PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment Committee

4 June 2014

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE – BUILDING CAPACITY (ADDITIONAL GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SQUAD)

Report by the Depute Director (Environment)

This report updates the Environment Committee on the progress in creating an additional squad in Grounds Maintenance. In February 2014, the Council allocated £100K per annum for 2014/15 and 2015/16 to fund this squad and to support the Council's commitment to the development of Modern Apprentices (MAs).

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 At the Council meeting on 17 February 2011, a budget decision was taken to accept a saving in Grounds Maintenance. The impact analysis of this reduction in the Grounds Maintenance Service recognised the service would still maintain the large public open spaces by tractor and triple grass cutting, undertaken once fortnightly. It also recognised that some marginal and finer detailed areas, that required a higher staff resource, would not receive the same attention.

1.2 To mitigate the impact of this saving, the service has carried out a comprehensive review of our maintenance schedules, rationalised the sites the Council maintained but did not own, and re-assessed how we approached the servicing of grassed areas within residential areas.

1.3 The outcome of this review has been implemented, and has freed up capacity within the Ground Maintenance section to offset the savings.

1.4 In February 2014, a budget motion was approved by the Council, which allocated £100,000 per annum for 2014 / 15 and 2015 / 16, to fund an additional squad, comprising 6 staff, including 4 modern apprentices.

1.5 This approach supports the Council's priority to support the employability agenda with regards to youth employment. The Service also has an imperative to address workforce planning issues within Direct Services, due to the aging workforce within that team.

1.6 The proposal is to use this additional squad to act as a "hit squad" that could react to members or public concerns. It will also provide a resource to service new sites coming under Council control (e.g. new housing developments); and to assist in continuing maintenance of high amenity areas where land ownership is currently unclear.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 The Squad will consist of:

a) One Foreperson – to train, supervise the MAs and to work as an integral part of the squad.
b) One experienced seasonal operative to assist the Foreperson.
c) Four new MA opportunities for young people; these candidates will train and work as part of the squad.

2.2 The squad will be deployed throughout the Council area performing a varied range of tasks which will be subject to weekly review to ensure relevancy and responsiveness to any work requests being received by the Council. Priority will be given to ensure that the higher profile sites in communities continue to be maintained to a high standard. Tasks will include litter collection, weed control, grass cutting and hedge trimming along with any other related tasks. The opportunity to link up with the Shaw Trust Social Enterprise at the Westbank plant nursery will also be explored so that the MAs have variety in their work and can develop horticultural expertise with the SVQ Level 2 they will be studying at Dundee College. It will also have a role in ensuring the area looks as good as possible for the major events taking place this year, such as the Ryder Cup.

2.3 The Training and Development Team in Human Resources will recruit the MAs jointly with The Environment Service Supervisory staff. The first post to be recruited will be the Foreperson. The successful candidate in the Foreperson post will then be involved in the MA recruitment process. A vehicle for the squad will also be identified by the Council Fleet Manager along with appropriate machinery.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Following approval for additional funding for a new grounds maintenance squad for a two year period, work has been undertaken to examine the best use of this. This includes the composition of the squad, its targeted work and support for the Council's youth employability agenda.

3.2 The Committee is asked to:

(i) Note the progress made in developing the new Grounds Maintenance squad providing opportunities for youth employment.

(ii) Request the Depute Director (Environment) to produce a further update report to be submitted to Committee in 12 months time.

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ANNEX

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	**Yes/No**
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	**Yes**
Corporate Plan	**Yes**
Resource Implications	
Financial	**Yes**
Workforce	**None**
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	**None**
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	**Yes**
Strategic Environmental Assessment	**Yes**
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	**Yes**
Legal and Governance	**Yes**
Risk	**None**
Consultation	
Internal	**Yes**
External	**Yes**
Communication	
Communications Plan	**Yes**

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report impacts on the following:-

(i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
(ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
(v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

1.2 It is considered that the actions contained within this report contribute to all of the above objectives.

Corporate Plan

1.3 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 outlines the same five objectives as those detailed above in the Community Plan. These objectives provide a clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resource allocation.

1.4 It is considered that the actions contained in the report contribute to the objectives as outlined in paragraph 1.2 above.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 This proposal is funded by the revenue budget proposal for £100,000 per annum for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Workforce

2.2 The proposals will add temporary staff to the workforce. It will also help the workforce profile in Direct Services by giving opportunities to young people to join the workforce.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no land and property, or information technology implications arising from the contents of this report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

3.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS). The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

3.4 Not Applicable.

Legal and Governance

3.5 Not applicable.

Risk

3.6 There are no significant risks associated with the implementation of this project.

4. Consultation

4.1 The Head of Legal Services and the Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5. Communication

5.1 Not applicable.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

3. APPENDICES

None.