

Report No.
ES20096

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC PROTECTION POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 09th June 2021

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

Title: ARBORICULTURE - GLENDALE ANNUAL CONTRACT
PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Contact Officer: Hugh Chapman, Arboricultural Services Manager
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Chief Officer: Colin Brand – Director of Environment & Public Protection

Ward: (All Wards)

1. Reason for report

1.1 This annual report outlines the performance of the Arboricultural Services contract which delivers the day-to-day arboricultural operations across the Council's administrative area relating to financial year 20/21.

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: Arboricultural Services are used by all residents, including vulnerable adults and children. Protection is not their primary purpose but adjustments are made, as required, to ensure services are as accessible as possible and all users are safe.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council Quality Environment Safe Bromley Healthy Bromley
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Tree Maintenance & Tree Planting & Maintenance
 4. Total current budget for this head: £ 724,030
 5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budget for 2021/22
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 5 FTEs
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement : The Highways Act 1980 imposed on the London Borough of Bromley a duty of care to maintain all trees on the street in a safe condition, which includes routine maintenance.
 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

Aims of the Service – Arboricultural Services

- 3.1. The primary purpose of the Arboricultural Maintenance contract is to maintain the Council's tree stock across the borough, which includes street trees, park trees, trees in education sites, trees in woodlands and trees in conservation sites. The Council is responsible for inspecting trees to identify those requiring any remedial work, removal, or replacement under the requirements of contract resources. The borough has the largest number of street and park trees in London and is also home to two thirds of London's woodlands; this is particularly valued by Bromley's residents, visitors and Council Members.
- 3.2. The existing contract supports the Council's arboricultural strategy, which sets out to ensure trees are planted, preserved and managed in accordance with good arboricultural practice, and with regard to their contribution to amenity and the urban landscape for both current, and future generations.
- 3.3. A key aim of the service is to maintain a general presumption against the removal of trees, allowing felling only in accordance with good arboricultural practice. The Council also will ensure that adequate and appropriate replacement planting takes place where planting is desirable, aesthetically necessary and sustainable.

Public Perception of Arboriculture in the borough

- 3.4. Nationally, there have been recent examples of poor arboricultural management by local authorities at a strategic level which has drawn significant public attention to this service area. The Council sets out it's aims to maintain and publicise high standards of arboricultural management, which is available on the Council's website.
- 3.5. Significant public and political attention has been drawn to the benefits of trees in recent years leading to the development of enhanced tree planting targets both at a local and national level. The Council takes a long term 'tree time' view on these targets. Planting a tree is of little value if the tree fails to establish. Therefore, the adopted approach is through the implementation of the 'right tree for the right place' philosophy and the commitment of the Council's Service Provider, Glendale, to maintain these young trees until established. Significant work has been undertaken in the past year to rectify historic issues with young tree establishment, complimented with a redesign of our processes related to tree planting and young tree maintenance. The Council continues to review and consider its processes and approach to the tree planting programme to maintain its continued success.

Current Position – Performance Standards

- 3.6. Contract performance is managed through a governance model set out in the contract documentation, the Performance Management Framework (PMF), which comprises of a series of Key Performance Indicators established at contract commencement. These indicators are reviewed on a monthly, bi-annual and annual basis to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and any proposed changes are made through a Change Control Notice procedure.
- 3.7. In addition to the client's monitoring system and partnership inspections Glendale is also responsible for self-monitoring to ensure the standards set out in the contract specification are adhered to. Access to Glendale's contract management system (a software system called Glendale Live) is provided to members of the client Arboriculture Team and the Performance Management and Business Support Team to view real-time data, this also provides access to before and after date-stamped photographic evidence of completed works.

- 3.8. Throughout financial year 20/21, the Council has continued working in partnership with both its ICT Service Provider, BT, and Glendale, on the integration of IT systems to facilitate the extraction of the data required under the contract in order to monitor the contractor's performance (e.g. PMF). This data is derived from the quantitative and qualitative monitoring being undertaken by the service. This information is reviewed and reported on a monthly basis by Performance Management and Business Support officers and Contract Management officers.
- 3.9. The impact of COVID-19 has not been as pronounced as it has been with other frontline environmental services provided by the Council. During the year 20/21 there was no disruption to supplier staffing levels due to COVID-19. Clarification was obtained early in the pandemic from the Minister of State for Domestic Forestry that no restrictions, other than those imposed through general government guidance and corporate procedure need be applied specific to this sector.

