

# CABINET

## Grounds Maintenance – Options for Service Reduction

17 February 2009

### Report of Corporate Director (Community Services)

| PURPOSE OF REPORT   |                           |                  |  |                              |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|--|------------------------------|
| To provide Cabinet with options for service reduction in the service area of grounds maintenance. |                           |                  |  |                              |
| Key Decision  | X                         | Non-Key Decision |  | Referral from Cabinet Member |
| Date Included in Forward Plan   | 29 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2009 |                  |  |                              |
| This report is public   |                           |                  |  |                              |

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR BARRY

- (1) From the list of savings described (2a-2g) only 2f (reduction in mowing at Lancaster Cemetery) is taken through as a budgetary savings.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the 2009/2010 budget setting process Cabinet have requested a report that provides realistic options for making immediate savings from the service area of grounds maintenance.
- 1.2 Grounds maintenance is not in itself a statutory service area. However, it does contribute significantly to the corporate plan medium term objective 'make our district a cleaner and healthier place'. This objective has the priority outcome of 'cleaner streets and public open spaces'. The key performance indicator that measures this is NI195 which is used to measure improvements in litter, detritus, fly-posting and graffiti. Performance against this target is one of the few where the City Council are directly measured within the Lancashire Area Agreement.
- 1.3 Activities undertaken by the ground maintenance service also support a number of other corporate objectives particularly in the areas of regeneration and community safety.
- 1.4 These contributions were reinforced following the organisational restructure of City Council Direct Services (CCDS) which grouped the grounds maintenance and street cleansing operations within the same line management structure. As a result many of the functions of the service are operationally linked- eg litter bin emptying, litter picking, leaf clearance, removal of dumping etc. This organisational change has

generated operational efficiencies across the two service areas which have translated into demonstrable improvements in the cleanliness of streets and public open space.

- 1.5 The grounds maintenance operation is highly efficient and already operates to the most stretched schedules (eg grass cutting) that the equipment will allow. Through previous budget rounds considerable cutbacks in the standard of service have already been made (reduction in mowing frequencies, fallow areas, turfing of flower beds, replanting with perennials etc.)
- 1.6 The net cost of maintaining the parks and open space for which the Council has direct responsibility is £899,000. Additional expenditure is incurred and income generated from operations undertaken within the District that are carried out for different funders. These include-

- Highways verges (in urban core)- County Council
- Highways trees (in urban core)- County Council
- Housing estate open space – Council Housing HRA
- Housing estate trees- Council Housing HRA
- Maintenance of land drainage – Planning Services
- Weed spraying (in urban core) - County Council
- Some aspects of Cemeteries maintenance- Environmental Health and Strategic Housing
- Contract work- eg NHS, other Councils, regeneration schemes etc

## 2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 The options can be selected as individual items or as a whole.
- 2.2 If Cabinet do choose to select some or all of these options the number of seasonal gardeners recruited by CCDS will be reduced accordingly.

## 3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 None

## 4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 4.1 The options are as follows-

| Option | Description   | Pros   | Cons  |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 1      | Maintain current levels of service provision.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets for LAA and corporate plan assume current levels of service.</li> <li>• Will maintain the current level of cleanliness of streets and public spaces.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not generate any savings for 2009/2010 budget.</li> </ul>                                       |
| 2      | Reduce current levels of service provision through selection of some of or all of the sub- options set out below. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generates savings for 2009/2010 budget</li> <li>• The options have been designed to be realistic and can be</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Savings will be very visible</li> <li>• Will generate ongoing complaints from residents /</li> </ul> |

| Option | Description | Pros   | Cons   |
|--------|-------------|--|--|
|        |             | <p>immediately implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The options have been designed so that they do not impact on the District's parks.</li> </ul> | <p>visitors / users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely to have negative impact on corporate plan priority outcomes and targets in LAA</li> </ul> |

The sub- options for option 2 are as follows-

| Sub - option | Description and officer comments   | Saving per annum |
|--------------|--|------------------|
| 2a           | <b>Cease over marking of football pitches-</b> currently pitches are over marked 15 times per season. They would be marked only once at the beginning of the season.<br>Users of the pitches will consider this is something they contribute to via pitch fees.  | £3,100           |
| 2b           | <b>Turf over 33 of the 37 flower beds in Harbour garden area of Morecambe promenade-</b> regeneration work is taking place in the adjoining area. The flower beds are in need of some redesign.  | £6,800           |
| 2c           | <b>Turf over all flower beds in the sunken gardens at Morecambe Town Hall-</b> the flower beds are a long standing and popular feature. They are not visible from the main road.   | £3,300           |
| 2d           | <b>Turf over all 4 flower beds in the oval gardens in Dalton Square-</b> the flower beds are a long standing and popular feature.  | £1,800           |
| 2e           | <b>Reduce the playground improvement revenue budget by 50%-</b> this budget is used to repair/ replace broken playground equipment throughout the year. If the budget was reduced the remaining amount would be spent on a priority basis (using playground priority list). Equipment in playgrounds lower down in the priority list would be removed once damaged / broken. | £18,100          |
| 2f           | <b>Reduce number of grave plots that are mown on a regular basis in Lancaster cemetery-</b> currently all areas are mown 16 times per year. If the budget was approximately 50% of the plots would only be mown once per year.   | £8,900           |
| 2g           | <b>Reduce frequency of mowing on Broadway Bridge bankings to once per year-</b> currently these bankings are cut 16 times per year. The area would be included on a more frequent litter picking schedule if this option was selected.   | £4,700           |

## 5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 The officer preferred option is option 2 with the exception of 2a.

## 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The report responds to Cabinet's request for options that are realistic, can be quickly implemented and will generate savings.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Corporate Plan-

Medium term objective- To make our district a cleaner and healthier place

Priority Outcome- cleaner streets and public open spaces

KPI- NI 195- improved street and environmental cleanliness

Lancashire Area Agreement- 3 year target set for individual Districts measured by NI 195

## **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

The main impact will be aesthetic only in terms of the appearance of the affected areas. There may be reduced play opportunities if vandalised/broken playground equipment is taken out of service.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As contained within the report. The proposal (option 2) offers an array of savings totalling £46,700 which can be achieved through a reduction to the number of seasonal gardeners recruited and/or materials. All approved savings should be built into the 2009/2010 budget process with immediate effect.

## **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

In reaching a decision, Members are advised to consider the options in context of the budget position and the need to make ongoing savings and achieve value for money, as well as proposed priorities and the impact on the service.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal have been consulted and have no further comments to add.

## **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[Click here and type list of background papers]

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