

GROUNDNEWS

Grounds Maintenance, Trees & Parks Services Re-procurement – 24 Sept 2007, Issue 2

Welcome to Issue 2 of Groundnews – the newsletter giving you further updates on progress of the re-procurement of the Grounds Maintenance, Trees and Parks Services Contracts for Birmingham City Council.

In Issue 1, we outlined some of the principles of the project, and explained the reasoning and the process that we were going to follow.

Here we're listing some of the main objectives of the Council (and the project team) as we move forward:

- to ensure that in any new contracts, the Grounds Maintenance service is maintained at its current or improved level, and that front line services are not reduced
- to listen to customer views on the levels of service they expect, and to give customers the continuing option to purchase above the 'core standard' level if they wish to do so
- to decide upon the geographical areas which should be contained within each contract package
- to ensure that all services which affect the Street Scene are efficiently co-ordinated (for example, grass cutting and street cleansing/litter picking)
- given the effects of climate change and the periods within which grounds maintenance now needs to be carried out (including coping with adverse weather patterns), to seek the views of service providers and other local authorities on how such challenges can be tackled
- to encourage continuous learning and development of suppliers (eg through apprentice schemes), and to seek proposals from suppliers about best joint use of service provider and Council resources to achieve this

Progress to date

We gave details in the last issue of the market sounding exercise, in which we sought the views of current market providers. We've had a good response, with some useful suggestions being put forward. There was a particular willingness to encourage local businesses and to develop and use local skills.

We have also been talking to our internal council customers about the service in order to understand their needs, together with those that operate alongside grounds maintenance, such as Highways and Environmental Services. We have also held a series of discussions to refine the service and decide upon options to make sure the City gets the most out of the forthcoming tender exercise.

Meeting the Council's objectives

We've all noticed the effects of the changes in the weather on our gardens – and the same thing is happening in our parks and open spaces. As part of meeting the Council's objective on climate change, we're looking at measures such as increasing grass cutting frequencies in some areas, and altering the species of trees we plant.

One of the things we are also proposing is an increase in green/timber waste recycling. The measures could include use of biomass heating, providing a far more sustainable disposal method, reduce long term energy costs and contribute positively to the city's environmental sustainability targets.

We're also seeking to put more emphasis on training and apprenticeships using the existing facilities at Kings Heath College.

More Information

If you'd like more information on this project, you can now contact us by email at groundnews@birmingham.gov.uk – we'd like to hear from you!

