

## ITEM No ...5.....

**REPORT TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 7th DECEMBER 2015

**REPORT ON:** STREET CLEANING AND OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

**REPORT NO:** 439-2015

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To update the Committee on the conclusions of the Changing for the Future 4's transformation change programme review of street cleaning and open space management.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- notes the contents of this report and the service changes proposed; and
- instructs the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to commence detailed consultation with the workforce and trade unions on the implementation of these changes.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services advises that the proposals outlined within this report will result in savings to the Environmental Management service of approximately £1.395m in a full financial year. To assist this process it is proposed to introduce a programme of capital investment. The capital expenditure requirements of £2.6 million will be met from the allowances under Parks and Open Space in the Council's Capital Plan 2016-2021.

3.2 The required investment of £30k in Routesmart specialist services and the installation of vehicle telematics in mechanical sweepers to enable the changes to be made can be met from within existing budgets.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Council's transformational change programme is driven by the desire to continuously improve services whilst meeting the policy and financial challenges facing local government in the years ahead. This will see Public Services, including all council services, transformed to make them fit for purpose and future proofed and will involve major changes in all areas. Significant changes in what local councils do and the way they deliver services is being driven by fiscal restraint, increasing demand and changing communities. These three drivers are generating a need to find new ways of delivering sustainable services.

4.2 This public service challenge, where 25% of the budgets are now managed by others, means that the city council must work in partnership with other providers in the city, to deliver to its citizens in the future.

4.3 The various strands in the delivery of the transformation change programme is being taken forward by Changing for the Future 4. This is an ambitious and far reaching

programme involving transforming a range of services currently delivered by Dundee City Council.

- 4.4 This Street Cleaning and Open Space Management review builds on previous reviews aimed at streamlining and harmonising service delivery. Significant efficiencies have already been achieved with limited or no loss of operational performance. It will involve implementing organisational and cultural change alongside a commitment to utilise community planning and partnering arrangements to make services work better for citizens and communities in Dundee.
- 4.5 Recent benchmarking with other Scottish authorities has identified that Dundee City Council continues to be one of the top performing authorities for street cleanliness and open space maintenance in Scotland. This benchmarking is reinforced by the citizen survey data that identifies high satisfaction levels for both street cleanliness (97%) and open space maintenance (97%).
- 4.6 As part of the Changing for the Future 4 programme, this major service review has been undertaken examining all aspects of this service area. The scope of the review included all activities relating to Street Cleansing, Leisure Management and Grounds Maintenance functions which have an overall net annual cost of approximately £10m. Some of the smaller and more specialist areas of activity such as Arboriculture and Forestry, Nursery/Glasshouses, Fencing and Playgrounds were excluded from this review but will be the subject of future reviews.

## **5.0 REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

- 5.1 An initial information gathering exercise was undertaken to ensure all information relating to current service delivery would be captured to provide full compilation of current operations. Alternative delivery options and examples of best practice developed within other local authorities who had gone through similar change programmes were reviewed.
- 5.2 A number of working groups were established to consider what were identified as being the key areas for service review along with a number of generic groups. These groups included:
- Street cleansing;
  - Ground maintenance;
  - Plant and equipment;
  - Organisational management;
  - Finance; and
  - Communications.
- 5.3 An internal Project Group was formed to initially ensure the establishment of the relevant working groups and subsequently to ensure that the work of the various groups was properly integrated and internal communications maintained.
- 5.4 Early engagement with staff was undertaken, initially through meetings with the relevant departmental shop stewards and followed up by a series of 15 briefing sessions involving every operative and member of staff. Staff were encouraged to contribute to the review process and where appropriate were included in the various reviews. In addition, the trade unions were represented on the project group overseeing the development of the proposals.

## **6.0 STREET CLEANSING**

### **6.1 Street Cleansing Policy**

- 6.1.1 The current street cleansing and litter picking regime was established in the early 1990's in line with what was then considered to be best practice. It was partially modified following the publication of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Litter in 2006. Following this review it is now proposed to bring the councils litter picking practices fully in line with the Code of Practice.
- 6.1.2 The Code of Practice recognises the principle that not all streets require the same level of resources to maintain them in an acceptably clean condition. It sets out grades of cleanliness and divides land into zones according to usage and establishes target response times for the duty body to restore the land to a clean state.
- 6.1.3 The Code of Practice is concerned with output rather than input standards i.e. how clean land is, rather than how often it is swept. It does not suggest cleaning frequencies; it simply defines certain standards that are achievable in different circumstances. This may mean that an area which generally escapes littering will seldom need to be swept, whereas a litter blackspot will need more frequent attention. The Code of Practice offers considerable scope for local authorities and other duty bodies to target resources to areas most in need of them, rather than sweeping a street because of the dictates of an arbitrary rota.

### **6.2 Proposed Changes**

- 6.2.1 In reviewing current operational practices against the best practice guidance given within the Code of Practice, it is clear that there are many opportunities to introduce changes to working practices and operations that will yield considerable efficiencies.
- 6.2.2 The main areas for change will include the redesign and rationalisation of all manual and mechanical sweeping routes with a general reduction in routine sweeping in favour of more planned responsive activity. The new sweeping routes will be redesigned using the "Routesmart" software to ensure the most efficient routes are established and vehicle telematics will be deployed to monitor performance.
- 6.2.3 In order to provide a flexible and responsive service, it is also intended to integrate various functions and to review working patterns to ensure they best meet demand needs.
- 6.2.3 These proposals will result in a level of change to service delivery, however it is fully intended to ensure that the principles of the government's Code of Practice are delivered and to maintain service standards on a par with the Scottish average.

