

CABINET

Maintaining the Public Realm 4th October 2011

Report of Head of Environmental Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To provide Cabinet with a number of proposals for how some aspects of the District's public realm could be best maintained			
Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	August 2011		
This report is public			

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR DAVID SMITH

- (1) That Cabinet considers the implications of improving grounds maintenance provision and increasing cleansing provision in Morecambe, in line with seasonal demands.
- (2) Cabinet are requested to indicate whether any of the other potential improvements in relation to grounds maintenance and cleansing be considered as a priority.
- (3) That officers review how the maintenance of Williamson Park is delivered and bring back recommendations to Cabinet.
- (4) That following the assessment and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cabinet considers how the County Council's commissioning plan approach can be best developed.
- (5) That where required the City Council provides officer time to work with the County Council and community groups to help deliver a number of community led projects within the District.
- (6) That the City Council continues to work in partnership with the Probation Service and that a list of environmental improvement works for 2012/13 is developed by officers and agreed with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder.

- (7) That in preparing the Street Pride programme for 2012/13 officers also ask for areas of open space to be nominated.
- (8) That officers review current recreational provision for teenagers and bring a further report back to Cabinet. Because of the timescales involved it is expected any financial implications would need to be considered as part of the 2013/14 budget.
- (9) That Cabinet considers the benefits of improving street names plates and directional signs within Lancaster City Centre.
- (10) That as a principle development is seen as an opportunity to improve the public realm and that full account is taken of the ongoing maintenance implications of development.
- (11) That Cabinet considers the information with regard to PCSOs and indicates whether it wishes to consider the funding aspect as part of the development of the 2012/13 budget.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2011-14 includes the aims of-
 - Improving the attractiveness, accessibility and enjoyment of the district's parks and open spaces for visitors.
 - Working with partners to deliver services that keep the streets clean and safe
 - Delivering responsive and efficient statutory services
 - Delivering City and County Council 'public realm' services, making most efficient use of resources and achieving the aim of keeping the streets clean and maintained.
- 1.2 A Cabinet draft priority for 2012/13 it to look at levels of street cleansing and improvement of open spaces.
- 1.3 For the purpose of this report 'the public realm' is defined as any publicly owned streets, pathways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces. The main activities that have an impact on the public realm for the purposes of this report are-
 - Street cleansing
 - Grounds maintenance
 - Planning
 - Street nameplate management

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 **Street Cleansing / Grounds maintenance-** Following an earlier organisational restructure and comprehensive review of service provision these two functional areas are delivered through the same line management structure. This merging of the functions has resulted in improved efficiency

and has led to higher standards of service delivery.

- 2.2 In addition a range of services that were previously undertaken by the County Council are now delivered by City Council as part of a formal 'public realm' agreement. This arrangement is working well and is having a positive impact in all areas of the District.
- 2.3 Operationally work takes place to continue to make best of available resources.
- 2.4 As examples, from September 2011 a total of 5 new posts in grounds maintenance/ cleansing will be established. Post holders will undertake grounds maintenance work in the summer and a combination of grounds maintenance and cleansing posts in the winter. Funding for these posts has been found through reducing the total number of seasonal gardener posts and use of the budget provided by County as part of the formal 'public realm' agreement. Having an increased permanent establishment will allow staff to develop new skills and ultimately result in more effective service delivery. Furthermore, budgets that had previously been used to supplement cleansing through use of agency staff are now being used to provide an equivalent number of permanent directly employed cleansing staff, thus creating additional employment opportunities and increasing the efficiency of the operation.
- 2.5 Overall available resources for these service areas are used effectively and a balance between service delivery, education and enforcement is maintained.
- 2.6 Clearly there are areas that do suffer from littering, fly tipping, and other problems. Efforts are made to address these. Often though the problems are symptoms of poor infrastructure, lack of ownership by householders and wider anti social behaviour issues.
- 2.7 In terms of contribution to delivering the aims of the Corporate Plan and Cabinet's priorities a proposal that would make a significant contribution is to focus on the maintenance of Morecambe promenade. Amending cleansing and grounds maintenance schedules in line with seasonal demands as well as introducing new planting schemes would have a positive impact on the appearance of Morecambe. As an example within existing budgets Lancaster City Council's entry to the RHS Tatton show will in future be replanted in the Promenade and topically themed beds will be planted near the Eric Morecambe statue. For 2012 the theme for these beds will be the Olympics.
- 2.8 There is scope for further improvement. However, additional one off and ongoing expenditure will be required.
- 2.9 Based on a 3 year programme of enhancing the grounds maintenance of the promenade it is estimated that the additional budget requirement will be-

