

Update on Grounds Contract in Wickhambrook 2020 - 21

The Estates Committee reviewed the grounds contract for 2021-22 at its March meeting and resolved to appoint R.H.Landscapes & Maintenance Services Ltd for the current financial year (Min. 21.03.09.2 refers).

The quotes considered were, as far as possible, like for like, based on the understanding of the frequencies of cutting undertaken during the previous contract.

The first cut took place in April, and it has been acknowledged that there were some issues to be resolved, relating to:

- Access to gated areas
- Collection of grass cuttings in some areas
- Level of cuts

all of which have been discussed with the contractor following a site visit with the Clerk in late April. A number of adjustments to the contract were agreed as a result, including

- The inclusion of strimming of the small meeting green at no extra cost
- The exact delineation of the nunnery green cut
- That leavings at the Bury Road pocket park would be collected, and the area outside the fence strimmed; and
- That cutting of the old cemetery would be delayed by two to four weeks to allow for the spring flowering bulbs to set their seed

Due to an unusually wet and warm spring, the grass grew at speed, and it has become apparent that the smaller greens, which were contracted for eight cuts a year, are likely to need more frequent cutting in the spring months. Accordingly, the clerk asked the contractor to increase the frequency of cuts to bi-monthly for the six weeks to end July when the situation would be reviewed.

The clerk also continued to liaise regularly with the contractor throughout June and July.

Over the June and July, a number of issues have been resolved, namely:

- New keys cut for access on to All Saints Churchyard
- Confirmation from West Suffolk and Havebury as to the extent of the areas which they cut
- An additional cut and collection on the Recreation Ground and Six Acres arising from a poor third party cut (it has not been possible to establish who was responsible)
- A special cut of the verge opposite Croft close to facilitate access for a resident with mobility problems (verge the responsibility of Suffolk County Council).

In addition, the former contractor has advised that greens were cut 16 times annually, and the inclusion of some sites which the clerk had not been made aware of.

Accordingly, the clerk will now be able to fine tune the specification with respect to the 2022/23 season, for which quotes will be invited in early September. This revised specification is attached as **Appendix A** to this report, and updated plans at **Appendix B**.

A copy of the existing contract is attached as **Appendix C** to this report.

Some additional adjustment to the existing contract will also need to be made to reflect the proposed new specification and take account of the additional cuts which have been flexed in over the early spring months of this year. This is summarised at **Appendix D** to this report.

Finally, additional quotes have been sought to address some areas of work not included in the original specification, summarised below.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there were issues and complaints relating to the quality of the cuts in the early part of the season, recent comments relating to the work have been positive and area summarised below:

Re Coltsfoot Green:

"As an aside the contractor has cut exactly the right area and made a good job of it".

Re Wickhambrook Cemetery:

"Cemetery is looking really smart these days"

Re All Saints Churchyard:

"the team are taking the work seriously, with better equipment and more men, sometimes they go a little fast"

The anticipated increase in cost over quote (£7,400) for the current financial year is £1535.00 (total £8935.00) against a total budget line for the grounds contract approved in January of £11,922.00 (all prices quoted ex VAT).

Further quotes from the contractor have been obtained with respect to:

- 1) The outer banks of the recreation ground & six acres to strim 4 times per year @ £220.00 per visit;
- 2) To cut the hedges around the bowling green, along the track next to the rec, the beech hedge near the car park and the hedge around the cemetery would be at a cost of £395.00 + VAT per cut and I would recommend at least 2 cuts per year.

Recommendation

1) To authorise the cost of:

- a. **Strimming of the outer banks of the recreation ground & six acres a maximum of two times in this current financial year at a cost £220.00 per visit;**
- b. **To cut the hedges around the bowling green, along the track next to the rec, the beech hedge near the car park and the hedge around the cemetery a maximum of two times in this current financial year at a cost of £395.00 + VAT per cut; and**

2) To refer an item to the next meeting of the parish council to authorise the anticipated increase on the contract to reflect the changes to cutting frequencies (£1535.00 plus VAT) and adjust the due payments schedule accordingly; and

3) To approve the proposed revised specification for cuts and proposed areas set out at Appendices A & B, (subject to any changes agreed at the meeting) in advance of quotes being requested for the grounds contract for financial year 2022/23.

