

<b>Report title</b>	2023/24 Environmental Services Service Area Plan progress report and a summary of the Service Area Plan to be delivered during 2024/25
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<b>Department</b>	Environmental Services
<b>Exempt?</b>	No
<b>Exemption type</b>	N/A
<b>Reasons for exemption</b>	N/A

**Purpose of report:**

- To resolve

**Synopsis of report:**

This report provides an update on the delivery of the 2023/24 Environmental Services Service Area Plan and a summary of the Service Area Plan to be delivered during 2024/25 for approval.

The full proposed Service Area Plan can be found in Appendix A

**Items identified as requiring budget growth have been included in the Council’s budget for 2024/25.**

**Capital provision for the switch to HVO fuel is covered in a separate report to this Committee in order to release funds during the year as per the Financial Regulations.**

**Recommendation(s):**

Members approve the 2024/25 Service Area Plan for Environmental Services.

**1. Context and background of report**

1.1 Service Area Plans (SAP) are an essential element in achieving delivery of the Council’s Corporate Business Plan 2023-26 (CBP) and five related Corporate Strategies – Organisational Development, Empowering Communities, Climate Change, Economic Development and Health and Wellbeing.

1.2 The CBP describes the key priorities for the Council to deliver over the period of the plan. Annual SAP identify how the CBP will be achieved and is action-orientated,

identifying resources required to deliver priorities and sets out where increasingly limited resources will be focused for the following financial year.

- 1.3 The annual business planning cycle for 2024/25 commenced with each Corporate Head of Service submitting any planned activity for the next Financial Year which requires revenue or capital growth for review.

## **2. Growth Bids**

Growth bids and associated business cases were taken to Corporate Management Committee as part of the MTFs report in December 2023. Subsequently these have been as part of the budget for 24/25 at Corporate Management Committee in January 2024 and Full Council in February 2024. Therefore, revenue growth presented in the report has been agreed as part of budget setting process. Capital growth requests approved as part of budget setting will be provisional in the budget for 24/25. Committee approval will be required to drawdown on provisional capital funds prior to a capital scheme proceeding. A growth bid to increase the maintenance budget for playground equipment from £30k to £60K in April 2024 was approved in 2022/2023. This additional budget will be used to ensure all play areas are safe.

- 2.1 To support this transition from Diesel to HVO fuel a separate report to the March Environment and Sustainability Committee seeks the approval of the committee to release the previously agreed budget provision of £100,000 per annum to fund HVO fuel which has a premium price.
- 2.2 When the CBP was set, a total of 194 actions and activities were identified from the associated 5 corporate strategies. Of these, SAPs for 2023/24 included 128 for delivery during the year. A further 33 CBP activities are identified for delivery in 2024/2025 across all service areas. The remaining 33 CBP activities are therefore a source of planned activities to be selected for delivery in 25/26.
- 2.3 Service Area Plans also include service-specific planned activity that does not require growth and may not be an activity identified as part of the CBP. For example, where legislation or the regulatory framework has been revised, in which the service operates and needs to be compliant with.
- 2.4 Activities that are required to be delivered as part of the Council's Savings Programme are also included in relevant Service Area Plans.
- 2.5 Service Area Plans also include a Mission Statement to document a narrative of the service area's current position and its direction of travel over the period of the Corporate Business Plan, and a summary of each of the teams that form the service area and the core tasks they deliver.
- 2.6 To ensure a 'golden thread' between Service Area Plans and team and individual plans, Corporate Heads of Service will use the planned activity to set team and individual objectives for 24/25.
- 2.7 Progress against delivery of activities detailed in Service Area Plans forms part of Corporate Performance reporting facilitated by the Project Management Office. Progress of delivery of activities is monitored through Quarterly review meetings with Corporate Heads of Service and subject to regular reporting.

- 2.8 Service Area Plans go to their relevant service committee for approval prior to final approval sought from Corporate Management Committee in March 2024 approving the Corporate Action Plan (which is an amalgamation of all the plans for the year).

### **3. Key Achievements in 2023/24.**

- 3.1 The Service Area Plan 2023/24 contained 17 actions, including:
- 3.2 Setting up a new multi-agency Safety Advisory Group to review plans for events that take place on Runnymede land. This service is now established and well attended by our partners including Surrey Fire and Rescue, Surrey Highways Events team and Surrey Neighbourhood Police team.
- 3.3 Drafting of a new Air Quality Action plan which was submitted to DEFRA in January for review. The plan is required under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and will be reviewed in five years. It is anticipated that air quality will continue to improve over the period of the plan.
- 3.4 Review of the Depot fuel tank to assess suitability for HVO fuel and ensure remediation works were taken in advance of the fuel switch. Works identified and completed included a tank inspection and test, painting and deep clean to remove sediment.
- 3.5 Embedding new Grounds Maintenance arrangements. After a shaky start the new team has gone from strength to strength. Major steps have been made to address shortfalls in the standard of delivery by the former contractor. This included major work to cut back hedges, planting perennials in high street planters, reducing flower beds and planting perennials in the formal parks and significant improvements around our housing sites.

