The Highland Council

Community Services Committee

21 August 2014

Agenda 121 Report COM/ 29/14

Grounds Maintenance Service Delivery Update

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report provides the Committee with an update on the service delivery of grounds maintenance, including a summary of grounds maintenance performance across the Highlands for Q1 2014/15; the management actions taken to address recent performance issues; and the resultant changes to service delivery. The report provides an update on the assessment of the options for the future delivery of grounds maintenance.

The report invites the Committee to agree that the existing contractual arrangements for delivery of amenity grass cutting are extended for the 2015 season so that all contracts terminate at the same time.

1. Background

- 1.1 Community Services is responsible for a wide range of horticultural related activities including cutting approximately 9.6 million sqm of amenity grass, consisting of; public open space, playing fields and burial grounds. External contractors maintain 5.3 million sqm (55%) with the remaining 4.3 million sqm (45%) maintained in-house. An area breakdown is provided in **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 This report details the recorded performance from April to July 2014, the arrangements for monitoring performance of the Grounds Maintenance Services. It also provides feedback of actions taken to manage the service during the period, in particular those ongoing since the end of June and the outcomes.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 18 November 2010 the TECS Committee considered a report for the tender of the Grass Cutting across the Highlands in nine areas (Lots) for 2011/12 to 2013/14.
- 1.4 The current mixed economy model for grounds maintenance involves contracts for cutting grass in 9 lots. Grass is cut by two contractors and the Council's in-house workforce as follows:
 - Caithness, Sutherland, Easter Ross by the Council;
 - Skye & Lochalsh by Golder Grounds Maintenance Ltd;
 - Lochaber by ISS with pitches by the Council;

- West Ross by the Council;
- Mid Ross by ISS, cemeteries by the Council (see para 2.3);
- Inverness by ISS with some cemeteries, pitches and grounds by the Council; and
- Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey by ISS, with some pitches by the Council
- 1.5 Externalisation of grass cutting has delivered a saving across the Highlands of £603k; the grounds maintenance budget was reduced by this sum in 2011/12.
- 1.6 In each sub-area, with the exception of Skye, there are also sections of grass out with the contracts where the in-house workforce deliver grass cutting.
- 1.7 The delivery model involves summer seasonal working for the contractors, which with a strong local economy is causing problems with retaining key personnel. The in-house workforce also recruits seasonal staff in some areas; although this has reduced in 2014 with the use of roads operatives in the north.
- 1.8 The five contracts with ISS and the three lots retained in-house can be extended for an additional year over the 2015 season.
- 1.9 The contracts have an output specification with a fixed monthly payment. Weather related risks, which directly influence growth rate are transferred to the service provider. If the grass grows quickly the contractor incurs higher costs in complying with the specified grass heights, whilst if it grows slowly their costs are lower.
- 1.10 The 2014 growing season has seen exceptional grass growth in April, May and June across the Highlands. Operations are normally programmed for a traditional slow start in April, with full resource mobilisation for May. In all areas except Skye the rapid growth has seen the service providers struggling to reach the manning levels necessary to deliver the required service.

2. Contract supervision and grounds maintenance performance

- 2.1 Performance by both ISS and the in-house teams during May and June has been significantly below standard as shown in **Appendix B**. The number of complaints received during June has been higher than previous years.
- 2.2 A senior management meeting was held with ISS and the Director of CS on 30th June 2014. ISS committed to a recovery programme with deployment of additional resources and dedicated remedial work team.
- 2.3 At the beginning of July a third of the in-house maintained grass area in Mid & West Ross was transferred into the ISS contract. This permitted in-house work to be programmed in a more efficient manner and reduced the need for seasonal staff.
- 2.4 Preliminary performance figures for July, as shown in **Appendix B**, indicate

- significant improvement in all areas by ISS and an improvement in the inhouse activity.
- 2.5 For the grass cutting activities and other grounds work the number of inspections and resulting breached standards issued to the contactors and inhouse operations during April to July 2014 are shown below:

	Grounds Maintenance Performance (All tasks and all service providers)								
Con	Contract Monitoring Breached Standards								
Month	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued Completed Percentage within 7 days						
April	296	83%	54	38	70%				
May	260	57%	111	75	68%				
June	381	55%	143	115	80%				
July	July 317 93% 32 23 72%								
Totals	Totals 1254 72% 340 241 71%								

- 2.6 A senior management review meeting with ISS took place on 7th August to assess their performance in July. Performance figures for ISS are shown separately in Appendix C.
- 2.7 Recovery of inspection costs for 2014 for the months of April to June have been agreed with both ISS and Golder Landscape Services.

