and equipment shall be maintained in a clean and sound condition – all biers, lowering webbing etc must be checked prior to each interment.

- Any defective materials being replaced immediately from stock provided and held by the Contractor.
- All used webbing shall be taken from the Cemetery at the end of each calendar year and shall be replaced with new webbing of a type approved by the Cemetery Manager.
- The Contractor's attention is drawn to the average number of earth burials, which take place at 100 per year.
- The Contractor's tendered rates in respect of the excavation of graves should be based on these figures and on all aspects of the interment processes.
- A client instruction will be raised at the end of each month based on the actual number of graves completed.
- Attendance "out of normal working hours" – at funerals or for the excavation of graves falls into two categories.
- Occasionally the Contractor will be expected to nominate a member of staff to attend a funeral during the lunch time period but will be deemed to have made do allowance in his working arrangements and tendered rates to cover for this eventuality.
- Interments are between the hours of 9am and 3pm (2.30pm between beginning of December and end of February) only. On Fridays between the hours of 9am to 2pm only.

Cremated Remains:

From time to time, as directed by the Cemetery Officer, the Contractor shall prepare and reinstate sites for the burial of cremated remains.

The specification for the work is as follows:

- (a) On receipt of instruction from the Cemetery Officer, the Contractor shall prepare a site in the position required.
- (b) A spoil board should be placed adjacent to the grave and all necessary covers employed to protect any adjacent memorial.
- (c) The Contractor shall now excavate a hole 45cm square and 50cm in depth, the hole to be square, have vertical sides, and a flat and level base. Turf should be carefully removed and set aside for reinstating the grave after interment.
- (d) In the event of water collecting in the hole, this should be removed.
- (e) In the event of there being insufficient space adjacent to the site for spoil to be stored after excavation this should be removed to a site to be specified

by the Supervising Officer, and the Contractor shall make provision in his Tendered Rates to allow for this eventuality.

(f) Having completed the excavation, the site should be left clean and tidy, all covers should be removed from memorials and any spoil mound adjacent to the site should be covered with grass matting.

(g) After the interment of remains the Contractor shall immediately reinstate the site filling and consolidating the soil to leave the surface at such a level that the turf removed is relayed flush with surrounding turf. Re-turfing should follow immediately after the reinstatement of the excavation.

Headstone Borders/Lawned Cemetery:

All new areas of the Cemetery are laid out as lawn plots with .6m wide borders running.

This page is intentionally left blank

**ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES
(Excluding cemeteries)**

1 DECEMBER 2024 to 30 NOVEMBER 2029

SPECIFICATION

04 March 2024

4/1

Page 71

SPECIFICATION CONTENTS

Ref	Task	Page
1	Annual Meadow Planting	
2	Bin Emptying	
3	Grass Cutting	
4	Hard Surfaces	
5	Hedge Maintenance	
6	Herbicide Application	
7	Litter Collection	
8	Perennial Meadow Areas	
9	Permanent Planting	
10	Play Areas	
11	Ponds and Lakes	
12	Rose Bed Maintenance	
13	Seasonal Bedding	
14	Site Presence	
15	Staff Qualifications and Experience	
16	Tennis Courts	
17	Watercourses and Ditches	
18	Weekend Duties	
19	Woodlands	

1. ANNUAL MEADOW PLANTING

- 1.1 Various flower beds are sown each spring with an annual seed mix supplied by the Client.
- 1.2 Each bed will be cultivated during March to a depth of 150mm.
- 1.3 Rake and consolidate the cultivated area removing any detritus to form a seed bed.
- 1.4 Broadcast sow the seed mix supplied and lightly rake over.
- 1.5 Irrigate on one occasion if there is no rainfall within 7 days of sowing.
- 1.6 Remove any large annual weeds monthly from April to September.
- 1.7 After flowering clear the bed and dispose of all arisings leaving the site tidy at a time agreed with the Client.

2. BIN EMPTYING

GENERAL

2.1 Bin emptying will be managed under three regimes as detailed below. The majority of sites will be maintained under the Bin Medium regime.

Regime	Period	Frequency per week	Standard on completion
Bin High	Summer: 1 st April to 30 th September	7 (daily)	Bins empty
	Winter: 1 st October to 31 st March	2	Bins empty
Bin Medium	Summer: 1st April to 30th September	3	Bins empty
	Winter: 1 st October to 31st March	2	Bins empty
Bin Low	All year round	Monthly	Bins empty

2.2 The Contractor is expected to be responsive and deal with reports of overflowing bins if they arise.

2.3 All operations relating to bin emptying and disposal of the associated waste shall be carried out in accordance with The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the associated code of practice, (hereafter referred to as the EPA).

2.4 The number of bins on the Contract is stated by site in the bills of quantity. The bins are a mixture of litter and combined waste. The majority are single with a volume averaging 80 litres. A small proportion are double with a volume of approximately 105 litres. Bins specifically for dog waste are currently emptied by the Council’s waste and street cleaning contractor and are not included in this Contract.

2.5 Having undertaken this cyclical operation, bins should be empty at the time the Contractor leaves the site.

2.6 The Contractor shall be responsible for the disposal of all rubbish, arisings, debris, litter and dog waste produced during the execution of any works and the associated disposal costs. This material shall be taken and disposed of at a suitably licensed, legally registered waste management site at the expense of the Contractor.

2.7 The temporary storage of rubbish on site shall only be permitted at specific locations approved by the Client.

3 GRASS CUTTING

General

- 3.3 Grass maintenance is categorised into three cutting regimes as set out in the table below.
- 3.4 Amenity Grass 16 will apply to children’s play areas and the highest profile and more ornamental sites only including Bexhill’s seafront, Egerton Park and Rye Gun Garden. The majority of sites will be maintained under the Amenity Grass 12 regime. The Environmental Grass 1 sites will require an element of Amenity Grass 12 maintenance to create informal paths for pedestrian access and alongside formal paths and around seating. Cutting heights refer to the height of grass on completion of the work.
- 3.5 There may need to be some flexibility in the start and finish dates of the cutting period in response to the growing conditions. Any variations will be subject to agreement between the Contractor and the Client.
- 3.6 Since it is not possible to anticipate the precise number of cuts which may be required on any site in any one year, the Bills of Quantities includes a given number of cuts based on two standards; 12 cuts and 16 cuts. The Contractor shall then be paid in accordance with the rates in the Bills of Quantities for more or less than this number, as this shall be dependant upon the prevailing weather conditions throughout the growing season.

