

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 25th FEBRUARY 2016

REPORT ON: REVIEW OF THE GARDEN MAINTENANCE SERVICE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT NO: 48-2016

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the outcome of the review into the delivery of the existing garden maintenance service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that approval be given to the proposal as set out within this report for the provision of the Garden Maintenance Service.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Costs in relation to Council and Housing Association tenants will be recharged to their respective landlord totalling £235,779. The costs associated with the recharge to the Housing Revenue Account of £175,000 will be met from efficiencies within the 2016/17 HRA Budget.
- 3.2 The implementation of these proposals will generate additional income of approximately £287,000 in 2016/17 and £338,000 in 2017/18 and beyond.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Garden Maintenance Scheme is a service offered to citizens who are unable to continue to maintain their gardens due to their age or disability. The service is provided free of charge to the majority of applicants and this is based upon a level of means testing.
- 4.2 The service is currently offered to all citizens including council tenants, tenants of Housing Associations or private landlords as well as owner occupiers. All citizens qualifying for the scheme receive a level of basic garden maintenance to ensure their gardens are maintained in a reasonable condition; however it is not a fully comprehensive gardening service.
- 4.3 There are currently 1,397 gardens included in the scheme. 1,246 receive a free (means tested) service. 870 gardens are either council or housing association owned while the remaining 376 are private individuals. The remaining 151 pay for the service. For the purpose of this report those clients who currently pay for the service have not been included in any of the financial costings as they are self-funding and this service would continue to be offered in the future.
- 4.4 There are currently 16 staff and 8 vehicles engaged in undertaking the Garden Maintenance Scheme and they generally operate in teams of two. Much of the maintenance work is seasonal, although a level of preparation work is undertaken over the winter months. The net cost to the council in delivering the scheme is £340,000 per annum.
- 4.5 This is a non-statutory service and there are a number of different approaches taken by other local authorities across Scotland to the provision of Garden Maintenance services. A 2014 survey of other authorities was undertaken and the results provided in Appendix 1. Responses were received from seventeen authorities and are summarised as follows:

- Provision of GM service - 82%

- Provision of GM service to non-council tenants - 47%
- Free/means tested service to council tenants - 53%
- Free/means tested service to non-council tenants - 24%

4.6 Of those authorities that provide a garden maintenance service there are a range of charging policies applied and details of these are given in Appendix 1. These policies range from completely free to full re-charge, some apply means testing whilst some do not and some charge owners whilst others do not.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 It is proposed that:-

- The costs of the service in relation to Council tenants and Housing Association tenants are recharged to their respective landlords.
This proposal will deliver an income of £235,770 based on an individual charge for a garden of £271 multiplied by the number of gardens 870.
- A charge will be levied to all other recipients of the free service and will be phased in over a 2 year period. Work will be undertaken to develop a social enterprise as an alternative option for those service users.
- Continue to deliver a service to those individuals who pay and seek opportunities to grow this market.

6.0 LEVY CHARGE DIRECT TO HOUSING ASSOCIATION/COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES HRA

6.1 At the present moment the service is delivered at no charge to Housing Associations and Council tenants. Currently the total number of gardens maintained for Housing Associations and Council Housing tenants totals 870 at a cost of £235,770.00.

7.0 PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS WHO CURRENTLY RECEIVE NO CHARGE

7.1 There are 376 private individuals who currently receive a free service at a cost of £101,896.

It is proposed to commence charging for this service from April 2016 and in order to reduce the impact, that the charges are introduced over a two year period. The proposed charges are maximum charge equivalent to £2.60 per week over a 52 week period from 1st April 2016 and which will rise to £5.20 per week from 1st April 2017. This will generate additional income of £50,835 in 2016/17 and an additional £50,835 in 2017/18.

7.2 As a further measure to reduce the charge impact, it is proposed to develop a partnership with a social enterprise who would take on the future delivery of the garden maintenance service for those non paying clients. Informal meetings have been held with the Network Manager from the Dundee Social Enterprise Network (DSEN) and it is clear that there may be an interest in this project. The development of this partnership would require to be considered in due course.

8.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. An Equality Impact Assessment is attached.

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services, Head of Democratic and Legal Services and the Dundee Social Enterprise Network have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

Elaine Zwirlein
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

Gary Robertson
Head of Environment

10th February 2016

Garden Maintenance Schemes – Scottish Local Authorities

Local Authority	Garden Maintenance Service	Private Owners Included	Free Service		Annual Charge
			Council	Non-Council	
Aberdeenshire	Yes	No	No	n/a	£75
Angus	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Argyle and Bute	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Clackmannanshire	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	n/a
Dundee	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	* Full recharge
East Ayrshire	Yes	No	No	n/a	£30
East Renfrewshire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Edinburgh City	Yes	Yes	No	No	£50/160
Falkirk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Fife	Yes	No	No	n/a	£41
Moray	Yes	No	Yes*	n/a	* Unknown
Orkney	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Perth & Kinross	Yes	No	No	n/a	£62
Renfrewshire	Yes	Yes	Yes*	No	£205
South Ayrshire	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	£235
South Lanarkshire	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	£375
West Lothian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	* £50-£100

