

105 DEVOLVED SERVICES

RDC Rye Open Spaces

RDC's contract with Idverde expires 30.11.23. Contract extension discussions remain ongoing. Because of the contract price increase being sought by Idverde – and a desire to progress devolvement - RDC has indicated that it is minded to seek an extension to 31.3.24.

We are aiming to assess the 'smaller' open spaces in Rye next week in order to establish whether they could be taken on by the Steward Service. RTC does not have the equipment nor expertise to maintain the 'larger' areas – such as the Cemetery, Salts, Gibbet Marsh and Mason Field – and so would need to appoint a contractor.

RDC has stated that it is not prepared to dispose of the areas freehold. It intends to offer 99-year leases – 125 if we press the matter.

If RTC elected not to accept responsibility for maintaining RDC's open spaces RDC would be obliged to continue to maintain them but it would be at the lowest possible standard to keep down costs. It is conceivable that it might consider selling any areas free of insurmountable restrictive covenants.

Rye Public Conveniences

The provisional plan was/is that open spaces would be 'dealt with' in 2023-24 and pcs in 2024-25. However, it appears that the cleaning contract with SHS expires 31.3.24 – and it is not yet clear whether RDC would be minded to negotiate a contract extension.

Although, transfer of responsibility of the open spaces presents a particular challenge in relation to the needs of the Cricket Club and (especially) the Bowls Club, the devolvement of responsibility for pcs (99- or 125-year leases) arguably presents a greater challenge because of their need for refurbishment (let alone addressing the revenue costs).

Rye Allotments (not strictly a devolved service)

A paper recommending that the freeholds of both Rye sites be passed to RTC is likely to be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 27.1.23.

Whether or not RDC finally accepts that they are statutory remains to be seen. However, once they are in RTC's possession this longstanding argument becomes less important.