Regime	Collect Grass	Cuts per annum	Cutting Height	Strimming around obstacles	Cutting Period
Amenity Grass 12	No	12	20-30mm	On every other cut	1 st March to 30 th September
Amenity Grass 16	No	16	20-30mm	On every cut	1 st March to 30 th September
Environmental Grass 1	No	1	50mm	After the one cut	1 st to 30 th September

- 3.7 When any grass cutting operation is undertaken, all strimming and standard edging shall be carried out on the site at the same time as required, such as along edges, fence lines and around obstacles. The Contractor shall allow for this combination of tasks in their rates. All grass shall be cut cleanly and evenly, to the same height and without damaging the existing surface.
- 3.8 The Contractor shall follow and keep to an approved system of cut to ensure that all areas are cut on a rota basis where applicable. Any rota shall be in accordance with the work programme. The Client may at their discretion, advance or delay the cutting dates.
- 3.9 The Contractor shall complete one area of grass cutting on the full area of the site, up to the paving, fencing and any other boundaries, before moving onto the next unless agreed in advance by the Client.
- 3.10 Soft vegetative growth, such as clover, shall be deemed to be part of the Contract where it occurs within larger areas of grass.

- 3.11 Prior to cutting any area, the Contractor shall remove all stones over 20mm, as well as any litter, bottles and other litter and debris, including dog faeces and small branches.
- 3.12 Soil from molehills shall be spread evenly over surrounding ground or removed from site dependant upon the Client's instructions.
- 3.13 Areas containing naturalised bulbs or corms, shall not be cut until six weeks after flowering ceases, but shall not be left uncut for more than eight weeks. The Contractor shall cut these areas in order to return them to the standard of the surrounding areas.
- 3.14 The Contractor shall remove all grass clippings arising from mowing, from paved areas, mowing margins, channels, steps etc. immediately after mowing. Generally this shall be by sweeping or by the use of an electric vacuum device or electric blower.
- 3.15 Grass cutting on areas containing rare or unusual species of wildflowers may be suspended on the instructions of the Client until flowering has finished.
- 3.16 The area within 150mm of the base of all trees in grass areas shall not be cut by strimming or mowers.
- 3.17 Care must be taken not to damage any obstacles within the area to be cut, and the Client must be notified of any damage that does occur by the end of the next working day. Any costs incurred in correcting such damage shall be met by the Contractor.
- 3.18 The Contractor is deemed to have considered existing site obstructions when submitting their tender. No additional payments will be made for obstructions present at the commencement of the Contract.
- 3.19 The football and cricket pitches, including a run-off, are maintained by others (sports clubs) and the Contractor should not take machinery over them at any time unless agreed with the Client.
- 3.20 The Contractor shall ensure public safety at all times and cease grass cutting in areas of high public usage until it is safe to continue.
- 3.21 The Contractor will be responsible for any damage to vehicles arising as a result of grass cutting.

EDGING

- 3.22 The edges of grass areas which abut planted beds shall be trimmed using long handled edging shears (not strimmer) to produce a well-defined edge with a neat, straight and even appearance with no grass overhanging the finished edge. The arisings are to be removed. This shall be carried out on each occasion of cutting and within 5 working days of the grass being cut.
- 3.23 The edges of grass areas which abut paths, play area safety surfacing or other hard surfaces shall be trimmed annually using long handled edging shears (not strimmer) to produce a well-defined edge with a neat, straight and even appearance with no grass overhanging the finished edge. The arisings are to be removed. This shall be carried out over the winter.

STRIMMING

- 3.24 Strimming shall be carried out around obstacles such as bollards and bins and alongside walls,

fences, buildings within 5 working days of the grass being cut and to the above frequency. There is to be no strimming around trees.

- 3.25 Sites which have steep banks, limited access or limited size or shape for a larger machine, shall be cut using a strimmer where appropriate.

4 HARD SURFACES

- 4.1 No routine maintenance to hard surfaces is required except at Egerton Park and as detailed under Tennis Courts.
- 4.2 Litter management to hard surfaces is covered elsewhere in the specification.
- 4.3 Sweeping and herbicide application, if required, will be undertaken through works orders.
- 4.4 An electric leaf blower or an electric vacuum may be used to remove loose matter from hard surfaces. However, in small areas such as under seats where embedded soil, moss and detritus cannot effectively be removed by this means, manual or mechanical sweeping will be required.
- 4.5 It is not expected that established weeds growing in path cracks or edges are removed.
- 4.6 Arisings constituting organic matter that is small in size may be collected and spread evenly at the back of borders where it will not blow back on to paths. Where this is not possible, the organic arisings should be collected and disposed of with other green waste as appropriate.
- 4.7 Arisings must not be blown into drains.
- 4.8 Litter and dog faeces should be appropriately disposed of in accordance with the LITTER PICKING specification.

5 HEDGE MAINTENANCE

GENERAL

- 5.1 Special care must be taken to ensure no damage is caused to any service cables over or in the vicinity of the hedge and the Contractor shall be liable for any damage he causes thereto. The Contractor is also responsible for ensuring the operators safety and so the appropriate precautions must be taken when working near overhead cables.

Regime	No. of cuts per annum	Extent of cut	Cutting Period
Hedge cut 1	1	Remove all annual growth	October / November
Hedge cut 2	2	Remove all current season growth	June and September

TRIMMING ESTABLISHED HEDGES

- 5.2 Trim carefully and neatly under normal maintenance to regular line and shape, maintaining the existing dimensions and form. The Contractor shall at all times provide a stable hedge. Hedges must remain impenetrable where applicable.
- 5.3 Use sharp secateurs, shears or mechanical cutters according to the type and location of the hedge; all as stated in the Contract. Correct equipment and attachments must be used.
- 5.4 Large easily accessible highway hedges may be maintained by tractor mounted cutting equipment (e.g. flail). When cutting highway hedges of any type all highways regulations must be strictly adhered to.
- 5.5 Prune all hedges as set out in the Bills of Quantities. Avoid disturbing birds during the nesting season and comply with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).
- 5.6 Clear all arisings, including clippings lodged in the hedge from the site by the end of each working day.
- 5.7 Ensure the base of the hedge clean, tidy, weed and litter free following cutting.

6 HERBICIDE APPLICATION

- 6.1 Except as part of routine maintenance to planted areas, as detailed under PERMANENT PLANTING, there is no routine use of herbicides on the Contract.
- 6.2 Where the application of herbicides is required, the Contractor must comply with the requirements as set out in STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE and PERMANENT PLANTING.
- 6.3 It is the Contractor's responsibility to comply with relevant industry guidelines and legislation, including, but not restricted to the following, as amended or superseded from time to time:
 - a) The Environmental Protection Act (1990) (EPA).
 - b) The Control of Pesticides Regulations (1986) (COPR).
 - c) The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974).
 - d) The Water Act (2014).
 - e) The Control of Pollution Act (1974).
 - f) The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002) (COSHH).
- 6.4 The Contractor will ensure that all staff have appropriate protective clothing, access to such washing and cleaning facilities as required.
- 6.5 Only chemicals approved under the EPA and the Control of Pesticides Regulations (1986) and by the Client may be used.
- 6.6 The Contractor must keep appropriate records, as required by law and these must be made available to the Client, by email, within 24 hours of request.

