



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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Date: 18 November 2019

To the Chair and Members of the  
**COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **STREET SCENE RAPID IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>
Cllr Joe Blackham	All	No

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report aims to give the reader some background information about the Street Scene Rapid Improvement Plan. It makes reference to some of the improvements that have been made and details future plans to ensure that the operational service area is fit for purpose and compliant in terms of reporting and service delivery.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

2. This report is for information and there are no recommendations. The service area intends to continue with the Rapid Improvement Plan and report on the findings of the peer review at a later date.

### **EXEMPT REPORT**

3. The report is not exempt.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

4. The operations carried out by Street Scene significantly contribute to making Doncaster an attractive place to live, work and visit. Operations are intended to encourage local people to take pride in their area and that we attract quality inward investment into the Borough.

### **BACKGROUND**

5. In July 2019, Elected Members raised concerns over disparities in terms of operational standards, particularly those relating to grass cutting and street cleansing. Initial investigations revealed that methods of reporting were not

meaningful and triggered a review into processes and procedures and evolved into a rapid improvement plan.

6. To set the legislative context, the Council has a statutory duty under Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990) to keep public highways clean and clear of litter, refuse and other waste, so far as is practicable. The Council fulfils this duty by providing a street cleansing service. For information, further guidance to councils concerning the legislation can be found in the supporting Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse which sets out the main powers to prevent littering.
7. Doncaster Council currently commits to cleansing the highway in Town Centres up to 4 times per day. Main roads are cleaned fortnightly and rural and estate roads up to every 3 months, adhering to standards in line with the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (2019).
8. In terms of grass cutting, the Council has a statutory duty under S41(1) of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway and this is fulfilled by the regular carrying out of grass-cutting to keep the highway safe for users including pedestrians and to maintain visibility for all road users.
9. Grass cutting in urban areas is generally for amenity reasons, however main pedestrian through routes should be maintained to a reasonable standard to enable the public to pass and re-pass safely.
10. Doncaster Council aims to cut the grass 13 times between April and mid-November, however operations are dependent on weather conditions.
11. In July 2019, issues arose because grass cutting and litter picks in parts of the borough were not at a standard that was considered acceptable.
12. Upon further investigation a variety of other service issues surfaced and this led to a strategic service review being undertaken known as the Rapid Improvement Plan (RIP).
13. Governance of the RIP was deemed key and a steering group and a governance board was established to ensure the deliverability of a number of key actions and accountability to the Executive.
14. Weekly progress meetings have been held and regular improvement updates are reported to the governance board. Elected Members received a briefing paper on 6 September 2019. The Senior Management Team have been available to give Elected Members the opportunity to raise any concerns.
15. Issues in the service area derive from a variety of cultural and performance related issues, lack of and inadequate allocation of resources (meaning that key hotspot areas were not being tended to), failing channels of communication between elected members and the service area, problems with IT systems and the method in which work is reported. In response to this, the rapid improvement plan aims to target five theme areas:
  1. Performance Management
  2. System Development
  3. Strategic Development

4. Measures and Indicators
5. Communications and Engagement

Each core area has an assigned business lead responsible for driving areas of improvement at pace.

16. In terms of improving communication with Elected Members, the online app has been removed and replaced with a new responsive Council website. During the improvement period Elected Members will receive a monthly newsletter which will provide updates on progress. In addition, drop-in sessions for Elected Members have and will continue to be offered prior to full Council meetings and seminars.
17. The first 'Big Clean' action week took place during 4 – 10 November 2019 and further details about this will be discussed during the meeting. Future dedicated actions weeks have been scheduled for 10 - 16 February 2020, 27 April – 3 May 2020 and 10 – 16 August 2020. Elected Members are encouraged to contribute to action week initiatives and make suggestions for future work.
18. Staff engagement is improving with a strong emphasis on moving the service forward, utilising lessons learned and understanding the importance of reward and recognition; it is an opportunity for staff to contribute to the re-design of operational service area processes. So far, operational improvements have been made in terms of understanding staff performance and capability issues; the management at weekends has also been improved. A review of the current 7-day working pattern and issues concerning the Cantley depot is underway. Staff have been recruited to key positions that were once vacant and all supervisors now report weekly on key performance indicators for their areas including absence, performance and quality.
19. The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) has undertaken a review of the service area and as part of this, they are in the process of producing a report on elements ranging from recruitment and retention to opportunities for commercialisation. APSE were briefed to identify the optimum method of working, relevant performance indicators and the steps required to be an industry exemplar of best practice.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

20. N/A

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

21. N/A

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

22.

