

**Decision Maker:** Environment & Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021

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

**Title:** IDVERDE ANNUAL CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT

**Contact Officer:** Peter McCready, Assistant Director of Environment,  
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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 reviews the 2020/21 annual 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 parks and greenspaces by *idverde*.
  - 1.2 The production of an annual contract performance report meets the requirement within Section 23 of the Council's Corporate Performance Rules (CPR) for contracts with an annual value that exceeds £500,000.
  - 1.3 The current performance of the contract service provider, *idverde*, is deemed to be satisfactory.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**The Environment PDS Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 **Review and comment on the contents of this contract performance report.**

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Fully Managed Parks and Greenspace Service affects 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: 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 and Green Spaces
  4. Total current budget for this head: £5.67m
  5. Source of funding: Controllable revenue budget for 2020/21
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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 potentially extended for another 8 years. This report covers the review period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- 3.2 The existing contract covers all Parks Management and Grounds Maintenance functions with the service provider identifying efficiencies when possible. Through the Deed of Variation extension introduced between 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the Council's client management responsibilities were transferred to the service provider. The current contract has been aligned with other frontline contracts within the Environment and Community Services Portfolio thereby permitting a more strategic commissioning approach which has been evident since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.
- 3.3 The services provided within the contract are closely monitored by the Council's Environment Division, with localised teams responsible for all aspects of the service, involving 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**

- 3.4 Feedback from key stakeholders within the voluntary community has been positive towards the current contract arrangements. An annual customer and stakeholder satisfaction survey took place as part of the contract requirements in the Spring of 2021. The survey was conducted by sending questionnaires to 3,000 randomly selected households in Bromley from a database supplied by the Council. Overall, responses are positive with 80% of respondents indicating that they are satisfied with LB Bromley's parks and open spaces, the same result as the postal survey in March 2020. The results show clearly that there has been a shift in respondents' behaviours during the pandemic, with respondents visiting LB Bromley's parks and open spaces on a much more regular basis: although visiting occasionally was still the most common response there has been a significant increase in those visiting daily and 4-5 times a week. The main reasons why respondents visit LB Bromley's parks and open spaces has remained largely unchanged between March 2020 and March 2021; however, there has been a slight decrease in all activities except 'Exercise' which has seen a significant increase. This can probably be attributed to the restrictions associated with the pandemic meaning people were only allowed outside to exercise as well as the closures of gyms, pools and leisure facilities. 'Cleanliness', 'Facilities' and 'Woodlands' were the most commonly selected features in respondents top three key priorities for LB Bromley's parks and open spaces. Both 'Cleanliness' and 'Woodlands' had fairly high levels of satisfaction at 63% and 76% satisfaction respectively. The detailed results of this survey are included with this report in Appendix A.
- 3.5 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;
- Bromley Biodiversity Partnership.

## **PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENT**

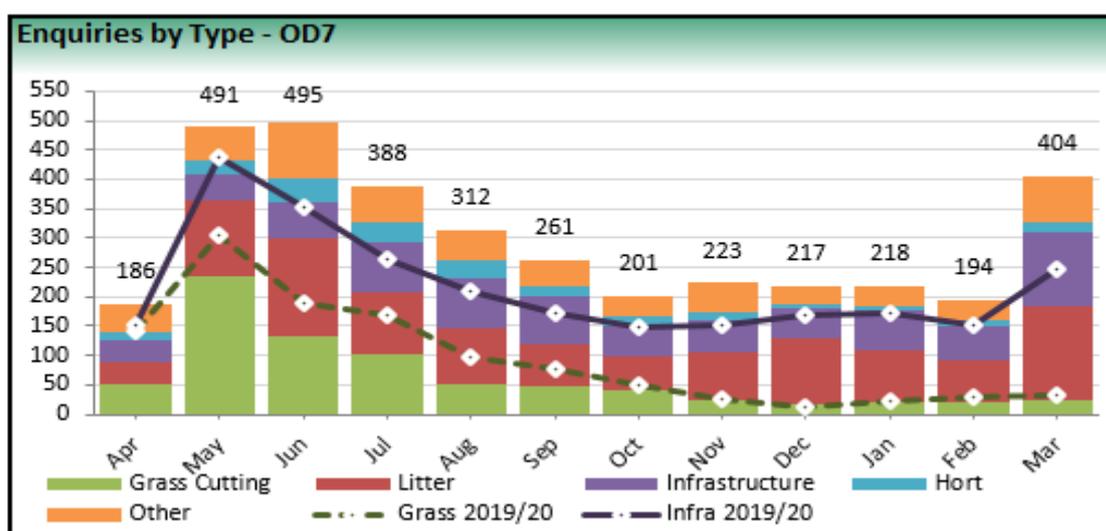
- 3.6 The service provider is monitored against a number of Key Performance Indicators, jointly agreed at the outset of the contract.
- 3.7 A Strategic Partnership Board meeting takes place each quarter and oversees the strategic management and reviews the performance of the contract. The membership includes the Assistant Director of Environment, Neighbourhood Manager (LBB Parks Contract Manager), Assistant Director of Performance Management and Business Support, *idverde* Contract Director, the Operations, Countryside and Fundraising Managers of *idverde* and other key Council officers. 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's determined Budget.
- 3.8 Accordingly, the Board receives and agrees 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 Monitoring Framework (PMF) based upon agreed service standards, together with a set of key deliverables. Performance is monitored by the Council's Contract Management Team linked to overall payment to the service provider, *idverde*. 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.
- 3.9 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.
- 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, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Heritage sites and agreed Woodland works. Sport and recreation, play, hard landscape, cemeteries, grants, leisure gardens and allotments, and environmental education and floral bedding sponsorship are all aspects of the contract that are also discussed.

