

2017

Future Council Improvement Review -
Neighbourhood Services
for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee



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Executive Summary Report to OSC January

2018

Neighbourhood Services Future Council Improvement Review

1. Background

The Environment and Transport Business Unit (BU6) is currently undergoing a series of reviews as part of a transformation programme. This is looking to review and modernise Neighbourhood Services, Waste Collection, and Highways, Engineering and Transportation; in addition to looking at cross-cutting support areas such as Fleet Services and the Stores function. The Future Council Improvement Reviews are delivered and managed by the BU6 Transformation team working in conjunction with other core and front facing business units.

Barnsley continues to work towards the Future Council ambition “*Working together for a brighter future, a better Barnsley*”, to become a more customer focused, modern, efficient and commercial authority and a destination that people want to live and work in. The way we manage our environment within our Neighbourhood Services, through grounds maintenance work and street cleansing, has an immediate impact on the people who visit, work and live in our town.

The service has already gone through extensive change and has removed approximately £1M from the service since 2010, primarily achieved through staffing reductions mainly attributable to the restructure implemented in 2013/14, the details of which are outlined below:

Financial Year	Reduction	Value
2010/11	Restructure	£0.050M
2011/12	Reduced mechanical sweeping	£0.075M
	VFM in relation to vehicles	£0.040M
2012/13	Reduce grass cutting frequency	£0.013M
	Reduce shrub bed	£0.100M
2013/14	Service reduction in operational services	£0.630M
2016/17	Service reduction in operational services	£0.233M
	Increase in income targets	£0.100M
		£1.241M

As we continue to invest in and redevelop our town centre and support businesses and families to relocate to Barnsley, a key priority is maintaining the physical environment managed by Neighbourhood Services and its modernisation to meet future demand.

As a result, a Future Council improvement review of the service was requested. The review examined current service delivery and looked at how the functions are managed. This has identified opportunities for modernisation within the service enabling a flexible operating model to continue to meet the needs of our customers and communities.

2. Key Issues Facing The Service

Neighbourhood Services costs the Council £2.2M (net spend) each year and includes grounds maintenance, litter collection, public rights of way and arbour maintenance. The service currently employs over 100 members of staff to keep the borough clean and tidy, however it is recognised that the service currently faces a number of issues that need to be addressed and these include:

- It is acknowledged that a key priority is to keep the town centre, primary gateways to the town and principal towns tidy, especially given the Council’s investment in the Glass Works development. It is

therefore critical that the service provides the best service achievable during and after the construction period

- The rigidity of some working practices limits service delivery due to prescriptive work-scheduling and silo working within Neighbourhood Services. Therefore, not allowing deviation from the task, which can impact customer perception and overall outcomes
- The current working patterns are standardised over 5 working days; this needs modernising to reflect 7-day demands of the service and extend the working week like the new Environmental Demand Management Service (EDMS) teams. These 4 time-limited multi-disciplined teams of two are providing grounds maintenance support to programmed services on Primary Gateway routes, the Town centre and Principal Towns.
- The physical demand of the work is impacting on productivity of some of the operatives
- The volume of assets that the Service maintains has evolved over the decades. For example, there are over 16,000 grass plots, which has inevitably impacted the workloads. However only 618 are located within the town's primary gateways
- On-going budget pressures and the need to achieve more for less

3. The Review

The primary focus is to progress and implement the service improvement opportunities identified in this review, without a diminution of service to the public. This will be achieved by applying 'lean' principles to maximise the efficient and effective use of resources and where and how they are deployed, whilst delivering the best possible outcomes for local people, businesses and communities. The service will also build on the learning from recent improvements to reduce fly-tipping, which is an example of our 'One Council' approach to service improvement; demonstrating that services can be improved without additional resources.

The terms of reference for this Neighbourhood Services review, provided the following scope:

- Assess the performance of the service
- Compare performance against others to better understand performance and value for money (VFM)
- How is VFM assessed within the service and demonstrate this
- Assess the financial position of the service
- Analyse the service structures, management layers, roles and responsibilities
- Evaluate the working practices and productivity of the staff to help identify opportunities for efficiency and improvement
- Review the workforce planning and development of the service
- Examine the interface with the Area Councils' commissioning
- Review customer satisfaction, complaints data etc.
- Consider the commercial opportunities with the service
- Procurement to include analysis of spend and opportunities for savings/improvement.

