

The Highland Council
Community Services Committee
4 February 2016

Agenda Item	10
Report No	COM 7/16

Grass Cutting and Ancillary Works Specification and Priorities

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report presents an update on progress with the retender of grass cutting and ancillary services including the specification for grass cutting service standards.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 20 August 2015 report Ref COM/43/15 was presented to the Community Services committee.
- 1.2 A programme of Ward Business Meeting briefings on the retender and Community Engagement are being delivered between January and March 2016 (**Appendix A**).
- 1.3 Common themes emerging from the WBM's are: contract monitoring, support for consistent standards, support for asset based budget and ability to set local priorities within budgets, and concerns regarding strength of communities to support community engagement.

2. Contract Monitoring and Management

- 2.1 The Community Services HQ based team will continue to manage the contracts, undertaking validation inspections and provide training and support to the operational staff in the Areas.
- 2.2 It is intended that the future contract will include self-monitoring by the contractor of his sub-contractors work using IT mobile working.
- 2.3 It is intended to utilise the Council's mobile working IT system Total Mobile and those of contractors, with trials organised for 2016. In Inverness the contractor, ISS, has introduced their system (All on Mobile), whilst the Council's system is to be tested on Skye and with the in-house service in Sutherland .

3. Standards and priorities

- 3.1 Results from panel and Community Council surveys show that maintenance of burial grounds, sports pitches and play areas are a very high priority for local

communities.

- 3.2 There is no statutory requirement stipulating that amenity grass must be cut. The Council has various duties to maintain public safety, deliver education in accordance to national standards, deliver a burial service, maintain roads and paths in a safe condition, and support the national play initiatives. To discharge these duties requires varying minimum standards of grass cutting to be delivered.
- 3.3 The amenity grass estate maintained by CS is allocated to budget groups and has been classified into three categories:
- A – Statutory where there is no scope for change of standard
B – Statutory but reduction of standard possible and/or transferral
C – Non-statutory where grass cutting could be reduced, ceased or transferred
- 3.4 Initial assessment shows there are limited areas classified as C but significant areas classified B where communities could request to take on works if the local requirement is for a standard above the statutory minimum.
- 3.5 Feedback from WBM's on revisions to priorities and standards has been positive.
- 3.6 It is proposed to modify the standards delivered in accordance with the general details given in **Appendix B**.

4. Contract Strategy and timescale

- 4.1 The tender timescale has been updated as follows;

WBM Briefings - specification/standards	January to March 2016
Final draft of documentation	March 2016
Advertise for tenders	April 2016
Receive, evaluate pre-selection	May 2016
Issue tender for pricing	June 2016
Tenders returned	August 2016
Evaluate tenders received	September 2016
Contract Awarded	October 2016
Contract mobilisation	November 2016 to February 2017
Contract commences	March 2017

5. Implications

- 5.1 Advice is currently being secured on the legal implications for transferal to community groups.
- 5.2 A decision to amend the specifications for grass cutting would enable a financial saving to be secured.

5.3 There are no equalities, climate change/carbon clever, gaelic or rural implications.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to:-

- i. note the programme of the Ward Business Meeting briefings and the proposals for involving communities; and
- ii. approve the revisions of grass cutting standards

Designation: The Director of Community Services

Date: 22 January 2016

Author: Robin Pope

Background Papers: Report Ref COM/43/15 community services committee 20/8/15

Appendix A – Ward Business Meeting Briefings

Ward		Date	Time	Location
21	Badenoch and Strathspey	6/1/16	11:00	Convenor's hospitality rm
6	West Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	11/1/16	10:30	Dingwall cm rm 1
9	Dingwall and Seaforth			
10	Black Isle			
20	Inverness South	14/1/16	08:30	Town House
5	East Sutherland	18/1/16	10:00	Golspie - Drummie
14	Inverness West	18/1/16	14:00	Town House
18	Culloden and Ardersier	20/1/16	14:00	Town House
17	Inverness Millburn	25/1/16	15:00	Town House
11	Eilean a' Cheo	1/2/16	12:00	Tigh na Sgire, Portree
12	Caol and Mallaig	2/2/16	11:00	Council Chambers, Lochaber House
22	Fort William and Ardnamurchan			
13	Aird and Loch Ness	8/2/16	13:00	Town House
7	Cromarty Firth	9/2/16	09:00	Invergordon, Highland Homeless trust
1	NW and Central Sutherland	9/2/16	14:00	Golspie - Drummie
15	Inverness Central	15/2/16	09:30	Town House
16	Inverness Ness-side	22/2/16	14:00	Town House
2	Thurso	29/2/16	10:30	Chamber, Wick Town Hall
3	Wick			
4	Landward Caithness			
19	Nairn	7/3/16	TBA	Nairn Court House
8	Tain and Easter Ross	TBA	TBA	Tain Council Chamber

Appendix B

Category	Grass Type	Grass Length (mm)	Cutting Interval	Visible Clippings	Standard of Provision	
					Current provision (some disparity of application)	Proposed provision (for consistency & saving)
Sports Turf High maintenance.	Fine Turf	Sport specific	2-5 days	Insignificant	Premier locations with high profile matches and other intensively used facilities.	Continue. Move to single or exclusive user sites with self-provision.
Amenity Grass Regular cutting during the growing season.	Lawn	15-25	5-7 days	None (collected)	Ornamental gardens. High profile building surrounds.	Review - majority to be changed to High Amenity.
	High Amenity	25-60	5-7 days	Insignificant	Parks, gardens, high profile sites, some - burial grounds, school fields, and games pitches. Maximum availability for recreation.	Review – some sites will be satisfactory at General Amenity in full or in part.
	General Amenity	35-100	8-10 days	Minimal	Recreation areas, open spaces, most burial grounds, school fields and surrounds, games pitches and play areas. Normally available for use.	Reclassify some lesser-used parts of sites to Low Amenity or Conservation categories.
	Low Amenity	75-150	16-28 days	Some	Banks, path and urban verges, amongst trees and wet ground. Mothballed premises, sites with limited use some post operational burial grounds. Reasonable availability in dry conditions.	Some or parts of areas in these categories can be changed to Conservation grass.
	Rough Cut	100-250	30-60 days	Usual	Small plots with limited recreational potential with access or visual amenity required, verges/sight lines.	
					Proposed locations	Proposed standard
Conservation Grass Mostly cut out with growing season.	Meadow	600 +/-	Twice annually	Removed after cut.	Areas identified with existing potential or to promote biodiversity/habitat	Not yet in widespread use. Provides a cost saving and biodiversity development. Conversion from carefully chosen areas currently at General, Low or Rough Amenity standard.
	Semi-meadow	600 +/-	Twice annually July & Autumn.	Removed at first cut.	Prominent peripheries, banks where single cut not acceptable.	
	Annual Cut	Annual growth	Once after main cutting season.	Significant but spread.	Roadside drains, behind mown verge strip and habitat areas, in locations away from domestic property and high use.	
	Biennial	Annual growth	Biennial Sept to Feb	Significant.	Some riverbanks and unmaintained areas to prevent scrub growth.	
Intervention Cut			Officer directed		Spot treatment to control rank growth (within budget constraints).	