

## **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Supplier Engagement – Grounds Maintenance & Associated Parks Operations**

### **Introduction**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) is looking to invite interested parties to take part in a supplier engagement process regarding the provision of grounds maintenance and associated parks services in Tunbridge Wells. We would welcome interest from small to larger companies, and specialist suppliers.

### **Context**

The grounds service consists of the maintenance of public land, including but not limited to maintaining green open spaces, play areas (including inspections), public parks and gardens, six of the Council's sites are recipients of Green Flag awards and two Green Heritage awards (Dunorlan and Grosvenor & Hilbert) the Council have held these awards for over 10 years.

See [Parks and play areas \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](http://tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

Emptying of litter bins (within green spaces), cemeteries both closed and operational, crematorium grounds, working with and supporting friends' groups, volunteers and other key stakeholders, sports grounds (Football, Rugby and Cricket) including a county standard cricket ground and a sand based all-weather pitch (See [Sport grounds and pitches \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](http://tunbridgewells.gov.uk)), grass cutting of paths in allotments, ad-hoc clearance of fly-tipped rubbish and graffiti removal based on schedule of rates.

The service includes the supply and maintenance of seasonal bedding and floral displays in the Tunbridge Wells town centre and other Council owned buildings. Other than a small number of grassed areas located within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells the focus of the work will be within Tunbridge Wells town. The current contract allows for routine work based on a performance specification and non-routine work via a schedule of rates. We wish to consider a hybrid specification with grass cutting on a frequency base with all other operations on a performance basis. Please note that there is no guarantee or automatic right to non-routine ad-hoc work.

The Council wishes to explore options for recycling rubbish and litter collected from waste bins located in our parks and wishes to understand the contractor's approach to the recycling of waste and other environmental issues in the delivery of the service.

Significant depots/storage/welfare facilities of varying sizes may be included in the contract and office space including large secure compound is available located at North Farm Depot TN2 3EE. The Contractor will be expected to enter a lease on the terms set out by the Council for all sites it wishes to use. The paragraphs below provide an overview of the types of open space and landscape components within the current Contract and details of the principal sites within the current Contract. There will always be an element of non-routine works that will be required based on a schedule of rates and according to budget.

**Parks and Gardens** The principal parks and gardens are Dunorlan Park, Calverley Grounds (town centre park) Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, Hawkenbury Recreation Ground and St Johns Park.

Public facilities available in the five main parks include children's play areas, tennis courts, outdoor gym areas, a large area for events located in Dunorlan Park, refreshment kiosks (leased to external providers) and a boating lake (boating leased to an external provider in Dunorlan Park) The lake is a registered reservoir. The parks are popular sites with local communities and visitors from outside the area with Dunorlan Park receiving around 500,000 visits per year. All five main parks have active Friends groups who take a keen interest in the maintenance and development of their sites. The Council wish to maintain all our parks to the Green Flag Status with a view to increasing biodiversity and reducing our carbon footprint from the delivery of the service (See our net zero commitment [Corporate Carbon Descent Plan - TWBC Climate Action](#)) To achieve this, a dedicated site-based member of staff may be desirable in each of the five main parks.

Play Areas - All play area repairs are carried out on a non-routine basis as identified during routine inspections, this may be by a specialist company or the Council's own contractors. The contractor will be required to carry out routine maintenance and cleansing of children's playgrounds and 'kick about' areas. Play areas include skateboard parks, basketball hoops, multi-use games areas and play equipment usually contained within a fence. These play areas are sometimes stand-alone facilities but are more often part of a larger green space. Play areas are located in the five main parks and 14 other playgrounds and open spaces within the town.

Sports Grounds – Tunbridge Wells benefits from a number of sports clubs who play at a high level in their respective leagues including Hockey, Rugby, Cricket and Football. The Nevil ground located in Nevil Gate is a Kent Premier League standard ground, occasionally hosting White-Ball and similar level cricket and some Kent County Cricket Cub events. The Hockey club play on the recently refurbished all weather pitch which is a dual-purpose pitch used for football as well as Hockey. A number of grass football pitches are provided in varying sizes to accommodate adult and junior football, these are in either dedicated sports grounds or public parks.

Arboriculture work is currently carried out on an ad-hoc basis with an external contractor. However, the Council wish to explore options for including the service within the grounds maintenance contract but reserve the right not take the option.

Cemetery maintenance – The cemetery is situated in Benhall Mill Road and has been open for burials since 19<sup>th</sup> Century The cemetery has both Traditional and Lawn sections and includes the crematorium grounds. The service includes grave digging and the preparation of graves prior to the service, acting on instruction from Bereavement Services, including the preparation of graves for Muslim burials. On average there are 120 burials per year including the interment of cremated remains. Most graves are dug by light excavators, but some hand digging may be required on the older sections. The service will include the maintenance of the cemetery and crematorium grounds to a high horticultural standard. The maintenance and cleaning of buildings located in the cemetery and crematorium grounds will not be included in the contract.

