

# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AGENDA

### STREETSCENE SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date:** Thursday, 15 October 2020

**Time:** 6.00 pm

**Venue:** Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Members:**

Councillor Miss T G Harper (Chairman)

Councillor G Fazackarley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J E Butts

Mrs L E Clubley

J M Englefield

Mrs K Mandry

R H Price, JP

**Deputies:** Mrs T L Ellis

J S Forrest

L Keeble



**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Minutes (Pages 5 - 8)**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Streetscene Scrutiny Panel held on 24 September 2020.

**3. Chairman's Announcements**

**4. Declarations of Interest and Disclosures of Advice or Directions**

To receive any declarations of interest from members in accordance with Standing Orders and the Council's Code of Conduct and disclosures of advice or directions received from Group Leaders or Political Groups, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

**5. Deputations**

To receive any deputations of which notice has been received.

**6. Executive Business (Pages 9 - 10)**

To consider any item of business dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel, that falls under the remit of the Streetscene Portfolio. This will include any decisions taken by individual members during the same time period.

**(1) Covid-19 Public Spaces Recovery Plan (Pages 11 - 12)**

**7. Hedge Cutting and Sports Pitch Renovations (Pages 13 - 16)**

To consider a report by the Head of Streetscene which provides information in respect of the performance of the hedge cutting and sports pitch maintenance service.

**8. Covid-19 Lockdown - A Review of Streetscene Services (Pages 17 - 26)**

To consider a report by the Head of Streetscene which provides members with details of the challenges faced by the Streetscene department during the Covid-19 Lockdown period.

**9. Streetscene Scrutiny Panel Priorities**

To provide an opportunity for Members to consider the scrutiny priorities for the Streetscene Panel.



P GRIMWOOD  
Chief Executive Officer

Civic Offices  
[www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk)  
05 October 2020

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# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Streetscene Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

**Date:** Thursday, 24 September 2020

**Venue:** Virtual Meeting - Microsoft Teams

**PRESENT:**

**Councillor** Miss T G Harper (Chairman)

**Councillor** G Fazackarley (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:** Mrs L E Clubley, Mrs K Mandry, J S Forrest (deputising for R H Price, JP), Mrs T L Ellis (deputising for J E Butts) and L Keeble (deputising for J M Englefield)

**Also Present:** S D Martin, Executive Member for Streetscene, (For Item 6) and S Cunningham (for item 6)



**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J E Butts, J M Englefield and R H Price, JP.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Streetscene Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 30 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

**5. DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

**6. REVIEW OF GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE**

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Streetscene on the Review of the Garden Waste Collection Service and were given the opportunity to comment on the draft report that will be considered by the Executive at its meeting scheduled to take place on 12 October 2020. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor S Cunningham addressed the Panel on this item.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor S D Martin, Executive Member for Streetscene, also addressed the meeting on this item.

Members discussed the report at length and acknowledged that the Council has had to take action to secure new revenue streams to assist with the funding gap that will arise as a result of a recent decision by Hampshire County Council to no longer allow Fareham Borough Council to recover costs for material recycling.

Members felt very strongly that the marketing campaign to launch this service will be a key tool in ensuring residents understand that this service is currently a free service that is not covered by Council tax payments, and to explain why it has become necessary to consider implementing a charge for the collection of garden waste.

Members discussed the proposed cost of the service and felt that when compared to some other Council's, it appears to be quite expensive. However, Officer explanations were accepted that the costings have been

calculated by benchmarking against a group of Councils with a similar size and demographic to Fareham to ensure that comparisons are relevant. In addition, comparison costs with other Council's should be made based on the likely charges in the 22/23 municipal year rather than current rates as this is when it is proposed that the service be implemented. Members acknowledged that whilst people may regret the necessity to charge, they are likely to accept it and welcome what will ultimately be an improved service in terms of capacity and handling.

Members put forward concerns that some residents may not be able to afford to purchase a subscription or may not have space to store a bin. Officers acknowledged that there will be a need to consider whether some residents will need support through the transition period and explained that residents will be able to share a subscription with neighbours, family or friends. In addition, the marketing campaign will highlight the very successful scheme that is being run by Hampshire County Council that encourages people to home compost.

Members discussed home composting in detail including the merits of combined food and garden waste composting bins and considered whether it would be worth promoting this type of receptacle now. However, it was felt that the significantly higher unit cost for this type of composting bin is prohibitive.

