

Meeting of the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee – 21st March 2024

Report of the Director of Environment

Update on The Neighbourhood Approach

Purpose of report

1. To present the current progress report on matters associated with the new Neighbourhood Services approach.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee review the contents of this report and that any identified issues are referred to the Cabinet Member and Director of Environment to feedback and inform future decisions.

Background

3. This report is intended to provide members of the committee with an overview of the new neighbourhood approach in Neighbourhood Services, with a focus on Street Scene. The team has responsibility for street cleansing and grounds maintenance following a redesign which was implemented on 1st November 2023.

The History of Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance, now referred to as Street Scene

Prior to 1st November 2023 the Street Scene functions were split across two service areas: -

Green Care	Green Care consisted of grounds maintenance, parks development, countryside services and the tree section. It was responsible for weed control, grass cutting, parks, green spaces, nature reserves and tree work within the borough.
Street Cleansing	Street Cleansing was a standalone service area which was responsible for the street cleansing of the borough, such as mechanical street sweeping, litter picking, graffiti removal, responding to RTCs to clear debris and spillages, removing dead animals from the highway, emptying street bins and fly tipping removal.

Two service managers previously managed the two above mentioned teams with two separate budgets. Due to this structure decisions were made in two areas of the Environment Directorate despite clear synergies between the two. As part of the redesign, it was therefore felt Street Scene should be created thus amalgamating street cleansing and grounds maintenance into the new Street Scene team.

The new Street Scene Structure

Under the previous Green Care and Street Cleansing structures it was identified that there were circa 40 different job titles and job descriptions. This meant officers and operatives often held very specific and rigid roles which meant deploying staff to anything outside their job description proved difficult. Therefore, these 40 job titles were removed as part of the redesign consultation process with staff in 2023, and 6 new job descriptions created for the whole of the Street Scene team, these being the Street Scene Group Manager, 5 Street Scene Neighbourhood Managers (each covering one of the new 5 community forum areas, instead of the previous north, central and south teams) 10 Street Scene Neighbourhood Supervisors (2 in each area) and 32 Street Scene Operatives – at Levels 1, 2 and 3 in each area.

By addressing the above-mentioned job titles and job descriptions issue, roles were combined which results in staff now being able to develop their skills and essentially become general practitioners, able to assist in all functions of Street Scene rather than either being a street cleansing or green care operative. This offers value for money as it means more resilience is created by having a team of multiskilled staff members who will eventually be in a position to deal with requests during one visit, once they have gained the necessary experience and received the appropriate training, work which is already in progress.

Under the Street Scene structure there is a Systems and Administration team, which consists of a team of 4 FTEs who provide important systems and admin support including managing our Whitespace and Confirm system which issues ad-hoc and routine works to the workforce, managing incoming calls and emails including supporting our 500 registered community volunteers whereby equipment is loaned to them and places such as schools.

In addition to the above resources, Street Scene has 4 new Street Scene Apprentices, which forms part of our succession planning as it is acknowledged we have an aging workforce.

The above resources results in the Street Scene team having a workforce of 184 staff members.

Community Forum Areas

The Street Scene Community Forum areas and associated wards are as follows: -

Area 1 - Dudley North	Sedgley, Gornal, Upper Gornal and Woodsetton, Coseley East.
Area 2 - Brierley Hill	Kingswinford North and Wall Heath, Kingswinford South, Wordsley, Brierley Hill, Brockmoor and Pensnett.
Area 3 - Dudley	Castle and Priory, St. James's, St. Thomas's, Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrews, Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood
Area 4 - Stourbridge	Amblecote, Wollaston and Stourbridge Town, Lye and Stourbridge North, Norton, Pedmore and Stourbridge East.
Area 5 - Halesowen	Cradley and Wollescote, Hayley Green and Cradley South, Belle Vale, Halesowen North, Halesowen South.

Progress Made in Street Scene

Street Scene colleagues are working closer than before with key community groups including stakeholders such as Policing teams, Housing, Waste, and other stakeholders. This forms part of the neighbourhood approach whereby Street Scene teams are forming contacts both inside and outside the council to enable a more joined up

approach. Working Groups are being set up with stakeholders to address issues facing citizens of the borough.

One of the many focusses in Street Scene is taking priorities from members, residents, businesses and community groups whilst ensuring expectations are appropriately managed and budget management controlled.

How Street Scene will be working differently

<p>Member Enquiries</p>	<p>Street Scene has introduced a new system in dealing with councillor and MP enquiries, Street Scene Neighbourhood Managers will now take the lead and track progress of such enquiries. This brings about a focus on accountability and delivery in each of the 5 areas, this should result in an improved response rate to councillors, MPs and citizens.</p>
<p>Focus on Community</p>	<p>Street Scene Neighbourhood Managers will attend several public meetings each year to learn of the issues in local communities and take priorities from them about what is important to residents and businesses locally. Street Scene will plan works around resident's priorities rather than simply focussing on an outdated route which has been stuck to for many years. It is important to note the importance of routine works; if the Street Scene team focuses on the routine tasks it knows are required, such as grass cutting, it is felt complaints will be reduced and satisfaction increased. Diverting operatives from routine works has a negative impact over the proceeding weeks whereby complaints are received as a result.</p>
<p>Performance Monitoring</p>	<p>Through digitalisation we are now able to track performance in terms of how quickly we respond and just how many jobs the Street Scene team deals with. Until recently street cleansing was paper based which resulted in antiquated processes. All staff in Street Scene will have regular one to ones with their line manager to ensure a private space to talk is provided to action their development and training requirements. Sensible targets will be set in line with one to ones and My</p>

