

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS PORTFOLIO

Councillor Nigel Grundy

My Key focus for Neighbourhood Services and Assets in 2022/23

What a year it has been for the delivery of front line services across Blaby district and yet despite unprecedented challenges our neighbourhood services and Assets teams have excelled.

The lack of HGV drivers nationally and the pandemic causing staffing issues has proved challenging for our refuse collection service. During 2020/21 we did not have to cancel a single refuse or recycling collection. Unfortunately during the last few days we have suffered from staff illness that has affected our service. The sickness issues affecting refuse collections is a daily challenge which can and will change overnight. Councillors should be aware that increased costs may come into play this year as we may need to rely on more agency cover. There is a contingency within the budget to cover this.

The Parks and Open Spaces team have delivered a number of highly popular projects through its capital programme this year. Replacement steps at Crow Mills, new seating at Bouskell Park and the successful completion of the popular new all weather paths through Woodland Trust owned land linking Countesthorpe and Blaby. Its major achievement though is keeping our parks and open spaces in such fantastic condition. Despite staffing issues due to Covid we have received unprecedented levels of compliments from residents who have found solace and distraction in their visits during these troubling times.

The District Cleansing team have worked wonders across the whole of our district. It is fantastic that our residents have been able to enjoy our parks and green open spaces but this has caused challenges in keeping them litter free. The rollout of dual use bins in more strategic locations has certainly helped in this battle. The litter 'wombles' have made a massive difference to the litter situation across our district. As a Council we are proud to support their activities. Our refuse collection teams liaise with the groups to collect the bagged up rubbish whilst keeping them supplied with the 'blue bags' which identify them as 'womble' collections. We had £10,000 in the budget last year for litter picking kits and as much as I would normally like to save money in this case I'm proud to say the litter kits and the £10,000 are nearly all gone. These actions have led to residents sending us comments that they have never seen our district looking so 'clean'.

All of that you have read is a synopsis of the fantastic work our 'neighbourhood team' has done this year. My key focus and the focus of the budget figures before you is to not just continue with this level of excellence but strive to provide more. More 'greener' solutions to refuse collection. More support for the 'wombles' and residents who wish to make a 'cleaner' difference. More resident enjoyment of our parks and open spaces. "So much more for not much more" is what this budget provides.

The Assets team has worked incredibly hard this year. We have seen the council move into the private rented sector market and the upgrade works to our existing Council building is pushing on. Next year will see some major challenges with the longer term future of the Council's office accommodation being one such major challenge.

Another challenge for 2022 will see us continue on our journey towards a greener future. Exploring options for more efficient fossil fuel alternatives for heating and lighting of the Council building/depot will be considered along with developing charging infrastructure at the depot for electric refuse vehicles.

As we say farewell to a difficult 2021 there have been many successes for Paul and his team to reflect back on with pride. I am very proud of all they have achieved and no doubt will achieve going forward. Myself, Paul and all the teams are looking forward to a very ambitious, exciting, and challenging 2022.

My thanks goes to Paul Coates and his team who have shown again a great commitment and team effort to deliver what's important to Blaby.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Grundy

Senior Officer: Neighbourhood Services & Assets Group Manager

Portfolio Total

Corporate & Neighbourhood Services - Total	2021/22 Approved Budget [A]	2021/22 Revised Estimate [B]	2022/23 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£2,895,512	£2,914,339	£3,014,638	£119,126 4.11%	£100,299 3.44%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,706,462	£1,925,494	£1,820,881	£114,419 6.71%	-£104,613 -5.43%
3. Direct Income	-£1,892,548	-£2,028,493	-£2,285,423	-£392,875	-£256,930
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£2,709,426	£2,811,340	£2,550,096	-£159,330 -5.88%	-£261,244 -9.29%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	80.61	80.41	80.41	-0.20 -0.25%	0.00 0.00%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This portfolio includes the establishment and running costs in relation to the teams based at the Whetstone Depot, as well as Property Services. As with other portfolios, allowance has been made for a 2% pay award in 2022/23, and also contractual increments and on costs for national insurance and pensions. Other than this there have been no significant movements between 2021/22 and 2022/23, and the headcount for this portfolio remains substantially unchanged.

During 2021/22 there has been a significant increase in the number of new or replacement bins that have been needed, leading to an increase in budget of £87,000. This trend is expected to continue into 2022/23 albeit at a reduced level – an additional £50,000 has been allowed. It should be noted that these additional costs have been more than met by increased income, particularly from green waste collections. Also included in other gross direct expenditure are the recently approved costs of the Green Space Strategy (£15,000 in 2021/22 and £20,000 in 2022/23), and the options appraisal of the main office building (£50,000 each year). Both years make provision for the supply of litter picking kits to voluntary groups (£10,000 per annum), and replacement of public space bins (an additional £18,000 per annum).