Financial Year	One off additional budget requirement	Ongoing budget requirement
Phase 1-2012/13	£17,000*	£0
Phase 2-2013/14	£17,000	£0
Phase 3-2014/15	£10,000	£0

An outline plan of the programme is included in Appendix 1. As can be seen the one off amounts are required to purchase items like planters. All revenue costs will be managed from within existing budgets including any future renewals and replacement. Officers are also currently in the process of contacting partners and local businesses with a view to them sponsoring some of the City Council flower beds.

*Please note that to deliver Phase 1 in 2012/13 a decision on the financial implications would be required by November 2011 in order for officers to order equipment and plants. The financial implication section of this report shows that Phase 1 could be funded within existing budgets through a virement that could be agreed by Cabinet.

- 2.10 For cleansing the most significant improvement would be to increase cleansing provision in line with seasonal demand. Increasing evening, weekend and bank holiday cleansing provision during the holiday season would have a significant impact on the cleanliness of the promenade and town centre. To achieve this, an ongoing increase in budgetary provision of £12,000 per annum would be required from 2012/13.

2.11 PROPOSAL 1- Cabinet are requested to consider the implications of improving grounds maintenance provision and increasing cleansing provision in Morecambe, in line with seasonal demands. As set out in the financial implications Phase 1 of grounds maintenance improvements could be delivered from within existing budgets, with Cabinet's approval, through a virement in this financial year. Phases 2 and 3 would need to be considered within the context of the overall budget and Cabinet is requested to indicate whether any of the other potential improvements in relation to grounds maintenance and cleansing be considered as potential growth in developing the 2012/13 budget.

- 2.12 Currently a situation exists in Williamson Park where some cleansing and grounds maintenance functions are provided directly by Environmental Services and some by Williamson Park staff. Greater efficiencies could potentially be generated through reviewing how maintenance in the park could be best delivered.

2.13 PROPOSAL 2- That Officers review how the maintenance of Williamson Park is delivered and bring back recommendations to Cabinet
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- 2.14 **Working with other Partners-** The overall appearance and perception of the public realm can clearly be improved by working closely with other partners.

- 2.15 The County Council has a huge impact on the management and maintenance of the District's public realm. From this year the County Council has produced a public realm commissioning plan. The plan details County public realm services and resources allocations in the District for 2011/12. At this stage the main stakeholders involved in the development of the plan have been County Councillors informed by relevant County Environment Directorate Officers.

- 2.16 The intention is that the document is constantly developed through ongoing consultation with County Councillors, District Councillors, Parish Councils and County and District Officers.

- 2.17 The County intend to use the proposed 3 Tier Forum as the main way of consulting with stakeholders and thus developing the commissioning plan.

- 2.18 From a City Council perspective feeding into the development of this plan provides a real opportunity to put forward public realm priorities within the District.
- 2.19 The City Council already works closely with the County Council in delivering public realm services. There is also the opportunity to use this plan as a way of joining up County / City Council / Parish Council public realm activity. This would help ensure that we are delivering joined up public realm services and in way that our residents would want us to.
- 2.20 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been requested to consider the opportunities the commissioning approach provides and make recommendations to Cabinet in the future.

2.21 **PROPOSAL 3-** that following the assessment and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cabinet considers how the County Council's commissioning plan approach can be best developed.

- 2.22 In addition the County Council are also working with City Council officers on a number of community led projects within the District. These are attached at Appendix 2.

2.23 **PROPOSAL 4-** that where required the City Council provides officer time to work with the County Council and community groups to help deliver these community led projects.

