

Decision Maker: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUSTAINABILITY, GREEN SERVICES AND OPEN SPACES

For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Environment Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 22nd November 2022

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

Title: IDVERDE ANNUAL CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22 – CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF PARKS MANAGEMENT AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

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

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report reviews the 2021/22 annual performance of the contract for parks management and grounds maintenance with idverde Ltd. Under this contract, idverde have responsibility for providing a fully managed service that manages and maintains parks, countryside and greenspace sites across the borough.
- 1.2 An annual contract performance report meets the requirement of section 23 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) for contracts with an annual value that exceeds £500k.
- 1.3 The current performance of the contract is deemed to be satisfactory.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **The Environment & Community Services Policy Development & Scrutiny Committee are asked to review the annual contract performance of idverde.**

2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces is asked to approve a variation (modification) to the contract with idverde for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance of up to £640k over two years for the inclusion of infrastructure repairs to park and cemetery assets, funded through the Operational Maintenance Budgets.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The service provided by idverde affects all residents including vulnerable adults and children. Some of their activities have a specific impact, such as the provision of environmental education, oversight and planning of volunteer programmes in open spaces and management of playgrounds.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Open Space Strategy 2021-2031
 2. Making Property Even Better Priority:
 - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and sustainable for the future.
 - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley residents.
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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: £ 6.214m
 5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budget for 2021/22
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 3 FTE
 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 Comments

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Property Implications: N/A

Carbon Reduction and Social Value: N/A

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): All borough residents (circa 330,000), local businesses and people that work in and visit Bromley.
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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 20th November 2018 the Executive agreed (report **ES18082**) that a contract for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance be awarded to idverde Ltd for a term of 8 years commencing 1st April 2019, with the option to extend for a further 8 years.
- 3.2 The purpose of the contract is the provision of a fully managed service for the management and maintenance of parks, countryside and green spaces in the borough. There are 28km² of open space which the council is custodian of, including formal parks, leisure gardens, allotments, cemeteries and closed churchyards, and semi-natural habitats including areas of woodland. As part of their contractual responsibilities, idverde support, encourage and empower local community involvement in open spaces and manage concessions and events.
- 3.3 This contract supports the delivery of Council priorities identified in its Corporate Strategy, Making Bromley Even Better, and the Council's Open Space Strategy 2021-2031.

Contract Management and Governance

- 3.4 The contract is monitored by the Carbon Management and Greenspace division, following a realignment in February 2022. This realignment included placing officers in specialised teams to improve the quality of contract monitoring and build organisational resilience.
- 3.5 Contract performance is scrutinised in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) and is managed through the governance model set out in Schedules 4 and 11 of the contract, making use of the Performance Management Framework (PMF). The PMF comprises of 12 Key Service Objectives (KSOs), which break down into 18 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were established prior to contract commencement. The framework is designed to incentivise idverde to invest in resources to address under performance rather than incur a Performance Adjusted Value (deduction). Key Service Objectives include:
- KSOs 1-7 which are monitored monthly and relate to feature quality (and therefore grounds maintenance activities)
 - KSO 8 which relates to operational delivery, including time sensitive tasks and enquiry management
 - KSO 9 which relates to operational reporting
 - KSO 10 which relates to submission of strategic plans and delivery of operational programmes
 - KSO 11 which covers financial performance and administration
 - KSO 12 which relates to health and safety and personnel management.
- 3.6 Performance is reviewed and monitored at a monthly Service Operations Board (SOB) meeting. This includes reviewing performance in relation to the PMF, as well as reviewing the relevant financial information, health and safety reports, data protection, delivery against key plans, and the contract risk register in detail.
- 3.7 A Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) comprising of senior managers from the Council and idverde meet bi-annually to oversee strategic management of the contract. This Board reviews performance trends and considers the annual Service Delivery Plans.