3. Reviews

- 3.1 A review on methods of service delivery, contract supervision and maintenance standards has commenced, including reviewing:
 - existing standards;
 - how difficult and high profile sites such as burial grounds are specified;
 - Identification of little and unused (by the public) land that are maintained.
- 3.2 Methods of service delivery under review include:
 - viability of in-house teams and ancillary horticultural works such as at Council run nurseries (Inverness and Wick);
 - options for use of SME's;
 - other models, such as external resource based fixed price contracts;
 and
 - partnership options.

- 3.3 The Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 19th June 2014 received summary report HH02/002 dated 10th June 2014 entitled 'Community Services Outsourced Grass Cutting Contract Monitoring and Payment arrangements' which presented summary of findings of an audit of monitoring during the 2012 season; the report includes an audit report action plan. A separate update report on delivery of the action plan forms another report to this Committee.
- 3.4 It is intended to report to November CS Committee on:
 - a) Service delivery options with recommendations targeted at new arrangements commencing in April 2016; and
 - b) Review options for alternative and improved methods of contract delivery, monitoring, supervision and standards to secure cost savings and improved service delivery.

4. Tendering

- 4.1 To improve the contractors' retention of key trained operatives, future contracts need to include a more comprehensive workload that incorporates a full year's work.
- 4.2 To permit new contract options and savings to be properly considered it is necessary to extend the five existing grass cutting contract Lots with ISS and the three internally delivered Lots for one year to cover the 2015 season.

Substantial work is required in relation to:

- drafting of updated contracts
- updating the asset database to define the work content being tendered
- improving performance monitoring and reporting for contractual purposes and for Members and managers.
- 4.3 ISS has shown a significant improvement in performance during July after implementing their recovery programme showing that they are capable of delivering good service. This removes uncertainty about their commitment to the Council and significantly lessens any concern in their ability to perform acceptably in 2015 should the contract be extended for a year.
- 4.4 The alternative is to retender the existing grass cutting contracts on the basis of the current imperfect asset data. This would of necessity preclude inclusion of non-grass cutting activity as the data behind that will not be available till Autumn 2015.
- 4.5 A one year contract would align with the end of the Skye contract however it is well known that a short contract is likely to result in an increase in unit rates and overall costs as the contractor's overheads have to be recovered over a shorter period. Feedback from the industry is that this may cost in the order of 10% (or £100k) more overall.

- 4.6 To return the service in-house for a single year has also been considered. The additional costs associated with such an option; equipment costs as identified in para 4.5, management costs with the need for additional resources and recruitment of seasonal staff are such that the original cost savings stated in para 1.6 could not be maintained.
- 4.7 It is therefore recommended that a one year extension to all current contracts except for Skye be implemented to avoid additional costs whilst allowing time for future delivery and cost saving options to be properly assessed and to complete the work identified in paragraph 3.2.

5. Implications

- 5.1 A decision to extend the amenity grass cutting contracts for Lots 1-4 and 6-9 secures the costs of service delivery for 2015. A potential significant financial risk of increased costs has been associated with non- extension.
- 5.2 There are no legal, equalities, climate change/carbon clever, gaelic or rural implications.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- i) Note the grounds maintenance performance information for April to July 2014;
- ii) Note the management action taken to address performance issues;
- iii) Agree that a review of the supervision of grounds maintenance is undertaken; and
- iv) Agree that the existing contractual arrangements for delivery of amenity grass cutting are extended for the 2015 season so that all contracts terminate at the same time.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 31st July 2014

Author: Robin Pope

Background Papers:

Appendix A - Grass and Ground Maintenance Areas

	Total	Service	Provider			Highland A	rea Maintained
	Total Grass Area	Contractor (55%)	In-house DLO (45%)	Planted Area	Hard Landscape	Total Area	% of Highland Total Area
Caithness	902,806	0	902,806	13,100	94,681	1,010,587	9%
Sutherland	784,017	0	784,017	11,206	40,118	835,341	8%
CS Totals	1,686,823	0	1,686,823	24,306	134,799	1,845,928	17%
Skye	393,332	393,332	0	4,709	71,102	469,143	4%
East Ross	1,360,387	0	1,360,387	22,337	143,776	1,526,500	14%
Mid & West Ross	1,260,449	823,279	437,170	37,911	119,498	1,417,858	13%
SR Totals	3,014,168	1,216,611	1,797,557	64,957	334,376	3,413,501	32%
Inverness	3,005,906	2,314,502	691,404	63,386	87,997	3,157,289	30%
INV Totals	3,005,906	2,314,502	691,404	63,386	87,997	3,157,289	30%
Loch	940,553	817,933	122,620	23,843	243,563	1,207,959	11%
Badenoch &Strathspey	433,702	433,373	329	9,228	26,789	469,719	4%
Nairn	546,156	539,341	6,815	10,676	8,621	565,453	5%
LBSN Totals	1,920,411	1,790,647	129,764	43,747	278,973	2,243,131	21%
Total	9,627,308	5,321,760	4,305,548	196,396	836,145	10,659,849	100%

Appendix B – Performance Analysis

Area Summary's

Month	Contract Mo	onitoring	E	Breached Standa	rds				
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage				
Sky	Skye, Ross & Cromarty – Area Summary (all service providers)								
April	123	85%	18	9	50%				
May	85	64%	25	14	56%				
June	119	57%	33	22	67%				
July	162	92%	16	10	63%				
Totals	489	77%	92	55	60%				
	Inverness -	- Area Sum	mary (all se	rvice providers)					
April	87	86%	12	12	100%				
May	52	54%	31	23	74%				
June	46	59%	28	22	79%				
July	51	90%	1	0	0				
Totals	236	75%	72	57	79%				
Cai	thness & Suth	erland – Are	ea Summary	y (all service pro	viders				
April	28	100%	4	0	0%				
May	38	53%	22	8	36%				
June	41	39%	9	9	100%				
July	39	97%	12	11	92%				
Totals	146	70%	47	28	60%				
Lochal	ber, Nairn, Bad		rathspey – <i>I</i> oviders)	Area Summary (a	III service				
April	58	66%	20	17	85%				
May	85	54%	33	30	91%				
June	175	57%	73	62	85%				
July	65	97%	3	2	67%				
Totals	383	64%	129	111	86%				

Skye, Ross & Cromarty – Area Reporting

Amenity Grass Tendered

Month	Contract M	onitoring	Breached Standards							
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage					
	Amenity Grass Contract - East Ross Lot 3 DLO									
April	10	60%	4	0	0					
May	7	14%	9	4	44%					
June	0	0	2	2	100%					
July	8	100%	0	0	0					
Totals	25	58%	15	6	40%					
	Amenity Gra	ss Contrac	t - Mid & We	est Ross Lot 4 IS	S					
April	38	87%	6	6	100%					
May	10	50%	7	4	57%					
June	33	52%	14	8	57%					
July	42	83%	6	5	83%					
Totals	123	68%	33	23	70%					
A	Amenity Grass	Contract -	Skye & LocI	nalsh (Lot 5) Gol	ders					
April	2	100%	0	0	0					
May	27	81%	5	4	80%					
June	34	71%	10	9	90%					
July	0	0	0	0	0					
Totals	63	84%	15	13	87%					

Skye, Ross & Cromarty – Amenity Grass Retained (non tendered)

	Amenity Grass - Skye, Ross & Cromarty Retained DLO								
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards						
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage				
April	21	76%	7	3	43%				
May	7	0%	3	2	67%				
June	5	20%	2	2	100%				
July	46	96%	96% 2 1 50%						
Totals	79	79 64% 14 8 57%							

	Amenity Grass - East Ross Retained DLO								
Month	Contract M	onitoring	E	Breached Standa	rds				
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage				
April	0	0	0	0	0				
May	5	100%	0	0	0				
June	0	0	0	0	0				
July	0	0	0	0	0				
Totals	5	100%	0	0	0				
	Amenity G	irass - Mid	& West Ros	s Retained DLO					
April	16	69%	7	3	43%				
May	7	0%	3	2	67%				
June	5	20%	2	2	100%				
July	46	96%	2	1	50%				
Totals	74	62%	14	8	57%				