Members raised concerns that composting could have a significant impact on the Council's recycling target. It was felt, however, that this would be offset by the significant benefits to the environment and a reduction in the carbon footprint. It was agreed that the Panel would recommend that the following paragraph be added to the Executive report as an additional recommendation:

"Fareham Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council to further promote home composting of garden and food waste."

Members raised concern that if residents did not take up the service, this could result in garden waste being disposed of as general household waste. This would also then have a potential impact on the Council reaching its recycling target. Officers explained that there was no evidence put forward during research carried out with other Council's to suggest that the volume of residual household waste would increase as a result of implementing charges.

Members queried whether it might be possible to provide residents with a choice of available bin sizes. Officers explained that the cost saving for a smaller sized bin is so small that it is unlikely that residents would want to take up this option.

Members discussed who would be responsible for replacing broken bins and also whether a subscription would be transferrable in the event of people moving to a new house. Officers confirmed that the current policy for replacing the bin free of charge will continue to apply and that if moving to a new house within the Borough, the subscription could be transferred. Refunds on subscriptions would not be offered as the cost to administer this would be expensive.

RESOLVED that the Panel recommends that the following additional recommendation be added to the draft Executive report for consideration at the meeting scheduled to take place on 12 October 2020.

“Fareham Borough Council will work with Hampshire County Council to further promote home composting of garden and food waste.”

(The meeting started at 6.10 pm  
and ended at 7.31 pm).

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Streetscene Scrutiny Panel

**Date**            **15 October 2020**

**Report of:**    **Head of Streetscene**

**Subject:**       **EXECUTIVE BUSINESS**

#### **SUMMARY**

One of the key functions of this Scrutiny Panel is to hold the Executive Portfolio Holder and Senior Officers to account in the delivery of the service and the Improvement Actions identified in the Council's Corporate Priorities and Corporate Vision.

Members are therefore invited to consider the items of business which fall under the remit of the Streetscene portfolio and have been dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel. This also includes any decisions taken by individual Executive Members.

The relevant notices for decisions taken are attached for consideration.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Members consider the items of Business discharged by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

2020/21  
Decision No.  
2201

### Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 3 August 2020

<b>Portfolio</b>	Planning and Development
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Covid-19 Public Spaces Recovery Plan</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Planning and Regeneration
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Protect and enhance the environment

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's Public Spaces Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Council's Public Spaces Recovery Plan forms part of a Recovery Framework which will be presented to the Executive on 3rd August 2020.

The plan has been produced in accordance with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Safer Public Places – Urban Centres and Green Spaces guidance that was published by HM Government on 13 May 2020. The guidance document provides a framework for identifying the issues associated with the use of public spaces considering the need for social distancing. It focuses primarily on urban centres and green spaces which are likely to have high footfall.

The report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on urban and green spaces in the Borough, and highlights actions that the Council, and others, have taken to enable people to safely use public spaces.

Government has provided Councils across England with a share of £50m of additional funding to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. The money allows local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets, through measures that extend to the end of March 2021.

Fareham Borough Council has been allocated a grant of £103,270 which comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The Fund will particularly focus on high streets, as well as other public places that are at the heart of towns and cities gearing up to reopen as safe, welcoming spaces. Most of the details of how this will be allocated in Fareham will be included in the Economic Recovery Plan.

**Options Considered:**

At the invitation of the Executive Leader, Councillor R H Price, JP addressed the Executive on this item.

As recommendation.

**Decision:**

RESOLVED that the Executive approves the Covid 19 Public Spaces Recovery Plan as detailed in the report.

**Reason:**

The report forms part of a Recovery Framework in response to the Covid-19 pandemic which will be presented to the Executive on 3rd August 2020.

**Confirmed as a true record:**

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 3 August 2020

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Streetscene Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 15 October 2020

**Report of:** Head of Streetscene

**Subject:** HEDGE CUTTING AND SPORTS PITCH RENOVATIONS

#### SUMMARY

The members of the panel are invited to scrutinise the performance of the hedge cutting and sports pitch maintenance service, that are undertaken by the Public Spaces Operations Team, with the purpose of delivering the corporate objective of providing a Clean and Tidy Borough.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel scrutinises and notes the information as set out in this report.