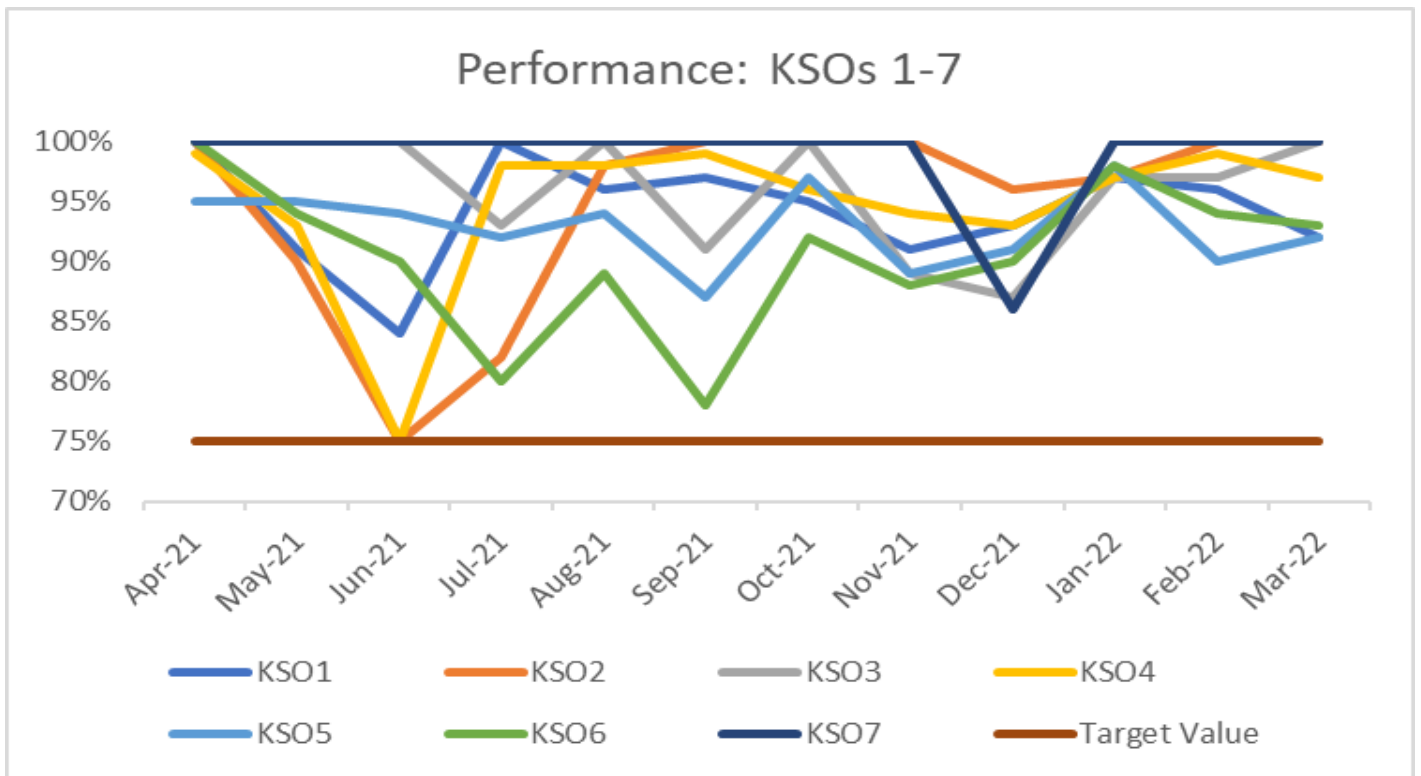
- 3.8 Outside of the formal contractual governance, and to provide input into the management of open spaces, a non-decision making Stakeholder Engagement Panel also meets bi-annually where groups with direct involvement in local open spaces can have their say. This includes the Friends Forum, representatives from Delegated Sports Managers, the allotment associations and other similar groups. Feedback from these stakeholders is used to inform the development and delivery of the Service Delivery Plan, the Biodiversity Plan and Open Space Management Plans.
- 3.9 Additionally, idverde and council officers regularly engage with community stakeholders through other panels and forums, including:
- Countryside Consultative Panel
 - Bromley Friends Forum, and Forum Partnership Meetings
 - Local Friends groups, volunteers and stakeholders
 - Leisure Gardens and Allotments Consultative Panel
 - Bromley Biodiversity Partnership

Contract Performance

- 3.9 This report summarises performance levels for each of the KSOs across the third contract year – between April 2021 and March 2022.
- 3.10 Performance data suggests that idverde have been meeting the minimum target value for KSOs 1-7 during this contract period. KSOs 1-7 measure:

KSO 1	Highway verges and amenity grass cutting/strimming, within the service standards and timescales
KSO 2	Maintain a programme of floral bedding displays, within the service standards and timescales
KSO 3	Maintain playground features, including, soft safety surface, sandpits, paddling pools, within the service standards and timescales
KSO 4	Maintain all other grass i.e. general parks grass, box mowing, gang mowing, cemeteries grass and rough grass, within the service standards and timescales
KSO 5	Achieve the cleanliness standards of the EPA for cleansing operations in Parks (i.e., sweeping, litter picking) shall be according to the EPA Standards
KSO 6	Maintain horticulture features (rose beds, shrub beds, herbaceous borders and hedges) within the service standards and timescales
KSO 7	To ensure performance standards for floral displays within the service standards and timescales

- 3.11 The table below shows the performance data in 2021/22 contract year for KSOs 1-7:



3.12 Performance has been within an acceptable level across all KSOs, according to the contractual target value. There was a marked decline in performance in relation to KSO2 (floral bedding) and KSO 4 (Maintain all other grass i.e. general parks grass, box mowing, gang mowing, cemeteries grass and rough grass, within the service standards and timescales) in June 2021 – this was because of the fifth wettest May in record for England and fourth wettest for the UK overall. The unseasonably wet weather affected operations and led to vigorous grass growth across the borough. Additionally, performance in relation to KSO 6 (horticultural features) during the summer period, whilst acceptable, did see a decline during the period in which these assets are most prominent.

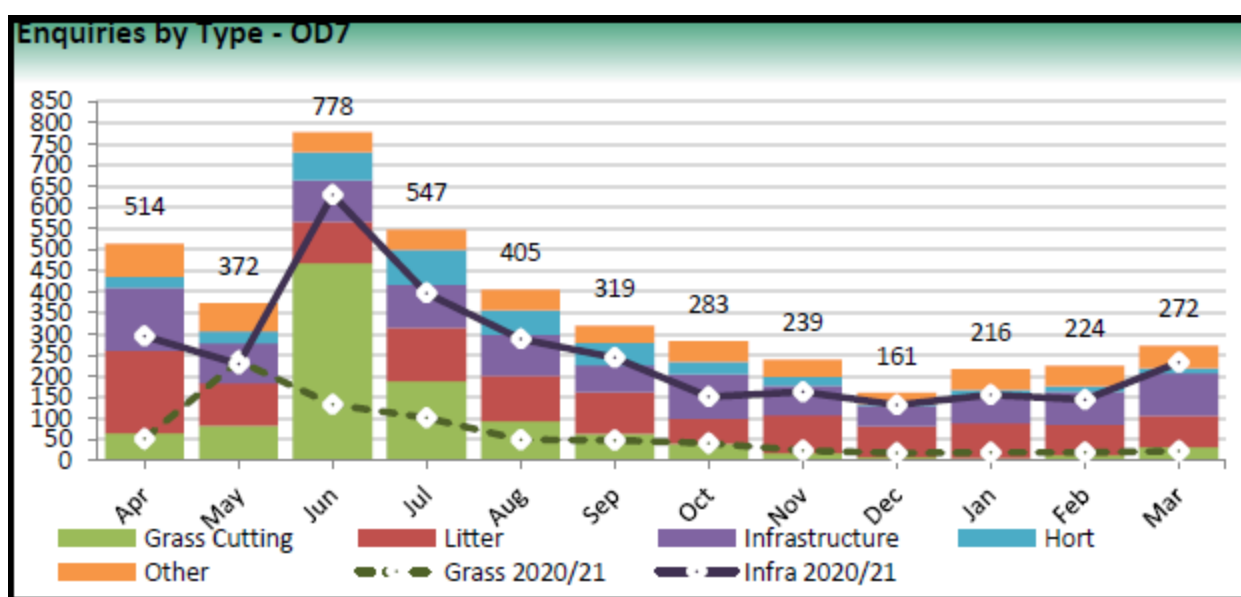
3.13 KSOs 8 – 12 are reported here by exception, as all KPIs have a target value of 100% or a pass/fail score. In 2021/22, the following performance issues were reported:

KSO8	OD2	Fly tipping	3 reported incidents not resolved within the agreed SLA.
	OD7	Enquiry management	There were five instances where the percentage of enquiries managed within the contractual timescales did not meet expectations – in four of these instances, the target value was missed by 1%, and in one instance the target value was missed by 10%.
	OD11	Drainage assets	24 instances where drainage assets were not maintained within the service standards or timescales.
KSO9	OR8	Service enquiries from officers, members or MPs	2 enquiries were not managed within the agreed timeframe.

- 3.14 Although each of the instances where performance fell below the target value of 100% attracted the application of a PAV, the overall performance as a percentage of the total number of instances were all within the green RAG status, excepting OD11. idverde addressed this during the year by appointing a subcontractor with the relevant skills to undertake the required works to drainage assets and performance has since improved.
- 3.15 The contract allows for a review of the KSOs and KPIs annually. There were no changes proposed or agreed during 2021/22, although the Council intends to submit a proposal for consideration in the 2022/23 contract year.

Customer Enquiries

3.16 During 2021/22, the idverde Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has received 4,330 enquiries, an average of 361 per month, but with a seasonal peak that coincides with the commencement of the grass cutting season. The table below shows the number of enquiries received each month, broken down by enquiry type:



3.17 During 2021/22, idverde managed 97.3% of enquiries within the required timescales.

Resident Satisfaction – Perception of the Borough’s Parks and Green Spaces

- 3.18 An annual customer and stakeholder satisfaction survey was conducted in summer 2022, with questionnaires sent to 3,000 randomly selected households in Bromley from a database supplied by the Council. 399 responses were received, which is a response rate of 13%. The full survey report is attached at **Appendix 1**. To encourage participation, respondents are entered into a prize draw to win a £100 voucher.
- 3.19 77% of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the borough’s parks and green spaces. This is a reduction of 3% on the survey completed in summer 2021.
- 3.20 They survey found that 30% of respondents were visiting parks or green spaces daily, compared with 11% of survey respondents pre-pandemic.
- 3.21 Respondents most selected cleanliness and facilities as top priorities for parks and greenspaces, however satisfaction with cleanliness was at 63% and at satisfaction with

facilities was at a low 21%, with both condition and range or number of facilities being given as reasons for dissatisfaction.

3.22 Officers have reviewed the frequency of litter collections with idverde and an increased number of frequencies have subsequently been agreed and implemented for 2022/23. During the 2021 contractual year there were Covid restrictions in place, which resulted in an increase in the amount of litter in parks.

3.23 To improve the management of the condition of facilities on site, officers are recommending that the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces agrees to vary the idverde contract to include infrastructure works, instructed on a case by case basis, at an estimated value of £640k for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 contract years. The funding for this work has been set aside in the Operational Maintenance Budget (**HPR2022/007**) for 2022/23 and is expected to similarly be set aside in the 2023/24 budgets. This will enable idverde to identify, recommend and undertake works to repair assets such as pathways, fences and potholes directly, and is an approach supported by the Property division. In accordance with the relevant CPRs, the value of this variation must be approved by the Portfolio Holder.

Contract achievements and plans for ongoing development

3.24 *Embedding and showcasing collaboration:* partnership working has had benefits for biodiversity management in 2021/22:

- Ongoing joint working with the **RSPB** ensured that the Countryside team accomplished their Great Crested Newt licences, enabling completion of survey and monitoring work needed to deliver the repair works to Scadbury Moated Manor.
- Collaboration with **Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group** on heathland and woodland management provided training and delivered a reptile survey at Hayes Common, Keston Common and Parkfield Recreation Ground, which suggested that the adder population in Bromley is regionally significant.
- As part of the Bromley Biodiversity Action Plan, idverde have delivered training courses to **Bromley allotments**, including courses on supporting hedgehogs and amphibian and reptile wildlife. Consequently, there are now Biodiversity Champions at some allotments who are conducting species surveys, with results reported to the relevant recording bodies.
- In partnership with the **Friends Forum**, four biodiversity training courses were delivered to 194 participants.

3.25 *Sustainability:*

- A **Countryside Stewardship** grant of £128k was secured from Natural England and the Forestry Commission to support management of SSSI sites and other woodland sites (including Scadbury Park, Hayes Common and Keston Common) in 2020/21. Work commenced in 2021/22 and will continue over the next 5 and 10 years. The Non SSSI High Level Stewardship was extended in 2021/22. Additionally, the new coppicing cycles previously introduced at Padmall Wood are now into its third year with clearance work and removal of invasive species now completed.
- Following engagement with the Butterfly Conservation Trust and community stakeholder groups, the **Brilliant Butterflies** project has created give butterfly chalk banks, meadow

beds and scrapes in four parks and greenspaces, chosen to form part of a regional wildlife corridor for pollinators, with work undertaken between April and September 2021.

- To support **management of flooding issues**, new culverts were introduced to Elmstead Woods and additional ponds were installed in Scadbury Parks and Jubilee Country Park.
- In partnership with the **Kent Wildlife Trust**, a new regime for grazing sheep in remote, rural meadows (for example, at High Elms Country Park) has been agreed, to potentially eliminate the need for rural grass cuts, and the carbon footprint such cuts create. Additionally, London Wildlife Trust permitted seed collection on a neighbouring site which have been used in other meadows to support the growth of the butterfly population, particularly those species that are prioritised under the Biodiversity Action Plan (e.g. Small Blue butterfly).
- In March 2020, 34 sites in Bromley were selected as a pilot for the conversion of 37Ha of amenity grassland into **naturalised/meadow grassland**. Monitoring of these sites has continued in 2021/22 and a review of the pilot is due in Winter 2022/23.

