

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 18 th July 2023
Report Subject	Resilience & Capacity within Streetscene & Transportation
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer, Streetscene & Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Streetscene and Transportation portfolio has been experiencing several issues over the last two years with staff recruitment, retention and long-term absences, which have impacted the resilience and capacity of the existing teams. It is anticipated that the demands on the portfolio will continue to increase as legislation is updated or introduced and the pressure to deliver additional or new services multiplies.

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the ongoing staffing issues within the portfolio, which are impacting the resilience and capacity of the existing teams to respond to service demands and deliver service priorities effectively and flexibly.

The report presents proposals to address the resilience and capacity issues within the portfolio in two key areas: fleet services and waste strategy. The proposals do not require any structural changes and do not place any current employees at risk. These areas of the portfolio have been identified as high risk, where increased capacity is required to ensure that the service remains resilient and ensure that we meet statutory targets, fulfil our legal duties, and meet future anticipated demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet recognises the challenges faces by the portfolio in terms of staff resilience and capacity and notes the associated risks highlighted.
2	That Cabinet supports the proposals detailed within the report, which will require additional budget to be allocated for the creation of the following additional posts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fleet Services - two additional posts, to support delivery and provide resilience b) Waste Strategy - three additional recycling and compliance data officer posts

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT AND PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS THE RESILIENCE AND CAPACITY ISSUES WITHIN THE PORTFOLIO
1.01	<p>The Streetscene and Transportation portfolio provides the necessary technical expertise and resource to carry out an integrated provision of the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highway maintenance• Grounds maintenance• Street cleansing• Waste and recycling collection and disposal• Fleet maintenance and management• Civil parking and environmental enforcement• Transportation services• Bereavement services <p>The services provided by the portfolio touch the lives of most of the county's residents, visitors, and businesses, almost every day. The service has developed to meet a number of key corporate priorities, but the primary driver for the service is the delivery of the Council's frontline operational activities, alongside the need to help provide a clean, safe, accessible and attractive environment, where residents are proud of their local communities. The service also supports the highway and transport infrastructure that enables residents and visitors to access employment, education, homes, leisure, health, and social activities.</p>
1.02	<p>Over the last two years, the portfolio has been experiencing several issues with staff recruitment, retention, and long-term absences, which have impacted the resilience and capacity of the existing teams.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the demands on the portfolio will continue to increase as legislation is updated or introduced and the pressure to deliver additional or new services multiplies. This report presents proposals to address the resilience and capacity issues within the portfolio in two key areas: fleet services and waste strategy.</p> <p>The proposals do not require any structural changes and do not place any current employees at risk. These areas of the portfolio have been identified as high risk, where increased capacity is required to ensure that the service remains resilient and ensure that we meet statutory targets, fulfil our legal duties, and meet future anticipated demand.</p>
1.03	<p>Fleet Services</p> <p>The fleet services function is responsible for managing the council's vehicle fleet across the organisation and ensure resilient, coordinated, and efficient services to client departments. Over the last two years, the fleet services function has faced significant resilience and capacity issues, particularly around the role of fleet manager, which is a critical post for the authority.</p>

1.04	<p>The fleet manager role is a statutory role and, as the prescribed transport manager on the operator's licence, it is required to ensure that the legal requirements for road haulage are met. Currently, the service manager for the Highway Network service has been fulfilling this duty and is currently the named transport manager on the Operator's Licence.</p>
1.05	<p>Additionally, the portfolio was the subject of a red-amber audit report for the Vehicle Operator Licence (O' Licence), which was undertaken as part of the approved Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2020/21. Progress to address the outstanding actions following the audit has been limited, mainly due to the absence of a fleet manager. The loss of the O' Licence remains a significant risk to the authority and would result in the council not being able to operate any fleet vehicles, as well as reputational and financial risks.</p>
1.06	<p>Below is a summary of the current position in relation to fleet services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fleet manager position had been vacant between October 2022-May 2023 following the unexpected, sudden and tragic passing of the previous post holder. • Recruitment took place in December 2022/January 2023 and an appointment was made, but during the course of the pre-employment checks, that individual withdrew from the process and declined the appointment. • Interim arrangements are currently in place with the existing fleet technical officer, who has been temporarily acting up into the role for the last six months and will continue to do so until recruitment of the fleet manager has been completed and a handover taken place. • APSE was approached in April 2023 and temporary arrangements are in place to support the Highway Network Manager as the main CPC holder in the interim on a consultancy basis. • The role of the fleet manager was readvertised in April 2023 and interviews were held in early May 2023 with an appointment made subject to pre-employment checks. • Following a successful appointment, the new fleet manager commenced with the authority on 12th June 2023 and will need a period of transition into the role as part of the 6-month probation period. This means that he is likely to be added to the Operator's Licence during Quarter 4 (2023-2024) and upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period.
1.07	<p>Recruitment exercises in recent years have proven that the fleet manager is a difficult role to fill, and staff turnover has impacted the continuity and consistency required to provide an efficient, effective, and compliant service. This will be the fifth exercise to recruit to the role since 2016.</p> <p>As a result, we currently rely on support from other teams within the portfolio, such as the compliance team. This is not sustainable, and there is no career pathway for employees to develop into the fleet manager role, which has been highlighted by the trade unions as a longstanding issue.</p>

