

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	25 SEPTEMBER 2024
Report Title:	URBAN AND RURAL GRASS CUTTING CAPITAL EQUIPMENT
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	ZAK SHELL HEAD OF OPERATIONS, COMMUNITIES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Council's policy framework or procedure rules as a result of this report.
Executive Summary:	This report provides an update in relation to the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service and seeks Council approval of an amendment to the Capital Programme.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update in relation to the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service and seeks Council approval for a proposed amendment to the Capital Programme to incorporate a capital budget of £340,000, vired from the existing Raven's Court capital budget.

2. Background

- 2.1 In February 2015 Cabinet approved the appointment of contractors to provide an urban and rural grass cutting service through a tendered contract, rather than the existing in-house provision, which provided a net saving of £132k of MTFs savings for the Authority.
- 2.2 In January 2024 Cabinet approved a report seeking approval for officers to work towards reintroducing the in-house delivery of urban and rural grass cutting.
- 2.3 On 24 September a report was presented to Cabinet proposing that a budget of £340,000 be included in the Capital Programme, with funding vired from the existing Raven's Court capital budget.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Officers have reviewed a number of potential ways forward for the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Services.

- 3.2 Officers have provided regular updates to the Cabinet Member Communities and the Leader.
- 3.3 Work has already been undertaken with the Job Evaluation team and, subject to their review, recruitment of staff for the service could commence in the autumn. Recruitment would take place in two stages, the first stage being autumn 2024 and the second stage being spring 2025.
- 3.4 Work has been undertaken with the procurement team in relation to purchase of required equipment. It is currently considered that scope does not exist for equipment already owned by the Council to be used for the delivery of a new, additional in-house service as well as existing in-house service delivery.
- 3.5 It is currently understood that, for required equipment to be available from the 1 March 2025, orders via the agreed route will need to be placed by 30 September. It is proposed that the required procurement process commences with an intention of placing required orders by 30 September.
- 3.6 Alongside this, previously identified works required at Bryncethin Depot are to commence in autumn 2024.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment Template has been completed and a summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is outlined below in respect of the proposal:

- Long-Term: The provision of an in-house grass cutting provision enables flexibility in service provision and planning for the longer term.
- Prevention: In-house provision means that the level of service can be more flexibly adjusted which provides better control of delivered service.
- Integration: Improving control of the overall grass cutting provision will benefit communities in the effective management of green spaces.
- Collaboration: In-house provision of rural and urban grass cutting will take into account working with internal partners such as highways in delivery of the service and prioritisation of provision as required.
- Involvement: In terms of the project, internal stakeholders will be part of the process of assessing the management of rural and urban grass cutting and the outcomes being sought.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service will deliver what is considered to be a balanced approach to health and safety, finances, biodiversity and aesthetics.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding issues as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 In reviewing options, officers currently estimate the set-up capital requirements associated with the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service in-house to be £340,000.
- 8.2 No budget exists within the Green Spaces and Bereavement Services department for additional capital items associated with the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service in-house.
- 8.3 It has been identified that capital resources to the value of £446,000, currently allocated to Ravenscourt in the Capital Programme, are now no longer required for the purpose originally intended.
- 8.4 It is proposed that £340,000 of the £446,000 be vired to support the estimated costs associated with the delivery of the Urban and Rural Grass Cutting Service in-house.
- 8.5 A decision is required at this time due to the reported lead in time of the equipment required to deliver the service in-house.
- 8.6 It was proposed to Cabinet on 24 September 2024 that approval be given to the proposed amendment to the Capital Programme and agree that a report be presented to Council to consider the proposal to amend the capital programme.
- 8.7 It is therefore proposed that Council, subject to Cabinet having approved the report of 24 September 2024, agree an amendment to the Capital Programme to incorporate a capital budget of £340,000, vired from the existing Raven's Court capital budget.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is proposed that Council agree the proposed virement of £340,000 in the Capital Programme for the delivery of Urban and Rural Grass Cutting in-house with funds being vired from the existing Ravenscourt Capital Programme budget.

Background documents

None