

**Decision Maker:** Environment PDS Committee

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** **PARKS, COUNTRYSIDE AND GREENSPACE MANAGEMENT -  
CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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**Chief Officer:** Colin Brand, Director of Environment and Public Protection

**Ward:** All

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This annual report outlines the performance of the Parks, Countryside and Greenspace Management contract which delivers the outsourced day-to-day Fully Managed Parks and Grounds Maintenance Service operations across the Council's administrative area since contract commencement on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That PDS Committee reviews and comments on the content of the report.

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Fully Managed Parks and Greenspace Service affect all residents, including vulnerable adults and children. Idverde are the Council's agent and manage an administrative service checking the Health and Safety compliance for all events in Parks and Greenspaces in the Borough. Idverde also manage the BEECHE (Bromley's Environmental Education Centre at High Elms) running classroom and outdoor services, including training for the public, schools and volunteer groups. While protection is not the primary purpose, DBS checks are carried out on all those directly involved with the education of children or the supervision of vulnerable and disadvantaged adults and adjustments are made, as required, to ensure services are as accessible as possible and all users are safe in their capacity of Community engagement.

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## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Quality Environment Safe Bromley Healthy Bromley Regeneration:
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Parks Management, Grounds Maintenance, Crystal Palace Park
  4. Total current budget for this head: £ 5,506,330
  5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budget for 2019/20
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## Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Borough wide impact on businesses, residents and service users.

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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

### **3. COMMENTARY**

- 3.1 On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018 the Executive agreed (Report ES18082) that the Fully Managed Parks and Grounds Maintenance Service be awarded to 'idverde' and the Contract to run for an 8 year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027. Following a review the contract would then be agreed for another 8 years.
- 3.2 The existing contract covers all Parks Management and Grounds Maintenance functions with the contractor identifying efficiencies when possible. Through the Deed of Variation extension agreed to run from 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the current contract has now been aligned with other contracts within the Environment and Community Services thereby permitting a more strategic commissioning approach which has been evident since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.
- 3.3 As a result of the commissioning and negotiation process, savings were identified through the Events Management aspect of the contract. The final savings sum was estimated to be up to £1.6m across the initial contract duration of 8 years. Following a review, any agreement to the 2027 – 2035 contract extension would also include a further £1.6m saving.
- 3.4 Currently a holistic Fully Managed Parks and Greenspace service is in place (closely monitored by the Council's Neighbourhood Management Division), with localised teams responsible for all aspects of the service – both community liaison and the delivery of maintenance duties. Additionally Bromley Parks Friends' Groups and stakeholders are given a greater 'voice' in what occurs on the ground in their communities and are identified as volunteer contributors to enhance the current service.

#### **PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF PARKS AND GREENSPACES IN THE BOROUGH**

- 3.5 Informal feedback from key stakeholders within the voluntary community has been positive towards the current contract arrangements. An annual customer and stakeholder satisfaction survey is planned as part of the contract requirements for the spring 2020. The results of this survey will be reported to Members as part of the annual contract review process.
- 3.6 The contract portfolio provides a raft of opportunities for community engagement and stakeholder liaison. These include the following:
- Corporate Volunteering
  - Countryside Consultative Panel
  - Bromley Friends Forum
  - Local Friends Groups, Volunteers and Stakeholders
  - Leisure Gardens and Allotments Consultative Panel
  - Partnership Meetings
  - Sport and Recreation (Delegated Sports Managers)
  - Stakeholder Engagement Panel
  - Volunteer Task Force

