

Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 29th February 2024

Wards: All

Subject: Idverde Grounds Maintenance Performance Update 2023-24

Lead Director: Dan Jones Executive Director Environment, Civic Pride and Environment and Regeneration.

Lead member: Cllr Natasha Irons Lead Member Environment, Civic Pride and Environment and Regeneration.

Contact officer: Andrew Kauffman Head of Parks Services Merton.

Recommendations:

- A. Members are asked to note the content of the report and provide officers with any comments regarding their experience, or reports they have received relating to Park and Playground Maintenance and Cleansing, Highways Verge Maintenance, Cemeteries Maintenance and Burial Management, Sports and Allotment Bookings
 - B. Members are asked to note the additional partnership contract support that IdverdeUK have provided Merton council during 2023-24
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

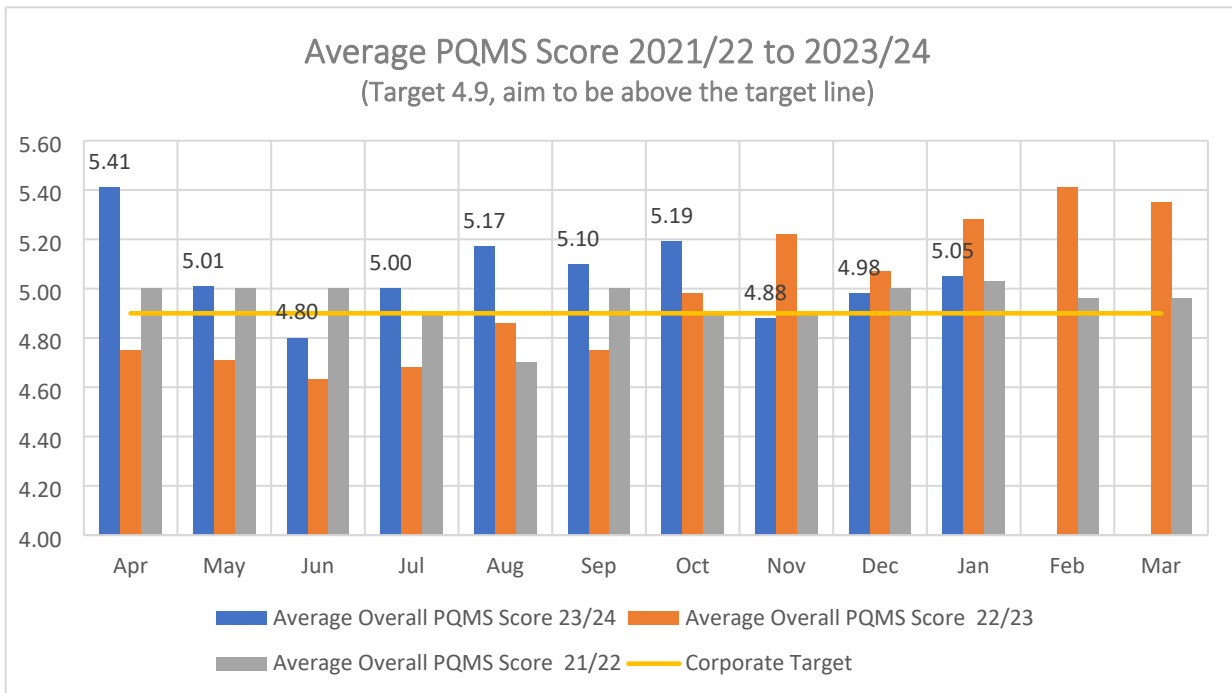
- 1.1. The report is intended to provide members with an update on the performance of the core grounds maintenance service over the last twelve (12) months that is shared on the monthly performance dashboard.
- 1.2. Members should also note Appendix 2 IDV Performance Report Q3 23-24 covering the period September - December 23, that was shared with SCOSP in January 2024. The council will share Performance Report Q4 23-24 covering the period January - March 2024 in April 2024 to the next available SCOSP meeting.
- 1.3. The report will also summarise any additional above core contract activity and Social Value delivered by the service provider IdverdeUK working in partnership with Council (Greenspace and other council service teams) on biodiversity, capital works, events, Friends of Parks supported activities and other service related activities.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The performance of the parks ground maintenance contract operated by our service provider IdverdeUK is monitored contractually through the agreed Performance

