

DECISION TITLE: Changes to the Parks, Trees and Open Spaces service within the Amey contract following the 2015/16 budget
Councillor Elsey, Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications
March 2015
Deadline date: March 2015

Cabinet portfolio holder:	Councillor Elsey, Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications
Responsible Director:	John Harrison, Corporate Director: Resources
Is this a Key Decision?	YES If yes has it been included on the Forward Plan: Yes Unique Key decision Reference from Forward Plan: KEY/13FEB15/02
Is this decision eligible for call-in?	YES
Does this Public report have any annex that contains exempt information?	NO
Is this a project and if so has it been registered on Verto?	NO

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- a) confirm service changes to litter collections in the City's parks and open spaces, the maintenance in cemeteries and parks, parkway verge maintenance, grass-cutting and shrub maintenance (which are fully detailed in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4 of this report) within the Amey contract. These service changes follow Full Council's approval of reductions in the Parks, Trees and Open spaces maintenance budget at phase 1 of £110,500 and at phase 2 of £131,500; and
- b) approve the capital investment of £97,000 to achieve these savings broken down into the following: -
 - Tractor with front and side cutting flail unit - £65,000
 - Ride on Batwing mower - £32,000

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications to approve the service changes following budget decisions in respect of the Amey contract and the delivery of the Parks Trees and Open space function.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 2.1 This report is for Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications to consider exercising delegated authority under paragraph 3.4.6 of Part 3 of the constitution in accordance with the terms of their portfolio at paragraph (d).

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	N/A
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4. DETAILS OF DECISION REQUIRED

- 4.1 On the 17 December 2014, £110,500 of savings from Parks, Trees and Open Spaces in respect of the Amey contract went to full council (phase 1 of the budget) and were voted to be carried through as part of the budget for 2015 / 16.

- 4.2 As a result of phase 1 savings, this Cabinet Member Decision Notice proposes that the Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications confirms the following service changes to the Amey contract:-

- Fewer litter collections in the City's parks and open spaces. The proposal is to reduce the frequency of these collections by around 20 per cent. This proposal makes a saving of £10,500.
- Reduce maintenance in cemeteries and parks by around 25 per cent. This includes the frequency of grass cutting, flower bed maintenance including weeding and pruning and footpaths not being swept as frequently, generating a saving of £100,000.

- 4.3 On the 4 March 2015, a further £131,500 of savings from Parks, Trees and Open Spaces savings in respect of the Amey contract went to full council (phase 2 of the budget) and were voted to be carried through as part of the budget for 2015 / 16.

- 4.4 As a result of phase 2 savings, this Cabinet Member Decision Notice proposes that the Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications confirms the following service changes to the Amey contract:

- Parkway verge maintenance will be reduced to only cut the first two meters and sightlines, this will result in the rest of the grass being left to naturalise and grow longer. This will be done on all major roads through the City including some high profile gateway routes, saving £10,000.00
- We will restrict the final cut of the year on rural verges to only include a single width and sightlines, currently the final cut of the year is taken all the way back to the hedge line, this will save £3,500.00

- The cutting regime for shrubs will be reduced from the current annual city-wide cut-back, to a bi-annual full cut back of all shrubs and hedges across the City. (50% of the shrubs will be cut each year sightlines and any health and safety issues would be maintained on all shrubs and hedges throughout the year). Certain shrubs will receive a hard cut back from pathways where required, other areas could be designated as hedge natural and left to grow naturalised with no cut backs. This will offer a saving of £62,000.00
- Grass cutting will move from 10 cuts per year to 8 City wide, also additional open space areas will be identified and moved to 3 cuts per year and others will be cut once. In all areas of the City, grass adjacent / parallel to footpaths will be cut 8 times and full account will be taken to ensure there are amenity areas for play available. This will save £39,000.00
- The balance of £17,000 that is required to make up the £131,500 saving originally proposed from verges, grass cutting and shrubs will be delivered by refinement of the above proposals or alternatively looking at options on bedding plants, for example leaving soil bare in the spring or considering sowing wild flowers instead of bedding plants

4.5 As a result of phase 2 savings, this Cabinet Member Decision Notice proposes that the Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Waste Management and Communications approves a capital investment of £97,000 is need to support and implement these savings this is broken down into the following: -

- Tractor with front and side cutting flail unit - £65,000
- Ride on Batwing mower - £32,000

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 These budget savings have been through the following consultations:-

Phase 1

- Public Consultation – 14 November 2014
- Cabinet – 15 December 2014
- Full Council – 17 December 2014

Phase 2

- Public Consultation – 28 January 2015
- Cabinet – 19 February 2015
- Full Council – 4 March 2015

5.2 As a result of the consultation undertaken on the original proposals:

- i) Cabinet recommended (and Full Council agreed) not to pursue the original approach of *removing* 20% of the city's shrub stock, preferring to adopt a different, less intensive maintenance regime
- ii) Cabinet withdrew the original proposal of making savings from the closure of bowling greens and grass court tennis in the city

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 The potential savings will aid the council in achieving a balanced budget for 2015/16 whilst still maintaining a reasonable service within our Parks Trees and Open Space Areas.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS & ANY RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 7.1 It is recommended that in order to achieve the overall required budget for Peterborough City Council in 2015 / 16 that these service changes be made. Members of the public and the Cross Party Budget Working Group have been fully consulted. The overall reductions in the Parks Trees and Open Spaces budget was also approved (for phase 1) at Full Council on the 17 of December 2014 and (for phase 2) at Full Council on 4 March 2015.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Do nothing - Maintaining the current frequency of services is impractical in light of the council's budget reduction. To maintain services at the current level would result in the authority being required to find savings from other areas of the council, potentially impacting on more vulnerable services.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The total budget reductions in Parks, Trees and Open Spaces maintenance of £242,000 will see a decrease in cleansing and maintenance of all Parks, Trees and Open Spaces of 25% as well as changes to grass cutting and shrub maintenance.

- 9.2 These will result in a reduced frequency of grass cutting and reduced flower bed maintenance in parks and cemeteries and fewer litter collections in the city's parks and open spaces.

- 9.3 The savings will have a visible effect on the City – areas of grass left longer and shrubs growing taller before being cut. Parkway verges will have longer grass in some areas however through all these savings Health and Safety and sightlines will always be maintained.

- 9.4 The services will continue to be provided, albeit not to the current level of frequency.

- 9.5 Financial

- 9.5.1 This reduction in Parks, Trees and Open Spaces maintenance will result in a budget saving to the Council of £242,000.

- 9.5.2 Capital investment of £96,670.00 needed to support and implement these savings:: -

- Tractor with front and side cutting flail unit - £64,700
- Ride on Batwing mower - £31,970

- 9.6 Legal

- 9.6.1 The provision of parks and open spaces is not a statutory function, however the Local Government Act 1999, provides local authorities with the powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their communities. The provision of good quality parks and open spaces can make a huge contribution to all aspects of well-being. Whilst the Council has a statutory duty to cut grass for safety reasons, the majority of grass cutting is undertaken for amenity or aesthetic reasons and is therefore a discretionary service rather than a statutory duty.

9.6.2 The Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, imposes a duty on local authorities to keep specified land and public highways clear of litter and refuse so far as is practicable. A Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse is issued under section 89(7) of the 1990 Act. The Code defines standards of cleanliness and sets how quickly differing types of land should be returned to a set cleanliness standard.

10. DECLARATIONS / CONFLICTS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS GRANTED

None.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.