## INTRODUCTION

1. In 2017 the Vanguard review of the Grounds Maintenance service concluded that the hedge cutting and sports pitch maintenance service, previously outsourced to a private contractor since 2004, should be managed in-house. The main reason being it would enable the Grounds Maintenance service to become more flexible and responsive to changing demands and therefore be more efficient and effective than the outsourced service.
2. At the Council's Executive meeting in January 2018, approval was obtained to employ four additional operatives within the existing Grounds Maintenance service to undertake hedge cutting and sports maintenance work.
3. The Executive also approved a capital investment of £120,000 to procure the specialist vehicles and plant required to undertake the work.

## OPERATIONS

4. Hedge cutting is the primary function of the team with around 60% of the team's annual workload dedicated to maintaining approximately 50 kilometres or 31 miles of hedging and greenways across the Borough. Meadow operations make up around 20% of the workload with the remaining 20% split between sports pitch maintenance, rural grass cutting and countryside path management.
5. The team commenced work in July 2018 and the meadow management and countryside path maintenance operations were included in the work programme so that a full annual work schedule was created for the team as set out in the below table:

<b>Work Schedule</b>	<b>Operation</b>
March/April	Meadow preparation and sowing
May	End of season renovations for winter sport
May/June	Rural grass cut & countryside path cutting
July - September	1 <sup>st</sup> cut of hedges & countryside path cutting
October	Rural grass cut and meadow cut & collect
November - February	2 <sup>nd</sup> cut of hedges/greenway management

6. In order to undertake the wide variety of operational tasks, the team have been equipped with the following vehicles, plant and machinery.

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Operation</b>
100hp tractor	Multi-function – sport, hedge, grass maintenance
Transit van	All works
Deep aerator	Sports pitch maintenance
Disc seeder	Sports pitch maintenance
Tractor operated	Sports pitch maintenance and meadow

cultivation equipment	preparation
Tractor towed flail cut & collect equipment	Meadow mowing
Tractor mounted side arm flail	Hedge and rural grass cutting
2 long & 2 short reach hedge trimmers	Hedge cutting
2 blowers	Hedge and grass works
Hand tools	All works

## REVIEW OF THE SERVICE

7. Delays in the recruitment of operatives and a period of transition which required reorganisation of the team and delay in delivery of the new flail equipment meant the meant that progress was slower than desired to begin with.
8. It soon became apparent that in some areas the hedge growth had become established too high and therefore needed extensive reduction which required a greater amount of time and effort to deliver. The reduction to an appropriate size was welcomed by most residents but also gave rise to some complaints about lack of privacy to their property as a result of the hedge reductions.
9. Despite the issues and slow initial progress, the team completed the essential trimming back of the seasonal growth over the first year although had little time to deliver many improvements to the service.
10. Year two was much better and has not only seen standards of the work improve but also resulted in some significant reduction work being completed on hedges and other tall vegetation that had previously caused issues for some residents or that made efficient and effective maintenance challenging.
11. Hedge and vegetation reduction work is very time consuming and results in a lot of green waste to remove from site. Previously this would have been undertaken by the contractor at an additional cost to the contract and in some cases a location with a significant amount of vegetation to reduce could cost thousands of pounds a time.
12. As a result of the above, the ability of the Council to undertake reduction works was limited to the budget available. This is no longer the case with the in-house team as although the time available for this work is limited to a period in the winter there is no additional cost involved other than the green waste disposal.
13. The intention going forward is for the reductions to continue each year as required so that the Council's hedge stock can be improved visually and become more efficient to maintain over time. This will then reduce the number of complaints received from residents about vegetation overhanging paths and cycleways or blocking light from gardens.
14. Sports pitch maintenance has also improved as a result of the in-house team operation.

The deep aeration work can now be scheduled as appropriate rather than being determined by contractor availability. Standards of the pitch renovation work are more consistent as a result of the dedicated team's involvement year on year.

15. Meadow management and creation has continued to the same high standard as in previous years but with more flexibility to match the best conditions for preparation and sowing when compared to again being determined by contractor availability for this time sensitive work.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

16. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

### **CONCLUSION**

17. The in-house hedge cutting, and sports maintenance team have, after a challenging start, developed into a productive and flexible asset for the Council. Improvements have commenced to some of the Council's assets following resident's requests such as hedge height and width reductions that have saved money and will drive efficiencies going forward. These service improvements will help to reduce the number of complaints received from residents about vegetation overhanging paths and cycleways going forward.

