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| Report of Head of Neighbourhood ServicesToThe Head of Paid ServiceOn29 June 2022 |
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| **INCREASE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FRONTLINE CREWS WITHIN THE WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE AREA** |

**1 SUMMARY**

* 1. To seek approval to increase the establishment within the waste recycling service with an additional 1 x Refuse Driver and 2 x Refuse Collectors to create an additional crew.

As the budget impact will be £79,601.64 per year, (salary plus on-costs based on Refuse Collectors at the top of their grade, and the Refuse Driver at the current market supplement of 4.2), this is a key decision.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

 **To be resolved by the Head of Paid Service:**

2.1 That the number of Refuse Drivers (TS10) on the establishment is increased by 1 FTE and the number of Refuse Collectors (TS03) is increased by 2 FTE.

1. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 There are currently 21 x Refuse Drivers on the establishment that are required for the current workload. There are 15 driving roles each day which means there are 6 that are needed to cover sickness and annual leave, who cover alternative duties when not required to drive, for instance loading bins as part of another crew and delivering new bins to customers. There has been no increase to the establishment for in excess of ten years.

3.2 Over the last 18 months, there has been an increased turnover of Refuse Drivers (6 x FTE have left during this period), due to the competitive nature of the driving positions resulting from the national shortage of LGV drivers. This has also meant that agencies have been unable to supply temporary staff to meet the demand for drivers across the UK, and as such MDC have been unable to secure temporary resources to cover any vacant posts during recruitment or to respond to unexpected absence.

3.4 The impact on the driver shortage is that services have been suspended at various points over the last 18 months including glass collections, bulky waste collections and garden waste collections. The most recent bulky waste suspension has led to reduction in income from £61k down to £23k.

3.5 There has been a significant impact on resources across the Council as a result of services not operating in the form of:

* regular communication messages needing to be prepared and sent to residents;
* responding to contact via phone, email and social media; and handling complaints.
* This has also had a negative impact on the Council’s reputation to deliver a good service

3.6 A Delegated Decision was taken on the 31st March 2022 to implement a market forces supplement to increase the salary for Refuse Drivers to scale 4.2. This increased pay was reflected in the number of applicants to the subsequent job advert for the job vacancies, and all Driver posts have now been filled, (subject to pre-employment checks).

3.7 Alongside the issues with recruiting Refuse Drivers, there has also been a high reliance on agency staff to cover for Refuse Collectors. Permanent members of staff are often more reliable and the team have been required to train around 100 agency loaders through the induction process in the past two years. This is resource intensive and not a sustainable approach in the current economic climate.

3.8 In April 2021 kerbside glass collections were introduced to increase the recycling offer for residents, which has been very successful, with over 2,300 tonnes of glass collected in the first year of operation. This has partly been delivered by resources freed up through the cessation of garden waste collections for Newark and Sherwood District Council, but has also been another draw on a service area which operates with limited resources.

3.9 In September 2021 the company responsible for emptying glass bins at bring sites across the district terminated their contract with MDC, leaving a considerable problem for the team to resolve quickly. Having considered the options available, and by consolidating the bring site locations into a more manageable number, the team are now servicing the sites themselves, to process the glass in the same way as the domestic collections are through the disposal contract. Whilst this is a more lucrative approach to dealing with these sites, it also creates an additional draw on the service.

3.10 Ideally the request for an additional crew would be presented and scrutinised through the annual budget setting process, however there was an expectation that the service would stabilise within 2022, and we would be able to meet demand post pandemic operations. This has not proved to be the case and the situation has been exacerbated by post Brexit shortages of drivers and agency workers, and measures are required to address the issue urgently.

3.11 The Mansfield District Local Plan 2013-2033 sets a target of 325 dwellings per annum. From 2013 to 2021, 2,811 new properties have been completed and there is a need to provide a further 1706 homes between April 2021 and March 2026. However, the number of new homes predicted to be created is actually 2641. Mansfield District Council has seen the population grow by over 4000 (4%) since 2013 and if this trend continues, the population will grow by a further 2800 in the next 5 years. Whilst the service have been able to absorb these new builds in the past, the growing demand on the current resources is significant and is becoming unsustainable.

3.12 The glass disposal contract has recently been re-tendered for the next two years, (with an option to extend for an a further two years), which has increased the income from the glass service considerably. The total income from the sale of the glass is forecast to generate £80k in 22/23 which includes an estimated 500 tonnes from our recycling sites. This represents a rise of £57k per annum compared to 21/22. This increase makes a significant contribution to fund the additional crew and the total revenue generated from the glass contract per annum will cover the entire cost of the additional crew required to increase the resilience of the service. At the time of setting the budget setting the revised contract for glass disposal and the associated sale price was not complete, and as such income projections were based on the existing, lower value, contract which was in place at the time.

3.13 An increase in staff numbers can also provide an opportunity to implement a District wide commercial glass waste collection service for trade customers, which would enhance the offer for local businesses, and continue to enhance the offer the Council is able to provide to support recycling in the district, as well as generating further additional income.