7 LITTER COLLECTION

GENERAL

- 7.1 Litter picking will be managed under three regimes as detailed below. The majority of sites will be maintained under the Litter Medium regime.

Regime	Period	Frequency per week	Standard on completion
Litter High	Summer: 1 st April to 30 th September	7 (daily)	Litter free
	Winter: 1 st October to 31 st March	2	Litter free
Litter Medium	Summer: 1st April to 30th September	3	Litter free
	Winter: 1 st October to 31st March	2	Litter free
Litter Low	All year round	Monthly	Litter free

- 7.2 The Contractor is expected to be responsive and deal with reports of broken glass etc. as they arise.
- 7.3 All operations relating to litter collection and disposal shall be carried out in accordance with The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the associated code of practice, (hereafter referred to as the EPA).
- 7.4 All litter operations shall also include the removal of animal droppings and dog faeces from areas, as detailed under the EPA and the Litter (Animal Droppings) Order (1991).
- 7.5 Sites should be litter-picked in their entirety including all planted areas (shrub beds, rose beds and bedding areas), watercourse and hard surfaces such as paths and tennis courts.
- 7.6 The Council works with volunteer groups who carry out occasional litter picking activities on parks sites. The Contractor is expected to collect and dispose of any waste arising from these activities.
- 7.7 Having undertaken this cyclical operation, the site should at the time the Contractor leaves it, be in a tidy and clean condition essentially free of litter, furniture clean and free from spilt food or other unpleasant deposits.
- 7.8 The Contractor shall be responsible for the disposal of all rubbish, arisings, debris and litter produced during the execution of any works and the associated disposal costs. This material shall be taken and disposed of at a suitably licensed, legally registered waste management site at the expense of the Contractor.
- 7.9 The temporary storage of waste on site shall only be permitted at specific locations approved by the Client.
- 7.10 No litter picking is required at St Peters and St Marks Churchyards, the Council's car parks, Yates Close, Camber, Peasmarsh and Udimore workshops, other than prior to grass cutting.

8 PERENNIAL MEADOW AREAS

- 8.1 Various flower beds are permanently planted with a perennial meadow mix.
- 8.2 Allow to cut plant growth on request from the Client during May or June to delay or stagger the flowering period. Carefully rake up and dispose of all arisings.
- 8.3 Remove any large weeds on a monthly basis.
- 8.4 After flowering cut vegetation, rake up and dispose of all arisings leaving the site tidy at a time agreed with the Client.

9 PERMANENT PLANTING

GENERAL

- 9.3 The majority of permanent planting comprises shrub beds. There is also a small amount of perennial planting which is largely confined to three Bexhill sites; West Parade, Egerton Park and Manor Gardens. Roses are covered separately.
- 9.4 Maintenance is categorised into three regimes as detailed in the table below.
- 9.5 The majority of sites will be maintained under the Shrub bed 2 or 4 regime. These beds will generally have established planting covering a large proportion of the bed and will include low profile beds. High profile and more ornamental planting will be maintained under the Shrub bed 9 regime.
- 9.6 Routine maintenance comprises weeding only with the exceptions of West Parade, Egerton Park and Manor Gardens where some annual pruning will be required.

Regime	No. of visits annually	Timing
Shrub bed 2	2	1 visit during June or July. 1 visit over the winter.
Shrub bed 4	4	3 visits during growing season: (1) April/May (2) June/July/August (3) September/October. 1 winter visit.
Shrub bed 9	9	8 visits in the period 1 st March to 31 st October. 1 visit during the winter.

Weeding

- 9.7 Weeding may be by hand, by herbicide application or a mixture of both, as appropriate taking into account the season, conditions, proximity of cultivated plants and type and size of weed. Beds should be weed free once visited and left in a neat and tidy condition.
- 9.8 Brambles, sedges, self-sown trees, tri-cornered leek, bindweed and thistles should be dug out by hand so as to remove the roots.
- 9.9 Only glyphosate-based translocated herbicides will be permitted. Residual herbicides may not be used. Katoun Gold is not permitted.
- 9.10 Disturbance to the soil by digging, forking or hand-hoeing should remove the minimum amount of soil and cause minimum disturbance to mulched surfaces, bulbs and herbaceous plants.
- 9.11 Any organic matter or other debris which is spread onto adjoining grass or hard-surfaced area

during the course of maintaining the shrub beds should be carefully removed.

Mulching

9.12 West Parade planting is generally mulched with fine granite material supplied by the Client. Application will be via a works order.

9.13 The Contractor may apply woodchip, composted green waste or other approved organic mulch to planted areas in order to assist with weed control but only with the prior agreement of the Client.

Pruning

9.14 Pruning is excluded from the Contract with three exceptions of :

- Egerton Park – allow for 30% of the permanent planting areas annually.
- West Parade – allow for 30% of the permanent planting areas annually.
- Manor Gardens – allow for 20% of the permanent planting areas annually.

9.15 Any additional pruning required will be dealt with through a works order.

9.16 Below is a basic general guide to the timing of pruning. The Client will liaise with the Contractor regarding the timing and method of pruning wherever it is required. Pruning is to be carried out using secateurs, not hedge trimmers unless otherwise agreed with the Client.

- Winter flowering: Prune in Spring.
- Early flowering shrubs flowering in April, May and June: Prune immediately after flowering.
- Summer/early autumn flowering shrubs: Prune in March/April.
- Evergreens: Prune in April after the danger of frost has passed.
- Cornus: Cut back in March.
- Grasses: Late March/early April.

Green waste

9.17 Green waste shall either be recycled by the Contractor or disposed of at an authorised facility which recycles the waste. It may be temporarily stored in a tidy pile for a period of no more than two weeks at the following locations:

- Egerton Park contractor's compound
- Designated area of Manor Barn car park
- Designated area of the Polegrove adjacent to the bowls greens

10 PLAY AREAS

10.1 Play areas must be maintained in a safe, clean and well-presented order, fully compliant with current British standards. Moving parts should be repaired quickly once damaged and more serious problems reported to the client immediately. It is the Council's aim to upgrade play sites where possible and to deliver the most exciting play opportunities to the widest age range. The Contractor should note some existing playgrounds may be removed and new sites may be added in due course.

General

10.2 Play areas shall include grass, grassmat, play bark, sand, concrete and tarmac areas on which are sited moving and static items of play equipment, seats, litter baskets, fencing and gates, safety surfacing, other features and signs.

10.3 It is a requirement of this Contract that all named inspectors of the workforce will be subject to police checks prior to undertaking this duty. All staff must be competent and trained to RPII Outdoor Operational Inspector standard to undertake all tasks they are expected to perform with this updated every three years.