Other open spaces - There are 14 open spaces and small play parks which will include the inspection of play equipment and safety surfacing, grass maintenance, the clearance of litter, path/road sweeping and emptying bins from all park areas.

Water courses and drainage ditches. A small stream runs through Grosvenor and Hilbert Park with culverts which will require attention during the contract e.g. litter and debris clearance. There are several drainage ditches which will require annual maintenance to keep them clear of debris and litter.

The council would like to understand what would be achievable and the estimated cost based on the following priorities:

Essential items • Play area inspections -anticipated cost to deliver. • Grass cutting in all areas -anticipated cost. • Hedge cutting -anticipated cost. • Emptying of litter bins -anticipated costs Litter picking • Herbicide treatments using nonchemical treatments • Cemetery maintenance and grave digging • bin emptying and litter picking. Lower priority • Seasonal bedding • Shrub beds/perennial planting • Water courses/ditch maintenance • Hard surface sweeping/blowing.

Objective 1) The Council wishes to engage with the market to establish the current issues and opportunities facing the market in the delivery of these services.

Objective 2) The Council wishes to market test the possible procurement options and packaging to gain a better understanding of the following:

- i. How service providers might approach delivery of the service if it was split into smaller lots or tendered as a whole?
- ii. Any other models that you think may suit this type of contract, along with any examples on how this may work in practice.

Objective 3) The Council is keen to understand the contractor's risks and identify opportunities to mitigate them in the specification and conditions of contract where possible to obtain greater value for money and price certainty.

The information will then be considered by the council and key stakeholders with a view to developing a specification for a formal tender in October. Timescales below are provided for indicative purposes but are subject to change at the Council's discretion.

The Council's contract with its current supplier ends on 31 December 2026. The contract covers Royal Tunbridge Wells town only and some grass cutting in the parish areas. The contract consists of:

- 5 large main parks (up to 7 football pitches within the parks and 1 all-weather pitch)
- Cemetery and Crematorium grounds including grave digging operations.
- 2 closed cemeteries
- 14 small parks and recreation areas
- Up to 4 dedicated sports grounds including a cricket grounds.
- Estates grass cutting
- Minimal floral displays within the parks including baskets and troughs around the town.
- 10 Allotment sites
- Arboriculture and tree planting works
- Handyman service

## Market Engagement

### Indicative Timetable

Event	Expected Date
Issue Supplier Engagement documents	W/C 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Return of supplier responses	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2024
Assess information received	TBC
Supplier engagement meetings	TBC
Stakeholder Engagement	TBC
Finalise Tender Documentation	October 2024
Obtain Political approval for specification	December 2024
Release Opportunity	Q1 2025

### **Submission requirements**

Interested parties are invited to submit the following information but may submit additional information that they feel relevant. A review of the service has been undertaken, with the aim of providing more 'flowing and growing' environment, and in doing so maximise the carbon reduction and other resources benefits. This is reflected in our contract documents, that did, we are very keen to understand your approach to our flowing & growing process:

- Your company's approach to environmental matters:
  - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has set a target of operating as net carbon neutral by 2030. Please explain how your company can assist the Council to meet its target and in doing so improve our flowing and growing environment.
  - Details of any accreditation such as ISO 14001
  - Please include any specific initiatives being undertaken to reduce carbon emissions of your company and your suppliers.
- As with other local authorities Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is facing financial challenges over the coming years. Can you outline any potential efficiency savings to reduce costs while delivering a service that meets the expectations of our Councillors, sports clubs, key stakeholders, and visitors to our parks. Please also identify opportunities where the Council can draft the specification and contract conditions to assist in the reduction of contractor risk.
- Your approach to training and apprenticeships
- Your approach to working in partnership with Local Authority clients.
- Your approach and track record in health and safety
- Your views on what would be appropriate periods of time for the Invitation to Tender and for contract mobilisation.
- How you would engage and develop with local friends' groups and sports clubs in the delivery of the services
- Your preference on whether this should be a single or multi lot tender.
- Your views on the term of the contract
- Locations in which you are currently undertaking contracted work in the Southeast.

Interested parties are invited to submit their responses to the bullet points above, in either Microsoft Word or PDF format. Responses should be limited to 500 words per bullet point for the purposes of this exercise.

**Your expression of interest must be made via Kent Business Portal, and the information requested above must be provided by 12:00pm on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 in order to be eligible for assessment. Information must be submitted via the messaging facility within the Kent Business Portal.**

The information will then be considered by the council and key stakeholders with a view to developing a specification for a formal tender in Quarter 1 of 2025.

At the conclusion of the engagement process, the Council will determine the most appropriate route forward, but makes no guarantee of any future tender or contract award for this service.

Participation in this supplier engagement process does not grant any advantage in any future tender process, nor does it guarantee acceptance of any future tender you may submit.