3.14 A major transformation project is currently underway across Neighbourhood Services, which aims to implement in-cab and hand-held technology to all front-line services, (Waste and Recycling, Street Cleansing, Parks and Town Centre), which will enable a more efficient use of resources and more effective deployment to complete planned and unplanned tasks each day. The system will also increase accountability for crews and operatives, and enable better monitoring of productivity. The procurement of the software has just completed, and contract negotiations are underway, with an estimated roll-out to the first service (Domestic Waste) expected by December 2022. This will obviously aid resource allocation to maximise efficiency in the service, but given the scale of growth, the lack of additional resources over time, and the additional collections and demand on services, this is unlikely to resolve all the issues currently experienced with crew resources for consistent service provision. The software will support the review of Trade Waste operations, (early 2023) which should free up some resources through more efficient route planning and deployment, which will be prioritised to generate additional income through additional customers and collections, to reduce the strain on corporate budgets.

3.15 A recent review by APSE into Neighbourhood Services at Mansfield District Council highlighted that the Waste and Recycling Service was relatively light on staff numbers, compared with similar organisations nationally. The same report also highlighted that the Parks Service was quite generously resourced compared to other organisations, which will be considered in more detail once the software and hand-held technology has been rolled out to better understand productivity and efficiency across this service, and actions taken accordingly to resolve the situation. Parks have supported Waste and Recycling on occasion through Covid-19, while some of their own operations were suspended, such as team sports bookings, which shows there could be potential for more multi-skilling across teams in the future, as part of the wider review.

3.16 In terms of vehicle resources a new refuse freighter is currently on order and due to be delivered in August/September, which will ensure there are ample vehicles within the fleet to consistently deliver services, (the additional freighter will bring the total to 21 in the fleet).

1. **OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

4.1 Preferred option:

Increase the establishment by 1 x FTE Refuse Driver (TS10) and 2 x FTE Refuse Collectors (TS03). This is the preferred option and will provide resilience to the service to prevent further service disruptions.

4.2 Alternative option – Do Nothing:

Maintain the current staffing levels and continue to rely on agency loaders and accept the risk that services may be adversely impacted by sickness levels or other unforeseen circumstances. This is not the preferred option as previous recruitment exercises have not immediately provided a replacement operative, limitations on agency staff are likely to continue and in the impact on resources could leave the department short and is likely to result in services being suspended.

**5 RISK ASSESSMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS**

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| **Risk**  | **Risk Assessment**  | **Risk Level**  | **Risk Management**  |
| Reputational | Staffing levels being reduced and services being suspended will lead to complaints and reputational damage.  | High | Increase the establishment and provide a buffer and an increase in resilience in the front line service. |
| Financial | Driver shortages results in bulky waste being suspended which denies the opportunity to generate income. | High | Increase the establishment and provide a buffer and an increase in resilience in the front line service. |
| Financial | Insufficient staff levels would prevent the introduction of a commercial glass waste service. | Medium | Increase the establishment and provide a service to generate income. |

1. **IMPLICATIONS**
2. Relevant Legislation - The Council is a waste collection authority and has a duty to dispose of household waste in its area (Environmental Protection Act 1990). Section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act imposes a duty upon waste collection authorities to collect at least two types of recyclable waste from households. Regulation 13 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011/988) requires separate collection of waste paper, metal, plastic and glass.

(b) Human Rights – no direct implications

(c) Equality and Diversity –no direct implications

(d) Climate change and environmental sustainability – An additional team will give more resilience to the service to ensure that household collections can be facilitated both now, and into the future as more homes are developed. All glass collected is re-melted and is made into new bottles and jars which has the biggest carbon saving.

(e) Crime and Disorder – no direct implications

(f) Budget /Resource –The additional two loaders will cost £51,008 per annum, (at top of scale including on-costs) but this would be offset by reducing the reliance on agency staff which would cost £55k for 2 loaders for the same period, including the agency charges.

 A commercial glass collection could yield an estimated 250 tonnes of glass per annum which would generate an income of around £8k for the sale of this glass. There would also be an income for the service itself although this would be offset by the reduction in the general waste capacity from these customers as the waste is diverted to recycling. As outlined above by servicing the bring-sites in-house this will generate an additional £11k approximately over the course of a year. Additional income from a trade glass round has not been incorporated into existing income forecasts, and the transfer of bring-sites to be serviced in-house was implemented after the budget setting process was completed. Any additional fuel usage relating to increased commercial operations will be covered by the additional income.

**7 COMMENTS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS**

1. Head of Paid Services Decision Taker
2. Monitoring Officer No specific comments
3. Deputy Section 151 Officer No specific comments
4. Human Resources - There have been a number of difficulties with recruitment and support from Agencies, with increases in absence and demand on the service an increase in establishment would alleviate pressures on the service and the current employees. Any recruitment will be in line with policy. The market supplement is to be reviewed prior to the Anniversary in April 2023

**8 CONSULTATION**

 None.

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