

## **POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**25 JUNE 2020**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROJECT UPDATE**

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update Members in respect of the project to realign and invest in Environmental Services. This project commenced in September 2019 and the project aimed to realign and refocus the service towards effective delivery of the Community Plan.

#### **2.0 Background Information**

2.1 Environmental Services within the scope of the development outlined in this report include: Street Cleansing; Refuse & Recycling; Transport; and Parks & Grounds Maintenance. These services now sit within one unit enabling synergies across the functions however these services report into different Committees – namely: cleansing, waste and transport to Leisure & Environment and parks and grounds maintenance to Economic Development. This report will provide an overview of the work done within the project.

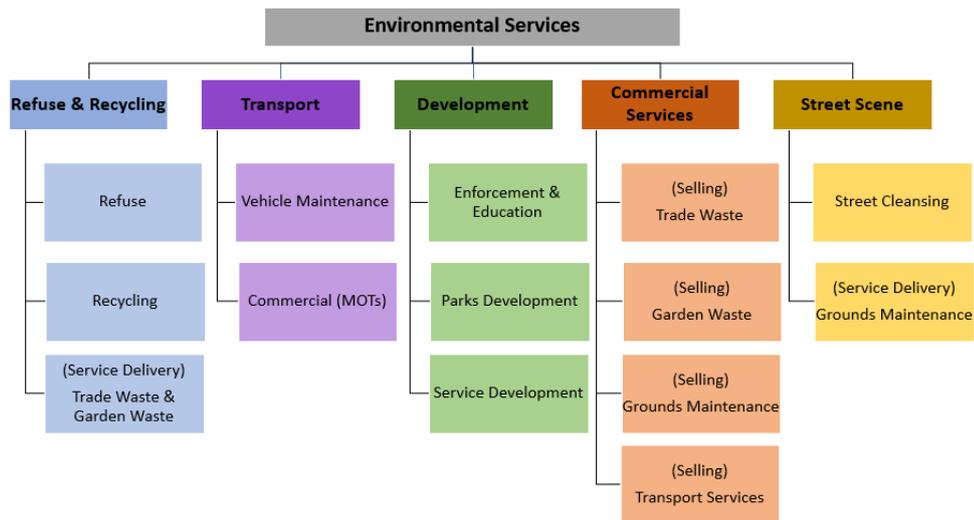
2.2 The Environment Strategy was due to be presented to Committee alongside this report however due to the dramatic impact of the pandemic this strategy needs to be reviewed and realigned. This Strategy will cover the period 2020-2023 and summarise the strategic direction for refuse, recycling and green spaces. The standard lifespan for a strategy is five years however this strategy has a shorter lifespan in reflection of the currently altering national picture. The purpose of this three year strategy is to deliver the Community Plan objectives and prepare the service for the changes coming so that the service will be on a solid foundation in 2023 ready to grow and to deliver nationally mandated change.

2.3 The project was expected to close in May 2020 however Environmental Services have had to redirect their primary focus to keeping essential services running through the Covid-19 crisis. This has meant that some project work streams have been scaled back and others paused in recognition of the changing local and national picture.

2.4 This report summarises the work done and that planned, for the development of this service and highlights where Covid-19 has impacted project outputs. This report will set the scene for the service area and lays the foundation for the Environmental Services Strategy, which will set the vision for the service that is due to be presented to Committee later this year.

#### **3.0 Proposals**

3.1 The project's aim was to develop the services within Environmental Services to a secure foundation through realignment and investment to enable the service to be ready to deliver the objectives outlined in the Community Plan. The project is still ongoing however the majority of the activity undertaken to develop and improve the services has been completed. These activities have been undertaken across the service and this report will review the work undertaken underneath each of the five 'delivery arms' within the newly formed environmental services;



## Restructure

- 3.2 Firstly, the project undertook a service wide restructure to create the five delivery arms within Environmental Services. The aim of the restructure was to realign resource to strengthen street scene functions, improve succession planning and separate commercial services and service delivery to increase income generation and provide a better service for our residents and customers. The restructure was approved at JCC on 18 October 2019, consultation took place and the restructure commenced November 2019. The Environmental Services Business Manager is in place as are the Waste & Transport and Street Scene Managers. At the time of this report, it is expected the complete structure will be in place by September 2020.

