

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2019

PROPOSED INVESTMENT IN WASTE AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOLLOWING SERVICE REVIEWS AND RESIDENT SURVEY FEEDBACK

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members in respect of the proposed investment in, and realignment of, Environmental Services, including Street Cleansing, Refuse & Recycling, Transport, Parks & Grounds Maintenance. This investment is to focus these functions towards effective delivery of the Community Plan.
- 1.2 To update Members in respect of the wider investment in, and realignment of, the Environmental Services within the remit of Economic Development Committee, namely;
 - a) Grounds Maintenance
 - b) Parks
- 1.3 To update Members in respect of the intended commercial development of the Grounds Maintenance, Trade Waste and Garden Waste Services, as the commercial agenda also falls within the remit of the Economic Development Committee.

2.0 Governance

- 2.1 The Environmental Services within the scope of the development outlined in this report include; Street Cleansing, Refuse & Recycling, Transport, Parks & Grounds Maintenance. It is relevant to treat these as a connected portfolio of services as there are synergies across the services despite the services reporting into different Committees – namely Leisure & Environment and Economic Development.
- 2.2 Therefore, this report will provide an overview of the whole project to put the services related to the remit of this Committee into context and a similar report will also be presented to Leisure & Environment Committee during the same September cycle. This development is about engaging with opportunities for change across environmental services realigning to deliver the activities within the Community Plan. The resource to deliver this project comes from reappportioning of positive variance within the revenue budget and endorsement for this redistribution will be sought at Policy & Finance on 26 September 2019, as the Committee with overall control for finance and delivery of the Community Plan. This project will impact services which report into this Committee, namely; Parks & Open Spaces, as well as Waste & Transport which reports to Leisure & Environment.

3.0 Background Information

- 3.1 Environmental Services are vital to the Council; they impact the lives of residents every day both in their homes and as they walk through the district's streets and parks. These front line services and their performance in the streets and green spaces across the district, are valued by our residents. This is demonstrated in the 2018 Resident Survey when residents were asked 'what is the most important service?' and they selected 'refuse collection and recycling' as fourth most important closely followed by 'keeping streets and public areas clean and tidy.' Similarly, one of the largest themes in the resident comments was that the

Council should address 'cleaner' issues, most notably fly tipping, littering and dog fouling whilst 90% of respondents said it was important or very important to them be able to live in a sustainable and environmentally aware way. Another theme from resident comments was requests to improve care of green spaces, parks, roundabouts and verges.

3.2 This ties into the legacy of the "Cleaner, Safer, Greener" campaign, launched in July 2018, which saw Newark & Sherwood District Council pledge to make the District a Cleaner, Safer and Greener Place. The campaign's Council wide focus on the front line issues that impact residents every day was a great success and it re-energised and refocused the Council on the streets and green spaces across the district. It also led to an increase in the reporting of littering and environmental crimes and the Council need to be able to meet this demand to maintain the positive engagement developed through the campaign.

3.3 In recognition of the importance of these services and to maintain the focus and drive created by Cleaner, Safer, Greener a diagnostic review was undertaken, by Waste Consulting, of the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Waste Services, including Trade Waste and Street Cleansing. This review identified areas where efficiencies could be made and services improved and developed, as well as opportunities for commercial growth of services.

3.4 As a result of this a project is underway to deliver the action plan resultant from this review working to deliver the following Community Plan objectives to

"Improve the cleanliness and appearance of the local environment" and

"Protect, promote and enhance the district's natural environment"

As well as develop the Grounds Maintenance, Trade Waste and Garden Waste Services to

"Generate more income, improve value for money and increase residents' satisfaction with the Council"

4.0 Proposals

4.1 Impact on Grounds Maintenance

The main focus of the project will be developing the capacity of the Grounds Maintenance Service. During the project a package of works will be undertaken to develop the service such as; transitioning to a digital system of task recording, introducing zero-based budgeting and developing staff succession planning. This will get the service to a solid foundation from which it can be grown as a commercial service. Once at the baseline, estimated to be achieved by April 2020, the service will be grown gradually, for example by examining additional services it could offer, such as arboriculture, and developing additional capacity to secure new contracts.