1.08	<p>To address this issue, we are proposing to create two additional posts, which are intended to provide resilience and enable a career pathway and development programme for the team. These will be for the creation of an assistant fleet manager position and a ULEV (Ultra Low Emission Vehicle) transition officer position.</p> <p>The assistant fleet manager role would provide additional support and oversight to the fleet services function, ensuring that service delivery is maintained in the event of unexpected disruptions. By creating this additional position, we can establish a clear career advancement pathway for employees within the fleet services function whilst also providing resilience for the fleet manager.</p> <p>The second additional position proposed is the ULEV (Ultra Low Emission Vehicle) transition officer, which would support the assistant fleet manager and fleet manager and supplement the existing technical officer by ensuring that we meet our commitments to decarbonise transport and transition to ultra-low emission vehicles. Both roles will require investment in terms of personal development, either through mentoring and coaching, approved training courses and on-the-job learning. Both roles would be subject to job design and evaluation, and it is anticipated that the on-going revenue costs would be in the region of £90-105k per annum including on-costs.</p>
1.09	<p>Waste Strategy</p> <p>The waste strategy team is currently a small team consisting of a waste strategy manager and two recycling, compliance and data officers. Over the last nine months, the waste strategy manager has been on long-term absence and has recently resigned from the post. Additionally, one of the recycling, compliance and data officers, has applied to reduce her contractual hours to 0.5FTE and, whilst this is supported and work is underway to backfill the other half of the post, it does leave the service under-resourced and exposed. In addition to this, the contract manager for Parc Adfer, the energy from waste plant and the North Wales Regional Waste Treatment Partnership (NWRWTP) is on long-term absence and unlikely to be able to return to work soon, which is placing an additional pressure on the service.</p>
1.10	<p>Waste management is a highly regulated industry and, if not managed adequately, it can result in significant financial, environmental and reputational risks to the authority, staff and the wider public. A significant breach of the environmental permitting conditions is a risk to the authority and could result in the council not being able to operate waste services.</p> <p>Additionally, Welsh Government has placed statutory recycling targets upon local authorities. Failure to achieve these targets may result in significant infraction fines.</p> <p>As has been widely reported in recent times, Flintshire has failed to achieve the statutory recycling targets in 2021-2022, which could lead to WG levying a fine of £663k against the authority. Following year end waste data submission, the indication is that the statutory targets for 2022-2023 have not been achieved, presenting further risk to the authority.</p>

	<p>Consequently, Welsh Government has stipulated that an action plan be put together to address these shortcomings.</p> <p>To date, all work on the action plan has been undertaken by the service manager and chief officer, which is not sustainable. To fully achieve the action plan, the current resource allocated to the waste strategy team is not sufficient and does not provide any resilience. Work is underway to recruit a replacement waste strategy manager and part-time recycling, compliance and data officer, however, this will take some time to deliver and will not address the pressures in the service in the short-medium term.</p>
1.11	<p>Following comparison with resources allocated in other local authorities that are meeting the statutory recycling targets, it is proposed that three new positions are created for the existing role of recycling, compliance and data officer, which would provide additional support to the waste strategy manager and more capacity within the service to focus on education campaigns and delivery of the action plan, as well as providing resilience for contract management, environmental compliance monitoring, ongoing accreditation to ISO and PAS100 standards and waste data flow reporting.</p> <p>Furthermore, in 2024/25 the authority is required to meet a more stringent target of 70% recycling which will require increased resource to manage and implement service changes.</p> <p>The estimated costs for the three additional recycling, compliance and data officer posts would be £133k, which is based on the existing grade G05 for the role plus on-costs. Additional budget would be required.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Fleet Services: It is anticipated that the creation of the two additional roles within Fleet Services will require an initial investment in the short-term. However, we anticipate significant benefits in terms of increased efficiency, improved service delivery, and control of significant contract costs in the longer term through the renewal of the fleet contract. For example, the creation of an assistant fleet manager position will provide additional oversight and support to the fleet services function, reducing the likelihood of unexpected disruptions, costly downtime, and ensure appropriate enforcement against non-compliance. The costs for the two additional posts would be subject to job design and evaluation, but it is anticipated that the on-going burden in employee costs would be in the region of £90-105k per annum including on-costs.</p>
2.02	<p>Waste Strategy: The recycling and compliance data officer role is already in existence with two posts currently on the established structure. The estimated costs for creating the three additional posts would be £133k, which is based on the existing grade G05 for the role (top of grade) plus on-costs. Additional budget would be required from the revenue account.</p>
2.03	<p>The proposals do not require any structural changes within the portfolio and do not place any current employees at risk.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	A previous internal audit report highlighted that the failure to identify and mitigate risks associated with single person dependencies and a lack of service resilience could lead to non-compliance issues not being highlighted or actioned in a timely manner and failing to meet Operator Licence requirements. The proposals for two additional posts within Fleet Services are intended to address this risk and increase the resilience within the team.
3.02	We are highly unlikely to achieve the statutory recycling targets without making significant changes to improving our recycling performance and reducing the amount of waste presented in the residual waste bin. The risk of not achieving the statutory recycling targets could result in a significant financial penalty for the Council (£200 for every tonne not recycled) if Welsh Government were to choose to levy the infraction fines. The proposed additional posts for recycling, compliance and data officers would provide additional capacity within the waste strategy team to assist with educational campaigns and environmental compliance.
4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	With the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Regional Transport Strategy via the portfolio Programme Board.
4.02	With the Senior Management Team (SMT) for the portfolio and Chief Officer Team, who supported the proposals.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Katie Wilby, Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation) Telephone: 01352 704530 E-mail: katie.wilby@flintshire.gov.uk
8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	None