

**Mountsett Crematoria Joint Committee**29<sup>th</sup> January 2010**Grounds Maintenance Review –  
Grass Cutting at Mountsett Crematorium**

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**Joint Report of Terry Collins – Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services; Stuart Crowe – Corporate Director: Resources (Treasurer to the Joint Committee)**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present options for the grass cutting of the grounds at Mounsett Crematorium.
2. The report seeks approval of the grass cutting report and sets out for members' consideration the issues and actions from this report.

**Background**

3. In 2008/09 the grass cutting within the crematorium was carried out under external contract via Sones, the external contractor appointed by the former Derwentside DC. The annual budget 2009/10 for this service is £3,585.
4. The grounds within the crematorium are classed as High Profile. High Profile areas are areas such as entrance features, surrounding flower beds, traffic islands/roundabouts, buildings or within Parks or other ornamental or highly visual features.
5. High Profile Mowing is defined as that carried out on areas or lawns with a cylinder mower with 5 or more blades, front and rear roller, as necessary, giving at least 70cuts per linear metre. The number of cuts being up to 30 occasions between April and October, the cuts being distributed on a one weekly cycle, which could be accelerated or decelerated in accordance with prevailing conditions to maintain a height of 10mm.
6. As members will recall, the standard of service received in 2008/09 was not considered to be effective. On a number of occasions grass cutting was not carried out weekly and a cylinder mower was often not used in accordance with the contract. This resulted in the land becoming very overgrown on a number of occasions. This led to a number of questions about the quality of service provided, which the committee have previously been made aware of.
7. Durham County Council have agreed an extension to the Sones grass cutting contract for another year, however this does not include any grass cutting within Mountsett Crematorium.

8. Members will be aware that the current staff arrangements at Mountsett cannot cope with the introduction of the grass cutting at Mountsett at this present time.

### **Options for Improved Standards of Grasscutting**

9. Officers within the Bereavement Services Team of Durham County Council have developed a number of options for members' consideration:

#### *Option 1*

10. To engage the external contractor (Sones) to carry out the maintenance of the grass areas within Mountsett using a rotary machine and on a reduced frequency of 16 occasions and in line with cutting schedules under the contract. The annual budget cost would be £2,283 and produce a net saving of £1,302, against the current budgeted costs.
11. This would provide a reduction in cost for the service, the risk however, given that the service has received some complaints, is that this reduction in service may provide less satisfaction with the area.

#### *Option 2*

12. To carry out the grass cutting of the crematorium through the in-house Street Scene Bereavement Services team, supplemented by hiring a cylinder mower. This would result in additional costs from hire, along with fuel and maintenance costs (not including damage on a hire), for 25 weeks per year – estimated at a gross budget cost of £11,405.
13. This would provide the Streetscene team direct control over the cutting frequency and standards.
14. The net increased cost to the 2010/11 budget would be £7,820.

#### *Option 3*

14. To carry out the grass cutting of the crematorium using a cylinder mower from the existing Durham County fleet, operated by staff from the Street Scene wider Bereavement Team on a frequency of 25 occasions' per year at a gross budget cost of £6,513.
15. This option allows the wider Street scene team to maintain the grass and be in direct control of the service and utilise the machinery in the most efficient way.
16. The net increased cost to the 2010/11 budget would be £2,928 under this option.

#### *Option 4*

16. Members have also requested a costing on the employment of a current part time member of staff on a full time basis, providing the capacity within the Mountsett team to undertake grass cutting duties.

17. The current gross employee costs of the part time member of staff is £12,313, which includes the costs of overtime that has been worked over the past year. To employ this member of staff full time, on a flat salary scale with no bonus, would be £15,898, £3,585 more than is included in the current budgets. Including the required machinery, the gross costs of providing the grass cutting service from within the Mountsett Crematorium staffing establishment, would be £8,531.
- 18 This would allow additional working hours to reduce the number of hours worked as overtime and sufficient to maintain the grass cutting of the grounds using a machine from the Durham County fleet. These additional hours would assist in improving service provision, providing a level of flexibility to conduct a wider range in such areas as other grounds maintenance works or snow clearing / winter maintenance when the grass isn't growing.
- 19 This option provides a great control over the grounds and grass cutting activities at the Crematoria.
- 20 The net increased cost to the 2010/11 budget would be £4,946.

### **Recommendations and reasons**

20. It is recommended that:

- Members note the contents of the report;
- Approve Option 4, as it provides a greater level of control over the services provided; and
- The budget for 2010/11 be increased by £5,000 to cover the additional costs that would be incurred.

### **Background Papers**

Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

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#### **Contact(s):**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

The financial implications associated with this report are set out in the report. The draft budget for 2010/11 incorporates the additional expenditure associated with approving Option 4.

### **Staffing**

As detailed in the report, it is proposed that the Joint Committee decide if they wish to make the temporary member of staff full time. Due to 'LGR' appointments to a full time post may need to be done initially on a temporary basis.

### **Equality and Diversity**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Crime and disorder**

None

### **Sustainability**

None

### **Human rights**

None

### **Localities and Rurality**

None

### **Young people**

None

### **Consultation**

Officers of Gateshead Council were consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Health**

None