Appendix A

Revised Specification for Grounds Contract

Plan Reference		No. Cuts	Collect Arisings	Hedges	Leaf Clearing	Notes
	Greens					
1	Attleton Green	16	No			leave small triangle at rear for wildflower colonisation
2	Coltsfoot Green	16	No			strim down into all culverts
3	Meeting Green Verge & Triangle	16	No			small triangle must be trimmed to ensure visibility
4	Nunnery Green Verges	16				verges uneven, take time in dips to obtain even cut
	Cemetery & Churchyard					
5	All Saints Churchyard	16	No			Only in Churchyard, not verges or car park
		16				cut hedges both sides on road & one side elsewhere. Delay cuts where bee orchids indicated, or to allow spring flowers to set seed
6	Cemetery and Memorial Garden			yes	yes	
	Play Areas					
7	Bury Road Play Area	16	yes		yes	
8	Cemetery Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	16	yes		yes	
	Six Acres & Recreation Ground					
9	Bowling Green (in and outer banks)	16	yes		yes	not the bowling green itself
10	Tennis Courts surrounding Grass	16				
11	Inner banks of Recreation Field and Six Acres	16				
12	Recreation Ground & Six Acres	16		yes		cut one side
	Other					
13	Footpaths per plan	8				
14	Outer banks of Recreation Field and Six Acres	2				strim/brushcut - note steep banks
15	Village Hall	16		yes		

Appendix D

Proposed Adjustments to Existing Contract

	Cost per cut	Contract Cuts	Contract Cost	Flex to 16 Cuts	Revised Cost	Cuts to date	Anticipated Year End Cuts	Anticipated Year End Costs	Cost to Flex to 16 and 12 cuts	Notes
All Saints Churchyard	£ 85.00	8	£ 680.00	16	£ 1,360.00	4	14	£ 1,190.00	£ 1,020.00	
Attleton Green	£ 35.00	8	£ 280.00	16	£ 560.00	4	14	£ 490.00	£ 420.00	
Coltsfoot Green	£ 35.00	8	£ 280.00	16	£ 560.00	4	14	£ 490.00	£ 420.00	
Meeting Green Verge	£ 35.00	8	£ 280.00	16	£ 560.00	4	14	£ 490.00	£ 420.00	
Nunnery Green Verges	£ 40.00	8	£ 320.00	16	£ 640.00	4	14	£ 560.00	£ 480.00	
Tennis Courts surrounding Grass			see below					£ -		
Cemetery and Memorial Garden - grass, hedges and leaf clearing	£ 100.00	16	£ 1,600.00	16	£ 1,600.00	6	16	£ 1,600.00	£ 1,600.00	
Bowling Green (in and outer banks), leaves & debris collected	£ 45.00	16	£ 720.00	16	£ 720.00	4	14	£ 630.00	£ 720.00	
Bury Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	£ 35.00	8	£ 280.00	16	£ 560.00	5	15	£ 525.00	£ 420.00	
Cemetery Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	£ 35.00	16	£ 560.00	16	£ 560.00	6	16	£ 560.00	£ 560.00	
In and outer banks of Recreation Field			see below					£ -		weren't included in the weren't included in the contract
Other hedges (cut one side)			see below					£ -		
Recreation Ground & Six Acres (including in and outer banks of recreation field & tennis courts surrounding grass)	£ 150.00	16	£ 2,400.00	16	£ 2,400.00	6	16	£ 2,400.00	£ 2,400.00	Outer banks have not been cut and quoted separately
Village Hall			n/a							
Footpaths per plan			n/a							
Total	£595.00		£ 7,400.00		£ 9,520.00			£ 8,935.00	£ 8,460.00	

Anticipated increase in cost over quote for 2021.22 is £1535.00