

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES & ASSETS PORTFOLIO
Councillor Nigel Grundy

2023/24 has been a very challenging year in many respects for the portfolio. The cost of living crisis has been keenly felt by all staff resulting in industrial action at the depot. Whilst the effects of this were well managed and much of the impacts on residents mitigated there were obvious impacts on the delivery of key Neighbourhood Services initiatives. The settling of the dispute means the service can look forward to developing efficiencies from its mobile working aspirations, working collaboratively with partners, and deliver the latest packaging reforms.

Despite the challenges during the summer there were a number of achievements within my portfolio. Firstly, it was great to see the POS Strategy being well received by the Scrutiny Working Group after comprehensive work by the team to help shape the future of our open spaces, so they provide accessible yet sustainable spaces for people, place and nature. The completion of capital projects at The Osiers and Crow Mills were also well received by residents. The team also completed the landscape framework procurement to ensure the Council continues to obtain value for money when delivering hard landscaping schemes such as the car park resurfacing works at Fosse Meadows which was completed at the start of the year. The focus this year will be on implementing the actions within the new strategy including looking at innovative ways to make the parks self-sustaining.

Route optimisation has been completed on the waste collection rounds to ensure the appropriate resource is in place and is efficient. Approximately, 4,000 new homes have been absorbed into the service since the last main service change in 2018. The new changes will be implemented during the middle of January with day changes kept to a minimum of 2,000 properties to minimise impacts of day changes to residents. In addition, the team have completed a comprehensive procurement of the in-cab technology to ensure real time information between front line and back office teams to improve the customer experience and efficiency of the service.

The fleet team have procured and implemented the latest fleet management software with support from the transformation team. The service will continue its journey to digitise the service next year to further streamline its record keeping and compliance monitoring to improve driver safety standards. This year the team will undertake a greater number of taxi vehicle inspections throughout the district resulting in greater standards of safety of taxi's licenced by Blaby District Council.

This year the main depot project will see the completion of the work to install solar panels at the depot and begin the transition towards providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Much has been happening in terms of Council assets to help pave a positive way forward for the long-term future of the Council with the outcomes of various feasibility studies coming to fruition to help meet our pressing housing needs and ensure we gain best use of Council assets. More immediately the team have delivered a number of projects including the complete refurbishment of the office accommodation, the

installation of the gas boilers, completing the final phase of the transition to LED lighting and delivering the Changing Places toilets in Blaby.

Another year I extend my thanks to the team who have faced and overcome many challenges whilst at the same time achieving much in a very busy operational and key front-line service.

2024/25 promises to be a very exciting year ahead following a restructure within the Senior Leadership Team to prepare the Council to deliver a number of significant asset related projects.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Grundy
Senior Officer: Neighbourhood Services & Assets Group Manager

Portfolio Total

| Neighbourhood Services & Assets - Total | 2023/24 Approved Budget [A] | 2023/24 Revised Estimate [B] | 2024/25 Proposed Budget [C] | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|---|--|---|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Establishment Costs | £3,236,288 | £3,330,312 | £3,649,027 | £412,739 12.75% | £318,715 9.57% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £2,307,938 | £2,573,770 | £2,431,090 | £123,152 5.34% | -£142,680 -5.54% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£2,322,278 | -£2,320,806 | -£2,433,793 | -£111,515 4.80% | -£112,987 4.87% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £3,221,948 | £3,583,276 | £3,646,324 | £424,376 13.17% | £63,048 1.76% |
| 5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE) | 80.11 | 83.50 | 85.00 | 4.89 6.10% | 1.50 1.80% |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The establishment budget for 2023/24 allowed for a 3% pay award. Following protracted negotiations, a flat rate increase of £1,925 for employees on grades 1 to 9 has been agreed with the trade unions. The nationally agreed pay award for Chief Executives and Chief Officers was 3.5%. The revised estimate allows for an increase in headcount in the Refuse and Recycling team, and the Vehicle Maintenance team, following approval by Cabinet Executive on 18th September. The increase for the Refuse and Recycling team is for 3 additional loaders which will provide sufficient budget to enable an additional round to be undertaken. The increase to the Vehicle Maintenance team is to make the Transport Services Support Officer post full time on the back of an increase in compliance work in relation to the safe operation and upkeep of the Council's fleet vehicles.

