

Item no.

Report to: **Resources Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **20 November 2007**
Report of: **Operations Manager**
Subject: **Value for Money Review of Horticultural Services**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform scrutiny members of the (VFM) project plan.

2. Consultation

2.1 The Director of Community Services, Corporate support unit and the project team have all been consulted in the preparation of this report.

3. Background

3.1 It is the aim of the council to ensure that all the services delivered and operations undertaken are providing value for money for our residents. Following the need to review and develop a corporate approach to assessing and improving value for money in key service areas the management team developed a programme of priorities for VFM analysis.

3.2 The horticultural service is the first key service programmed for review from April 2007 to assess if value for money is being achieved. Value for money is being achieved when costs are low, performance is high, outcomes are successful and satisfaction is high.

3.3 An assessment of this service found that costs are high performance and satisfaction is average.

3.4 A value for money toolkit developed by the corporate support unit and has been used to develop a project plan, which will be used to determine outcomes in the review. The central purpose is to use these assessments to consider ways that value for money can be achieved.

4. Position Statement and Option Appraisal

4.1 A project team comprising of representatives from Community Services operations, finance units, Personnel Dept, Health safety unit, corporate support unit along with the trade unions has been formed to work through the project plan. Appendix 1 details the progress to date.

4.2 This project plan lays out a framework to determine costs, performance and satisfaction. Project progress will be monitored along with risks and any other issues encountered during the review to ensure the project is delivered on time.

4.3 Overall the progress to date is good however there has been slippage and the plan has been amended to accommodate obstacles and the team is now confident to deliver the findings of the review as programmed in the plan.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial

There will be some expenditure on a satisfaction survey along with some benchmarking visits all of which will be met from existing revenue budgets.

5.2 Legal

There are no legal implications.

5.3 Policy

The proposals are consistent with council's policy on value for money.

5.4 Risk

A risk assessment has been carried out on the proposals and all significant risks assessed and any actions required will be implemented.

5.5 Communication

These proposals do not have any communication implications.

5.6 Corporate

The proposed actions within this report help to sustain quality services for our people.

5.7 Equality & Diversity

No implications.

5.8 E-Government

No implications.

5.9 Procurement

No implications.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are requested to note the project plan and comment on the progress made.

Project Reference: VFM Review of Horticulture

Version No: v 0.3

Background

This area has been identified as potentially high cost, average performance, average customer satisfaction and high importance to customers. There are a number of gaps in our knowledge around this however, and these initial views may change through the assessment process.

The value for money equation of low cost x high performance x high satisfaction leads us in this case to examine why costs are high and performance and satisfaction is average.

We will do this through understanding our costs and comparing those against relevant comparators and do likewise regarding performance and satisfaction. We will use the appropriate tools contained within the council's toolkit to help us with this exercise.

The service is of high importance to customers and contributes significantly to the councils overall aims .A clean and tidy environment is essential if we are to attract further investment and development helping to sustain our communities. Our corporate objective number five is *clean and tidy communities*.

Document Purpose

This document is to define the project plan/s, to form a basis for its management, identify the risks and explain the project reporting structure and frequency. This is a living document that will be updated throughout the duration of the project and used to record project progress, risks and issues.

Project Objectives

To examine the councils horticultural operation determining costs, performance and satisfaction against relevant comparators

Project Scope

Grass cutting, shrub bed maintenance, tree maintenance, general landscape works, play areas, walkways, footpaths across open spaces, unadopted roads, drainage works in open spaces, Seaham leisure centre maintenance of grounds, works for parish councils grass cutting etc, works for other organisations grass cutting etc, works for private residents, landscaping after demolitions, maintenance of closed churchyards, garage site maintenance, beach cleaning, default works garden tidies, bonfire removal/fencing/clean up work, council office complex grass cutting shrub bed maintenance, contribution to Castle Eden Dene maintenance, verge maintenance on behalf of the county council, Snow clearing of OAP bungalows, Crimdon Park, Allotments, Inspection of Playground Equipment and General Sundry Rents and Way leaves

Out of Scope

The elements of the former street cleansing operation now included in the clean and green teams. Litter picking, street sweeping, emptying litterbins.

