

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS PORTFOLIO
Councillor Nigel Grundy**My Key focus for Neighbourhood Services and Assets in 2023/24**

I promised that 2022 was going to be another challenging year as we emerged from the pandemic and so it has proved to be. Again, our Neighbourhood Services and Assets teams have excelled; delivering business as usual in a much-changed world where increasing prices, long lead times, and low stocks from external providers has seemingly worsened throughout the year which impact greatly behind the scenes.

The refuse and recycling team have consistently delivered to a high standard and absorbed another year of growth in housing supply despite pressures of the shortage of HGV drivers in year. The trade waste service continues to be in a healthier position following the review of the disposal charges introduced earlier this year whilst further development of online forms for bulky waste collections and reporting non-collections has made it easier for customers and more efficient for the back office. We await central government's full response to the national waste consultation however Blaby's waste team have contributed significantly to the development of the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy this year.

The Parks and Open Spaces team have continued to deliver improvements to strategic sites such as Crow Mills, The Osiers, Fosse Meadows to make sites safe and more accessible to visitors. The improvements have also gone some way to make good the significant wear and tear issues from unprecedented usage during the pandemic. The team have also been working on preparing the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy to be launched by the end of the year. Numerous ecological surveys and a public consultation has already taken place and puts the team in a good position to help deliver a strategy that will help meet our ecological obligations by creating diverse habitats as well as being places visitors want to come to spend time and relax.

The District Cleansing team have been continuing the good progress of moving to dual waste litter bins and replacing tired old litter bins with new ones. Whilst fly-tipping, particularly of construction and DIY waste, remains challenging the team have continued to meet its response times and have a great relationship with the South Leicestershire Wombles who have helped keep litter levels to incredibly low levels across the district.

The Asset team have had another busy year which started off delivering the LED replacement programme throughout the staff side accommodation. This was followed by the office refurbishment project which is now in its final stages; internally the Council offices look transformed and with the support of the working party the whole process has gone through smoothly with minimal disruption to staff and visitors. More has been done to understand how we can 'green' our buildings and depot and several projects are in the pipeline for next year including solar panels and Air Source Heat Pump installation at the depot. In addition, a number of opportunities for affordable housing continue to be looked at in terms of potential viability.

The Council's heavy vehicle fleet has moved away from diesel and fully transitioned to using hydro treated vegetable oil. The transition has again been smooth and green ambitions continue following a number of demonstrations of electric powered refuse collection vehicles which are the long-term future for the heavy waste collection fleet. In addition, the Transport Services team have implemented taxi vehicle testing and MOT's which has helped drive up the standards of taxis operating in the district as well as generating an income for the Council.

My thanks go 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

Neighbourhood Services & Assets - Total	2022/23 Approved Budget [A]	2022/23 Revised Estimate [B]	2023/24 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£3,014,638	£3,161,349	£3,236,288	£221,650 7.35%	£74,939 2.37%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£1,825,381	£2,218,288	£2,307,938	£482,557 26.44%	£89,650 4.04%
3. Direct Income	-£2,285,423	-£2,272,423	-£2,368,278	-£82,855	-£95,855
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£2,554,596	£3,107,214	£3,175,948	£621,352 24.32%	£68,734 2.21%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	80.41	80.41	80.11	-0.30 -0.37%	-0.30 -0.37%

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. The establishment budget for 2022/23 has been adjusted to allow for the recently settled pay award and uplifted pension contribution rates. As with other portfolios, allowance has been made for a 3% pay award in 2023/24, and contractual increments and on costs for national insurance and pensions. Other than this there have been no significant movements between 2022/23 and 2023/24, and the headcount for this portfolio remains substantially unchanged.

There have been several significant changes to other gross direct expenditure budgets in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. Some of these are one-off in the current year only, mainly for unspent budget provision brought forward from 2021/22. Other changes are expected to be ongoing. The tree maintenance budget was increased by £50,000 in 2022/23 to allow urgent works to be undertaken following a survey of trees for which the Council is responsible. Whilst some costs will be ongoing, the increase in 2023/24 has been scaled back to £20,000. In April 2022, the Cabinet gave its approval to convert most of the Council's fleet vehicles from diesel to Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The additional cost in 2022/23 was estimated at £70,000, and a similar increase has been applied for 2023/24 to reflect the increasing price and demand for HVO. The cost of vehicle repairs has also seen a notable increase in 2022/23 and the ongoing budget has been increased from £74,500 to £145,000. This is based on the current level of commitments in addition to vehicles requiring significant improvements.

Fees and charges have been increased where necessary to ensure that full cost recovery is achieved. However, income from garden bins has been reduced by £50,000 to reflect the lower take-up of bins in 2022/23. It is not clear whether the reduced take-up was in response to the 10% price increase last April, or because of the end of the pandemic and furlough.

Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and Open Spaces	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£400,339	£424,551	£438,751	£38,412 9.59%	£14,200 3.34%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£190,604	£256,749	£211,584	£20,980 11.01%	-£45,165 -17.59%
3. Direct Income	-£46,614	-£46,614	-£45,969	£645	£645
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£544,329	£634,686	£604,366	£60,037 11.03%	-£30,320 -4.78%
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 revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 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 unspent budget provision carried forward from 2021/22. £50,000 has been added to the 2022/23 revised budget to allow for urgent works arising from a tree survey. Ongoing provision of an additional £20,000 for tree maintenance is included in the 2023/24 proposals.
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	2022/23 Approved Budget [A]	2022/23 Revised Estimate [B]	2023/24 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£378,102	£388,271	£375,937	-£2,165 -0.57%	-£12,334 -3.18%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£64,200	£64,650	£68,550	£4,350 6.78%	£3,900 6.03%
3. Direct Income	-£90,000	-£100,000	-£109,000	-£19,000	-£9,000
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£352,302	£352,921	£335,487	-£16,815 -4.77%	-£17,434 -4.94%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	10.80	10.80	10.50	-0.30 -2.78%	-0.30 -2.78%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 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 temporary staffing provision has been reduced to reflect latest working practices.
2. No major changes but inflationary increases allowed as necessary.
3. Increase in line with inflation.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Minimal change in hours.

