

# In House Grounds Maintenance Service Delivery for Hastings Borough Council

**Part A – Resourcing and Overview  
on delivering a base level service –  
INDICATIVE OPTION**

# Resourcing and Overview Method Statement (Part A)

## A1 Introduction

This document (Part A) outlines a high-level method statement and operational model detailing how Grounds Maintenance Services could be resourced to operate and deliver a reduced Grounds Maintenance Service through a Hastings Borough Council DSO (HDSO) in accordance with the Council's current financial situation.

The model proposed is based on the meeting and actions agreed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022 between Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and Waste Consulting LLP (WCL).

The outcome of this meeting was for WCL to generate a Grounds Maintenance Service which will meet statutory and duty of care requirements, and an operating model which best meets the current financial position of the Councils.

The basis of this in-house delivery proposal is to provide a base in-house service as opposed to an outsourced contract model, and is built on a principle of a "mixed economy"; using a mix of in-house resources and commercial providers to undertake certain elements of the operation where this is more economically advantageous to the Council than delivering the service or function themselves.

### A1.1 Methodology

The proposed delivery model is based on the principles agreed with HBC Officers on 23 August 2022, which followed a discussion held by Elected Members and Officers on the way forward based on the figures shown in the draft cabinet report submitted in August 2022 which were unaffordable in the current climate.

It details and costs how a limited, 'base', Grounds Maintenance service could be managed and delivered by an in-house DSO using a "mixed economy" principal, where works could be delivered by in-house labour with the use of contracted and external resources where necessary. The proposal is submitted in three parts, these being:

- High-level details of service resources - labour, plant and equipment (this document, Part A)
- Detail on how the service could be delivered, the implications of the delivery model and the costings of the service (Part B)
- Resource Deployment and Operations (Part C)
- Market overview - showing the current state of the Grounds Maintenance industry (Part D)

The methodology shows what 'Core' and 'Statutory' works can be delivered directly and where works may be subject to competition and procurement.

## A2 Staffing Resource

### A2.1 Introduction

The staffing resource employed on the in-house service delivery is based on the following delivery model to meet the Council's Statutory functions and its Duty of Care requirements. It will also address significant 'Aesthetic' and 'Usability' issues in specific, key areas.

### A2.3 Operational Front Line Staff

The in-house proposal uses a model consisting of teams and individuals operating on a task/function-based method of operation.

These teams deliver the following works:

- Statutory Requirements (action team)
- Maintenance of Cemeteries and grave digging
- General Grass Cutting and Activities across the Borough
- Maintenance of Shrubs and Hedges on a reduced frequency across the Borough
- Parks Maintenance and key Seafront sites.

The approach to this, on a functional rather than geographic basis, reflects the compact size of the Borough and allows teams to carry out the full range of operations in one visit or scheduled cycle of operations.

### A2.4 Staffing Numbers

Grounds Maintenance services, being an activity with a high degree of seasonality, needs to have a sufficient workforce to deliver the "peaks and troughs" of the work while also providing adequate cover for training, sickness, leave and other unplanned absences. This still applies even in a workforce delivering a limited, core service.

The initial, proposed staffing numbers for the in-house service are as follows:

- Supervisor -1
- Team Leaders – 4
- Skilled Operatives - 6
- Semi-Skilled – 7

Unlike the previous proposal submitted there is no allowance for the following :

- Apprentices – 0 (to be recruited once service is established)
- Seasonal Labour Support – none allowed for at present.

These staffing levels allow for a base service and can be adjusted once the Council has made the strategic decision on what its Parks and Open Spaces service will consist of in terms of functions and assets in November 2023, when this service is proposed to start.

In determining the staffing resource necessary, an assumption has been made that, for example, staff engaged to cut grass would be used to support other activities when grass

cutting is not required; either in summer during periods of less growth or during the winter period. These activities would include hedge cutting, shrub bed maintenance and providing support to other teams to cover training, sickness and holiday.

There has been no allowance made for seasonal support, the scheduling of operations and equipment provided will be sufficient to provide this base service delivery.

## A2.5 Staff Terms and Conditions (including Pay)

The proposal has been prepared without the benefit of TUPE information from the incumbent contractor.

It is the Council's Policy that staff are assimilated into the Council's pay structure and terms and conditions, including Sickness and Annual Leave entitlements. Taking the view that the Private Sector staff are currently most likely to be employed on different terms and conditions, these would typically include:

- Working hours of normally 40 hours per week
- Minimal Sick Pay entitlement normally five days' pay then SSP
- Minimal 'Nest type' pension (3% employee and 3% employer is the norm)
- An annual leave entitlement of 20 days plus Bank Holidays
- Overtime available as required.

