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| COMMITTEE: | BEST VALUE MANAGEMENT |
| DATE: | 21ST NOVEMBER 2001 |
| SUBJECT: | BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SEAFRONT GARDENS |
| REPORT OF: | DIRECTOR OF TOURISM AND LEISURE |
| Ward(s): | All |
| Purpose: | To advise Members of the progress made on the Best Value Plan |
| Contact: | Gareth Williams, Parks and Gardens Manager, telephone 01323 415281 or internally on extension 5281 |
| Recommendations: | That Members note the attached progress report |

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| 1.0 | <u>Background</u> |
| 1.1 | The Best Value Review of Seafront Gardens was reported to the Tourism, Leisure and Amenities Scrutiny Committee on the 19 th March 2001 and approved by Cabinet on the 18 th April 2001. |
| 1.2 | The main recommendations include continued customer surveys, a one-year extension to the existing contract, interpretation signage, sustainable planting designs, inclusion of more fragrant plants and the creation of a Seafront Gardens Focus Group. |

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| 1.3 | The benchmarking group, Hastings Borough Council, Thanet District Council and Shepway District Council has shown that the cost of the Seafront Gardens compares favourably with other providers although more work needs to be carried out to produce a model for 'like-for-like' comparison of costs with other Local Authorities. |
| 2.0 | <u>Progress</u> |
| 2.1 | Members are referred to the progress report based on the Best Value implementation plan (attached as Appendix A.) |
| 3.0 | <u>Consultations</u> |
| 3.1 | A survey is programmed for the Seafront Gardens every alternate year e.g. 2002, 2004. The first survey was carried out for the Best Value Review during summer 2000. |
| 4.0 | <u>Human Resource Implications</u> |
| 4.1 | All work is being programmed within existing available staff resources. |
| 5.0 | <u>Environmental Implications</u> |
| 5.1 | The planting of perennial displays will greatly improve the sustainability of certain areas and also reduce the use of both resources and materials in maintaining the areas. |
| 6.0 | <u>Financial Implications</u> |
| 6.1 | The evolving of seasonal bedding areas to perennial sustainable plantings will create some financial efficiencies. |
| 7.0 | <u>Summary</u> |

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| 7.1 | <p>Progress is being made in achieving a balance between seasonal bedding areas and perennial sustainable plantings whilst retaining Eastbourne's reputation for excellence in our seafront gardens.</p> <p>The management and supervision of the gardens is being challenged to determine whether more onus can be put on the contractors to both deliver and monitor the quality of the service and standards of work. Efficiency has been improved with a direct e-mail link to Brophy. There have been financial savings on the introduction of more perennial plantings improving the overall economy of the seafront gardens.</p> |
| <p>Gareth Williams</p> <p>Parks and Gardens Manager</p> | |
| <p>Background Papers:</p> <p>The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</p> <p>Seafront Gardens Best Value Review</p> | |
| gpw/Best Value Seafront Gardens 21.11.01 | |

Best Value Improvement Plan

| 1. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| | To programme regular recorded risk assessment inspections of the Seafront Gardens to provide a safe environment for Service Users | To provide a safe environment, regular monthly inspections are programmed and hazards rectified. | Monthly inspections programmed from April 2000 Parks and Gardens Manager/Contracts Assistant |

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| K | Regular monthly inspections are carried out and any potential risks prioritised for remedy to link with the Council aim of a safe place. | |
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| 2. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| The results of the Seafront Gardens Best Value Review are being integrated into management Service Plans | Service Plans being completed | Service plan completed February 2001 with links to Best Value Action Plan | Parks and Gardens Manager |

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| K | Current Service Plans fully linked to the findings of the Seafront Gardens Best Value Review. | |
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| 3. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To prepare the next contract in a less prescriptive manner | Draft specification being prepared currently | New Contract 1 January 2002 | Parks Development Manager |

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| J | The specification prepared for the next seafront garden contract is slightly less prescriptive but still not output or performance biased enough. | |
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| 4. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To specify quality assurance with more areas on the contract being 'self monitoring'. | Draft specification being prepared currently | New Contract 1 January 2002 | Parks Development Manager |

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| K | Initial discussions with our current ground maintenance contractor, Brophy, to agree and work to a single joint monitoring system and share data. Pro-forma of monitoring sheets agreed and to be trialled during November 2001. |
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| 5. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To investigate an external E-mail link to the contractor. | Draft specification being prepared currently | New Contract 1 January 2002 | Parks Development Manager |

