

Shaping the Council 2015-16 and beyond: Savings Business Case

Business Case Title	Restructure and review of all grounds maintenance operations		
Revision No:		Date:	01 July 2014
Lead Director	Mike Heath		
Lead HOS			
Critical friend/Exec Bd			
Business Case Author	(if different to HOS) Daren Spring		

Section 1: Summary

Savings Proposal

Major reduction in the current levels of grass cutting frequencies and other grounds maintenance activities across the borough on all non-housing land.

Strategic rationale

Saving will be achieved through the reduction of frequencies and withdrawal of services. The table below provides details of proposed levels of service reductions required to achieve savings targets.

Area of activity	Current outputs/frequencies	Proposed outputs/frequencies
Play Areas	74 sites	10 sites
Grass cutting in parks, open spaces, verges, cemeteries and all other non-housing land	Monthly cuts between April and September	Two cuts in 2015/2016. Reducing to one cut per annum thereafter.
Coalhouse Fort and Langdon Hills	Managed country parks with SSSI sites Educational and community events	Unmanaged open spaces No events
Outdoor sports	52 pitches provided for a range of summer and winter sports	Sports provision stopped.
Winter shrub maintenance	Annual programme of shrub and tree management in parks and open spaces and along cycle paths	Emergency response only to health and safety risks
Floral plantings	Seasonal displays in town centres	No floral planting

Approximate Cost Savings

15/16 - £330k 16/17 - £991k total £1.321m

Timescales

Activity	Timescale
Introduce area based working; reduce the frequency of grass cutting, shrub pruning and hedge cutting on non-housing land.	Dec 2015
Further reduce frequencies in all areas, stop all outdoor sports.	March 2017

Risks /Consequences

- Increased grass heights in parks and open spaces may render the areas less usable and less attractive to residents. Numerous studies have shown the importance of green spaces to both physical and mental health. The positive impacts of the parks etc may be lost as they become targets for vandalism and potentially fly tipping.
- The programme of introducing gym equipment to parks will be reversed. As these items are heavily used, there may be an impact on overall health and being for residents.
- The height of the grass may cause litter to collect, dog fouling will be difficult to remove and it may attract adders to these sites.
- There will be different heights of grass cutting within parks, highways land, private housing estates and housing land.
- Shrub areas will become over grown and tired looking.
- Play provision will be reduced. Children in parts of the Borough may no longer have a site readily accessible to them.
- The successes achieved in creation and maintenance of SSSI sites and habitats for rare bees, bats, butterflies and orchids will cease entirely.

Mitigation

Moving to a delivery model incorporating areas-based teams and increasing the amount of maintenance carried out on a reactive (rather than scheduled) basis should provide a degree of mitigation of the impact, but a reduction in front-line capacity of circa 50% will inevitably result in a significant deterioration in the appearance of the Borough and the usability of parks and open spaces.

A strong programme of community involvement could assist in the maintenance of some areas.

Self managed sports provision may enable residents to still play sports in certain areas.

Section 2: Finance, savings and costs

Financial summary

General Fund budget 2014-15

	Staff £000s	Premises / Transport £000s	Supplies/ Services £000s	Direct Payments £000s	Third Party Payments £000s	Total Expenditure Gross £000s	Income £000s	Net Expenditure £000s
2014/15	2,145.7	1,797.2	288.8	1,557.2	46.5	5,835.4	-2,577.4	3,258.0

Staff Related savings

Current number of posts (FTE and headcount)	94.3 FTE
---	----------

Number of posts to be deleted (FTE and headcount)	42.3 FTE and headcount	
Amount of salary saving (inc on-costs)	15 / 16	£ 284K
	16 / 17	£1,138.9K

Non- Staff Related savings	
Premises and buildings (inc utilities)	
Transport	22 vehicles
	15 / 16 £ 45.6K
	16 / 17 £182.5K
Supplies and services	
Other (please specify)	

Third Party Related savings/income	
Commissioning/contracts	
Charges to the HRA/DSG/PHG <i>(NB can be negative)</i>	
Increase fees & charges	
Grants/additional funding streams	
Other (please specify)	

Benefits – non financial

Costs & Resources to deliver the savings	
Direct costs	
Redundancy costs	Not quantified
Accommodation costs	
Procurement and/or Legal costs	
Other HR costs	
Other (please specify)	Losses on vehicle and plant disposals – Not quantified Removal and disposal of play equipment – Not quantified. Removal and disposal of parks litter bins and other furniture no longer being emptied/maintained – Not quantified

