

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 12TH APRIL 2012

SUBJECT:	PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES MODERNISATION PROJECT – PROGRESS UPDATE INCLUDING PROPOSED WORKFORCE WORKING PRACTICES PILOT INITIATIVE
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR LESLEY RENNIE, CULTURE TOURISM AND LEISURE
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a progress update on the Parks Modernisation Project and to seek endorsement for the proposed Workforce Working Practices Pilot initiative agreed with Trade Union representatives.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 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.

2.2 An Outline Delivery Plan was endorsed by Cabinet at their meeting on 24 November 2011 (Minute 205 refers) 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

In addition there was an urgent short-term project to integrate the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service into the Council for 1st February 2012 on the expiry of the existing external contract.

2.3 This report provides a progress update on the modernisation of the service and achievement of the Delivery Plan endorsed by Cabinet.

3.0 PARKS MODERNISATION PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE

3.1 Highways Integration Project

Following the decision by Cabinet not to award an external contract for the delivery of Parks & Countryside Services, an urgent priority has been to integrate the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service previously delivered by Continental Landscapes Limited into the Council for the expiry of the existing contract on 31st January 2012.

The Highways Integration Project was established with the purpose of ensuring the smooth integration of the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service back into the Council by this date and focused on three main strands:

- Human Resources – to ensure the successful TUPE transfer of Continental Landscapes Limited employees into Council employment
- Depot Arrangements – to ensure appropriate interim depot arrangements were in place to efficiently and effectively deliver the service in advance of the major Parks & Countryside Service depot review being undertaken later this year
- Equipment and Vehicles – to ensure the necessary equipment and vehicles were in place to efficiently and effectively deliver the service via the best value solution available to the Council bearing in mind the short timescale for service mobilisation

Cabinet was provided with an update on the integration of the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service into the Council on 12th January 2012 and this included gaining approval to use £500,000 of the existing Capital Programme for Cultural Services assets to purchase the necessary equipment and vehicles to deliver the service (Minute 261 refers).

This equipment and vehicles have now been purchased and the majority is now in place being used for service delivery. This has included £54,500 spent on purchasing second-hand equipment from Continental Landscapes Limited as reported to Cabinet on 15th March 2012 under Contract Procedure Rule 21 'Exceptions to Procurement Procedure'.

As reported to Cabinet on 12th January 2012 an options appraisal exercise was undertaken to establish an interim depot arrangement and the service is now being delivered out of Reeds Lane depot in Moreton, the same depot as previously used by Continental Landscapes Limited, following the Delegated Decision by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources to enter into a twelve month lease.

In relation to staffing the 23 permanent employees who worked for Continental Landscapes Limited to which TUPE Regulations applied all successfully transferred into Council employment for the 1st February 2012 service commencement date. These employees have all been through the usual

training and induction processes and are working a flexible 'annualised hours' approach as part of their Council Terms and Conditions of employment.

3.2 Policy Processes and Performance Workstream

A Project Initiation Document (PID) for this workstream and a programme Risk Register has been produced and will be updated on a regular basis.

The 'Create Excellent Business Processes' strand is progressing well and business analysis is currently being undertaken to identify and establish current business processes within all Services Areas under Parks and Countryside including all grounds maintenance functions, playground facilities, sports, crematorium and cemeteries, ranger service, nature conservation and biodiversity. Findings, and potential recommendations, will be presented to working groups of stakeholders with a final report in April 2012 to the Parks Project Board.

ICT processes are being examined and recommendations will be presented in a report to the Parks Project Board.

An initial meeting to scope the 10 year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework has occurred but progress has been delayed whilst the existing business processes are mapped and staff, Union and Friends representatives are aligned to this important strand of work. It is anticipated the Strategic Plan will take at least an additional 9 months with a completion date of December 2013.

An exercise is underway to identify current budgets and realign them to the new modernised service in order to assess performance and value for money.

Resources have been assigned to develop a strategy in relation to benefits realisation, the performance management framework and establishing value for money for the new Parks and Countryside Service.

3.3 Human Resources Workstream

A draft management structure for the service has been prepared for consultation with trade unions and staff and implementation is planned for May/June 2012.

Regular meetings have been held with Trade Union representatives on the introduction of a range of new working practices and this work is described in more detail in Section 4.0 of this report.

Work has started on a Training and Development plan with a skills gap analysis to be completed by June this year.

3.4 Assets Workstream

A review has been completed of existing plant and equipment and a programme of replacement drawn up for consideration by Cabinet. Much of the plant and equipment is out of date and in poor condition. Urgent replacement is required for equipment to ensure compliance with requirements for Hand, Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). Other equipment is now requiring high levels of maintenance

and is beyond economic repair. The total estimated value of replacement is in the region of £2.5m.