4.2 Impact on Parks

The review found the park's service to be excellent; reflected by the 5 green flag parks within the district. The main action during the project will be the separation of Grounds Maintenance and Parks into two distinct functions; as the focuses of these services are different. Parks development is community focused and led whereas grounds maintenance is a commercially operated service that focuses on delivering quality to its customers and, as such, the two services should be separated and an SLA agreed for the maintenance of parks. This will allow Grounds Maintenance to act as a commercial service and focus on providing a quality service to its customers. This, in turn, allows the Parks Development

service to connect more directly with communities, their green spaces and the Council's 'Greener' agenda.

4.3 **Commercial Development**

The project to enact the review's action plan is multi-faceted and involves developing non-commercial services, such as Street Cleansing, as well as commercial services such as Grounds Maintenance. Both sides of Environmental Services are to be developed and invested in as the success of the whole service relies on the strength of both the at-cost and commercial elements. Development of a successful service cannot be done without viable commercial activities to support public services. This development will include consideration for creating a commercial team to achieve commerciality in trade waste, garden waste and grounds maintenance. This dedicated team would be responsible for the marketing and sale of these services, and ensure appropriate income is achieved across the services.

Regarding Trade Waste the project will focus on developing the good services already offered by adapting how collections are made, and how customers are charged, to best practice methods. Whilst for Garden Waste the project will focus on delivering efficiencies through collection round design and consultation with customers to introduce seasonal hours for garden waste collections.

4.4 **Wider Development**

The project aims to develop environmental services in line with the Community Plan with a focus on delivering quality value for money services and impacts the services outlined above as well as services which report into Leisure and Environment;

Street Cleansing

The project actions are targeted activities to improve performance including; zoning the streets outside of town centres so that areas that require it are cleaned regularly and changing staff deployment in town centres to provide cover in the evenings and weekends. This project will also see the creation of a new 'Action Team' created through the realigning of in-service resources. This team will have a similar function to the 'Litter Hit Squads' but with a wider range of skills. This new multi-disciplined team will be able to undertake cleansing duties and minor 'hard works' such as pruning, weeding and pothole filling. This additional capacity will help the service respond to the large number of service requests in a timely manner.

Refuse & Recycling

For this service the project focuses on delivering efficiency in domestic collections to make available savings to be reinvested in Street Cleansing namely the creation of the 'Action Team'.

4.5 **Review of Environmental Services**

This project also includes a cross-unit review to realign staffing resources to achieve the projects actions and deliver the Community Plan objectives as well as improve succession planning across all service areas. All business units involved in this review will be consulted with and any outcomes will be subject to consultation with affected employees and the recognised Trades Unions. It is therefore not appropriate to go into any more detail in public in relation to staffing matters as this is subject to formal consultative processes.

This project will also create a Waste & Grounds Maintenance Strategy outlining how the services can deliver the Community Plan and prepare for the results of the National Waste Strategy. This strategy will be created through collaboration between operational officers

and key members who can reflect the views of the public the services are accountable to. This will be facilitated by Waste Consulting. The intention is to bring a strategy back to Committee early in 2020.

4.6 Waste Consulting

Waste Consulting be working with the Council throughout this project using their specialist knowledge to provide critical insight into the services and working alongside staff to help deliver the commercial development outlined above.

5.0 Equalities Implications

5.1 Equalities impact assessments will be completed where appropriate for activities taking place within this project.

6.0 Financial Implications – FIN19-20/9283

6.1 At the time of writing, the investment required to deliver this project can be supplied through underspends in year. Any one-off costs, and the costs for the external consultants (WCL) will be funded from the Change Management Reserve. As such, there are no further implications on the budget.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 These aspects of the project, namely the development of the Garden Waste, Grounds Maintenance and Trade Waste services, contribute to the objective to “generate more income, improve value for money and increase residents’ satisfaction with the Council.” The wider work of the project, and several actions within the work streams identified above, also contributes to the corporate objectives to “improve the cleanliness and appearance of the local environment” and “protect, promote and enhance the district’s natural environment.”

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- (a) Members endorse the development of Environmental Services as outlined above and recommend that further progress updates be brought back to Committee; and**
- (b) Members note that Members from both Economic Development and Leisure & Environment will be consulted with regarding the development of the Strategy (see 4.5). Details of the sessions facilitating this development will be circulated in autumn 2019.**

Reason for Recommendations

To deliver the improvements required to ensure delivery of the Community Plans’ objectives and develop the commercial ‘Environmental Services’ to enable them to engage with a range of commercial opportunities working to deliver the generation of income and delivery of value for money services to the public and the customer.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Ella Brady on Ext.5279

Matthew Finch,
Director - Communities & Environment