10.4 All information regarding accidents to be brought to the immediate attention of the Client.

Repairs and Replacements

10.5 At all times repairs and replacements of the equipment, surfacing, fencing and gates shall be affected using the correct parts and materials supplied by the manufacturers and shall be in accordance with BSEN 1176 parts 1 to 7, BSEN 1177 and BSEN 15312 and any amendments and additions thereto.

10.6 The Client will be responsible for replacement of any major equipment resulting from accredited inspectors' recommendations or because of modernization/upgrading etc.

10.7 Following weekly / daily inspections carry out all measures necessary to maintain all aspects of children's play areas in a safe working condition, clean, hygienic and secure in every respect including removal of graffiti.

10.8 Where graffiti is painted or scratched into a bar/panel etc., the surface of the bar/panel will need to be painted in its entirety; Undercoats/primary coats from a stock of approximately 5 different colours are to be used. All wood surfacing will require sanding down to remove any graffiti or sharp edges and wood stained over the entire surface to leave a uniform finish across the entire space.

10.9 Carry out minor repairs of worn or defective parts and structural components and submit to the Client a list of works carried out on a monthly basis split into the parts and labour used. For repairs to any one unit where the value of parts exceeds £1,000, the Client's approval must be obtained in the first instance.

10.10 Where necessary prevent use of equipment by signing and fencing off until repairs are completed.

10.11 Immediately repair or replace items or parts thereof which have been vandalized or incurred a fault which renders the item unsafe or likely to fail.

10.12 If repairs cannot be made immediately due to the required parts not being readily available or the damage or fault is of a major nature, prevent access to the item of equipment by signing and fencing off until such time as repairs are completed.

10.13 All acts of vandalism affecting any aspect of play areas are to be reported to the Client immediately following inspections and repairs.

10.14 Order replacement parts that are required immediately following inspections and allow for fitting replacements within 3 days of receipt.

Inspection Reports

10.15 The Contractor shall submit to the Client in writing details of the inspections monthly and details of the three-monthly inspections as soon as available. The form of documentation and method of logging information is to be supplied by the Client at the start of the Contract.

Regular Visual Inspections - weekly

10.16 Carry out throughout the year inspections to frequency specified to ensure all items in all play areas are in a safe working condition, clean hygienic and secure in every respect for use by children.

10.17 Inspect on a weekly programme throughout the year:

- Collington Wood, Bexhill
- Egerton Park Adizone, Bexhill
- Galley Hill Play Area and Skate Park, Bexhill
- Seabourne Road Recreation Ground and Play Area, Bexhill
- Sidley Recreation Ground Play Area, skate park and BMX track, Bexhill
- Barrack Hall Park, Bexhill
- Bending Crescent, Bexhill
- Bexhill Down Laundry Site
- Bexhill Down (Upper site)
- Crowhurst Lane, Bexhill
- Little Common Recreation Ground, Bexhill
- Sidley House, Bexhill
- Southlands, Bexhill
- Levetts Field, Bexhill
- Preston Road, Bexhill
- Fair Salts, Rye
- Kings Avenue, Rye
- Masons Field, Rye
- Darvel Down, Netherfield
- Coronation Gardens, Battle
- Levetts Lane Play Area and Skate Ramp, Bodiam

Regular Visual Inspections – daily and weekly.

10.18 Egerton Park Play Area must be inspected daily for a six-month period starting prior to Easter bank holiday weekend or the start of the easter school holidays, whichever is soonest. This will

revert to a weekly inspection for the remainder of the year.

Inspection Visits

10.19 Inspection visits will include the following.

Egerton Park Sand/Bark Loose Fill

- Check thoroughly for contamination i.e. debris, sharps, excreta, rubbish, stones etc and remove.
- Following the removal of any contamination, the sand or other loose fill must be treated with a suitable disinfectant. The loose fill bark material is to be raked and re-levelled daily and topped up as required to maintain at 300mm depth. The sand pit level is to be maintained at 450mm and is to be raked and re-levelled daily and topped up as required. Additional material is to be purchased and supplied by the Contractor at their expense as required.

All sites

Maintain Surfaces

- Sweep all surface areas leaving in a clean, tidy condition free of litter, mud, broken glass, excreta and other debris.
- Remove arisings from site immediately.
- Sweep to remove standing water after rain.
- During periods of snow/ice the Contractor shall make due allowance for salting and removal of ice/snow to prevent slippery conditions.
- Maintain free of moss, algae and weeds all impact absorbent surfaces and tarmac to ensure that clean non-slip surfaces are maintained.
- Report all incidences of damaged or missing impact absorbent surfacing to the Client.
- Make minor repairs to wet pour impact absorbent surfacing using respective proprietary surface repair kit.
- Where grass is used as a safer surfacing for play equipment with a critical fall height of up to 1.5m the grass must be inspected in the same way as other types of surfacing and any defects such as compaction and lack of grass cover reported to the Client.

Empty Litter Bins

- Empty litter baskets during routine playground inspection and dispose to approved tip.

Maintain Gate/Fence/Boundary Treatment

- Ensure fencing is intact and gates are secure.
- Lubricate locks and hinges as necessary to maintain effective use.
- Erect temporary high visibility plastic pedestrian fencing, secured with plastic cable ties around unsafe items where repairs cannot be effected immediately and maintain in a safe and secure condition until repairs to the equipment are carried out. In high risk situations or if repairs cannot be carried out within one week Heras fencing must be used.

Maintain Seats

- Seating must be left clean at the end of each visit.
- Any damage to benches to be reported immediately to the Client and made safe prior to leaving site.

During Inspections of Equipment Generally

- Ensure all fittings are correctly positioned and all fixings are properly secure.
- Remove minor protrusions and sharp edges to ensure normal safe use and repaint to prevent corrosion as appropriate to the item of equipment. Erect warning signs to prevent use until surface finishes have properly hardened.
- Ensure all moving parts are working in a smooth, quiet and efficient manner.
- Ensure paintwork and other finishes are in a good condition and free from corrosion.
- Ensure all safety measures installed around or fixed directly to items of equipment are in a good condition and fully effective for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Check for damage from whatever cause to timber components/items.

During Inspections of Specific Features

Swings:

- Check for damaged seats.
- Ensure that shackles and chains are in a good and safe condition for use.
- Check that main frame/structure is fully secure.

Slides:

- Ensure that the sliding surface, including the run-out point, is complete, secure, safe and free from protrusions and obstructions.
- Ensure that the steps, handrails and slide entry are complete, secure and in a safe condition for use.
- Check that main frame/structure is fully secure.

Zip Wires:

- Check for damaged seats.
- Ensure that the seat attachment is not knotted.
- Ensure that cable is not damaged.