### **4. Actions taken forward into 2024/2025**

The following actions will be carried forward into 2024/2025

- 4.1 Procurement of a tree survey. Identification of tree locations and delivery of a contract specification will be progressed in 2024/2025
- 4.2 Rewilding and planting projects. Working with colleagues in Community Services we plan to continue to work r to enhance Runnymede's formal parks using perennial planting and also identify areas for naturalisation.

Working with colleagues in Assets and Regeneration work will continue to ensure the depot buildings and wider infrastructure are safe and fit for purpose.

The full-Service Area Plan can be found in Appendix A. A summary is provided below.

### **5. Service Area Mission Statement:**

- 5.1 Environmental Services is a multi-disciplinary business centre covering a range of services including Environmental Health and Licensing, Direct Services Organisation (DSO), Parks and Green Spaces and Engineering Services.

## **6. Contribution to Corporate Strategies 2022 to 2026:**

### **6.1 Climate Change Strategy**

We will factor our aim for net zero carbon into the design and delivery of all operational activities across Environmental Services. Key deliveries as follows:

- Refurbishment of the depot to deliver a safe working and operating environment.
- Develop a new fleet strategy working with colleagues in the Climate Change team.
- Potential switch to HVO fuel.
- Move to lithium-ion battery powered hand-held equipment in grounds maintenance,
- Review of Runnymede Borough Council sandbag policy.
- Review of schedules for grounds maintenance to optimise efficiency. New sustainable planting policy.
- Adopt SEP 25 policy for waste and recycling.
- Procurement of alternative route management software for the waste fleet which includes route optimisation.

### **6.2 Empowering our communities strategy.**

We will strive to design services which reflect the needs of our communities, and which enhance their quality of life. Key deliveries as follows:

- Respond to complaints about noise and fly tipping.
- Work with voluntary groups to encourage participation in activities including litter picking and planting.
- Maintain vacant allotment plots to encourage local uptake.
- Work with applied resilience to support communities vulnerable to flooding.

### **6.3 Economic Development Strategy**

We will design services to enhance the street scene in our town centres and offer local employment opportunities to residents in our direct services teams. Key deliverables as follows:

- Recruitment campaigns for all direct services to include locally directed marketing.
- Improvements to street scene infrastructure to be funded by the national prosperity fund.
- Develop a programme of green scene infrastructure improvements to enhance our open spaces.
- Support our food businesses by offering advice and information together with relevant signposting as we navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

### **6.4 Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

We will support residents, local workers and visitors to Runnymede through advice and where necessary enforcement with respect to private rented housing and health and safety at work. We will maintain our parks and open spaces and facilities to provide safe and welcoming access to the natural environment. Key deliveries as follows:

- Respond to complaints about private rented housing, giving advice or taking enforcement action where appropriate in line with our enforcement policy.
- Review the RBC waste bin allocation policy to incorporate clear standards specifically for licensed HMOs and flats.
- Responding to complaints about working conditions and investigating, advising or enforcing as necessary to ensure appropriate safety systems are in place.

## 6.5 **Organisational Development Strategy**

We will work with digital services and human resources to ensure we have the right staff in place to deliver our services. Key deliveries as follows:

- Recruit to vacancies in the new Grounds Maintenance team, providing training and development as required.
- Recruit to vacancies identified and created by the 2023/2024 Environmental Services restructure.
- Deliver implementation plans for Environmental Health, Green Spaces and Grounds Maintenance following the restructure.
- Continue to train operatives working from the DSO to ensure they have all necessary training and induction.
- Work with teams to implement the new HR Payroll package.

## 7. **On-going services to be delivered:**

### 7.1 **Environmental Health**

Following the 2023/2024 restructure recruitment, support and training will take place to ensure a smooth transition to the new team. We will continue to deliver all existing services as identified in the background service information in section 2 of this service delivery plan. A review of enforcement and licensing options in Houses in Multiple Occupation will be delivered in 2024/2025

### 7.2 **Engineers**

In 2024/2025 the team will review the bus shelter contract which potentially may deliver additional income. The team will continue to deliver planning advice around flood prevention. New drainage bylaws will be introduced following consultation with relevant stake holders.