Refuse Collection & Recycling

Refuse Collection & Recycling	2022/23 Approved Budget [A]	2022/23 Revised Estimate [B]	2023/24 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£1,788,282	£1,903,718	£1,961,743	£173,461 9.70%	£58,025 3.05%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£514,519	£509,155	£591,052	£76,533 14.87%	£81,897 16.08%
3. Direct Income	-£1,691,750	-£1,653,750	-£1,728,250	-£36,500 2.16%	-£74,500 4.50%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£611,051	£759,123	£824,545	£213,494 34.94%	£65,422 8.62%
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 revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 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. Increases in composting fees, commercial waste fees, and software maintenance for Whitespace, offset by a reduction in the number of new domestic bins required.
3. Income from garden waste recycling credits, trade refuse, and commercial dry, mixed recycling has been increased. This is offset by a reduction in garden bin rental, in line with actual experience in 2022/23.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No change.

Fleet Management

Fleet Management	2022/23 Approved Budget	2022/23 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Proposed Budget	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
	[A]	[B]	[C]		
1. Establishment Costs	£275,615	£264,018	£274,256	-£1,359 -0.49%	£10,238 3.88%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£409,555	£560,155	£633,040	£223,485 54.57%	£72,885 13.01%
3. Direct Income	-£1,790	-£16,790	-£16,790	-£15,000 837.99%	£0 0.00%
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£683,380	£807,383	£890,506	£207,126 30.31%	£83,123 10.30%
5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE)	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00 0.00%	0.00 0.00%

Reasons for Variances

1. The revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 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 current year revised estimate, and next year's budget for overtime have been reduced.
2. The fuel budget was increased by £70,000 in 2022/23 to allow for the conversion to HVO. A further £70,000 increase has been allowed in 2023/24 to reflect rising prices. The vehicle repair budget has been doubled to reflect the current level of spend plus major improvements needed to a small number of vehicles.
3. The income budget relates to repair charges recovered in respect of, e.g., the Community Bus.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. No change.

Assets

Assets	2022/23 Approved Budget [A]	2022/23 Revised Estimate [B]	2023/24 Proposed Budget [C]	Variance [C] - [A]	Variance [C] - [B]
1. Establishment Costs	£172,300	£180,791	£185,601	£13,301 7.72%	£4,810 2.66%
2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure	£646,503	£827,579	£803,712	£157,209 24.32%	-£23,867 -2.88%
3. Direct Income	-£455,269	-£455,269	-£468,269	-£13,000	-£13,000
4. Net Direct Expenditure	£363,534	£553,101	£521,044	£157,510 43.33%	-£32,057 -5.80%
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 revised estimate allows for the pay award effective from 1st April 2022, which exceeds the provision made in the original budget. The 2023/24 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 carried forward from 2021/22 in respect of the Office Options Appraisal and added to the 2022/23 revised budget. Both 2022/23 and 2023/24 reflect increasing gas and electricity costs for the Council's buildings.
3. The income budget for industrial estate rents has been increased to allow for new lettings.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. No changes.

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.
- Maximise income generating opportunities

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 43,500 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, and on behalf of in-house teams such as Environmental Services, Building Control, and support with emergency response.

- **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"> • A review of current Neighbourhood Services operations will explore options for cost savings and income generation. • Route optimisation will be undertaken to help balance days for efficiency. • Bulky waste collections will be reviewed in light of imminent legislation affecting the way foam filled furniture is treated for disposal. • The waste software system will be reviewed as part of procuring a new contract to deliver the in-cab offer. <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 complete the transition to dual waste across the district to release opportunities for fuel savings by accessing disposal facility. <p><u>Parks and Open Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the new parks and open spaces strategy and associated management plans including exploring opportunities to fund improvements through biodiversity net gain funding. <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a more streamlined digital process for recording and consolidating fleet information and documentation to aid compliance and adopt best practice. • To support Assets Team with delivering electric charging infrastructure
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	<p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the appraisals of the Council office campus in addition to other key locations and where appropriate undertake more detailed assessments to determine the long-term potential for office accommodation and affordable homes. • Deliver further accommodation improvements to support the transformation to more developed hybrid working such as a desk booking system and a staff communal area.
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>Transport Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will continue to offer chargeable taxi vehicle inspections and MOTs in 2023-24. • The Council will explore opportunities to undertake chargeable fleet services on behalf of other organisations in 2023-24. <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"> • Install solar panels and air source heat pump at the depot to deliver heating, lighting, and power. • Commence steps to improve electric charging infrastructure at the depot to accommodate electric refuse collection vehicles in the future. • Various schemes to improve the accessibility and enjoyment of the Council's strategic countryside parks.

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 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 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 cost of living affecting prices, unavailability and/or long lead times of some key products and services, and national shortages in skilled staff may result in some service disruption throughout the year.

A route optimisation exercise may result in changes to the day of collection to some residents in parts of the district.