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| J | External e-links to Brophy have been operational since May 2001 and greatly improved the efficiency of issuing works and two way reporting. |
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| 6. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To amalgamate all ground maintenance Best Value Reviews e.g. Seafront Gardens, Parks and Gardens | Parks and Gardens Best Value Review (Year 3) | 2003 | Parks and Gardens Manager |

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| J | The Parks and Gardens Best Value Review is due to commence in 2002 and now has a wider remit e.g. all Eastbourne's Parks and Gardens (except Seafront Gardens), Highway verges and amenity grass areas, Trees, Downs and Woodlands and Devonshire Park. |
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| 7. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To create a Seafront Gardens Focus Group | A specific focus group for the seafront gardens to be initiated | Focus group programmed for summer 2001 | Parks and Gardens Manager |

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| K | A Focus group is to be programmed for mid March 2002 with a wider remit to look into the seafront estate rather than just the gardens. | |
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| 8. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To create more fragrant/scented plantings as a result of the Seafront Gardens questionnaire | Modernise schemes from next planting season | New schemes from autumn 2001/winter 2002 | Parks and Gardens Manager/Contracts Assistant |
| K | Designs currently being worked upon to create more fragrance and scent within the seafront gardens. A partial re-planting of the Wish Tower moat is programmed prior to April 2002. | | |

| 9. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| Improve accuracy of benchmarking data to achieve total 'like-for-like' performance benchmarking targets | Local benchmarking group started and regular meetings programmed into the future | The first meeting was in August 2000. They are now programmed every 6/8 weeks. | Parks and Gardens Manager |
| K | There are regular meetings programmed with our benchmarking partners and a model for financial costings has been produced by Thanet District Council. Once agreed, this will provide 'like-for-like' performance data. | | |

| 10. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| | To code all orders to Corporate Aims to determine where key spending occurs within the Service | New system commenced for data to be collected | The system was implemented in April 2000. Figures reviewed quarterly | Parks and Gardens Manager |
| J | All orders have continued to be coded to the relevant corporate aims. | | | |

| 11. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To arrange regular surveys to determine user satisfaction and serve the community in providing a local, beneficial service. | First survey carried out as an integral element of Seafront Gardens BVR. Future surveys every alternate year. | Surveys Summer 2002 Summer 2005 | Parks and Gardens Manager |
| K | A survey of the Seafront Gardens will be programmed for summer 2002. | | |

| 12. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| To record all customer complaints and enquiries | Parks and Gardens system of recording data set up for all contract areas for future evaluation of problematic features/sites. | This system was implemented in April 2000. Results reported in existing monthly performance monitoring. | Parks and Gardens Manager |
| K | Ongoing, data being collated for all customer enquiries or complaints to identify any problematic areas within the Seafront Gardens. | | |

| | 13. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| | To reduce the areas of bedding and replace with sustainable plantings to support the Corporate Aim - A place for the future. | There will be an ongoing programme to reduce areas of bedding for initially 5 years. | Sustainable planting introduced June 2001 with 5% target reduction of bedding each year | Parks and Gardens Manager/Contracts Assistant |
| J | <p>A target was set of 5% reduction in seasonal bedding each year for the next five years. In year 1 (2001) 15.93% was achieved leaving 5% for 2003 and 4.07% for 2005. The year 1 schemes were the worst areas in terms of sustainability e.g. Devonshire Place (50% of roadside beds), Middle Parade and Western Lawns. All were prone to excessive drying out and theft. The Long Border, opposite Wilmington Square, has been modified due to the seasonal bedding not providing value for money i.e. the rear of the border could not be viewed as bedding from the pavement due to the raised beds.</p> | | | |

| | 14. Action | Implementation Plan | Implementation date | Officer responsible |
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| | To implement a programme of installing interpretation information as a result of the seafront gardens questionnaire | There will be an ongoing programme of installing interpretation information in relevant areas of the Seafront Gardens | Interpretation signs to be installed - 1 each year from 2001 to 2005 | Parks and Gardens Manager/In Bloom Co-ordinator |
| K | <p>Two seasonal interpretation signs were installed during summer 2001 for the Red Arrows carpet bedding display and the centenary of the submarine service. An interpretation panel has been produced to depict the main rock garden species grown within Eastbourne.</p> | | | |

J - Action completed

K - Action in progress

L - Action not started