

Cabinet – Supplementary agenda No. 1

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on:

Date: 22 September 2020

Time: 3.00pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Items

8. Medway Norse Update

(Pages
3 - 46)

For further information please contact Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer on
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Date: 16 September 2020

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CABINET

22 SEPTEMBER 2020

MEDWAY NORSE UPDATE

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rupert Turpin, Portfolio Holder for Business Management and Chairman of Medway Norse Board

Report from/Author: Phil Watts, Chief Finance Officer

Summary

This covering report represents a review of the performance of the Joint Venture from the perspective of the Council client for the first quarter of the 2020/2021 financial year. It is accompanied by an update on the Joint Venture's achievements and financial performance prepared by the Partnership Director at Medway Norse.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Review of the performance and financial position of the joint venture is a matter of Cabinet and there is a requirement to submit regular reports to Cabinet.
- 1.2 This report has been circulated separately to the main agenda, therefore the Cabinet is asked to accept this as an urgent item to enable consideration of the report at the earliest opportunity.

2. Background

- 2.1 In March 2013, Cabinet agreed for the joint venture (JV) company, Medway Norse, to be established for the provision of facilities management (FM) services from 1 June 2013. It was established to:
 - Provide services to the Council more efficiently, giving better value for money;
 - Grow the business through taking on external contracts;
 - Increase employment opportunities for local people.
- 2.2 In 2014, the joint venture also took on responsibility for the grounds maintenance contract and for an initial phase of school transport for children with special educational needs attending three schools (now five). In October 2019, Medway Norse took over responsibility for the waste collection and street cleansing activities, increasing the joint venture's gross turnover to over £25million per annum.

3. Governance

- 3.1 The Company's Board of Directors comprises three representatives from Norse Commercial Services and two from the Council. The Council has two representatives. An elected member, Councillor Rupert Turpin, who is Chair of the Board, and Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director Frontline Services. The Board is responsible for the overall performance of the joint venture.
- 3.2 There is also an Operational Liaison Board, which consists of representatives from Medway Norse and nine representatives from the Council.
- 3.3 Corporate client responsibility lies within a number of areas. Responsibility for the original facilities management core contract sits with the Head of Corporate Projects, whilst the greenspaces and environmental elements are managed by the Head of Environmental Services. Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport is under the School Admissions and Transport Manager.
- 3.4 Services provided by the joint venture sit within the portfolio themes of the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services and the Portfolio Holders for Children's Services (Lead Member) and Front Line Services.
- 3.5 These update reports comprise a covering report from the Council's corporate client, accompanied by an update on the joint venture's achievements and financial performance prepared by Andrew Mann, the Partnership Director at Medway Norse. As agreed, a "balanced score-card" of performance indicators has been included in the update report at Appendix 1.

4. Facilities Core Contract (from Head of Corporate Projects)

- 4.1 Medway Norse (MN) have been supporting Medway Council Survey Teams during the COVID-19 pandemic. Medway Council property Cell continue to be supported by MN with provision of signage and sneeze boards, sanitising equipment and paper towels.
- 4.2 MN have been very helpful and efficient ensuring we continue getting the buildings set up and open under very difficult circumstances. We note that we have found the response particularly helpful for special screens and getting the backup supplies out, as well as the mobilisation of their services. On all these matters MN have performed very well.
- 4.3 In June the outside Cafes received a good external clean ahead of the park cafes reopening, with the parks prepared for the public to enjoy.
- 4.4 In July we received special assistance with setting up the temporary reopening of the Old Vicarage for the Sunlight Centre alternate provision.
- 4.5 In August and into September MN continue their contribution to the Covid-19 building reopening response and are currently engaged with us in making buildings such as the Rainham Contact Point, St Georges, and the MN managed Community Centres compliant.
- 4.6 During the pandemic our property team with MN have taken the opportunity to investigate the problems at Gun Wharf of low water pressure. This

investigation and the works has been completed and the toilet pressure issue resolved. This will please all members of staff with the previous issues caused by poor and long waits between flushes now rectified.

- 4.7 Many services were/are impacted across the council due to the pandemic with staff being furloughed. This has of course affected MN staff as well. It has been really good to see the effort made to cheer up all made by MN staff with assistance and collaboration between our teams.
- 4.8 A great demonstration and collaborative team effort was in the public health stock management of care packages, which transitioned from Gun Wharf to St Georges centre for distribution to the public who were in need. MN canteen staff played an essential role in this activity.
- 4.9 The rainbow display in the canteen area supplied by the catering team demonstrated positivity in the midst of the current crises. These types of display are key to the overall staff wellbeing and contributes to the overall positive outlook that we all need.
- 4.10 The VE Day bunting was another example of MN working with the council in our remembering the positivity of our lives and the contribution and sacrifice of our ancestors in their darkest hour. This all helps to create a happier work place.
- 4.11 BRMF fund allocation is ongoing and allocated funds equate to approximate 50% of budget which is in line with where we need to be on a timeline programme review. Medway Council will be reviewing at the next Property Board and recommending the next tranche of FM works during the Covid-19 ongoing condition.
- 4.12 Senior Medway Norse managers have sat in on the Council's emergency Bronze, Silver and Recovery meetings that were conducted via "MS Teams" thus ensuring our service and operation continued over the pandemic and risks identified and mitigation put in place. MN contribution to this and recent emergency call outs has been exemplary.
- 4.13 The Health and Safety status shows no reportable serious accidents or injuries over the period.
- 4.14 This has been a successful period with profit greater than 107 % again projected.
- 4.15 The relationship between Medway Council Hard FM team and the JV MN team remains very high and is maintaining over the continuing COVID – 19 challenges where the Corporate Client has appreciated the help and support of the MN team.

5. Green Spaces (from Head of Environmental Services)

- 5.1 Medway Norse in partnership with Medway Council, manage the landscaping of the two country parks, 106 play areas, seven green flag sites, five cemeteries, crematorium grounds, a grave digging service and all the open spaces. They also manage the 72 sports pitches, grass bowling greens, grass

tennis courts, a Pit and Putt site at Snodhurst Bottom, all of Medway's grass verges and the 18,000 trees within the public realm.

- 5.2 This last year Medway Norse reviewed the equipment across the grounds services and new equipment was procured ready for 2020 growing season to enable Norse to introduce a more efficient grass and hedge maintenance regime. This included:
- 2 tractor attachments for cutting large open spaces offering greater capacity and more efficient service delivery
 - 1 cutting attachment for cutting hedgeways
 - 2 new tractors
 - 14 new ride on machines
 - 2 small tractors with cut and collect attachments to enable a wider programme for naturalised verges and enabling more in house meadow cutting.
- 5.3 Medway Norse continues to drive forward the service. Developments this year include further bulb plants along:
- A2 Rainham
 - Maidstone Road, Chatham
 - Pier Road verges
 - Kingsfrith Playing field
 - Extending Deanwood drive
 - Shorsted Way, Hempsted
- 5.4 A fantastic public response was received about the stunning bulb floral display in Rainham along the A2. Next year this programme will be extended to areas in Strood and Rochester.
- 5.5 The Tree Team continue to develop the planting of tree programme – with another 116 planted in the autumn 2019; so for the second year in a row equalling or exceeding the number of trees felled. Works have been completed along Hoath Way to remove old trees for safety and disease issues. This historically unfunded work has been undertaken by finding efficiencies in other areas, freeing up resources for delivery of maintenance along high risk high speed road sites.
- 5.6 Coppicing work was completed at the end of last year in Hempstead near Cobblestones. Engagement with the local community before works were undertaken resulted in no complaints received about the work being done. Further works are planned each winter season. This program was re-introduced in 2018 after training and upskilling the workforce to enable much of this program to be delivered in house when previously unfunded.
- 5.7 During the winter seasons the wardens at the Country Parks undertook various in-house maintenance projects to ensure the facilities were up to standard ready for Green Flag assessments and new spring season usage.
- 5.8 The country parks team have continued to develop their online presence with two Facebook pages set up for the Country Parks. These have been well received by the community with Capstone now reaching 1,744 followers, and Riverside 1,037.