**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Reference Papers:** Executive Report Review of Hedge Cutting Contract, 08 January 2018

**Enquiries:** For further information on this report please contact Mick Gore. (Ext: 4459)

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Streetscene Scrutiny Panel

**Date** 15 October 2020

**Report of:** Head of Streetscene

**Subject:** COVID-19 LOCKDOWN- A REVIEW OF STREETSCENE SERVICES

#### SUMMARY

The members of the Panel are invited to scrutinise the response of the Streetscene department to the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic between the months of March and July 2020.

#### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel scrutinises and notes the information as set out in this report

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the Council and our community. Immediate response efforts were required to maintain key Council services and to rapidly adapt to new requirements which helped to support residents and businesses in the Borough.
2. The Chief Executive's Management Recovery Team met regularly throughout the pandemic in order to manage the Council's response.
3. In order to guide the on-going recovery process following the lockdown, a COVID-19 Recovery Framework was devised to focus on key areas of recovery. This was approved by the Executive at the meeting on 3 August as was the Public Spaces Recovery Plan which included elements of the Streetscene services.
4. This report focuses on how each of the Streetscene service areas were impacted by the pandemic and highlights actions that were taken to enable the continuation of essential services and ensure the safety of the public and Fareham Borough Council staff.

## **BACKGROUND**

5. The Streetscene department began preparing for the Covid-19 pandemic as early as 26 February when the business continuity plans were reviewed, and services were prioritised in anticipation of possible staff shortages. As the government updated guidelines, in the lead up to the official lockdown announcement on 22 March, services were reviewed daily.
6. On 18 March the government stated that vulnerable groups should shield and work from home. This resulted in the Streetscene frontline services losing a significant number of staff. Staff based at the Streetscene depot offices were also affected and from 23 March a large proportion of the office staff began working from home, in accordance with government guidelines.

## **REFUSE AND RECYCLING**

7. At the beginning of the lockdown period, approximately 25% of Refuse and Recycling frontline staff were unavailable for work because they were either shielding or self-isolating. However, as the government guidance regarding vulnerable groups changed, most of the staff were able to return to work and by April all but two operatives were back in work.
8. To assist with the continuation of the service, two additional drivers were employed on 6-month temporary contracts to enable the services to be able to cope with any unexpected staff absences. Streetscene staff from other service areas and staff from other Council departments provided vital support which enabled the service to function effectively during the lockdown period.
9. The lockdown resulted in a significant increase in demand on the service. As residents were spending unprecedented amounts of time in their homes and could not dispose of

waste or recycling at HWRCs, which were closed, the tonnages of waste and recycling collected at the kerbside increased.

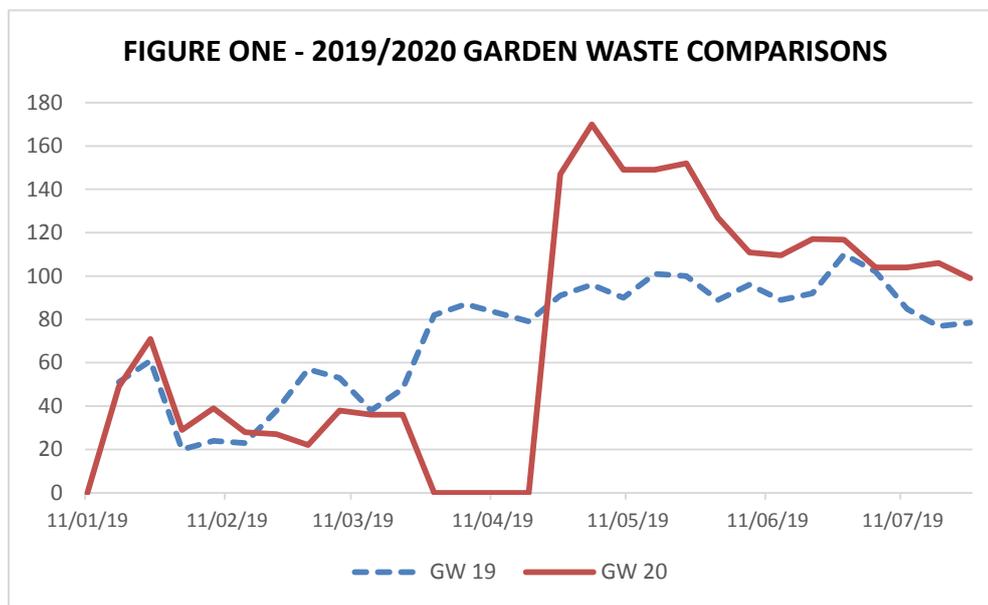
10. Between 22 March and 26 July 2020, the tonnage of refuse collected at the kerbside was, on average, 14% higher compared to the same period in 2019. Recycling tonnage was 8% higher on average across the same period.
11. In order to comply with government social distancing guidelines, the number of operatives in refuse and recycling collection vehicles was limited to two. To achieve this required hire cars and Council vehicles so that the third operative could travel separately to the collection vehicle.
12. The start times for the front-line operatives were staggered in four phases between 5:20am and 7:30am to limit the numbers of staff in the depot in the mornings to maintain safe social distancing.
13. An additional £51,000 was spent during lockdown to ensure the continued operation of essential services. This included the cost of extra staff, hire vehicles and personal protective equipment to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

## **GARDEN WASTE**

14. The Garden Waste collection service was suspended on 18 March due to the number of waste collection staff having to self-isolate or shield. This allowed the remaining waste collection operatives to focus on essential refuse and recycling collections.
15. When the garden waste service was suspended, the Streetscene customer service team was inundated with requests from residents to reinstate the service. This situation was compounded by the closure of Hampshire HWRCs on 24 March so residents had no way to dispose of garden waste.
16. When it was announced on 15 April that the garden waste collection service would be resuming, the department received 136 calls from residents requesting reusable garden waste sacks.
17. As residents had not been able to dispose of their garden waste for many weeks, when collections did resume, the tonnage collected increased dramatically (figure 1). The week beginning 1 May, 170 tonnes of garden waste was collected, compared to 94 tonnes in the same week in 2019. Between April and May the tonnage of garden waste collected at the kerbside was 58% higher than during the same period in 2019.
18. As a result of the significant increase in volumes of garden waste, the number of loaders for each garden waste crew was increased to three loaders per round in order to ensure that the operatives were not lifting excessive weights.
19. As a result of the Civic Offices being closed, there was no opportunity for residents to pick up a new garden waste sack free of charge. Therefore, between 18 March and 3 August, 3480 reusable garden waste sacks were issued and delivered free of charge across the Borough. This unprecedented demand meant that additional operatives from

both Refuse and Grounds Maintenance teams were redeployed to complete the deliveries.

20. Disposable garden waste sacks were still available for purchase for £10 for a pack of five or £40 for a pack of twenty-five. The department sold 531 disposable garden waste sacks which raised nearly £15,000 revenue for the department.



## TRADE WASTE

21. Over 200 businesses suspended bin collections, 31 reduced collections and 10 cancelled collections altogether when lockdown began on 23 March. This resulted in a 35% drop in collections, reducing income by £81,000.
22. This generated an unprecedented amount of administrative work and many hours spent by the Trade Waste support officers dealing with issues and providing help and support to struggling businesses.

## TEXTILE BANKS

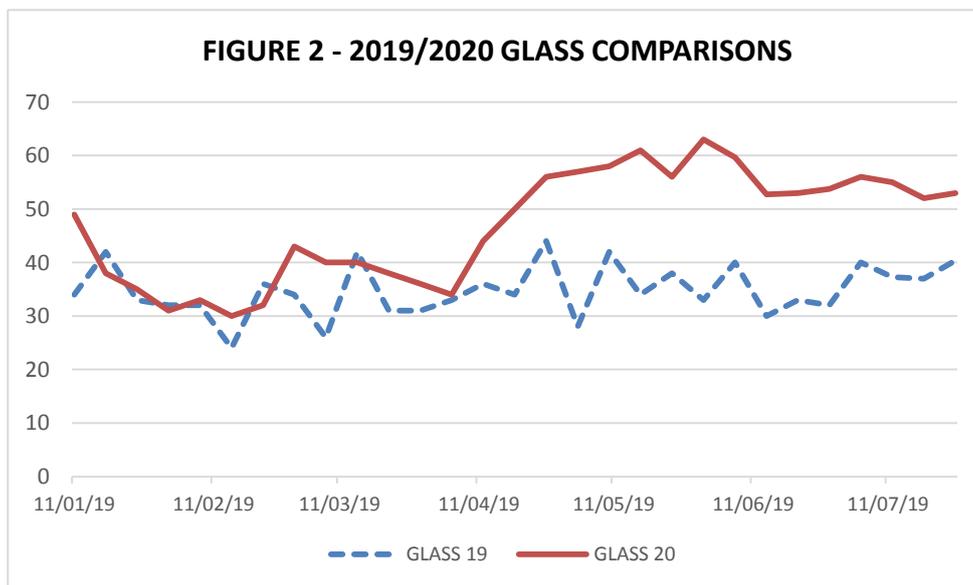
23. The Salvation Army suspended collections from textile banks across the Borough on 27 March and resumed collections on 3 July. However, the overseas markets for textiles were adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Council received a reduced price for the sale of textiles meaning income received from textile recycling has reduced by £56,000.