* Means tested - charge applied if tenant not in receipt of benefit

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Part 1: Description/Consultation

Is this a Rapid Equality Impact Assessment (RIAT)? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is this a Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Date of Assessment: 28/01/2016	Committee Report Number: 48-2016
Title of document being assessed:	REVIEW OF THE GARDEN MAINTENANCE SERVICE
1. This is an new policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed (If yes please check box) <input type="checkbox"/>	This is an existing policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed? (If yes please check box) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Please give a brief description of the policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed.	The Committee report proposes a change to current Garden Maintenance provided to qualifying residents free of charge. The service to Council and Housing Association tenants will be met by the landlord. Others will pay directly.
3. What is the intended outcome of this policy, procedure, strategy or practice?	To continue to deliver an effective service for residents and to mitigate the impact on the existing impact users.
4. Please list any existing documents which have been used to inform this Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.	
5. Has any consultation, involvement or research with protected characteristic communities informed this assessment? If yes please give details.	Comparison with other local authorities in terms of whether they provide this non statutory service, and if this is provided free of charge.
6. Please give details of council officer involvement in this assessment. (E.g. names of officers consulted, dates of meetings etc.)	Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator. Gary Robertson, Head of Environment Rod Houston, Operations Manager
7. Is there a need to collect further evidence or to involve or consult protected characteristics communities on the impact of the proposed policy? (Example: if the impact on a community is not known what will you do to gather the information needed and when will you do this?)	The intention is to continue to consult with disability and affected groups in order to assess impact.

Part 2: Protected Characteristics

Which protected characteristics communities will be positively or negatively affected by this policy, procedure or strategy?

NB Please place an X in the box which best describes the "overall" impact. It is possible for an assessment to identify that a positive policy can have some negative impacts and visa versa. When this is the case please identify both positive and negative impacts in Part 3 of this form.

If the impact on a protected characteristic communities are not known please state how you will gather evidence of any potential negative impacts in box Part 1 section 7 above.

	Positively	Negatively	No Impact	Not Known
Ethnic Minority Communities including Gypsies and Travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3: Impacts/Monitoring

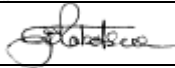
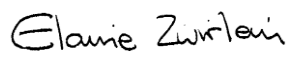
<p>1. Have any positive impacts been identified?</p> <p>(We must ensure at this stage that we are not achieving equality for one strand of equality at the expense of another)</p>	<p>We expect Housing Associations to support the continuation of the service for their tenants.</p>
<p>2. Have any negative impacts been identified?</p> <p>(Based on direct knowledge, published research, community involvement, customer feedback etc. If unsure seek advice from your departmental Equality Champion.)</p>	<p>By working in partnership with Dundee Social Enterprise Network, it is hoped that the charges for those still seeking to have their garden maintained, will be as low a cost as possible.</p>
<p>3. What action is proposed to overcome any negative impacts?</p> <p>(E.g. involving community groups in the development or delivery of the policy or practice, providing information in community languages etc. See Good Practice on DCC equalities web page)</p>	<p>By working in partnership with Dundee Social Enterprise Network, it is hoped that the charges for those still seeking to have their garden maintained, will be as low a cost as possible.</p>
<p>4. Is there a justification for continuing with this policy even if it cannot be amended or changed to end or reduce inequality without compromising its intended outcome?</p> <p>(If the policy that shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination you must stop and seek legal advice)</p>	<p>The policy will ensure equality and fairness across all tenures.</p>
<p>5. Has a 'Full' Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?</p> <p>(If the policy is a major one or is likely to have a major impact on protected characteristics communities a Full Equality Impact Assessment may be required. Seek advice from your departmental Equality lead.)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>6. How will the policy be monitored?</p> <p>(How will you know it is doing what it is intended to do? e.g. data collection, customer survey etc.)</p>	<p>The scheme will continue to be monitored and the Council will continue to work in partnership with both Dundee Social Enterprise Network and the community.</p>

Part 4: Contact Information

Name of Department or Partnership	Neighbourhood Services, Dundee City Council
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Type of Document	
Human Resource Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy/Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Change Papers/Local Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidelines and Protocols	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Manager Responsible		Author Responsible	
Name:	Elaine Zwirlein	Name:	Gary Robertson
Designation:	Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services	Designation:	Head of Environment
Base:	Neighbourhood Services 3 City Square, Dundee DD1 3BA	Base:	Neighbourhood Services 3 City Square, Dundee DD1 3BA
Telephone:	01382 434538	Telephone:	01382 436894
Email:	elaine.zwirlein@dundeecity.gov.uk	Email:	gary.robertson@dundeecity.gov.uk

Signature of author of the policy:		Date: 10 February 2016
Signature of Executive Director/Head of Service:		Date: 10 February 2016
Name of Executive Director/Head of Service:	Elaine Zwirlein	
Date of Next Policy Review:		