- 5.9 Play areas continue to be refurbished where possible within external s106 funding restrictions. Inspections are undertaken monthly by internal staff and annually by a qualified independent assessor to ensure safe standards are maintained.
- 5.10 During this period, works have been undertaken to plan for the new naturalised verges that will be allowed to grow along some high speed roads and wide urban areas. This is part of the climate change and biodiversity agenda work to encourage more biodiversity in our verges. There is a growing swell of public support for our naturalised verge programme. Signs were due to be erected in June 2020 to highlight these areas.
- 5.11 At Cabinet in January 2020 it was agreed that the weed spraying programme would be dialled back within play areas and open spaces. This will also allow a one metre ring around tree bases to grow longer as part of the climate change and biodiversity work.
- 5.12 During the COVID crisis, the grounds team maintained parks grass cutting to keep this essential facilities open for the public as a lifeline for mental health. The kerbside grass cutting programme was slightly delayed but commenced in early May. Planting of formal beds started in May despite the crisis. The grounds team also supported the waste services at the start of the pandemic while new procedures were being developed.

6. Transport (from School Admissions and Transport Manager)

- 6.1 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Travel Assistance across Medway is provided to eligible children and young people in various different ways including solo transport, shared vehicles, cash allowance and personal travel budgets. The provision of transport (e.g. via taxi, mini-bus) is met by a number of different providers who all form part of the transport framework. The previous transport framework expired in July 2019 and a new framework was implemented from September 2019, following a rigorous procurement process. Since then, Norse has continued to play a major part in the transporting of SEND pupils to and from school transporting approximately 394 pupils every day from a total transported (shared vehicles) cohort of 1094.
- 6.2 Since the implementation of the new contracts in September 2019, the provision delivered by Norse has continued to improve and is operating to a good standard, highlighted by the continuous reduction in the number of incidents, customer queries and complaints. Since November, these rates have declined significantly with only two complaints received in December-March and a fall in incident numbers across a high number of routes. Some safeguarding concerns were raised in February and March however, and a high level of co-operation between Norse and Council operatives resolved these quickly.
- 6.3 Schools have a good working relationship with Medway Norse and communication with both schools and Council officers is at a high level, which has been highlighted during the Covid-19 crisis where transport has continued to be provided as necessary in challenging circumstances.

- 6.4 Medway Norse reacted to the COVID situation positively during the lockdown period and this has continued into the full return of pupils into September with all pupils requiring transport on Norse routes being appropriately transported to and from school.
- 6.5 The School Admissions and Transport Team will continue to work with Medway Norse to resolve any concerns raised by parents, so that the service delivered: a) meets the expectations of Medway Council, schools and families; b) focusses on the needs and best interests of the children and young people and; and c) is delivered in the most cost effective manner to ensure best use of public funds.
7. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) (from Head of Environmental Services)
- 7.1 The HWRC contract broadly consists of the following elements:
- The management of three HWRCs;
 - The haulage of all materials arising at the sites with the exception of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and household batteries, which are covered by Producer Compliance Schemes (PCS);
 - The marketing and sale of materials arising at the sites with the exception of residual waste, wood waste, and those detailed above;
 - A 50/50 risk share on all materials sold;
 - Achievement of a 60% recycling rate in Year 1, 61% recycling rate at Year 2 and 62% recycling rate for Year 3 onwards.
- 7.2 The main focus for the year was the implementation of the new entrance system following short notice KCC introduction of charges at their sites. This included:
- Successful implementation of the new ID check scheme and recording of postcodes for KCC recharge purposes;
 - Capital investment by Medway Council into the site entrance re-design programme for:
 - Changes to layouts of entrances to allow turning circles for vehicles to exit the sites safely if no ID was produced
 - Electric vehicle barriers
 - Meet and greet cabins
 - Employment of additional staff for the first few months while the new service settled in;
 - Continuation of staff training schemes;
 - Comprehensive communications plan.
- 7.3 Despite all of this work and the need for periods of site closure, the HWRCs continued to offer high quality recycling services for 30 different material streams.
- 7.4 Medway Council and Medway Norse have achieved a 60% recycling rate for the second contract year, only 1% below target and remaining the same as the Year 1 2017/18 rate of 60%.

7.5 The table below details the recycling performance (excluding rubble and hard-core) of the three HWRCs.

Contract year	Total tonnes	Recycled tonnes	Recycling %
Oct 2017-Sept 2018	22,341	13,341	60%
Oct 2018-Sept 2019	20,774	12,418	60%

7.6 During the COVID crisis, the three sites were shut for a period of 6 weeks following police advice on 'essential travel' and loss of a key material off-taker due to COVID closures of their facilities. Once Government guidelines on safe operating practices were issued, Hoath and Capstone were safely reopened on Friday 15 May 2020. After one day of excessive queues as staff and public settled into the new site operating rules and booking systems, the sites have been operating safely smoothly with minimal queues.

8. Waste Collection and Street Cleansing (from Head of Environmental Services)

8.1 A significant amount of work was put into the transfer of the weekly waste collection and street cleaning contract to Medway Norse with the new service commencing on 1 October 2019.

8.2 This work has included:

- A new street cleaning fleet (39 vehicles);
- Depot redesign at Pier Approach Road in Gillingham to house the daily operations of the collection and street fleet;
- New ICT systems for asset management and customer service requests has been developed in partnership with Medway Councils Environmental Service and ICT teams;
- TUPE transfer of the existing 271 staff from Veolia to Medway Norse.

8.3 The project was an excellent example of partnership work, across the Council and Medway Norse and it is through the success of the partnership that the transfer has been delivered seamlessly and on schedule.

8.4 Medway Norse are performing to a good standard. This is reflected in the number of service requests and corporate complaints received; remaining consistent for the time of year. The number of missed waste collections remains low compared to the number of collections that occur each week; over 341k collections of refuse, recycling and organic waste weekly. Medway Norse have carried out over 10 million waste collections since contract start which equates to only 0.056% of collections being missed. Additionally, Waste Services consistently receives one of the highest levels of corporate compliments, again showcasing the excellent service delivered by the teams.

8.5 The first efficiency that has been achieved with the cleansing services joining Norse, is street cleansing and grounds maintenance teams working with Medway Council to combine the cleansing and green space works. Due to the speed and volume of traffic on these roads additional traffic management is required to ensure the safety of the operatives whilst working. Combining both services has provided efficiencies and enabled a holistic provision of services. This means the main roads are litter picked, green space maintained and a final cleanse undertaken to remove grass cuttings, all the same time.

- 8.6 Street cleansing is performing to standard with the NI 195 results showing 97% of land found to be at an acceptable standard at the time of the inspection during quarter 4 of 2019/20, meeting the Council target.
- 8.7 Throughout the COVID crisis the service has maintained delivery with only three lost days of the organic waste service. The public support for the teams has been phenomenal with countless letters and messages of support for the work the teams have continued to in exceptionally challenging times. The street cleansing service has also been maintained with only a few days of lost time on scarab cleaning work when drivers were needed to support the collection services.
- 8.8 The bulky waste service was maintained with only the loss of fridges and freezers during April following closure of the off takers facilities. This was quickly caught up and full services resumed in early May.

9. HRA Housing Landlord Service (from Head of Strategic Housing)

- 9.1 Estate services continue to be delivered effectively in partnership with Medway Norse. Following five successful years of delivery, the Housing Landlord Service took up an option to extend the existing contract for a further five years. This further 5 years will commence from 5 October 2020.
- 9.2 The suite of KPIs and the open book accounting with profit share have worked well for both parties and indeed for the HRA tenants and Leaseholders. Performance across the contract remains strong with eight of the nine KPI's on target.
- 9.3 Having a fixed price contract for the five year period has meant financial stability and the partnership approach between the service and Norse has allowed successful trials of alternative delivery models that are now enshrined in the contract extension Customer satisfaction has improved from 67% when the service was delivered by the Council to 84% with Norse.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 Although the joint venture has not yet posted final accounts for the 2019/20 financial year, it has forecast a profit of £754,000 and is expecting to return a rebate of around £377,000 to Medway Council. This represents a significant increase over previous years.
- 10.2 Medway Norse anticipates returning a similar level of rebate to the Council in 2020/21.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this update report, however as consideration is given to transferring further Council services to the joint venture, this will be undertaken in accordance with all legal and Medway Council constitutional requirements. Any decision to transfer services to the joint venture will be a matter for Cabinet.

12. Risk Management

12.1 The Medway Norse Board maintains and regularly reviews its business risk register in conjunction with the Corporate Client Team.

13. Recommendation

13.1 The Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report and its appendix.

14. Suggested Reasons for Decision

14.1 When the Cabinet agreed to establish the joint venture company it was also agreed that regular monitoring reports would be provided to Cabinet.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Medway Norse Cabinet Report Sept 2020

Background papers

None.

