



Report of: Director of Leisure and Environment

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor K Wilkie

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND STREET CLEANSING

Wards affected: Borough wide.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update on the progress of the grounds maintenance and street cleansing review, outline the findings and recommendations of the report and propose a way forward to deliver an action plan to achieve the proposed savings.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1 That the findings of the review, attached in Appendix 1 are noted.
- 2.2 That the action plan attached in Appendix 2 be agreed and Council be requested to provide funding for the capital items outlined.
- 2.3 That the efficiency savings of £30,000 in 2018/19 be agreed and a future report be brought to Cabinet and Council on completion of further works to outline the savings for 2019/20.
- 2.4 That delegated authority be given to the Director of Leisure and Environment to take all necessary steps to implement the recommendations of the review outlined in the action plan and section 8 of the APSE report in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- 2.5 That this report is not appropriate for call-in due to the need to procure and implement a computer system and that this policy option was agreed through the budget process and it is being considered by Council.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

3.1 That the findings of the review, attached in Appendix 1 are noted.

- 3.2 That the action plan attached in Appendix 2 be agreed and capital funding associated with implementing the plan be approved from the capital programme.
 - 3.3 That the efficiency savings of £30,000 in 2018/19 be agreed and a future report be brought to Cabinet and Council on completion of further works to outline the savings for 2019/20.
 - 3.4 That delegated authority be given to the Director of Leisure and Environment to take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations of the review in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In October 2017, Council approved a policy option involving a review of the Ground Maintenance and Street Cleansing Service aimed at achieving savings of £150,000 by 2019/20 and awarded £25,000 to appoint a consultant to assist with the review process. A report on the findings of the review was to be reported back in February/March 2018.
- 4.2 A number of consultants were approached, requirements of the project were discussed and following quotations obtained, the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) were appointed to undertake the review.
- 4.3 Between October and December 2017, APSE consultants undertook a diagnostics review of the service. This involved meeting with all levels of the Street Scene management, facilitating a workforce workshop, interviews with a number of internal stakeholders and holding a Members workshop. These stages aimed to gain some clarity about how efficient the services are currently operating and to identify the changes that will be most likely to drive improvements to achieve the savings required. Detailed service data has been analysed and benchmarked with other comparable authorities and service industry standards.
- 4.4 The findings of the review along with a number of recommendations have been presented in a report, produced by APSE, attached in Appendix 1. This report has been condensed to summarise the main findings and recommendations in section 5 below and produced into an action plan, attached in Appendix 2 to outline the action to be taken, capital funding required and achievable savings.

5.0 REVIEW FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The review has identified a number of key issues which need addressing, to enable the service to be driven forward to make the necessary savings and improvements in service delivery.
- 5.2 The lack of up to date digital information available within the service makes it impossible to quickly and effectively calculate the optimum numbers of staff required to deliver the service, and therefore it is recommended that the authority invests in a scheduling/asset management software system. This system will be used to store service data and map assets across the Borough to produce quantitative data and work programmes/schedules that the staff can deliver throughout the year. It is paramount that this system is implemented and used to determine the level of future resource needed to deliver the agreed standard of

work (see paragraph 5.4). Once the system is implemented it will need populating with service data and due to limited capacity within Street Scene additional administrative capacity will need to be sourced to complete this exercise in a timely manner. Without a system the process of collating all of the data required would have to be undertaken manually which would take a considerable length of time and risk a delay in the savings being achieved in the timescale set.

- 5.3 The system will enable the scale of the tasks to be quantified and when multiplied by the agreed service standard, determine the amount of hours that are required to complete the tasks. This total can then be used to equate this to the number of posts required to undertake the work.
- 5.4 The second element of calculating what resources are necessary is to agree a service standard that meet Members' expectations, is affordable in the context of the Council's difficult financial position, and can be widely publicised to manage customer expectations. Current service standards need to be better defined, predominately due to the fact that the contract document of 2012 has now expired. This contract set the service standard of maintenance across many land types and functions and the current resource is no longer adequate to deliver this standard. It is essential that service standards be developed with all relevant stakeholders and agreed by Members. It is proposed that once developed these service standards be agreed by Members and used to deliver the service in a much more proactive way to achieve greater efficiencies in service delivery.
- 5.5 The equipment currently used is largely determined by the standard of work being delivered through the agreed contract document of 2012 and consequently, a review of the equipment should be undertaken once the future agreed standards are known.
- 5.6 Staff across the service are currently deployed in isolation to undertake service tasks in the same geographic area, for example, grounds maintenance staff will maintain the land within a park and street cleansing will be deployed to empty the litter bins in the park. Greater productivity and efficiency can potentially be achieved by integrating staff together into area teams and widening their responsibility to have a more holistic approach to the work required in an area. To achieve this a new structure will need to be developed, with new roles and working hours to meet the demands of the service. Through the integration of teams and upskilling of the staff it is envisaged that one vacant posts can be removed from the establishment, saving £22,230 in 2018/19. Revising working hours to meet the demands of the service will reduce the reliance on overtime, which will be reviewed at a later date. It is hoped that many staff will embrace the opportunities that integrating the services will create, however, it may generate concern for some staff. Regular communication, adequate training and support and consultation with the Unions will be essential in this respect.
- 5.7 In addition, a skill matrix needs to be developed to ensure that the staff acquire the necessary skills to deliver the tasks required, ensuring sufficient cover for sickness and holidays, providing resilience and succession planning in the service. The existing service training budgets will be used to deliver a structured programme of training in future years.