Rotating/Rocking Equipment:

- Ensure that all bearings are working in a smooth, quiet and efficient manner.
- Ensure that seating platforms, footboards, side panels and handgrips are complete, secure, free from protrusions and obstructions and are in a safe condition for use.

All Other Structures/Equipment:

- Ensure that each item is complete, with fittings correctly positioned and all fixings properly secure.
- Check that main frame/structure is fully secure.

Quarterly Operational Inspections

10.20 Throughout the contract period carry out detailed inspections every three months of all items of equipment in all children's play areas. Such inspections shall include all checks specified below and following inspections, carry out all necessary works to maintain all aspects of children's play areas to the specified standards without in any way altering the construction or design of the equipment.

Check

- paintwork/preservative is in good condition.
- all parts including bolts and screws are present and secure.
- supports are firmly fixed
- for corrosion throughout the equipment
- for corrosion or decay at ground level
- impact absorbent surface is in good and safe condition and securely adhered to the general surface of the playground, loose fill is to be maintained at correct consistent level.
- for sharp edges, protrusions and damaged cables showing exposed wire rope strands
- that timber components are in good safe condition having no breaks or splintering or cracking sections
- that moving parts are working correctly
- wear on individual chain links on swing chains
- swing seats are at correct height, in good safe condition with fixings secure
- multi-section slide chutes for gaps in sliding surface and chute sides
- height of slide run-out sections ensuring no water is retained
- steps are secure and each one is in good safe condition
- side panels/rails to steps and slide entries are secure and in good safe condition
- all platforms and footboards are in good safe condition, to correct levels/heights and are secure
- ground clearances are correct when stationary and in motion
- bearings are working smoothly, efficiently and quietly and are correctly lubricated.
- ends of rocking equipment do not touch the ground
- tube plugs are secure
- nuts, bolts and other fixings/fastenings are properly secure
- safety features are in good condition and effective for the purpose of which they are intended.
- surface beneath equipment is free from glass, grit or other debris.
- fibre glass and plastic components for damage
- drainage gullies are clear with correct gratings properly positioned.
- general surface freespace areas are in good safe condition
- tunnels are clean and clear of litter and other debris.
- check the condition of ropes
- gates operate satisfactorily and check for closing time not less than 5 seconds
- erosion/wear to grass mounds has not exposed hard/sharp surfaces/materials or caused trip hazards.

10.21 During inspections remove all arising occurring as a result of the specified checks to approve site.

Skate Parks – Facilities for users of Roller Sports Equipment

10.22 A concrete skate bowl is provided at Sidley Recreation Ground, a smaller set of skate ramps at Galley Hill and a single steel ramp in Bodiam. The stakepark on Rye Cricket Salts is not the

responsibility of the Council.

10.23 Inspect all three sites on a weekly basis. Additional inspections may be required immediately prior to and following skating events during the summer.

10.24 Remove litter, sharps and debris from bowl and surrounding areas that form part of the skating surface.

10.25 Check barrier railings and other site features for stability and safety.

10.26 Report incidences of vandalism, damage, wear and tear and flooding of bowl to Client.

10.27 Maintain inspection reports for each visit (playground inspection report format applies). The Contractor is not to undertake any structural repairs without prior agreement.

BMX race track and jump park (Sidley Recreation Ground)

10.28 This is included in the playground inspection and maintenance regime including all relevant maintenance elements listed above.

10.29 Malicious damage and unauthorized modifications to the track must be made safe and reported to the Client.

11 PONDS AND LAKES

EGERTON PARK LAKES

General

- 11.1 The lake in Egerton Park is a saltwater lake fed mainly by sea water via an inlet pipe.
- 11.2 During times of extreme cold weather, the Contractor may be required by the Client to break the ice and display warning signs.
- 11.3 Care must be taken during the breeding season that any operation undertaken around the lake area does not disturb nesting birds. The Contractor's attention is therefore drawn to the Countryside and Wildlife Act (1981).
- 11.4 The Contractor shall clear all litter, debris, leaves and any harmful or larger items such as shopping trolleys and bicycles to ensure the lake is kept clean at all times. The Contractor should have equipment to enable light items to be scooped up and removed from within 2m of the lake edge and a boat and waders to enable heavier items or items further out into the water to be removed.
- 11.5 The Contractor is not expected to remove algae growth, except by specific request from the Client with an associated works order.
- 11.6 The Contractor is to apply a small quantity of liquid product such as barley straw extract on a monthly basis to reduce the risk of algae from March to October inclusive. The Client will provide the product(s).
- 11.7 Any pollution shall be reported to the Client immediately.
- 11.8 During the months of October to February inclusive, the Contractor shall put out a daily feed of split maize provided by the Client for the waterfowl.
- 11.9 Each lake has a small island. No routine work is undertaken to the island adjacent to the play area and refreshment kiosk, but a proportion of the grasses on the smaller island accommodating the folly are cut back annually in early February, prior to the start of the waterfowl breeding season. This requires use of a boat.

Maintenance of water level

- 11.10 The Contractor shall monitor the water level and in consultation with the Client shall lower it as necessary by manually opening the outlet to ensure the lake does not overflow when excessive or prolonged rainfall is forecasted. The site-based member of staff will be best-placed to do this, but provision must be made as necessary at times when they are absent.
- 11.11 The Contractor will need to take into account high tides at which time water cannot be successfully released to sea. As a rule, water must not be discharged to sea during the bathing season except with consent from the Environment Agency, via the Client.
- 11.12 The Contractor shall monitor the water level and in consultation with the Client shall raise the level as necessary by opening the inlet at the chamber in the southeast corner of the park.

11.13 The Client may require the level to be lowered for specific reasons, (ie: repair of sidewalls, etc). The Contractor may be required to display warning signs provided by the Client at such times. Adequate notice shall be given to the Contractor for this operation. The lake must not be emptied for any other reason without the prior consent of the Client.

EGERTON PARK SMALL POND

General Maintenance

11.14 The Contractor shall clear all litter, debris, leaves, algae growth, glass or any harmful items to ensure the water is kept clean at all times.

11.15 The overflow shall be checked and cleaned out as necessary, particularly in the winter months, to ensure there is no blockage which could cause the pond to overflow.

11.16 The aquatic vegetation including bulrushes and purple loosestrife shall be cut back annually in the first half of February and the arisings disposed of.

MANOR GARDENS POND

GENERAL

11.17 There is one small ornamental pond at Manor Gardens. The Contractor is required to maintain this pond using management techniques that shall facilitate a balanced, healthy, disease and pest free environment for plants, fish, amphibians, insects and other pond life.

11.18 Where in the opinion of the Client damage, death or disease is incurred to any aspect of the pond and the life it supports, as a result of the Contractor's negligence, the Contractor shall bear the cost of any necessary remedial action, repair or replacement.

11.19 Fish must only be fed once daily during the period, end of February to mid-November. The Contractor shall purchase and supply suitable fish food.