## GLASS BANKS

24. Glass bank collections were not suspended during lockdown. However, the tonnage of glass collected increased dramatically (figure 2). As people were drinking exclusively from their homes rather than in pubs or bars, the disposal of household glass

significantly increased. There was a 48% increase in the tonnages of glass collected from glass banks compared to the same period in 2019.

25. A back up glass collection vehicle had to be used as the existing vehicle could not cope with the increased tonnages and regularly broke down. An extra collection round was introduced on Mondays to cope with the large amount of glass deposited at bring banks over the weekends. This arrangement is still in place as the tonnage of glass deposited remains high.



### **TRANSPORT REPAIR UNIT (TRU)**

26. During the lockdown period the TRU had four members of staff in work out of an establishment of six because they were shielding or on long term sick leave. Two of the four TRU operatives were also classified as vulnerable but volunteered to come into work in order to help keep the service running.
27. The workload and working hours of the TRU significantly increased over this period. Due to the later starting times of the refuse and recycling rounds and increased amount of waste being collected, vehicles returned to the Depot later and therefore TRU staff had to work longer hours. Furthermore, the extensive internal cleaning of vehicles and installation of extra health and safety measures created additional work for the team.
28. To assist with the extra workload external contractors were used and repairs were outsourced to external garages in some cases.
29. During the Covid-19 pandemic the servicing schedules of vehicles could be extended. This was introduced by government to help organisations maintain services in the wake of staff shortages. However, the TRU maintained the existing schedules to ensure the reliability of the fleet.

30. MOT deadlines were also extended. While this helped to ease the workload of the TRU during the lockdown period, it also meant that many MOTs would be due in September which had the potential to create a huge amount of work. However, as Fareham Borough Council has a green (low risk) Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS), MOTs were extended for 12 months from March 2020.
31. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there were vehicle part shortages. While the TRU purchased additional stock at the start of the crisis, which lessened the impact, disruption in supply chains continue to cause issues. The delivery of new vehicles to replace dilapidated vehicles in the fleet has also been delayed.
32. Due to increased demand, the price and availability of consumable products dramatically increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that the expenditure of the TRU increased. Additional vehicles had to be sourced, extra safety measures installed, even the purchase price of latex gloves increased from £6 to £11. Furthermore, as the production of new vehicles was delayed by the pandemic the price of second-hand commercial vans increased.

## **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

33. The Grounds Maintenance team was majorly affected by staff shortages during the lockdown period with over a third of staff unavailable for work because they were shielding. This meant that services had to be prioritised and some suspended to make sure that the most essential tasks carried out by the service could continue.
34. Staff shortages were also compounded by the impacts of social distancing requirements. Only one operative could occupy a vehicle at a time so on some occasions there were not enough vehicles to accommodate all grounds maintenance operatives.
35. This impacted on the time and cost efficiency of the service as fuel and vehicle maintenance costs increased for some teams in addition to down time also increasing slightly. These effects were felt more keenly as the pandemic occurred during the peak growing season when the Grounds Maintenance workforce is already under increased pressure.
36. Extra tasks were also placed on the team as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the monitoring of new safety signage reminding the public of social distancing and informing them why facilities were closed. Some Grounds Maintenance staff were also redeployed to assist with the additional demand for the garden waste service, delivery of garden waste sacks and food storage logistics to assist with stock movement for food banks in the borough.
37. Along with all other Council events, Fareham in Bloom was cancelled due to social distancing concerns. However, a virtual Fareham in Bloom was launched instead. Residents uploaded photos of their entries online and the most 'liked' photos were shortlisted. 100 entries were received.

38. All the summer and autumn seasonal bedding planting was cancelled for the year to focus resources on essential tasks.