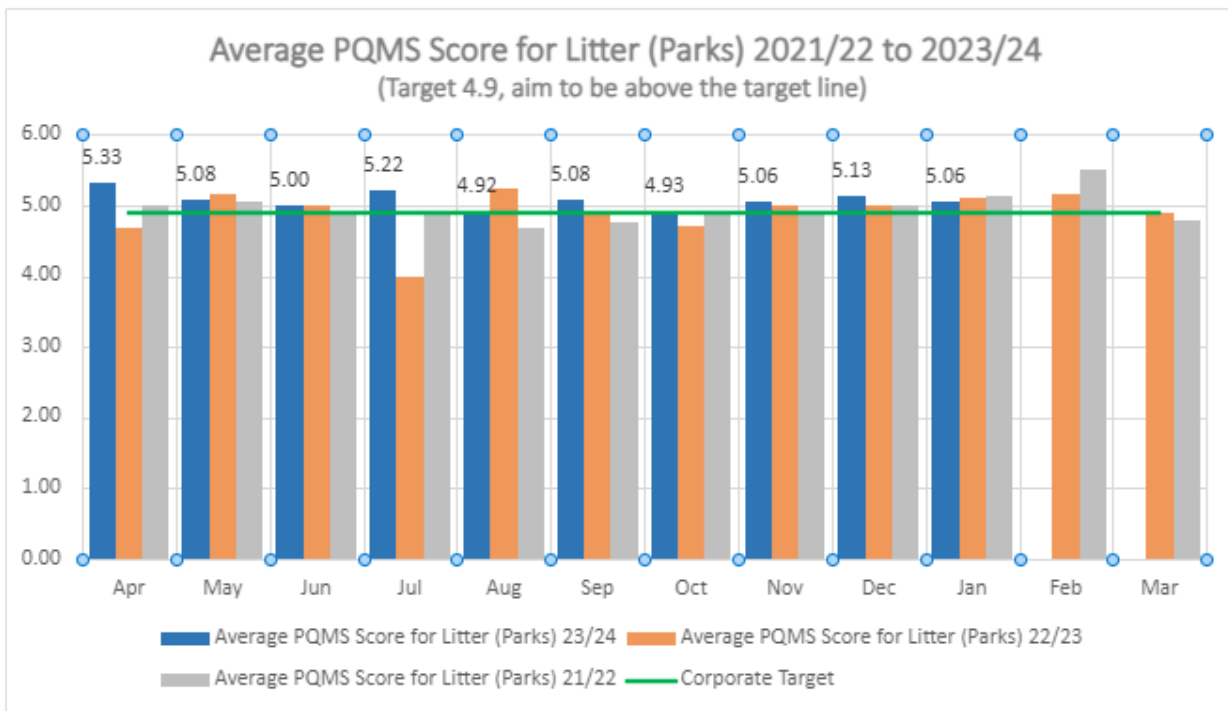
Quality Management System (PQMS). The below graph demonstrates the overall performance of the contract in the last calendar year for Overall Parks PQMS made up from scores for Grass, Flower Beds, Hedges, Street Furniture, Playgrounds, Sports, Outdoor Gyms and Buildings.

- 2.2. The below graph shows these overall parks PQMS scores as compared to 2021/22 (Grey) 2022/23 (Orange) and 2023/24 year to date (Blue).
- 2.3. The below graph shows a positive trend for the year to date 2023-24 with only 2 out of the 12 monthly PQMS scores falling below the 4.9 Corporate Target and 6 out of the 12 months to date scoring above 5 for overall parks management operations.