11.20 Incidents of infestation of pests and diseases to either plants or animals must be immediately reported to the Client.

11.21 As fish are prone to highly infectious fungal diseases the Contractor shall report incidents of death and disease immediately and the Contractor shall take whatever remedial action is required by the Client.

11.22 The Contractor must ensure that water levels are topped up by hose, regulating the flow of water to a gentle trickle to minimise disturbance to fish and other pond life, from the nearest stand pipe as may be necessary. At no time should water levels be allowed to fall by greater than 25mm.

11.23 Chemically based fertilizers or pesticides should not be used within 10metres of the pond, without prior approval of the Client.

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE - SPRING

11.24 The Contractor shall remove, when specified, all decaying vegetation from plants which have died back during the Winter together with any other deleterious matter and general litter.

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE - SUMMER

11.25 The Contractor shall inspect the pond and remove all litter, debris and decaying vegetation.

11.26 The Contractor shall remove invasive weeds such as blanket weed when required, in order to keep the water clear and to maintain the natural balance of the pond.

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE - AUTUMN/WINTER

11.27 The Contractor shall remove dead withering leaves as necessary and remove seed heads from plants. Plants whose leaves lie under the surface of the water should be cut well back and the arisings removed. The exception to this is evergreens which should only have dying leaves removed. Spent leaves and flowers of water lilies must also be removed. When dead, hollow stemmed plants, e.g. bullrushes, should be cut back to a few centimetres above the water line.

11.28 During freezing weather conditions the Contractor shall ensure that ice is not allowed to form entirely over the pond for any longer than four consecutive days. A heavy implement must not be used to smash the ice as this can concuss and kill fish. The ice must be melted in several places over the surface to allow gaseous exchange, and the Contractor shall remove some of the water from under the ice to leave a gap which shall facilitate oxygen circulation.

12 ROSE BED MAINTENANCE

GENERAL

- 11.3 There are only two sites with rose beds on the Contract; Egerton Park and Manor Gardens.
- 11.4 All pruning operations shall be carried out using sharp secateurs.
- 11.5 Beds will be weeded four times per annum; three times during the period 1st April to 30th September and once in late October or early November immediately before applying the winter mulch. The beds should be weed free upon completion with any dead roses removed.
- 11.6 Deadhead roses on two occasions during the summer flowering period. At the same time cleanly remove any suckers as close as possible to the base of the plant.
- 11.7 All arisings from maintenance operations should be disposed of appropriately off site.
- 11.8 Every November apply 100mm depth of well-rotted farmyard manure over the whole surface of the bed ensuring the graft is not buried.
- 11.9 Prune all plants in the dormant season to remove 50 to 75% of the previous season's growth together with any dead, diseased and damaged material.
- 11.10 The application of any insecticides or fungicides to control pests and disease will be carried out through a works order, as and when needed.

12 SEASONAL BEDDING

GENERAL

- 13.1 The Contractor will be responsible for maintaining a small quantity of seasonal bedding at the war memorial in St. Mary's Churchyard in Rye, the war memorials at Little Common and Marina in Bexhill and in some of the Bexhill Town Centre planters.
- 13.2 Bedding displays shall be maintained in a neat and tidy manner at all times, so as to provide an attractive appearance for the maximum period of time, in accordance with the requirements of high quality planting.
- 13.3 Plants to be grown in Plantpak 18 growing tray or similar and in peat free compost. Contractor to provide evidence on request. Plants must be well-established and pest and disease free.
- 13.4 Bed preparation: Beds to be dug over or rotavated prior to planting. All stones exceeding 20mm, weeds, litter and other debris shall be removed. Consolidate by treading and rake to obtain a fine tilth. For summer bedding only, incorporate a suitable fertilizer in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 13.5 Planting: All plants shall be correctly firmed into place, avoiding excessive compaction and damage to the roots or the aerial part of the plant.
- 13.6 Stripping: Unless otherwise instructed by the Client, no bed shall be stripped in excess of seven days in advance of planting, and no bed shall be stripped unless bed preparation is to be completed within five days. No bed shall be stripped and left in an uncultivated condition over a weekend.

Summer bedding

- 13.7 Summer bedding will be a two-yearly rotation of bedding pelargoniums (geraniums) in year one and African or American marigolds in year two planted in the last two weeks of May or the first week of June at a density of 30 plants per square metre.
- 13.8 Maintain the beds monthly by hoeing or cultivating, remove weeds and rogue plants, including rogue bulbs. Deadhead at the same time. Beds should be weed free after each monthly visit.
- 13.9 Irrigate summer bedding evenly, to ensure healthy and sustainable flowering. Care should be taken to avoid scorching of the plants and water damage to the soil structure and the plants themselves. A low-pressure hose or similar should therefore be used and the beds flooded. During hot weather this shall only be carried out in the early morning or evening, not during the day.

Winter/Spring bedding

- 13.10 Winter/spring bedding will be single colour wallflowers planted in October at a density of 25 plants per square metre interplanted with complimentary tulips at a density of 50 bulbs per square metre. The same colour should not be repeated in consecutive years.
- 13.11 Maintain the beds in March by hoeing or cultivating to remove weeds and rogue plants taking care not to damage emerging bulbs. Beds should be weed free after the visit.

13 SITE PRESENCE

- 13.3 During the working week, the Contractor is required to provide a full time member of staff at, Egerton Park and another at Bexhill Seafront (includes Galey Hill, East Parade Marina Gardens and West Parade).
- 13.4 The site-based staff will be expected to perform the full range of grounds maintenance duties, supported by mobile maintenance teams, as required.
- 13.5 A full time presence shall mean the following hours: Monday to Friday – 7.30am to 4.30pm or equivalent if variable hours are worked Summer and Winter.

14 STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

GENERAL

- 14.3 As a minimum, the two site-based members of staff on the Contract must have a recognised qualification in horticulture and at least two years of experience in fulltime paid horticultural employment undertaking tasks comparable to those in this Contract. The Contractor will be required to provide evidence of this at the start of the Contract. During the course of the contract, replacement staff must also meet this criteria.
- 14.4 Contract staff must comply with all relevant laws and legislation whilst engaged in delivering this Contract including those related to the use, maintenance and storage of vehicles, machinery, chemicals and the use of illegal substances.
- 14.5 The Contractor must be fully aware of all relevant safety legislation and codes of practice, with particular attention to the safe use of machinery and power tools.
- 14.6 All staff are expected to hold a full driving licence. Tractor drivers must have a minimum of two years experience in tractor and plant operation.
- 14.7 All staff must comply fully with the requirements of The Environmental Protection Act.
- 14.8 At all times, at least one member of staff must hold an up-to-date PA1 and PA6 qualification for the safe use of pesticides using a hand held applicator. Evidence of this will be required at the start of the Contract.
- 14.9 The requirements for the Play Area Inspector is covered under PLAY AREAS.
- 14.10 The Contractor must consider at all times their obligations towards the workforce under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 and the current related Approved Code of Practice. At all times, at least one member of staff working locally during the working week (Monday to Friday) must hold an HSE approved Certificate in First Aid.
- 14.11 The Contractor is encouraged to consider the employment of horticultural students during their Industrial placement years, who are studying for appropriate and relevant qualifications.
- 14.12 The Contractor is also encouraged to provide for staff to attend day-release courses and other skills training to maintain and enhance the skills base.