### Refuse & Recycling

- 3.3 The main focus for the refuse and recycling delivery arm has been creating efficiencies and realigning services to reflect best practice. This included;
- Utilising the new larger vehicles and driving efficiency by removing a waste round from the programme. The round was removed in February with a minimal impact on residents. 80 households had their collection day changed. The savings made with the removal of this round are being reinvested into the development of the action team.
  - Redesigning the rounds to ensure best use of the waste vehicles by adapting how collections are made to best practice methods.
  - A review of the trade waste service to ensure best practice in charging methodology and service delivery.
  - Finally, an additional supervisory resource has been added to ensure efficiency and best practice in service delivery.

### Transport

- 3.4 The project has enabled several actions within transport;
- The restructure included the addition of a mechanic apprentice, set to join the team Summer 2020. They will act as an additional resource and offer a route for succession planning. This recruitment has been delayed due to Covid-19. Any recruitment will be conducted in consultation with the appropriate organisations and unions.

- A refresh of the vehicle procurement process to ensure transparency and best practice.

## **Development**

- 3.5 Three functions now sit within development;
- The 'education and enforcement' function encompasses waste enforcement and behaviour change including; education, campaign delivery and days of action.
  - 'Reporting and development' involves the reporting on, and constant development of, the whole service considering performance, synergies and efficient use of resources.
  - Development also includes the 'parks development' function containing the ranger service as well as a new role Environmental Programme Officer. This function leads on the green and sustainability agendas including ownership of the 'Greening' campaign encapsulating work to improve sustainability across Newark and Sherwood with a special focus on recycling.

## **Commercial Services**

- 3.6 The commercial services within Environmental Services are; garden waste, trade waste, bulky waste, transport (commercial MOTs) and grounds maintenance. The service delivery of these functions stays within the appropriate delivery 'arm' however the 'commercial' arm focuses on 'selling' these services this will include brand management, marketing, pricing and customer interaction. Creating a central point for at cost services improves communication and cross marketing. The new Commercial Manager will drive the renewed focus on commerciality working to optimise the income achieved by the service through marketing and communication and consideration of the offer. This will include the potential introduction of a quality and affordable trade recycling offer.

## **Street Scene**

- 3.7 The newly formed street scene delivery arm contains street cleansing and grounds maintenance functions. The following activities have been undertaken;
- In coordination with housing, health and community relations and in response to data gathered through the Residents Survey, the wider district (areas outside of town centres) has been zoned to enable areas that require it to be cleaned more regularly.
  - A new street cleansing shift is being introduced allowing town centre cover every weekend and until 6pm Monday to Saturday to ensure that our town centres are well-presented as people commute through or go into town for the evening. This shift was intended to be in place from April 2020. However, due to the exceptional circumstances street cleansers have been working differently. This round will become part of the regular programme when street cleansing resumes as normal.
  - A three person 'Action Team' has been created. This multi-skilled team are able to complete cleansing and light grounds maintenance tasks such as pruning, bin installation and pothole filling (on Council land only). They will work with the litter hit squads to target key areas and respond to multi-faceted service requests as well as acting as the foundation, in terms of staff presence, for days of action. This team was intended to be in place from April 2020. However, due to the exceptional circumstances this has been delayed and this team will commence working as expected when the regular programme resumes as normal.

- Finally, there has been extensive development of the Grounds Maintenance Service to get this service to a solid foundation from which it can be grown as a commercial service. The following activities have taken place;
  - Alterations to shift patterns to enable greater capacity during summer,
  - A review of all sites to update site schedules (a plan of what is required),
  - Introduction of a refreshed, and commercial, pricing matrix and service budget,
  - Review of internal SLAs for services delivered in-house, and
  - Working to develop, and populate, a digital system for recording site information and associated tasks. This system is in development with Meritec. The Council's existing CRM provider. The intention is that the system will cover all aspects of Street Scene.

#### **4.0 Equalities Implications**

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

#### **5.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/4253)**

5.1 The projected additional costs for the new Environmental Services were included in the 2020/21 Revenue Budget. There were some additional costs in 2019/20 due to some staff recruitment before the 1 April 2020. These were covered through underspend within the service. There will be some staff redundancy costs and it was agreed to fund these from current reserves.

5.2 Since the last report to this Committee on 24 September 2019, the additional capital budget of £89,410 was approved to purchase three additional vehicles. These will enable the action team to operate and the new shifts to start as per paragraph 3.3 and 3.7.

#### **6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives**

6.1 This project works deliver the following Community Plan objectives;

- Improve the cleanliness and appearance of the local environment,
- Protect, promote and enhance the district's natural environment, and
- Generate more income, improve value for money and increase residents' satisfaction with the Council (income generation to be achieved by the development of the Environmental Services Commercial Services).

#### **8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**That the progress made in the development of Environmental Services be noted.**

#### **Reason for Recommendation**

**To ensure Members are informed on the progress made 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.

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