- 5.8 The integration of teams and increases in productivity will also result in less use of agency workers allowing a reduction in budget of £7,700 in 2018/19.
- 5.9 To maximise the efficiency of the team, the use of mobile technology should be developed to create a paperless system, enable staff to both send and receive work tasks and update on action taken to provide 'live' data to customer services and back office staff. The training matrix will be used to identify those staff that will need additional support in the use of IT.
- 5.10 Productivity levels need to be increased with the production of proactive work schedules and effectively managed to ensure that the time afforded to the staff is best utilised. Responses to reactive work need to be reviewed, resourced and appropriate response times set to prevent staff being redeployed off scheduled work to deal with more reactive issues. Vehicles need to be adequately equipped with welfare equipment to prevent the need for staff to return to the depot during the day, including lunchtimes. Many of these issues will be addressed with the implementation of a system that can generate work programmes and by agreeing service standards. The agreed service standards will introduce a new way of working whereby tasks are undertaken more proactively and efficiently.
- 5.11 Raising the standards of cleanliness and making the area more attractive will be achieved by greater partnership working with Lancashire County Council and private businesses. The undertaking of the public realm agreement will provide greater control over local conditions and actively working with LCC and the business community to secure sponsorships will hopefully lead to the enhancement of gateways. Whilst this partnership arrangement is initially for three years, every effort will be made to secure future work providing adequate funding is available.
- 5.12 There is scope for further improvement in the standard of street cleansing, particularly the depth of cleaning undertaken across the Borough, for example, removal of detritus, chewing gum and cigarette ends. The role and deployment of staff needs to be reviewed in line with the integration of the teams and modern equipment such as vacuum barrows and back packs need to be considered to enable a more in-depth clean to be achieved.
- 5.13 Linked to the standard of cleanliness is the provision of litter bins. Currently, there is a multitude of bins across the Borough that vary in design, condition and capacity. To assist in raising the standards of the street furniture provided to assist with meeting a higher standard of cleanliness, decluttering of streets and providing an efficient servicing operation, a litter bin strategy should be produced, taking into consideration advances in technology now available in litter bins.
- 5.14 To implement the changes outlined in the attached action plan, over the next 12 months, regular communication, involvement and dialogue with staff and promotion of a new way of working, embedding a 'can do' attitude where staff take responsibility and wear the uniform with pride, will be key to driving forward the changes necessary to deliver a more efficient, sustainable service.
- 5.15 Regular communication will also allow issues that appear to go unresolved, for example quality of bin sacks to be resolved quickly.

- 5.16 To effectively monitor the performance of the works undertaken the current redundant NI195 regime for undertaking inspections should be reviewed and consideration given to using Land Audit Management System (LAMS) that could provide information for both services and not just street cleansing. The availability of staff to undertake inspection work should be reviewed across the new Leisure and Environment Directorate. Performance indicators will be reviewed as part of the corporate plan process.
- 5.17 Whilst the review primarily focussed on the work of the street cleansing and ground maintenance service, it became apparent during the review that lots of synergies exist across the new Leisure and Environment Directorate and further work will be undertaken to explore the opportunities to align services to achieve further efficiency savings.
- 5.18 Whilst the review has identified a number of possible efficiency savings it also highlights a number of opportunities for income generation. Evident from the stakeholder interviews, various services are employing contractors to undertake similar work that could be undertaken by Street Scene allowing monies to stay within the Council. In the future, a new approach should be adopted whereby a schedule of rates be produced and services offered to both internal and external stakeholders. In order to build capacity to source this type of work consideration should be given to employing a Business Development Officer to initially start this work in Street Scene then be used more widely across the Council. This post will require ICT system development skills and it has been suggested by the consultant that this post should be self-financing. It is essential that in the first instance Street Scene is able to deliver its own work before committing to undertaking work for other customers. There is a risk that should the work not be acquired by the Business Development Officer post the cost of the post would reduce the level of savings. This risk will be mitigated by appropriate supervision and keeping the role under review appropriately. A business case will be developed to assess whether or not there is any financial merit in creating this post.
- 5.19 The appropriate issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices should be reviewed and alternative ways of delivering this function should be explored in line with stated policy to ensure that best value is being achieved.
- 5.20 The recommendations outlined in the report are summarised in the action plan in appendix 2. It is recommended that these be agreed and that capital funding associated with the implementation of these actions be approved.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The review has highlighted a number of recommendations that initially give rise to efficiency savings of £30,000 in 2018/19 that go some way to achieving the proposed savings target, of £150,000 per year agreed by Council through the policy options process in October 2017. Further work will be undertaken to

identify possible savings for 2019/20, in the context of the service standards that will be developed.

- 7.2 To move forward on implementing the recommendations investment of £78,000 needs to be sought from Council.
- 7.3 Appropriate Trade Union consultation and engagement will take place as part of the review process.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The main risk associated with the implementation of the recommendations is the procurement of a computer software system, capacity to populate it and the timeframe.
 - 8.2 The installation of a new software system is going to require time and support of BTLS. A request has been submitted to BTLS to develop a proposal for the implementation of a new computer system.
 - 8.3 Additional resources in the form of administrative support is needed initially to populate the computer system and additional support from the consultant may be necessary to ensure that timescales are met.
 - 8.4 If the service standards are not agreed the service will continue to be delivered in a reactive way leading to inefficiencies in service delivery.
 - 8.5 Change could impact on the morale of staff and lead to unrest within the service that may impact on service delivery. Regular communication and involvement will be necessary to ensure that the staff are engaged and performance is maintained.
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Background Documents

APSE Solutions - Diagnostic Review of Street Scene Services, December 2017.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does have a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - APSE Solutions - Diagnostic Review of Street Scene Services, December 2017.

Appendix 2 – Ground Maintenance and Street Cleansing Review Action Plan 2018-20

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment