

Title: idverde Contract Review (Grounds Maintenance)
 Lead Officers: Zoë Court (Head of Neighbourhood Services)
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 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Roberts
 Wards of the District directly affected: ALL

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder		Cllr Will Roberts
Finance		Andrew Rollins
Legal Services		N/A
Chief Executive		Chris Elliot
Director of Climate Change		Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)		N/A
Section 151 Officer		Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	6/3/25	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group		
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	No	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

1. Summary why Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for the report

- 1.1 The Committee have a programme in place to review all of the Council's major contracts to scrutinise performance and value for money.
- 1.2 Idverde are contracted to deliver Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing across the district, this report is reviewing Grounds Maintenance and there is an accompanying report reviewing Street Cleansing.

2. Background and Contract details

- 2.1 The current contract started in April 2021 and is for 8 years (to 31 March 2029) There is an option to extend the contract for up to an additional 8 years
- 2.2 The contract value is £22,500,000 (annual contract value is c£2,812,500). This is subject to RPI applied in April based on August the previous year.

- 2.3 The grounds maintenance contract includes a wide range of services, these include:

- **Grassland Management**

- Ornamental Grass, Amenity Grass
- Tall Herbage Grassland/ Wetland Areas/Scrub Grassland
- Meadow Management
- Play Area Grass
- Metaled Path Edges and Grass Path Management
- BMX cut
- Pedestrian/Tractor Flail
- Grass Bulb Areas
- Leaf Collection/Mulching
- Earth Quaking

- **Soft landscape Management**

- Shrub and Herbaceous Beds
- Pruning/Maintain flower beds and Fixed planters
- Spring/Summer Bedding
- Ground Preparation
- Formation of planting surface
- maintenance/removal of bedding
- Methods of planting
- Provide/maintain/water portable floral containers (including hanging baskets and sponsored hanging baskets, tubs on poles_

- **Hedge Maintenance**

- Topiary
- Box hedging
- Amenity hedge
- Ecological hedges

- **Tree Planting**

- **Cemetery Maintenance**

- Grassland management. Soft management landscape management, maintenance of water features
- Grave excavation
- Preparation for funerals
- Grave Arrangements, backfilling, and aftercare
- Woodland burials
- Exhumation
- Chapels checks and maintenance

- **Sports Areas**
 - Maintain senior and junior football pitches
 - Maintain bowling greens
 - Pétanque Court Management
- **Main Water features**
 - Ornamental lake
 - Other water bodies
 - Invasive species
 - Reed beds
- **Wildlife Provision**
 - Bird boxes
 - Straw for swans
 - Treatment of bird eggs
 - Bird feeding stations and hoppers
- **Highway grass, shrub, and hedge maintenance (for WCC)**
- **Temperate Glass House Technician**

Idverde are also supporting the Climate Change and Green Spaces team with the delivery of the Councils' Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and have been advising on improvements to No Mow May since 2023

3.0 Grounds Maintenance Contract Standards

- 3.1 Grounds Maintenance is to be carried out on a frequency basis throughout Warwick District in accordance with this specification. The Services described in this Specification broadly comprise:
- 3.2.1.1 Various regimes of grass cutting across the district including parks, open spaces, housing land, cemeteries, Council offices, woodland, local nature reserves, local wildlife sites and ecologically sensitive areas.
 - 3.2.1.2 Maintenance of sports facilities including athletics track, football pitches, tennis courts, boules and bowling greens.
 - 3.2.1.3 Maintenance of shrub beds, hedges, ecological hedges, annual bedding, hanging baskets, planted containers, sustainable beds and other types of mixed amenity borders and planting.
 - 3.2.1.4 Provision of burial services for bereavement services and maintenance of cemetery grounds, crematorium and closed churchyard grounds.
 - 3.2.1.5 Provision of a skilled qualified horticultural team for extra works throughout the year, especially during the winter months.
 - 3.2.1.6 The application of pesticides to control pests such as weeds, insects and vermin.
 - 3.2.1.7 Water features and habitat management including rivers, ponds, flood attenuation areas, sustainable urban drainage (SUD) features, lakes and streams.

4. Contract Performance and KPIs

- 4.1 Since the contract started in April 2021 there has been four different contract managers leading this contract, which has been disruptive and created some difficulties in the management and development of the contract. The most recent contract manager has been in post since September 2024 and is building a good relationship with officers

4.2 The Neighbourhood Services Service Area Plan (NS SAP) tracks the monthly performance of the Contractor in relation to Grounds maintenance. The system used for scoring is idverde's PQMS (Performance Quality Management System). This system is a feature quality assessment of the grounds maintained. Random locations are automatically selected for inspection. PMQS scores range from 1-7, assessed values between 4.00-4.9 are compliant with the contract.

