

Cabinet – 4 September 2019

Enhancements to Street Cleansing Service

Portfolio: Councillor Oliver Butler, Clean and Green

Related portfolios: None

Service: Clean and Green Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

1.1 To inform Members of the proposals to address immediate concerns in the street cleansing service, on a time limited basis with the use of:

- Additional Barrow-men
- Temporary agency resources to cover annual leave and absence
- Community Payback to undertake “one off” clean ups across the borough

1.2 Consideration of any further changes to the service will be part of the wider programme of Council service redesigns undertaken within the Walsall Proud Programme, as per item 11 on the agenda (Outcomes, service levels, delivery models and service redesign)

2. Summary

2.1 This report identifies time limited immediate improvements that can be made to the street cleansing service from 1 October 2019 until 31 March 2020 for:

- The temporary reinstatement of eight Environmental Operatives in a Barrowman role, operating within every ward throughout the borough targeted in key locations to maximise impact at a cost of £131K.
- Temporary reinstatement of an agency budget to cover front line resources for holidays, sickness absence and training at a cost of £141K.
- Additional budget in 2019/20 for the supervision of a Community Payback Team to support street cleansing resources and volunteer groups with street cleansing activities at a cost of £20K.

- 2.2 It is acknowledged such improvements are time-limited owing to the early focus on 'Nurturing the physical environment' in the Walsall Proud Programme, which will define service standards, delivery models and service efficiency through a focus in Quarters 3 and 4 of financial year 19/20.
- 2.3 The review will be carried out in line with the Council's adopted framework - Aim, Know, Decide, Respond, and Review - to improve customer experience, employee experience and service efficiency.
- 2.4 This is a key decision because increasing the street cleansing service on a time limited basis exceeds the threshold for "significant" expenditure and affects all wards.

Background

- 2.5 Due to the visible deterioration of the street scene, the new Administration of the Council has requested immediate improvements to the street cleansing service are implemented across the borough on a time limited basis.
- 2.6 This report advises Members of the additional costs incurred if resources in the street cleansing service are increased with immediate effect from 1 October 2019 until 31 March 2020.
- 2.7 Over the last two years the service has seen a 28% increase in complaints from 5,802 in 2017/18 to a projected 7,415 in 2019/20 (2,852 for first 20 weeks of the year) see 4.10 below.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet consider the contents of this report and approve additional funding on a time-limited basis from 1 October 2019 until 31 March 2020 for:
 - 3.1.1 The introduction of eight additional environmental employees as mobile street cleansing operatives (Barrowmen) at a cost of £131k.
 - 3.1.2 The reinstatement of an agency budget to cover holidays, sickness absence and training at a cost of £141k.
 - 3.1.3 A budget for the supervision of a Community Payback Team to support street cleansing resources and volunteer groups with street cleansing activities at a cost of £20k.

4. Report detail – Know

Legislative Drivers

- 4.1 Street cleansing is a statutory service and the following legislation is appropriate:
- Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 – Part IV – Litter etc. This defines local authorities as ‘Principal Litter Authorities’ responsible for all relevant land and any highway maintainable at the public expense other than a trunk road, and is used to ensure public spaces and highways are kept free from litter and refuse as far as is reasonably practicable .
 - Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (Nov 2006), read in conjunction with the EPA.
 - Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- 4.2 The principal of the legislation and Code of Practice is to ensure duty bodies maintain their land to acceptable cleanliness standards and keep an area clear of litter and refuse. If the land falls to an unsatisfactory level, it must be returned to a clean level within a minimum time.
- 4.3 On 10 April 2017 the government published the first ever “Litter Strategy for England”, a long term national strategy which aims to create an anti-litter culture and reduce the burden to tax payers of the associated clean-up costs.
- 4.4 The litter strategy requires local authorities to improve their cleansing activities, provide appropriate and proportionate enforcement and work collaboratively with Highways England and neighbouring authorities to co-ordinate works along the strategic road network.

