

Title: Grounds Maintenance Update (*Gospel Oak District*)

Information/Discussion Report – Discussion

Recommendations: The DMC is asked to note the report *and/or other recommendation*.

Report Summary: This report seeks to provide an update on service delivery, concerns, challenges and respond to queries from GODMC reps on their experience of the service in their district.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Detailed below is what is included in the Grounds Maintenance contract. In regard to Gospel Oak it would depend on what horticultural or play assets are on site.
- 1.2 The contract is performance based and works are programmed by idverde where they are required.
- 1.3 The playgrounds are inspected weekly and defects and risks addressed through repair, shut down or removal.
- 1.4 In regards of horticultural tasks there are a range of teams including horticulturalists and grass cutting teams.

2. Ground Maintenance Service Delivery

- 2.1 idverde are Camden's term grounds maintenance provider. idverde undertake a range of grounds maintenance tasks across Camden's green spaces which are included in the service charge.
- 2.2 The grounds maintenance contract is monitored by Camden's Grounds Maintenance Monitoring officers (GMMO's). The GMMO's lead on replanting and other improvements and also raise penalties if areas are out of specification.
- 2.3 The horticultural features of the Grounds Maintenance contract are predominantly performance specified.
- 2.4 The playgrounds are inspected weekly by one of idverde's trained playground inspectors and annually by an independent annual play inspector.
- 2.5 The works and additional specific task monitoring and asset replacement is managed by Camden Green Space Operations team.

3. idverde Contractual Service Delivery

3.1 The idverde grounds maintenance contract delivers the following services across Camden's public green spaces:

- Grass and Meadow Maintenance
- Hedge Maintenance
- Plant Maintenance – Shrubs, Roses, Herbaceous, Perennials, Rock Gardens
- Weed Management
- Play Area Maintenance, Cleaning and Inspections
- Park Keepers
- Housing, Sheltered Housing and Parks Horticulturalists & Head Gardeners
- Parks Opening and Closing
- Fleet and Machinery supply, operation and maintenance
- Health and Safety Management

3.2 In addition the above routine works, the contract delivers a number of ad-hoc works, including:

- Invasive species management (predominantly Japanese Knotweed)
- Planting and landscaping improvements
- Play area, MUGA and outdoor gym asset repairs and improvements
- Vegetation removal, such as ivy growing on Housing buildings
- Food growing area development and support
- Green waste clearance. This supports volunteer group projects.
- Community gardening group support and guidance
- Park asset maintenance and improvement
- Lawn maintenance
- Large scale bulb planting

3.3 The monitoring of the grounds maintenance contract shows that from the 1st April to date there have been 131 penalty's raised against idverde. The penalties are for items out specification this includes grass cutting. There have been 16 penalties raised in the Gospel Oak area.

3.4 The contract facilitates resident gardening and management of community gardens and specific beds. This arrangements are agreed with if the TRA supports the application form the resident to undertake gardening in specific areas.

3.5 The grounds maintenance contract has delivered a range of adhoc works. The list below includes a brief summary of the type of works completed.

- **Mansfield road rear communal garden:** The TRA requested a retaining wall to stop soil spilling on pavement and create a planting space. A budget for the work was provided by the DMC and the works progressed.
- **Cherry Court Planting:** A refreshed planting scheme was delivered in the play area. Residents were concerned about overgrowing vegetation, litter, climate change. The planting included low growing, sustainable drought tolerant plants.
- **Ludham & Waxham:** Working with TRA representative to introduce a splash of colour across the middle communal lawn area. Bulb planting has completed around two main seating areas. Further shrub reductions have been planned for autumn.
- **Barnfield and Woodfield:** Working with the TRA to establish a new wild flower meadow in central court yard. Further stocking with bulbs is planned.
- **Troyes House:** The driveway raised bed has been planted with flowering shrubs, herbaceous planting and ornamental grasses. The raised bed was previously planted with ivy.
- **Estelle Road Estate:** The provision of food growing planters for residents in their communal garden.
- **New Harmood Estate 1:** The reduction of dense vegetation attracting ASB has started. The works including planting with a low growing sustainable plants that will provide winter/ summer interest that will be completed in autumn 2024.
- **St Silas Estate 2:** play area has been replanted with wildflowers and the overgrowing shrubs reduced.

4. Service Delivery Challenges

4.1 The winter period saw a high level of rain. This was followed by a very wet spring. The BBC summarised by saying "In March we had 107.8mm of rain compared with the average of 84.9mm, so it ranks in the top 20% of wettest March months. April was even wetter! We had 111.4mm of rain, compared to the average of 71.9mm. It was the sixth wettest April of the last 189 years".

4.2 The wet, warm spring resulted in vigorous grass and weed growth across the borough. This has been compounded by our approach to the use of herbicide. Camden have not used selective herbicide for over 7 years. This has seen an increase in weeds in the grass. The weeds grow very quickly and can make the lawns look long and messy. We are looking to identify budgets to undertake manual turf improvements across the worse affected housing sites in autumn.

4.3 The monitoring of the grounds maintenance contract shows that from the 1st April to date there have been 131 penalty's raised against idverde. The penalties are for items out specification this includes grass cutting. There have been 16 penalties raised in the Gospel Oak area.

Report ends