

Council

26 November 2020

Report of Director of Community & Environmental Services

REVIEW OF THE CLEAN AND GREEN SERVICE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the proposed scope and methodology of the review. To seek the views of Members in relation to this review.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council approves the scope of the review, as outlined in paragraph 2.14 of the report
2. That Council approves the creation of a project group, led by the Director of Community & Environmental Services to progress the review
3. That a Sub-Group be established, comprising of four Members as set out in paragraph 2.6 and with the Terms of Reference set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report.
4. That Council approves the allocation of funds for the appointment of external consultants and benchmarking of the service.
5. That, subject to the approval of 4 above, Council approves a supplementary revenue estimate of £30,000 (for consultancy and benchmarking) for 2020/21, to be financed from the general reserve.
6. That further reports are presented to the Community & Environment Committee to update on the progress of the review and to agree any necessary changes to the service

WARDS AFFECTED

All

STRATEGIC LINK

The Clean & Green Service supports the District Council's Corporate Aim of improving 'place', as well as meeting its dedication to keeping the district clean, green and safe

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2012, the District Council approved a report outlining changes to the Grounds Maintenance & Street Scene service, now known as the Clean & Green team,

with the aim of 'becoming more efficient, economic and effective' and providing 'a more customer focused holistic public realm service'.

1.2 The overriding principal aim of the review, as outlined in the 13 September 2012 report, was to 'enable the Council to reduce the costs whilst at the same time improve the current level of performance of service provided'.

1.3 These changes included:

- Merging the two services of Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing
- Introduction of 'area based' teams
- The creation of 'generic multi-skilled' roles
- Setting service specifications and service standards
- Introduction of seasonal hours for staff (summer and winter hours)
- The development of core standards to introduce reasonable limitations on what the Council does. This included increasing the frequency but reducing standard of works for grass cutting, reduction in the number of litter bins, removal of winter bedding plant programme, etc.

1.4 At the time, there was a belief that these adjustments would 'lead to greater employee satisfaction and ownership and improve customer care'. Since taking on the responsibility for the service in 2016/17, the Director of Community & Environmental Services has had numerous discussions with individual staff, teams, residents and Parish and Town Councils. Whilst the 2012 review did bring some success, there are many areas where it did not have the desired effect.

1.5 Concerns have regularly been expressed by several sections of the workforce that the loss of expertise has resulted in lower standards of service and ultimately a loss of pride and motivation in the work. These concerns raised have been consistent in meetings with the Director of Community & Environmental Services, as well as meetings and discussions with the Clean & Green Manager, the Chief Executive and the Human Resources Manager and supporting team.

1.6 The approved changes have now been in place for approximately eight years and whilst the previous review achieved its objective of cost savings (£120,000 p.a.), the resulting standards of work have also been cause for concern from several sections of our communities. For example, the frequency and approved standards of works on grass verges has, and still is, the main cause of frustration from many of the district's Parish and Town Councils, as well as the current management team (137 complaints in the last two year).

1.7 Whilst still adhering to the approved policy, incremental changes have been made over the last three years, with the aim of improving the management and delivery of the service. These improvements include:

- Developing a more positive and inclusive culture
- Fundamental review and improvement of Risk Assessments
- Improved communications
- Improved document and information management
- Improved staff training and development
- Introduction of a Community Payback Scheme
- Introduction of detailed vehicle inspections

- Introduction of Hand and Arm Vibration (HAVs) assessments
- Introduction of robust procurement practices
- Introduction of safer working practices and systems of work
- Introduction of structured team meetings and 1:1's
- Monitoring of driving standards and behaviours
- Restructure of the management team

1.8 Although the above has contributed to improvements in the service, it is recommended that a fundamental review of the service is necessary to both modernise to meet the current demands and aspirations of the Council and its communities.

2 REPORT

2.1 Although the 2012 policy achieved its objective of reducing costs (£120,000 p.a.as stated above), Officers believe the policy, which is still current, needs to be reviewed. It is proposed that a new policy should not only focus on enhancing the aesthetics and level of biodiversity across the district but should, where possible, also reflect the requirements of our communities.

2.2 In order to achieve this, it is recommended that the review of the service should be undertaken with the support of both an external consultant and project group which includes Member representatives. It is also suggested that consultation and engagement with local Parish and Town Councils takes place, along with other external agencies, such as the Wildlife Trust.