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Cabinet Report September 2020




Executive Summary

1. This six monthly joint report includes updates on the ongoing service developments, improvements, efficiencies and projects that have been worked on in conjunction with Medway Council.
2. The report covers the operational and financial performance of the Partnership and a snapshot of financial year.
3. Confirmation of the continued management of the company Health and Safety, Quality and Environmental Management Systems to maintain statutory compliance.

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1.1 Partnership Performance – Balance Scorecard/KPIs

MEDWAY NORSE OPERATIONAL SUMMARY					
Internal Business Perspective		Previous YTD	Month	YTD	
Performance measure	Target	2019/20	Actual	Actual	Data Frequency
No of reportable serious accidents or injuries	0	0	0	0	monthly
No of satisfactory Site Health & Safety Audits (%)	>90%	96.70%	96.00%	95.93%	monthly
No of satisfactory Vehicle Health & Safety Audits (%)	>90%	92.21%	99.90%	99.97%	monthly
Accident free time (%)	>95%	98.65%	99.90%	99.90%	monthly
Financial Perspective					
Performance Measure	Target	Previous	Month	YTD	Data Frequency
Profit V budget (%)	>107%	543.68%	215.40%	300.06%	monthly
Sales V budget (%)	>101%	98.18%	96.40%	94.03%	monthly
Aged Debt (days)	<45 days	23	1	1	monthly
Non contracted sales growth (%)	>110%	111.86%	104.90%	81.67%	monthly
Learning and Growth Perspective					
Performance Measure	Target	Previous	Month	YTD	Data Frequency
Staff retention (%)	>97%	98.55%	98.90%	99.20%	monthly
Staff attendance rate (%)	>97%	97.65%	93.40%	92.63%	monthly
No of toolbox talks/training delivered (%)	1 per employee per month %	33.30%	30.20%	45.00%	monthly
Apprenticeship levy use (%)	>100%				
Customer Perspective					
Performance measure	Target	Previous	Month	YTD	Data Frequency
No of satisfactory Quality Audits	>90%	0.00%	91.00%	88.00%	monthly
No of external complaints resolved within 10 days (%)	>90%	90.00%	100.00%	100.00%	monthly
No of external compliments (%)	1 per employee per year % i.e. 8.33% per month	7.45%	6.49%	23.40%	monthly
Coporate Social Responsibility	1 day per employee per year % i.e. 8.33% per month	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	monthly

1.2 Financial Overview

Commercial Sales

Income for the quarter and YTD is in line with budget. Growth is up against expectation.

Medway Norse - Summary

Medway Norse Summary Profit & Loss Account					
	P&L Heading		YTD Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Variance
Income	Sales	♦	6,983,839	6,731,128	-252,711
Income		♦	6,983,839	6,731,128	-252,711

Cleansing contracts awarded include the Clinical Commissioning Group, Ashford (East Kent), St Margaret's Community Centre and the Millenium Centre, Rainham – to be discussed further at Full Board.

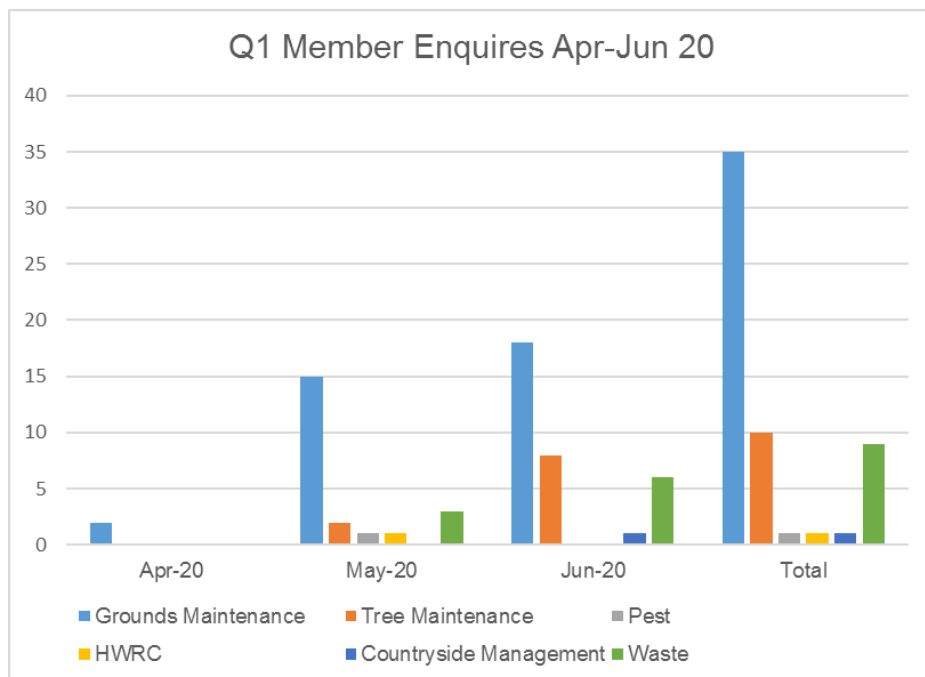
Date	Customer	Contract Value p/a
Q1	New Contracts	£93,420.00
Q1	CoVid-19 Contracts	£28,000.00
Q1	Pipeline Business	£110,000.00
		£231,420.00

The appointment of a new Business Development Manager has been put on hold because of Covid 19.

1.3 Members Enquiries

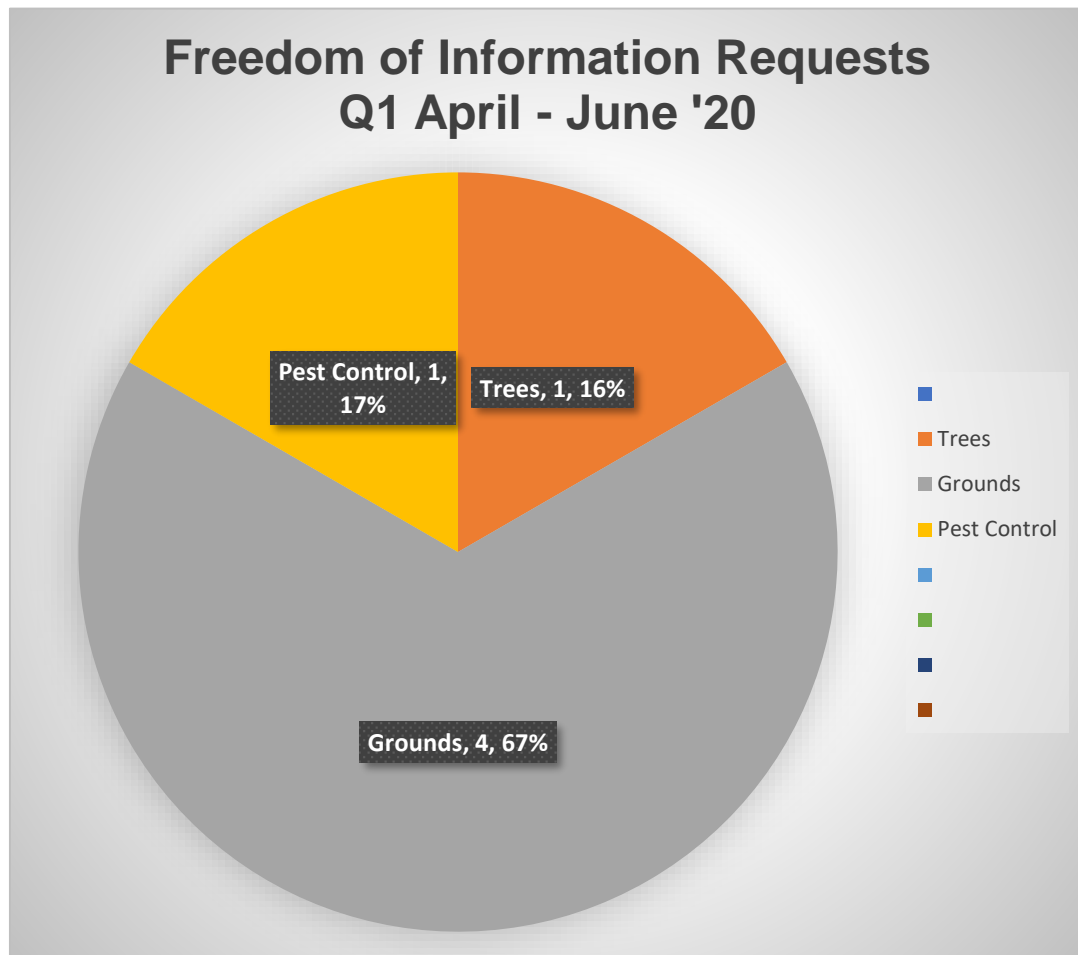
Direct Members enquiries logged and shown in service groups as per below, 57 in total.