The Transformation Team has been established and recruited to over the last 3 months and the additional capacity allowed for an independent review of the service to commence. The Team has specifically looked at:

- Overall performance against service standards
- Service performance in comparison with similar council services and against other authorities
- Financial performance and service arrangements
- Service delivery structures, in terms of Future Council principles and service requirements
- Customer satisfaction levels
- Reviewing supply chain relationships.

The approach taken has been to examine and evaluate all the business activities and processes along with any relevant documentation. This has been completed in conjunction with the individual team members, including site visits and hands on exploration with the crews themselves.

The recommendations and findings within this initial summary report are evidence-based and it is accepted that some difficult decisions will need to be considered to allow the service to move forward and evolve. It should be noted that there are significant opportunities for change to improve value for money by delivering the same level of service to the public but more efficiently by aligning further with Future Council Values.

4. Key Findings of the Review

Following an initial review of Neighbourhood Services and engagement with all employees, we have been able to determine the following broad conclusions:

- The current operating model for service delivery is not suitable in its current format. There is a need to adapt the service model to ensure that the right service is delivered at the right time and place, with a strong focus on improved outcomes, aligned to Future Council. This transformation change will result in improved business processes along with a flexible and modern workforce
- The initial observations indicate that the service could be delivering greater value for money, when looking at the cost vs output, but it is accepted that further work is required in the area
- The multiple service standards that are currently adopted do not lend themselves to efficient service delivery, allowing for wastage by not maximising the use of the resource available
- Across the range of services there are operatives that are currently not deployed in the most effective and efficient way
- Use of technology is minimal, resulting in lack of efficiency and effectiveness in some areas
- The service continues to maintain assets (16,000 grass plots and 1,900 bins) along with facilitating legacy agreements that have not been reviewed or aligned to the Future Council principles
- The current management arrangements for the maintenance of the parks within the borough need to be brought in-line with the 'One Council' ethos, as they are currently maintained by various teams within the Council

- The scope of work delivered by Area Councils has the potential to better complement the Neighbourhood Service offer
- Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and general performance monitoring requires improvement in areas as it is not fit for purpose. A stratified performance framework needs to be developed so that the service is clear of its strategic, tactical and operational indicators and both managers and employees can be held to account for service delivery
- Poor communication between the operational management team and front line services is evident and this leads to lack of trust, urban myths and resources reverting to the old ways of working

5. Recommendations

The key recommendations for consideration are outlined below and will support improved service delivery and outcomes for customers, achieve greater efficiencies at scale and support the Future Council ambition to ensure the service is efficient, effective, high performing and sustainable.

- 1. Develop a target operating model and then develop a new structure reflecting the findings of the review, which ensures the right service is delivered at the right time and place ensuring a strong focus on improved outcomes whilst aligning to Future Council. This transformation change will result in improved business processes, with a smarter workforce, by:**
 - a) Harmonisation of service standards across all client and customer groups, which will ensure workforce deployment protocols are reflective of and aligned to demand;**
 - b) Rationalisation of the 16,000 grass plots and 1,900 bin units held within Neighbourhood Services, in conjunction with Asset Management and Communities**
 - c) Support joint working across the Council's public spaces to remove the potential cross over and resource duplication within Neighbourhood Services, Area Council and Parks**
 - d) Challenge, remove or formalise the existing legacy agreements that are operating within service**
 - e) Introduce enabling technologies and automation within the service to improve efficiency for both frontline services and the back office support function**
 - f) Use social media, active campaigns and education programmes to proactively manage demand for services**
 - g) Develop new workforce structure using Council's Design Principles**
 - h) Address the cultural and leadership issues within the service to ensure alignment with the Future Council vision, values and one council principle**

6. Governance

To oversee the delivery of the Future Council Improvement Reviews and provide appropriate governance arrangements a steering group has been established. Support towards this service review cross-cuts the Council and includes representation from the following business partners:

- HR
- Finance
- Performance
- Area Council
- IT
- Customer Services
- Parks
- Procurement
- Workforce Development Team

The approach being taken with the reviews is to present preliminary findings to Cabinet and to follow this with a second stage final service recommendations report that identifies how services will be modernised. Once support for these changes has been agreed then the implementation work will commence.

7. Next Steps

- Develop the overall transformation, review governance arrangements such as the programme and project board, progress reporting and the incorporation of the reviews within the business plan for the coming year;
- To present the final service recommendations for support to implement in line with the project plan for April 2019; and
- Consult with unions to provide them with an opportunity to review the first stage report recommendations of the review.