The establishment budget for 2024/25 allows for a 3% estimated pay award, contractual increments where appropriate, and employer's national insurance and pension contributions within service budgets.

There have been several changes to other gross direct expenditure budgets in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. Some of these are one-off in the current year only, mainly for unspent budget provision brought forward from 2022/23. Other changes are expected to be ongoing and reflect contractual or inflationary increases.

Fees and charges have been increased where necessary to ensure that full cost recovery is achieved. Income from garden bins has been increased by £50,000 in 2024/25, with a similar increase being applied to bulky waste collections.

Parks & Open Spaces

| Parks and Open Spaces | 2023/24 Approved Budget | 2023/24 Revised Estimate | 2024/25 Proposed Budget | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | [A] | [B] | [C] | | |
| 1. Establishment Costs | £438,751 | £438,751 | £485,099 | £46,348 10.56% | £46,348 10.56% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £211,584 | £222,449 | £239,029 | £27,445 12.97% | £16,580 7.45% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£45,969 | -£55,969 | -£45,969 | £0 0.00% | £10,000 -17.87% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £604,366 | £605,231 | £678,159 | £73,793 12.21% | £72,928 12.05% |
| 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 2024/25 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. £10,000 has been added to the budget for both years to reflect increased costs in relation to open space development work, and tree maintenance.
3. Additional income from grass cutting expected in 2023/24.
4. The net impact of changes referred to above.
5. No change.

District Cleansing

| District Cleansing | 2023/24 Approved Budget [A] | 2023/24 Revised Estimate [B] | 2024/25 Proposed Budget [C] | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Establishment Costs | £375,937 | £375,937 | £436,010 | £60,073 15.98% | £60,073 15.98% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £68,550 | £69,550 | £74,550 | £6,000 8.75% | -£5,000 -6.29% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£109,000 | -£109,000 | -£102,000 | £7,000 -6.42% | £7,000 -6.42% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £335,487 | £336,487 | £408,560 | £73,073 21.78% | £72,073 21.42% |
| 5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE) | 10.50 | 10.50 | 11.00 | 0.50 4.76% | 0.50 4.76% |

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 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. A part-time District Cleansing Operative post (0.5 FTE) was temporarily removed from the current year budget and has been reinstated for 2024/25.
2. The budgets for equipment and removal of fly tipping have been increased to reflect current spending levels.
3. Minor reduction in anticipated income from emptying of litter and dog bins because of reduced demand from some parishes.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. Additional 0.5 FTE reinstated for 2024/25 as above.

Refuse Collection & Recycling

| Refuse Collection & Recycling | 2023/24 Approved Budget [A] | 2023/24 Revised Estimate [B] | 2024/25 Proposed Budget [C] | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Establishment Costs | £1,961,743 | £2,020,767 | £2,177,501 | £215,758 11.00% | £156,734 7.76% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £591,052 | £692,552 | £654,552 | £63,500 10.74% | -£38,000 -5.49% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£1,728,250 | -£1,705,250 | -£1,814,050 | -£85,800 4.96% | -£108,800 6.38% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £824,545 | £1,008,069 | £1,018,003 | £193,458 23.46% | £9,934 0.99% |
| 5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE) | 49.61 | 53.00 | 53.00 | 3.39 6.83% | 0.00 0.00% |

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 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. Three additional refuse loaders have been added to the budget to facilitate an increase in rounds from 7 to 8 as approved by Cabinet in September 2023. An increase in hours was also approved for the Assistant post. The proposed budget includes a fixed term Apprentice position, and the removal of the Assistant post which has been moved to Fleet.
2. Revised estimate includes a one-off £27,000 for external support with refuse collections during the industrial action last summer. Other increases relate to composting fees (offset by income), commercial waste fees, postages, and computer equipment.
3. Income from garden waste recycling credits, garden bin rental, and bulky collections has been increased. This is offset by a reduction in trade refuse income.
4. Net impact of variances listed above.
5. As per Note 1.