Service	April 20	May 20	Jun 20	Total
Grounds Maintenance	2	15	18	35
Tree Maintenance	~~~	2	8	10
Pest	~~~	1	~~~	1
HWRC	~~~	1	~~~	1
Countryside Management	~~~	~~~	1	1
Waste	~~~	3	6	9



1.4 Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

FOI requests in the period totalled seven. FOI and Subject Data Requests are completely up to date. All FOI's were closed off within the allowed period. There were no Subject Access Request being actioned and/or closed.



2.0 Capital Schedule

A schedule of works has been agreed which will over the remainder of the year will see a steady spend of the Medway Norse budget; with additional income already being identified for redecoration works across the property portfolio.

Splashes Pool is now closed pending a £5 million refurbishment – we have outstanding pool equipment refurbishment / replacement which is likely to take place in this period. Also, in April we had the successful completion of last year's BMRF repairs on Strood and Medway Park swimming pools.

2.1 Future Partnership MTFP Savings Options & Budget Pressures

Medway Council entered into a spend freeze in the back end of 19/20 and this, along with Covid 19 implications, has delayed a number of activities but also created a number of new opportunities with sneeze screens and sanitisation units. This has impacted all services in terms of many projects currently being stalled.

Design of the new depot and planning application being scoped for the Rochester Road site. The build required to be completed by October 2021 to allow SEN Transport and the Grounds teams to relocate to a new facility. The current programme sees this as achievable. SEN Transport and Grounds teams have been operating out of Deangate since August 19 and are settled into operations. Retrospective planning with conditional elements has been approved.

The strategy remains to be consolidation and cost control; to continue to drive the Medway Council aged debt position towards zero, which is being carried out in conjunction with Phil Watts (MC). Pressures on labour costs and general MN facilities costs (rates and leases) brings the need to consolidate operations as soon as possible.

The Graffiti Service along with the new vehicle purchase is due to begin 1st July and will bring over one Tupe'd member of staff. The shared purchase of a MN/MC Graffiti Cleaning vehicle has taken place, with delivery February 2020. Following fit out of equipment, the vehicle is now operational. The potential integration of services and transfers are being undertaken and will be concluded post Covid-19.

2.2 Health & Safety, Quality and Environmental Management

A New Health & Safety advisor has been employed from 1st April, however due to Covid restrictions and the number of staff in the workplace his start date has been delayed. There has been considerable activity with central SHEQ team in and around production, delivery and training of new working practices to remain compliant with the latest Government expectations.

Environmental management of HWRC's was limited as sites were closed for the full duration of Covid. Work associated to drainage systems was carried out following specific requests from the Environment Agency but was then suspended due to closure of the sites. Operating regime completely changed on reopening with a booking system and restrictions, furthermore only two of the three sites opened.

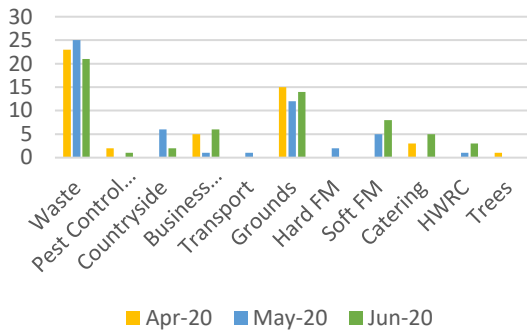
Covid cleaning – there was deep cleansing operations in a number of schools and buildings carried out post 72-hour isolations. We had a strong reputational presence in Medway.

2.3 Compliments and Justified Complaints

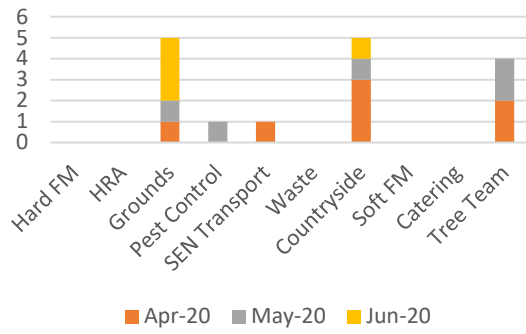
Compliments

For Quarter 1 there were 96 compliments logged for the various areas of the business.

Q1 Compliments Apr-Jun 2020



Q1 Complaints Apr-Jun 2020

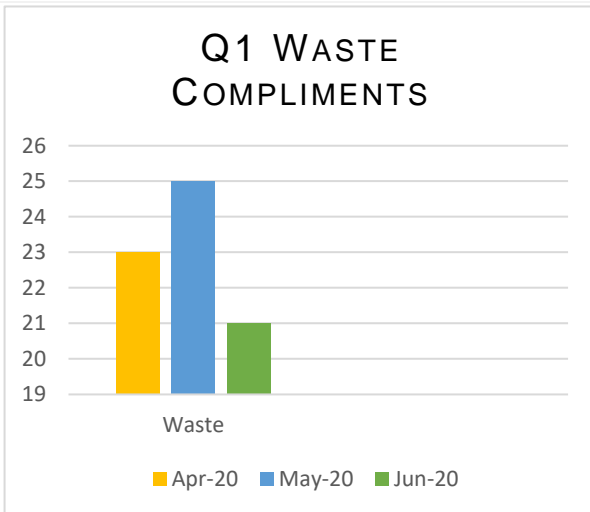


Compliments by Service Area	Performance
Urban Rangers	Helpful Team
Hard FM	Fast Response
Grounds	Hanging Baskets Look Amazing This Year
Business Support	Going That Extra Mile
Street Cleansing	Rapid Response
Grounds	Fabulous Service
Waste	Helpful Staff

Complaints

For Quarter 1 there were **16** complaints logged for the business. The team is working well with the JADU software.

Following the mobilisation of the waste contract the complaints have currently been logged separately. During Q1, there were 45 complaints, a reduction of 16 from the previous Quarter. These complaints are usually for missed bin / recycling collections / brown bin collections and all are resolved promptly. In addition, complaints of waste spillages on collection day were all resolved promptly. A number of the issues relating to collection are generally regarding timing and or restricted access making it difficult for crews to move waste from doorstep to Refuse Collection Vehicle.



3.0 Partnership Service Updates

3.1 HWRC

Finance

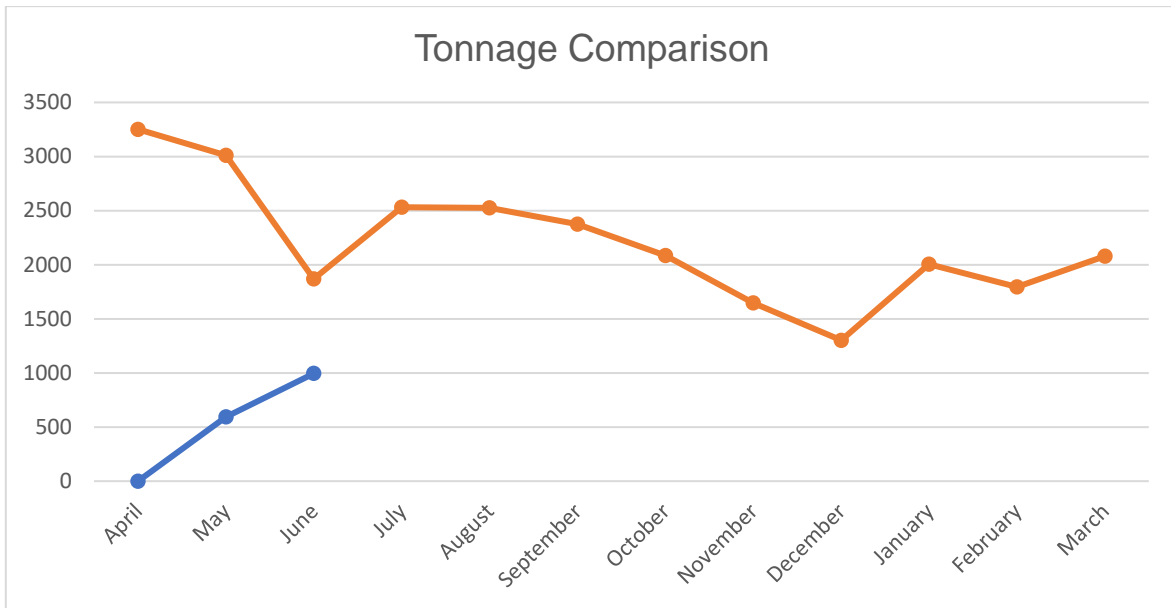
The closures of the HWRC sites amid the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 virus has shown savings to the contract to budget in the first quarter.

