

## Appendix 1

### Overview and Scrutiny Q&A Grounds Maintenance

#### **1. Who was involved with the setup of the in-house operation and what background and experience did they have?**

The pre insourcing work was managed by the projects team lead by Paul Ashman who ran a series of meetings. Attendees were from all relevant departments including, HR, Assets, Finance, DSO, Legal etc.

Once the TUPE transfer was completed and the contract with Idverde ended mid-November 2022 the service was delivered by Environmental Services. The DSO manager and Fleet Manager led with respect to vehicles and equipment, the Interim Green Spaces Manger worked on the schedules and rounds with contributions from the in-house Green Spaces supervisor and TUPE transferred supervisor who had worked for Idverde.

#### **2. What was the quality of the handover from the contractors who were previously doing the work?**

We held one meeting with Idverde. They had asked to end the contract early and at the meeting asked us either to increase the value of the contract by £60k per annum or to negotiate an early termination of the contract. No paperwork was transferred from Idverde. We were already aware that the contractor was not meeting the contract specification which was largely based on the Compulsory Competitive Tender specification drawn up at some point in the 1990s.

#### **3. What detailed documentation was available from the contractors and Community Services who were previously responsible?**

As above we did not receive any documentation from the former contractor. The Parks and Open Spaces Manager had left the authority around October 2021. The DSO and CHES met the Assistant Open Spaces Manager on one occasion before he left the authority in May 2022. Most of that conversation was around other parks and open spaces work. He had not been responsible for managing the manned parks. Files with records of complaints and rectification notices together with additional works orders (AWOs) have since been found on the shared drives. Maps showing all locations and contract frequencies were also found on file. These were not up to date but offered a good base line. These maps are being updated to reflect the present position relating to locations, frequencies, and requirements. This is an ongoing process.

#### **4. Within the current E&S structure who within the management team has operational and management experience of running a grounds maintenance operation.**

The following officers have operational, management and contract management experience.

Shaun Barnes DSO Manager – Management experience and operational experience

Helen Wilson Deputy Green Spaces Manager – Contract management experience, operational management experience

Steve Owen Green Spaces Supervisor – operational experience and management experience.

**5. What process was followed to establish the operational plans and what was submitted for scrutiny to either the Community Services and/or Environment & Sustainability Committees (or any other committee - e.g. CMC)?**

The project team and Corporate Head of Environmental Services updated E&S Committee as the project progressed. The DSO manager had devised 6 operating teams covering the following areas, Cemeteries, Housing, Parks, Grass Cutting x 2 and Horticulture. The Idverde Supervisor was TUPE transferred into the new team. He had been running the grass cutting rounds and the teams continued to follow the same established rounds from November 2022. The former parks supervisor was appointed into a Green Spaces Supervisor role. He has considerable experience in the borough having worked in the formal parks for many years. He contributed to developing operational plans modelled on the former operation.

**Recognising the challenges experienced since April and the neglect inherited by the in-house team, when does Runnymede expect to see an improvement over what was previously being delivered?**

The challenges from November 2022 until July 2023 were largely due to three factors.

- Firstly, the former contractor Idverde had significantly reduced the resources allocated to Runnymede when they lost the Elmbridge contract in September 2022. They ran both contracts from the same yard. Some autumn activities were not completed including the autumn grass cuts.
- Secondly, delays in acquiring the requisite machinery, in particular the wide angled mower (WAM) which arrived two months late meant we simply didn't have the necessary machinery to get through all the rounds.
- Thirdly, the wettest spring in 40 years made some locations which are sited on flood plains very difficult to access as the larger mowers and tractor sank into the ground. The rain also supported very rapid growth of grass this spring.

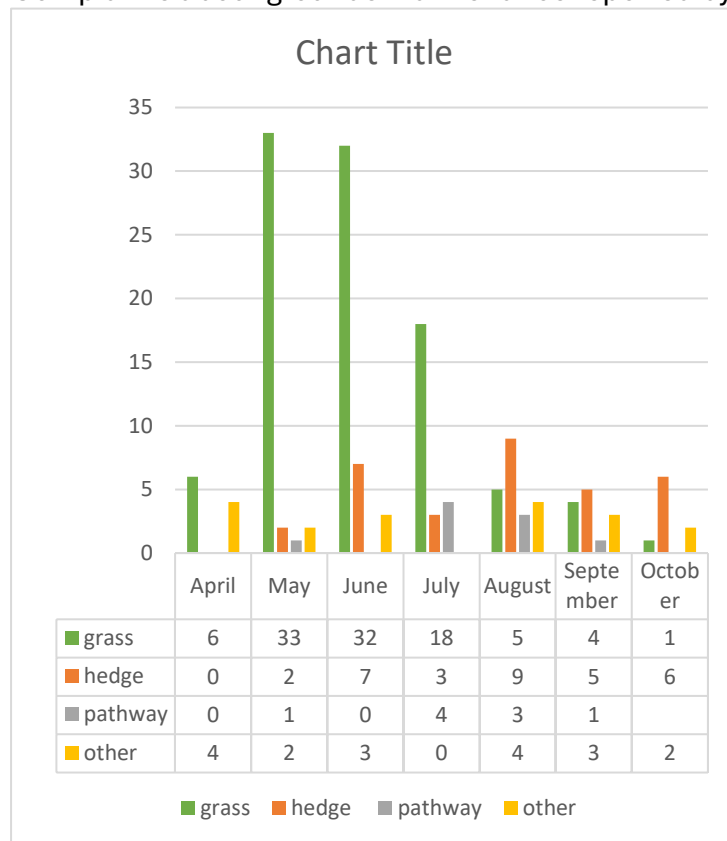
We are now delivering to a higher service standard with respect to grass cutting in parks, cemeteries, and amenity areas. The grass cutting teams will be working though until December. Last November we received complaints about the grass in the cemeteries whereas this year the new team have been complimented for their work. Horticulture work had been neglected for a number of years and is now being addressed – high hedge reductions for example.

The high street planters have been planted with perennials for the first time in a number of years. This work had been dropped from the former contract to save costs.



- September 2023 Facebook post

Complaints about grounds maintenance reported by email or online form 2023



Helen Clark November 2023

## Photos from around the borough

Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:



Before:



After:







**Leaf clearance is a big job in Runnymede- all those trees!**