By moving staff to HBC conditions, including a 37-hour working week and additional sick and leave entitlement would leave, if not addressed, a shortfall of approximately 51 hours per week based on the proposed staffing structure. This is equivalent to approximately 1.4 members of staff per week. This has been allowed for in the proposal

It is proposed that staff both TUPE'd (and subsequently recruited) are employed on varied terms and conditions to meet the needs of the service.

These being:

- Continuation of an 'annualised hours' method of working (42hrs in the summer and 29 in the winter)
- A 'cap' on the amount of leave to be taken in busy times
- An increased amount of "core" working hours in the day to reduce the need for overtime payments. Core working hours are those hours where no overtime payment is made, for example core working hours for his service, could be 6.30 to 18.30 and 8 – 12 pm on a Saturday. This is common practice in the commercial sector. Note, this does not mean 12 hour shifts just times where a standard working day is undertaken between these times.

Or:

- Continuation of terms and levels of pay with an adjustment in hours to 37 hours per week or

- As an alternative, extra allowance to work a 40 hour week equating to £35 (excluding employers' NI and pension contributions) per person per week (c.£31k p.a. before oncost).

This would be a decision for the Council to make should in-house delivery be the preferred way forward, for the purposes of providing the Council with an indicative service cost the maximum costs have been allowed for of 37 hours and 2 additional staff members to make up the difference in hours lost (c.£40k p.a.).

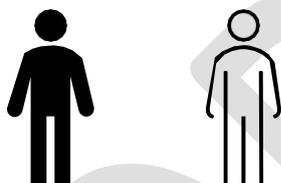
## A2.6 Functions

Working on the basis of an industry standard and accepted productivity levels, the numbers of staff in each team has been allocated, recognising the need for flexibility in a seasonal service.

Colour Key

	Intensive Cyclic Activity
	Monthly, weekly or reduced visits required
	No Activity
1	Number indicates the number of visits per month

### A2.6.1 Sportsground Team



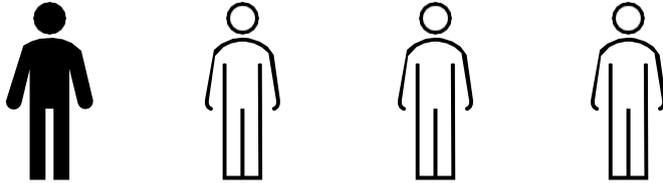
It is recognised that the provision of Sportsgrounds is not a statutory requirement, however political/public pressure may mean that the Council may wish to retain some of its sports facilities, subject to a review of usage and/or consolidation. Sports Provision may offer the Council the greatest potential to form a number of partnerships to retain facilities but working with the local community.

An indicative number of visits per month is shown below:

Function	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Bowling Greens	8	8	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	12	8	4	
Cricket Squares	4	4	8	16	16	20	20	20	16	12	4	3	
Football Maintenance	8	8	8	8	8	4	4	8	8	8	8	8	
Tennis Court Maintenance	4	4	4	4	10	10	10	10	10	10	4	4	4
Basketball Court Maintenance	4	4	4	4	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	4	4

Putting Green Maintenance	4	4	8	12	12	12	12	12	12	4	4	4
MUGA Maintenance	4	4	4	4	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

### A2.6.2 Grass Cutting Team



Grass cutting is the main operation undertaken in Parks and Open Spaces, which, when not carried out is most noticeable. In our experience a reduced grass cutting frequency is one policy, due to public pressure, most often reversed.

Adopting the principle of grass cutting that at one point during April/May and September/October there will be a “flush” of growth and, more than likely, a “dry spell” then the adoption of a frequency of cutting the majority of Open Spaces on a three weekly cycle (15 working days) with the initial cut as low a height as can be achieved. Choice of equipment is crucial to this delivery method, with flail and rotary grass cutting decks the best options to be able to cope with a possible increased length of grass.

There will be some areas in Parks and some Ornamental areas such as the seaside gardens, where this base, restricted regime is not a standard which will meet the requirements of the site, or the aesthetics of a town which during the summer months is focussed on tourism. Therefore, an increased frequency of cutting will be required on these areas. Use of high productivity grass cutting machinery as opposed to a traditional use of pedestrian mowers will be required to deliver this with an emphasis on ride-on machines.