Ad-Hoc and Routine Works

- 3.10. These works constitute the majority of the service provided by Glendale, originating primarily from cyclical tree surveying, the species-specific management of basal growth, subsidence mitigation pruning and public enquiries. In line with the growing season we see a typical spike in public enquiries related to tree nuisance. There are a significant number of enquiries received in relation to arboriculture through various Council reporting systems; the majority are received through FixMyStreet as the primary reporting method for customer enquiries. In 20/21 there were a total of 3760 customer enquiries (see Appendix Figure 1). The enquiring volume has resulted in varied jobs issued throughout the year on the contract is represented in Appendix Figure 2. Seasonal variations are primarily caused by the need to crown lift/remove basal growth from trees and can also be impacted by weather conditions (e.g. severe strong winds), both being the main contributory factor to the variations in work requests. Officers endeavour to limit the volume of potential ad-hoc works and reduce potential risk to the Council associated to insurance claims through thorough working practices.

Monitoring of Completion of Works (April-March 20/21)

- 3.11 As set out in the contract documentation the primary Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for all routine and ad-hoc arboricultural works, is the measure of works completed within the designated time frame on the basis of the Councils risk based priority system. The PMF (paragraphs 3.6 to 3.8) is used to monitor and record these measures on a rolling monthly basis, and where performance is not achieved a monetary Performance Adjusted Value (PAV) is applied. A PAV is an estimate of the costs that would be incurred by the Council through implementing corrective action and managing the service in order to return performance to the contracted level. Monitoring this KPI performance throughout the financial year 20/21 demonstrates a performance variation (see Appendix Figure 3), averaging a final annual percentage value of 77.28% which equates to an above target annual indicator value (75%). This figure confirms that the service standard has been met over the course of the past year.
- 3.12 The remaining Key Performance Indicators set out within the contract documentation have been met since contract commencement, and the last financial year. This has been documented as part of the monthly contractual governance processes.
- 3.13 The Council has undertaken a thorough review of the relevant performance data. This has involved consideration of seasonal variations and acknowledgement that particular tree works require more time to complete than estimated in the baseline Service Level Agreement within the PMF indicators. Therefore, the Council in partnership with Glendale have agreed to

reconfigure the mechanics of specific indicators and amend procedural/operational processes and administration to address this review.

- 3.14 As a result of the review of work volumes and timescales of completion the Council will introduce a programmed works approach in the form of a 'Clear Borough' programme. This is anticipated to significantly reduce the volume of ad-hoc works ordered, above the average norm due to seasonal peak variations. Historically the bulk of minor works such as 'crown lifting' and 'basal growth removal' have been raised as ad hoc works which have been identified as a significant contributor to the significant seasonal increase of works required. Implementing the 'Clear Borough Programme' (to include a number of traditionally ad-hoc works), the Council intends to enable Glendale to produce a routine schedule of works, encapsulating both routine and proactive ad-hoc works requirements. This will ensure the performance targets are equitable to the baseline expected workload on an average monthly basis, providing more meaningful data to monitor the performance of the contract.
- 3.15 Action has been undertaken by Council officers, including thorough negotiation with Glendale, to provide Glendale officers specified use of the Council's asset management system (Confirm Arb) where appropriate, to amend target completion dates of works where there is a justified amendment to be made (i.e. storm event). The Council will require this to be evidenced and will monitor and approve amended requests when validated by accompanying information.
- 3.16 It should be noted that even with the most robust mitigation measures, the volume of work on the contract is still liable to volatility due to severe weather events and the emergence/identification of pests and disease which can significantly and unexpectedly increase the workload above expected levels.

Emergency Call Out

- 3.17. Typically arising from severe weather events, emergency works are received by Glendale, from the Council's Contact Service Centre and assigned by Glendale to a team to make the situation safe.
- 3.18. In the last financial year there were eight named meteorological storms and many other instances of high winds, causing tree failures with varying degrees of severity and impact across the borough. This is the most unpredictable element of the contract; national and global weather forecasting data suggests an increase in frequency and severity of such events. The severity of impact of these weather events can significantly alter the scheduled and predicted delivery of ad-hoc and routine works for several weeks. This risk is identified and mitigated through mechanisms in the contract monitoring framework.
- 3.19. For works identified as Emergency Call Out, Glendale respond by attending the given location or site to make the reported works safe within one hour during normal working hours. These targets are monitored on a monthly basis as part of the PMF. The illustration in Appendix Figure 4 illustrates the decreasing volume of hours worked to complete Emergency Call Outs during the financial period 20/21.