Graph 1: PQMS OVERALL PARKS SCORE PERFORMANCE 21/22 – 22/23 – 23/24

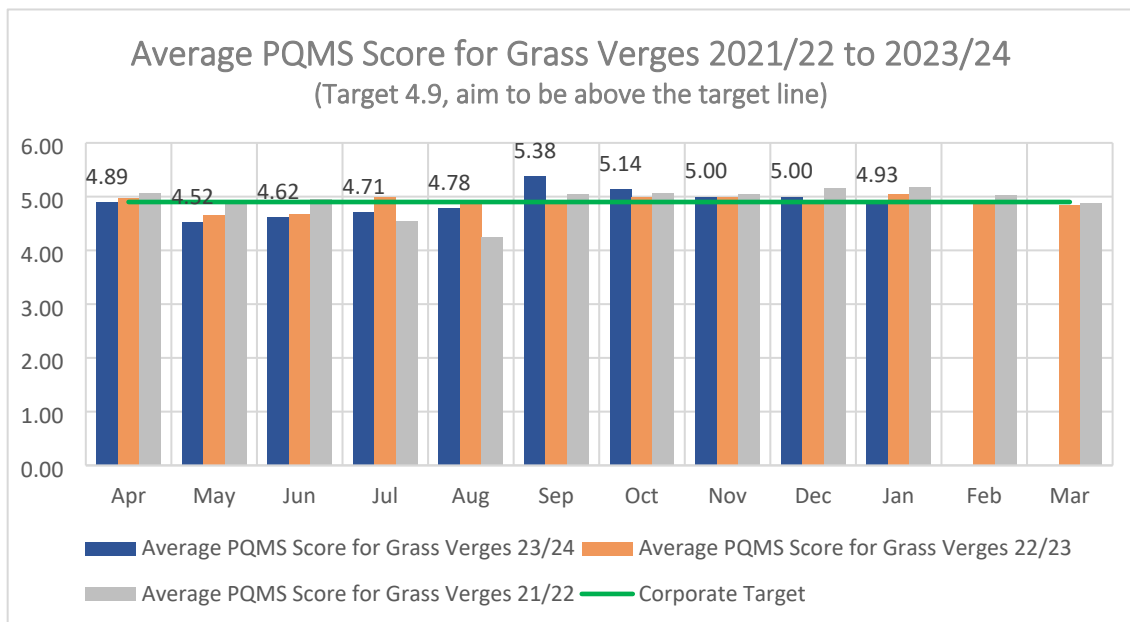
- 2.4. The graph below show the contract PQMS score for Overall Parks Litter 2023-24 year to date.
- 2.5. Since April 2023 IdverdeUK parks litter teams have performed well across the year meeting or exceeding the corporate target of 4.9 in 8 out of the 10 months to date. The poor month in August and October 2023 can be attributed to increased incidents of park litter during the School Summer Holiday periods.
- 2.6. Capital investment in phasing out the traditional open litter bins with Merton parks and replacing them with enclosed parks bins in some of the higher footfall parks has reduced the numbers of incidents of litter being pulled out of park bins by birds and foxes. The council will increase the bin replacement in 2024-25 financial year to expand the numbers of enclosed bins.



Graph 1: PQMS PARKS LITTER PERFORMANCE 21/22 – 22/23 – 23/24

- 2.7. Graphs below show the contract PQMS score for Verge Maintenance 2023-24 Year to date.
- 2.8. Since April 2023 IdverdeUK grass verge maintenance has either met or exceeded the Corporate Target in 5 out of the 10 months year to date which is lowest performing PQMS indices o contract.
- 2.9. Linked to 2022-23 adoption of the SLWP Wildways Verge Maintenance Program [WildWays: boosting biodiversity on grass verges | Merton Council](#) with 11% of the councils highways verges being adopted as Wildway’s The councils neighbourhood inspectors have rigorously implemented the 100mm contract verge grass standards in the remaining 89% of the boroughs Highway Verges.
- 2.10. During the Q4 period this year IdverdeUK have carried out all seasonal recruitment early to ensure the 3no Highways Verge Team are at full strength and all the winter servicing is complete so teams can commence grass cutting in early March 2024, with additional staff resources available from tractor teams tasked with general waste removal from Merton Allotments which will be carried out sub-contract resources.
- 2.11. Machinery and labour resource deployment during Q3 period meant the last grass cuts on sites was carried out later in October 2023 so PQMS performance was stronger than in previous years.
- 2.12. The council have been working with IdverdeUK and its partners at RSPB along with the councils Corporate GIS Team to map the Biodiversity Grass Management on the boroughs verges and update the Councils commitments under the Wildways Program around frequency of framing cuts and encouraging Citizen Science Monitoring of these verges working with SLWP Partners from the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames and colleagues from Sustainable Merton and Climate Action Teams to

record the impact of species diversity on Wildways with the reduced maintenance frequency.