## CONTRACT PERFORMANCE

3.11 Performance of the contract is scrutinised in line with Contract Procedure Rules. A Performance Dashboard Report is reviewed each month as part of the contract governance processes which is discussed in depth during the monthly Strategic Operations Board, comprising of senior officers and contract managers from both the Council and *idverde*.

3.12 In the period of April 2020 – March 2021 the *idverde* customer relationship management team managed a total of 3,590 customer enquiries at an average of approximately 300 per month. The bar chart in Figure 1 illustrates the seasonality of enquiries with the peak season (May and June) coinciding with the commencement of the grass cutting season. As a direct result of increased park use throughout the year there was a notable increase in litter enquiries as parks became one of the key local outdoor destinations available to the public during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. An example of enquiries by type is also demonstrated in Figure 1. The chart also indicates the customer enquiry volumes for grass cutting and infrastructure issues for 2019/20 have a similar trend in terms of volume to 2020/21.

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



3.14 The *idverde* administration team have managed the administration of service requests and enquiries well above acceptable response standards with a year-to-date percentage rating of managing 99.9% within the agreed contractual service level agreement. An example of the measures for monitoring 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)	100.0%	99.9%
No. of open enquiries older than 45 days.	0	0
FMS Additional Comments over 10 days old	0	8
FOI	2	19

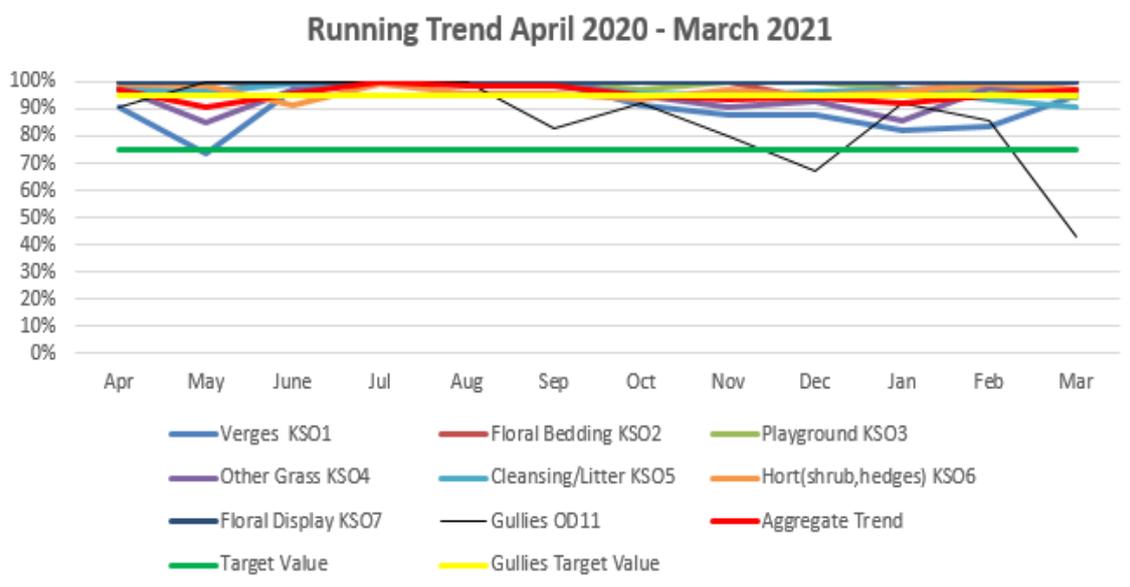
3.15 The performance levels for each of the contract KPI's are reported and reviewed on a monthly basis for scrutiny at the Service Operations Board meeting. All of the service objectives have been performing within service standards since contract commencement (1<sup>st</sup> April 2019). Performance indicators measure a number of operational activities set against standards of horticultural maintenance and other management objectives which are routinely monitored by Neighbourhood Management officers and the Parks Contract Manager. The indicators measured include the following key activities/features:

