

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING: GETTING MORE OUT OF OUR SPENDING

Proposal 7: Public Realm – Proposal Update **Portfolio Lead: Communities and Housing**

1.0 Summary of Proposal

- 1.1 A range of services relating to the maintenance of the public realm within the Borough is provided by the Council and commissioned partners. This workstream seeks to review the offer in order to make savings within the services in scope. Changes in the provision will result in a revised offer and a reduction in the quality of the public realm within Stockport.

2.0 Proposal & Scope

- 2.1 The savings proposals have been subject to review and have been discussed at the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee on 29th October and on 3rd December 2018. Based on this feedback and discussions at the Council's Contributors Committee it is proposed that the proposals detailed in the report be implemented from 2020/21.
- 2.2 The phasing of the reduction of resources will enable Totally Local to effectively implement and manage revised cleansing schedules and methods in order to minimise the impact of these proposals on the Borough.
- 2.3 The proposals in scope relate to the following work and service areas:
- Cleanliness rounds – the cleansing cycle will reduce on residential streets;
 - Litter bins – the least used public bins will be withdrawn;
 - Highway verges – will be mown less frequently, resulting in longer grass and higher levels of grass cuttings once mowing takes place;
 - Parks and green spaces – a reduced mowing frequency across open greenspace will result in more meadows.
 - Reduced winter maintenance – trees and bushes will be cut back less frequently over the winter months.

- 2.4 These changes will result in a reduction of standards across the borough, both in general cleanliness and the maintenance level of parks. In view of the level of concerns expressed in the consultation and at Scrutiny, it is proposed to introduce the savings in 2020/21 to enable Totally Local to revise schedules and methodologies to minimise the impact of the reductions. This will ensure that a gradual reduction in resources is sensitively managed, allowing for any unforeseen impacts of changing schedules to be identified and mitigated against.
- 2.5 The Council is continuing to work, and liaise, with Totally Local Company to introduce the proposals in order to achieve the savings required.

3.0 Financials

Saving Name	2018/19 Cash Limit Budget £000	2019/20 Full Year Saving £000	Revised Cash Limit 2019/20 £000	Year 2 2020/21 Saving £000	Revised Cash Limit 2019/20 £000
Reduction in Greenspace Offer	2,668				
Reduction in Street Cleanliness	3,527	(000)		(550)	
Total	6,195	(000)	6,195	(550)	5,645

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 We have been engaging with the public on these proposals and have been inviting comments through the Have Your Say Page on the Council website. Consultation opened on Friday 16 November and closed on Friday 11 January.
- 4.2 We have received 725 responses to these proposals. A consultation report can be found in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 Based on the feedback from the consultation (public, members, scrutiny and the Board of Totally Local Company) we look to put mitigating actions in place to lessen the effect of the savings proposals, this includes phasing the implementation of this proposal from 2020/21.
- 4.5 Neighbourhood teams will focus on the potential to engage businesses, community groups and individuals to build capacity and help residents to realise their aims for their area. We will also be paying greater attention to enforcement and using penalties as a mean of deterring negative behaviour.
- 4.4 Work will continue with contractors to review practical suggestions to increase productivity and improving work methods for employees, so residents get the best possible outcomes within resource constraints.

- 4.5 The Council will continue to explore opportunities for commercial activity and to generate additional income from our assets. Where possible, fees and charges will be implemented in order to recover costs (please see Proposal 8: Balancing the Cost of Services, from the Medium Term Financial Plan).
- 4.6 We are committed to ensuring that residents are at the heart of everything we do, and we want to create an open dialogue with communities, encouraging new opportunities and building on existing relationships to make Stockport an even better place to live. As a Council over the next two years, we will be investing £1million into communities through the Stockport Local Fund and are keen to listen to the ideas people have for their neighbourhoods.
- 4.7 During the consultation, we received a number of requests for more information on what natural play areas are. These are unequipped spaces that are specifically laid out to encourage imaginative play for all ages.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Public Realm Consultation Report

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment	
Proposal 7: Public Realm	14/01/2019
	Draft

Stage 1: Do you need to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

About Equality Impact Assessments

Yes, an EIA is required as this proposal seeks to change the way services are delivered.

A range of public realm services are commissioned and provided by the Council help manage the maintenance of the public realm and the Borough's infrastructure. A new schedule of services is being negotiated with the Council's

contractors, looking to make savings through a reduced level of service broadly split across the following areas:

- Cleanliness rounds – the cleansing cycle will reduce on residential streets;
- Litter bins – the least used public bins will be withdrawn;
- Highway verges – will be mown less frequently, resulting in longer grass and higher levels of grass cuttings once mowing takes place;
- Parks and green spaces – a reduced mowing frequency across open greenspace will result in more meadows.
- Reduced winter maintenance – trees and bushes will be cut back less frequently over the winter months.

Stage 2: What do you know?

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Where we have it, we will include information about socioeconomic status. We have also used feedback from the public realm contractors, to assess general impact and have listened to their concerns about the savings proposals.

