

Meeting	Full Council
Date	22 nd November 2022
Report Title	Autumn Shrub Bed & Hedge Maintenance
Agenda Reference	13
Author(s)	David Hunt, Head of Parks & Open Spaces, Laura Cutter, Deputy Clerk & Services Manager and Jodie Smart, Finance Officer

Parks & Open Spaces Committee Recommendations/ Background

At the Parks & Open Spaces Committee on 8th November 2022, the Officers presented this report. As any financial agreements are within the delegated authority amount of £25,000.00 the Parks & Open Spaces Committee has progressed with the following recommendations and are asking Full Council to note this report only.

1. To note the Council will be employing two temporary seasonal staff (5th December 2022 – 31st March 2023) to assist with the hedge cutting schedule, the cost of this is £16,381.00 inclusive of on costs.
2. To note that the Council will hire a temporary vehicle for the two seasonal staff at a cost of £5,000.00 for the duration.
3. To note that the Council will instruct Countrywide to carry out at £650.00 per day, for a 10 day work schedule with the large tractor and flail at the end of January, at a cost of £6,500.00 + VAT (£650.00 per day).
4. To note that Council will purchase additional tools up to the value of £2,000.00.

Contract

Unfortunately, on Thursday 27th October 2022, the Contractor notified the Parish Council that it has pulled its service due to under-pricing the initial contract, the additional journeys back/forth from its depot in Avonmouth and not having enough resources to complete the requirements. The Contractor is therefore decreasing its operations to keep in line with the current economy. At the time of accepting the contract, the Parish Council knew there were some risks associated and made extra provisions with the cost savings, such as planning to upskill current staff and potentially hiring machinery ready to jump into the contract for this very scenario.

Current Status

The Parks & Open Spaces Team has been able to pick up and cover elements of the contract. The service is still on track and the Parish Council is in a better position with additional resources, equipment, surplus grounds maintenance budgets due to cost savings and a dedicated Head of Parks & Open Spaces.

Considerations

- **Overtime** - Only one member of the team has registered an interest in overtime, so this is not a suitable solution, and the works will be done within the working day.
- **Specification** - The shrub beds will be reduced severely (to the specification and more) to put the team ahead and for less intensive works to be done in the Spring and next Autumn. There will be communications to follow that will keep residents informed. By doing a harsh cut back now, next years budget (if done in house again) could be reduced in future years.
- **Shared parish resources** - there is a risk associated to this, especially during a year of many risks from taking the Spring/Summer cut internally and delivering the enhanced



autumn cut for this year. Discussions will therefore take place for consideration in future years.

Enhanced Specification

The team will be completing substantial reductions on shrub beds and hedgerows (where required), this will be above and beyond the enhanced service that was included with the tender document. The reasons for this are to reduce the required maintenance of shrub beds and hedgerows for the coming years. These areas will be cut by hand, it will look bare during the winter months but new growth next season and coming seasons will be more manageable. Note: The degree of the reduction will be dependant on the species of shrub and trees.

Additional Staff

The benefit of the two additional staff is that this would enable the Head of Parks & Open Spaces to be flexible and vary the work schedule of the permanent staff to ensure that other jobs in the winter schedule are also being completed.

The cost of two additional staff would be £16,381 inclusive of on costs and an inflated hourly rate to offset against annual leave and sickness if this happens within the short term contract. A short term contract of this size would not be required to enter the pension scheme. Two additional staff would require a short term hire vehicle and be kitted out with PPE.

Three potential interested candidates have been contacted. If for any reason the vacancies are not filled, the schedule could take place with the existing five operatives, but this will delay the winter projects schedule and some items will be deferred as late as Autumn 2023.

Countrywide

Countrywide has been appointed to conduct a programme of works in January/ February time at a cost of £650.00 per day. Countrywide is reliable, knows the area and scope of works well. A list of areas will be compiled by the Parks & Open Spaces Team as it goes through the schedule; the list could be up to 10 days work.

Financial Summary

Total grounds maintenance contract budget for 2022/23	£64,300.00
Less: Summer mowing contract (now complete) confirmed total cost	<u>£11,510.80</u>
Winter maintenance budget available for 2022/23	<u>£52,789.20</u>
Less: Winter contract payment for works carried out in October	<u>£5,400.00</u>
Remaining budget available	<u>£47,389.20</u>
In house service requires:	
Additional staff (short term contracts)	£16,381.00
Temporary additional vehicle	£5,000.00
Additional tools	£2,000.00
Contractor (10 days)	£6,500.00
Contingency	£3,000.00
Operative Training	£5,000.00
Remaining budget	<u>£9,508.20</u>