3.26 *Health and wellbeing:*

- 7025 hours of **volunteer support** has been provided to benefit Bromley's parks and woodlands, with well documented health and wellbeing impacts. This is over three times the number of hours achieved the previous year, although this which was heavily impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. Habitat management being by far the most regular task completed by volunteers; this is also the most physically demanding task and benefits physical wellbeing.
- Following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and consultation with schools in April 2021, the online webinars have now ceased, but with an increase in the number of **education visits** and environmental education sessions provided at BEECHE, with 3414 visits in 2021/22.

3.27 *Glyphosate reduction:*

- The **Foamstream** system was introduced in 2019 with the aim of reducing the reliance on glyphosate by as much as 90% by the end of the next 5 years. In 2021/22 weed control in urban parks of annual and perennial weeds on all surfaces was primarily achieved by using the Foamstream system in conjunction with manual methods such as brush cutters and hand weeding.
- Following advice from DEFRA, the annual treatment programme for **Japanese Knotweed** now commences later in the year to speed up eventual control of the plant and therefore reduce the amount of glyphosate used in its management.

3.28 *Awards:* The **Green Flag Award** scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. In Autumn 2021 7 sites within the portfolio have been awarded Green Flag status: Keston Common, South Hill Woods, Hayes Common, Biggin Hill Recreation Ground, Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Common and Queens Gardens.

4 **TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The parks management and grounds maintenance contract supports the delivery of the ambitions within the Corporate Strategy: Making Bromley Even Better, with a the most direct impact on ambitions:

(4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and sustainable for the future.

(5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley residents.

4.2 The parks management and maintenance contract is also key to the delivery of the council's Open Spaces Strategy 2021-2031.

5 IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

5.1 The parks management and maintenance contract 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. Adjustments are made, as required, to ensure services are as accessible as possible and all users are safe in their capacity of community engagement.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The current controllable revenue budget for Parks and Green Spaces is £6.214m. The annual value of the contract with idverde for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance is circa £5.3m.

6.2 The report recommends a variation (modification) to the contract with idverde for parks management and grounds maintenance of up to a value of £640k over two years, to include repairs to parks and cemetery infrastructure which currently falls outside of the scope of the contract. This variation will be funded from the budget set aside in the Operational Maintenance Budget, and specifically the Building Investment Fund for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

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 Executive for all contracts with a value higher than £1m.

7.2 Further, this report seeks a variation (modification) to the contract with idverde for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance of up to £640k over two years for the inclusion of infrastructure works to park and cemetery assets.

7.3 This was originally procured as an above-threshold contract following a competitive tendering process. The variation stated above can be completed in compliance with Regulation 72 (b) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

7.4 The Council's requirements for authorising a variation are covered in CPR 23.7 and 13.1. For a contract of this value, the Approval of the Portfolio Holder following Agreement by the Chief Officer, the Assistant Director Governance & Contracts, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Finance must be obtained. In accordance with CPR 2.1.2, Officers must take all necessary professional advice.

- 7.5 Following Approval, the variation must be applied via a suitable Change Control Notice, or similar, agreed with the Provider. A modification notice will be published.
- 7.6 The actions identified in this report are provided for within the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, and the proposed actions can be completed in compliance with their contents.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This Committee is requested to review this report on the annual performance of idverde Ltd in relation to its contract for the provision of parks management and grounds maintenance services. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces is further asked to approve a variation to the contract with idverde to include infrastructure repairs to park and cemetery assets at a value of £640k over two years.
- 8.2 The Council's Constitution, at Part 4 – Rules of Procedure, provides the terms of reference for the Environment and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee as it relates to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio. Under these terms of reference, this Committee is responsible for receiving reports and making recommendations on performance monitoring of services falling within the remit of this portfolio.
- 8.3 Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 23.2 provides that for all Contracts with a value higher than £500,000, or which are High Risk, an annual report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder, the responsible Officers having submitted for consideration a formal Gateway Review, covering, as appropriate, the matters identified in the Council's standard Gateway Review Template for consideration as part of Contract Monitoring/Management requirements.
- 8.4 Under CPR 23.7.5, variations (Change Control) over £500k require Portfolio Holder decision unless delegated authority was sought at the point of Contract Award. Any variation must comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Under Regulation 72 (1)(b)(ii) a public contract may be varied without a new procurement procedure where a change of contractor would cause significant inconvenience or substantial duplication of costs for the contracting authority, provided that any increase in price does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract.
- 8.5 Should the variation be approved by the Portfolio Holder then the appropriate contractual change control mechanism must be followed.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel Implications, Ward Councillor Views, Property Implications, Carbon Reduction/Social Value Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1: Public Satisfaction Survey Results HPR2022/007 – Operational Building Maintenance Budgets and Planned Programme 2022/23 Open Space Strategy 2021-2031 ES2006 idverde Annual Performance Report