

**Report to: Environment Committee, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: STREET SCENE PLACE WORKING**

**1 Recommendation**

**That Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the contents of this report and approves the proposal to continue with the existing number of operatives undertaking Place working.**
- 1.2 Approves the recruitment of two permanent staff to the Street Scene team (Place Working), or**
- 1.3 Approves the deployment of two temporary staff to the Place Working service for an additional twelve months (from April 2022), and for this arrangement to be further reviewed for 2023/2024 budget.**
- 1.4 Recommends to Council an additional revenue budget of £55,000 to the Environmental Operations budget for 2022/2023.**

**2 Background**

- 2.1 In July 2020, a report was brought to the Environment Committee for approval for 'Place Working' to commence in October 2020 with the city being divided into five Places, including the city centre as a Place. Teams of five operatives were initially allocated to each of the outlying Place areas (working Monday to Friday) with a team of six (working Monday to Sunday) for the city centre.
- 2.2 Previously, Place working was presented within the Budget Paper to Environment Committee, 28/01/2020. Item 2, of appendix 5, detailed the delivery of Place working and highlighted the need for two additional posts to be funded in order for 4 teams of 5 to be deployed in the outlying areas. The additional posts were to be funded at a total cost of £81,000 (equivalent to £54,000 p.a.) for a period of 18 months, this additional funding is due to end in March 2022.
- 2.3 Operating with teams of 5 has brought a level of resilience, as the team members cover each other's holidays and absence (c. 37 weeks cover per 5 person team). The Place Teams also cover the holidays/absence for the litter bin teams.
- 2.4 Given the level of holidays/absence the teams, more often than not, have 4 operatives in attendance. Having 4 operatives in attendance allows for 2 teams of 2 to operate. This reduces the need for lone working and is more effective than single person working when undertaking larger, more detailed, tasks (alleyway clearances, hedges etc.).

- 2.5 In order to revert to the pre-October 2020 staffing levels of 18 operatives (currently 20 deployed) from April 2022, the following options were suggested in the January 2020 budget papers:
- a) Other City-wide functions shift to a Place basis (e.g., mowing) and workloads combined; or
  - b) The number of Places is reconfigured across the remaining 18 posts, with 4 Place areas of 5 operatives being consolidated into 3 Place areas of 6 operatives); or
  - c) Reduce the number of operatives in 2 of the Place areas; resulting in 2 areas with 5 operatives and 2 areas with 4 operatives.

2.6 Having further reviewed these three options, it appears that each of them would be detrimental to the current service:

- a) City-wide functions shift to a Place basis (e.g., mowing): – the current city-wide functions have greater flexibility and better asset deployment (one set of assets moving through the city, rather than assets in each place), to split these functions across four Place areas would reduce efficiency.
- b) The number of Places and the size of team is reconfigured across the remaining 18 posts (4 Places of 5 is reduced to 3 Places of 6): - Of the 3 options to reduce the number of operatives, this is most likely the more sustainable option.

The Place areas would obviously increase in size, with each area likely including more 'hotspots', so the cleansing standards in some areas would be recovered later in the day/week. There would initially be some disruption to the established cleansing patterns, whilst the teams adapt to their new areas.

- c) Reducing two of the Place areas to 4 operatives: - it has not been established that any of the Place areas have less demand, or greater community involvement; therefore, the reduction of staff in 2 areas would have a detrimental effect on the current cleansing standards in those locations.

Paragraph 2.3 details that teams of 5 bring a greater resilience to cover holidays/absence and allows for more detailed tasks to be undertaken by 2 teams of 2, a team of 4 would operate as a team of 3 for 20+ weeks of the year, this would reduce effectiveness.

### **3 Preferred Option for Place Working**

- 3.1 The change to Place working has been well received and is seen as being successful so far, with general service standards improved and reduced complaint levels.
- 3.2 To reduce the level of resources deployed will likely be detrimental to the standards of the service, therefore, the proposal is to continue with the deployment of the existing resources; directly employing an additional two operatives on a permanent basis, in the Place teams.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 To continue with the deployment of the additional resources on a temporary basis; employing two operatives on fixed-term contracts for 12 months, from April 2022.

**Advantages:**

- Continues with the existing resource levels and enables service standards to be maintained.
- Allows for a further review to be undertaken in 12-months' time.

**Disadvantages:**

- Maintains uncertainty for the service and future budgets.

**5 Implications****5.1 Financial & Budgetary Implications**

The cost of providing this additional resource, 2 operatives (including on-costs and holiday/absence cover), is estimated at £55,000 for 2022/23 financial year.

**5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

As Principal Litter Authority, Worcester City Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that relevant land in its area is, so far as is practicable, kept clear of litter and refuse.

**5.3 Risk Implications**

The current standard of street cleansing in the outlying areas, could deteriorate if the resource is withdrawn.

**5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications**

This programme supports:

- City Plan Theme: People feeling like they are proud of where they live; the city being a beautiful place to be in, whether as a resident or a visitor.

**5.5 Equality Implications**

There are no negative equality implications identified.

**5.6 Human Resources Implications**

Employment of two new operatives.

**5.7 Health and Safety Implications**

No health and safety issues; during periods of absence teams can deploy into 2 teams of 2; these can operate safely on more detailed tasks.

If resources are reduced and some Place teams have a standard team of 4, then during periods of absence the remaining 3 operatives may need to operate together at times.

**5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications**

**Social:** Maintenance of improved street scene standards, including aesthetic improvements, can improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to the city.

**Environmental:** Maintains (as a minimum) existing cleansing results.

**Economic:** Good cleansing standards improve the street scene in the city making Worcester a more attractive location for residents and businesses, and a more inviting destination for visitors.

**Ward(s):** All  
**Contact Officer:** Phil Gilmour, Interim Head of Environmental Operations  
Tel: 01905 722534  
Email: [phil.gilmour@worcester.gov.uk](mailto:phil.gilmour@worcester.gov.uk)  
**Background Papers:** None