



**COMMITTEE TITLE: Housing, Health, and Community**

**DATE: 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	Housing Grounds Maintenance Review
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Lauren Stretch

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

Grounds Maintenance services to the Housing Stock has historically been provided by the depot. However, the last known service level agreement (SLA) was drawn up in 1991, over 30 years ago.

Being that the service level agreement is dated, it has become difficult to accurately note the time and activity on site and the original requirements have somewhat changed.

This means, at present, we are unable to recharge the service charge to Leaseholders which is impacting on the income to the Housing Revenue Account.

As such, a decision was taken to review the specification of works to all housing sites, including garages, amenity greens and communal gardens.

In order to price against the specification, the depot requested a bill of quantities that housing was unable to provide due to a lack of mapping on site.

An external mapping company has since been appointed to conduct an exercise to log all boundaries of HRA land as well as note the number and size of greens, hedges, and shrubs etc.

Once this is received, the depot will be in a position to reprice for the whole HRA contract and importantly break it down site by site to allow Housing to charge the correct service charges to both leaseholders and Tenants.

## **SUPPORT ING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Housing Grounds Maintenance has always been provided by the depot. However, the last known formal review of the service level agreement was in 1991, over 30 years ago.

Over this time, many changes have been made as residents groups took over certain communal garden maintenance, and then as these groups have ceased, the works were never picked back up by the depot.

This has created a decline in some of our housing sites that has resulted in an increase in complaints from residents.

In addition to the decline in condition of our sites, as there has never been a formal method of recording time and activity on site, this means that the Housing Service are unable to charge Leaseholders a service charge and the Tenant charge is limited.

The lack of charging has an impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and if it was to continue, would mean a cut back in services due to lack of funding.

Many conversations have taken place over the years to find a solution to improve the grounds maintenance service, however these have failed due to lack of resource.

In the summer of 2022, Housing embarked on a full review of the Grounds Maintenance service and engaged an external consultant to write a specification for all activities. This prompted conversations with the depot management as to whether this service could continue to be provided by them.

It quickly became evident that a bill of quantities would be required before any decision on the depots future delivery of the contract could be made.

As such, we have engaged a mapping company to undertake a large exercise of mapping all housing sites including garage sites and amenity greens.

This will provide an accurate boundary of each estate which is required to correctly bill residents, as well as detail on the size and location of greens, shrubs, hedges etc.

It is expected that this task will be completed by the end of December 2023 and then the depot will have all information required to enable them to confidently quote for ongoing grounds maintenance works.

Examples of the detail provided as part of the mapping service can be found at Appendix A, and 2.

## **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Over the last 2 years it has been considered in detail as to whether an external contractor would be more beneficial in delivering the service.

As we engaged in conversations with our consultants, it was decided that being such a small housing stock, we may struggle to find suitable bidders.

It was also considered that by going to an external contractor, would mean the depot lose the contract and this would significantly impact the depot.

During final discussions with senior management, it was agreed that the contract would remain with the depot subject to their pricing of the contract in line with the specification drafted.

It was noted that some minor changes to the specification would need to be made for the depot to be able to deliver the service, but these did not pertain to a drop in required service.

A final option was to leave the current service level agreement as it was, however, with the loss in service charges to the HRA and increasing level of complaints, this was discounted.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

### **4.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

Tenant Talkback will be consulted on the specification of works and will be invited to view the mapping for the sites and provide any comments.

### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer**  
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If the contract was to be awarded to an external company that is not the depot, this would have a significant impact on the depot and its future delivery.

Likewise, the costs provided by the depot must be reasonable to cover the services and be able to be met by the Housing Revenue account.

The cost of services has an impact on residents and therefore a future consultation on service charges should be considered to allow full recovery of costs.

### **6.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Acting Joint Director – People & Governance & Monitoring Officer**  
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The service level agreement should be formally logged and review dates agreed to avoid lengthy gaps between reviews.

### **7.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health**  
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None

### **8.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

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None

### **9.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

**Name & Title: Henry Muss, Sustainability & Climate Officer**  
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Consideration should be considered to environmental schemes in the borough such as rain gardens which can assist with flooding.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Mapping example 1**

**Appendix B: Mapping example 2**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None**

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>