Health and Safety

Our main requirement of the first quarter was coping with the pandemic of Covid 19 and ensuring that when sites reopened on the 14th May they were safe for both staff and for customers. 2m distancing was maintained on sites, a booking in system was implemented to reduce the numbers of visitors on site, the opening times for the sites were extended later in the day, security staff were employed, and additional cleaning, sanitising and PPE products were purchased.

Performance / Tonnage

During the 1st quarter we have handled 1,590 Tonnes. Due to the site closures and Covid 19 restrictions this is significantly lower than budget and last year's tonnage. Recycling rate for the quarter is 72.26%



Operations

Operations are still being affected by Covid 19 measures. Cuxton recycling centre remains closed as a recycling centre its location and short access to a main road means that with the current restrictions and queuing it would cause congestion and safety issues.

We are still maintaining our Health and Safety measures to protect staff and visitors on sites including social distancing. The booking in system is in now operational to restrict visitor numbers and the two open sites have returned to their normal opening hours.

3.2 Grounds Medway Norse

1. Grounds Maintenance

Grounds Maintenance performance in April – June focuses on the grass cutting and ongoing shrub beds maintenance and seasonal bedding.



This spring has seen the fruits on the autumn hard work of bulb planting. The displays around some key routes have really been a bright start to spring, which saw lots of compliments.



Grass verge initiative started this spring, where our partner agreed to having areas on highways verges to be left long, to benefit the wildlife and environment. This is the first year, and we received a number of compliments for this initiative.

WE'VE STOPPED MOWING TO HELP NATURE'S HOME

We want to help create more wildlife habitats around Medway, so we've stopped mowing a number of our grass verges. By leaving these verges to grow, it will allow a wider diversity of wild grasses and flowers to thrive, providing a vital food source for bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Wildflowers that are left to seed also feed birds and small mammals such as bats, voles and shrews. These smaller animals will then support apex predators such as barn owls and kestrels.

Did you know?
Grassland and meadows store more carbon than woodland

#SMALLCHANGES

The fine turf team continued to prepare the grass tennis courts in anticipation in some Covid relaxing



The grounds team have also been gaining new works and using new skills on the robot line marker.



We have also been training our staff on other key services and able to help services when needed.

Grounds team helping clear bulky waste: -



Through upskilling the grounds staff this year the team undertook works in Traffic Managed routes, doing tree felling and grass cutting bringing another level of work in house.



Trees

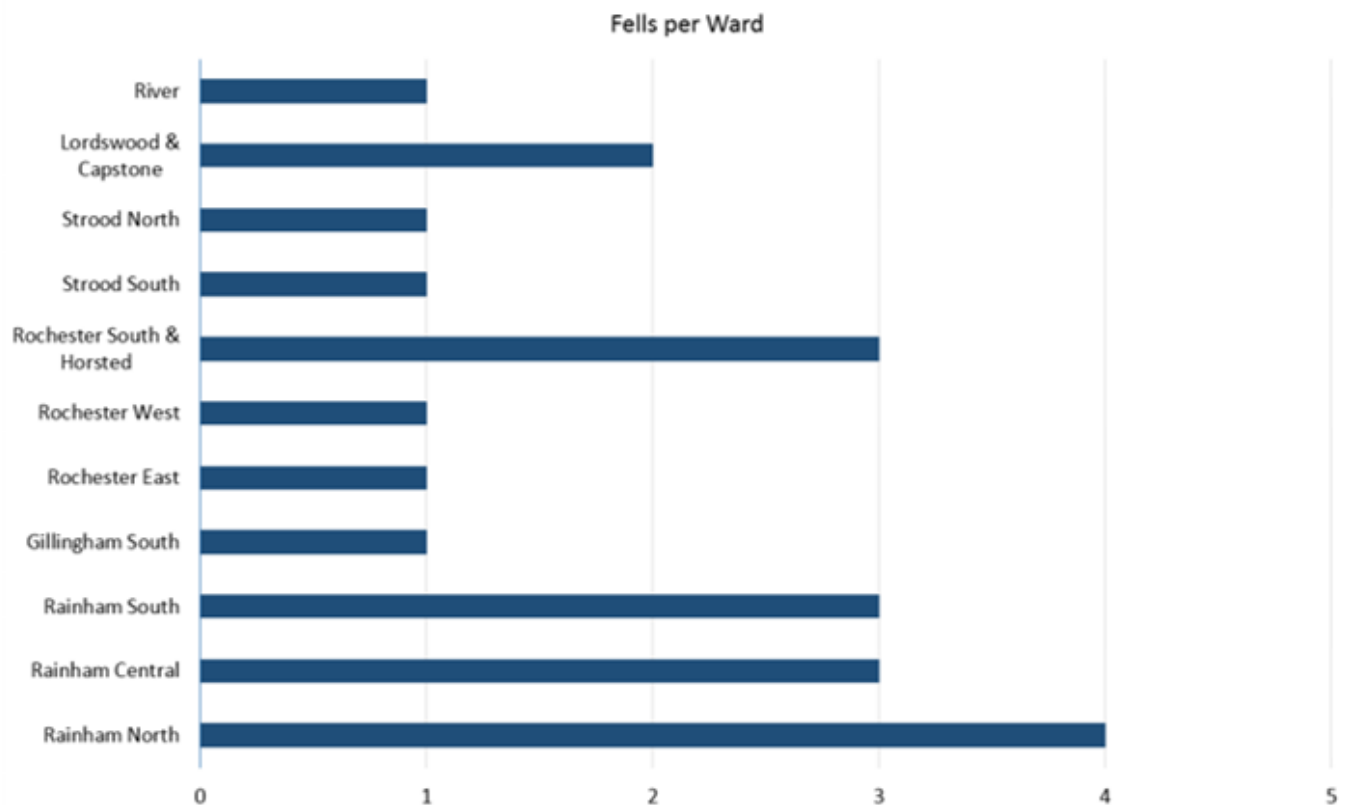
Woodland

Woodland coppicing should re-convene later in the year. The program of coppicing has a total of 41 woodland sites, totalling over 240 hectares requiring managing. For regular tree inspections and tree works – there were 371 work items issued on trees in Q1 period – with 21 fells of trees greater than 5m in height.

Required Work	Total
Cleaning out crown	1
Climbing Inspection	1
Crown Lifting	65
Crown reduce/thin	32
Cut back from property 2-4m	38
Fell	21
Flat Quantity	24
Full prune	41
Groundsperson/Arborist	15
Maintain a new tree	2
Plant new tree	2
Pollarding	3
Reduce stake	2
Removal of climbers	4
Removal of dead, dying, diseased and broken branches	59
Remove stake	1
Remove suckers/epicormic	23
Stump grinding	8
Stump poisoning	3
Grand Total	371

Fells by Ward for Q1

21 trees over 5m height were felled in Q1. These trees were felled because they had failed/failing on grounds of health and safety.



Tree Planting

We are expecting in 2020 to exceed previous tree planting numbers currently in the region of 195 standard trees. Some of the funding will be from Councillor requests. Based on better success rates in other UK and abroad we will be trialling specialised watering bags (Treegators) at 50-75 litre holding capacity to irrigate the new trees. They allow slow percolation rates controlled by micro pores that release water/nutrient over an extended period of time and are reusable. These bags will replace the typically installed underground perforated coiled plastic pipes which are difficult to monitor and will help reduce plastic waste, a contributor to adverse effects upon beneficial soil microbes. Also new to Medway is the biodegradable tree tie straps with double/triple hessian wraps that will replace the traditional and expensive rubberised straps to support the new trees against the stakes. Detail of tree numbers and per ward will be included in up and coming Q2 or Q3.

