

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Subject: Grounds Contract Renewal – Briefing Note

Report Author: Andrew Briggs, Head of Operations

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1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to make current members aware of the process that will need to be followed in advance of the renewal of the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing arrangements in July 2027.

This report is for briefing and early awareness, and to ensure that members understand the key stages, governance requirements and indicative timetable so that preparatory work can continue in advance of formal consideration by the new Council following the May 2026 election.

2. Background

The Council is responsible for grounds maintenance and street cleansing services on land within the parish through deed and lease arrangements with Swindon Borough Council. The current contract covers horticultural services, cleansing and general maintenance, sports pitch maintenance, play area inspections and ad hoc project work. The current service has been delivered through an external contractor since 2020.

The future delivery of these services is a significant strategic and financial matter.

The main delivery models available to the Council are:

- bringing the service fully in-house;
- adopting a hybrid in-house / external model;
- undertaking a full tender for an external provider.

Any future decision will need to take account of service quality, affordability, flexibility, procurement requirements, transition planning and TUPE implications.

3. Why the Report Is Being Brought Forward

Although the contract renewal point is not until July 2027, the lead-in time for review, member consideration, procurement and mobilisation means that preliminary work must begin well in advance.

Before any future route is selected, the Council will need to review its specification, mapping and service data to ensure that pricing and service expectations are based on accurate and current information.

Where a new provider or a different delivery model is pursued, transition planning will be required. TUPE processes may require a minimum 90-day period, and potentially 120 days where consultation is required. A full tender exercise may also take between 3 and 6 months, depending on the route taken.

4. Effect of the May 2026 Election

A key issue for the Council is that the local election will take place in May 2026. As a result, while preparatory work can continue beforehand, it is anticipated that the updated options appraisal and any recommended procurement route will be presented to the new Council from June 2026 onwards.

This will allow newly elected members to:

- review the service delivery options available;
- understand the financial and operational implications;
- determine the preferred direction of travel; and
- authorise the next stage of procurement or implementation activity.

This approach ensures that current members are aware of the process and timetable, while the formal strategic direction is determined by the incoming Council.

5. Issues That Will Need to Be Addressed Before a Decision Is Taken

Before the matter returns for formal decision, the following work will need to be completed.

5.1 Specification Review

Maps, site plans and GIS information will need to be reviewed to ensure they are current and accurate. The specification should also be supported by digital mapping and five years of delivery data. This is important both for clarity of service scope and for obtaining realistic pricing.

5.2 Performance and Quality Requirements

Clear KPIs and SLAs will need to be established for any future delivery model, including response times, frequency of service, resident satisfaction and environmental impact measures.

5.3 Indicative Pricing

The 2024 appraisal set out the broad cost implications of each option. Based on the figures available at that time:

- a fully in-house model was estimated at around £1.05 million per year;
- a hybrid part in-house model was estimated at £750,000 to £1 million per year;
- a multi-contractor model was estimated at £800,000 to £1.3 million per year; and
- a full retender was estimated at £800,000 to £1.5 million per year.

These figures will need to be refreshed before any report is brought back for decision, but they illustrate the scale of the issue and the potential impact on the Council's budget and precept. These decisions will also need to be considered alongside the Council's wider financial commitments, including existing borrowing.

5.4 Procurement Route

Depending on the option pursued, procurement may be undertaken through a full tender process or through a compliant framework such as ESPO.

5.5 TUPE and Mobilisation

TUPE is likely to be a material consideration in any change of delivery model, particularly where there is a transfer from the current contractor. A detailed transition plan would be required, particularly for in-house, hybrid or retendered options.

6. Indicative Timeline

The indicative timeline is as follows:

May to June 2026

- continue preparatory work on the specification review;
- review mapping, schedules, service standards and delivery data;
- refresh financial assumptions and delivery options; and
- consider procurement route options, including whether a framework approach is appropriate.

May 2026

- local / Parish election.

From June 2026 onwards

- present the updated options appraisal and procurement route to the new Council for consideration.

August / September 2026

- anticipated commencement of procurement activity, depending on the direction agreed by the new Council.

Early / Mid 2027

- procurement, evaluation, award, mobilisation and any TUPE / transition activity.

July 2027

- new contractual or operational arrangements to be in place.

This timetable is intended to allow sufficient time for member decision making, procurement, consultation and mobilisation ahead of the renewal date.

7. Key Risks of Delay

If preliminary work is not progressed in advance of member decision-making, the Council may face:

- reduced time to undertake a robust procurement exercise;
- reduced time to complete consultation and TUPE requirements where applicable;
- increased transition and mobilisation risk;
- limited opportunity to revise the specification and secure best value; and
- greater risk of service disruption or short-term decision-making close to expiry.

8. Recommendation

Members are asked to **NOTE**:

1. the forthcoming contract renewal timetable for July 2027; and
2. the need for the updated options appraisal and procurement route to be presented to the new Council from June 2026 onwards.