

Green Space Project

Options Appraisal Workshop Outcomes

Method of assessment

A 2-day workshop involving a variety of stakeholders was used to score each element against a series of options. Each element was assessed based on a set of criteria for the best way to manage the element in the future using an options appraisal methodology similar to that carried out for the non-PFI elements of Streetforce. Scores were allocated on a scale of 0 (unacceptable outcome) to 6 (potential for excellence). Scores were then weighted to give a combined total that highlighted the most desirable outcome.

The key considerations for the assessments were:

- Customer First (30%)
- Value for money (30%)
- Council Considerations (20%)
- Employee Considerations (20%)

Working group composition

A core group with representatives from Parks and Public Realm (P&PR), Council Housing Services (CHS), HR and Finance attended the workshops and was supplemented by additional people with specific knowledge of a particular service area when needed. The workshop was independently chaired and facilitated by a manager from a different service area

Options

Initially, 7 possible options were proposed. After discussion by the group, the 'reconfigure' and 'internal move' were merged. The remaining six possible service delivery options considered were:

1. Maintain status quo
2. Form a new internal service (reconfigure and/or move)
3. Transfer to multiple specified Council Service providers (split)
4. Transfer to existing external Council Partner with no procurement (outsource whole)
5. Transfer to external council Partner following a procurement (outsource whole)
6. Transfer to multiple external partners (Outsource split)

Key Findings

Current service provision is good with high levels of public satisfaction across all areas considered. However, the conclusion of the group is that improvements can be made to value for money and customer service by reconfiguring the existing services. The results of the options appraisal exercise and brief comments are included at the end of the document. Further work is now required on the following options:

- 1 **To integrate the grounds maintenance provision by Estate Officers in Council Housing Services into the Parks and Public Realm service.**
- 2 **To review the delivery of grounds maintenance taking into account the current Service Level Agreement (SLA), Southeast Pilot and Northeast Pilot.**
- 3 **To reconfigure the remaining CHS Estate Services functions**
- 4 **To review structures, terms and conditions and job descriptions across Parks and Public Realm and Estate services as part of the reconfiguration**
- 5 **To set up a group to review the support services as the shapes of the reconfigured services emerges.**
- 6 **To investigate how the client function for highways grounds maintenance can work more closely with the reconfigured Parks and Public Realm service.**

Appendix: Results

Parks management and grounds maintenance

Highest Score: **Maintain status quo** (4.45/6)

2nd Highest: Outsource whole to an existing external partner (2.95/6)

Comments:

The current service is already customer focussed with easy access for customers.

The current service provision benchmarks well against the Streets Ahead project maintenance rates and against other core city grounds maintenance costs. Outsourcing could compromise the relationships with Friends of groups and is not considered to offer improved VFM.

Housing grounds maintenance by P&PR (SLA)

Highest Score: **Move/Reconfigure** (3.9/6)

2nd Highest: **Maintain status quo** (3.6/6)

Comments:

The current service is based on an SLA costed specification that is inadequate to meet the current requirements of the CHS tenants. The SLA is therefore supplemented by estate officers from CHS. Although the SLA offers value for money and is responsive to the customer, reconfiguring and integrating with other areas would offer greater flexibility and higher quality (see also Housing Estate Officer grounds maintenance assessment below). Two pilot trials have shown that efficiency and/or quality can be improved by integrating workforces from CHS and P&PR. Limitations due to differing terms and conditions of staff mean that extending the successes of the pilots more widely would not offer the same opportunities as fully integrating the grounds maintenance teams. Integration will lead to a full review of job descriptions and terms and conditions for employees in the newly integrated service.

Other Clients grounds maintenance by P&PR

Highest Score: **Move/Reconfigure** (3.7/6)

2nd Highest: **Maintain status quo** (3.6/6)

Similar to above – i.e. reconfigure as part of a whole service reorganisation.

Housing Estate Officer grounds maintenance

Highest Score: **Move/Reconfigure** (3.85/6)

2nd Highest: **Maintain status quo** (3.75/6)

Comments:

The current service is a supplement to the P&PR SLA. Customers like the personal service offered and it allows for rapid response to customer enquiries. Move/reconfigure would offer a similar level of customer service but could deliver better quality and value for money if integrated with the P&PR service as a single deliverer of green space maintenance. P&PR already has resources available that would lead to improved efficiency of vehicle use. The specific details relating to FTEs, Transport and supplies and services still require further verification to ensure that an adequate resource is transferred to maintain current quality standards.