Application has been made to Urban Tree Challenge Fund by Medway Council with an emphasis upon whip plantings in open spaces. Increasing trees per householder/residents, such as Luton and Wayfield (known as Priority People/Place). Norse have been contributing to this by providing technical aspect and supporting volunteer groups until the new areas become established. We should hear very soon from the Forestry Commission to see whether the bid has been successful which has the potential of increasing tree numbers by 13842 within the open spaces:

Beeching's Crossing (1080), Luton Rec (1386), The Strand (2111), Chancel Drive (640), Wainscott Rec (330), Bligh Way Park (1426), Jacksons (1577), Priestfield's (1911), Horsted Valley (1964), Hook Meadow (564), Chestnut Ave (853).

Bat Surveys

A first for Medway Norse, as part of a TPO requirement we had to employ an ecologist to determine the presence of bats within a dilapidated English Oak located in Lordswood area. The tree had shown typical hollows and crevices which could harbour the protected species. Causing unnecessary harm to them carries a hefty penalty, fortunately the endoscope using ecologist/bat expert found no sign of their presence. The tree can now be safely reduced with no impact on ecology.

Tree Inspections

All highway and park tree inspections will now be ward based which is a smarter way of working. We are starting to utilise the live tablets to capture new data and is currently being tested for school areas such as Hempstead Infant and Junior school.

Country Park

March lockdown and restrictions see us having to keep the car parks closed but the parks open. This in large went relatively well but it did see a few incidences around blocked access gates and roadways for which the Rangers used their skill in diplomacy to move offending vehicles and many questions from park users. Keeping the play areas secure and closed presented its own issues with signs being removed secured gates opened and people ignoring government guidelines.

As a result of Covid restrictions we have seen a marked increase in numbers of visitors on all days of the week to both countryside and country parks, which is nice to see however this has seen an unfortunate increase in antisocial behaviour, increased litter, fly tipping and overflowing bins which the service has dealt with accordingly.

Utilising the new tractor to aid with social distancing we have widened many of the paths in the country parks and countryside sites.



We really noticed the difference having the parks closed for a time, and productivity in the parks, maintenance and installation of memorial benches etc have been much easier, also allowing us to develop the social media presence of the parks, really increasing our engagement levels and enabling us to keep the public informed of our achievements, progress of wildlife and the flora and fauna. For example, the Pyramidal Orchard and the Bee Orchid.



The purchase of a planking attachment for our chainsaws has enabled us to make use of timber harvested from our sites to construct display boxes, signage, seats and other creations that potentially could be sold in our visitors centres when they are reopened or utilised on our sites.





We have carried out considerable work on improving the garden at the front of Capstone's visitors centre and further development to the new bee garden area near the café. Rotavating an area which we are laying to grass to form a picnic area that will eventually overlook both the lake and play area, in turn creating additional bench space for users of the café.





The easing of lockdown has encouraged many people to our parks, most of these are enjoying the natural beauty, peace and quiet and treating the parks with the upmost respect, however there are a few that do not. These are a couple of examples of things our Rangers have to regularly deal with:-



Tree issues and safety works, clearance, butterfly and bird surveys and all everyday activities have continued throughout the countryside sites and within the country parks. Cross working with all the Rangers, tree team and grounds to keep visitors to our sites safe and manage the areas to the benefit of conservation, ecology and all. We have also taken the opportunity during tree works to develop the skills and experience of the Ranger team with coaching and mentoring to bring up the standards of work and increase confidence in individuals' abilities.



Recently we have seen the welcome return of volunteers to both countryside and the Country Parks. We have worked with Medway Council and looked at what others nationally are doing as well as government guidelines, social distancing to ensure their safe return. In terms of risk assessments and putting practices in place working closely with the volunteers and offering them support to bring what is a valuable asset back. The Rangers have programmed suitable activities and works that the volunteers can help us with which are beneficial to the parks and all involved.



Health and safety inspections of sites have been ongoing as has maintenance works and programming in of team tasks as well as dealing with customer enquiries, which have increased in line with the growth in visits to our green spaces and the current Covid situation.

A considerable amount of planning has gone on behind the scenes applying for felling licences and programming works for later in the year such as meadow cuts, coppicing and the potential reintroduction of events and education activities.

With the purchase of new equipment, we have had to increase capacity within the yard at Capstone recently we cleared a scrub bank and surfaced an area using recycled type one to dust for this.





3.3 Soft FM

Corporate & Schools Cleaning Contracts

Medway Schools contract is still progressing well as well as the Corporate contract. Both clients are requesting additional works such as gutter clearance, window cleaning, carpet cleaning as well as ad hoc specialist cleaning.

Audits are showing good results. Norse Schools and Corporate teams demonstrating ability to maintain a high standard especially in these trying times. The Soft FM team have supported and reassured our clients right across the Medway Norse venture. Staff have excelled and gone beyond the call of duty supporting individual services with reactive and proactive cleaning services allowing buildings to continue to function and support the residents of Medway.

Schools Contract Re-tender

The Schools contract is up for re-tender and will commence July 2020. Medway Norse have secured 19 of the 21 Schools. Two schools that did not transfer, Balfour Infants this went in house and Horsted, have chosen to go with another supplier Rapid Commercial Cleaning, based in Wokingham.

New Business

Contract commenced on 22nd June 2020 with additional 3 new employees to the service. We have in addition a temporary contract St Helens School which we have supplied cleaning services. Head Teacher, Mrs Jarvis, said that “she has not seen the school so clean and smell clean for a long while.”

Pipeline

Cleaning, St Margaret’s Church and Millennium Centre Rainham.
Cleaning, Clinical Commissioning Group Whitstable Between
Pest Control, MHS apartments Manor road Chatham
Pest Control, Britton Farm shopping mall Gillingham
Pest Control, Marsh spraying

Pest Control, MHS in regard to 4 new blocks of flats at Corporation Street Rochester

Efficiencies

We have as a department looking at making positive efficiencies within Medway Norse with the use of environmentally friendly products. To date the department's efficiencies have been green paper towels instead of white ones which have more bleaching and chemicals. Making this move will save Medway Norse partnership £9,360 pa and refuse sacks by buying in bulk has saved Soft FM department over £5,000 pa.

Innovation

Soft FM services have been requested to trial a new product Odorbac. This product has been successful and has eliminate the need for most cleaning chemicals apart from a de-scaler.

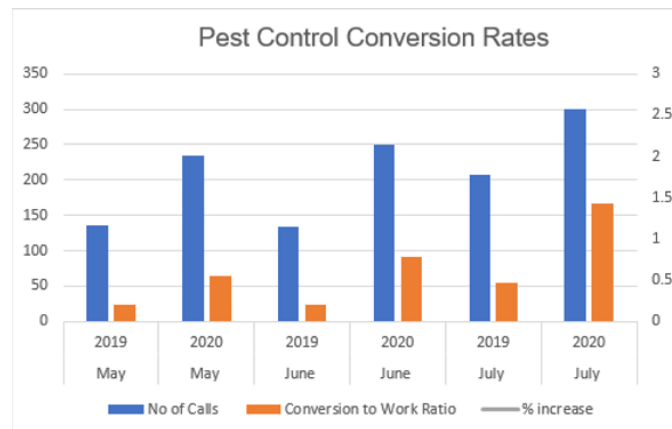
We have been currently trialling this product at Gun Wharf, Medway Norse office and Burnt Oak School. This has now taken place across all cleaning services including HRA and HFIL. Corporate services - In regard to the School contract this will take place after July 2020. We anticipate being able to make substantial savings on the consumables budget across all services.

Product information

Odorbac, stain remover, air freshener, carpet cleaner, washroom cleaner will also de-odorise, cleanse all work surfaces, except food process areas, floor cleaner, and a sanitiser. The system will self-measure and decant and mix.

3.4 Pest Control

Comparisons –



Sodexo contract is still strong with requests for other work such as pigeon proofing of the site including the collaboration area and 40ft hangar at B.A.E. Systems Rochester. We have also started selling baiting kits direct to the public.

Other local Authorities are selling these kits, the prices are varied from £35 to £60 a time, these include, 2 bait boxes, 2 boxes of poison, (not industry grade)6 pairs of gloves, 2 keys, set of safety instructions and contact details. We are able to offer lower prices for these kits.