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

3.16 The results of the measures of the overall service aims listed in paragraph 3.15, are deemed acceptable with a steady year to date improvement in performance, with each service element performing above the contractual target value (e.g. 75%). This is illustrated in the line chart Figure 3, which shows the performance trend from April 2020 to March 2021 for a number of greenspace features. This chart indicates that the key performance indicators have exceeded the contractual targets with the exception of two indicators (Gullies OD11 and Cleansing/Litter).

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

3.17



The service area for Gullies OD11 involves cleaning surface water drainage features within parks which underperformed on a minority of occasions (December 2020 and March 2021) during the year. This has been addressed with additional training to operatives and there has been no further performance issues. Cleansing and Litter performance did drop below performance targets in May 2020 due to an increased volume of parks visitors during the period of the pandemic, however all other services have operated within an 80% target threshold.

### Monitoring Completion of Works

3.18 As set out in the contract documentation, the primary Key Performance Indicator for all routine and ad-hoc parks and greenspace works, is the measure of tasks

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 record 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 to improve performance moving forwards. As a result of a PAV application, during the month of November 2020, an improvement has been identified following the monthly monitoring process. 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 are examples of projects delivered during the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021:

- Embedding and showcasing collaboration: *idverde*'s partnership with RSPB continues to bring benefits to Bromley's parks through access to contemporary research and practice. RSPB have engaged with LBB to support woodland creation and advised on habitat management across the Borough. In addition to the formal partnership with RSPB *idverde* have collaborated with other specialist organisations such as London Wildlife Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group in order to inform their management of Bromley's green spaces.
- In March 2021 *idverde* launched their "Biodiversity Allotments" programme. Working in collaboration with BALGF members. To date 41 plot holders have received biodiversity training and 13 BALGF allotments have nominated "Biodiversity Champions" for their site.
- In 2021 *idverde* has supported the establishment of 4 new Friends groups; Friends of Crofton & Sparrow Woods, Friend of Betts Park, Friends of Palace Square Open Spaces and Friends of Churchfields Recreation Ground.
- *idverde* successfully engaged with London Wildlife Trust & Butterfly Conservation as well as multiple community stakeholder groups in Bromley to commence the "Brilliant Butterflies" project in November 2020 (see paragraph 3.24).
- *idverde* delivered 3 complimentary training programmes to Friends of Parks groups with a total attendance of 33. To facilitate these during Covid restrictions *idverde* invested in online webinar licences.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

- 3.21 The Parks Strategy objectives will be presented to Members of the PDS Committee with a separate report entitled the Open Space Strategy 2021-2031 for scrutiny. In order to ensure continuity of the parks service aims *idverde* has committed to the following aspects with no cost implications to the Council:

## **Grassland Conversions**

- 3.22 In March 2020 *idverde* piloted the conversion of 37 hectares (Ha) of amenity grassland across 34 sites in Bromley to naturalised/meadow grassland. This results in increased carbon sequestration, storage and fewer cuts. This brings the total amenity grassland converted to meadow since 2015 to 94Ha.

## **Woodland Management**

- 3.23 In February 2020 *idverde* reinstated positive management to Padmall Wood by reintroducing coppicing cycles. This was achieved through at a cost neutral basis by utilising the sale of the timber products to offset the cost of the work. This project had the support of RSPB and Forestry Commission England and has yielded positive results for biodiversity and the long-term sustainability of the woodland.

## **Brilliant Butterflies**

- 3.24 An *idverde* led collaborative project between the Council, London Wildlife Trust, with Butterfly Conservation, commenced a project which successfully installed a range of habitat features at four strategically selected sites to form part of a regional wildlife corridor for pollinators. A combination of meadow areas, chalk banks and chalk scrapes were installed at Biggin Hill Recreation Ground, Coney Hall Recreation Ground, Leaves Green Common and Green Street Green Common.

## **Natural Flood Defences**

- 3.25 In March 2021 *idverde* installed two new wetland areas in Elmstead Woods and Darrick & Newstead Woods. Designed to redirect and capture water in the woodlands; these installations will diversify the habitats present as well as increasing the volume of water held during periods of excessive rainfall.

