

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT 2

Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee

To: Councillors K Taylor (Chair), Daubeney (Vice-Chair),
Cuthbertson, Hook, Kilbane, Pearson and D Taylor

Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: The George Hudson Board Room - 1st Floor West
Offices (F045)

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 9 January 2023.
The attached additional documents are now available for the following
agenda item:

4. Public Realm Update (Pages 1 - 14)

This report provides an overview and update on the services and functions managed by Public Realm. This includes delivery through in house provision, the private sector and through a variety of arrangements with the community and voluntary sector.

This agenda supplement was published on 11 January 2023.

This page is intentionally left blank



17 January 2023

Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Head of Environmental Services
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Public Realm – Service description and update

Summary

1. This report provides an overview and update on the services and functions managed by Public Realm. This includes delivery through in house provision, the private sector and through a variety of arrangements with the community and voluntary sector.

Recommendations

2. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

Review the content of the overview and provide any recommendations to the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Reason

To improve the care and maintenance of the local environment including roads and streets, the city centre and parks and green space.

Background

3. Public Realm is one part of Environmental Services within (Directorate of) Transport, Environment and Planning. Environmental Services comprises Public Realm, Waste Services and Fleet Services.

4. Public Realm has existed in its present form for about 10 years and includes, as core functions, highway verge grass cutting, cleansing (including dog and litter bins), city centre cleansing, parks and open space management, and public toilets.

Service

5. A comprehensive breakdown of the services provided and managed are detailed in Annex 1. This includes information on what, who, where, when and in some cases with what. Where a service has a defined budget, this is also provided.
6. Most of the areas of responsibility for Public Realm are delivered through the in-house service (this covers grounds maintenance and horticultural activities across the city, litter and dog bin provision and emptying, litter picking, grass cutting, hedge cutting etc). The service also manages these services on Housing land.
7. The Public Realm service covers the following activities; highway verge maintenance, street cleansing (through manual and mechanical means), emptying of litter / dog bins, maintenance of housing land and shrub beds etc, cleansing of city centre and river walks, provision of parks and open spaces. It also covers Arboriculture (this covers the planting of new trees but also the requirements to survey (once every four years) council owned stock, management of Strays, closed churchyards, play areas, de-leaving works, cleansing on the A64, the treatment of weeds etc, management of public conveniences (toilets) and opening /closing of the bar walls. The service also delivers an estate worker service (delivered for Housing).
8. To support the work of the Public Realm service, there are a number of dedicated Friends of Groups that undertake work through various communities. The Environment and Community Officers from the Communities and Equalities Team provide the link to and coordinate the actions of local volunteers (e.g. Good Gym, York Cares / corporate days, Friends of and similar community groups). Annex 2 provides details of the volume of work undertaken and sample tasks between April to November 2022. The service also provides venues for Community Payback (delivered through the Probation Service). During 2022 the following areas were used as a base for their activities; Hull Road Park, Rowntree Park, Glen Gardens and Clarence Gardens.

9. As well as the work by the operational Public Realm staff, the care and management of parks and green spaces also involves a multitude of “landlord” functions. These include the proactive and reactive tasks such building maintenance, fence repairs, stonework repairs and ditch clearance. Such work is commissioned either through other Council services or local contractors.
10. Over several years, services and facilities traditionally provided by Public Realm have been transferred to the community under the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process, e.g., allotments, tennis courts, pavilions. Such transfers often require ongoing support to become fully established and have residual landlord obligations.