#### **PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENT**

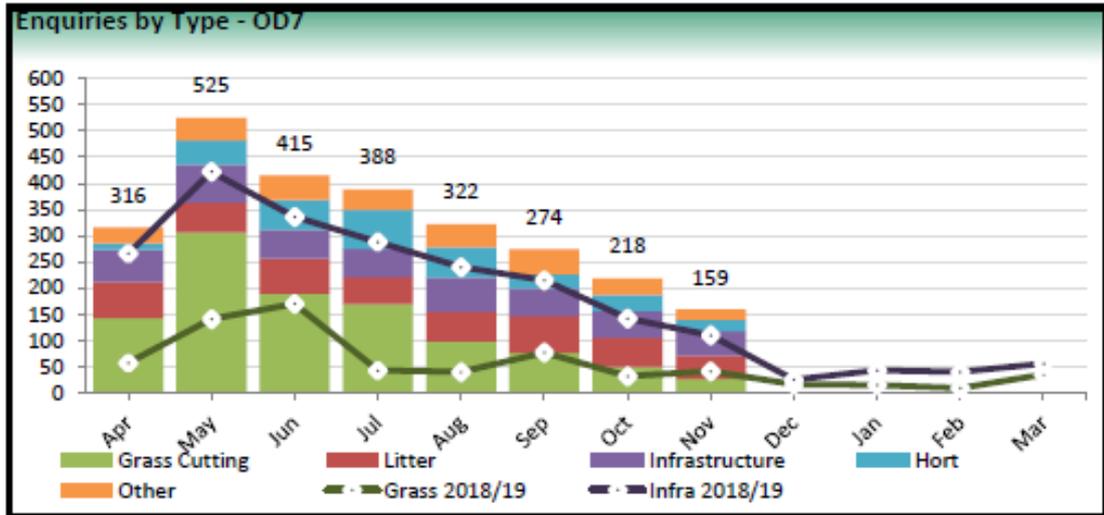
- 3.7 The contractor is monitored against a number of Key Performance Indicators, jointly agreed at the outset of the contract.

- 3.8 A Strategic Partnership Board meeting takes place each quarter and oversees the strategic management and reviews the performance of the contract. The membership includes the Assistant Director of Environment, Neighbourhood Manager (LBB Parks Contract Manager), idverde Contract Director, the Operations, Countryside and Fundraising Managers of idverde' and other key LBB and contracted management posts. The Board manages strategic direction of the Parks and Greenspace service and establish freedoms to be allowed at local level in service choices, all within the Council determined Budget.
- 3.9 Accordingly, the Board receives and agree an Annual Plan from idverde for achievement of performance and deliverables. The Board maintains a contract monitoring function, assessing performance against an output based performance framework based upon agreed service standards, together with a set of key deliverables. Performance is monitored by the LBB Contract Management Team linked to overall payment to the Contractor. Key Performance Indicators and key deliverables include:
- Service response times to customer enquiries
  - Customer Satisfaction
  - Delivery of annual action plan targets
  - Delivery against key actions/milestones in key strategic documents.
- 3.10 To assist in strategic management of the Contract service a non-decision making Stakeholder Engagement Panel meeting also takes place to work with interested local groups and organisations, such as The Friends Forum, Delegated Sports Managers, Allotment Associations and other similar groups. The Panel helps to inform development and delivery of the Annual Action Plan which includes actions related to the Biodiversity Plan and wider Management Plans for parks, SSSI, Heritage sites and agreed Woodland works. Sport and recreation, play, hard landscape, cemeteries, grants, leisure gardens & allotments and environmental education & Floral Bedding Sponsorship are all aspects of the contract that are also discussed.
- 3.11 The Partnership Board manages the strategic direction of the Parks and Greenspace Service, with such direction flowing from the Portfolio Plan agreed by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

## **CONTRACT PERFORMANCE**

- 3.12 Performance of the contract is scrutinised in line with Contract Procedure Rules. A Performance Dashboard Report is reviewed each month which is discussed in depth during the monthly Strategic Operations Board meeting comprising of senior officers and contract managers from both Bromley Council and idverde.
- 3.13 Since the contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 there has been a steady decline in the volume of service user enquiries with the current reporting to the end of November 2019 at a total of 159 enquiries. The reduced volume of enquiries are mostly driven by having overcome earlier operational challenges at contract commencement, combined with seasonal changes. An example of enquiries by Type is demonstrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Parks and Grounds Maintenance Enquiries by Type**



3.14 The idverde administration team manages Bromley’s Parks and Greenspaces enquiries well above acceptable standards with a year to date percentage rating of managing 99.5% within the agreed service level agreement. An example of the measures for monitoing enquiries within timescales, including reports received from the Council’s on-line web service, FixMyStreet, is demonstrated in figure 2.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Enquiries managed within agreed Service Standards**