One major issue highlighted was the delivery of grounds maintenance on and around the highway. This will remain confusing to customers. Discussions with the Highways client are required to better align the delivery of the services

City Centre Horticulture (incl water features) & City Centre External Clients

Comments:

This area was not scored. Discussion about whether or not this should be in scope. Decision was that there were no foreseeable efficiency gains possible in integrating this area into Parks. The position of this service within the City Centre wider team was seen as the best fit for this service.

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Bereavement Services

Comments:

This area was not scored. The work of the Cemetery grounds maintenance and burial teams is specialised and closely allied to the work of the whole of Bereavement Services.. Therefore, recommend that this area of service delivery continues to remain as a stand-alone section within Parks and Public Realm.

Non-horticultural maintenance

Playgrounds:

Highest Score: **Maintain status quo** (4.35/6)

2nd Highest: **Move/Reconfigure** (3.05/6)

Comments:

Maintenance and inspection costs have been benchmarked against both private sector and other local authorities and compare well. Current operational organisation provides a good service to customers. There were no obvious linkages with other service delivery areas. Reconfiguration would not result in improved customer focus or value for money.

Citywide service provision

Dog bin service

Highest Score: **Maintain status quo** (3.85/6)

2nd Highest: **Move/Reconfigure** (3.80/6)

Comments:

Current service equates to 2 FTE with vehicles and services dog bins across the city. Business continuity is an issue for this service. Alternative options discussed included a reduction in some specific dog bins in favour of 'multi-use' litter bins, the contents of which could be more easily disposed of. Maintaining status quo makes most sense from a customer perspective and this is therefore the recommendation. However, service delivery should continue to be reviewed regularly to assess for any changes to the options appraisal for this area.

Graffiti Team

Comments:

This area was not scored. Current service equates to 2 FTE with a dedicated vehicle and provides a specialist graffiti removal service to internal and external clients. The team and its line management have a high level of expertise in this area, particularly in dealing with graffiti on listed structures. The priority for this team is to remove offensive graffiti quickly anywhere in the city rather than to recoup costs from land owners. Business continuity could be an issue in the future and there is a need to ensure there continues to be an adequate, trained staff resource to maintain service delivery. It is recommended that this service remains as it is.

Litter Team

Comments:

The Parks litter team operates specifically on Parks and Countryside land and was therefore considered to be included in the Parks Grounds Maintenance element (scored above).

Organisation and Support

Green open spaces strategy (incl GIS)

Parks Project team

Council Housing Services Estate support services (incl policy & procedure, inspections, contract monitoring)

Parks and Public Realm support services

Comments:

These areas were considered together and not scored. Changes in the delivery of green space maintenance highlighted earlier will likely result in changes to the functions and operation of the above teams. Synergies already exist between these operations but without the detail of how the future green space delivery would change, it is not possible at this point to consider how these areas will be affected. It is

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recommended that a group be set up, with representatives from each service area, to consider the implications of the reconfiguration of other service areas in relation to support services.

Other

Block Cleaning

Highest Score: Move/**Reconfigure** (4.15/6)

2nd Highest: Maintain status quo (3.85/6)

Estate Services functions (fly tip, bin skimming etc.)

Highest Score: Move/**Reconfigure** (4.15/6)

2nd Highest: Maintain status quo (3.85/6)

Comments:

Both these elements were considered and scored separately, however the resulting recommendations apply equally to both areas. Different Housing areas have different practices across the city which to some extent depends on the type of housing stock in an area. The proposed transfer of grounds maintenance from Housing to Parks & Public Realm gives the opportunity to reconfigure these services to create a more effective service. There is also an opportunity to work more closely with P&PR over sharing responsibility for litter and/or fly tipping on areas of green space whether they be inside or outside the HRA ring fence.

Housing Land Tree inspections

Comments:

This area was not scored. It was considered that this service already provides a high quality service to Housing and Schools and its location and skill base within P&C makes good sense.