

Meeting:	Economy, Place, Access, and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date:	28 January 2025
Report of:	James Gilchrist, Director of Environment, Transport and Planning
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency (Cllr J Kent)

Neighbourhood Caretakers: Proposal Development

Summary

1. Executive and officers are keen to seek Scrutiny Committees views and ideas on how a Neighbourhood Caretaker model may be developed.
2. Attached as Annex A is a presentation of thoughts and ideas so far.

Background

3. Within the Council Plan is a commitment to Develop a “Caretaker” proposal to reflect pride-in-place priorities in neighbourhood plans.
4. It is important that the policy approach to caretaking is defined in terms of the outcomes to be achieved, members will set the policy direction and how to resource services. This then allows officers to determine the way the teams are most effectively deployed.
5. Scrutiny are being asked to explore both the policy and outcomes alongside how to resource a Neighbourhood Caretaker model. Officers are outlining different approaches to how they might be deployed most efficiently.

Consultation

6. At this early stage engagement has been with Executive Members. There has not been public engagement.

7. In terms of developing an approach and policy to the development of a Neighbourhood Caretaker scrutiny committee are being invited to review and help develop the policy.
8. A presentation is attached to help frame discussion with scrutiny committee – see annex A.

Options

9. A number of services already focus on cleaner and greener neighbourhoods. Public Realm undertake grounds maintenance and street cleansing of public areas. Housing Services manage housing area and the Communities Team engage with communities to maximise and co-ordinate volunteering activity.
10. This model seeks to develop a team to specifically focus on local priorities that emerge from ward walk abouts but are not picked up by existing service delivery.
11. A balance will need to be struck as clearly the objective is to deliver this model in the most efficient way possible. When deploying resource to undertake physical works such as public realm and grounds maintenance there is a balance to be struck in the way resource is deployed.
12. The more localised a resource becomes it reaches a point where it becomes inefficient. For example the Council has two large mechanised sweepers for the city. These work around the city, to take this task to a hyper local ward would require significantly more sweepers or complicated sharing of resource which would not drive efficiency.
13. In the same way a workforce whose tasks are very broad and not defined can mean that core elements of service begin to fail. For instance a emptying litter bins is a task based on a route. If that team are also tasked with other things e.g. removing graffiti then they may not complete their round within the allotted time and then the bins are not emptied and over flow.
14. Therefore any proposals for Neighbourhood Caretakers needs to work alongside existing services and balance up the most efficient way to deliver services.

Council Plan

15. Within the Council Plan is a commitment to Develop a “Caretaker” proposal to reflect pride-in-place priorities in neighbourhood plans.

Implications

- **Financial**

Within the proposed budget there is a proposal for Neighbourhood Caretakers - £150k to improve public realm spaces in our communities by improving services across departments, tapping into local knowledge and expertise and maximise the impact of volunteering.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

Any staffing changes would need to follow the normal staff change process and consultations with affected staff and trade unions would be part of this.

Risk Management

16. The proposals seek to mitigate the risks of a service becoming inefficient and how to prioritise. Scrutiny are asked to consider how these risks could be further mitigated.

Recommendations

17. Scrutiny are asked to:

- i. Consider the presentation and make recommendations on the development of policy and outcomes for a Neighbourhood Caretaker Model.

Reason: to inform and advise the Councils policy development for Neighbourhood Caretakers

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Contact details

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Presentation on Neighbourhood Caretakers