This portfolio contains some of the Council's key income streams, including trade waste fees and charges and green waste collections. When the Schedule of Charges was approved by Cabinet in November 2021, it allowed for an inflationary increase of around 3% for most fees and charges relating to refuse and recycling. Since then, due to the size of the budget gap, Cabinet have informally approved the inclusion of additional increases to fees and charges, in particular, green waste collections and trade waste collections from schools and charities. Green waste charges are proposed to be increased by 10% on top of the current year charges, which would still not put Blaby out of line with many of our neighbouring authorities and would bring in approx. an additional £80,000 of income. Currently schools and charities receive a discretionary discount on the standard trade waste fees and it is proposed that this be removed from 1st April 2022, bringing in an additional £110,000.

The income budget also now includes £36,000 rent income in respect of the Old Bank, Narborough.

Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and Open Spaces	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Estimate	2022/23 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£387,871	£387,871	£400,339	£12,468 3.21%	£12,468 3.21%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£160,075	£197,054	£186,104	£26,029 16.26%	-£10,950 -5.56%
3. Direct Income	-£45,114	-£45,114	-£46,614	-£1,500	-£1,500
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£502,832	£539,811	£539,829	£36,997 7.36%	£18 0.00%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	11.00	11.00	11.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2022/23 Establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised estimate includes non-reoccurring budget carried forward from 2020/21 for Tree Maintenance, Training and Open Spaces development due to delays caused by Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Budget in line with income received to date, and income expected by year end.
4. The net impact of changes referred to above.
5. No change.

District Cleansing

District Cleansing	2021/22 Approved Budget [A]	2021/22 Revised Estimate [B]	2022/23 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£386,776	£366,603	£378,102	-£8,674 -2.24%	£11,499 3.14%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£34,595	£65,895	£64,200	£29,605 85.58%	-£1,695 -2.57%
3. Direct Income	-£83,200	-£83,200	-£90,000	-£6,800	-£6,800
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£338,171	£349,298	£352,302	£14,131 4.18%	£3,004 0.86%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	11.00	10.80	10.80	-0.20 -1.82%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2022/23 Establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised budget includes a virement of funds to cover the cost of changing Dog Waste Bins to Public Space Bins.
2. Adjustments to the revised budget as per note 1, plus additional budget added to cover the litter picking kit required for the volunteer litter pickers.
3. Increase in line with inflation.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minimal change in hours.

Refuse Collection & Recycling

Refuse Collection & Recycling	2021/22 Approved Budget [A]	2021/22 Revised Estimate [B]	2022/23 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£1,716,827	£1,755,827	£1,788,282	£71,455 4.16%	£32,455 1.85%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£517,598	£577,558	£514,519	-£3,079 -0.59%	-£63,039 -10.91%
3. Direct Income	-£1,366,810	-£1,493,560	-£1,691,750	-£324,940 23.77%	-£198,190 13.27%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£867,615	£839,825	£611,051	-£256,564 -29.57%	-£228,774 -27.24%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	49.61	49.61	49.61	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2022/23 Establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions. The revised budget increase is due to Agency cover that has been required due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19.
2. Increase in the revised estimate is due to an increase in Domestic waste and Garden bins requests.
3. Increase in Garden and Domestic waste bins. Proposed Budget includes an increase in fees and charges for Green Waste and the removal of current discounts on Trade Waste.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Fleet Management

Fleet Management	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Estimate	2022/23 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£240,409	£240,409	£275,615	£35,206 14.64%	£35,206 14.64%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£406,800	£392,185	£409,555	£2,755 0.68%	£17,370 4.43%
3. Direct Income	£0	-£90	-£1,790	-£1,790	-£1,700
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£647,209	£632,504	£683,380	£36,171 5.59%	£50,876 8.04%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2022/23 Establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. The revised fuel budget has been reduced to reflect the latest estimate of price and usage.
3. The income budget relates to repair charges recovered.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Assets

Assets	2021/22 Approved Budget	2021/22 Revised Estimate	2022/23 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£163,629	£163,629	£172,300	£8,671 5.30%	£8,671 5.30%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£587,394	£692,802	£646,503	£59,109 10.06%	-£46,299 -6.68%
3. Direct Income	-£397,424	-£406,529	-£455,269	-£57,845	-£48,740
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£353,599	£449,902	£363,534	£9,935 2.81%	-£86,368 -19.20%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2022/23 Establishment budget takes account of the estimated pay award yet to be confirmed, contractual increments where applicable, and increases to employer's national insurance and pension contributions.
2. Non-recurring budget has been added to the revised from the Agile Working reserve to cover office changes. Additional budget has been added to cover costs of business rates in relation to vacant units at Enderby Road Industrial estate.
3. The income budget has been reviewed and revised in line with expected income for 2022/23.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No changes.

Movement in budget and staff from last year

Neighbourhood Services

No movement in staff has occurred over the last year.

Assets

No movement in staff has occurred over the last year.

Portfolio Priorities

Neighbourhood Services

To deliver an efficient and cost effective refuse and recycling service; and provide a clean and tidy district with well-maintained areas of open space.

Deliver a green spaces strategy.

Assets

Maximising the use of the council's assets.