2.3 It is recommended that a consultant is used to support the project for the following reasons:

- Speed – unlike other members of Project Group, the consultant's time will be focused on the project and is unlikely to be distracted by other tasks
- Industry Knowledge – a consultant will have a greater appreciation of best practice, possible pitfalls and effective solutions from elsewhere in the industry
- Perspective – a consultant will provide will help challenge the status quo
- External review – a consultant will analyse the current performance of the service and objectively benchmark it against other similar Local Authorities

The use of consultants has been key in the successful review of other areas of work, including the recent Leisure Service review and the renewal of the Waste & Recycling contract.

2.4 It is proposed that a Project Group is established, supported by a Sub Group, to undertake the review. The Project Group will need to meet regularly (every 1 - 2 weeks) to cater to the demands of the workload and keep the project within a reasonable timescale. It will focus on reviewing the current standards, analysis of costs, discussions with consultants, research and benchmarking, staff consultation, etc.

2.5 It is proposed that that the review be completed by February 2022 with a revised approach being introduced with effect from 1st April 2022. In order to achieve

implementation of a new policy by April 2022, it is proposed that a Sub Group is established to review the options and monitor progress against a defined project plan.

2.6 The Sub Group should include:

- Member representative + one substitute (Conservative)
- Member representative + one substitute (Independent)
- Member representative + one substitute (Labour)
- Member representative + one substitute (Liberal Democrats)

2.7 The terms of reference for the Sub-Group would be:

- a) To investigate and evaluate the options open to the Council and to recommend a revised policy that takes account of (for example) statutory requirements, financial impact analysis and stakeholder consultation.
- b) To conduct consultation as set out in section 2.2
- c) To conduct an Equalities Impact Assessment of the draft policy prior to consideration by the Community & Environment Committee.

2.8 The Sub Group will regularly liaise with the project group, but due to possible limited availability at suitable times, it will meet less frequently (e.g.: on a monthly basis). The purpose of this group will be to support the core group and provide feedback on its proposals and recommendations, whilst constructively inputting their own suggestions.

2.9 In addition, the Project Group will provide a monthly update report to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team for corporate challenge, consideration and input. The Project Group will also provide updates to the Sub Group via email following each meeting.

2.10 The Project Group will consist of the following:

- Director of Community & Environmental Services (Project Lead)
- Clean & Green Manager
- Senior Accountant
- A member of the Council's Senior Management Team (via expression of interest)
- External consultant (TBC)

2.11 The Project Group will also require the support of the following:

- HR representative (when required)
- Legal representative (when required)
- Clean & Green Supervisors (when required)

2.12 Throughout the course of the review it will be necessary to also include representatives from other services areas such as, ICT, Community Development and Marketing and Communications.

2.13 In order to procure a suitably experienced consultant, it is necessary to have an outlined brief or scope to ensure a clear focus on the objectives of the review.

Below is a proposed scope of the review, which will be used as a basis to procure consultancy services.

2.14 The scope of the review should include:

- Analysis of current performance (and against peers)
- Analysis of resource and utilisation
- Assess the service's costs and value for money
- Expansion of biodiversity and use of clean energy
- Explore current strengths and weaknesses
- Explore customer base and engagement opportunities
- Explore staff training and development opportunities
- Identify best practice and benchmarking opportunities
- Identify opportunities for developing commercial services
- Identify potential for service development
- Improved communication and promotion
- Introduction of improved performance management systems
- Review key processes, working patterns, structure, roles and deployment of teams
- Review the frequency and standards of work
- Review working practices, equipment and vehicles (greater environmental consideration)
- Transformation of the service (greater level of technology)

2.15 An external consultant will need to be appointed via the necessary procurement process and it is anticipated that this process could take up to 3 months. Through soft market testing, the cost of procuring such services is likely to be between £20,000 and £30,000.

2.16 The review itself is likely to take approximately 12 months to complete, once a consultant has been appointed, and Members will be updated at regular intervals throughout the process. This will take place in the form of briefings, committee reports and email updates.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Legal

The purpose of this report is to set up a project group to review the efficiency and performance of the Council services. The commissioning of a consultant is proposed and would need to be appointed in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Order. The relevant officer and members are involved in the project group and as such the legal risk is assessed as low.

3.2 Financial

The cost of the external consultant (including benchmarking) is estimated at up to £30,000. This would be paid in instalments, based on the achievement of particular milestones. As it is difficult to split the spending at this time, it is recommended that a supplementary revenue budget of £30,000 be approved for 2020/21, with any unspent balance at the year-end being carried forward in reserves to be spent in 2021/22.

Subject to Members' approval, the additional expenditure will be financed from the general reserve.

Any change in the costs of the Clean and Green service as a result of the review, and the achievement of value for money, will be taken into account as part of the review process and reported to a future Committee or Council Meeting with the outcome of the review.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 None.

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

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6 BACKGROUND PAPER

7 ATTACHMENTS