

Name of meeting: CABINET

Date: 22nd September 2015

Title of report: Parks and Open Spaces Service Standards Part 1

This report, is as a result of recommendations made, following a call-in by Scrutiny, held on 20 August 2015

Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes
Is it in the Council's Forward Plan?	Yes
Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name	Jacqui Gedman - 14/09/15
Is it signed off by the Director of Resources?	David Smith - 11/09/15 <i>Debbie Hogg on behalf of</i>
Is it signed off by the Assistant Director - Legal & Governance?	Julie Muscroft - 11/09/15
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Steve Hall, Planning, Highways and Open Spaces

Electoral [wards](#) affected: ALL

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: PUBLIC

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform and update Cabinet on the progress of delivering new service standards to parks and open spaces sites across all of Kirklees and to reflect recommendations following the scrutiny process.
- 1.2 The report seeks agreement of the recommendations to adopt the new service standards subject to regular review and for District Committees to annually influence local changes within resource allocation.
- 1.3 The report is also to seek approval from Cabinet to delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director (Physical Resources and Procurement) for the most cost effective procurement of seasonal plants in order to achieve best value.

2. Key points

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 A Budget decision was made in Feb 2015 to reduce the parks and open spaces budget by £1.3m and as a result changes have been made to the operating model to allow for scaling of the service and target resources where they are needed.
- 2.1.2 This change in service standards has led to a projected annual saving of £834,000.
- 2.1.2 The reduction equates to approximately 50,000 less hours of resource.
- 2.1.3 For context the service is responsible for cutting 350 hectares of grass in parks and open spaces (which equates to 490 football pitches) and also cuts an additional area of 405 hectares (which equates to 567 football pitches) made up of Housing, Highways, Bereavement Services, Schools and other Council services.
- 2.1.4 The total amount of grass that the service cuts is 755 hectares (which equates to 1,057 football pitches).
- 2.1.5 The service also grows over 400,000 plants per year to go into beds, hanging baskets and floral displays.

2.2 Service Standards

- 2.2.1 In setting the new standards the impacts that reduced maintenance and display regimes have been considered and have been minimised as far as possible.
- 2.2.2 Sites have been assigned into 5 categories of reducing maintenance and planting ranging from Gold which will receive the highest level of maintenance, Silver and Bronze to the introduction of Natural areas that receive the least maintenance. Some sites will be allocated as Gold but also as Strategic areas that are of wider significance than a single District.
- 2.2.3 Strategic sites will include the five principal parks, cemetery and crematoria grounds and some town centres, and these will be detailed on the plans. These areas are considered Strategic which means that they cannot be altered at a District level, with exception of enhancements via community capacity. Any addition, removal or alteration to the status of these sites will be a Cabinet decision.
- 2.2.4 The methodology for allocation of standards across Districts is included in Appendix C.
- 2.2.3 A copy of the service standards are attached in (Appendix A) which identifies how the standards will affect sites, including an example list of sites to provide a high level indication of which standard has

currently been allocated, broken down into District Committee areas. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, a full list will be provided to District Committees as part of the engagement strategy.

2.2.4 New service standards in maintenance started to be introduced from April 2015 across all of Kirklees in order to see the impact through the growing season and the current configuration ran until the end of June, allowing a period for feedback to identify the impact the changes have on both the landscape and users of the sites.

2.2.5 The new service standards in planting and floral displays will be implemented by April 2016.

2.3 Service standard variation

2.3.1 At the discretion of District Committees it will be possible to trade areas of service standard to either increase or decrease in identified areas within the agreed overall framework of that District.

2.3.2 The District Committees have an allocation of hanging baskets and bedding areas. The location of these can be influenced at a District Committee level.

2.3.3 This means that if a District Committee is of the opinion that an area that is maintained at Silver standard is actually used at a level that Bronze would be more appropriate they can say that this area can be dropped in standard. This will release capacity to increase the service standards elsewhere.

2.3.4 The estimated comparison chart that will be used is shown below:

Standard	Square metre comparison
Gold	1
Silver	3
Bronze	5
Natural	35

2.3.5 There may be some slight variations to this table to reflect the specific geographies of a site for example the interaction with any other amenities, access or infrastructure characteristics.

2.3.6 The engagement process is more fully explained in Cabinet Report Parks and Open Spaces Service Standards Part 2.

2.4 Feedback

2.4.1 The feedback on maintenance from the trial period has come from a number of forums i.e. Facebook, email, Councillors and staff, this is all based on subjective reports and there has been no qualitative or quantitative research or analysis undertaken.

2.4.2 Key themes from the feedback are:

- Long grass looks unsightly
- Dog fouling will increase and become a health issue
- Leisure activities will be limited or reduced

2.4.3 Details of feedback received for each District Committee area are shown in (Appendix B).

2.5 Recommendations

- 2.5.1 That the new service standards are adopted in Parks and Open Spaces.
- 2.5.2 That service change analysis is done to capture all seasons to understand the real impact of the changes and this is reported back to Cabinet in the New Year.
- 2.5.3 That the decision making is devolved to District Committees to allow changes to the standard a site is allocated to reflect local community need within the resource allocation for the District.
- 2.5.4 To note that given the need to ensure Best Value the Assistant Director for Physical Resources and Procurement is delegated the responsibility to find the most cost effective solution to the future provision of seasonal plants and will report the options back to Cabinet.

3. Implications for the Council

- 3.1 The operating model for parks and open space service standards is budgeted within the current financial resource allocation.

4. Consultees and their opinions

- 4.1 Portfolio Holders, Cabinet, Officers of Streetscene and Housing have been consulted and are in favour of the proposals.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 To implement the associated Engagement Strategy.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

- 6.1 That Cabinet members be aware of the new service standards and the issues identified in the feedback and that the recommendations in 2.4 are approved.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation

- 7.1 The portfolio holder, Councillor Steve Hall, would like Cabinet Members to be aware of the new service standards and the issues identified in the feedback and that the recommendations in 2.4 are approved.

8. Contact officer and relevant papers

Officers:

Rob Dalby, Parks and greenspaces manager, Streetscene and Housing

Tel: (01484) 221000

Email: rob.dalby@kirklees.gov.uk

Papers:

Service standards (Appendix A)

Feedback (Appendix B)

9. Assistant director responsible

Joanne Bartholomew - Assistant Director - Place

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