PROGRESS 2024/25	Target	Progress
April-24	4.00	3.94
May-24	4.00	4.00
June-24	4.00	3.89
July-24	4.00	4.00
August-24	4.00	
September-24	4.00	4.00
October-24	4.00	4.00
November-24	4.00	4.22
December-24	4.00	4.00
January-25	4.00	4.08
February-25	4.00	
March-25	4.00	
Year summary (to date)	4.00	4.01

4.3 Generally this KPI meets the target set. However, there have been occasions where idverde have not completed grounds maintenance related jobs within the agreed timeframe. Work with idverde to agree extensions where possible, but this is not always possible due to seasonal work, nesting birds etc.

4.4 This is the only KPI within the NS SAP and it may be beneficial to add in other KPIs relevant to grounds maintenance, based on customer reports outlined in 4.9 of this report, as these are areas that are important to residents.

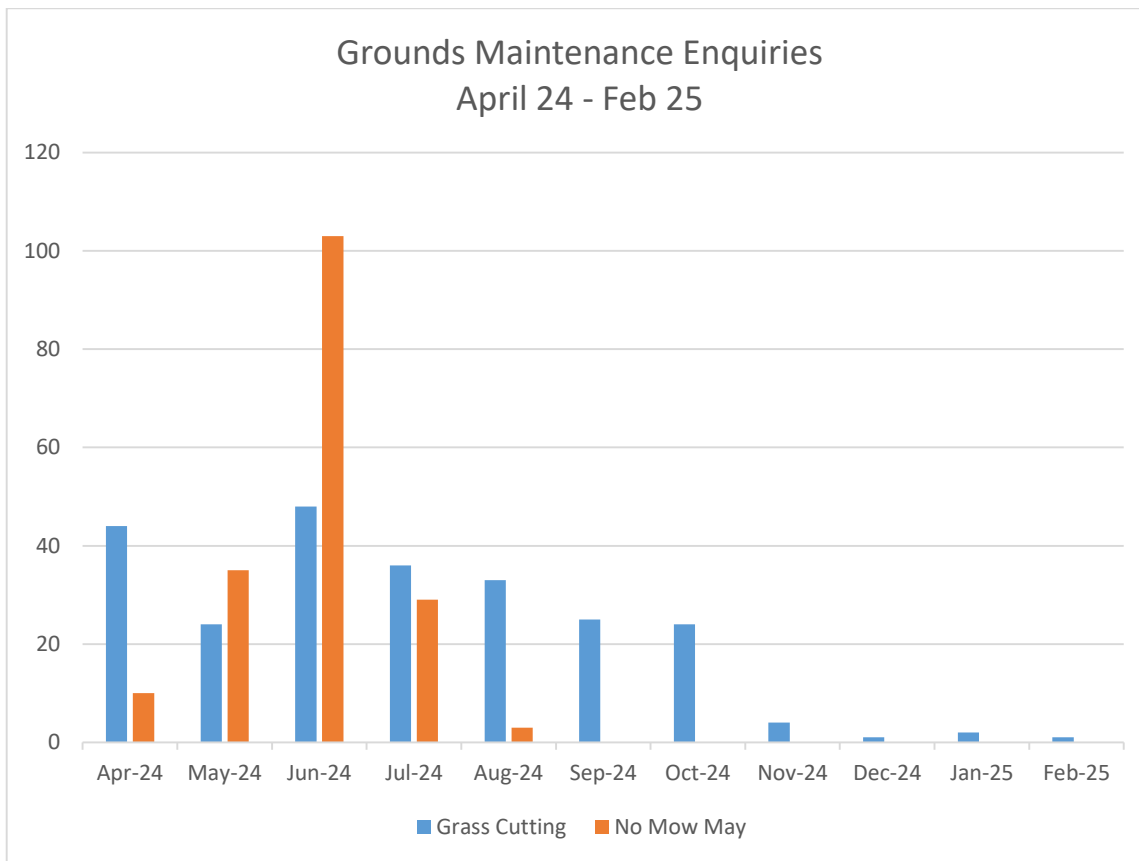
4.6 Area Contract Officers are expected to carry out 1 inspection each per fortnight, with or without a Contract Supervisor attending. Any contract rectification is recorded on a spreadsheet.

