

Grounds maintenance contract to be brought back in house

3 years ago



At a meeting of Full Council on Wednesday 12 October, Hastings' borough councillors have voted in favour (16 for, 11 against) to bring the grounds maintenance contract back in house from 2023.

The council currently uses a contractor, idVerde, to deliver grounds maintenance service, but agreed the move to bring the service back in house from the end of the current contract in November 2023.

By bringing the management of grounds maintenance back in-house, the council will have more control over the work done by the team and will be able to be more flexible about the level of work than a fixed, outsourced contract.

Cllr Julia Hilton (Green), lead councillor for climate change and natural environment, said: "This has been a long-term project for the council. Bringing this service back in house means we have better control over the work being done, and the level of service we receive. We will also be better able to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies, increase community engagement and address relevant skills and education gaps, as well as having the flexibility to think differently on how we want to manage our green spaces into the future."

Reviews of the current contract and work done to look at potentially extending the current contract has shown that costs have risen dramatically to levels that are unaffordable for the council.

The in-house service will cover the council's statutory and health and safety responsibilities, including grave digging, grass cutting, litter picking and bin emptying. There will also be the opportunity to look at the current Hastings Direct Service Operation which operates the street cleansing contract and make potential efficiencies and improve the resilience of both services to help reduce the need for agency staff.

The council will also be able to work more closely with community groups and to work with expert organisations including Groundwork and Plumpton College to support future careers in ground maintenance and similar subjects. This would be alongside building and developing in-house skills and local knowledge of our green spaces, so we can work with the community to co-create our vision of Hastings as a Garden Town.