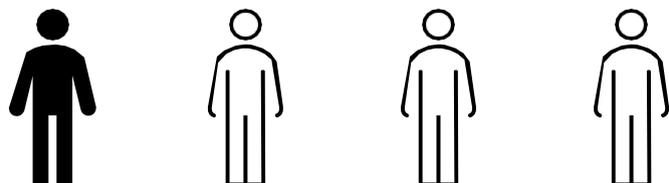
Other areas which are large areas of pure grass cutting, such as the Hills, with a reduction in the frequency of the grass cutting regime, an external grass cutting contractor may be the most economical option, and as such this has not been included in the grass cutting requirements, just shown as a potential sub contracted cost.

An indicative regime is set out below (including number of visits)

Function	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Ornamental Grass Cutting	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	0
General Amenity	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	0
Amenity	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	0
Sports Pitches	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	0
Environmental Cuts			1				1			1		
Miscellaneous and other				1			1			1		

As Hastings is a compact Borough it is envisaged that ride on machines can travel independently without the need for transportation, reducing the need for extra vehicles. This team will also be utilised for hedge and shrub bed maintenance when grass cutting is not undertaken and will provide general grass cutting support for Cemeteries and the main parks when required.

### A2.6.3 Seafront, Town Centre and Alexandra Park



This four-person team will be based in Alexandra Park and maintain a permanent presence of two staff in the park and two maintaining the seafront sites.

The team will undertake grass cutting, litter collection, rose and shrub bed maintenance and general works throughout the park and seafront, where necessary they will be supported by the grass cutting team.

The indicative works frequency plan shown below indicates the level of minimum activity required to deliver a base service to the Key Park and Town Centre sites.

Function	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Ornamental Grass Cutting			1	4	4	4	4	4	2	3		
Amenity Grass			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		
Footpath Sweeping and Clearing	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	1
Shrub Border Maintenance	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0
Rose Bed Maintenance	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0
Asset and Facility Checks	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Litter Picking Support	8	8	8	12	20	20	20	20	12	12	12	20
Bandstand Maintenance	1	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	1	1

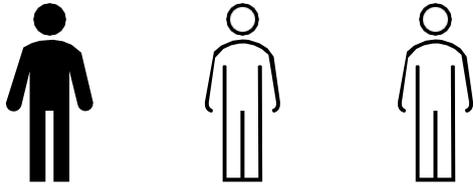
### A2.6.5 Action Team

The Action team will undertake a mix of activities which are both routine and non-routine. Routine Tasks will be in the inspection of Safety Features, the cleaning of facilities and play area inspections.

The team will deliver all the Council's Statutory and essential duty of care functions, ranging from Play Area checks and maintenance, maintenance and management of water courses, Health and Safety work on assets and other work as is required for the Council to meet its key obligations.

The main purpose of the team is to ensure compliance and, over time, reduce the amount of external expenditure. A more detailed explanation of this team is shown in Appendix A.

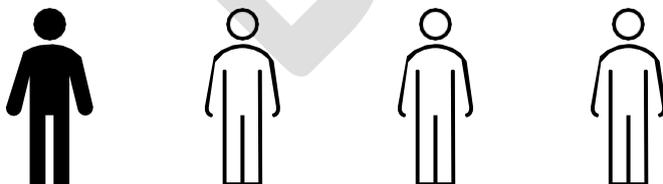
The team will also be available to support the day-to-day operations teams and the street cleansing service.



Function	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Play Area Inspection	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Other recreation facilities	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Cleaning of Park Furniture	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
Cleaning of Memorials	1		1		1		1		1	1	1	
Cleaning and Inspection of Signs	1			1			1			1		
Dipping Platforms		1						1				
Picnic and Other Street Furniture	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

#### A2.6.6 Cemeteries Team

The cemeteries team consists of a team leader and in the team will be two specialist grave diggers and plant operatives. supported by two staff for grass cutting and other duties.



Provision of Cemeteries is a statutory function and a sensitive and emotive area. Cemeteries Maintenance consists of the standard horticultural activities and grave digging.

The Council is fortunate that it has one Cemetery, which although large affords the opportunity to change the maintenance regimes into one of environmental management, especially in the older parts.

The indicative works frequency plan shown below indicates the level of minimum activity required to deliver a base service.

Function	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Cemetery Grass Cutting	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	1
Grave Digging	AR											
Shrub and Border Maintenance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Path and Hard area clearance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ornamental Lawn Cutting	1	1	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	2	1	1
Rose and Memorial Beds	1	1	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1

### A2.7 Staffing Principles

These numbers and allocation of staff are indicative of how the service is intended to run for the majority of the time.