Services

Neighbourhood Services

- **Refuse & Recycling**

The Refuse and Recycling service provides an alternate weekly collection service to over 43,000 households and a chargeable garden waste collection service to over 25,000 households. The service also provides bulky waste collection services with over 2,000 collections made per year. Trade waste collections are provided to over 500 local businesses

- **Parks & Open Spaces**

The Grounds Maintenance service carries out the amenity mowing and horticultural services on all the Strategic Parks and Open Spaces owned by Blaby District Council. Additional works are also carried out for a number of Parishes, local sports clubs and external partners.

- **District Cleansing**

District Cleansing delivers the litter picking, dog and litter bin emptying and street sweeping throughout Blaby District. In addition to this we also offer a litter and dog bin emptying service and the option of additional litter picking operatives for Parish Councils

at agreed rates. We currently have approximately of 1,000 litter and dog bins which are emptied on frequencies dependant on their usage.

- **Fleet Management**

The Fleet consists of 21 HGV's, 25 Vans (below 3.5 Tonnes), 1 pool car, 1 tractor and side arm, 1 compact sweeper, 7 ride on mowers, 6 trailers, 12 assorted plant and equipment all of which are maintained and serviced in house at Whetstone Depot. The O licence for the fleet, for which there is a legal requirement in order to operate the service, is held by the Transport Services Manager.

- **Assets**

This includes costs for the Council Offices and the Depot, including the facilities management and maintenance of the buildings and the associated grounds maintenance. Also includes expenditure incurred in relation to public conveniences, the Glebe Road Caravan site in Countesthorpe, bus shelters, car parks, Enderby Road Industrial Estate and costs associated with the administration of property and assets owned by the Council. The team also administers Asset of Community Value applications made by residents.

Key Points

<p>Doing things differently – plans for the coming year</p>	<p><u>Refuse & Recycling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trade waste charging structure will be reviewed in the coming year to ensure that charges are competitive and to identify opportunities for further income generation. • At time of writing the national waste consultation due imminently may require the authority to undertake separate weekly food waste collections in 2023/24. This year will see the preparations of weekly food waste collections. A review of the Leicestershire Waste Strategy is in progress concurrently and will have an associated action plan to be approved by Council in summer 2022. <p><u>District Cleansing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and build on the success of the Council's volunteer litter picking initiative and continue to rationalise litter and dog bin locations following the move to dual waste bins in the district. <p><u>Parks and Open Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review long term management plan for the development of countryside sites as part of developing and delivering a new green spaces strategy
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	<p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An options appraisal of the Council's future accommodation requirements will be undertaken with consideration given to maximising the potential of its key strategic sites. Focus will continue on improving staff side accommodation to the existing building to build on the momentum of agile working and to ensure the building is still fit for use in the short to medium term. • The Assets team will be undertaking a number of green related projects this year including internal LED lighting in the offices, and replacement green heating solutions at the Council offices. Work will continue at the depot to explore the potential for providing heating and lighting solutions from renewable energy such as solar panels and Air Source Heat Pumps. In addition work will continue to understand the Council's future fleet energy solutions to ensure a reliable and robust electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
Income generation	<p><u>Refuse & Recycling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to charge for larger or additional bins following the introduction of alternate weekly collection. • The Council will continue to charge for Garden bins. • The Council will review its fees and charges to identify options of further growth in income. <p><u>District Cleansing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to provide chargeable services to parish councils and developers for litter bin collections. <p><u>Parks and Open Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service will continue to provide services for Parish Council's and will explore other opportunities to maximise income. <p><u>Fleet Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will implement chargeable taxi vehicle inspections and MOT's in 2022-23. <p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The utilisation of the Council's assets to obtain revenue or improve usage is an ongoing initiative. The lease of the Council offices to NHS and Citizens Advice Bureau not only bring revenue opportunities but also better outcomes for our customers with partners such as these delivering services alongside our own officers. • Income generation is also obtained via leased rental agreements on the Enderby Road Industrial Estate and Countesthorpe Mobile Home site.

Capital plans for the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various schemes to improve the accessibility and enjoyment of the Council's strategic countryside parks • Replacing end of life fleet vehicles in accordance with the 5 year capital programme. • The replacement of the central heating system, and LED lighting, at the Council Offices, and various works on management plans at our strategic parks and open spaces. • Replacement of existing toilet block on Blaby village centre with a modern self-cleaning, unisex unit that will minimise anti-social behaviour.
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Key Performance Indicators

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	2020-21	COMMENTS
Percentage of waste collected which is recycled.	42.4 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling rates have remained static which is usual when there is no service change such as reduced refuse capacity or no additional recyclable material collected.

Customers

The portfolio delivers many frontline services. Customer feedback is essential with all services to ensure we are outcome focussed and are actually delivering what really matters to and is valued by the customer. This information is used to help shape and measure service delivery.

The Assets team has a variety of different customers, both internal and external. These include, for example, requests from staff and managers for changes to the layout of the offices, local businesses in respect of the Enderby Road Industrial Estate, and also Parish Councils and a variety of legal representatives. Internally the team provides professional property advice as required. The team also has a clear responsibility to ensure that all council buildings are accessible and meet the wide needs of residents who visit the offices.

Risks

Increased staffing issues particularly regarding HGV driver shortage nationally and self-isolation from particularly virulent Covid variants may result in some service disruption throughout the year.