### 7.3 **Direct Services Operations (DSO)**

Functions delivered by the DSO include, Waste Collection, Recycling collection, Trade Waste collection, Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Cemeteries. The street care service will be reviewed in 2024/2025  
The team will work with digital services to implement a new route optimisation programme.

### 7.4 **Green Spaces**

The team delivers the following services: landscape management, inspections services for parks and Housing, allotments, events, response to complaints, contract management of the ground's maintenance service, and enquiries and all related enforcement functions including incursions and encampments on RBC land. Following the 2023/2024 restructure recruitment, support and training will take place to ensure a smooth transition to the new team. Workshops to develop greater resilience across the Green Spaces and Grounds Maintenance teams will be delivered.

### 7.5 **Challenges, Opportunities and key deliverables for 2024/2025**

The main challenges for 2024.2025 will be as follows:

- Recruitment of new officers established in the 2023/2024 restructure of Environmental Services.

- Interim operation of the depot whilst alternative options for delivering a compliant and effective site and accommodation are explored.
- Delivery of the proposed fleet and fuel strategy which will offer increased efficiency and reduce RBC scope one emissions.
- Review of licensing and enforcement options for Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- Review of the Street Cleansing service
- Review of Cemetery conditions

## **8. Policy framework implications**

- 8.1 This Plan supports the delivery of the Corporate Business Plan.
- 8.2 Specifically, those actions arising from Corporate Strategies that will be addressed in delivering the Service Plan can be seen in the Planned Activity Dashboard in Appendix A in the table list titled Corporate Business Plan activities.

## **9. Resource implications**

- 9.1 Growth areas are as follows,

The following growth was approved at February 2023 Full Council.

£100,000 to facilitate the swich from diesel to HVO fuel there is a separate report to the March 2024 Environment and Sustainability committee to release these funds.

£50,000 for maintenance of playgrounds which was approved in 2023/2024 to commence from financial year 2024/2025. £100,000 for a tree audit. This will be procured in 2024/2025.

- 9.2 These activities have been incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Council's budget for 2024/25. Capital schemes will require relevant committee approval for the release of funds for the schemes to progress.

## **10. Legal implications**

- 10.1 There are no direct legal implications identified as a result of this report.
- 10.2 All contractual or other legal implications linked to proposed areas of work will be subject to full consideration, working with colleagues in Law and Governance.

## **11. Equality implications**

- 11.1 No direct equality implications identified as a result of this report.
- 11.2 Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted for relevant activities and projects being delivered as part of this plan. This will ensure that any equality implications are identified and addressed before new initiatives are introduced.

## **12. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 12.1 For all planned activity, consideration will be given to environmental, sustainability and biodiversity implications, in support of the Council's commitment to climate change and its Climate Change Strategy. Planned activity from across the organisation that supports climate change will be reported to Members regularly during the year.
- 12.2 A number of Service area plan projects planned will support Runnymede's commitment to reducing carbon emissions. In particular the following projects:
- Refurbishment of the depot to deliver a safe working and operating environment.
  - Develop a new fleet strategy working with colleagues in the Climate Change team.
  - Potential switch to HVO fuel.
  - Move to lithium-ion battery powered hand-held equipment in grounds maintenance,
  - Review of schedules for grounds maintenance to optimise efficiency. New sustainable planting policy.
  - Procurement of alternative route management software for the waste fleet which includes route optimisation.

### **13 Risk implications**

- 13.1 The Service Risk Register has been reviewed for factors that may impact service delivery in 24/25. Risks have been identified, categorised and scored and any risks that score above the Risk Threshold as set out in the Risk Management Framework are reviewed by CLT to be included in the Corporate Risk Register. Planned activity in service area plans may include actions required to mitigate these risks.
- 13.2 Without approved annual Service Area Plans, there is a risk that is a lack of clarity and prioritisation of activity and resources to enable delivery of the CBP.

### **14 Conclusions**

- 14.1 The Service Area Plan presented supports the delivery of the Council's CBP and associated corporate strategies.
- 14.2 The SAP sets out the Council's ambition in delivering more, different and better as an organisation, an aspiration supported by Members and Officers alike.
- 14.3 However, it is important to note that these ambitions will have to be considered against the financial position of the authority.

### **15 Background papers**

- 15.1 None.

### **16 Appendices**

- 16.1 Planned Activity dashboard in the table list titled Corporate Business Plan activities.