

**A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY
BOARD WAS HELD ON 8 MARCH 2022**

Councillor Burgess

Councillors Raffaelli, Bateman, Beavis, Blackman, Carter, Earle, Mrs Furlong, Hutchison, Miss Kelly, Meenaghan and Westerby

PART II

114. REVIEW OF STREETSCENE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE.

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Streetscene regarding a review of Streetscene Grounds Maintenance Service.

The Head of Streetscene updated the Board on the costs involved in paragraph 1.5. The investment of £516,667 from capital and the vehicle lease costs of £67,540 had been approved by Board. He also pointed out that paragraph 2.6.3 should read possible introduction of apprentices, not possible apprentices.

A Member wished to recognise that the thinness of the report did not reflect the amount of work that had gone into bringing the service in house and wanted to thank the Officers.

In answer to Members questions, the Head of Streetscene advised that since the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) the number of staff employed had risen from 26 to 30, the additional 4 being seasonal workers employed through the PCC temporary staff agency.

Officers advised that the interaction between the maintenance service and the Housing department was working very well indeed and the additional work they have taken on in regard to void properties etc has been very well received. They were able to offer a quicker response time than a contractor, and provided better value for money. Officers felt there was more that could be offered to the Housing department, and this would form part of the review to determine how both internal and external customers can be satisfied with the time and resources available.

Members were advised that the review would be undertaken by the Head of Streetscene and the Streetscene Operations Manager, with input from the Enforcement Manager and an Officer from Portsmouth City Council. It was hoped that these two Officers would provide insight from a different aspect.

Members were advised that engagement of staff would form part of the review, and a letter has already gone to staff advising them that the review will take place. There have been no concerns raised yet, and there would be 1-1 engagements. Officers felt that since the service had come in house the staff have felt more engaged and encouraged by the investment in new uniforms and equipment. There is good communication and issues regarding equipment faults etc are raised quickly.

Members felt that they had received positive feedback from residents who thought that the staff seemed proud to be working for the Council.

Members saw the benefits to the Housing department and how there would be a monitoring of all activities to ensure open and transparent value for money. The budget allocated to repairs would go further as they would be charged at cost and wouldn't have to pay a contractors profit margin.

The Head of Streetscene reassured Members that succession planning would form part of the review to ensure skilled staff were able to mentor apprentices or trainees and provide the skilled workforce for the future. A skills matrix would be produced identifying the skills already present within the team. For many of the current team, grounds maintenance was a second career and they brought bricklaying engineering etc experience to the team. The apprentice scheme would work in conjunction with Sparsholt College and would provide a mix of day release to college and on the job training. Schools were also sending pupils for work experience. These roles may provide opportunities for those young people with additional educational needs.

The Streetscene Operations manager advised Members that part of the review would be to understand better the requirements of the Housing department and identify what increase in staffing levels would be required to meet demand on top of grounds maintenance commitments. These additional staff would hopefully offer a variety of skills that could be used across all areas. The agency at Portsmouth City Council would be used to fill these positions in order to minimise recruitment timescales.

Members were advised that there were other areas where currently contractors were used where savings could be made. Tree work and playground repairs and improvements being two of the most obvious, but the review may identify others.

Members wished to congratulate the Head of Streetscene, his team, those in the Procurement department and all who had worked hard to facilitate this change during a time where Covid had created additional issues and delays.

A Member wished for caution to be used in the next phase of development to ensure resources were not overstretched and too much taken on.

Members were advised that the review would start straight away with completion anticipated by the end of 2022, beginning of 2023. Should this deadline become untenable, then an interim report would be brought to Board to advise on progress made and reasons why there would be delays.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the overview and approved a full review in due course of the strategic direction of the service and associated operational and staffing adjustments to further enhance service delivery.