A separate assessment is being undertaken of vehicle requirements and a review of depot requirements has started with a condition survey. A needs assessment is now being carried out which will be completed in May/June and may have a further capital or other financing requirement.

The first working group has been set up for the "Develop and Implement Tree Management Plan" workstream. Work is in progress reviewing the existing tree management procedures and assessing the National Tree Safety Group's new guidance on Trees and Public Safety in the UK December 2011 and advice is being sort from best practice authorities.

3.5 Communication and Engagement Workstream

A Parks and Countryside Communication and Engagement Plan has been developed which covers engagement and communication with the following:

- **Service users**

As it is important that we understand who is actually using our parks and what they want from the service. We have done some desk research using feedback that we already have from regular park users and other recent consultations that have taken place and designed a survey to help develop a long term plan for the Parks and Countryside service. We asked staff, local residents and visitors to tell us what they like about them and if they could change anything what would it be. The questionnaire was available on line and paper copies, postcards and posters were available in Parks, One Stop Shop, Libraries, Childrens Centres and Leisure Centres. The consultation took place from 25th January until 12th March and approximately 1000 responses have been received, the findings will be compiled into a report and will be used to inform the 10-year plan for Wirral's parks, beaches and open spaces. We will be repeating this during the Summer Months. In addition we will be consulting with other equality groups.

- **Employees**

There have been regular meetings with Trade Union representatives to discuss working practices and the implementation of the Parks and Countryside improvement programme. All staff were invited to participate in working groups established to discuss specific areas of improvement.

- **Media and other stake holders**

Information has been shared with Parks Steering Group and further consultations meetings will be arranged with stakeholders. The February round of Area Forums included promotion of the survey.

3.6 Delivery Plan Progress

Progress against the Delivery Plan approved by the Cabinet in November 2011 is set out in the Appendix to this report.

Each of the tasks in the Plan has been assigned a 'RAG' status as follows:

- GREEN – Task on target for completion within project timescale
- AMBER – Some non-critical milestones have slipped but Task still on target for completion within project timescale
- RED – Critical milestones have slipped and Task will no longer be completed within project timescale

In the Plan there are 35 Tasks as follows: 5 Complete, 21 Green, 8 Amber and 1 Red.

Overall, good progress is being made in the delivery of the Plan at this stage, however there are a number of Amber Tasks where resource pressures have been identified and mitigating management action is being taken. There is one Task classed as Red relating to the development of a new Ten Year Strategic Plan as this work is being reprogrammed for completion after the conclusion of the Modernisation Project in Spring 2013.

4.0 PROPOSED WORKFORCE WORKING PRACTICES PILOT

4.1 Following discussions with Trade Union representatives agreement has been reached in principle on a 12 month pilot for changes in working practices. The key points are:

- the introduction of annualised hours which would increase hours worked in the summer and decrease hours worked in the winter improving efficiency and helping to reduce costs.
- reduction in time taken for lunch breaks,
- Friday afternoon working to prepare parks and other areas for increase in use over weekends
- flexible working across areas
- agreement to work in rain/wet conditions to minimise any loss of productivity due to weather

4.2 Discussions are continuing on details of the agreement and how it will apply to different groups within Parks and Countryside. It is intended that there will be a formal consultation with all staff before the pilot is started in early May 2012.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 A register of key risks and mitigating actions under each Workstream has been developed and will be monitored at future Project Board.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 An alternative to the annualised hours pilot proposal described in Section 4.0 would have been a reduction in full time staff and an increased use of seasonals. The annualised hours proposal was considered a more cost effective solution.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation and Engagement is one of the four key Workstreams and is covered in detail under section 3.5 of this report.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 An important objective of the Modernised Service will be to facilitate the development of relationships with the community and voluntary sector.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 Financial Implications

9.1.1 It is proposed that the Policy, Processes and Performance Workstream will carry out a review of Parks & Countryside Services budgets and realign them to the new service/ performance monitoring areas under the new Modernised Service.

9.2 Human Resource Implications

9.2.1 A progress update summarising the HR aspects of the project is described in section 3.3 of this report.

9.2.2 The proposed Workforce Working Practices Pilot is described in detail in section 4.0 of this report.

9.3 Asset Implications

9.3.1 A progress update summarising the Asset implications of the project is described in section 3.4 of this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Legal Services are a key discipline represented on the Project Board.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and an Equality Impact Assessment for the Parks Modernisation project is attached –

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010-0>

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Environmental Sustainability is an important objective for the Modernised Service.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Community safety in parks is an important objective for the Modernised Service.