Stockport has a wide variety of open space and maintained greenspace. This includes; 1,200 hectares of greenspace, 340 hectares of woodland, 135 play areas, 93 outdoor sports pitches, 14 local nature reserves, 1 Coronation meadow, and a variety of other parks, and sports and leisure facilities.

Stockport parks and greenspaces are used by 92% of Stockport residents (according to the Place Survey 2009, taken from <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/public-parks/written/39374.html>), with around 191 formal football teams, 5 approved parkruns, and dozens more groups that use the parks both formally and informally.

Parks have long been cited as being beneficial for people's health and wellbeing, particularly in urban areas. Parks provide low cost and accessible space that can encourage physical activity.

In a Government report for the Communities and Local Government Committee, various organisations were invited to submit evidence to an inquiry on public parks and amongst the evidence, different service users of parks detailed the benefit they gained from using public parks; this includes a group for people with dementia using Etherow Country Park. The full report can be found here: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf>

Whilst the proposals will not limit people's access to greenspaces, considering the indirect impact of the proposals has been a significant part of analysing the results of the consultation. Comparably, the affect of the street cleansing proposals will likely be observed by nearly every resident. It is important that we take into consideration every comment from those who have responded.

The proposals will be accompanied by staffing reductions at Totally Local Company. As the staff affected aren't employed by Stockport Council, it will be the responsibility of TLC to assess the impact of reductions on their staff.

Stage 2a: Further data and consultation

A consultation exercise was completed in the period 16 November 2018 to 11 January 2019. We received 725 responses.

Due to the nature of the consultation undertaken – comments were made on the impact the proposals that would affect the individual and what the public believed were other ways of making the savings -

Demographics of respondents:

Age range	Number of respondents	%
0-17	2	0.3
18-24	5	0.7
25-34	70	9.6
35-44	149	20.6
45-54	163	22.5
55-64	139	19.2
65-74	105	14.5
75-84	31	4.2
85+	2	0.3
Prefer not to answer	47	6.4
Not answered	12	1.7

Gender	Number of respondents	%
Female	408	56.3
Male	262	36.1
Prefer not to answer	43	1.7
Not answered	12	5.9

Ethnicity	Number of respondents	%
White	622	85.8
Asian or Asian British	4	0.5
Black or Black British	4	0.5
Mixed	3	0.4
Other	2	0.3
Prefer not to answer	71	9.8
Not answered	19	2.7

Religion	Number of respondents	%
No religion	279	38.5
Christian	306	42.2
Muslim	6	0.8
Buddhist	2	0.3
Jewish	1	0.1
Other	5	0.7
Prefer not to answer	95	13.1
Not answered	31	4.3

Living with a disability or illness	Number of respondents	%
No	571	78.8
Yes	83	11.5
Prefer not to answer	54	7.4
Not answered	17	2.3

Self-reported impacts from respondents

The majority of responses (34.1%) cited that the biggest impact the proposals would have on them would be the appearance of the public realm. Whilst that in itself would not discriminate against any particular group, some (7) respondents felt that there was the potential for polarisation in the maintenance of neighbourhoods, as one respondent said;

“Those of us that live in the more deprived areas will feel the impact the greatest.”

Some of the respondents echoed research into the benefits of open greenspaces on health & wellbeing: *“It would have a great impact on my wellbeing. It de-stresses me to walk in the parks and not to assist the friends any more would be detrimental to the upkeep of the parks”*.

Likewise, 1 individual raised the issue that longer grass meant the greater chance of them suffering from hayfever.

We received 41 comments that focused on mobility issues arising from longer grass and more detritous on the pavements and roads if a reduction in street cleansing was implemented. In particular, residents had concerns about slippery pavements that would cause a danger to elderly people who may slip during the Autumn months. One person wanted to see that parks and play areas would be maintained to a sufficient standard in order for wheelchairs to use them: *“please make sure areas of grass in parks and play areas are still accessible as people who use wheelchairs struggle if it’s too long.”*

Similarly, those with caring duties for children were concerned that a reduction in mowing or other kinds of maintenance in parks and playgrounds would limit the areas that their children could play and use.

Stage 3: Results and Measures

Based on conversations with the contractors and colleagues, a change has been made to the first savings proposals that were presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny. Concern around the impact of introducing the savings in one cut has been addressed through the phasing of the proposal: there will now be a gradual reduction of the service in order to closely monitor, and amend as necessary, the savings as they are brought in. This was agreed in conjunction with TLC. Based on the results of the consultation, the following mitigations have been agreed:

- Increased engagement with community groups, businesses, and individuals to aid and empower community activity within neighbourhoods;
- Greater enforcement within neighbourhoods and penalties for negative behaviours, including littering;
- Productivity will be assessed and more efficient working practices will be developed;
- Individuals who would like to get involved in community maintenance schemes, or voluntary groups will be directed to the Stockport Local Directory to find different voluntary groups that would suit them.

The Schedule of Services is still in the negotiation stage for the Public Realm proposals. Only when this has been completed will we know what the impact it will have on the services in scope.

Stage 4: Decision Stage

To be completed as a new Schedule of Services has been negotiated and the proposals are developed fully.