Fleet Management

| Fleet Management | 2023/24 Approved Budget | 2023/24 Revised Estimate | 2024/25 Proposed Budget | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | [A] | [B] | [C] | | |
| 1. Establishment Costs | £274,256 | £309,256 | £363,621 | £89,365 32.58% | £54,365 17.58% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £633,040 | £633,040 | £667,040 | £34,000 5.37% | £34,000 5.37% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£16,790 | -£16,790 | -£16,790 | £0 0.00% | £0 0.00% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £890,506 | £925,506 | £1,013,871 | £123,365 13.85% | £88,365 9.55% |
| 5. Overall No. of Posts (FTE) | 5.00 | 5.00 | 6.00 | 1.00 20.00% | 1.00 20.00% |

Reasons for Variances

1. The 2024/25 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. It also allows for an increase in overtime based on additional work from necessary increase in vehicle fleet, taxi vehicle testing, and other ad hoc repairs for partners.
2. The fuel budget has been increased in 2024/25 in line with expected price rises. The vehicle repair budget has also been increased to reflect the rising cost of parts.
3. No change.
4. Net impact of the variances listed above.
5. See above – Transport Services Support Officer moved from Refuse and Recycling.

Assets

| Assets | 2023/24 Approved Budget | 2023/24 Revised Estimate | 2024/25 Proposed Budget | Variance [C] - [A] | Variance [C] - [B] |
|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | [A] | [B] | [C] | | |
| 1. Establishment Costs | £185,601 | £185,601 | £186,796 | £1,195 0.64% | £1,195 0.64% |
| 2. Other Gross Direct Expenditure | £803,712 | £956,179 | £795,919 | -£7,793 -0.97% | -£160,260 -16.76% |
| 3. Direct Income | -£422,269 | -£433,797 | -£454,984 | -£32,715 7.75% | -£21,187 4.88% |
| 4. Net Direct Expenditure | £567,044 | £707,983 | £527,731 | -£39,313 -6.93% | -£180,252 -25.46% |
| 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 2024/25 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 2022/23, including a sum to cover the initial phase of the Office Options Appraisal, and added to the 2023/24 revised budget. The revised estimate also includes a sum for repair and maintenance works in connection with two units at Enderby Road Industrial Estate. This has been covered by budget transfer from central provisions. Contractual and inflationary increases have been applied where appropriate.
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 the actions within the agreed POS strategy.
- Maximise income generating and savings 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 44,000 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 several Parishes 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"> • To deliver requirements under new waste packaging reforms • To explore collaborative opportunities with partner authorities • To identify mobile working enhancements to improve the customer experience. <p><u>District Cleansing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop digital working arrangements to improve processes and efficiencies in the service. • 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"> • To deliver the actions within the approved POS strategy including a review of options to help parks be financially sustainable. <p><u>Transport</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the feasibility of delivering fleet services on behalf of other Councils and partners. • To continue to embed digitisation in fleet operations. <p><u>Assets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To progress strategic site projects through the next stages to ensure the Council's assets are utilised to gain best value. • To support the delivery of the solar panel and EV charging infrastructure at the depot. • Help internal customers to self-serve and reduce ad hoc demand on asset team. |
| <p>Income generation</p> | <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 for all taxi services in 2024-25. • The Council will explore opportunities to undertake chargeable fleet services on behalf of other organisations in 2024-25. <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 a section of the Council offices to NHS bring revenue opportunities but also better outcomes for our customers with partners such as these delivering services alongside our own officers. The asset team will be looking for opportunities to lease the vacant area of the Council officers now the refurbishment has been completed. • Income generation is also obtained via leased rental agreements on the Enderby Road Industrial Estate and Countesthorpe Mobile Home site. The team actively work with the Council's letting agent to ensure that units at the industrial estate are let quickly following them becoming vacant. |
| Capital plans for the portfolio | <p>The 2024/25 Capital Programme includes the following proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.3m for replacement of fleet vehicles. • £130,000 to resurface the car park at Fosse Meadows subject to securing external funding. • £440,000 for car park improvements at Bouskell Park, subject to identifying external funding opportunities. |

Key Performance Indicators

| PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES | 2022/23 | 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 such as food |

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.

At the time of writing the funding allocation for implementing the new waste packaging reforms has not yet been announced.