4.7 A recent example from the spreadsheet record is shown below:

Date issued	Address or location	Details of breach of contract	How should Contractor rectify the breach	Deadline for rectification
17th February 2025	Vincent Street, leamington Spa	As per section 4.2.1.2.1, 4.2.1.2.2, 4.2.1.4, and 4.2.1.4.5, of the contract conditions you have failed to perform the Services completely in accordance with the provisions of the Contract, by failing to remove clippings, and carry out the winter cut to all shrubs in the beds as required, front, back and top to prevent encroachment and extensive height. Failure to comply with this rectification notice (RN 700) will result in the issuing of an instant default notice. As per section 31.10 of the Deed of Agreement it should be noted that an instant Default Notice will be issued when a third and any subsequent substantiated complaint is received of a similar nature to any previously issued Rectification or Default Notice(s) for the same location in any 12 month period.	Return to shrub at corner of Duke Street to remove excess clippings, and cut front and top appropriately to reduce encroachment one level growth. Return to shrub bed at Corner of Queen Street to remove excess clippings. Return to shrub bed at corner of King Street (rear parking bays) to carry out cut back to top of shrubs missed.	25th February 2025

4.8 Failure to rectify within the timescale results in a default notice being issued to the value of £17.50. The input and output of this work needs to be reviewed as part of the contract improvement plan to ensure that this is a good use of resources and proportionate to the number of service requests received.

4.9 Since April 2024 there has been over 430 service requests from residents in relation to grounds maintenance, categorised in the graph below.



4.10 No Mow May (NMM) started in May 2023 to raise awareness and to tackle the climate emergency. There were a lot of significant lessons learnt and NMM 24 saw improvements made and less resident complaints/enquiries. However, as the Council now has a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in place, NMM activities are being blended into this plan. A Councillor briefing note has been written regarding reviewing NMM 24 and outlining the plan for 2025. This advises that due to issues with the mowing team 'catching up' and residents feedback, all areas will continue to be mowed throughout May with only areas that have been identified as having significant biodiverse benefits being included, these are listed in the briefing note (See Appendix 1)

5. Contract Development

5.1 Since the contract was awarded, it has been the intention to move away from using spreadsheets and emails to track contract performance and completion of scheduled jobs. idverde have an internal system called 'SMS' which is now being rolled out across both the Street Cleansing and Ground Maintenance contracts. Council officers in Contract Services will have read only access to view jobs completed in real time, when jobs are due to be completed, photographs of completed work and issues recorded (i.e. on play equipment inspections). There will also be the ability to run reports on performance (Appendix 2 is a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the SMS system).

- 5.2 The intention is to integrate SMS with the Council's CRM system to improve how service requests from residents are dealt with. The first service to be integrated will be flytipping report, during Summer 2025, and once the street cleaning has been integrated work will start on Grounds Maintenance, likely to be in 2026.
- 5.3 The SMS system is already being used to record grass cutting, which started in early March and a large % of winter shrubs and hedges are in the system, this work to add all aspects listed in 2.3 of this report continue at pace.
- 5.4 A budget growth request was successful in 2023 and saw additional resources added to the management and maintenance of the bowling greens, after significant investment by the Council the bowling greens were replaced, and more maintenance is required whilst they mature. This has seen a marked improvement in the quality of the bowling greens, with no issues reported during 2024/25.
- 5.5 The Head of Neighbourhood Services (NS) is working with finance to ascertain if it is possible to add an additional parks team to be funded from the Grounds Maintenance reserves due to the additional and planned green spaces being added to contract. This additional resource will cost approximately £130k pa for the remaining 4 years of the contract and a report will come to cabinet in the next few months.

6. Contract improvements

- 6.1 As laid out in the contract in the event that any achieved KPI falls short of the relevant target, the Contractor shall:
- Agree with the Council a detailed remediation plan for meeting the applicable target.
 - Deploy all additional resources and take all remedial action that is necessary to meet the target; and carry out actions as identified in the remediation plan agreed by the Council.
- 6.2 As part of the proposed Contract review, The NS and the idverde Area Director (AD) will be reviewing frequencies/timing of various ground maintenance activities which will be discussed with their teams. To reflect the changing climate, weather and the introduction of the BAP and ensuring best value for money.
- 6.3 A review of the KPIs captured and reported on within the SAP will take place to ensure we are tracking KPIs that are important to our residents and in line with our corporate priorities of delivering valued services.
- 6.4 Both the NS and the AD will be reviewing best practises for the grounds maintenance contract, by looking at other local authority grounds maintenance contracts held by idverde. Changes are needs to ensure that the contract remains flexible and adapts to the changing climate/weather and meets the aspirations of the council to increase biodiversity.

7. Summary:

- 7.1 Whilst there are areas within the contract that require improvement, this report includes various activities aimed at improving the contract efficiencies and performance and customer insight. The improvements are aimed at ensuring our parks and green spaces are well maintained assets for everyone who lives, works and visits Warwick District to enjoy and to increase biodiversity where possible.