3.5 HRA - (Housing Revenue Account Estate Services)

HRA service has got off to a good start for quarter 1 with Medway Council, this is the first time that Medway Norse has received a **100%** in the history of the contract also we have piloted a new concept in regards to a static Operative working on site at Benenden Manor, Twydall, this has been a success and now made a permanent position. This site has now gone into the green for the first time even when Medway Council managed the contract Benenden had always been in the red with regards to Audits. We are now in (Q1) and the status quo remains for Benenden Manor. This has been due to the hard work and determination of the two operatives that work this site. Weekly audits are now showing good results across the HRA contract, demonstrating ability to maintain a good and steady standard which is reflected within the KPI's.

The HRA contract has now been renewed to the value of £ 1.7million over the term of the 5 years, I believe this is also due to the commitment and hard work of the Wardens who work on the contract.

HR

There are still 2 operatives on long term leave due to sickness and the one on suspension has now been resolved by a good partnership working with HR. To help reduce Agency costs Mobile Cleaners have been seconded from corporate cleaning to support the HRA contract. This has now also been resolved by variation to a permanent position reducing the cost of overtime and agency costs.

Efficiencies

We will be tasked with auditing the types of chemicals and their use, bringing HRA in line with the Schools and Corporate contracts this in itself will generate a saving within the contract In April 2020 all chemicals have now been brought in line with all other contracts making life a little easier for the Estate Wardens, with the chemical lasting longer and not having to carry as much in their vehicle or as many trips to replenish. This has also been noticed by the client on condition and longer lasting pleasant odour.

Innovation

A new jet washing system with a rotating floor scrubbing head has been trialled on flooring at Benenden Manor and at Keswick Court. The results have been very positive and positive comments from the Client, we have agreed to deep clean the flooring with the jet washer process on a quarterly basis.



Service delivery

Performance against KPI's has continued to improve with rates of inspection passes and satisfaction levels at their highest level since the contract started in 2015 and there are no red service improvements on the system

To date, Head of Housing is pleased with Medway Norse's performance in this regard.

3.6 HFIL – (Housing for Independent Living)

The Soft FM Area Supervisors have been tasked to look at chemicals and consumables at the HFIL schemes which will include a training program for the Medway Norse staff programmes consisting of BICS, Manual Handling, Safeguarding, COSHH, Equality and Diversity. Regarding this we will also be putting Black Boxes on the sites to replace the site files also to introduce a Monthly Audit regime with the clients. The above has now taken place, training has been completed and the black boxes are now on all HFIL sites. All chemicals and consumables have now also been brought in line with other Soft FM Services. We have also introduced cross service support to the contract helping in any absence and lessening the need to use any Agency workers reducing costs.

Staffing

All staff members have returned from furlough or shielding, and we are at full compacity with 194 staff covering 267 positions. We have been very lucky with just a couple of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a handful of suspected cases.

The staff working within my team and other departments have worked well in these very difficult times, it has been a true effort by all involved.

		PERFORMANCE Q1
KPI	SUBJECT	April 20 July 20
1	Estates Passing Inspection	Norse - 100% Council -100%
2	Fly Tipped Waste Removal collected within 5 Working days	100%
3	Hazardous Material collected within 24 hours	100%
4	Offensive Graffiti Removed within 24 hours	100%
5	Non-Offensive Graffiti Removal within 5 Working days	100%
6	Cleaning Schedule Delivered on time	100%
7	Overall Level of Satisfaction with cleaning	100%

3.7 Hard FM

The Hard FM team have been extremely busy this quarter with very little time spent furloughed. It's been a fantastic opportunity to visit busy sites such as Gun Wharf and leisure centres to work on the areas that are often very difficult to close whilst operational. We spent a few weeks carrying out essential repairs to the toilets within Gun Wharf before finishing we gave the painting works leaving the areas fresh and clean after some much needed works.

Leisure

Medway Park & Strood sports had new pool plant to include replacement pipe work and filter media. Medway Park had new dosing systems installed as well as a UV system to each pool which is a much better way to clean pool water than using chemical. We also took the opportunity to decorate the gym areas as well as carrying out essential works in the changing rooms to include lighting, grouting and replacing flooring and ceiling tiles.



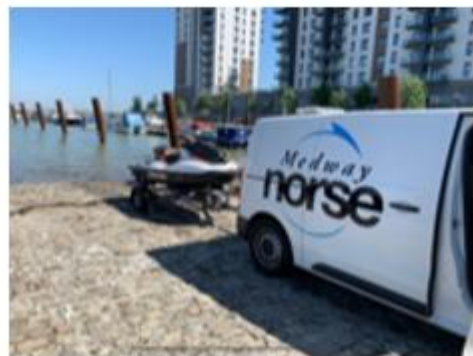
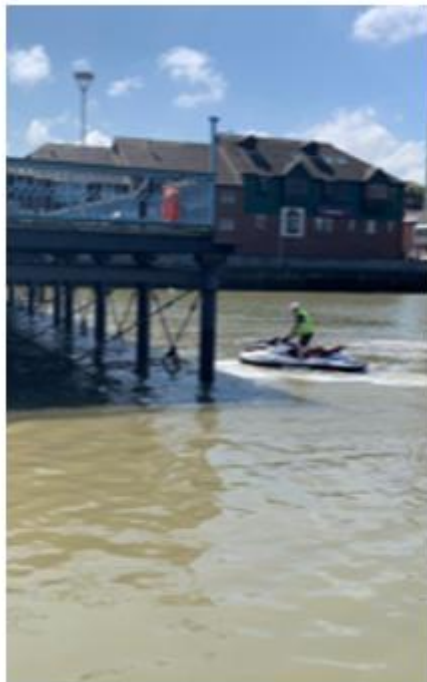
Covid compliance

At a time of such uncertainty the Hard FM team have worked alongside Soft FM and Medway Council staff to ensure a smooth transaction with regards to reopening sites. This has been a truly tiring time for all involved and many of hours spent finding materials and building sneeze screens to protect both staff and members of the public. This has been a huge achievement for the teams involved as hundreds of signs needed being installed as well as sanitisation stations prior to sites opening.



Wildlife rescue

We received a call from Medway Council regarding life belts that had been thrown in from Sun Pier and the surrounding area. They had become tangled under the pier with swans and cygnets becoming trapped. We acted swiftly and prepared RAMs to deploy a jet ski to remove the life buoys and trailing ropes from the water during lockdown.



3.8 Catering

The Corona virus has a massive impact on catering/hospitality industry and at Medway Norse we have suffered equally.

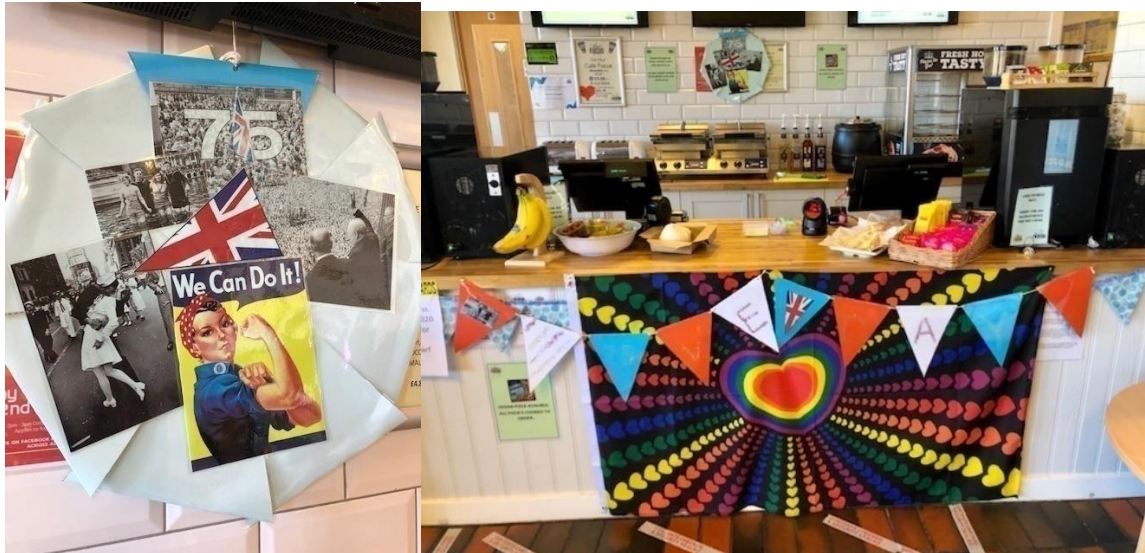
We had the theatres close their doors along with both Country Park cafes. Much of the department were furloughed leaving just 5 catering staff including myself left working on site at Gun Wharf cafe. We had to adapt to new Government guidelines daily with Gun Wharf becoming the heart of the Catering department.