- 2.24 The Council's use of the Community Payback scheme to improve the appearance of the District has to date worked well. Currently the Council contributes £24,000 to the Probation Service to part fund the cost of a Probation Service supervisor, vehicle and tools. In turn the Probation Service undertake a list of environmental works provided by the Council.

2.25 **PROPOSAL 5-** that the City Council continues to work in partnership with the Probation Service and that a list of environmental improvement works for 2012/13 is developed by officers and agreed with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder.

- 2.26 The Council's Street Pride initiative has been a further success in terms of working with partners and improving the appearance of the District. A suggested refinement for 2012/13 is that calling for streets to be nominated we also call for areas of open space to be nominated.

2.27 **PROPOSAL 6-** that in preparing the Street Pride programme for 2012/13 officers also ask for areas of open space to be nominated

- 2.28 **Street Name Plates-** The City Council has a statutory duty to provide and maintain street name plates within the whole of the District. The annual budget provided for this service is £13,200. In order to improve the experience for both residents and visitors to our City Centre work has taken place to assess the state of the existing signage in Lancaster City centre. To ensure that the City Centre is clearly signed with name plates that are appropriate to a conservation area would require a one off amount of £16,000 to cover the cost of either repainting or replacing. Samples of work previously undertaken are shown in appendix 3. In addition a further £4,000 would be required to provide directional signage to places to visit (eg VIC, Roman

Baths). The financial implication section of this report shows that Phase 1 could be funded within existing budgets through a virement that could be agreed by Cabinet.

2.29 **PROPOSAL 7-** that Cabinet consider the benefits of improving street name plates and directional signs within Lancaster City Centre. Subject to this Cabinet approves the £20,000 virement required to fund the works.

2.30 **Development led improvement-** Many of the environmental issues that the Council deals with are symptoms of bigger and more expensive problems related to existing infrastructure. As an example some parts of the City Centre are very difficult to cleanse because of types of surface, street furniture etc. The Square Routes project in the City Centre and the Morecambe Action Plan present an ideal opportunity to ensure that ongoing maintenance is considered at the design stage. The proposals that develop from these are likely to have positive implications for the management and maintenance of the public realm in Lancaster and Morecambe. The plans when delivered have had the input of managers who will be responsible for maintaining them and as such there is confidence that this development will lead to sustained improvements. In the past this joined up approach has not always happened and developments have taken place without full consideration of the future maintenance or consideration of how section 106 monies could be best used.

2.31 **PROPOSAL 8-** that development is seen as an opportunity to improve the public realm and that full account is taken of the ongoing maintenance implications of development.

2.32 **Recreational Facilities-** the Council has in place a strategy for playground provision that has seen significant improvements to play provision within the District and this approach has been successful at attracting external funding. Feedback suggests that whilst play provision for younger children is catered for there could be more play facilities for teenagers. At this stage the evidence for this is largely anecdotal and furthermore planning of provision of facilities for teenagers needs to take into account what teenagers would actually want and the views of surrounding communities.

2.33 **PROPOSAL 9-** that Officers review current recreational provision for teenagers and bring a further report back to Cabinet. Because of the timescales involved it is expected any financial implications would need to be considered as part of the 2013/14 budget.

2.34 **PCSOs-** Cabinet have requested further information on the position with regards to funding of PCSOs in 2012/13 and clearly PCSOs do make a contribution towards maintenance of the public realm.

2.35 In 2011 The Home Office agreed that they will for the next two years continue to provide the 2/3 funding that they currently contribute towards PCSOs if someone else contributes the other 1/3. No further information is available as to the detail of PCSO funding beyond April 2013.

2.36 For 2011/12 the LDLSP has provided the majority of the contribution to 9 PCSOs within this District. At this stage it seems unlikely that the LDLSP will have the funding to be able to make this contribution in 2012/13.

2.37 In order to maintain the level of PCSOs currently funded by the LDLSP a contribution of £99,000 would be required in 2012/13.

