

The Highland Council	Agenda Item	18
City of Inverness Area Committee 2 September 2014	Report No	CIA/46/14

Grounds Maintenance Performance Monitoring Report – mid season update

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report details performance management information for the Grounds Maintenance Services from April to July 2014.

The Committee is invited to note the management action taken to address performance issues identified and agree to review required service standards at future Ward Business Meetings.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Scheme of Delegation to City/Area Committees gives the City of Inverness Area Committee the power:

“to approve local levels of service for grounds maintenance within the strategy and budget allocated by Community Services Committee.”

- 1.2 Community Services is responsible for a wide range of horticultural related activities, including the maintenance of grass in public open spaces, designing and planting of flower and shrub beds, pruning vegetation and trees, also the inspection and maintenance of play areas.
- 1.3 This report details the recorded performance from April to July 2014 and the arrangements for monitoring performance of the Grounds Maintenance Services. It also provides feedback of actions taken to manage the service during the period.

2. Background

- 2.1 Report CIA/07/13 'Grounds Maintenance Programme' was presented to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 11 February 2013. The report detailed arrangements for the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service and the resources available.
- 2.2 In Inverness, the externalised grass cutting is delivered by ISS; the contract was extended by one year in 2014. The grass cutting of the two principal burial grounds, Kilvean and Tomnahurich, together with Bught Park, Northern Meeting Park, Milton pitches, Culloden Pitches, Walker Park, Fraser Park, and Bellfield Park are undertaken by in-house DLO.

- 2.3 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. An update report on delivery of the action plan was presented to the Community Services Committee on 21st August 2014.

3. Activities

- 3.1 Grounds Maintenance activities include:

- Grass cutting to low, medium and high amenity standards
- Grass Area maintenance out with the growing season
- Grounds around War Memorials
- Arboriculture - the cultivation and management of individual trees, shrubs and other perennial woody plants
- Path maintenance including weed control
- In cemeteries, the lifting of grave surfaces as they settle
- Tending high amenity locations such as Bellfield Park, Cavell Gardens and bowling greens
- Floral displays and provision of hanging baskets
- Support for Special Events
- Burial Grounds and Internments
- Play Area inspection and maintenance

- 3.2 Across the seven Inverness Wards there are approximately 3.4 million square metres of public open and amenity space spread over 1694 locations. Over the course of a year approximately 40,000 maintenance tasks or activities are carried out as summarised in **Appendix A**.

Activities are carried out to the standard specified in the grounds Maintenance Service Level Agreement (SLA). **Appendix B** provides details of the Grass Cutting Amenity Standards. The SLA and specification apply Highland-wide and provide a consistent set of standards including methods for measuring compliance across the Highland.

A copy of the SLA and a list of plots are available to Members on request.

4. Asset Management

- 4.1 There is an on-going programme of refinement and improvement of the data required to manage the assets involved in Grounds Maintenance. We have a large electronic database defining all the plots and relevant tasks.
- 4.2 A mapping exercise has been undertaken to provide a database of all the grass cutting areas. A draft issue of Inverness and Area Maps was provided to Ward Managers in PDF Format on CD for Ward Members and Community Council use. Subject to ICT agreement it is intended to make the maps available in electronic format via the Council's website during 2014/15.

5. Contract Supervision & Performance

- 5.1. The basis for all SLA or contract inspections is to determine if the site management, including contracted services, is sufficient to maintain the service standard of the Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- 5.2. The first level of inspection is carried out as self-assessment by in-house or contracted service delivery teams and Managers. This first stage assessment is independently validated by Contract Supervisors.
- 5.3. Monitoring of all works Highland-wide is currently carried out by a Contract Performance and Inspection Coordinator with 3 Contract Supervisors, one of whom is responsible for monitoring Inverness Area. They are part of the Roads & Community Works HQ team in Inverness who are also responsible for management and supervision of the Public Convenience cleaning contract and monitoring the Garden Aid contract.
- 5.4. In the summer months, monitoring is supported by seasonal Inspector(s) employed to undertake the monitoring of the Garden Aid contract.
- 5.5. The section handles approximately 100 enquiries and complaints per month.
- 5.6. Planned and reactionary validation inspections are undertaken with the objective of covering all grounds maintenance disciplines. Focused inspections are carried out in known problem areas or as a result of reported complaints. Re-inspections are often undertaken following the issue of a Breached Standard notice.
- 5.7. Where failure is recorded, an improvement request or informal notice is issued to the service provider, whether internal (DLO) or external contractor.
- 5.8. Failure to return the site to the required standard within 48 hours results in an escalation and issue of a remedial notice.
- 5.9. A follow up inspection will be made on or after the completion date. If there has been no improvement then either a Nonconforming Service Report or a Default Notice will be issued to the DLO manager or the contractor respectively.