Project Deliverables

Identification of improvements in service effectiveness, potential policy options for political consideration in the delivery of these services.

Communications Plan

Role	Responsibility	Name
Review lead	Accountable for the success of the review	Paul Penman
Review support	Responsible for co-ordinating the review activity under the direction of the review lead	Mick Devine
Team member	Responsible for the delivery of relevant tasks to aid the review	Tony Bleasdale John Lowes Roy Todd Lisa Mason David Walker Mike Lavender Mary Readman Tom Scott Peter Bennet

Frequency and Method of Communication

Meeting	Target Audience(s)	Delivery Method	Delivery Frequency	Comment
Project Management Board	MR, TB, OS, JB	Project plan General discussion	Six weekly	
Resources Scrutiny Committee	Elected members	Project plan General discussion	Two visits, preview and review	

Quality Plan

To ensure that this project is delivered within the time identified and that our thinking is challenged we will report progress in two ways. Route one will be via the Resources Scrutiny Committee and route two will be via Mary Readman Principle Corporate Development Officer, Tom Bell Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Joy Brindle Assistant Chief Executive and Oliver Sherratt Director of Community Services. Mary, Tom, Joy and Oliver will act as a project management board whilst the scrutiny committee will provide a political input. The resources scrutiny committee will preview and review the objectives.

Project Contacts

Names, email, telephone numbers for each member of the project


Name	Email	Phone	Responsibility
Paul Penman	Paul.Penman@easington.gov.uk	5876118	Review lead
Mick Devine	Mick.Devine@easington.gov.uk	5274567	Review support
Tony Bleasdale	Tony.Bleasdale@easington.gov.uk	5274357	Team Member
John Lowes	John.Lowes@easington.gov.uk	5876130	Team Member
Roy Todd	Roy.Todd@easington.gov.uk	5876128	Team Member
Lisa Mason	Lisa.Mason@easington.gov.uk	5274345	Team Member
David Walker	david.walker@easington.gov.uk	5274327	Team Member
Mike Lavender	michael.lavender@easington.gov.uk	5274600	Team Member
Mary Readman	mary.readman@easington.gov.uk	5274615	Team Member
Tom Scott	Tom.Scott@easington.gov.uk	5274489	Team Member
Peter Bennet	Peter.Bennett@easington.gov.uk	5274581	Team Member

Project Plan

Summary project plan to:

Tasks	Start	Complete	Who
Carry out preparatory work	06.07.07	06.07.07	PP/MD
Circulate preparatory work for comment/ observations and amend as appropriate	10.07.07	14.07.07	MD
Complete all project plan documentation circulate for approval/amendments	16.08.07	31.08.07	MD
Costs			
Break costs down into cost headings e.g. operatives, machines, materials, oncosts	06.08.07	17.08.07	TB
Break down costs into areas of operation e.g. grass cutting, tree maint, landscape	17.08.07	31.08.07	TB/PP/MD
To analyse budgets and make sure all the budget headings are correctly allocated	03.09.07	7.11.07	TB/PP/MD
To analyse whether or not any rechargeable works are fully recovering costs	28.08.07	21.09.07	PP/JL
Submit tender for East Durham Homes grounds maintenance soft market testing exercise	20.8.07	6.9.07	PP
Evaluate the learning form East Durham Homes grounds maintenance soft market testing exercise	18.9.07	7.11.07	PP/MD/TB/JL
Performance			
Quantify horticultural functions throughout the District	06.08.07	31.10.07	PB & Team leaders
Man power analysis (sickness levels, accidents, training, occupational disease)	03.09.07	03.10.07	JL/DW/LM
Create an Easington profile in terms of quantity/costs/service standards per hectare	31.10.07	14.11.07	PP/TB/MD
Take part in the APSE performance network	19.09.07	05.10.07	PP/TB
Identify suitable comparators to benchmark with (three)	14.11.07	31.11.07	PP/MD/MR
Compile benchmarking questionnaire	14.11.07	31.11.07	MD/PP/MR
Undertake benchmarking exercise	2.12.07	23.12.12	PP/MD/JL/TB
Evaluate findings of benchmarking exercise including results of APSE performance networking.	7.1.08	21.1.08	PP/MD/TB
Satisfaction			
Analyse complaints	20.08.07	12.10.07	PP
Commission Vision Management Systems to undertake a customer satisfaction survey	01.09.07	12.10.08	ML/PP
Undertake a satisfaction survey of external customers.	20.08.07	26.10.07	PP
Analyse results of the above survey	28.10.07	6.11.07	DE
Evaluation and recommendations			
Present report to Management Team	4.2.08	4.2.08	PP/MD
Present report to Working Executive	12.2.08	12.2.08	PP/MD
Present a report to Resources Scrutiny Committee	1.4.08	1.4.08	PP/MD

