

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 28

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Grounds Maintenance Review
Date of Meeting: 12 October 2009
Report of: Director of Adult Social Care & Housing
Contact Officer: Name: Robert Keelan Tel: 29-3261
E-mail: Robert.Keelan@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To propose a review of our current grounds maintenance arrangements with the aim of creating quality spaces in which people want to live and can be proud, and which others will respect.
- 1.2 To work with the Estates Service Monitoring Group to bring recommendations on future delivery of the grounds maintenance service on housing management owned land.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee endorse the proposal to carry out a review of our current grounds maintenance arrangements.
- (2) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee endorses the proposal for the Estates Service Monitoring Group to undertake this work with officers.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS.

- 3.1 We are aiming to become a 3 star service and to do so we must satisfy our residents and the audit commission that we keep our estate grounds clean, tidy and attractive by working closely with service users, other departments and external agencies.

3.2 We currently have a grounds maintenance contract provided by City Parks who have provided the service since 2004. The level of service provision varies across the city and the contract specification has not been amended since 2004. We need to review whether the specification meets the current needs and aspirations of residents. We want to find out from residents what they think of the current service and whether we need to change our approach to the management of our green spaces and communal areas.

3.3 It is proposed that a project officer will work alongside the Estates Service Monitoring Group to:

- Consider the objectives for the grounds maintenance service.
- Review the level of service residents would like.
- Review how other housing organisations provide their service and achieve value for money.
- Prepare a specification for future service delivery of our grounds maintenance service.
- Make proposals for future contract and performance management of the grounds maintenance service on housing management land.
- Work with City Parks to explore innovative ways of maintaining the grounds (e.g. opportunities for conservation, wild flower planting, food growing and allotments)

The group will also involve and work in partnership with City Parks to review the service.

3.4 The driver for this change is value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 It is proposed that this project will be undertaken with the Estates Services Monitoring Group which consists of two representatives from each of the four area panel areas, a leaseholder and a high rise action group member. The Estates Service Monitoring Group has taken the lead in reviewing estate based issues such as the cleaning service and it seems appropriate to extend its remit into wider estate based issues.

4.2 In line with other chairman focus groups this would be a time limited piece of work and we will bring a preliminary update back to Housing Management Consultative Committee in December 2009.

4.3 In Autumn 2009 we will be carrying out a tenant satisfaction survey which will be sent to a number of randomly selected tenants. Through this survey we will seek views on our current grounds maintenance service and feedback will be passed to the Estates Service Monitoring Group to consider in their proposals.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 The 2009/10 Housing Revenue Account Budget includes £388,810 for Grounds Maintenance, of which £319,640 is for the main contract with City Parks and the remaining £69,170 for trees and garden maintenance works outside the main contract. The amount recovered through service charges for Grounds Maintenance is currently budgeted for at £189,150 for Tenants and £57,600 for Leaseholders.

5.1.1 When carrying out the review the working group will need to consider the financial implications of any changes to the current service in respect of charges to the Housing Revenue Account Budget and the Grounds Maintenance service charge income received from Tenants and Leaseholders living in blocks of flats.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen

Date: 30/09/09

Legal Implications:

5.2 There are no direct legal or Human Rights Act implications arising out of the report's recommendation to review the existing grounds maintenance arrangements

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 14/09/09

Equalities Implications:

5.3 Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between economic and environmental deprivation and poorer communities tend to live in more polluted, less green locations. Residents of social housing are therefore more likely to live in areas of poor environmental quality (Neighbourhoods Green (2004) *Decent homes, Decent spaces*). In order to minimise any negative impacts throughout the city an equalities impact assessment will be undertaken during this review.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 This project supports the council's sustainability strategy and clear environmental benefits could be gained from the development of a new specification including reducing the cities carbon footprint and protecting and enhancing nature conservation interest within the city.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Through the development of a new specification there is the opportunity to ensure that issues of community safety are considered in the design and maintenance of green spaces and communal areas.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The development of a new specification for the delivery of our grounds maintenance service will have citywide implications for council tenants and leaseholders.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Continue with the existing grounds maintenance contract specification. However this is not recommended as the specification does not provide a consistent level of service provision throughout the city and does not allow us to have a service which reflects the priorities and aspirations of residents.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To consult and seek endorsement from members of the Housing Management Consultative Committee on the proposal for a review of the grounds maintenance service. To seek endorsement on the recommendation that the Estates Service Monitoring Group undertake this work with officers.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Neighbourhoods Green - *Decent Homes, Decent Spaces (2004)*