14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Cabinet is requested to:

- (1) Note the Progress Update provided in section 3.0 of this report;
- (2) Endorse the proposed Workforce Working Practices Pilot initiative agreed with Trade Union representatives described in section 4.0 of this report.

15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

15.1 The purpose of the Progress Update is to keep Members apprised of the progress of this important corporate project to modernise the Parks & Countryside Service.

15.2 The proposed changes to Workforce Working Practices as proposed by the pilot initiative will increase workforce productivity and the overall efficiency and cost effectiveness of the service.

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APPENDICES

Parks Modernisation Project Delivery Plan.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award	22 September 2011
Sustainable Communities O&S Committee – PACSPE Contract Award Call in	20 October 2011

Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award (following Call in)	3 November 2011
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Integration of Highway Services and Outline Delivery Plan	24 November 2011
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Update	12 January 2012
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Purchase of Second-hand Vehicles and Equipment	15 March 2012

PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES MODERNISATION PROJECT – DELIVERY PLAN (DECEMBER 2011 TO MARCH 2013)

A. POLICY, PROCESSES AND PERFORMANCE WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Create Excellent Business Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish existing 'as is' business processes 	Dec 11 – April 12	Progressing well in all service areas – on target for completion by end of April	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and redesign business processes 	Jan 12 – June 12	Work in progress but may run into July/August	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure necessary ICT 	Jun 12 – Dec 12	In future	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide necessary training and development 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In future	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 'to be' business processes 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In future	G
Establish Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing policies 	Dec 11 – Mar 12	Work is in progress but delayed due to loss of staff resource	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework 	Jan 12 – June 12	Work is being reprogrammed for completion by end December 13 and additional resource support required	R
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Annual Business Plan 	Feb 13 onwards	In future	G

Establish New Performance Standards and Monitoring Regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline existing performance standards 	Dec 11 – June 12	Identification of service KPIs in progress. Work may run into July/August	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Partnership Performance Advisory Board (PPAB) 	Jun 12 – July 12	In future	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement new performance standards (KPIs, CPIs) 	July 12 – Nov 12	In future	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and realign budgets to service/ performance areas 	Apr 12 – Nov 12	Work in progress	G

B. HUMAN RESOURCES WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Establish New Management Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and redesign management structure 	Dec 11 – Feb 12	Review/redesign exercise now complete and draft out to consultation	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement revised management structure 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Draft out to consultation	G
Establish New Operational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing operational structure including Terms and Conditions 	Dec 11 – Jun 12	Work in progress	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement revised operational structure 	Jun 12 – Nov 12	In future	G
Develop and Implement Training & Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake Skills Gap Analysis 	Dec 11 – Jun 12	Not yet commenced. Work may run into July/August. Additional resource support required	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Training and Development Plan including Competency Framework 	Apr 12 – Oct 12	In future	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Training and Development Plan 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In future	G

C. ASSETS WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Develop and Implement Plan & Equipment Plan	• Review existing Plant and Equipment	Dec 11 – Feb 12	-	Complete
	• Identify Plant and Equipment requirements	Dec 11 – May 12	-	Complete
	• Develop and agree funding and procurement strategy	May 12 – Jun 12	In progress – report to Cabinet in April	G
	• Implement Plant and Equipment Plan	June 12 – Dec 12	In future	G
Develop and Implement Buildings and Depots Plan	• Review existing Buildings and Depots	Dec 11 – Feb 12	Work is in progress but delayed	A
	• Identify Building and Depot requirements	Dec 12 – May 12	Work programme delayed	A
	• Develop and agree investment strategy	May 12 – Jun 12	Work programme delayed	A
	• Implement Buildings and Depots Plan	Jun 12 – Dec 12	In future	G
Develop and Implement Tree Management Plan	• Review and develop tree management procedures	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Work in progress	G
	• Agree and implement new Tree Management Plan	Jun 12 – Feb 13	In future	G

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Develop and Implement Communications & Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement Communications and Engagement Plan 	Dec 11 – Feb 13	Plan developed and due for sign-off by Project Board. Some consultation actions completed	A
Develop and Implement Regular Public Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree new survey format 	Dec 11 – Jan 12	-	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new Public Surveys 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	-	Complete
Develop and Implement Branding and Marketing Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree Branding Guidelines 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	In progress	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree Marketing Strategy 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Outstanding	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Branding and Marketing Plan 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In future	G