

Wards: All

<p><b>Building Resilience into Arboriculture, Grounds and Maintenance Services</b></p>
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**Report of the** Director of Regeneration

This item is not exempt  
Therefore exempt reasons are not applicable

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan  
Forward Plan Reference No: 0075/21

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

- 1.2 The growth of housing and public spaces in Hull in the last ten years has placed additional pressures upon Streetscene resources to meet statutory inspections timeframes, planned and reactive maintenance as well as increasing customer demand for timely services from residents, businesses, visitors and Members. In addition, the introduction of flood mitigation measures, new green space, tree planting and ensuring access for all, presents resource challenges.
- 1.3 This report identifies the short-term measures proposed to respond to those pressures so as to improve resilience, service provision and outcomes in the arboriculture, grounds and street cleansing services across the city to deal with the growth in demand and ensure the Streetscene can undertake its work in line with statutory requirements, specifications and/or the service standards expected.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet commit £417,445, to be funded 40% (£167,445) from the General Fund and 60% (£250,000) from the Housing Revenue Account based on expected delivery across the City, through available in-year resources to provide the initial funding required to establish eight teams in Street Scene to undertake works to ensure that pedestrian footways and cycle ways are cleared through the 2021/22 winter and shop fronts maintained tidy:

	Team Type	Number of Teams Required	Total for 4 Months
Grounds & Open Spaces	Tree	1	£ 107,226
Grounds & Open Spaces	Shrub	3	£ 122,403
Street Cleansing	Leaf Clearance	1	£ 54,401
Street Cleansing	Internal Footpaths	2	£ 100,368
Street Cleansing	Litter Bin Emptying & Shop Fronts	1	£ 33,047

**Total**

£ <b>417,445</b>
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2.2 That the permanent funding arrangements be considered in the development of Street Scene budget for 2022/23 to ensure that the Council is able to sustain the required standards thereafter.

### 3 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To allow Streetscene to ensure it has the capacity to manage the additional works generated by the natural growth of the city and to take account of the impacts on the natural environment due to climate change

### 4 Background

4.1 Expansion in the city, new housing, flood mitigation, increased use of parks and inviting open space has increased demand.

4.2 The Customer Panel feedback also indicates that clean streets are seen as the most important in making a place a good place to live as well as most important in needing improvement

4.3 In addition, Streetscene has also faced the need to reprofile services away from routine office hours so as to ensure 24/7 coverage of the city is provided to meet out of hours pressures. The service also plays a key role in the ongoing response to Covid.

4.4 The maintenance of service provision is testament to the successful application of management techniques such as Total Quality, Lean Management and Six Sigma and investment in technology to support the streamlining of processes to reduce non-value added activities and increase value. This includes such things as route planning, vehicle telematics, hand-held technologies and real time reporting on the status of a customer request limited only by the speed at which full functionality can

be realised.

- 4.5 This means that, not only has Streetscene managed to adapt its human resources to better meet increased demand, it has also increased significant efficiencies to allow minimal resources to achieve wider 24/7 coverage and service specifications including rapid response to incidents.

Selecting three examples;

- The creation of a shrub/cleansing team to address the cycle tracks recognising that cycling was likely to be a key aspect of getting the economy going during the early days of Covid
  - Providing cover for major events such as the Sesh, Hull Fair and, elements HCAL parks management facilitating clean-ups and litter picking etc assets such as East Park, Peel Street.
  - Supporting community safety projects, Serious and Organised Crime reduction, Modern Day Slavery and Counter Terrorism reduction, localised Police related activities and soon to be safer travel routes as part of the Bus Services Improvement Plan to make people feel safe
- 4.6 New developments bring with them more roads, trees, weeds, grass to cut, shrubs, gullies, severe weather response such as gritting, flooding fallen/broken and unsafe trees.
- 4.7 The services referred to in this report are primarily planned works or routine scheduled tasks and reactive works as they arise.
- 4.8 When demand increases beyond the levels required to remain capable of fulfilling the works, the service ends up becoming more reactive. Scheduled works are invariably more productive, cost effective and efficient whereas the more reactive a service becomes, the costs increase and the time away from scheduled works increases which just fuels the issue.
- 4.9 The service has worked hard over the last five years or so to drive out a lot of inefficiency and whilst this will always be reviewed, it is not the source of the current issue which is simply not enough resources to accommodate the additional growth of the city and resident expectations.