Background - Current Street Cleansing Service

- 4.5 The current service operates with fifty Environmental Operatives carrying out proactive and reactive maintenance. The street cleansing service operates a working pattern of ‘four on, four off’, resulting in a maximum of twenty-five staff in service on any given day subject to annual leave and attendance. No resource allocation is budgeted for covering staff on leave or off sick etc. Commencement of shift starts at 6.30am through to 17.45pm each day over a seven-day period (Monday to Sunday operation).
- 4.6 Staffing has been deployed into two core workflows:
- Reactive maintenance (six staff on average - fly tipping, bin delivery, service complaints, bulky item requests).
 - Proactive maintenance (nineteen staff on average - routine cleansing across the twenty ward boundaries on frequencies ranging from daily in Walsall Town Centre and high profile areas to deep cleansing from three times to eight times per annum dependent on need).

Resource profile:

Work activity	Staff per 4 on 4 off shift (25 staff)
Re-active works	
• Bulky item collections & bin delivery	3
• Responsive – fly tipping / complaints	3
Average total	6
Planned scheduled cleansing:	
• Large mechanical sweeper – highway channels borough wide	2
• Precinct sweeper (footways / town & district centres)	5
• Emptying street bins	3
• Neighbourhood litter pick / manual sweep	4
• Barrow routes – Walsall Town Centre	2
• District barrow routes (Caldmore/Palfrey, Willenhall/Chuckery, Pleck/Birchills)	3
Average total	19
Note: no cover for holiday sickness etc., therefore resources can reduce on average to 20 on a given day.	

- 4.7 Cleansing schedules have been prioritised using historic data intelligence, informed by demands through complaints and service requests, levels of deterioration, hot spots etc. The schedules have been tailored to maximise the impact with limited resources, whilst providing services for all. However, with these arrangements and an accompanying reduction of resource, it is acknowledged that the service has deteriorated over the last seven years.
- 4.8 The current cleansing service is reliant on the reactive resource (six employees) which is prioritised to deal with bulky waste collections, bin deliveries, service complaints and removal of fly tipping on a daily basis.
- 4.9 The current cleansing service has a proactive / planned resource of nineteen employees operating on a daily basis. However due to there no longer being a budget available to cover absence for holidays and sickness this is reduced on average to fourteen employees per day and can be as little as nine or ten in some circumstances. The utilisation of the available employees is focussed on:
- 1 x Mechanical channel sweeping
 - 3 x Emptying of litter bins
 - 2 x Walsall town centre
 - 3 x District Barrow routes
 - 4 x Precinct Sweepers
 - 1 x Neighbourhood litter pickers / sweepers

This means there is a significant impact on proactive scheduled cleansing activities particularly in neighbourhood areas.

- 4.10 There are currently five footway sweepers on contract hire but only four can be utilised on a regular basis due to lack of driver availability because of holidays, training, sickness and skill set. The current hire contract for compact sweepers is being reviewed and considered by Cabinet elsewhere on this agenda.

Issues and Impacts of Current Service

- 4.11 In the last seven years, there has been an increasing deterioration in the cleanliness of the borough due to the ongoing reduction of budgets and resources.
- 4.12 The reduction in service has resulted in an increased number of customer complaints and contacts. The table below show the number and type of complaints over the last three years.

Complaint Type	Date(s)			
	1st April 2017 - 31st March 2018	1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019	1st April 2019 -19th August 2019	Projected 1st April 2019 -31st March 2020
Dead Animals	207	303	90	234
Dog Fouling	165	147	53	137.8
Fly Posting	37	49	26	67.6
Fly Tipping reports	3711	3929	1567	4074.2
Graffiti	58	73	41	106.6
Human Waste	35	56	22	57.2
Leaf Clearance	98	139	2	5.2
litter/Sweeping	1036	1807	729	1895.4
Litter bins	159	197	133	345.8
Syringes	217	234	85	221
Weed Growth	79	103	104	270.4
Total	5802	7037	2852	7415.2

Service Improvements and additional resources

- 4.13 In order to start to address the issues and impacts from previous reductions in resource, the following time limited service improvements are proposed:

Proposal 1 - Barrowmen

- 4.14 The temporary reinstatement of eight Environmental Operatives in a Barrowman role, extending the Barrowman service to the sixteen wards that do not currently have one. The Barrowmen would provide a visible presence for litter picking and other associated cleansing activities and will be targeted in known litter hot spot locations within the ward. Each ward will be scheduled to be visited within an eight-day cycle. These operatives would be supported by 2 x 3.5T /7.5T cleansing vehicles, which would have to be hired, to transport waste and move the operatives around the borough. Implementing additional Barrowmen from 1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020 would cost an additional £131K.

Proposal 2 - Cover for Holidays, Absence and Training

- 4.15 There is currently no cover when street cleansing operatives are absent due to holiday, sickness or carrying out important mandatory training. Additionally on occasions, street cleansing operatives are utilised to support waste collections to maintain service delivery in this priority area. This reduction in resource has been as many as nine to ten operatives in one day, and comes from proactive cleansing / deep clean activities. On occasion it has resulted in no proactive cleansing being carried out, having a significant impact on service delivery.
- 4.16 Environmental Operatives have on average thirty-five days annual leave (including Bank Holidays that are normal working days), eleven days sickness and two days training per year. This equates to an average of five employees not at work at any one time. To replace these forty-eight days absence per person with agency cover for the fifty-four employee workforce (forty-six current employees plus eight temporary additional staff) a budget of £141k would be required for the time limited period.

Proposal 3 - Community Payback Team

- 4.17 With the appropriate support, Community Payback, volunteers and communities are a very effective resource, being able to undertake initiatives to enhance their local environment, addressing areas that are important to local residents, increasing pride in the area and building community cohesion.
- 4.18 Increased use of Community Payback and the voluntary and community sector is vital to enhance the service provided by the council and encourage pride and ownership of local neighbourhoods.
- 4.19 In 2019, an award to Walsall Council for an additional one off funding of circa £49k from the High Street Community Clean-up Fund. Councils, in partnership with existing community groups, including Community Payback, can use this one-off funding to support these groups, to buy tools such as litter pickers, gloves and brushes and provide training for residents on how to remove graffiti or tackle fly-tipping, as well as organise events to encourage more families to get involved.
- 4.20 Community Payback is a punishment that requires offenders to pay back the community for the crimes they have committed. They have to carry out demanding unpaid work as a sentence from the courts with sentences ranging from forty and three hundred hours. This work helps make communities safer and better places to be.

- 4.21 The Community Payback scheme is a resource that can be used to support cleansing activities across the borough. Projects may include litter picking, clearing dense undergrowth and removing graffiti. To be considered projects must meet the following criteria:
- It must benefit the local community,
 - It must not take paid work away from others,
 - No one must make a profit from the work,
 - It must be challenging and demanding,
 - It must be worthwhile and constructive,
 - Offenders must be seen to be putting something back into the community.
- 4.22 Offenders usually work as part of a team five to eight people, accompanied by a supervisor and would be deployed on specific clean-up or improvement projects.
- 4.23 Discussions have taken place with Community Payback and it is agreed that street cleansing and environmental improvement work is a suitable activity for the offenders. It meets all criteria identified in 4.21 and can be carried out alongside work undertaken by volunteers, community groups and local businesses.
- 4.24 Allowing an interface between offenders and the people they affect may help to minimise re-offending and giving offenders skills, work experience and a potential route into employment.
- 4.25 There is a small cost attached of £150 per day for transport and supervision of the participants. A five-day operation for twenty weeks of the year would equate to £15k plus materials. A budget of £20k per annum is proposed.
- 4.26 Identification and development of suitable Community Payback projects will be dovetailed with initiatives being undertaken by community groups and local businesses, providing increased levels of support, particularly for more demanding projects and allowing greater impacts to be achieved. An assessment to determine the full benefits will be carried out.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.27 The street cleansing service links to the current priorities set out in the 2018-2021 Corporate Plan as follows:
- Internal focus – All Council services are efficient and effective.
 - Economic growth - for all people, communities and businesses.
 - Communities - are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Risk management

- 4.28 The reinstatement of any budget related to street cleansing activities will have a positive impact.
- 4.29 The following potential risks have been identified.

Risk	Control Measures
Street scene continues to deteriorate as additional funding unavailable / or alternate savings cannot be identified	Additional funding approved by Cabinet / Alternative savings identified and approved by Cabinet
Effectiveness of Community Payback	Short term arrangements could be terminated

Financial implications

- 4.30 Should all three proposed options be approved, the time limited investment required for 2019/20 is £292k.
- 4.31 The budget required in 2019/20 (1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020) for Proposal 1 - The introduction of eight additional Environmental Operatives as mobile street cleansing employees (Barrowmen) is £131k. This cost includes two support vehicles to transport the barrowmen across the area.
- 4.32 The budget required in 2019/20 (1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020) for Proposal 2 - The reinstatement of an agency budget to cover holidays, sickness absence and training is £141k.
- 4.33 The budget required in 2019/20 (1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020) for Proposal 3 - The use of a Community Payback Team to support street cleansing resources and volunteer groups is £20k.
- 4.34 Clean and Green is currently projecting a break-even position for the 2019/20 financial year. There is no available budget to implement increased street cleansing activities, therefore, additional revenue budget allocations are required, or implementation of these proposals will result in a net overspend within the Service.
- 4.35 It is proposed to fund these time-limited investments by use of general reserves, pending the outcome of the proposed service redesign as referred to in 1.2 and 2.2 of this report. This redesign will set future revenue budgets aligned to the determined service standard and judged against affordability in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Legal implications

- 4.36 Clarity is required on the working arrangements in entering into an agreement with Community Payback. Ongoing discussions are taking place with Legal Services to determine arrangements to ensure compliance with the Councils Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.37 Working with Community Payback will positively contribute to social values. The work of the community payback scheme helps make the communities we live in safer and better places to be. All projects combine punishment and hard work for the offenders and some offer the chance to learn new skills.

Property implications

- 4.38 There are no property implications with this report

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.39 Clean and well-maintained streets can have a significant impact on physical health and mental wellbeing. The more attractive a street, the more likely a wide range of people will use it. Clean streets encourage people to walk more and enjoy the environment. A cleaner borough will lead to increased investment creating economic growth, increased visitor numbers and increased employment opportunities in the borough.

Staffing implications

- 4.40 Additional agency staff will be used to facilitate the temporary implementation of an extra eight Barrowman and the provision of cover for employee holidays, absence and training

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.41 It is not considered that the reintroduction of increased street cleansing activities has any inequality issues.

Consultation

- 4.42 It is not considered public consultation is necessary for the reinstatement / increase in street cleansing activities.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet are requested to consider the content of this report and decide on the level of additional funding to be made available for time limited enhancements to the street cleansing service.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations, Clean and Green officers will:
- a. Source eight additional temporary Environmental Operatives to undertake Barrowmen duties on a time limited basis.
 - b. Hire two additional vehicles to support the mobile Barrowmen.
 - c. Source additional temporary staffing resources to provide cover for employee holidays, absence and training on a time limited basis.
 - d. Enter into an agreement with Community Payback for to provide up to 100 days of work from 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020.
- 6.2 The scheduling of work for the Barrowmen will be finalised, taking account of the current utilisation of existing resources to ensure optimisation and service efficiency.
- ## **7. Review**
- 7.1 We will monitor street cleansing budgets via existing budget monitoring processes.
- 7.2 We will monitor outcomes, and consider these along with service requests, comments, compliments and complaints, to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of maintenance regimes.
- 7.3 The focus on 'Nurturing the physical environment' for service redesign through the Walsall Proud Programme (see 1.2 and 2.2) will ensure the outcomes of this time-limited investment can be assessed together with options for the future delivery of such services.

Background papers

Cabinet Report Sept 2018 - Improvements in Street Cleansing Service

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