Graph 3: PQMS VERGE MAINTENANCE 21/22 – 22/23 – 23/24

CEMETERIES MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

2.13. Idverde Cemeteries management and maintenance performance in 2023-24 across Merton's 4no Cemeteries Merton and Sutton Joint Cemeteries, London Road, Gap Road and Church Road Cemetery has shown consistent financial performance being 4.0% ahead of income targets . Which is a positive result considering massive market pressures from the Cremation and Budget Cremation sectors

2.14. Idverde Staffing profile at all 4no cemeteries has been consistent this year which has meant a significant improvement in cemeteries grounds maintenance. This service improvement has been supported by a new cemeteries supervisor being recruited along with contract support being provided by a specialist funeral services grave digging contractor who supports the local teams particularly at MSJC at times of peak demand on the service.

2.15. Idverde contract has also supported a number of specialist projects in the boroughs cemeteries during 2023-24 including the creation of a 200 linear meter Yew Boundary Hedgerow on Garth Road as well carrying out arboriculture surveying and carrying out both reactive and planned trees works at all 4no of the boroughs cemeteries in 2024. This was particularly important during the recent spate of storm events in the UK from Storm Henk, Isha, Jocelyn and Kathleen which saw very little impact across the boroughs

SPORTS LEISURE MAINTENANCE, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

2.16. Idverde Sport and Leisure performance in 2023-24 to date continues to see positive financial growth between April-December 2023 being 18.00% ahead of budget.

2.17. Idverde have supported the council with a number of wider external funding projects working with sports governing bodies including

- **Lawn Tennis Association:** National Park Tennis Court Improvements which saw 47 courts across 11 park locations upgraded [Tennis courts | Merton Council](#)
- **England Athletics:** Improvements to Wimbledon Park Athletics Track and achieving Track Mark Status (Partnership with Hercules Athletics and Athletics England)
- **Surrey County Cricket Board:** Improvements to artificial wickets on existing Park Cricket Tables.
- **Bowls England:** New Rainbird Irrigation System at John Innes Park Croquet Club.
- **Wimbledon Park Lake Safety Project:** Integrate the existing Crazy Golf concession at Wimbledon Park into the Lake Safety Project incorporating the De-culverted brook into the Crazy Golf
- **Wimbledon Park Beach Volleyball:** Worked with Beach Volleyball UK to improve the legacy 2012 Beach Volleyball Courts in Wimbledon Park
- **Themed Paddling Pools:** Bringing 5 of the 6 council Paddling Pools up to date with accessible ramps and themed tactile surfaces and accessible surrounds

All projects with a focus on improving and maintaining existing court infrastructure



Themed Paddling Pools



Crazy Golf and Beach Volleyball Upgrades Wimbledon Park



LTA Tennis John Innes, Garfeild Park NCIL, Colliers Wood MUGA Strategic CIL

ALLOTMENT MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- 2.18. Idverde allotment management operation has performed reasonably well during 2023-24 season.
- 2.19. There has been a greater emphasis in the past 2 years on the management of allotment waiting lists, which has been achieved through closer working with Allotment Reps and carrying out site inspections and issuing non cultivation notices where necessary.
- 2.20. The council and Idverde also carried out a program of plot clearances during winter 2022 and spring 2023 which generated a further 60no plots across 7 council managed allotments.
- 2.21. The council and Idverde will be reviewing the [Merton Allotment Guidelines](#) which were last reviewed in March 2021 as we seek to encourage more sustainable allotment gardening with a greater emphasis on reducing water usage and rainwater harvesting, increasing the green waste composting on allotments and discouraging bringing general waste on site.

Allotment Site	Total Plots on site	Total Vacant plots	Total on waiting list	Comments
Brooklands Avenue	19	0	10	Tree works due to commence soon to pollard or remove Poplar trees along the drainage area behind the allotment. Arranging plot clearance to allow access.
Cannizaro Park	42	4	33	4 vacant plots. One 6 rod plot split in 2 to reduce waiting list
Cottenham Park	296	31	60	15 plots given up and 9 unpaid after invoicing. IdverdeUK will be arranging a group viewing of vacant plots and update records accordingly. JKW on site which will be treated once gully cleared which is currently with Merton Council Legal Team
Durnsford Road	61	6	42	
Eastfields Road	58	7	36	
Effra Road	12	0	10	
Eveline Road	28	0	23	
Haslemere Road	6	0	4	
Havelock Road	89	11	43	JKW on site which is being treated regularly as part of the IdverdeUK Invasive Species Management plan.
Phipps Bridge Road	80	8	16	
Thurleston Avenue	44	8	20	

Table 1: Council Managed Allotment Waiting Lists and Vacant Plots Q3 23-24

IDVERDE GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

- 2.22. The council and Idverde Horticulture Development Team continue to manage a positive working relationship with the Ministry of Justice Probation Services Team across Merton with 4no static projects placed at Abbey Rec, Nelson Gardens, Wimbledon Park and Kendor Gardens supporting the associated Friends of Parks Groups on these sites to support a range of gardening, footpath and infrastructure projects which to date this year has generated 4,483 hours of volunteer support for these groups. The numbers are down due to the reduced incidents of crime and probation time allocated which is a positive trend overall.
- 2.23. Linked to the Greenspaces Teams attendance at the Safer Merton Partnership we have been able to establish a Mobile Probation Team that are able to work on remote sites without welfare and toilet facilities which are provided in the Ministry of Justice Mobile Welfare Van. The mobile team are planned to progress a project at Rowan Recreation Ground in March 2024 and will allow the Greenspaces Team to work closer with Friends Groups to priorities projects for this group.

PROJECT	TOTAL HOURS CREDITED										
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	
Abbey Rec	149	82	96	126	27	28	160	137	105	59	
Nelson Gardens	166	191	64	164	174	110	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	
Wimbledon Park	132	162	150	76	95	83	99	182	165	112	
Kendor Gardens	82	112	76	80	120	110	93	173	69	55	
TOTAL	529	547	386	446	416	747	352	492	339	229	
GRAND TOTAL										4,483	

TABLE 2: MINISTRY OF JUSTICE PROBATION SERVICES HOURS YEAR TO DATE 2023-24

- 2.24. Finally linked to supporting the boroughs readiness for Biodiversity Net Gain [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) the council are working with Idverde Horticultural Development Team and Nature Positive Communities Partnership [RSPB and idverde Creating Nature Positive Communities - idverde](#) to ensure the councils designated Nature Reserves and their Management and Maintenance Plans are suitably updated.
- 2.25. During 2023, the RSPB Ecology Team have carried out 3no Phase 1 Habitat Survey Reviews of Merton Green Walk, Cherry Wood Nature Reserve, and Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields Millennium Wood, including updates to the management and maintenance plans for these sites. Further reviews will continue in 2024-25, including Morden Park, Canons Hill Common and Fishponds Wood and Lower Wandle,
- 2.26. The council along with service providers at Idverde UK Operations and Horticultural Development Team have attended all recent Independent Merton Greenspaces Forum Meetings in person to discuss council and contract progress and answer any questions from the Friends groups in attendance.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. As this is a performance review of the current service provider arrangements, alternative options have not been considered

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purposes of this report

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix 1: Q3 Performance Report submitted to SCOSP January 2024 covering Q3 Idverde performance

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Progress on re-procurement of the GM Contract - [Cabinet report 19 Feb 2024 \(merton.gov.uk\)](#)
- 12.2. Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (19th Jan. 2023) - [Committee report \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Department Approval	Name of Officer	Date of Comments
Legal	N/A	
Finance	N/A	
Executive Director	Dan Jones	23/02/24
Cabinet Member	Cllr N. Irons	23/02/24