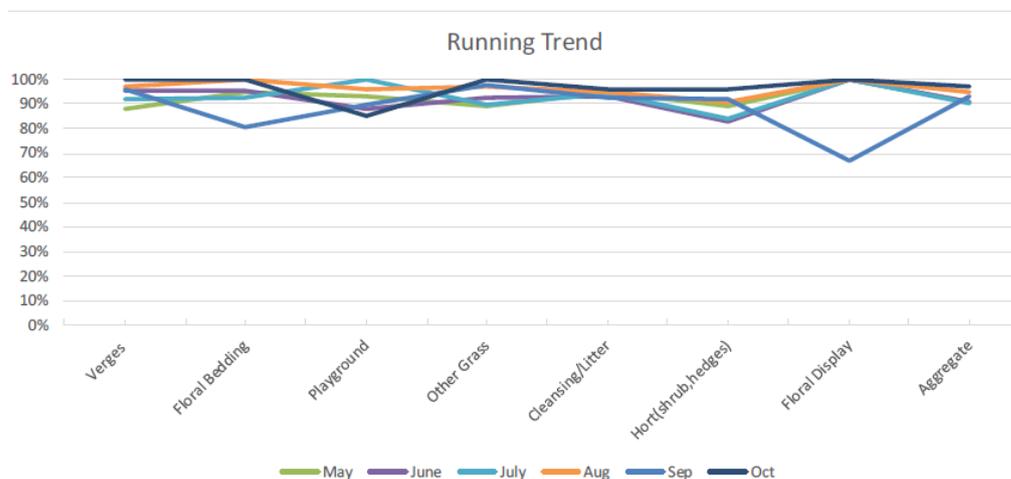
Enquiries Management - OD7	Month	YTD
% Enquires Dealt With On-Time (G&A)	99.4%	99.5%
No. of open enquiries older than 45 days.	0	5
FMS Additional Comments over 10 days old	0	6
FOI	1	13

3.15 The performance levels for each of the contract KPIs are reported and reviewed on a monthly basis for scrutiny at the Service Operations Board meeting. All of the service objectives have been performing within service standards since contract commencement. Performance indicators measure a number of operational activities set against standards of maintenance which are routinely monitored by Neighbourhood Management officers and the Parks Contract Manager. The indicators measured include the following activities/features:

- Floral Displays
- Horticultural Features (shurbs and hedges)
- Cleanliness/Litter
- Grass (verges and open spaces)
- Playgrounds
- Floral Bedding

3.16 The measures of the overall service aims (listed above) are deemed acceptable with a steady year to date improvement in performance. An example of this is demonstrated in Figure 3, from contract comment to October 2019.

**Figure 3: Overall Service Aims – Performance Trend**



3.17 One service area (Floral Displays - Hanging Baskets) was affected by a monitoring discrepancy. This was due to an internal training issue which has now been rectified, however all services are operating within an 80% target threshold.

**Monitoring Completion of Works**

3.18 As set out in the contract documentation, the primary Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for all routine and ad-hoc Parks and Greenspace works, is the measure of works completed within the designated time frame on the basis of the Councils risk based priority system. The suite of Performance Management Framework (PMF) indicators monitor and records the monthly values and where performance is not achieved a Performance Adjusted Value (PAV) is applied. A PAV is an estimate of the costs incurred by the Council implementing and managing the service in order to return the performance to the expected level. Under this KPI the performance over the first four months of the contract has been within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) as set out in the contract documentation.

3.19 Where service failures are identified, idverde review their scheduled work programming following officer input and refresh the respective service level agreements amongst their front line operatives in an effort to improve going forward. As a result of PAV application, during the month of November an improvement has already been seen. The remaining Key Performance Indicators set out within the contract documentation have been met since contract commencement and documented as part of the routine contract governance processes.