2.38 **PROPOSAL 10-** that Cabinet considers the information provided with regards to PCSOs and indicates whether it wishes to consider their funding further as part of the development of 2012/13 budget.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 If Cabinet wishes to explore some of these proposals further then appropriate consultation will take place.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 This outline report is provided to allow Cabinet to consider at an early stage what options exist with regard to maintaining the public realm. Cabinet are requested to consider each of the proposals and if required add further. This will provide officers with the direction required to develop the relevant parts of the corporate plan, for later consideration by Members.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The report sets out proposals for the maintenance of the public realm that are in line with the Corporate Plan and Cabinet priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Council's Corporate Plan 2011-14 includes the aims of-

- Improving the attractiveness, accessibility and enjoyment of the district's parks and open spaces for visitors.
- Working with partners to deliver services that keep the streets clean and safe
- Delivering responsive and efficient statutory services
- Delivering City and County Council 'public realm' services, making most efficient use of resources and achieving the aim of keeping the streets clean and maintained.

A Cabinet priority for 2012/13 it to look at levels of street cleansing and improvement of open spaces.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The proposals outlines will impact on the maintenance of the Public Realm in the District as a whole.

There is a positive linkage between a well maintained environment and community safety.

It is important that the ongoing maintenance of the public realm is factored into developments and this is set out within the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal have been consulted and have no further comments to make.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Proposal 1 – seeks a 3 year phased programme of grounds maintenance works on Morecambe promenade estimated at £17,000 per annum. As reported through the PRT process, the Grounds Maintenance function currently has 2 vacant posts which it is currently recruiting to. The latest position regarding the turnover savings is currently in excess of £21,000 plus oncosts. It is therefore possible that should Members choose to support Phase 1 then the £17,000 funding needed could be met through the virement scheme which at these levels requires Cabinet's authorisation. With regard to Phases 2 & 3 of the improvements these would need to be considered as a growth item within the forthcoming 2012/13 budget process. For information further salary savings are anticipated due to the delayed recruitment of the posts detailed in section 2.4 estimated in excess of £11,000 plus oncosts.

Proposal 2 – there are no direct financial implications at this point in time but it is hoped that by combining working practices could ultimately generate efficiency savings through taking advantage of economies of scale available plus reduced management and operational costs. Any future savings identified will be built into the revenue budget as part of the budget process.

Proposal 3 - there are no direct financial implications at this point in time.

Proposal 4 – providing officer time will be met from existing budgets.

Proposal 5 – the 2011/12 approved revenue budget assumes a continuation of the partnership with the Probation Service.

Proposal 6 - there are no direct financial implications at this point in time.

Proposal 7 – seeks one-off funding of £16,000 to repaint or replace existing signage in Lancaster City Centre plus £4,000 to provide additional directional signage. Again, as reported through the PRT process, salary savings to date of £50,000 have been achieved within the Waste Collection function through re-evaluating and streamlining working practices. Following the review, 5 posts have now been identified for deletion equating to ongoing annual savings of £108,000 which will be built into the forthcoming budget process. It is therefore possible to utilise £20,000 of the savings to fund this proposal through the virement scheme which again at this level requires Cabinet's authorisation.

Proposal 8 – there are no direct financial implications at this point in time. The implications of ongoing maintenance of future developments should be considered at the design stage and reported as necessary.

Proposal 9 - there are no direct financial implications at this point in time. Providing officer time will be met from existing budgets.

Proposal 10 – as detailed in the report, Cabinet requested further information on the future position of the PCSOs. It is highly probable that the LDLSP will not be able to continue to provide the £99,000 required to fund one third of their overall costs in 2012/13, and Members need to be mindful of this situation.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

None

Information Services:

None

Property:

None

Open Spaces:

As outlined in the report

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

As highlighted in the report, the use of the virement scheme would allow progress to be made in this year in various proposed priority areas. In considering such virements, Cabinet should be mindful that they would result in lower savings in the current year, resulting in less balances being available to meet savings targets, or to be spent on other needs or priorities. This assumes that there will continue to be a net underspending against the budget in this year, which seems reasonable based on current trends.

With regards to potential growth for future years, consideration as part of the budget process is in line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. It ensures that all such growth bids can be considered alongside each other in context of the Council's proposed priorities and other spending needs or requests, and what is affordable. At present the Council's financial outlook shows that it needs to make financial savings, and this need would increase in order to provide any scope for growth.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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