

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	20th July 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3289
TITLE:	Investment in Neighbourhood Services from 2022	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Services (highways maintenance, waste, cleansing, fleet, parks & grounds) has delivered significant cashable service efficiencies during the past 10 years. This has resulted in a risk-based approach to delivery of a number of functions and in some cases, decisions have been taken to stop services. The Council has invested additional funding in street cleansing in 21/22 and would like to invest further in Neighbourhood Services to improve standards and reinstate some services.
- 1.2 This report provides options for future investment in these high-profile front-line services for 22/23. The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (CES PDS panel) has been consulted on these proposals and will be further engaged as the proposals are developed to be considered through the budget setting process.
- 1.3 The Cabinet also is committed to immediately stopping the use of glyphosate to treat street weeds throughout the district on a permanent basis. One of the proposals include investment into mechanical and manual removal until other viable treatment solutions can be identified.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Agree that the Council will no longer use glyphosate to control street weeds and will prioritise funding to mechanical and manual weed removal for street weeds in 22/23 whilst continuing to research viable alternatives.
- 2.2 Agree the areas to be considered within the Neighbourhood Services portfolio for further investment as a 12-month pilot, making a commitment against the council's £2m Covid contingency budget that has been earmarked to manage council priorities and backlogs on operational services. This money to be released from 2022/23. At the completion of the pilot, the outcomes will be reviewed to ensure they deliver the necessary service improvement and considered as part of the council's financial planning processes for long term service investment in the 23/24 budget.
- 2.3 The Cabinet is asked to take into account issues raised by the Scrutiny Panel when they report back on their findings.
- 2.4 Delegate authority to the Director of Place Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, to develop the most operationally effective and value for money delivery arrangements.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The neighbourhood services covered by this report are high profile in our communities and how we deliver these impacts upon the reputation of the council. Many are statutory in nature and constitute a mix of proactive and reactive services. In addition, these are high volume services both in respect of service deliver and the number of customer enquiries/contacts. The table below provides some detail on scope:

Highways	Parks	Waste
1200 kms of roads 17,000 streetlights 100 sets of traffic signals 25,000 road gullies 2000 structures 1040 kms Footways and footpaths 11000 signs and bollards 9 gritting routes totalling 268 miles of road	270 Parks and Open Spaces managed 6 Heritage Parks 59 Play Areas 28000 Trees & 7 Woodlands (to date) 24 Allotments 80000 plants grown each year	Waste and recycling collections provided to 86,435 households Every 4 weeks over half a million refuse and recycling collections take place 870 business waste customers serviced Cleansed over 1300 miles of highway Litter picked main road litter twice a year Emptied litter bins two/three times a week or over 90,000 times a year

3.2 In common with every local Council, this Council has had to make cashable efficiencies to service provision in order to balance its budgets over the last 10 years. Services such as washing and replacement of highways signs have been stopped and there has been a focus on a risk based to approach to service delivery and maintaining statutory minimum in some areas.

3.3 The Council is mindful of its core objective to Improve People's Lives, the principles of prioritising it's declared climate and ecological emergencies and giving people a bigger say.

3.4 The Council has this year invested in increasing street cleansing activity, which has resulted in improvements to response times and service delivery improvements. Additional activity includes, main road litter picking in rural areas and weekly visits to urban wards. Examples of other options that may be included in the pilot are as follows:

- Mechanical and manual removal of street weeds – stopping the use of glyphosate and working with communities to manage street weeds in some locations.
- Street cleansing – More proactive cleansing. Visiting more areas more frequently, litter picking main roads more frequently, Improved response times and increased visits to areas on routine schedules including deep cleans of channels and gulleys.
- Graffiti removal –improving response times and enhancing the service
- Enforcement – continued investment in enforcement against fly tipping and litter dropping and other activity that breaches relevant environmental law.
- Gulley emptying – increasing the frequency of emptying
- Highway signs and street nameplate – Cleaning signs & cutting vegetation from them more frequently, replacing worn out signs and repainting signs.
- Highway road markings – more frequent painting of worn out road markings
- Improvement to customer feedback on issues raised through our website for attention, improving our digital systems and information for residents about issues affecting their specific areas
- Enhanced response times to road and pavement maintenance

3.5 This investment would also provide an opportunity to pilot area-based delivery mechanisms, working in consultation with ward councillors and town and parishes councils to assess costs and bring forward longer term plans.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Council is the statutory Highways Authority, Waste Collection and Waste Disposal Authority and Principle Litter Authority and is governed by legislation that dictates statutory powers and standards that must be upheld.
- 4.2 The proposals detailed will raise standards above the Council's statutory minimum service provision in the areas listed.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 It is estimated that sums of up to £950K revenue would address the areas detailed to give a visible improvement in standards. This funding would be for plant, equipment, labour and contract payments for the 12-month pilot
- 5.2 These additional services will be funded from a commitment against the council's £2m Covid contingency budget that has been earmarked to manage council priorities and backlogs on operational services. This money to be released from 2022/23. This is a one off pilot and any further funding would need to be considered as part of the council's financial planning processes.
- 5.3 The Council's Medium Term Financial outlook currently forecasts a further revenue savings requirement of £12.6m for 2022/23 in order to set a balanced budget. Any permanent growth in the Neighbourhood Services portfolio would need to be offset with savings in other service areas, and this will need to be considered as part of the budget process for 2023/24 and future years.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making, risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 Equalities impact assessments will be completed for all proposals considered in detail through the budget process.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 In determining investment in the areas detailed above due regard will be paid to reducing the carbon impact of our activities and plant and equipment using fossil fuels will be reduced to the minimum possible. Alternatives will be procured
- 8.2 The proposal to stop the use of glyphosate in the management of street weeds will contribute to our work in response to the ecological emergency, significantly reducing the use of chemicals in our operations and providing greater flexibility in how street weeds/pavement plants are managed.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 This report details areas for consideration through the Council's budget process. Other areas will come forward through the CEPD Scrutiny Panel work, and through the process itself.

10 CONSULTATION

This report has been consulted with the S 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and Cabinet members. It has already been agreed to engage Scrutiny members and there will be engaged of ward councillors and Town and Parish Councils.

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Background papers	
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