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	<p>Having an attractive borough that is free from waste and fly tipped material will help to attract and retain inward investment.</p> <p>It is important that the service area takes every opportunity to engage with a wider audience to ensure that Doncaster is an attractive place to live, work and visit. Local people and visitors can take pride in their area.</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Accessible, safe and well maintained public land provide valuable opportunities for people of all abilities and age to become physically active.</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	<p>Well managed and maintained land that is clear from waste and detritus offers an interesting and vibrant environment for all ages.</p>

	<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	<p>It is important to have safe open spaces for people to meet and socialise thus helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation.</p> <p>Safe spaces can also provide a means for families to build on relationships and offer opportunities for intergenerational activities.</p>
	<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	<p>The proposal will support service improvement ensuring that the management of the service/assets are efficient, delivers value for money and the approach is consistent across the borough.</p>

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

23. If the review were not undertaken, there is a risk that the borough's open spaces will not be well managed and maintained and this may detract inward investment and affect the quality of life, health and wellbeing for the people of Doncaster.

There is a risk if appropriate performance and reporting measures are not in place then the service area will not be in a position to articulate any meaningful benefit. If issues are not resolved in the service area there is a risk that the statutory obligations will not be met.

24. However, it is expected that the operational teams will implement the relevant actions and will receive the necessary support.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: NJD Date: 28/10/2019]

25. There are a number of statutory obligations placed on the Council to ensure that the land, including the highways within its control are kept clear of litter and refuse and to keep the fabric of the highway in good repair.
26. The report highlights that for the Council to optimise its ability to deliver services to achieve the statutory obligations a rapid improvement plan has been implemented to allow the service area to redesign their services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

27. Further legal advice and assistance will be given, if required, as part of the rapid improvement plan and service redesign.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: RW Date: 28/10/2019]**

28. Street Scene operates within an existing revenue budget. No specific funding has been identified for the Rapid Improvement Plan and all costs are currently being met from within the revenue budget. Should the programme require commitment beyond the current budget then additional funding will need to be identified or there will be an overspend in the street scene budgets.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: AC Date: 21/10/2019]**

29. There are no HR implications specific to the report. The directorate HR & OD team are closely involved in the Rapid Improvement Plan and are represented at the steering group. Future developments which have implications for the workforce will require HR engagement and would involve separate approval as appropriate.

#### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PW Date: 25/10/2019]**

30. As outlined in the report, the online apps previously used by Elected Members and customers have been replaced by the mobile version of the Council website from 1 November 2019. Business and systems analysis work is currently underway to review the existing Street Scene business processes and identify the required changes to processes and systems to support the Rapid Improvement Plan. All staff have been trained on Electronic Document Management and Hybrid Mail to ensure these systems are being used effectively. The service area are also working with the third party supplier to utilise the existing Technology Forge Asset Management System for playgrounds. It is also understood that there may be a requirement to use handheld devices to capture performance information (eg number of litter picks, grass cuts etc) to upload to Pentana and the APSE portal. Further consultation will be needed with ICT in relation to this.

#### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: CT Date 19/10/2019]**

31. Public Health supports the recommended option to ensure improvements to the Street Scene Service. Residents should feel proud of the area they live in. Poorly maintained streetscene can reduce or even destroy the pride residents have about living there. Community spirit can be negatively affected if the area becomes uncared for. As a result of this, people's health and wellbeing can deteriorate. Studies have shown that people that live in clean and well maintained areas with lots of green spaces have better mental and physical health than people that live in areas with poorly maintained streetscene. Poor streetscene brings with it other associated health risks such as diabetes, heart attacks and strokes and thus can put more strain on health facilities such as GP surgeries and A&E departments.
32. It is positive to see that staff will be involved in the reshaping of the service. Listening to staff can often bring about positive changes to a service as they can share their experiences and bring ideas to make improvements.

In turn, staff will feel more valued and motivated.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SJC Date 23/10/2019]**

33. Decision makers must consider the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty of S149 of the Equality Act (2010). The duty requires the council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share it.
34. Having carried out an initial assessment, it is understood that duty Grass cutting in urban areas is done for amenity reasons. The standards vary accordingly, reflecting respective duties. Grass cutting helps to ensure that grass verges and footways are accessible for walking. The protected characteristic identified as potentially being impacted are those that either increases the likelihood / frequency of individuals needing to walk on footways and verges, or else make those individuals more vulnerable when doing so. It is considered that the impact on these groups would be, at worst, low. The potential increase of overgrowth of uncut vegetation from verges onto footways or carriageways arising from these proposals is considered minimal.
35. People using verges are likely to find the grass slightly longer at certain times of year but any resulting disproportionate effect on protected characteristics is considered insignificant. Grass cutting for visibility purposes (sightlines of all road users) is not affected by this proposal. There is considered to be negligible impact on protected characteristics by the elements of the proposal that concern the management arrangements for service delivery.
36. It is acknowledged that if this report was in relation to verges impeding on footways, then it could have a significant impact on people with sight and mobility issues, but that is not the case.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

37. There is presently no information in the public domain concerning this project.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

Not applicable

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