## **PUBLIC SPACES**

39. The Public Spaces Recovery Plan went to the Executive on 3 August. It provides a framework for identifying issues associated with the use of public spaces and highlights actions that the Council, and others, have taken to enable people to safely use public spaces.
40. Public conveniences were closed on 24 March. They were reopened in two phases. The first phase, on 16 May, reopened toilets that served large areas of public open space when changes to the government lockdown rules were made to allow people to take unlimited exercise outdoors. The second phase, on 1 June, reopened toilets that mainly served shopping areas and district centres.
41. Due to concerns regarding social distancing, play areas, multi-use games areas and outdoor gyms were closed on 24 March. They reopened on 4 July in accordance with government guidelines. Skate parks were closed between 10 April and 8 June.
42. On the 17 July the UK government released new guidelines and gave approval for competitive grassroots football and training sessions to re-start providing it takes place in groups of no more than 30. The government announced that club cricket could recommence from 11 July. Bookings and maintenance of football pitches and cricket wickets subsequently resumed. However, in accordance with government guidelines, sports pavilions and changing facilities remain closed except for the use of toilet facilities.
43. The above measures required new signage to be created for display at the sites. The signage required regular monitoring by the team and replacing due to damage throughout the periods of closure.

## **CEMETERIES AND BURIALS**

44. In anticipation of increased numbers of burial bookings, an additional burials team was deployed for 8 weeks. This increased the weekly burial capacity from 3 to 8. The number of burials peaked the week beginning 18 May when 7 burials took place.
45. The interment of cremated remains was suspended on 3 April to focus resources on the increased demand for burials. The service resumed on 13 July.

## **COUNTRYSIDE**

46. The countryside rangers usually work with teams of volunteers to maintain sites. Volunteer groups were suspended on 19 March. While the rangers continued to monitor sites and maintain them, increased footfall meant that, as with other open spaces, incidents of litter and other minor vandalism has put increased strain on sites.

## **STREET CLEANSING**

47. Approximately a third of Street Cleansing staff were unavailable during the initial lockdown period because they were shielding. The reduction in staff availability resulted in some services such as street sweeping reducing to ensure the litter bins could be emptied and litter collected from the parks and open spaces.
48. The easing of lockdown and government advice to use parks and open spaces for exercise and mental wellbeing, resulted in increased numbers of people accessing these facilities. This coincided with a period of warm and sunny weather. Therefore parks, green spaces and the foreshore have been inundated with visitors which resulted in unrepresented volumes of litter and dog waste being collected. Even bins in smaller localised area of open space and street litter bins exceeded capacity at times.
49. To mitigate the increased volumes of litter, some staff resource was re-deployed to work over the weekends and peak periods to empty the bins and clear any accumulations of litter. Larger bins were installed on the foreshore and open space areas that get a high level of visitors.
50. An example of the increased demand is at Burrige Recreation ground where the litter bins were required to be emptied daily, instead of the usual weekly schedule, to cope with the increase in footfall. This was replicated in other parks across the Borough although not all to this scale.
51. The closure of HWRCs resulted in increased reports of fly tipping. Between 23 March and 10 June there were 94 reported incidents of fly tipping compared to 65 during the same period in 2019.
52. Bulky waste and fridge freezer collections were suspended on 20 March and resumed on 22 and 27 April respectively but there was no noticeable increase in demand when the service was switched back on.

## **CONCLUSION**

53. While social distancing measures remain in place, the government's metre-plus guidelines have allowed more staff to return to the office and for operational staff to work with greater ease. As a result, most of the Streetscene services are now operating effectively within the constraints of complying with government guidance.
54. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new and ever-changing guidance continues to provide new challenges. While some Streetscene service areas have seen a return to the `old normal` most of the key frontline services continue to see significant demand.
55. It is anticipated that use of public open spaces and foreshore will reduce over the autumn and winter period which may provide an opportunity to catch up on much needed maintenance that has resulted from the heavy public use over this period.

However, the demand on Refuse & Recycling and TRU is likely to increase going forward as more people spend time in their homes.

56. Overall, the service has coped very well with the unprecedented demands during the difficult period and is well placed to continue to respond to future changes and challenges. This is largely thanks to the dedication and commitment of staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the key services that residents need and rely on continue to be delivered to a high standard.

**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** None

**Reference Papers:** Covid-19 Public Spaces Recovery Plan – Executive 3 August 2020

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Mark Bowler – Head of Streetscene  
Ext 4420