	Annual Reviews, to ensure staff have clear expectations of what is required of them and how they each reach their targets.
Accountability	With updated and clear job descriptions the Street Scene workforce is now clear on their wide-ranging responsibilities. The Street Scene Group Manager has empowered the team to do the right thing. This is an important part of our new neighbourhood approach; we are trying to move away from an instruction culture and allowing our professional officers and operatives to do what they know is required in their areas.
Changing the Culture	At the centre of everything Street Scene will do from here, is it will strive to adopt a can-do attitude at all levels of the team, inspiring the workforce to take pride in the work they do and go the extra mile for the residents of our borough. Undertaking works as if they were in their own road or local park.
Focus on Improving the Streetscape	Street Scene will focus on improving the general appearance of the streetscape and will work closely with partners and stakeholders to do so, sharing the workload appropriately. There will be a particular focus on main entrances into the borough from neighbouring local authority areas and busy main road routes including town centres.
Maximising Recycling	Street Scene will play an active part in increasing our recycling figures. It will do this by undertaking projects to introduce vape disposal bins and street recycling bin provision, where funding allows. Street Scene will submit grant funding applications with a view of bringing in additional funding to achieve the team's aspirations.
Modernisation	Street Scene is keen to use technology available to bring about a more modernised service which operates in an effective and efficient way, by looking at new ways of working to maximise efficiencies.

The Volume of Street Scene's Work

The work Street Scene undertakes on a daily basis is vast. Street Scene is responsible for circa 4,000 roads in the borough whereby the team works hard to make sure all roads and green spaces are presented in the best possible way, from a street cleansing and grounds maintenance perspective. The below table sets out some examples of how a typical two-months period looks like in the Street Scene world.

*This data is taken from April and May 2023.

Task	Quantity
Footway Sweeping	Approximately 6,000,000 square metres of footway swept.
Channel Sweeping	Approximately 2,000,000 linear metres of channel swept.
Litter Bin Emptying of Street and Parks Bins	Litter bins were emptied approximately 55,000 times.
Litter Picks (carried out by operatives)	Approximately 3,000 litter picks carried out by operatives.
Litter Picks (carried out by volunteers)	Approximately 1,000 bags of litter collected by volunteers.
Grass Cutting	Approximately 10,000,000 square metres of grass mown.
Car Park Cleansing & Grounds Maintenance	There were approximately 400 jobs completed relating to car park cleansing and grounds maintenance related tasks.
Graffiti Removal Jobs	Approximately 100 graffiti related jobs completed.
Dog Fouling Removal & Cleanse	Approximately 80 jobs of dog fouling removal and cleanses completed.
Dead Animal Removal & Cleanse	Approximately 70 jobs relating to the removal of dead animals completed.
Fly Tipping Cases	Approximately 550 incidents of fly tipping responded to and removed.

A Summary of Neighbourhood Services

Neighbourhood Services is made up of four areas, which have been set out below.

Street Scene Manager: Leigh Whitehouse Street Scene Group Manager	Responsible for all street cleansing and grounds maintenance functions, such as mechanical street sweeping, litter and dog foul removal, fly tipping removal, grass cutting and weed control.
Parks, Countryside and Arboriculture Manager: David Keeley Acting Parks, Countryside and Arboriculture Manager	Responsible for parks development and assets, nature reserves, and all tree related work.
Licensing and Waste Enforcement Manager: Simon Smith Licensing and Waste Enforcement Team Manager	Responsible for all licensing related work, including premises and taxi licensing and waste enforcement, such as prosecuting offenders of fly tipping and littering.
Parking Services Manager: Steve Cooksey Parking Services Team Manager	Responsible for all Dudley Council car parks, including the enforcement of parking related offenses.

Finance

4. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Law

5. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Dudley Council must make sure that roads and open spaces under its control and to which the public have access are free of litter and refuse as far as practicable.

Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, Dudley Council has responsibility to undertake the cleaning of the highways for which it is the highway authority so far as the cleaning of the highways is necessary for the maintenance of the highways or the safety of traffic on them.

Under the Local Government Act 1988, Dudley Council has responsibilities in relation to the below areas: -

- Cutting and tending grass (including re-turfing and re-seeding but not initial turfing or seeding);
- Planting and tending trees, hedges, shrubs, flowers and other plants (but excluding landscaping any area);
- Controlling weeds.

Risk Management

6. No material risks have been identified that result from this report as no proposals are made.

Equality Impact

7. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to: -
 - Assess the potential impact of the service on different equality groups.
 - Identify any potential barriers or disadvantages faced by specific groups.
 - Ensure that the service is designed and delivered in a manner that promotes equality, inclusivity, and accessibility for all residents.

No negative equality and diversity implications have been identified.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

8. There are currently no human resources or transformation implications associated with this report.

Commercial/Procurement

9. There are no commercial or procurement implications associated with this report.

Environment/Climate Change

10. This report briefly sets out ways Street Scene can contribute to the environment and climate change. Following the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2020 the Council has developed a Climate Action Plan to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2030.

Council Priorities and Projects

11. This report sets out a way in which the Street Scene team has focus on improving service delivery and adopting a can-do attitude with focus on the communities it serves, which is in line with the Council's Priorities and vision.



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Appendices

None.

List of Background Documents

None.