

# Appraising Delivery Models in Landscaping Services

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# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service

- Why?
- Improve Service Quality and Performance
- Improve Presentation of the Borough (key objective in the corporate plan, Attractive Ashford)
- Deliver a service that offered a combination of control, quality, flexibility and affordability.

# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service

- Service provision on contract included;
- Mowing, pruning, planting, hedge maintenance, floral beds and sport pitch maintenance in parks, open spaces, housing land and cemeteries.
- In house inspection team for contract

# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service

- New service needed to bring together;
- All current contracted services
- Flexibility to grow those services, for the presentation of the borough and for income generation.
- Quality and environmental control
- Cost control

# Objectives for the new service

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Characteristics Required of Service</i>
Improve the presentation of the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• implement improvements to raise quality</li><li>• create a responsive service</li><li>• focus on priority areas</li></ul>
Tightening of Council budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• efficient and flexible financial control</li><li>• reduce costs through maximum productivity</li><li>• generate income</li></ul>
Devolution of space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• restructure and re-design the service over time</li></ul>
Growth of the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• meet resource pressure</li><li>• secure trading opportunities</li></ul>
Changing policy and priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• re-allocate resources as required</li><li>• diversify work</li><li>• re-shape as changes occur</li></ul>

# Options appraisal

<i>Delivery Service Model</i>	<i>Conclusion of Options Appraisal</i>
<p><b>Outsourcing to private sector</b> - Tender the service to an external commercial company with the Council continuing to operate as a traditional monitoring client.</p>	<p>Larger scale contractors are competitive, given their economies of scale, and the overall operational risk to the Council is low. However they are less flexible to respond to changing priorities, include profit in all works variations and retain profit for their shareholders. Contractors are increasingly cutting costs and service levels to boost low margins.</p>
<p><b>Joint venture</b> - pool the service activity with another public sector body with significant grounds maintenance experience and place in a jointly owned commercial company.</p>	<p>Finding a local publically owned and experienced partner is limited. This model does not give the Council overall control, but an economy of scale can be achieved. A contract and specification with a 'thin' client would be required alongside governance costs. Limited profit can be achieved given procurement regulations.</p>

# Options appraisal

<p><b>In house service</b> – bringing in the service (in house) and fully managing and operating the service.</p>	<p>Enhanced flexibility and regaining of full control. All risk passed to the Council which will require expertise. However, this is an effective model to deliver on the key issue of improving the quality and presentation of the green spaces whilst driving up productivity and controlling cost.</p>
<p><b>Shared service with other local authorities</b> – a joined up approach with another public sector body where the service model is shared.</p>	<p>Much the same as above but the Council's influence is reduced as you share control with another partner. Political priorities may change overtime.</p>
<p><b>Trading Company</b> - create an arms-length but wholly owned company that can trade.</p>	<p>This model does allow cost control and flexibility but delivers limited income return (given procurement regulations) and requires Company administration and governance.</p>

# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service



- Potential future commercial opportunity
- Breeding a business culture within the service
- Values to reflect the service vision





# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service

- Depot procured on same trading estate as refuse and recycling contractor
- Exemplary Operations Manager employed with clear vision for the future
- Substantial funding for depot purchase and equipment set up costs (cap ex)
- Acceptance that improvements would require long-term revenue investment

# Creating an In-house Grounds Maintenance Service, Oct. 2016



# Issues

- Staff Tupe'd from incumbent contractor
- Staff apathy – due to lack of training, development and leadership
- Previous failure of fleet, tools and equipment
- Previously lacking management and direction, leading to poor behaviours
- Lack of care and attention to detail

# Resolutions

- Staff training and on boarding programme
- Staff taken on a journey, instilling new behaviours
- Result in staff feeling valued and a clear sense of belonging
- Increased team morale
- Achieved fantastic results in the first year of operation

# Immediate and tangible improvements

## Gateways



# Quality systems and operational procedures

- Investment in Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Manager
- Investment in technology, digital transformation
- HAVs watches that stock control
- Dynamic risk assessments through mobile working
- CHAS accreditation
- ISO accreditation underway

# From strength to strength

- Aspire Landscape Management today;
- All staff moved to annualised hours (overtime savings have funded more staff)
- Staff engaged, involved and proud to be working in the service
- Delivering inspirational projects, as well as the day job.



# Aspire Landscape Management

- Mowing, pruning, planting, hedge maintenance, floral beds and sports pitch maintenance in parks, open spaces, housing land and cemeteries
- PLUS; own arboricultural team, memorial headstone inspections, hard landscaping, risk rated playground inspections and repairs, innovation and inspiration...



# Aspire Landscape Management



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Aspire Landscape Management



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Aspire Landscape Management

- What does the future hold?
- Business planning for commercial enterprise – tree team and overall service
- Added value, USP, income generation (market gap analysis)
- Possible company arm in the future

# View from the Top

- An in-house service can be extremely flexible and while it may be full circle for some of us, life has changed. Managing direct labour organisations are about the commercial approach that should be taken and how important performance and outcome needs to be to the management.
- Clearly the skill and expertise of the management and the dedication and of the staff is what makes the considerable difference. The importance of being connected to the corporate agenda of the Council will drive the reputation of the team but clearly with the expectations of the community in mind.

Mrs. T. Kerly, Chief Executive, Ashford Borough Council.



# View from the Top

- “We took this bold decision because we would not accept that our Borough should be anything other than looking clean, free of litter and our landscape and public spaces well groomed. It took a progressive Portfolio Holder and Head of Service to propose real action and it also took a strong collective political leadership to bite the bullet and bring an "In-House Service" at some considerable financial cost. It has however been one of the most rewarding things we could have ever done and worth every penny.
- It was however not just the bringing of the operational activity "in-House" that made this such a success - it was putting the right people in-charge and creating a committed and enthusiastic team of skilled landscape operatives who are highly respected and valued, not only by members and officers, but also by the general public, who are now gaining much pride in their Borough.”

Leader of Ashford Borough Council, Mr. G. Clarkson, CBE.

# More information? Come and visit us.

- 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- Meet the team, tour the depot, look at the systems, Q and A with Operations Manager.
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