Section 3: Impact/Consequences of proposal – not covered in financial section

Impact on Corporate Priorities/objectives/ performance targets/standards

Priority 1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity	
Priority 2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity	The reduction in service levels may have the impact of discouraging investment and economic regeneration within the Borough.
Priority 3. Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities	The reduced levels of maintenance and degradation of parks and open spaces may have the unintended consequence of undermining pride and respect amongst residents of the Borough.
Priority 4. Improve health and well-being	Decommissioning 80%-90% of play sites will reduce opportunities for children to take exercise. Restricted access to parks areas no longer maintained to acceptable standards will reduce public outdoor leisure activities. Reduced access to outdoor sports pitches will limit opportunities for organised team exercise (i.e. football, rugby etc).
Priority 5. Protect and promote our clean and green environment	Grass cutting and general grounds maintenance frequencies across the Borough will be significantly reduced. The work to provide habitats for flora and fauna and to maintain accessible green spaces within the Borough will cease. This priority will no longer be supported through Council activity.
Well-run organisation - financial & governance; staff; customers	

Impacts on partners

The reduced levels of grounds maintenance may render Thurrock a less attractive prospect for partners to engage with Thurrock in the future.

Impacts on customers / community and equality/diversity implications

The reduced levels of grass cutting and grounds maintenance may render Thurrock a less attractive prospect for investment and business. There may be an unintended consequence in terms of reduced visits to retail areas and a less vibrant housing market.

As these services are for all residences each day of the week, all will be affected.

Has an EqlA been undertaken?

YES / NO

Date:

Other impacts/implications

Reduced levels of grounds maintenance in parks may cause residents to not want to use the parks if they are unattractive and unkempt places. There will be less space for recreational activities. If grass will be cut on a when required basis there will be inconsistencies across the borough in the height of the grass.

With the scale of the reduction in team size the capacity to respond to complaints and services requests via "My Account" will be limited.

Section 4: Risks and Mitigation

Delivery risks

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Rating	Management or Mitigating Action
Timescale – it may not be possible to reduce operational capacity to the required level by December 2014.	2	2	4	Increased level of support from HR
Public response – residents' reaction to the proposed changes in service levels is likely to be critical and un-sportive.	4	3	12	Communications campaign. Support from Corporate centre in establishing strong community volunteer groups to undertake some of the maintenance work.

Service risks

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Rating	Management or Mitigating Action
The parks and open spaces will look unkempt, with longer grass and increased weed levels. This may give rise to public health risks and accident claims against the Council.	3	3	9	Disclaimer notices in high risk areas where reduced maintenance is to be carried may help to limit the Council's public liability. Equipment in play sites no longer maintained will be removed to reduce injury risks and claims.

For information on the ratings criteria guide, please see <\\Thurdata01\data\THURROCK\EXCHANGE\ROM>

		4	8	12	16
Likelihood		3	6	9	12
		2	4	6	8
		1	2	3	4
					Impact

Section 5: Assumptions, Dependencies & Exclusions

Timeframes Assumptions/ Dependencies/Exclusions

There is an assumption that staffing and vehicles levels can be decreased within the timeframe set for this saving.

Benefits Assumptions/ Dependencies/Exclusions	The cost of redundancies and losses on asset (vehicles & plant) disposals is not reflected in the savings figure.
Costs Assumptions/ Dependencies/Exclusions	
Other/ General Assumptions/ Dependencies/Exclusions	There is an assumption that in decreasing the service levels and resource numbers that the saving will be achieved, and that additional service requirements will not be placed on the operational teams There is a assumption that the Service will no longer have capacity to respond to complaints within the corporate targets.

Section 6: Stakeholder Engagement Requirements

		Approximate timelines
Staff/Unions NB. Services should not be undertaken consultation with staff in isolation – all such activity should be co-ordinated through Jackie Hinchliffe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussions on area based working to start in September 2014, with staff consultation from November 2014.
Portfolio Holders/Members NB. Services should not be undertaken consultation with staff in isolation – all such activity should be co-ordinated through Directors Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	October 2014
Partners NB. Services should not be undertaken consultation with partners in isolation – all such activity should be co-ordinated through Directors Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	October 2014
Residents/Public NB. Services should not be undertaken consultation with staff in isolation – all such activity should be co-ordinated through Directors Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other – please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Section 7: Any other comments to support savings proposals