15 TENNIS COURTS

GENERAL

- 15.3 There are five public tennis courts and one kickabout court at Egerton Park. The two other courts are the responsibility of Egerton Park Tennis Club. There is one public tennis court alongside one basketball court at Little Common Recreation Ground.
- 15.4 Only the five public tennis courts at Egerton Park will receive routine maintenance under the Contract. The basketball pads at various sites are also excluded. Works orders will be issued for any additional court maintenance needed.
- 15.5 The Egerton Park tennis courts are kept locked and members of the public can only access them via the keypad entry system after making a booking.

Surface cleaning

- 15.4 The surface will be cleaned using an electric leaf blower or electric vacuum to the regimes below. Sweeping is not permitted. Moss and weed management, jet washing and line marking are excluded.

Regime	Period	Blowing Frequency
Courts 1 & 2	Summer: 1 st April to 30 th September	monthly
	Winter: 1 st October to 31 st March	weekly
Courts other	Summer: 1st April to 30th September	monthly
	Winter: 1 st October to 31st March	monthly

Tennis nets

- 15.6 The nets are to be adjusted as needed. As the courts can only be accessed by paying customers it is not anticipated that they will be subject to vandalism and they should only need adjusting on an occasional basis.
- 15.7 Damaged nets should be reported to the Client in a timely fashion so that replacements can be ordered by the Client. The Contractor will be required to take down the damaged nets and put up the replacements.

16 WATER COURSES AND DITCHES

MONTHLY MAINTENANCE

- 17.1 Remove all rubbish, litter and obstructions from the water across the entire width of the watercourse. Remove and dispose of any fly tipped items and recover items such as park seats and return to their proper locations. Leave the site in a clean and in a tidy condition upon completion of the works.

QUARTERLY MAINTENANCE

- 17.2 Cut or strim banks, excluding trees and bushes to 50mm. All arisings are to be removed from site.

Leaves and Debris

- 17.3 Clear leaves and debris from culverts, outfalls, overflows and grills monthly during the winter (1st October to 31st April) and on two occasions during the summer.

OTHER MAINTENANCE

- 17.4 There may be an occasional need to remove debris or fly-tipped items in response to concerns about pollution, safety or the risk of flooding. In such situations, a works order will be issued if required.
- 17.5 There may be an occasional need to clear grills in addition to the routine maintenance, particularly during the winter before and during heavy rain to ensure they don't become blocked.
- 17.6 Any other maintenance, including silt removal will be managed through works orders, as need.

17 WEEKEND DUTIES

- 17.3 The Contractor shall arrange for litter to be collected and bins emptied to the specified frequency.
- 17.4 The Contractor shall arrange for gates to be locked / unlocked as directed by the Client. At the time of letting the Contract this is limited to St Mary's Recreation Ground Car Park – Bexhill. This is done at the same time as Bexhill Cemetery.
- 17.5 Egerton Park playground daily inspection includes weekends for 6 months commencing at Easter.

18 WOODLANDS

- 19.1 No routine work is to be undertaken to woodlands except for litter management which is covered elsewhere.
- 19.2 Trees works is largely undertaken through the Council's three year call-off contract with Elite Arborists. The services of other specialist arboricultural contractors are used when needed.
- 19.3 If, in the course of carrying out litter duties, the Contractor observes any issues with dangerous or damaged trees, seats or fences, major fly tipping or abandoned vehicles, the Contractor should inform the Client within one working day.

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting – 4 March 2024**CB23/77. PROCUREMENT OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT
(9)**

Members considered the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which detailed the requirements to procure a new grounds maintenance contract for the Council. The current contract with Idverde was scheduled to expire on 30 November 2024. The report detailed the current 'routine and non-routine' works carried out and significant savings achieved since July 2023. A budget of £250,000 per annum had been set for 'routine works', and a further budget for 'non' routine works', both of which excluded all works at the Council's cemeteries as these works were self-funded through charges and would remain as current.

It was noted that the maintenance of sports grounds/pitches, including bowling greens, were one of the most expensive aspects of the 'routine works' and it was therefore desirable for their maintenance to be completed by the clubs. Officers were working with the various sports clubs to agree leases and/or licences to handover the grounds maintenance of sports pitches to the clubs. Individual meetings had been held with all the clubs and ongoing discussions had been largely positive to date.

To understand the market appetite and what services could be provided within the proposed £250,000 budget, a soft market test had been completed. A copy of the documents was detailed at Appendices 1, 1a, 1b, and 1c to the report. Several responses were received and provided crucial feedback for the basis of the new contract, which provided confidence to officers that a contractor would bid for these works. A draft specification had been created, as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report.

It was proposed that the new contract be procured for five years, with the ability to extend for a further three years, two years and finally one year (10 in total). Flexibility would also be included regarding future devolvement opportunities and changes to the budget. The contract would focus on critical services in order of priority, particularly the higher visitor areas such as Egerton Park, seafront in Bexhill etc. Whilst consideration could be given in the future to providing an in-house service, significant investment and resources would be required.

Cabinet recognised the Council's financial challenges and agreed that significant savings were required, however it was extremely important that the Council's public spaces were maintained, remained safe and accessible to all. It was therefore agreed that the Director – Place and Climate Change be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract to procure and appoint a new grounds maintenance contractor from 1 December 2024. It was also agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft contract specification and that provided there were no major concerns raised, officers be authorised to commence the tender process without further recourse to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) delegated authority be granted to the Director - Place and Climate Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism, Joint Waste Contract to procure and appoint a contractor from 1 December 2024 to provide grounds maintenance work across the district within the agreed budget; and
- 2) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to review the draft contract specification as per Appendix 2 and subject to no suggested amendments, officers be authorised to commence the tender process without further recourse to Cabinet.

(Councillors Byrne and Timpe each declared an Other Registrable Interest in this matter in so far as they were Members of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof.)

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 March 2024
Title:	Local Enforcement Plan Task and Finish Group
Report of:	Ben Hook, Director – Place and Climate Change
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To recommend a Local Enforcement Plan Task and Finish Group be established to inform the Council’s Local Enforcement Plan.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) a Local Enforcement Plan Task and Finish Group be established;
- 2) the Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 be approved, together with indicative timescales for carrying out the review and reporting back; and
- 3) the size of the Task and Finish Group be agreed and appointments made thereto.