Skye, Ross & Cromarty – In-house non grass

Sky	Skye, Ross & Cromarty - DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting								
Month	Contract Monitoring			Breached Standards					
Month	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage				
April	52	90%	1	0	0%				
May	34	76%	1	0	0%				
June	47	55%	5	1	20%				
July	64	94%	6 4 80%						
Totals	197	79%	13	5	38%				

Month	Contract M	onitoring	ı	Breached Standa	rds
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage
	Skye & Lochal	sh DLO SL	A Work exc	luding grass cut	ing
April	3	100%	1	0	0%
May	19	89%	0	0	0
June	22	68%	1	0	0%
July	1	0%	1	0	0%
Totals	45	86%	3	0	0%
	East Ross	DLO SLA W	ork excludi	ing grass cutting	
April	11	100%	0	0	0
May	4	50%	0	0	0
June	0	0%	0	0	0
July	3	100%	0	0	0
Totals	18	83%	0	0	0
	Mid & West Ro	ss DLO SL	A Work exc	luding grass cut	ting
April	38	87%	0	0	NA
May	11	64%	1	0	0%
June	25	44%	4	1	25%
July	60	95%	5	4	80%
Totals	134	73%	10	5	50%

Inverness – Area Performance Reporting

	Amenity Grass Contract - Inverness Lot 9 - ISS									
Month	Contract Monitoring Breached Standards									
	Inspections	Pass Completed Percent								
April	57	89%	6	6	0					
May	30	23%	31	23	74%					
June	27	44%	27	22	81%					
July	27	85%	85% 0 0 0							
Totals	141	141 66% 64 51 80%								

	Amenity Grass - Retained Inverness DLO									
Month	Contract Monitoring Breached Standards									
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage					
April	3	100%	1	1	100%					
May	0		0	0	0					
June	1	100%	0	0	0					
July	2	100%	0	0	0					
Totals	6	100% 1 1 100%								

	DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting									
Month	Contract Monitoring Breached Standards									
	Inspections	Pass Issued Completed within 7 days Percenta								
April	27	78%	5	5	100%					
May	22	95%	0	0	0					
June	18	78%	1	0	0					
July	22	95%	1 0 0							
Totals	89	89 86% 6 5 83%								

Caithness & Sutherland – Area Reporting Amenity Grass - Tendered

	Amenity Grass Contract - Caithness Contract Lot 1 - DLO							
Month	Contract Mo	onitoring	ı	Breached Standards				
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage			
April	0	0%	0	0	0			
May	8	50%	13	4	31%			
June	41	39%	7	7	100%			
July	6	100%	9	9	100%			
Totals	55	47%	29	20	69%			
A	Amenity Grass	Contract - S	Sutherland	Lot 2 Retained -	DLO			
April	13	100%	0	0	0			
May	0	0	0	0	0			
June	0	0	0	0	0			
July	8	100%	0	0	0			
Totals	21	100%	0	0	0%			

Amenity Grass – non- tendered

	Amenity Grass	- Caithnes	s & Sutherl	and Retained – D	LO	
Month	th Contract Monitoring Breached S			Breached Standa		
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage	
April	7	100%	0	0	0	
May	10	40%	0	0	0	
June	0	0	0	0	0	
July	10	90%	1	0	0	
Totals	27	74%	1	0	0%	
	Amenity	/ Grass - Ca	aithness Re	tained - DLO		
April	0	0	0	0	0	
May	6	0%	0	0	0	
June	0	0	0	0	0	
July	8	88%	0	0	0	
Totals	14	50%	0	0	0	

Caithness & Sutherland – In-house non grass

	Grounds Maintenance Performance (SLA Work excluding grass cutting - Caithness - DLO)							
	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards					
Month	Number	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage			
April	0	0%	0	0	0			
May	18	56%	0	0	0			
June	18	50%	0	0	0			
July	8	100%	2	2	1			
Totals	44	62%	2	2	1			
	SLA Work excluding grass cutting - Sutherland - DLO							
April	8	100%	0	0	0			
May	2	100%	0	0	0			
June	0	0	0	0	0			
July	7	100%	0	0	0			
Totals	17	100%	0	0	0			

Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – Area Reporting

Amenity Grass – Tendered

	Amenity Grass Contract - Lochaber Lot 6 ISS							
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards					
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage			
April	10	100%	0	0	#DIV/0!			
May	17	29%	13	13	100%			
June	37	41%	40	39	98%			
July	6	67%	2	2	100%			
Totals	70	49%	55	54	98%			
Amenity Grass Contract - Badenoch & Strathspey Lot 7 ISS								
April	18	17%	15	15	100%			
May	21	57%	9	9	100%			
June	47	36%	30	21	70%			
July	11	100%	0	0	0			
Totals	97	44%	54	45	83%			
	Amenity Grass Contract - Nairn Lot 8 ISS							
April	7	100%	0	0	#DIV/0!			
May	10	0%	10	8	80%			
June	11	55%	2	2	100%			
July	19	100%	1	0	0%			
Totals	47	68%	13	10	77%			

Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – Amenity Grass Retained (non tendered)

Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards			
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage	
April	0	0	0	0	0%	
May	2	100%	0	0	0%	
June	1	100%	0	0	0%	
July	1	100%	0	0	0%	
Totals	4	100%	0	0	0%	
	_		tenance Pe Lochaber R	rformance Retained DLO)		
April	0	0	0	0	0%	
May	1	100%	0	0	0%	
June	0	0	0	0	0%	
July	0	0	0	0	0%	
Totals	1	100%	0	0	0%	
			tenance Pe ch and Stra	rformance thspey Retained	DLO)	
April	0	0	0	0	0	
May	0	0	0	0	0	
June	0	0	0	0	0	
July	0	0	0	0	0	
Totals	0	0	0	0	0	

Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – In-house non grass

Lochaber, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey - DLO							
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards				
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage		
April	23	78%	5	2	40%		
May	35	77%	1	0	0%		
June	79	76%	0	0	0		
July	28	100%	0	0	0		
Totals	165	81%	6	2	33%		

Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards				
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage		
Lochaber – In-house SLA work excluding grass cutting							
April	14	71%	4	1	25%		
May	17	82%	0	0	0		
June	32	69%	0	0	0		
July	5	100%	0	0	0		
Totals	68	75%	4	1	25%		
Badenoch & Strathspey – In-house SLA work excluding grass cutting							
April	7	86%	1	1	100%		
May	14	79%	0	0	0		
June	34	76%	0	0	0		
July	13	100%	0	0	0		
Totals	68	82%	1	1	100%		
Nairn - In-house SLA work excluding grass cutting							
April	2	100%	0	0	0		
May	4	50%	0	0	0		
June	13	92%	0	0	0		
July	10	100%	0	0	0		
Totals	29	90%	0	0	0		

Appendix C – ISS Contractor Performance

		ISS OVERAL	L PERFOR	MANCE		
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards			
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage	
April	130	80%	27	27	100%	
May	88	33%	70	59	81%	
June	155	43%	113	92	81%	
July	105	87%	9	7	78%	
Totals	478	61%	219	183	84%	
	Amenity	Grass Contr	act – Mid &	West Ross Lot 4		
April	38	87%	6	6	100%	
May	10	50%	7	4	57%	
June	33	52%	14	8	57%	
July	42	83%	6	5	83%	
Totals	123	68%	33	23	70%	
	Ame	enity Grass C	ontract - Lo	chaber Lot 6		
April	10	100%	0	0	0%	
May	17	29%	13	13	100%	
June	37	41%	40	39	98%	
July	6	67%	2	2	100%	
Totals	70	49%	55	54	98%	
	Amenity G	rass Contract	- Badenoch	& Strathspey Lot	7	
April	18	17%	15	15	100%	
May	21	57%	9	9	100%	
June	47	36%	30	21	70%	
July	11	100%	0	0	0	
Totals	97	44%	54	45	83%	
	A	menity Grass	Contract - I	Nairn Lot 8		
April	7	100%	0	0	0%	
May	10	0%	10	8	80%	
June	11	55%	2	2	100%	
July	19	100%	1	0	0%	
Totals	47	68%	13	10	77%	
	Ame	enity Grass Co	ontract - Inv	erness Lot 9		
April	57	89%	6	6	0	
May	30	23%	31	23	74%	
June	27	44%	27	22	81%	
July	27	85%	0	0	0	
Totals	141	66%	64	51	80%	