The benefit of delivering a service in-house is flexibility and adaptability. This is combined with the ability for long-term planning which is not constrained by contract end dates. With the current situation the Council is undergoing then the Service can be expanded or decreased as the financial situation changes at a pace the Council can afford.

A core of 16 fulltime skilled and semi-skilled staff is needed to meet the present demands and requirements of the reduced specification. As Grounds Maintenance is a cyclic, seasonal operation then additional support is available in the form of seasonal staff to meet the seasonal nature of the work, and provide cover for training, leave, sickness etc.

### A2.8 Supervision Levels

In addition to the Supervisor, allowance has been made for 4 working Team Leaders supervising the team members on a day-to-day basis. This will allow a degree of accountability and management within the teams as well as putting a succession plan in place.



## A3 Machinery and Equipment

The purchase of machinery and equipment for the HDSO is based on the principle of a mix of new and used items. The reasoning for this approach is:

- Reduction in the start-up CapEx requirement and a reduced on-going revenue impact of depreciation and capital charges
- Allowing the Council the option to review its purchase options in the near future, to meet its climate change target and ambitions, by replacing fossil-fuelled equipment when an alternative battery powered product is available
- Enabling a mix, and range of equipment to deliver to the specification and have reserve equipment in case of breakdowns and seasonal demand
- Immediate availability of used items, so no delay to the service go-live date.

### A3.1 New Items

New items are a mix of larger pieces of kit and smaller equipment.

For larger machines, which are fully integrated items, buying new or ex demonstrators is a better option with warranties, especially where they are worked intensively. For some items which have a long life and durability being able to depreciate them over a longer period maximise the budget.

With the usage and HAVs management required on smaller items of equipment such as Strimmers and Blowers then the purchase of new equipment is generally the better and more responsible approach.

### A3.2 Used Items

Where it has been identified that items may, in the near future, be replaced with an electric alternative, a machine is adaptable such as a Kubota tractor unit, immediately available on the used market or there is confidence in the expected life span (such as a tractor) then purchasing used equipment is often the better option.

### A3.3 Depreciation and Purchase Costings

Depreciation has been estimated on the expected lifetime of the equipment. Purchase costings are based on the best information at the time of the exercise and will need to be kept under constant review.

### A3.4 Replacement

Notwithstanding the need to replace written off and damaged items, a programme of replacement has been put in place. Given their nature, smaller handheld and some pedestrian equipment have a limited life expectancy. It would be likely that items up to c.£800 in cost would be included in the annual revenue budget as part of the service planning process.

### A3.5 Repairs

The costing and principle of service delivery is, all equipment is repaired by external sources, and no internal fitter or mechanic is employed. The cost of employment, fitting out, maintaining and locating a workshop, combined with a need for holiday and sickness cover, plus the Health and Safety issues of workshop management mean for a service of this size it is not a viable, economic (or operationally practical) option. It is however, suggested that HBC give serious

consideration to establishing such a facility if further services are brought back in-house in future.

A repair budget has been allocated to each machine, plus an allowance for consumables and an annual service in line with Provision and Use of Equipment Regulations. Combined with a contingency, an overall budget allowance should ensure a properly resourced and maintained asset base.

This approach may also benefit local SMEs should the Council undertake a procurement exercise.

### A3.6 Equipment Types and examples

#### Large Machines



120hp Tractor

Given the larger areas of grass to cut



Ransomes HR6010 "Batwing" a flexible approach to the cutting of areas and road transportable



Kubota F series outfront

For general amenity grass cutting, can be fitted with a number of deck options from rotatory as shown to flail.



Small Ride on precision mower

The above is an example of a small precision cut machine which can be used on the larger ornamental lawns and gardens, increasing productivity.

### A3.7 Smaller Machines and Equipment

A mix of smaller machines and equipment are allowed for in the proposal. A mix of powered walk behind machines both rotatory and cylinder mowers designed to meet the needs of the service requirements which are:

- Mowing of Fine Turf including sports and ornamental lawns
- Amenity areas where larger machines cannot be used
- Maintenance of Cemeteries and closed churchyards
- Other smaller sites such as Allotment Areas and Playgrounds.

It is intended for the initial life of the service delivery that machines are petrol or diesel powered, due to the cost of purchase and the shortfalls in the effectiveness of current electric mowing machines, although it is envisaged that within the lifetime of the purchased equipment suitable battery powered replacements will be available.



Hayter Pedestrian Mower – variances of this machine to be used in Parks and Cemeteries.

#### A3.8 Hire and Other Costs

An allowance has been made in the proposal for the hire of some equipment, which although may be necessary for use on certain tasks is not necessarily deployed on a regular basis, The cost of hire would be a more cost effective option than purchase and limited use.