**BENEFITS AND INNOVATION**

3.20 The following is an example of a project delivered during the period from contract commencement until November 2019 include:

- Embedding and showcasing collaboration: The last quarter (Q3) idverde celebrated local partnerships and collaboration, in particular the Bromley Countryside Volunteers

(BCV) and demonstrated how all parties are working together to protect Bromley's natural heritage. This included the full idverde Director team (11 members of staff) carrying out meadow cuts in designated SSSI areas with the volunteers by hand at High Elms Country Park. The RSPB were also in attendance and joint celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary of Bromley's Volunteer Groups, all working collaboratively on the HLS and SSI site countryside project. This was then shared with the BBC and local media which gave LBB an excellent public and commercial profile.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

- 3.21 The Parks Strategy objectives will be presented to Members during 2020 as this document is currently in draft form and under review with LBB Officers. However the service provider has already covered the following aspects with no Council cost implication:

### **Investing in a Closed Loop Recycling System**

- 3.22 In 2019 idverde committed to the construction and operation of a facility located within the Borough, for the recycling of green waste borough-wide in a closed loop system, at no cost to the Council. "Closed loop", means that the green arisings do not leave the borough and are transported to the new recycling facility where they are shredded, screened, quality monitored and processed to produce high quality horticultural products such as mulches, composts and soil improvers. These products are then returned to Bromley parks and open spaces to enhance quality and create a fully closed loop recycling system.

### **Carbon Reduction Initiatives**

- 3.23 idverde recognises the need to cut emissions to reduce the risk of damaging climate change and in 2019 commenced initiatives that will support the council's carbon reduction programme.
- 3.24 Such initiatives include converting from petrol to electrical operational equipment. In the first nine months of the contract idverde converted 11% of their small equipment inventory to battery powered equipment and 25% of their all terrain vehicles to electric. This change brought a direct reduction of 36,400 kg carbon dioxide equivalent, exhaust fumes and vibrations. idverde will continue this gradual switch from hydrocarbon fuels as equipment reaches the end of its economic life.
- 3.25 There are currently no factory built tipper vans available to the market, however as an interim innovative solution, idverde are working with suppliers to further explore the conversion of electric panel vans into tippers. This could possibly result in electric tipper vans being used in Bromley's parks and cemeteries in the very near future.

### **Managing Wellbeing and Residents Health using green areas**

- 3.26 In 2019 through supervised volunteer work parties, 1,3084 hours of physical work were achieved to the benefit of Bromley's parks and woodlands as well as the well documented health and wellbeing impacts of associated activities.
- 3.27 In 2019 via environmental education delivery, idverde piloted programmes in yoga, mindfulness and utilising greenspace for creative art activities.

- 3.28 Idverde developed their Corporate Volunteering Team raising corporate social responsibility amongst local businesses resulting in 388 hours of practical conservation and environmental work within the borough.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

- 3.29 During 2019 idverde trialled activities aimed specifically at children on the autistic spectrum. Through home education delivery they achieved 44 child visits, many of whom are considered to be children with SEND. There is a long term agreement with New Woodlands Primary School which has resulted in repeat visits for 4 groups of children with a combination of special behavioural and learning needs on a weekly basis since late 2018. In 2019 this equated to 815 child visits across 65 sessions. idverde aim to increase this during 2020.

### **Glyphosate Reduction: Foam Stream Application as preferred herbicide method**

- 3.30 In 2019 idverde introduced the Foamstream system; a technology which kills weeds using hot water which is insulated by a biodegradable foam, which does not contain inorganic chemicals. The heat is the critical ingredient, the foam acts as an insulator reducing the rate heat is lost to the atmosphere. The foam can be used to control weeds, algae and moss as well as for sanitisation such as removal of gum and power washing. In urban parks weed control of annual and perennial weeds on all surfaces is primarily achieved by using the Foamstream system in conjunction with manual methods such as brush cutters and hand weeding. idverde expect this approach to reduce the reliance on Glyphosate by as much as 90% by the end of the next 5 years.
- 3.31 Feedback from Friends groups, contract officers and performance monitoring is that overall the change to the fully managed arrangement has had a positive impact on the overall appearance of LBB's parks and countryside sites in relation to the cost efficiency aspect of the contract. The positive and can do attitude of the idverde staff contributes towards good partnership working arrangements.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The activities in this report reflect the Council's existing policy as set out in the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan 2019/20 and Building a Better Bromley 2016-18.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The current controllable revenue budget for Parks and Green Spaces is £5.506m. No significant projected variation to this budget was reported to the last meeting of this Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications necessary under current policy for an annual performance review scrutiny report.

**PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

In line with 23.3 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, an annual report must be submitted to the Executive for all contracts with a value higher than £1M.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]