

## **Cabinet – 18 March 2020**

### **Enhanced Street Cleansing Activities**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Oliver Butler – Clean and Green

**Related portfolios:** None

**Service:** Clean and Green Services

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1.0 Aim**

1.1 For Members to consider the continuation of funding for street cleansing service improvements for a further twelve months, the improvements being:

- A deep clean of the town centre
- A reactive town centre response team
- Management of the pigeon problem

These improvements were originally approved in July 2019, on a time-limited basis until 31 March 2020, as part of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan report

1.2 For Members to consider the continuation of funding for street cleansing service improvements for a further twelve months, the improvements being:

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

These improvements were originally approved in September 2019, on a time-limited basis until 31 March 2020, as part of the Enhancements to Street Cleansing Service report.

1.3 For Members to consider additional funding for street cleansing service improvements for a time limited period of 12 months, to introduce deep cleans in the 5 district centres of Aldridge, Brownhills, Bloxwich, Darlaston and Willenhall.

- 1.4 Permanent or additional changes to improve the street cleansing service across the borough will be considered as part of the 'Nurturing the Physical Environment' review in the Walsall Proud Programme, which will define service standards, delivery models and service efficiency.

## **2.0 Summary**

- 2.1 In July 2019, Cabinet approved the implementation of a six-month action plan to improve the image of the town centre as part of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan. This action plan required an increase in street cleansing activities and service improvements were identified and implemented. The improvements and funding were approved on a time-limited basis and are due to cease on 31 March 2020.
- 2.2 In September 2019 Cabinet acknowledged that there had been a visible, borough wide, deterioration of the street scene, and requested immediate improvements to the street cleansing service. It was identified that increased service levels were required and improvements were implemented across the borough. The improvements and funding were approved on a time limited basis and are due to cease on 31 March 2020.
- 2.3 This report identifies the additional funding required to continue to deliver an improved street cleansing service from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021. This consists of:
- An annual deep clean of the town centre (£26k)
  - A reactive town centre response team able to remove graffiti, fly posting etc.(£66.2k)
  - Dealing with pigeon fouling (£7.8k)
  - The retention of eight additional temporary Environmental Operatives in a 'Barrowman' role, operating within every ward throughout the borough and targeted in key locations to maximise impact (£268k)
  - Continued funding for temporary agency labour to provide cover for front line staff absences due to holidays, sickness and mandatory training (£308k)
  - A budget for the supervision of a Community Payback Team to support street cleansing resources and volunteer groups with street cleansing activities (£20k)
  - An annual deep clean of the 5 district centres (£19.3k)
- 2.4 This equates to a total budget requirement of £715.3k.

- 2.5 It is acknowledged that further improvements may be required. This will be considered as part of the 'Nurturing the Physical Environment' review, part of the Walsall Proud Programme, scheduled to be undertaken later this year. The review will define service standards, delivery models and identify service efficiencies.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 This is a key decision because increasing the street cleansing service exceeds the threshold for "significant" expenditure and affects all wards.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

That Cabinet consider the contents of this report and approve additional funding on a time limited basis from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021 for:

1. An annual deep clean of the town centre at a cost of £26k.
2. A town centre reactive rapid response team at a cost of £66.2k
3. Continued pigeon control on a weekly basis at a cost of £7.8k
4. Eight Environmental Operatives in a mobile street cleansing 'Barrowman' role at a cost of £268k
5. An agency budget to cover holidays, sickness absence and training at a cost of £308k.
6. A budget for the supervision of a Community Payback Team at a cost of £20k
7. An annual deep clean of the five district centres at a cost of £19.3k

### **4.0 Report Detail**

#### **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.

## **Town Centre Enhancements**

### **Deep Cleaning**

- 4.3 A deep clean of Walsall Town Centre was carried out during the late summer / early autumn of 2019 at a cost of circa £40,000. This involved the pressure washing of some 53,000m<sup>2</sup> of pedestrianised areas including Park Street, Bridge Street, Leicester Street, Darwall Street, Butlers Passage, the Cenotaph area and parts of Digbeth. The works were completed over 36 nights between 6:00pm and 2:00am, Mondays to Thursdays, took 565 hours to complete and removed an estimated 373,000 pieces of chewing gum.
- 4.4 Feedback on the cleansing of the town centre was generally positive, with positive feedback received from Elected Members, members of the public, businesses and market traders.
- 4.5 Negotiations with the deep clean contractor have determined that an annual deep clean of the town centre could be completed at a reduced rate of circa £26,000, a reduction of 35%.

### **Dealing with Pigeon Fouling**

- 4.6 The work to deal with excessive pigeon fouling within the town centre commenced in September 2019. The birds are prevalent in the town centre primarily due to the availability of food. In conjunction with an Urban Bird Control contractor a structured programme of control was introduced. This included education of the public to prevent unauthorised feeding and the provision of a Hawk to act as a deterrent. The additional cost of this intervention was circa £6,600.
- 4.7 The programme was delivered over a 6 month period where education was carried out by Community Protection Enforcement officers, and a Hawk attended for 4 hours per day every day for weeks 1 and 2, 3 days a week for weeks 3 and 4, 2 days a week for weeks 5 to 8 and 1 day a week for weeks 9 to 24.

- 4.8 Further interventions can be considered including nest removal, speaking to occupiers of buildings within the problem area and any other methods deemed suitable following further consultation with Council Officers.
- 4.9 Overall feedback on the intervention arrangements was positive and evidence shows that less residents are feeding the pigeons. Additionally there was positive news coverage in the local press and regional news programmes.
- 4.10 Negotiations with the urban bird control contractor have determined that on-going control with a Hawk would be effective and based on 1 day per week, could continue at circa £7,800 per annum.

### **Reactive Town Centre Response Team**

- 4.11 Three Environmental operatives commenced work in Walsall Town Centre in early October 2019. Activities included weed treatment and removal on strategic routes into the town, maintenance and pruning of shrubs and bushes, deep clean and tidying of car parks, removal of fly posting, etc. The cost of this work for a three-month period based on 5 days per week, 7.5 hours per day, over 7 days, Monday to Friday was £45,000.
- 4.12 Overall feedback on the additional town centre resource was good.
- 4.13 It is considered that a 2 person permanent Environmental Operative resource in the town centre would be effective in maintaining an improved standard. The resource would operate on similar hours and continue with similar activities. The full year cost of this resource would be £66.2k per annum.

### **Borough Wide Improvements**

#### **Barrowmen**

- 4.14 The temporary reinstatement of eight Environmental Operatives in a Barrowman role complimented existing resources and extended the Barrowman service to the sixteen wards that previously didn't receive this service. The extended service commenced in October 2019.
- 4.15 The Barrowmen now provide a visible presence for litter picking and other associated cleansing activities in known litter hot spot locations within each ward. Each ward now has scheduled visits within an eight day cycle.
- 4.16 The Barrowmen are supported by 2 x 3.5 tonne / 7.5 tonne cleansing vehicles that are currently hired in, to transport waste and move the operatives around the borough.
- 4.17 From 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020 the part year cost of the temporary additional Barrowmen was £131,000.
- 4.18 The feedback on the additional Barrowmen has been very positive with their regular visual presence a deterrent for residents to drop litter. The information

below details the number of bags of litter collected to date within each area / ward.

Ward 1 – Brownhills	286
Ward 2 - Pelsall	352
Ward 3 – Aldridge north and Walsall Wood	211
Ward 4 - Shellfield and Rushall	203
Ward 5 – Aldridge central and south	345
Ward 6 - Streetly	129
Ward 7 - Pheasey	222
Ward 8 - Paddock	410
Ward 9 - St Matthews	No data static round
Ward 10 - Palfrey	395
Ward 11 - Pleck	818
Ward 12 - Birchills & Leamore	898
Ward 13 - Blakenall	456
Ward 14 - Bloxwich East	461
Ward 15 - Bloxwich West	544
Ward 16 - Willenhall North	295
Ward 17 - Short Heath	300
Ward 18 – Willenhall South	No data static round
Ward 19 - Bentley & Darlaston North	614
Ward 20 - Darlaston south	313

- 4.19 The full year cost for the provision of eight additional Environmental Operatives in a Barrowman role on a time limited basis from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021, with associated transport and equipment is £268k.

**Agency budget to cover front line resources for holidays, sickness absence and training**

- 4.20 Previously, there was no cover when street cleansing operatives were 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 is taken from proactive cleansing / deep clean activities. Historically on occasion it has resulted in no proactive cleansing being carried out, having a significant impact on service delivery.
- 4.21 Environmental Operatives have on average thirty-five days annual leave (including Bank Holidays, which 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 a part year budget of £141k was required for the initial time-limited period.
- 4.22 The reinstatement of an agency budget to cover Environmental Operative holidays, sickness absence and training has had a significant impact on ensuring the majority of scheduled street cleansing services are completed routinely. The availability of additional resource has ensured planned

maintenance can now be delivered to schedule utilising one large mechanical sweeper, six precinct / footway sweepers, four manual litter pickers and eight barrow routes.

- 4.23 The full year cost of providing agency cover for annual leave, sickness absence and training on a time limited basis from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021 is £308,000.

### **Supervision of a Community Payback Team**

- 4.24 The Community Payback scheme is a resource that has been used to support cleansing activities across the borough. A team consists of five to eight people who work on specific clean up or improvement projects and there is a small cost attached of £150 per day for transport and supervision of the participants. Previously a budget of £20,000 was approved on a time limited basis from 1 October 2019 until 31 March 2020.
- 4.25 Activities have taken place over a number of days and included works such as weed removal, site clearance, erection of bollards and graffiti removal. The work by the Community Payback teams has proven difficult to arrange on occasions and has been cancelled at short notice.
- 4.26 It is considered that a time limited budget of £20,000 from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021 would be sufficient to continue the use of Community Payback to support street cleansing activities.

### **Deep Cleaning in District Centres**

- 4.27 Due to the effective deep clean carried out in Walsall town centre as detailed in 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 above, it is proposed to roll out a similar deep clean in the five district centres.
- 4.28 A deep clean including the removal of chewing gum will take place in the following areas:
- Aldridge – Anchor Road, High Street, corner of Rookery Lane and corner of Leighswood Road
  - Bloxwich – Wolverhampton Road, High Street and Market Place
  - Brownhills – High Street and Silver Court
  - Darlaston – King Street Precinct, Picture Dome Way and Victoria Road
  - Willenhall – New Road, Bilston Road round-a-bout, and Angel and Bell Passages.
- 4.29 Negotiations with the deep clean contractor have determined that an annual deep clean of the 5 district centres could be completed at a rate of circa £19,300.

## Council Corporate Plan priorities

4.30 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

4.31 The reinstatement of any budget related to street cleansing activities will have a positive impact on the environment.

4.32 The following potential risks have been identified.

Risk	Control Measures
Recruitment of staff	Work with Agency Contractor to identify interim resource

## Financial implications

4.33 The additional funding to improve street cleansing activities across the borough on a 6 month time-limited basis was agreed by Cabinet in July and September 2019, via the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan and Enhancements to Street Cleansing Cabinet reports. This funding ends on the 31 March 2020.

4.34 All funding allocated to Clean and Green under the Town Centre Action Plan (£91.6k) and Enhancements to Street Cleansing service (£292k) has been fully utilised. The breakdown of funding is detailed below:

- Town Centre Deep Clean £40k
- Reactive Town Centre response team £45k
- Management of pigeon problem £6.6k
- Additional Barrowmen £131k
- Agency resource to cover holidays, sickness etc. £141k



	• Community Payback supervision	£20k
	Total funding requirement	£383.6k
4.35	To continue these services on an ongoing basis for a further 12 months the funding below will be required.	
	• Annual Town Centre Deep Clean (Negotiated reduction in cost with contractor)	£26k
	• Reactive Town Centre response team (2 person team Mon – Fri with transport)	£66.2k
	• Management of pigeon problem (1 visit per week)	£7.8k
	• Additional Barrowmen (8 additional barrowmen with transport)	£268k
	• Agency resource to cover holidays, sickness, training	£308k
	• Community Payback	£20k
	Funding required	£696k
4.36	To increase the deep cleans across the five district centres a further £19.3k would be required, with total funding required, £715.3k.	
4.37	There is currently no funding within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan to cover these costs on an ongoing basis. However, as this additional funding is time limited, in advance of the proposed service redesign, the one-off costs of continuing the enhancements can be accommodated from general reserves, as general reserves as at 31 March 2020 are currently forecast to be above the opening level of reserves required for 2020/21, as set out in the Council's Budget plan approved by Cabinet On 12 February.	
4.38	It is proposed therefore, to fund these investments for a further time limited period of 12 months by use of these general reserves pending the outcome of the proposed service redesign as referred to in 1.3 and 2.5 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**

- 4.39 There are no legal implications with this report.

### **Procurement implications/Social Value**

- 4.40 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**

- 4.41 There are no property implications with this report

### **Health and wellbeing implications**

- 4.42 Improving the street cleansing service contributes to the 5<sup>th</sup> Marmot objective of “creating and developing sustainable places and communities”. Clean and well-maintained streets can have a significant impact on physical health and mental well-being. The more attractive a street is, the more likely a wide range of people will use it. Clean streets encourage people to walk more and enjoy the environment. It is accepted that physical activity is a major contributor to good health and can reduce coronary heart problems, diabetes, certain cancers and mental health problems.

### **Staffing implications**

- 4.43 Additional agency staff will be used for the Environmental Operative roles due to their temporary nature.

### **Reducing inequalities**

- 4.44.1 It is not considered that the temporary re introduction of aspects of the street cleansing service will have an inequality issue but recruitment of additional employees will target minority groups that are underrepresented in the service area.
- 4.45.2 A full EqIA will be undertaken should the additional services become permanent if necessary.

### **Consultation**

- 4.46 Public consultation is not considered necessary for the reinstatement / increase in street cleansing activities.

## **5.0 Decide**

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

## **6.0 Respond**

6.1 Subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations, we will:

- a. Continue with the temporary employment of ten Environmental Operatives in the role of Barrowmen and town centre operatives.
- b. Resource sufficient vehicles to support the Barrowmen and town centre response team.
- c. Source additional temporary resources to provide cover for employee holidays, sickness absence and training.
- d. Extend the agreement with Community Payback to provide street cleansing associated activities
- e. Procure the deep cleaning of Walsall town centre
- f. Procure the services of an urban bird control contractor to manage the pigeon population within the town centre.

## **7.0 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 of “Nurturing the physical environment” for service redesign through the Walsall Proud Programme (see 1.3 and 2.5) will ensure the outcomes of this time-limited investment can be assessed together with options for the future delivery of such services.

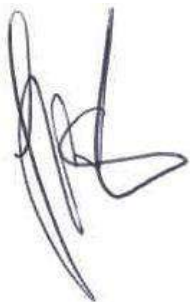
## **Background Papers**

Cabinet Report September 2018 – Improvements in Street Cleansing Services

Cabinet Report July 2019 - Walsall Town Centre Masterplan

Cabinet Report September 2019 – Enhancements to Street Cleansing Service

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9 March 2020