# Appendix A

## Detailed Summary of the Action Team

### Introduction

Within the Parks Contract delivered by idverde UK there a number of activities which, although essential to the maintenance and upkeep of the Parks and Open Spaces, are not those generally recognised as pure Grounds Maintenance activities.

These activities are as follows:

- Cleaning and Maintenance of Parks Features
- Inspection of Playgrounds
- Maintenance and Management of Playgrounds including minor repairs
- Maintenance and Management of Sports Equipment
- Maintenance and Management of Water Bodies and features
- Other required items such as Repairs and Maintenance, erection and repairs of fencing and other items
- Unlocking and Locking of Gates
- Support for activities such as events.

### Delivery of Extra Works

The present system of working is on the principle that the core works activities are paid via the routine contact sum for operations. As part of the previous contract, the Contractor provided rates for delivering extra works, over and above the regular works.

Also, where works are required which do not form part of the regular specified Contract Operations (such as pitch renovations, treatment of Japanese Knotweed and Playground repairs) payment is made to either the incumbent contractor, or a specialised supplier. In 2021 this total appeared to be in the region of £69,000.

It is intended that the Action Team will have the skills to reduce the need to pay external contractors, with the labour costs of the team included in the overall service budget, the only 'additional' costs would be materials and parts.

It is proposed that the in-house Grounds Maintenance Service would have a dedicated and flexible resource to deliver this works and provide general support to the Parks and Street Cleansing Management function.

By removing this activity from the teams engaged on cyclic activities, such as grass cutting and shrub and hedge maintenance, it offers the benefit of delivering additional services; ensuring the Council meets its Statutory obligations and Duty of Care, without impinging on the routine works during peak periods.

By delivering this function by a separate team, the Council can be sure that works are completed to the required standards, minor defects and other problems are swiftly dealt with. It offers greater flexibility to undertake works where, in most cases, the only costs incurred are

those of materials and parts. Labour, vehicles and plant are already accounted for in the overall budget for the service, thus allowing the Council to budget and ensure that it can meet its required obligations.

As these functions and requirements, especially in the area of inspections, are required to keep some facilities safe and operational, by dedicating a specific team to undertake these tasks the Council can have confidence works are being completed.

### Operations and Tasks Overview

The team would have a planned programme of operations agreed prior to the commencement of the in-house delivery function. This would include:

- Cleaning of Notice Boards and Handrails as per the current specification
- The management of water courses, boating lakes and drainage ditches
- Inspection and undertaking of playground repairs
- General asset maintenance operations (i.e. fence and seat repairs).

### Team Structure and Hours of Working

- The team consists of three members of Staff employed on a full-time basis, led by a team leader
- The team works a standard working week of 37 hours Monday to Friday with no annualised hours in place

Due to the work undertaken by the team, there is no need for summer/winter working through an annualised hours system as a consistent presence is needed throughout the year to allow the Council to respond to any issues and requirements which may occur.

It is intended that two of the team members will have a higher level of skill and be supported by semi-skilled staff members. These can be either permanently attached to the team or seconded during the off season.

It would also be envisaged that in the winter period where operations such as routine maintenance of facilities is undertaken that the team would be supplemented by other members of the Grounds Staff where required.

It is likely that, as the delivery service becomes more established, the team will need to be upskilled to carry out a wider range of works, such as Landscaping or minor construction. The requirement for this will depend on the skill level of the staff recruited.

### Vehicle

The Team will be equipped with a standard 3.5 tonne vehicle with no cages but equipped with a towbar and full highway markings.

### Equipment

A trailer will be required, and the team will be equipped with a range of tools and small plant. For any ad hoc works over the more general level, equipment will be hired and this factored into the work estimate per job or task undertaken.

### Monitoring and Recording of Activities

Due to the nature of some of the works undertaken a monitoring and reporting system will be used as part of the wider service reporting and monitoring system. This will ensure, where inspections and critical works are undertaken where there may be claim, liability or a statutory operation, that this is properly recorded for the purposes of Quality Assurance and general protection in support of any possible legal action against the Council.

### Miscellaneous Support and Functions

As part of the combined synergy with other in-house functions, it is anticipated that the Action Team will support the Street Cleansing Service in, for example, replacing Street Bins and Dog Bins and smaller elements of fly tipping in Parks and Open Spaces.

The team would also be available to support community groups and, if required, combined clean ups in areas of concern to the Council as part of a general approach to help keep the Borough clean and tidy.

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