## **Background to Services**

### Arboriculture

- 4.9 Streetscene manage and maintain all of the city's Highways trees. There are currently 29,430 Highways trees recorded electronically which accounts for approximately two thirds of highways trees in total. In addition, there are at least a further 150,000 trees within Housing owned land and the city's parks and open

spaces. The highways trees were last plotted electronically and inspected in 2002 by a company engaged by Highways. The trees on open spaces and council house gardens are not plotted. Historically works that have been raised and allocated to trees in the city have been reactive rather than proactive. Since October 2020 the Tree Officers have inspected and plotted over 16,000.

- 4.10 Streetscene has three Tree Officers that deal with all tree related enquiries, tree inspections, planting schemes, planning and insurance claims. It has three operational tree teams comprising of 10 full time staff with an operational Supervisor.
- 4.11 Streetscene oversee all tree planting across the city and over the last 10 years have planted in excess of 50,000 trees ranging from 1 year old whips to mature standards within the city boundary. Initiatives such as the Jacksons Project (planting 200,000 trees by 20510, Northern Forest and Trees for Streets are also dramatically increasing the city's tree stock in an effort to green the city, meet climate change targets and improve the environment as a whole. New developments also introduce additional trees into the city which are picked up through the land adoptions process and include areas such as Kingswood, Ings redevelopment and the transformation of the A63.
- 4.12 With the introduction of the Confirm computerised workflow system, Streetscene has now has the ability to electronically record all inspections of all trees on publicly accessible council owned land including highways, housing and open space. Forms within Confirm have been designed to capture all relevant information relating to each individual tree and any necessary works that maybe needed. A photograph is taken of the defect at the time of inspection.

#### Grounds Maintenance

- 4.13 We have seen the landscape of the city change and grow over the last 10 years with many new areas that have become adopted.
- 4.14 It is observed that the length of the growing season has extended over the last few years due to the effects of the changing climate. Historically the service would start grass cutting in late March and finish at the end of September. The service is still operational in November. This impacts on other duties those operational staff would undertake when not grass cutting.

#### Gully Service

- 4.15 After the floods in 2007, a national report was commissioned, and a recommendation was that gullies are cleaned at least annually.
- 4.16 Hull has a programme of cleansing gullies annually with main arterial roads cleaned twice yearly. This gives the total gullies to be cleaned per year 65,000.
- 4.17 The gully service are also the first teams to be called for issues with flooding and severe weather. In addition, the gully operatives are all expected (within their contract of employment) to be on the winter maintenance programme for road

gritting.

## 5 Issues For Consideration

### Arboriculture

- 5.1 We are currently inspecting over 16,000 highway trees and this information is being put into Confirm. To complete this task will take, we expect, over a year to complete at current estimations. As each inspection is carried out any works necessary to that tree are noted and a job is raised that is given a date-based priority. Each inspection made carries the possibility of raising an additional job within Confirm.
- 5.2 The ongoing tree planting programme will have an increasing impact on maintenance demands as schemes mature. The desire to significantly increase the number of trees in the city will need to be matched by a commitment to proactively maintain them with an agreed funded plan.
- 5.3 All the tree works on the highway now has to be permitted and depending on the length of a particular job would depend on which permit is requested and how long in advance they need to be applied for. This does mean that it cannot always guarantee a permit is granted for an area depending on competing other highway and utility works. At times turn access to the trees cannot be gained because of parked cars or other obstructions. This in turn means having to apply for another permit delaying the job further and also means lost productivity of the team.

### Grounds Maintenance

- 5.4 Over the past 10 years or so we have seen the city grow with new housing developments. Some of these such as Ings Road Estate have come back with similar amounts of work to prior re-development however others such as Kingswood, Hawthorn Ave, Riley College Estate, Milldane, Selset Way, Mulberry Lane Estate, Butterfly Park and Dragon Park to give some examples have come with significant new areas of land to be maintained by both grass cutting and shrub bed crews.
- 5.5 Grass cutting season has increased in length, during 2020 we started cutting on 17 February and didn't stop until 6th November. This has already increased the cutting season by 5 weeks. This increased number of weeks also impacts on shrub teams during the busy winter period as staff from our grass cutting crews go into these teams to help out with shrub tasks. Although there appears to be periods of hot weather, there is often rain in amongst them resulting in the grass continuing to grow. Grass cutting has to continue to be cut for the full growing season and is unable to be paused. The weather has also increased growth rates to the point machines struggle even after 7-8 days of growth. When grass cutting is paused the staff are redeployed on to shrubs, to help them out but because we have had to continually cut this has had an effect on the shrubs.
- 5.6 During winter period grass cutting staff have always been deployed on to the winter shrub pruning programme but the time that these staff are redeployed is decreasing due to the prolonged grass season. This programme is essential to get through the

summer especially because, like grass, the growth rate of shrubs and hedges has increased.

