

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

12 JANUARY 2012

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| <b>SUBJECT:</b>                          | <b><i>PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE<br/>MODERNISATION PROJECT - UPDATE</i></b> |
| <b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>                  | <b><i>ALL</i></b>  |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>                        | <b><i>DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL<br/>SERVICES</i></b>                  |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO<br/>HOLDER:</b> | <b><i>COUNCILLOR CHRIS MEADEN, LEISURE &amp;<br/>CULTURAL SERVICES</i></b>     |
| <b>KEY DECISION?</b>                     | <b>NO</b>  |

### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on progress to date on the project to modernise the Parks and Countryside Services and the integration of the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to use £500,000 of the existing Capital Programme allocation for Cultural Services assets to be used for the acquisition of equipment to deliver the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 onwards.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to note progress on the Parks and Countryside modernisation project and the integration of the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service and to approve the use of £500,000 of the existing Capital Programme allocation for Cultural Services assets to be used for the acquisition of equipment to deliver the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 onwards.

### **3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 3.1 Approval by Cabinet is required to enable the change in service provision to be managed effectively and to allocate the previously agreed Capital Programme allocation for Cultural Services assets.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Parks & Countryside Service Modernisation Project is a complex multi-disciplinary project with the purpose of establishing a modern, cost effective

and efficient service comparable to that offered by the private sector by Spring 2013.

4.2 An Outline Delivery Plan was endorsed by Cabinet at their meeting on 24 November 2011 and has been set out under four key workstreams all reporting to a Project Board:

- Policy, Processes and Performance
- Human Resources
- Assets
- Communication and Engagement

4.3 This report seeks approval for the acquisition of plant and equipment to deliver the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 and this decision is of a time-critical nature due to the considerable costs associated with short-term hire as described in section 7.2. It is proposed that a more extensive report will be prepared for Cabinet in the near future setting out a new medium/ long term programme of capital investment for the overall Parks & Countryside Service.

## **5.0 HIGHWAYS GROUND MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

### **5.1 Staffing**

5.1.1 An urgent piece of work is currently being undertaken to integrate the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service into the new Parks and Countryside Service. This needs to be completed by 1 February 2012 as at this time the existing contractor's staff transfer into the Council.

5.1.2 It has been established that there are 41 individuals currently employed by Continental who are involved with the delivery of the Highway Grounds Maintenance Service – 23 permanent employees to which TUPE Regulations apply and 18 seasonal employees who are engaged by Continental each year for the growing season. All permanent employees will be offered the opportunity to transfer onto Wirral Council Terms and Conditions working annualised hours from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012, though under TUPE Regulations these employees may opt to retain their existing terms and conditions should they choose to do so. It is also anticipated that the majority of these seasonal employees will be employed via temporary contracts for the current season as a minimum to ensure existing service delivery arrangements are maintained. The TUPE transfer process is ongoing and representatives from the Council's HR team had "one-to-one" meetings with all employees concerned before the Christmas break.

5.1.3 There will be an estimated additional cost to the Council of up to £300k per annum if all permanent Continental Landscapes employees accept Council Terms and Conditions and the same number of seasonal employees are employed to deliver the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service. However, this can be contained within existing Parks & Countryside Services budgets (which now includes approximately £1.2M p.a. funding which used to be paid to Continental Landscapes Limited to deliver the existing contract).

5.1.4 Despite these additional costs, offering to employ the Continental permanent employees on Council Terms and Conditions rather than the less onerous existing Continental Terms and Conditions corresponding to the minimum requirement to comply with TUPE Regulations demonstrates the Council's commitment to investing in its people and a single tier harmonised workforce.

## **5.2 Depot Arrangements**

5.2.1 To enable the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service to be effectively delivered by the Council it is essential that appropriate depot arrangements are put in place. Based on an options appraisal, it is proposed that the Highways Grounds Maintenance Services continues to be delivered from the depot presently occupied by Continental Landscapes in Reeds Lane, Moreton. This has the advantages of minimum disruption to the service, fitted with all appropriate storage requirements and a good strategic location. This depot would be leased for 12 months whilst a review of existing Parks and Countryside depots is carried out and any improvements undertaken to enable the Highways Ground Maintenance Service to transfer to Council owned premises before the end of the 12 month lease. The cost of the lease, rates and other associated costs is estimated at up to £50,000 which would be met from within existing revenue budgets which currently support this service. The lease terms will be negotiated by the Head of Asset Management and reported for approval by Delegated Decision to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources.

## **5.3 Plant and Equipment**

5.3.1 As the service is transferring from Continental Landscapes back to the Council new vehicles and grass cutting equipment are required. Vehicles can be provided by the Transport section in the Children and Young People's department and leased to the Parks and Countryside service but plant and grounds maintenance equipment will have to be purchased and available for the start of the contract in February 2012.

5.3.2 Some used specialist equipment may be purchased from the existing contractor subject to assessment of condition and value. The Corporate Procurement Unit have identified a suitable regional framework agreement which can be used to purchase equipment within a significantly shortened timescale. The cost of equipping the Highway Grounds Maintenance service is estimated at £500,000 which will be met from existing capital allocations for Cultural Services Assets. All aspects of procurement are being dealt with in conjunction with the Corporate Procurement Unit.

## **6.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

6.1 Due to the tight timescale, a potential risk to the Council would be to not mobilise in time for 1 February 2012. The use of the existing Continental depot and purchasing through the framework agreement helps to minimise this risk.

- 6.2 Given the very short timescales for the purchase of equipment it is possible that some of the equipment may not be available for the start of the grass cutting season in March 2012. Contractors tendering for the supply of grass cutting equipment have been asked to indicate how they could supply temporary equipment in advance of the delivery of new equipment and this will be included as part of the tender process.

## **7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 For depot arrangements the use of existing depots owned by the Council were considered as part of the options appraisal but were rejected because of the need to make provision by February 2012.
- 7.2 For plant and equipment the option of short term hire or lease was considered but was rejected due to high cost and availability of suitable equipment. The equivalent short-term hire cost of the plant and equipment to deliver the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service is in the region of £5000 to £10,000 per week.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 A Consultation and Engagement Plan has been agreed for the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Project ensuring staff and users are fully involved in the project.

## **9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 9.1 A key part of the Modernisation Project is to increase opportunities for voluntary and community groups in assisting with the maintenance and management of the Parks and Countryside area.

## **10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 10.1 The cost of the plant and equipment for the Highway Grounds Maintenance Service is £500,000 which will be met from existing allocations for Cultural Services assets in the Capital Programme.
- 10.2 The costs of harmonising Terms and Conditions (section 5.1), leasing the depot for 12 months (section 5.2) and acquiring new plant and equipment (section 5.3) can all be accommodated within the existing budget for these services which has now increased due to the contract payment no longer being made to Continental Landscapes.

## **11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken for the Parks and Countryside Services Modernisation Project.

### **13.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The new vehicles purchased will assist in reducing carbon emissions. Additional tree planting on highways and in parks contributes to offsetting carbon emissions.

### **14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are none arising from this report.

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### **APPENDICES**

None.

### **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

None.

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b>  | <b>Date</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|
| <b>Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award</b>  | <b>22 September 2011</b> |
| <b>Sustainable Communities O&amp;S Committee – PACSPE Contract Award Call in</b>  | <b>20 October 2011</b>   |
| <b>Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award (following Call in)</b>  | <b>3 November 2011</b>   |
| <b>Cabinet – Parks &amp; Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Integration of Highway Services and Outline Delivery Plan</b> | <b>24 November 2011</b>  |