- 5.10 For the grass cutting activities and other grounds work the number of inspections and resulting breached standards issued to the contractor and in-house operation during April to July 2014 are shown below:

Grounds Maintenance Performance (All tasks and all service providers)					
Contract Monitoring			Breached Standards		
Month	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage
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%

- 5.11 Overall 79% of all breached standards were rectified within 7 days. Compared with the maintained area of 3.362 million square metres and the 40,045 annual tasks undertaken, the number of breached standards is low. The level of performance differs between service providers, as presented in **Appendix C**.

6. Management Actions

- 6.1 The 2014 grass growing season has seen exceptional grass growth in April, May and June across the Highlands. Operations are normally programmed for a traditional slow growth rate in April. The rapid grass growth has seen all service providers struggling to reach full manning levels whilst delivering the required service.
- 6.2 Members will be aware of the high profile publicity surrounding reduced performance across a range of activities and the commitment to improve the grass cutting service in Highland.
- 6.3 Following these performance issues, a senior management meeting was held with ISS and the Director of Community Services on 30th June 2014. ISS committed to a recovery action with the deployment of further resources including a dedicated team for dealing with hotspots and remedial actions. Early indications show that this is working as reflected in the July figures, however the situation is being closely monitored.

6.4 When a Breached standard is issued and a contractor fails to complete acceptable remedial action, the Authority is entitled to recover its inspection costs and all losses which arise as a result of the deficient Services. There is no recovery of costs from in-house service delivery.

6.5 Recovery of inspection costs for 2014 for the months of April to July have been agreed with ISS.

7. Consultation with Ward Members on Standards

7.1 Engagement at Ward level is required to review and agree the appropriate standards at specific sites. Changes can be made that alter the designations between low/general/high amenity with the proviso that overall the change must be cost neutral. If one site goes up, another has to come down or a site be reduced in area. These are changes “within the budget and strategy allocated”.

7.2 Some meetings have already taken place but further meetings will be arranged as more accessible and up to date maps are available to discuss required standards. Changes will be implemented as soon as is practical thereafter.

8. Implications

8.1 **Resources:** There are ongoing resource implications for the Contract Monitoring and Supervision of Grounds Maintenance which is managed within the Community Services revenue budget.

8.2 **Other:** There are no legal, equalities, climate change/carbon clever, gaelic or rural implications as a result of this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:-

- (i) scrutinise the performance management and remedial action information provided on the grounds maintenance service set out in this report; and
- (ii) to note the management action taken to address the performance issues identified and agree to review required service standards at future Ward Business meetings.

Designation: **Director of Community Services**

Date: 19 August 2014

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Appendix A - Grass Cutting Maintained Areas and Annual Tasks

Inverness Grounds						
Area Maintained	Locations	Square Metres	Contracted		In House	
Grass	1,132	3,222,182	2,403,328	75%	818,854	25%
Planted	300	59,100	0	0%	59,100	100%
Hard landscape	262	80,605	0	0%	80,605	100%
Total	1,694	3,361,887	2,403,328	71%	958,559	29%

Number of Tasks Annually		Forecast
Grass	Growing Season	22,995
	Dormant Season	3,422
Planted	Growing Season	3,090
	Dormant Season	2,453
Hard landscape	Growing Season	4,887
	Dormant Season	3,198
Total		40,045

Recent Additions to

Programme:-

Cuduthel Pk

25,971

Inshes Pk

38,500

Appendix B - Grass Cutting Amenity Standards

Grass Type	Minimum Height of Grass (after cutting)	Maximum Height of Grass (prior to cutting)	Evident Clippings Acceptable	Action if Excessive Clippings
Lawn	15mm	25mm	None	N/A - <i>Collected at Each Cut</i>
High Amenity	25mm	60mm	Minimal	Remove
General Amenity	35mm	100mm	Some, Evenly Dispersed	Spread thinly or Remove
Low Amenity	75mm	150mm	Moderate, Dispersed	Spread
Rough or Verge	100mm	250mm	Significant, Scattered	N/A – <i>Not an Amenity Grade</i>

Appendix C Performance Analysis

Grounds Maintenance Performance (All tasks - Inverness - all Service Providers)					
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards		
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage
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%

Grounds Maintenance Performance (Amenity Grass Contract - Inverness Lot 9 - ISS)				
Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards		
Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage
57	89%	6	6	0
30	23%	31	23	74%
27	44%	27	22	81%
27	85%	0	0	0
141	66%	64	51	80%

Grounds Maintenance Performance (Amenity Grass - Retained Inverness DLO)				
Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards		
Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage
3	100%	1	1	100%
0		0	0	0
1	100%	0	0	0
2	100%	0	0	0
6	100%	1	1	100%

Grounds Maintenance Performance (DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting)						
Month	Contract Monitoring		Breached Standards			
	Inspections	Pass Rate	Issued	Completed within 7 days	Percentage	
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	86%	6	5	83%	