

LEISURE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

24 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 and Recycling, Transport, Parks and 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 development of environmental services within the remit of Leisure and Environment Committee, namely:
 - a) Street Cleansing
 - b) Waste and Transport

2.0 Governance

- 2.1 The Environmental Services within the scope of the development outlined in this report include; Street Cleansing, Refuse and Recycling, Transport, Parks and Grounds Maintenance. It is relevant to treat these as a connected portfolio of services as there are synergies across the functions despite the services reporting into different Committees – namely, Leisure and 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 has also been presented to Economic Development Committee in 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 from within the revenue budget and endorsement for this redistribution will be sought at Policy and Finance, on 26 September 2019, as the Committee with overall control for finance and delivery of the Community Plan. This will impact services which report into this Committee, namely; Waste and Transport, as well as Parks and Open Spaces which reports to Economic Development.

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 and 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;

“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 Street Cleansing

The review found the Street Cleansing service to be a quality value for money service. Therefore, the project actions are targeted activities to improve performance further 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 as well minor ‘hard works’ such as pruning, weeding and pothole filling on Council land. This will mean a single team can respond to a multi-faceted service request ensuring an efficient and responsive street cleansing service. This additional capacity will also help the service respond to the large number of service requests in a timely manner. There has been a 32% increase in the number of requests relating to litter and street cleaning as a result of C,S,G. They would affectively become a mini ‘day of action’ team supporting communities and increasing resident satisfaction across communities.

4.2 **Impact on Waste and Transport**

Regarding waste the review found Refuse and Recycling to be a good service as demonstrated by the Resident Survey's high satisfaction rating and the low missed bin count. For this service the project will focus on delivering efficiency in domestic collections to make available savings to be reinvested in Street Cleansing namely the creation of the 'Action Team'. Regarding Trade and Garden Waste, the project will focus on developing the good services already offered by adapting how collections are made, and customers are charged, to best practice methods.

4.3 **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 Economic Development;

Grounds Maintenance

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.

Parks

During the project the Grounds Maintenance and Parks services will be separated into two distinct functions; as the focuses of these services are different. Parks development is community 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 the Parks Development service to connect more directly with communities and their green spaces.

4.4 **Review of Environmental Services**

This project also includes a cross-unit review to realign staffing resources to achieve the actions outlined above 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 work to create a Waste & Grounds Maintenance Strategy outlining how the services can work to 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.

4.5 **Waste Consulting**

Waste Consulting will 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 actions 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 – FIN19-20/4069

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.

6.2 Approval from the Policy & Finance Committee will be required for any Capital costs, such as the 'Action Team' vehicles and equipment and, once it is known what is required, this will be brought to Committee under separate cover.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 This project links to the corporate objectives to “improve the cleanliness and appearance of the local environment” and “protect, promote and enhance the district’s natural environment” whilst 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.”

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: that

- (a) Members to endorse the development of Environmental Services as outlined above and recommend that further progress updates be brought back to Committee; and
- (b) Members from both the Leisure and Environment Committee and Economic Development Committee will be consulted regarding the development of the Strategy (see 4.4.). 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.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Ella Brady on Ext.5279

Matthew Finch

Director of Communities & Environment