Questions submitted in advance by the Chair

11. How is performance monitored for each of those jobs/functions?
Response:
 - Service performance is monitored across the board via a range of methods including management / supervisor inspection / site visits and elected member and public feedback. KPI's are also used to track the responsiveness of the service to dealing with urgent jobs (e.g. reports of needles, environmental hazards etc).
 - All works areas have appropriate risk assessments and SSOW's (safe systems of work). As a number of the work areas require machinery and detailed training then all staff go through work placed instructions, receive regular and detailed refresher training and have all training activities logged and certified.
 - Where the service provided requires recorded inspection entry (e.g. play area equipment, river safety equipment, tree inspections etc) then information is kept on a dedicated data base(s).
 - For five of the main parks and gardens in the city, external validation is sought through the Keep Britain Tidy 'Green Flag' award. The Award is held at Rowntree's Park, West Bank Park, Glen Gardens, Clarence Gardens and Rawcliffe Country Park.
 - Through any awards of accreditations; for example the Purple Flag award for the city centre.

12. How are we dealing with / plan to deal with any aging workforce concerns and recruitment pressures? Response:

- A restructure of Environmental Services has been undertaken with final implementation expected in February 2023. As part of the restructure the service has sought to offer new opportunities at a supervisory and management level. Part of the work will be to implement succession planning activities across the service (including Public Realm) to ensure that the service remains fit for purpose and primed to deliver services over the coming months and years.
- As part of planning for the future, the Public Realm service recruited to six general operative posts in 2022 with a further recruitment exercise scheduled to take place in the coming weeks.
- Plans are in place to further increase staff training to ensure we have the greatest provision possible of multi-skilled staff
- Offer opportunities for staff to learn new skills (e.g. HGV through dedicated training programmes which the Council will fund through a training agreement)
- Seek to recruit apprentices through new apprenticeship opportunities that have been launched for grounds maintenance based work

13. How well “equipped” we are to do the jobs that need doing, from fleet, to apparatus and equipment, to basic tools? Response:

- Fleet
This is an area which has been recently addressed as the fleet across Public Realm was very old. The service has recently procured 10 new electric caged vans with a further set of vehicles due to be procured in the 2023/24 financial year. Two new tractors have been procured in 2022/23 along with a new telescopic arm for hedge cutting activities. A new articulated mini-sweeper has also been ordered for the city centre. All vehicles are maintained in-house and have regular inspections, services and MOT's. All staff receive familiarisation training when vehicles re replaced. Staff perform a daily vehicle check and clean vehicles on a regular basis.

- Equipment
The service has a large number of tools and apparatus required to undertake various tasks. These include hedge cutters, leaf blowers, leaf vacuums, strimmers, lawn mowers, ride-on mowers, trailers etc. All pieces of kit are asset tagged and have a replacement schedule. All pieces of kit are regularly inspected and cleaned. The service has recently undertaken an exercise to manage all equipment as well as vehicles through the 'Tranman' system.

14. Any other "live" matters, in your view, for consideration - sickness/injury rates, possible synergies between one service area to another, ability to meet residents' demand with ever declining budgets. Response:

- Meeting residents demand is always a challenge for any service and Public Realm is no different in that regard. Throughout covid, the service adapted its delivery to meet demand (through the various stages of lockdowns and saw demand fluctuate accordingly).
- The service continues to take steps to address sickness absence with most long-term sickness cases addressed and managed in line with Council procedures.
- One of the challenges in this area concerns residents' views on the local environment with often polarised views on what constitutes a 'pleasant local environment'. For example, some residents welcome grass being left longer to meet aspirations as part of the Pollinator Strategy with other resident's complaining if grass is not regularly cut on highway verges/open spaces etc. How we 'harmonise' these views is a challenge for the service moving forward.
- Mechanisation of services – investing in new machinery is vital to ensure we deliver an even more flexible and adaptable service as we move forward.
- HGV – a number of staff have 'grandfather rights' to drive such vehicles (road sweepers, path sweepers etc) and there is a national shortage of HGV drivers. A new training programme is planned but it is a risk for the service with an ageing workforce.

Council Plan

15. This report supports and contributes to the following Council Plan priority – a greener and cleaner city

Implications

- **Financial** - The total net revenue expenditure budget for public realm for 2022/23 is £3.3m. This covers the functions outlined within the report and annexes.

