

**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.)