



GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 35/15

13 APRIL 2015

The purpose of this paper is to record the outcome of the tender process for Grounds Maintenance in the town for the period 1 April 2015 – 31 December 2017 and to recommend formal adoption of it.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) As Members are aware, the need for the tender process was a combination of the decision of the Isle of Wight Council to cease funding of Grounds Maintenance across the Island from 1 April 2015 and the Town Council's own decision of 13 October 2014 to take on direct responsibility for the town's Grounds Maintenance and appoint a contractor for it.
- b) The Public Buildings Working Group was tasked with progressing the matter.
- c) The Town Council Meeting of 9 February 2015 authorised *the Town Clerk, advised by the Public Buildings Working Group, to conduct a tender process for the maintenance of the 17 areas identified in the letter from the Isle of Wight Council dated 23 January 2015 to be effective from 1 April 2015.*

2) TENDER PROCESS

- a) Three companies with known capacity for and track record in the work required were invited to tender for a contract for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2017 against a specification agreed by the Public Buildings Working Group based on the details of the existing Isle of Wight contract as supplied to us on request.
- b) The Invitations to Tender were supplied to the three companies on 3 March with a deadline of noon on 13 March.
- c) The Town Council meeting of 9 March appointed Councillor Brian Lucas as its representative to attend the formal opening of the tender envelopes at the deadline.
- d) The responses from the three companies were:

COMPANY	TENDER PRICE
John O'Conner (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd	£15,934.00
Brighstone Landscaping Ltd	£15,694.24
Groundsell Contracting Ltd	No tender

- e) Financial Regulations are clear that there is no obligation to accept the lowest tender: the Public Buildings Working Group Meeting of 17 March was unanimous in its view that the fact that John O'Conner had existing knowledge and experience of all the areas involved and were already involved with the restoration of the Cascades outweighed the advantage of the relatively small difference in the quotations.

3) CASCADES PLANTING

- a) The selected contractor had, however, raised a serious issue in respect of the planting of the Cascades due to an error in the information provided to the Town Council by the Isle of Wight Council.
- b) The detail of the error – a very substantial underestimate of the number of plants required – and its consequences is set out in a Memo provided to the Public Buildings Working Group Meeting of 31 March and subsequently circulated to all Members.
- c) The subsequent requote on the basis of a reduced planting area at the density required to achieve the level of excellence the Town Council is committed was for a total annual cost for the whole contract of £29,213.
- d) After further discussions and adjustments the annual contract price was agreed at £27,750.

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- e) In view of the large number of plants needing to be secured in time for the summer planting at the end of April – an order that is usually placed in the previous October – and the Town Council's clear determination to restore the Cascades (see section 5 below) to its previous iconic quality for this season the Town Clerk, with the support of the Public Buildings Working Group Meeting, agreed to accept the new quotation.
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4) BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS

- a) Although the adjusted contract figure is £7,750 in excess of the agreed Budget provision of £20,000, it had already become clear that there would be sufficient room in other provisions for devolved services to accommodate this additional amount without detriment to any other budgeted service.
 - b) The Budget for 2015/16 includes a provision for Beach Cleaning to cover the whole cost of the Town Council's replacement service for it. The Isle of Wight Council's commitment to meet its statutory responsibility by paying the Town Council for cleaning Ventnor and Bonchurch beaches three times a week from 1 May to 30 September will mean a reimbursement of the order of £5,000.
 - c) The Budget for 2015/16 also includes the whole year cost of half the sum required to continue the No. 31 Bus Service: the new funding arrangement will now not be required until the second quarter at the earliest.
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5) CASCADES REFURBISHMENT

- a) The Town Council Meeting of 9 February also authorised the Town Clerk to deploy up to £9,000 from the contingency provision for services the Isle of Wight Council will no longer continue to restore the Cascades to the standard the town expects and the repair and refurbishment of the handrails and fencing.
 - b) This funding has now been fully committed. The major works on the Cascades to restore its condition ready for the summer planting and the repainting of the railings have both been completed. The repair work to the fencing has been commissioned against a commitment to complete the works by the end of this month.
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6) RECOMMENDATION

The Town Council is recommended to:

- i) formally agree the revised price for the Grounds Maintenance contract of £27,750;
 - ii) agree to offset the Isle of Wight Council's contribution to the Beach Cleaning programme against the cost of the Grounds Maintenance contract;
 - iii) ask the Town Clerk to advise the Town Council of any adjustments to devolved services budget lines required to meet the cost of the Grounds Maintenance contract as they arise.
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