

CABINET – 24 OCTOBER 2023

QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

QUESTION FROM MR TYERS TO COUNCILLOR T GILLARD

I am concerned about the amount of money being spent on 'Coalville Special Expenses', especially relating to Grounds Maintenance. The Grounds Maintenance budget for this year, excluding Broomleys Cemetery, is £296,600. Since only £4,000 is allocated to flower bed planting and £27,000 to grass cutting, I decided to submit a Freedom of Information request in July this year (ref no 1125) to try to establish where the remaining budget allocation was being spent. I have been refused this information and have just been given a list of functions without any monetary allocation.

Could the portfolio holder please explain why the information was refused and the justification for spending over a quarter of a million pounds annually, on the remaining functions (as listed in your reply to my FOI request) - trimming bushes, clearing litter, spraying, street furniture, various inspections/tests, locking/unlocking and line markings?

REPNSE FROM COUNCILLOR T GILLARD TO MR TYERS

Whilst we apologise to Mr Tyers for not providing the level of detail he requested, I can assure him that this is due to us not having that required level of detail. The cost to Coalville Special Expenses of the Grounds Maintenance Function doesn't have a specific financial amount attached to each area or task, it is based on the number of staff that have been historically allocated to delivering the service. Currently this is just slightly over four full-time members of staff, although the fluidity of the service dictates that this isn't always the same members of staff. The average hourly rate for a Grounds Maintenance Operative is £49.30 and, therefore, the total cost for these staff over the year is £160,160, and this covers their salary, national insurance and pension contributions. In addition to this, there are Operational Overheads which total £56,350 and this cost covers elements such as vehicle costs, operational equipment, fuel, servicing, tipping fees, staff training, personal protective equipment, and a contribution towards the running of the depot at Coalville Park which includes elements such as business rates, electricity, service contracts, refuse collection and insurance.

On top of these are two further costs. The first is a cost of £32,630 Management and Admin Overheads which is a contribution towards the cost of the Parks and Open Spaces Team Leader, the Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer, the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, and the Parks and Open Spaces Admin Assistant, to cover a proportion of their salaries, national insurance and pension contributions. The final element is a cost of £47,460 towards Service Management Costs. This is a contribution towards the salary, national insurance and pension contributions of the Leisure Services Team Manager, the Head of Community Services, and the Strategic Director, as well as a contribution towards the other internal Council services that support the delivery of the service such as Human Resources, Payroll, Finance, Communications, Information and Communication Technology, Legal Services, and Customer Services in line with normal council accounting practises.

The total of all these elements is £296,600.

Whilst we are not able to allocate costs to the specific functions across the Coalville Special Expense area or sites, it should be noted that these costs are based on the amount of time the operatives spend on site at a total cost of £160,160 a year, and do not include the £56,350 cost for Operational Overheads, the £32,630 for Management and Admin Overheads, or the £47,460 for Service Management Costs. The £160,160 covers the functions as previously highlighted to Mr Tyers and include grass cutting, play area

inspections, locking and unlocking of sites, statutory checks, emptying of bins, tree surveys, litter picking, weed spraying, shrub maintenance, hedge maintenance, the management of street furniture, line marking of pitches, the maintenance of the bowls green at Scotlands Recreation Ground, tree works, the management of sports pavilions, routine maintenance, and other related tasks.

This work covers the sites also highlighted to Mr Tyers of which there are 21. Whilst costs across all sites will differ due to the nature of them, this equates to an average of £7,627 per site per annum. Considering a Grounds Maintenance Operative's average hourly rate of £49.30, this equates to an average site visit of just over six hours per month for two members of staff, or 90 minutes weekly. This covers the main weekly tasks of emptying bins, litter picking, undertaking visual inspections of play area equipment, undertaking statutory inspections, and undertaking routine maintenance which, including travel time, would normally take two members of staff at least 1 hour. This obviously doesn't take into account some sites which are visited more frequently than weekly and the other highlighted tasks which are undertaken less frequently but take considerably longer to deliver.