## **7.0 OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 Significant changes to the planting and maintenance policies and operations have been introduced into the ground maintenance operations over the last few years. In summary these changes have sought to deliver soft landscaping features that require less maintenance, provide improved levels of biodiversity and yet still provide a high quality visual impact wherever possible.
- 7.2 Changes to some of the city's bedding plant displays have been trialled. This has seen a move away from traditional displays that utilise annual plants that are costly to maintain in terms of materials and labour. Planting designs have been altered to reduce the size of the display along with the introduction of herbaceous plants into the design. This has achieved more environmentally sustainable displays that deliver high public impact but with significantly reduced maintenance costs.

- 7.3 In addition, grass cutting regimes have also been reviewed. At present, the majority of grassed areas across the city are cut 15 times per annum. This traditional regime has been reviewed and changes trialled by the introduction of grass panels on a "rough grass" cutting cycle. This has been more commonly trialled on embankments or other areas where cutting is difficult due to the logistics. More recently, the use of wild flower has been trialled as a grass replacement or as a screen to allow the naturalisation of large grassed areas. This has been implemented most notably along Riverside and has been received enthusiastically by the public who appreciate the improvement in biodiversity as well as the more colourful displays provided.
- 7.4 Changes to working practices have been introduced that have seen the reduction of labour intensive operations such as removal of weeds in borders and the manual grass cutting operations replaced with less labour intensive practices, through the investment in more modern plant and equipment and maintenance techniques.
- 7.5 A working group was established to further review opportunities to extend these previously trialled changes in grounds maintenance operations on a broader scale across the city. It is considered that the following actions will continue these changes:
- redesign of bedding plant displays;
  - introduction of wild flower meadow and low frequency grass cutting in selected areas;
  - reduction of manual weed removal from borders through more spot herbicidal treatment;
  - treatment of daffodil, crocus bulb and corm areas;
  - replacement of rose beds with low maintenance planting regimes.
- 7.6 It is proposed to have the grounds maintenance teams continue to work on a five day working pattern Monday to Friday. At present, this group work 39 hours in the summer and 35 hours in the winter. In order to improve operational efficiency, it is proposed to introduce a more substantial differential between summer and winter hours of 42 hours summer and 32 hours winter. These working patterns would ensure that resources are deployed in the most effective manner.
- 7.7 The review into plant and machinery for this service established that current plant holdings could be reduced in certain areas as the equipment was no longer suitable or fit for purpose. Also the future control of plant and machinery could transfer to the corporate fleet manager to help improve efficiencies.

## **8. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 At present the Environmental Management functions are managed on an area based approach with two operational managers covering the east and west of the city, supported by a number of assistant managers and operational supervisors. The operational teams are supported by the asset management team providing support and advice on matters relating to landscape design, specification, biodiversity and community engagement.
- 8.2 The overall management structure will be reviewed and rationalised to meet future service needs, as part of the formation of the new Neighbourhood Services. Care will be taken to ensure that engagement and accountability to the local communities are maintained.
- 8.3 Integral to the overall organisational review is the introduction of greater flexibility between operatives across the organisation. At present there are currently 26 different job types of operatives with different job descriptions and functions. In order to significantly improve flexibility across the organisation posts, it is intended to reduce this down to approximately 5 job types. The revised posts will be far more

generic in nature and shall allow a greater degree of flexibility for planning and managing the workload, yet still recognising areas of specialism.

- 8.4 In implementing this new operational structure, it is recognised that staff will require to be supported in the provision of the necessary training throughout the transition, a fully comprehensive training matrix will be developed. These broader roles will provide a degree of job enrichment for staff and it is hoped to provide a more defined career path for operatives to progress within the organisation.
- 8.5 At present there exists a significant degree of variation in terms and conditions between operatives and these will require to be standardised in order to rationalise the job roles and realise the benefits of greater flexibility. This will be undertaken in-line with the Council's "Our People Strategy", report no. 446-2015 refers.

## **9.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 This report sets out the progress made to date in undertaking the major service review of Street Cleaning and Open Space Management. The review has sought to be comprehensive and inclusive involving staff at all levels within the organisation and across the various user departments. The review has also sought to engage with the workforce and the trade unions who have been represented as appropriate on the various groups.
- 9.2 Whilst the review is not yet complete, from the work done to date it is concluded that significant opportunity exists to re-design the services and to realise savings. The overall potential savings identified to date are estimated to be £1,395k per annum.
- 9.3 In order to achieve the savings identified it will be necessary to reduce the overall staffing levels by a total of 45 FTE's. It is hoped to secure these in time through natural turnover and the VER/VR scheme.
- 9.4 It is proposed to introduce a major capital improvements programme that will support the introduction of many of the proposed changes. In developing the programme of capital improvement projects priority will be given to projects that:
- are readily deliverable and provide opportunity to transfer appropriate staff;
  - contribute towards the future reduction in maintenance costs; and
  - provide a positive impact on the local environment.
- 9.5 The timeframes of the development, design and delivery of the capital projects will be critical to ensure that a pipeline of "shovel ready" projects are prepared and have undergone appropriate community consultation.
- 9.6 Capital allowances totalling £2.6m over the next two financial years have been made and will focus on improvement projects within the city parks, public open space, road and footpath verges including the green circular and cemeteries.
- 9.7 It is recognised that there exists further opportunity to make future efficiencies in areas such as:
- Further streamlining of mechanical sweeping routes based upon vehicle telematics data;
  - Reduction in vehicle specification utilised for street cleansing functions;
  - Future maintenance savings realised through the additional capital investment programme; and
  - Review of specialist ground maintenance functions excluded from this review.

- 9.8 Effective engagement with elected members, employees, customers, the wider public and community stakeholders/partners is essential to informing and supporting people through what can be a difficult and challenging period of change.

## **10.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainable Development, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

## **11.0 CONSULTATIONS**

- 11.1 The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report

## **12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 None

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