Contact Details

Authors:

Ben Grabham
Head of Environmental
Services
Tel No: 07749 710152

Dave Meigh
Strategy and Contracts
Manager
Tel No:

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

James Gilchrist
Director of Environment, Transport and
Planning

Report **Date** 09/01/2023
Approved

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background papers

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Public Realm Services

Annex 2: Environment and Community Officer activity April to November 2022

Annex 1 - Public Realm services and functions.

Notes

- a) staff levels will be greater than total establishment as most staff carry out multiple functions. Across Public Realm there are a total of 65 posts which covers (i) North/East team (ii) South/West team (iii) city centre cleansing team and (iv) estate workers (deliver services on housing land)
- b) staff, vehicles, equipment is shared between tasks/activities; the cost of which is not apportioned by task/activities. Staff multi task as activities are seasonal in nature
- c) V – indicates that service is assisted by volunteers / community input

Service / function	What	Who & planned / reactive	Where	Staff involved (fte)	Frequency	Volume information	Budget £'s
Highway verge maintenance	Urban grass cutting	In house, planned	Within 30 mph zone		10 cuts a year	7 ride-on mowers rounds and 2 tractors supported by a range of hand held mowing machines	
	Rural grass cutting	External contractor, planned	A and B Roads and some sections of C roads outside the 30mpn zone	n/a	2 cuts a year		
	Rights of Way on council land	External, reactive	Mainly rural areas	n/a	As required	10 locations	

Street cleansing	Mechanical sweeping	In house, planned and reactive	City wide			2 x road sweepers, 2 x path sweepers	
	City centre	In house, planned and reactive	Within foot-streets zone			2 x mini articulated sweepers	
	Emptying of litter / dog bins	In house planned and reactive	City wide		Multiple times daily through to weekly empties per week depending on location and time of year	Approx 1,500 litter and dog bins citywide	
	Leaf clearance	In house, planned and reactive	City wide		8-12 weeks in the autumn / early winter (weather dependent)		
	Litter collection (v)	In house, planned and reactive	City wide		Mobile teams undertake visits on an area by area basis		
	Fly tipping / tyres / asbestos collection	In house or specialist contractor, reactive	City wide		Vast majority of tasks dealt with internally as a reactive service. Asbestos removal is delivered through external contractor		

	Litter collection on A64	In house, reactive at the request of Highways England	A64		1 – 2 a year subject to necessary traffic control measures in place		
Weed control	Treatment of highway weeds	External contractor, planned	Curb lines, pavements, wall bottoms.	n/a	3 treatments per year		£50k
	Treatment of weeds around verge obstacles	In house, planned			1 treatment per year		
Grounds maintenance	Grass cutting	In house, planned	Parks, parts of the Strays, amenity greenspaces, housing areas, war memorials		Between 6 to 10 cuts a year depending on location		
	Shrub beds	In house, planned and reactive					
	Hedges - manual	In house, planned			2 cuts per year		
	Hedges – mechanical	In house, planned			1 cut per year		
	Hedges – mechanical	External contractor, planned	A and B roads	n/a	1 cut per year		Part of rural grass contract
	City ramparts	In house, planned	City walls		2 cuts per year	1 x specialist slope mower	
Arboriculture	Management	In house	City wide	1 fte			£135k
	Inspection	External consultant, planned	City wide	n/a	25 % of tree stock each year.		