Introduction

1. The draft revised Local Enforcement Plan (2023) (LEP) was not approved by Cabinet when it was presented for approval in February 2024 and a number of concerns were raised. Cabinet had therefore requested that a Task and Finish Group be established to inform the LEP going forward to address the issues identified (Minute CB23/66 refers).

Terms of Reference

2. The draft Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group can be found at Appendix 1. When establishing a Task and Finish Group, the Committee should consider the operating guidelines for Task and Finish Groups contained within the Constitution and attached at Appendix 2, which will guide the issues to be considered and agreed, including size and timescales.
3. The desired outcome of the review is:
 - a) An understanding of the role and function of Planning Enforcement within Development Management.
 - b) Establishment of SMART targets within the LEP taking account of limited resource within the team.
 - c) Clear understanding of the limitations of enforcement actions including the associated costs.
 - d) How the Council will fund such costs.

Conclusion

4. The Council's current LEP is outdated and is not fit for purpose. This review is required to enable the Council to have in place a new LEP that will assist in a more efficient and consistent planning enforcement service to manage stakeholders, customers and residents' expectations.

Financial Implications

5. Depending on the outcome of the review, there may be financial implications but these are unknown at this stage.

Human Resources Implications

6. The Task and Finish Group will be resourced from within the Planning Team with support from Democratic Services.

Environmental

7. In terms of carrying out the review, it will where possible, be carried out via MS Teams in order to keep the carbon footprint of the review itself to a minimum.

Equalities and Diversity

8. Equalities impact will form part of the development of the LEP and an Equalities Impact Assessment will accompany the revised LEP.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

Chief Executive:	Lorna Ford
Report Contact Officer:	Ben Hook
e-mail address:	ben.hook@rother.gov.uk
Appendices:	A - Draft Terms of Reference B - Operating guidelines for Task and Finish Groups set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Relevant previous Minutes:	CB23/66
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

Rother District Council**LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP****TERMS OF REFERENCE****Aims and Origin**

Enforcement is a discretionary service within the Planning Service. As a discretionary service which has to be balanced with public interest and indeed trust in the service. The Rother District Council Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) should provide information on how the Planning Enforcement Team, will undertake its monitoring and implementation duties, including how it should address and investigate breaches of planning control.

The current LEP is inconsistent with the operations of the service. It is also overly ambitious on timescales for enforcement proceedings which, bench marked against other local authority planning plans, has been found to be unreasonable.

It is, therefore, necessary to review the current LEP to ensure that the intentions within the document is achievable in the public interest and set against the background of limited resource and cost of undertaking this discretionary service.

The revised LEP (2023) was not taken onboard by the Executive when it was presented for approval and it was recommended that a Task and Finish Group was establish to inform the LEP going forward. These terms of reference sets out the proposed objectives for the Task and Finish Group.

Scope

- a) Existing LEP and functionality.
- b) Role and function of enforcement within the Planning Service.
- c) Resource within the Enforcement Team.

Approach

- a) Review current LEP.
- b) Determine priorities for further work.
- c) Review current workload, targets set against resource.
- d) Review and consider realistically the role of enforcement in Planning.

Desired Outcomes

- e) An understanding of the role and function of Planning Enforcement within Development Management.
- f) Establishment of SMART targets within the LEP taking account of limited resource within the team.
- g) Clear understanding of the limitations of enforcement actions including the associated costs.
- h) How the Council will fund such costs.

Timescale

- Preliminary meeting and review – TBC 2024.
- Follow-up meeting – TBC 2024.
- Analysis, report writing and recommendations – TBC 2024.
- Report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – TBC 2024.

Membership

Five or Six Non-Executive Members as nominated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (any Member of the Council).

Officer Lead

Kemi Erifevieme Development Management

Operating guidelines for Task and Finish Groups set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Formal Agenda	Optional
Informal minutes / notes	Yes, and not routinely publicly available.
Lead Officer(s)	Lead Officer(s) from the relevant service area with support from a dedicated Democratic Services Officer.
Action points	To be compiled by the Democratic Services Officer as part of minutes and circulated to all relevant officers and reviewed from meeting to meeting.
External / public involvement	Each Task and Finish Group to determine whether meetings shall or shall not be public. Stakeholders shall be invited to attend and to contribute to the group's work programmes, including co-option to the group, as appropriate.
Politically balanced	Not essential, but there is an expectation that task and finish groups shall include representatives from each political group, as far as reasonably practicable.
Composition	Appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from non-executive members with the relevant experience / interest. The lead Cabinet member may be invited to contribute in an advisory capacity to reviews.
Size	This shall vary according to the matter under discussion; however, groups should not normally comprise more than five members of the Council.
Terms of Reference	Terms of Reference shall be set and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the point of establishment and shall include: (a) The specific issue to be considered; (b) A timescale and deadline; (c) Principal aims and objectives.

This page is intentionally left blank

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2023 – 2024		
DATE OF MEETING	SUBJECT – MAIN ITEM IN BOLD	Cabinet Portfolio Holder
18.03.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring as at Quarter 3 – 2023/24 • People Strategy and Workforce Plan Presentation • Grounds Maintenance Contract / Specification • Local Enforcement Plan Task and Finish Group 	Field Jeeawon Oliver Timpe Killeen
22.04.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council • Review of Progress Against the Recommendations of the Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group • Report of the Digital and Customer Services Strategy Task and Finish Group • Impact of Airbnb and Second Homes in Camber, Rye and Winchelsea 	Coleman Byrne Timpe
WORK PROGRAMME 2024 – 2025		
03.06.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Fourth Quarter 2023/24 • State of the District • Annual Work Programme 	
08.07.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Outturn 2023/24 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 1 2024/25 • Active Rother Partnership Strategy 	
09.09.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: First Quarter 2024/25 • Annual Report of the De La Warr Pavilion 	
14.10.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30 	
18.11.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Report: Second Quarter 2024/25 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 2 2024/25 	
20.01.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2025/26 • Key Performance Targets 2025/26 	
17.03.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime and Disorder Committee: to receive a report from the Community Safety Partnership • Performance Report: Third Quarter 2024/25 • Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring – Quarter 3 2024/25 	
28.04.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in and Urgency Procedures • Draft Annual Report to Council 	

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of New Corporate Plan • Development of New Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

- Health and Well-Being Board – Update Report
- Litter Strategy
- Local Strategic Partnership – Update Report
- Regeneration inc. Leisure Centre, Fountains, Skate Park and Accessibility of Green Spaces Across the District
- Review of Progress Against the Recommendations of the Health and Well-Being Task and Finish Group (Year 3)
- Review of the Economic Regeneration Strategy
- Review of the Financial Stability Programme
- Review of the Tourism Strategy and the Impact of Airbnbs