- 5.7 The development of flood mitigation aqua greens and swales requires more intensive techniques to maintain.

### Gully Service

- 5.8 Over recent years 23% of the gully teams work involved dealing with emergencies for flooding and severe weather. This includes working out of hours, at night and through the weekend.
- 5.9 In addition, the number of roads has increased, which also increases the amount of gullies. The most significant example of this is the Kingswood Development.

## **6 Proposed Solutions**

- 6.1 Below is the summary resource proposed to meet the immediate needs

### **Requirements to deal with immediate needs**

- 6.2 As outlined above, to address the additional requirements due to natural growth and development of the city there is a need to:
- 6.2.1 Create an additional arboriculture (tree) team. This is a total of three operatives
  - 6.2.2 Create an additional three shrub maintenance teams. This is a total of nine operatives
  - 6.2.3 Secure an additional support for street cleansing for leaf clearance, internal footpath clearance and shop front and litter bin emptying.

### **Longer term position**

- 6.3 To take account of the additional demands including pressures from expanded housing areas for services it will be necessary to develop proposals for inclusion in the development of the 2022/23 budget.

## **7. Summary**

- 7.1 Without additional arboriculture support the service will see completion times for certain works inevitably slip as newly identified higher priority works will take precedent. Additional resources will also allow us to be pro-active and less reactive in our service delivery.
- 7.2 Additional resources in our shrub teams will allow the service to carry out a thorough list of tasks throughout the year which will improve the local environment for our residents.

7.3 An additional triple grass cutting machine will enable Streetscene to carry out work to newly adopted areas without a negative impact upon the rest of the city.

7.4 There is a need to identify an additional resources plan for the longer term and tackle areas of the City that Streetscene has not previously been commissioned to undertake.

## 8. Options

### 8.1 Do nothing

Without the additional resources a backlog of work would grow, giving a timely response would suffer, cycle paths would not be maintained, paths would become difficult to access and there will be an increased risk of insurance claims

### 8.2 Apply additional funding

The service will be able to maintain in line with public expectation and statutory requirements and access. This option is the one recommended.

## 9. Consultation

### 9.1 Internal service area and CST only

## 10. Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal Services and Partnerships)

10.1 The report is noted. The services and works described in the report not only improve the amenity in the City but are important in preventing and dealing with claims against the Council in respect of potential damages for personal injury and in respect of damage caused by trees to properties, in both private and council housing. Such claims and the legal costs associated with these are significant. The benefits of additional staffing resource to proactively manage necessary works should have a positive impact in helping to reduce claims and thus part of the additional staffing costs would be offset against a reduction in the amount of damages and legal costs incurred by the Council, whether directly or via its insurance arrangements (SL)

## 11. Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)

11.1 The recommendations are supported. The additional financial resources can be contained within the latest in year projections for the HRA and contingency funding identified within the General Fund. Funding requirements to address city growth and any estate / rapid response service will need to be taken into consideration in the development of Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2022/23 Revenue and HRA Budgets.

## 12. Comments of Assistant Director of HR & OD and compliance with the Equality Duty

12.1 The Assistant Director of HR & OD supports the increase in both permanent and temporary resources required to meet increased service demands. It is assumed that, as the request is for additional teams/posts, relevant graded job descriptions already exist in the Council for these roles and that appropriate trade union consultation will be carried out in a timely manner.  
(KM)

13. Comments of Overview and Scrutiny

13.1 This report was considered by the Infrastructure and Energy Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting of Wednesday, 10 November, 2021. The Commission supported the recommendations at section 2 of the report. (Ref. Sc6541 (FH))

14. Comments of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

14.1 I fully support the recommendations made in the report. In this period when we are recovering from the harsh impact of Covid19, it is vital that we provide Streetscene with the resources to catch up with outstanding work, and to ensure the service offered to residents across the city is of the highest standard.

Further, I wish to extend my thanks to all our staff in Streetscene who have worked tirelessly during the last 20 months to maintain an effective service for the people of Hull.

**Mark Jones**  
Director of Regeneration

Contact Officer : Andy Burton

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Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: - None

## Implications Matrix

**This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications**

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	Yes
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	Yes
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	Yes
The report is approved by the relevant Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	Yes
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	Yes
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	Yes
Any human rights implications are included within the report	Yes
I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	Yes
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	Yes
I have included information about how this report contributes to the City Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	Yes
I have considered the impact on Children Looked After and Care Leavers and any resulting actions/implications have been included within the report.	Yes