DISTRICT OF EASINGTON RISK ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND SHEET

Report to:* Date:* Report of:* Subject:* Value for money project for horticulture		RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX (GREY SHADED AREA DENOTES APPETITE FOR RISK)						SHEET	OF	
								ISSUED BY		
								*		
								ISSUED TO		
								*		
 District of easington.		LIKELIHOOD OF RISK HAPPENING	A	VERY HIGH			1			*
			B	HIGH						DATE ISSUED
			C	SIGNIFICANT			2			*
			D	LOW			1, 2			APPROVED BY
			E	VERY LOW			3			*
			F	ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE						DATE APPROVED
			*							
1. WRITE DOWN THE RISKS BELOW AND SCORE THEM. 2. ENTER THE RISK NUMBER FROM THE LEFT HAND COLUMN BELOW INTO THE RELEVANT BOX IN THE MATRIX ABOVE. 3. IDENTIFY THE TARGET SCORE, ENTER IN THE MATRIX ABOVE AND NOTE THE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS TO DEAL WITH THE RISK IN THE RIGHT HAND COLUMN BELOW.			4 NEGLIGIBLE	3 MARGINAL	2 CRITICAL	1 CATASTROPHIC	IMPACT ON ACTIVITY OR PROJECT			
							RISK ASSESSMENT ACCEPTED BY			
							*			
No	DESCRIPTION OF RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	OVERALL SCORE	TARGET SCORE	ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET SCORE	ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER	COMP DATE	LINKS TO	
1	Unable to quantify horticultural functions within the timescales set out in the project plan	A	2	A2	D2	Re-prioritise the work of the team member responsible for delivering this action. Extra resource to complete the task Alter the project timescales to suit the workload of the team member responsible for delivering this action,	PP, KP, OS	29/08/07		

ANY RISKS WITH A FINAL ASSESSMENT ABOVE THE "APPETITE" MUST BE REFERRED TO THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ACCEPTANCE AND REFERENCE TO THE RISK INCLUDED IN THE REPORT TOGETHER WITH DETAILS OF THE ACTION REQUIRED

**DISTRICT OF EASINGTON RISK ASSESSMENT
CONTINUATION SHEET**

SHEET OF

No	DESCRIPTION OF RISK (WHAT CAN GO WRONG)	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	OVERALL SCORE	TARGET SCORE	ACTIONS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET SCORE	ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER	COMP DATE	LINKS TO

ANY RISKS WITH A FINAL ASSESSMENT ABOVE THE "APPETITE" MUST BE REFERRED TO THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ACCEPTANCE AND REFERENCE TO THE RISK INCLUDED IN THE REPORT TOGETHER WITH DETAILS OF THE ACTION REQUIRED