Catering teamed up with Public Health to facilitate their stock ordering for care packages, which was delivered to Gun Wharf from where we transported it to the St Georges Centre from where it would be distributed. The 6 remaining staff loaded and transported stock. The café remained open throughout the pandemic.



Rainbows started to appear across the nations' windows, so I created a positive window at Gun Wharf. From the outside it was a supportive rainbow but, on the inside, I was putting all positive comments and social media posts on it. It did make staff smile, despite the situation it showed we were all pulling together and supporting each other.

V.E Day celebrations were happening across the country and we created some bunting at Gun Wharf... Just to put a smile on people's faces, a bit of normality.



June saw the reopening of the Country Park café however this was for take away only. This was for kiosk service, but we can sell hot and cold drinks ice creams and take away snacks.

The beginning of June was spent prepping each park café for re-open, including cleaning the outside of the cafes too! We put a short video together which was put on the café's Facebook page – an explanation on how things would work, to keep staff and customers safe it reached 3,402 people. The cafes have been extremely busy; June's figures were good considering we couldn't do hot food. Due to the social distancing regulations we can only have two staff members working at one time.

We have continued to help public health and to date purchased and transferred up to £67,000 pounds worth of stock.



3.9 Waste

April

Waste collection tonnage started to increase significantly with the start of lockdown with residents unable to use HWRC facilities and more time at home to start 'spring cleaning' and DIY. Staffing levels were increased to allow for staff in self isolation and potential infection. All Collection and Street Cleansing services were unaffected by Covid 19.



May

Collection tonnage is still at increased levels and fly tipping which has increased in both number of reports and quantity at each location. Staffing levels have been maintained, and all services are being delivered.

June

Still additional collection and fly- tipping tonnage with an increase in PPE litter evident during the last week due to re-opening of some venues.



3.10 SEN Transport

SEN Transport continues to provide support to many schools within the area. During the period of COVID-19 school provision has steadily increased which has also meant an increase in numbers being transported. However, these remain far below that normally transported.

As of the close of school term 17th – 22nd July we were running approximately 80% of resource with an occupancy rate of only 34%.

The main difficulties experienced, are that most of the schools were working within the Government guidance which indicated dedicated transport could be undertaken in “Bubble” groupings. These groups whilst working well for the schools presented a challenge for transport, as they required routing in a completely different way. Often it meant vehicles would cross routes and, in some cases, we had two or more vehicles visiting the same address as the siblings were in different “Bubbles”.

A great deal of pre transport work was undertaken in preparing the vehicles for use. Following a risk assessment and working within Government guidance the vehicles underwent some internal modifications such as transparent sheeting between the driver and passenger compartment and fitted hand sanitiser dispensers. There were also other changes which included pre, post and during journey sanitised cleaning, Socially distanced seating plans, disposable seat coverings and PPE for staff.

However, given the challenges and obvious ongoing concerns the SEN transport team remained upbeat and professional working tirelessly to ensure the service remained operational throughout what has been a difficult time for all. My thanks go to them all.

4. Risk Management

Business Continuity - regular updates in conjunction with Medway Council Silver command to ensure operations and risk related to Covid have been addressed, mitigated and delivered over the last three months with a view to guaranteeing service delivery for the coming months ahead.

5. Partnership Project Register

Highest Project Risk remains currently on depot locations from October 2021, design and planning meetings are at high profile level with Medway Council, planning application is due to be submitted at the end of August if joint project plan remains on track. Medway Norse remains under local pressure at Deangate and more so now also at Pier Approach Depot. The site being developed as an Operational Depot in Rochester will home all but the Collection and Cleansing Services, which whilst taking the pressure off vehicle parking at Pier Approach is only a very short-term solution.

Registers being reviewed currently on a daily basis with reactions to both PHE, Norse Group and Medway Council as the current developing situation and management of COVID -19. Considerable cross training occurred in March to ensure that Grounds teams could back up the Waste Collection services and therefore ensure continuity of service

6. HR Update

Key Recruitment and Organisations

Several staff are close to successfully completing their Apprenticeships – as Team Leaders (Level 3), in Business Admin (Level 3) and the Operational Department Management (Level 5).

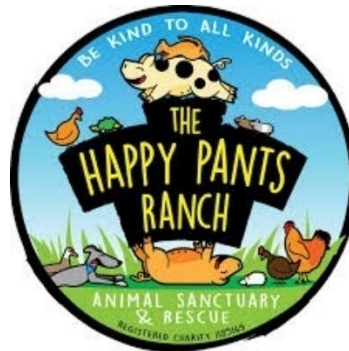
Key Stats	Period	Trend
Total employees:	832	↓
Current Vacancies:	15	↓
Absence & Sickness rate:	6.08%	↓

The National Living Wage of £8.72 was implemented 01/04/20 – all staff below this rate will be receiving the increased amount. The formal pay review process was halted with the Unions in March. This was a Group decision as a result of Covid 19 anticipating that this will be completed in second quarter and backdated - work to integrate pay scales – ongoing.

7. CSR

Quarter 1 saw the majority of CSR work largely put on hold because of Covid 19. Medway Norse is committed to fundraising for local and national charities. Please see CSR log below: -

CSR Log					
Date	Activity	Beneficiary	Money Raised	Participant dept	Days / Hours
Apr-20	Managing and carrying out food deliveries - Covid	Public Health England	£400	Catering	72 days
Apr-20	Delivering white goods to vulnerable adults	Citizens Advice Bureau	n/a	Hard FM	1.5 days
May-20	Managing and carrying out food deliveries - Covid	Public Health England		Catering	4 days



Medway Norse have assisted the Happy Pants Ranch

Luton Infant School – Food Assistance

Throughout the COVID 19 crisis we provided support with the collection of free school meal and foodbank food from the Tesco distribution warehouse which was delivered to Luton Infant School. This food was sorted for allocation to local families which would ensure the children continued to benefit from a daily meal despite not being at school.

A large number of children and families benefitted from having access to this food supply most of whom were from vulnerable groups. This regular support also ensured the link between the schools and families was maintained which is an invaluable part of safeguarding.

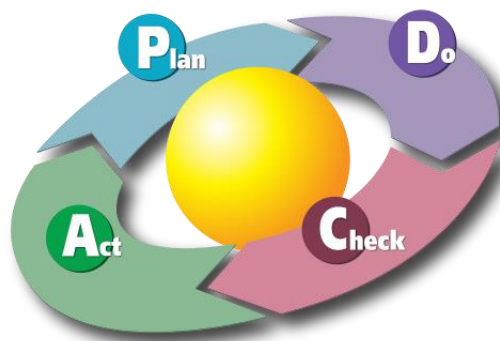
8. GREEN EFFICIENCY

Waste - Waste and Grounds Maintenance now share Traffic Management resources resulting in less specialist and operational vehicles required to complete cutting grass and cleansing, this will be expanded in future with use of the Bartec system to share work such as the emptying of bins and other tasks to share and reduce vehicle usage

Vehicles - 2019 saw the replacement of the majority of fleet with the latest Euro 6 clean burn engines.

9. Quality

Quality audits in the first part of the year have been deferred due to Covid-19 and the associated pressure on the services. Each of the services, however, are checking and reviewing the individual service manuals to ensure that they are up to date and any new working protocols are incorporated. This includes the new service streams of Domestic Waste, Security and Graffiti Removal. This work is scheduled to be completed by October.



In November 20 there is an internal audit schedule which will involve making sure that all changes made for improvement have been put into place, as well as removing any processes or changes that previously provided negative results. There are 9 scheduled audits:

- Catering x1
- Cleaning x1
- FM service x1
- Waste x1
- Transport x2
- Grounds Maintenance x2
- Print & Post x1

All our internal auditors have undertaken an approved training course through the Norse Skills Hub.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 19th November '20 @ 9.00am

I declare that these are the agreed minutes.

Signed:

Date:

Name: Cllr Rupert Turpin, Chair

The logo features the text 'Medway norse' centered. 'Medway' is in a black, italicized serif font, and 'norse' is in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. A light blue curved arrow starts above 'Medway', arches over the top, and ends above 'norse'. A second light blue curved line starts below 'norse' and arches back up to meet the bottom of the arrow above 'Medway', forming a partial circle around the text.

Medway
norse

In partnership with Medway Council