

**BEST VALUE PHASE 1 PILOT SERVICE REVIEW - LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE
PROGRESS REPORT**

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1. **Purpose**

1.1 To bring the Sub-Committee up to date on the progress of the pilot service review of Landscape Maintenance.

2. **Summary**

2.1 The review is now drawing to a close and a full report will be submitted to the Environment Committee on 3 November 1999.

2.2 The final report will include benchmarking data with other authorities and the Milton Keynes Parks Trust. An action plan will be incorporated.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 The Sub-Committee is asked to note the progress to date.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 The review has followed a similar process to the other pilot reviews, such as the formation of a Reference Group. The Reference Group has become a key part of the review process, not only by providing external scrutiny but also by developing new ideas and ways forward.
- 4.2 A final meeting of the Reference Group was planned to be held on 27 September 1999, which would scrutinise the conclusions, recommendations and action plan. Whilst the meeting went ahead, the meeting took much longer than planned especially when considering the benchmarking data. This meant that the meeting was adjourned approximately half way through the agenda and the second half has yet, at the time of writing, to be reconvened.
- 4.3 Whilst the Lead Officers and Managers will be available to give a verbal update on the findings, the principle conclusions are noted below:
- (a) that Milton Keynes' costs are broadly similar to those declared by the comparator authorities, with one exception;
 - (b) standards of performance are broadly similar with those found in the benchmark authorities;
 - (c) without reducing standards further, there is little scope for further economies;
 - (d) although it was found difficult to obtain data from other authorities, this has been collated and when used intelligently provides useful data;
 - (e) some data provided needs to be treated with caution;
 - (f) Milton Keynes is the only authority that makes use of the Section 136 provisions;
 - (g) further investigations are required as to why one authority claims much lower rates than the others in the group;
 - (h) closer working with the Parks Trust and local councils to be further investigated; and
 - (i) further contract monitoring is required, such as local citizens and local councils becoming further involved in an "Environment Watch".

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 The issues and choices will be further developed and discussed in the report to the Environment Committee, which will also be submitted to a future meeting of this Sub-Committee.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

The landscaping in Milton Keynes greatly adds to the local environment and the consultees, including residents, were consistent in their view in this respect and wished to ensure that standards were maintained or improved.

6.2 Equalities

Equalities issues have been incorporated into the review process.

6.3 Financial

None.

6.4 Legal

None.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The Reference Group have concluded, using the benchmarking and consultation data, that the landscape maintenance operation provides a generally satisfactory service, particularly in the light of the reducing budgets for this service.

Background Papers: None