	Maintenance (V)	Mostly in house, planned and reactive	City wide	3 fte			
	Tree planting	In house and local contactor	City wide		50 standard trees per on average		
Play areas	Inspection and routine maintenance	In house, planned and reactive	City wide	1 fte	Most sites inspected once a week	43 locations	
	Complex repairs and maintenance, equipment installation	Specialist providers, reactive	City wide	n/a	As needed	10 – 15 times a year	
City walls	Opening & Closing	In house, planned	City walls	2 part time	364 days a year		£21k
Public toilets	Management and cleaning	External contractor, planned and reactive	7 city centre locations, plus Acomb and Haxby		364 days a year		£96k
	Cleaning	External contractor, planned and reactive	Rowntree and West Bank Parks		364 days a year		
	Provision of offsite Raceday toilets	External contractor, planned	Little Knavesmire area		8 race meetings		Cost charged back to Property Services
Parks and Gardens	Green Flag entry (V)	In house	Main parks and gardens	1 fte supported	Annual	5 locations	

Community Activity (V)	Gardening, events, litter collection	Volunteers, Friends of, Probation Service, York Cares, Good Gym, businesses, planned and reactive	City wide with a focus on and main parks and gardens	by 3 fte Environment and Community officers	Year round	See Annex 2	
Rivers and water bodies	Safety Inspection of life buoys and riverside safety equipment	In house, planned and reactive	Clifton Bridge to Millennium Bride, River Foss to Huntington Road	1 fte	Weekly, year-round		
Closed churchyards	Safety Inspection of headstones and memorials	Council Stonemasons, planned and reactive	Mainly city centre plus a few Parish locations		Annual	23 sites	
Strays	General maintenance (V)	In house and local contractors. Assisted by Countryside and Ecology service	Micklegate, Walmgate Bootham and Monk Strays		Year round		
	Farm tenancies	Via Property Services	Hob Moor, Walmgate Stray, Parts of Bootham and Monk Strays				

This page is intentionally left blank

**Summary of Work with Volunteers by
Environment and Community Officers 1st April – 31st October 2022**

- Total volunteer hours (only including tasks / activities they are aware of): 5,603.5
- Average volunteer hours per month: 800.5
- Number of corporate days: 56
- Number of volunteer hours from businesses: 2,758

Total number of new volunteers signed up and inducted:

Gardeners: 13
Litter Pickers: 53
Goose Scarers: Just starting to reform

Total number supported:

Gardeners: 266
Litter Pickers: 824
Park Unlockers : 97
Snow Wardens: 295
Leaf Blowers: 36
Tree wardens 37

Friends of groups supported: 30

Sites worked on: 52.

Sample of work by the community overseen or arranged by the ECOs

- Sovereign Park (Acomb) Weeding of flower beds around the play area
- Carleton Street Play Area (Holgate) Installed raised beds, hard standing and tool shed. The new Carleton Street Community Garden group have installed further raised beds, have created new flower beds and planted up and have installed compost bins and a greenhouse.

- Alex Lyon House (Micklegate) Weeding, planting up raised beds, creating new flower bed and planting up, weeding and creating lawn area, cutting back weeds and grass in the orchard.
- Alma Terrace (Fishergate) Gardening group prepared land and progressing to refresh the area
- Glen Gardens (Heworth) Work started to refresh flower beds round perimeter of the park. Local school volunteers tending to wildflower area. Basketball and tennis court perimeters tended to
- Rawcliffe Country Park (Rawcliffe and Clifton Without) Froglife and volunteers have helped improve the condition of the pond. Regular trailbuilder volunteer days to do maintenance on the bike tracks.
- Clarence Gardens (Guildhall) Rose bed volunteer group meet weekly during summer months to tend to rose bushes. Refresh of wooden edging. New leaf bay installed
- Hob Moor (Dringhouses and Woodthorpe / Holgate) Regular volunteer litter picks by local residents, scouts and new volunteers. Thistle pulling in North Street pasture. Bramble and nettle cut back on Little Hob moor near to Hobmoor Terrace. Bluebell and wild garlic bulbs and wood anemone tubers planted in cleared areas. Broken wooden tree guards and barbed wire removed from wooded area. Underpass cleared of weeds, soil build up and scrub overhang
- West Nook Water Meadow (Haxby and Wigginton) 4 new Friends inducted and trained as gardeners. Wildflower area scythed and cuttings removed