Tree Planting

- 3.20. The annual tree planting season is carried out between the months of November and March each year when conditions are the most optimum for successful planting. This programme comprises of the replacement of street, park trees and woodlands where felling has occurred, or where suitable sites have been identified for new provision.

- 3.21. During the 2020/21 planting season the Council have planted 475 standard trees on the public highway and 750 whips (young tree) as a part of a woodland expansion project in Parkfield Recreation Ground. In addition, the Council have secured funding and purchased an additional 450 standard trees which are being stored at a tree nursery until required as part of the 2021/22 winter's planting programme (commencing November 2021). This is part of a programme to deliver an enhanced planting programme for the coming year with a target of a 1000 standard trees, with other projects linked establishing a programme of woodland creation and expansion in the Council's tree stock.
- 3.22. Working in association with 'Trees for Streets', the Council will launch this year an online tree sponsorship platform enabling residents and Friends Groups to proactively request and provide funding for trees in their local area. This will be supported by a campaign aimed at empowering residents to contribute toward the establishment of young trees throughout the borough.
- 3.23. The events of the last year have led more people to appreciate the difference nature makes to their lives and given the benefits trees provide the Council will expand upon the existing programme of engagement with Friends Groups, residents' associations and supporters of tree planting, to focus on identifying suitable sites for future planting.
- 3.24. Opportunities for the provision of external funding for tree planting will be managed by the Council with applications for various funding streams including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund which could see a 50% contribution toward street tree planting of £30,000. Other sources of funding include applying for the Woodland Creation Planning Grant and the Nature for Climate Fund to support ambitious future tree planting and establishment targets. An application will also be made for the HS2 Woodland Fund which will focus on areas of the borough's nature reserves.

Review of Contract Purpose

- 3.25. The Council have an ongoing requirement for arboricultural services. The scope of this service is only anticipated to grow as current trees age and new trees are planted. The contract is based on a schedule of rates and future demands on the service are met by available revenue funding and income from external grant applications.

4. COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Executive awarded the contract in November 2018 (Report No. ES18077) for an initial 8 year period with the contract commencing on 1st April 2019, with an option to extend the contract for a further two 4 year periods. Options for the future provision of these services, including a possible contract extension, will be considered in 2024, subject to the satisfactory performance of Glendale.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Within the 2020/21 revenue budget for Tree Maintenance and recharges to other departments there is a sum of £541,830 available for the arboricultural services contract with Glendale. The table below provides a breakdown of the budgets and projected spend for each service area as follows;

| Revenue 2019/20 Service Area | Budget £ |
|---|---------------------|
| Tree Maintenance – Parks & Green Spaces | 103,720 |
| Amenity/Environment – Tree Planting & Maintenance | 438,110 |

Total Revenue

541,830

5.2 Future risks relating to the financial impact of Ash Dieback are being quantified with a future report prepared for Member consideration which will outline the Council's strategy to address this matter in a practical and financial sense. Ash Dieback is a fungus that effects this tree species and has had the most impact in the south-east of England where it was first recorded in the UK in 2012. It is anticipated there will a loss of approximately 80% of ash trees in the UK.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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](#).

| | |
|---|---|
| Non-Applicable Sections: | Personnel, Procurement |
| Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer) | Environment Portfolio Plan ES18035 Building a Better Bromley (2016-18) Council's Tree Management Strategy Report Nos: ES18077 Award of Contract for Arboricultural Services; ES17088 Environment Services Commissioning Programme Update; ES17002 Environmental Services Procurement Strategy |

APPENDICES:

Figure 1:

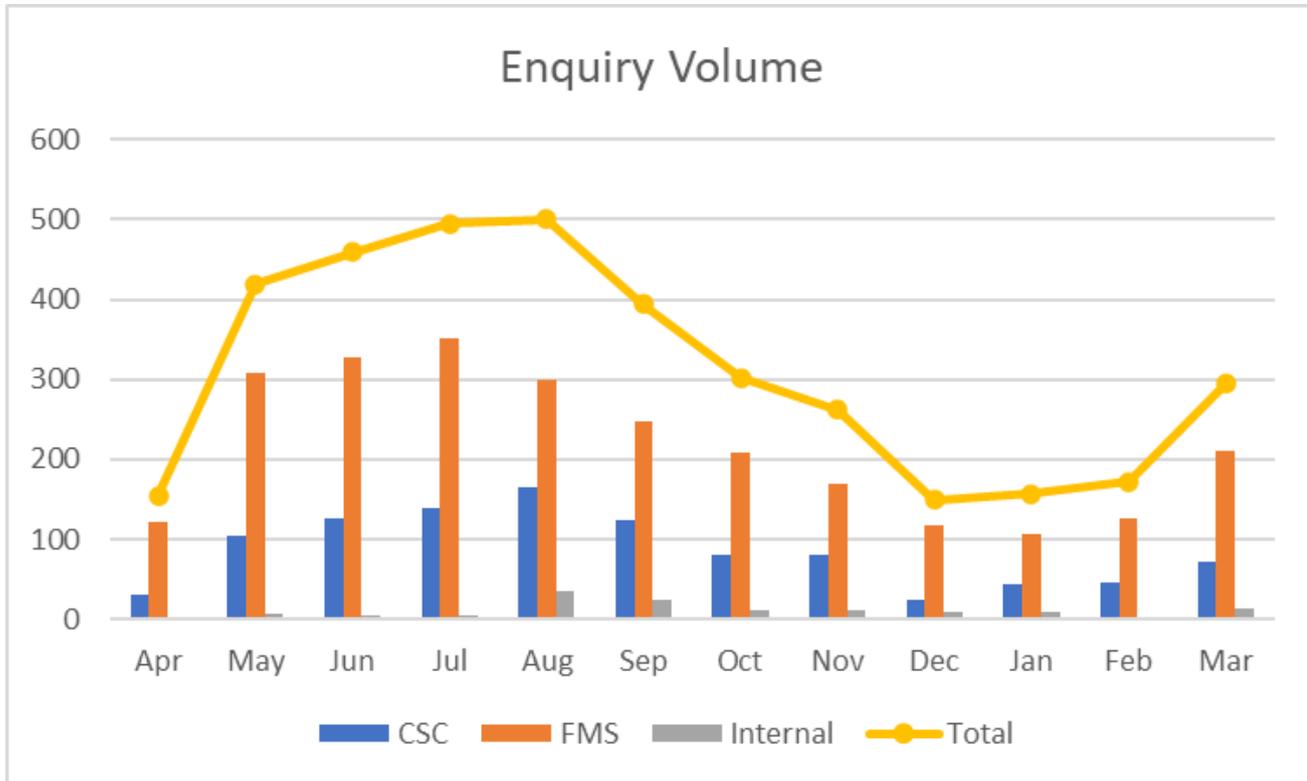


Figure 2:

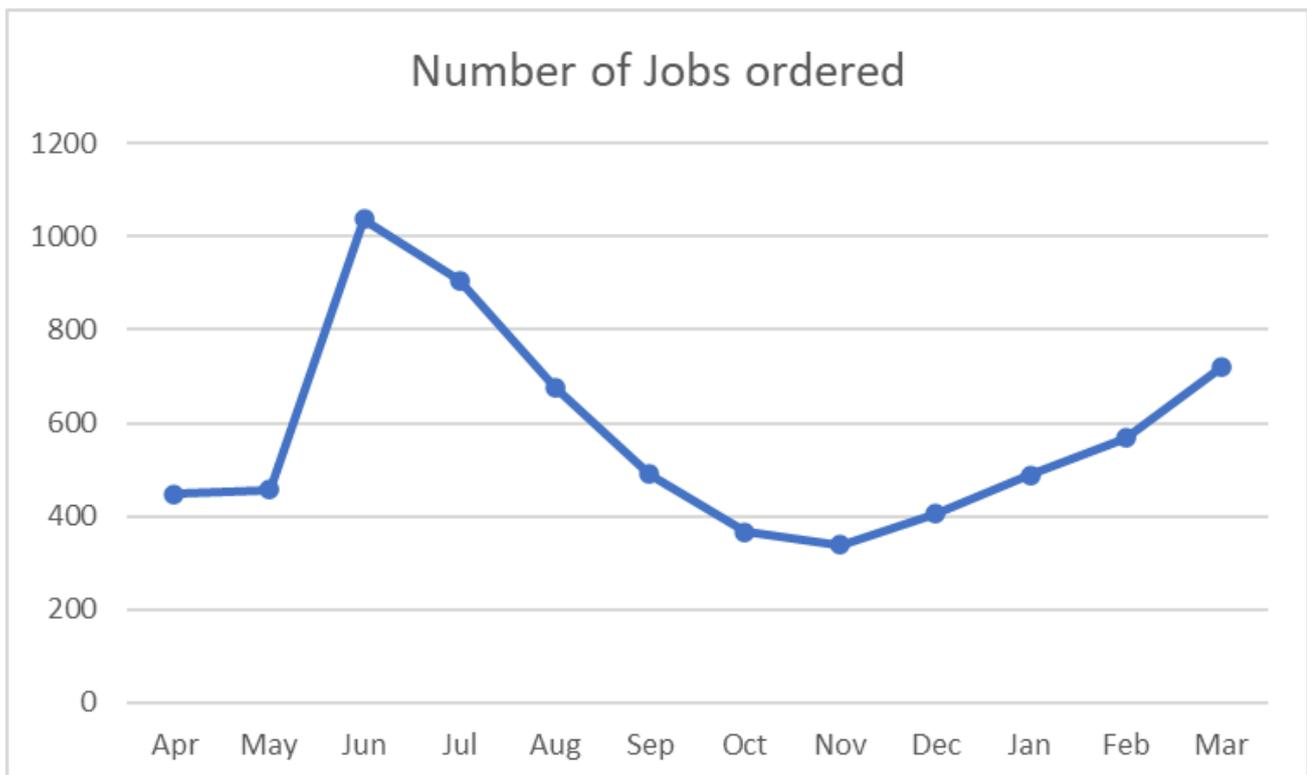


Figure 3:

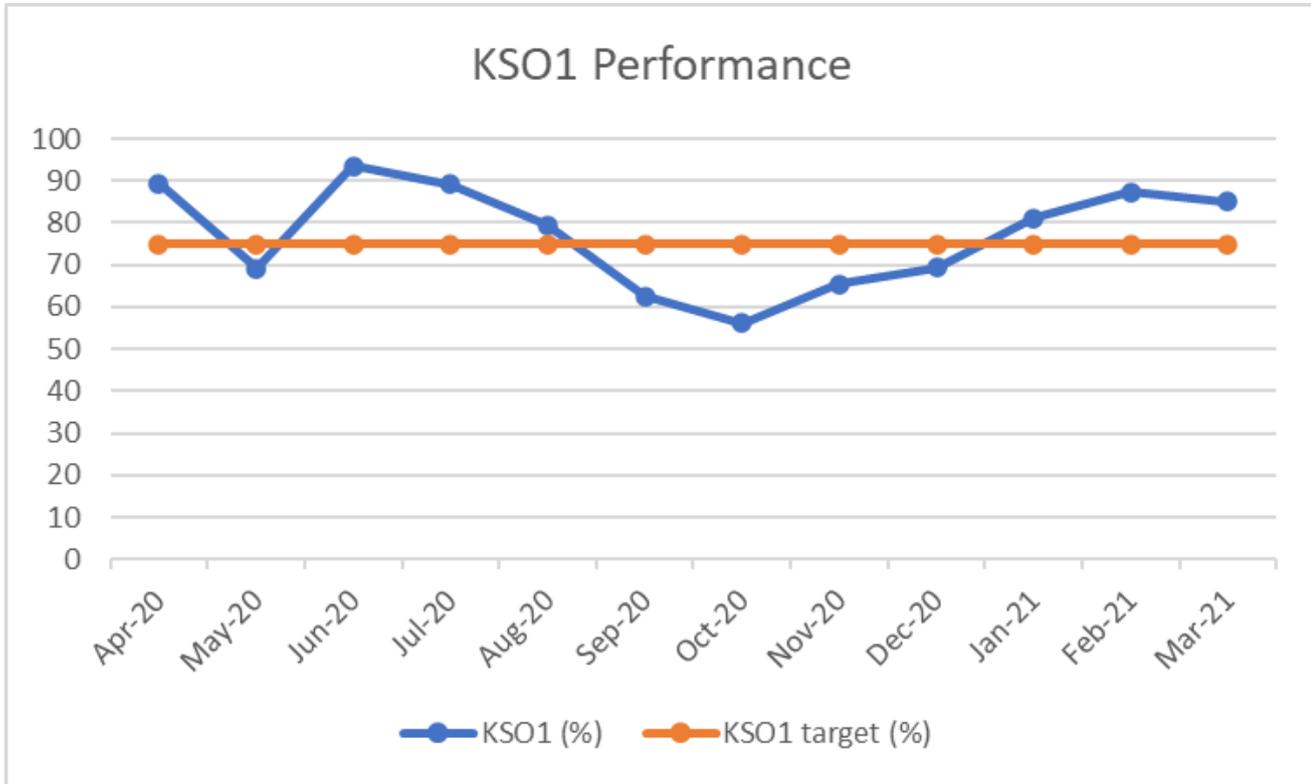


Figure 4:

