

CABINET

15th February 2022

GROUND MAINTENANCE AND FORESTRY PROCUREMENT- PROJECT APPROVAL

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change

Strategic Aim:	Customer-focussed services	
Key Decision:	Yes	
Exempt Information:	No	
Cabinet Member Responsible:	Cllr Lucy Stephenson: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change	
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Ward Councillors	All	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the re-procurement of a combined grounds maintenance and forestry contract as detailed in the Pre-Procurement Business Case attached at appendix A and in accordance with the service-led governance arrangements detailed in the report.
2. Notes that the Council has exercised a contractual option to extend the existing Grounds Maintenance contract to now expire on the 31st December 2023.
3. Notes that the Council has exercised a contractual option to extend the existing Forestry contract to now expire on 31st December 2023.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to the establishment of the required project structures to allow the undertaking of the re-procurement of grounds maintenance and forestry services and to progress with the re-procurement exercise as detailed in this report.

2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Council entered into its existing grounds maintenance arrangements for a term of 3 years with Harborough District Council w.e.f. 1st April 2019 on a shared service basis. Amongst other things the Agreement provides for an option to extend. The Council has exercised the right to extend on the basis that it was beneficial to do so, primarily so that it firstly now provides sufficient time to undertake a robust re-procurement exercise, and secondly it enabled the contract expiry to be bought broadly in line with the expiry date of the existing forestry contract. The existing grounds contract will therefore now expire on 31st December 2023.
- 2.2 The current forestry contract is with George Walker (Tree Care) Ltd and is due to expire on the 31st January 2023. Agreement has been reached to extend this contract to 31st December 2023 to bringing it to a co-terminus expiry date with the extended Grounds contract. That then allows Grounds and Forestry to be tendered together to commence on 1st January 2024 which it is considered beneficial to do.
- 2.3 The Current Service offer is via separate grounds maintenance and specialist forestry contractors. It is felt that through the adoption of an appropriate “lot” strategy, to be confirmed in due course, that it will enable the non-specialist tree work elements to be included in the grounds maintenance “lot” and with a separate “lot” for specialist tree work only. It would be hoped that this will result in lower pricing for the non-specialist tree work, it will also improve the critical mass of the overall offer to the market.
- 2.4 In broad terms the composition of the proposal is likely to see a grounds maintenance “lot” comprising grass cutting shrub pruning and reductions, hedge cutting, low level crown lifts and epicormics growth removal. Also a forestry “lot” to include service of tree reductions, tree felling and all speciality forestry aspects. Consideration will also be given to whether there is benefit in including some ancillary aspects such as repairs to boundary fences and gates etc. Whilst it is intended that the arrangements will deal with the current assets in scope, consideration will also be given as to whether it is beneficial to bring in additional areas that currently sit outside the existing arrangements.
- 2.5 Devolution of maintenance of specified areas to Town and Parish councils will be considered as available options in the specification.
- 2.6 A Project Management Framework risk assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the council’s Risk and Project Evaluation Criteria with the project attaining a risk score of 63 assessing it as a medium risk project. Governance for the project will therefore include:
- A part time service led project manager
 - A project team in place
 - Local logging of risks and issues
- 2.7 A Contract Risk Evaluation Assessment has also been completed assessing a score of 14 (weighted 72). This classifies the level of risk presented by the contract as medium. The financial vetting standards both during the procurement phase and subsequently over the life of the contract will therefore be as specified for medium risk contracts in the council’s related Financial Due Diligence Guidance.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 A “lessons learnt” exercise has been undertaken with the Council’s existing contractors. Internal customers in addition to Environmental Services, principally the Highways and Property functions are aware of this re-procurement exercise and will be fully consulted as specifications are developed.
- 3.2 A public consultation will also be undertaken allowing residents to express their views.
- 3.3 Specifications will be designed to align with required biodiversity considerations through consultation with the Members Climate Action Group and in turn through their volunteer network. This group is a strong link with members of the community where they are able to voice suggestions of how to improve the local areas’ biodiversity.
- 3.4 Following the Environment Act receiving Royal assent in November 2021, further considerations into possible opportunities that may be available under net biodiversity gain will be explored.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council can defer tendering both of the existing grounds maintenance and forestry contracts by exercising the option to extend for the second 12 months period.
- 4.2 Separate tendering of grounds maintenance and forestry services. The benefits as detailed in this report will not be achieved.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The 21/22 net budget for Grounds Maintenance (comprising cost centres RC 1524, 2615 and 2690) totals £450k. For Forestry Services the net budget (cost centre 1526) totals £115k.
- 5.2 It is the case that a number of Parish Council’s undertake their own grass cutting (mainly rural verges) with financial support from the Council. That position will be reviewed in line with the Environment Acts Net Biodiversity Gain Strategy.

6. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 As per the Council’s agreed project management framework, this project was analysed against the risk matrix and it was deemed a medium risk project-this requires a governance structure of a service-led project team and a part-time service led project manager.
- 6.2 Due to the value of the contract over five years approval is sought from Council to re-procure the grounds and forestry contract.

7. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no data protection implications arising out of this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There are no implications arising out of this report.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications arising out of this report.

10. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications arising.

11. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Environmental Implications

11.1.1 The detailed specification will have regard to the emerging bio-diversity aspirations of the Council as guided by the Environment Act.

11.2 Procurement Implications

11.2.1 The detailed procurement strategy remains to be determined. This is to be through a YPO: DPS 881 framework.

12. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 It is considered that maximum benefit will be achieved by the combining of services as set out therein and by effectively testing the market.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 There are no additional background papers to the report

14. APPENDICES

14.1 APPENDIX A: Pre-Procurement Business Case

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577