## **Habitat Audits**

- 3.26 *idverde* have engaged with specialist organisations to provide an annual programme of habitat consultation visits and habitat audits as a quality assurance measure. RSPB and Kent Reptile Amphibian Group have provided important input and assessment of woodland and heathland habitat in Bromley. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Of particular note is the view of Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group who identified that the Council and *idverde* should be “very proud” of how the heathland at Hayes Common is managed and that the adder (*Vipera berus*) population on site “is likely to be of regional importance” and should be treated as a “conservation priority for the Borough”. These visits will inform future work and may lead to future grant funded projects to extend the heathland habitat.

## **Fleet Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS)**

- 3.27 *idverde* has engaged with the FORS which provides accreditation to encourage the safe and sustainable operation of vehicles. This commits to enabling all operators to attain and maintain the best possible level of productivity and efficiency with the least impact on society and the environment.

## **Carbon Reduction Initiatives**

- 3.28 Over the past twelve months *idverde* have directed resource into the company’s sustainability programme including the addition of a full-time sustainability advisor

to support the *idverde* sustainability programme manager. Collectively this new sustainability team have been working centrally to support the business with a strategic approach to progressing sustainability issues that affect all business activities including services to the Council.

- 3.29 *idverde* are in the process of writing their second sustainability strategy which includes ten commitments focused on various sustainability topics including: colleague well-being, employability, community partnerships, carbon, waste & resources, biodiversity, climate change awareness, sustainable solutions and innovation. Many of the above commitment areas are already positively actioned through work in Bromley where *idverde*'s best practice can be observed. However, the new sustainability strategy and commitments will bring about a renewed focus and approach to progressing how they address these sustainability topics and will benefit Bromley in the longer term.
- 3.30 To date much of *idverde*'s focus has been in understanding their carbon impacts which has involved working with an expert third party to measure and validate their company carbon footprint for all direct emissions resulting from their business activities. *idverde* have reported that 96% of their direct emissions come from liquid fuels including petrol, white diesel (for road vehicles) and gas oil (for machinery and plant). The remaining 4% is split between electricity and gas consumption. This means that in order for them to significantly reduce their emissions they will need to transition their vehicle and machinery fleet to alternatively powered options in order to reduce fossil fuel consumption in the coming years. This is a process they have already started as a business including locally on the Bromley contract with ongoing proposals to reach Net Zero as soon as possible. *idverde* are confident that they will achieve substantial emissions reductions before 2030 as the natural replacement cycles of their vehicles and machinery are relatively short and so the opportunities to replace individual vehicles and machines with low and/or zero emissions alternatives will be frequent.
- 3.31 There are numerous challenges associated with the decarbonisation of not just *idverde* business activities but that of the entire amenity horticulture and associated industries. The alternative options in most cases cannot be used in a like for like fashion where equipment performance varies, machinery capability is restricted, and where infrastructure upgrades are required.
- 3.32 One advantage of the Councils partnership with *idverde* is the opportunity for deploying new technology into the contracts. *idverde* have recently renewed a contract with Warwick District Council and introduced electric vehicles, large grass cutting machines and a large number of small pieces of handheld battery powered equipment deployed into the service operations. Contracts like this will pave the way for developing the service models of the future and so other *idverde* partnerships such as that with Bromley will benefit from the learning and development which comes out of large-scale decarbonisation efforts which are taking place in Warwick..
- 3.33 In addition to *idverde*'s commitment to achieve Net Zero, they have taken a decision to compensate for the direct carbon emissions that were released through their business activities in 2020. This means that *idverde* and all of its activities have been carbon neutral for scopes 1+2 emissions as of 2020. This is supported and evidenced by a statement from their partners One Carbon World which is due to be received in October. It is anticipated that the compensating of their direct emissions will continue up until the point they reach Net Zero. Their business activities at Bromley have been carbon neutral for scopes 1+2 emissions as of 2020.

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

- 3.34 In 2021, via environmental education delivery, *idverde* piloted programmes in online delivery to support schools and young people through the impact of Covid and associated restrictions. Free to download activity packs were made available as well as a range of webinars which reached 350 participants.
- 3.35 Through supervised volunteer work parties, 2124 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. This figure was impacted by volunteering being prohibited April 2020 - August 2020 and January 2021 to April 2021.

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

- 3.36 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.
- 3.37 *idverde* have invested in further training to ensure that the majority of the Countryside team are qualified in the safe use of pesticides. This has increased the capacity to effectively manage injurious or undesirable plant species in the Borough.
- 3.38 *idverde* have refined their methodology for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed which has resulted in a reduction in the volume of glyphosate required to effectively manage the species, in line with best practice.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 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.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The contract was managed within the available revenue budget in 2020/21 of £5.67m.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **7 PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 In line with 23.3 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, an annual report must be submitted to the PDS Committee for all contracts with a value higher than £500,000.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	