

Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee – 26 September 2019

Report of the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks - Councillor John O'Shea

1. Purpose of report

This report sets out my Constitutional responsibilities and identifies my portfolio priorities.

2. Accountability and Responsibilities

In accordance with the City Council Constitution I have accountability for the management of Waste Strategy and Services, Cleaner Neighbourhoods, Recycling, Pest Control and Parks and Allotments. My responsibilities are as set out in the Constitution.

3. Priorities

Since taking on this portfolio in May of this year I have made no secret that my overarching priority for 2019/20 has been, and remains, to improve the waste collection service for Birmingham citizens. I have also stated that there are no quick fixes, making changes to the working patterns of the crews was a major undertaking and the subsequent logistical changes involved when collecting from over 534,600 properties is hugely complex but I am determined to establish a consistently reliable service for the people of Birmingham.

My focus on the waste service has not however been to the exclusion of the important work to safeguard and promote the City's parks, this we're doing by working with the many volunteers and Friends of Parks groups.

3.1. My priorities by service area are:

Waste

- Continue to improve the reliability of the waste collection service
- Invest in new vehicles and start the shift to alternative fuels, compliant with the Low Emissions Zone
- Progress the Waste Disposal policy review
- Improve recycling – involve the public in drawing the road map to the future

Street Cleansing

- Complete the implementation of the new structure
- Seek to invest in enforcement to tackle fly-tipping
- Continue with a programme of regular 'Love Your Street' days
- Involve residents in keeping their streets clean

Parks

- Continue to work with existing parks groups and to increase the number of "friends" groups
- Review the grass cutting programme
- Develop the Future Parks model to implementation to support health, housing and employment

Delivery against these priorities and monitoring of performance is supported by a number of arrangements that are in place to discuss issues, identify solutions and drive improvement; these include but are not limited to:

- Weekly Cabinet Member Briefing Meetings
- The Joint Service Improvement Board for Waste Services
- Visits to depots
- Independent Review of the Waste Service
- Waste Strategy Governance Board
- Attendance at monthly Finance Star Chamber meetings
- Monthly meetings with opposition leads
- Open door policy for Members to discuss issues
- Responding to concerns raised by residents, councillors and MPs across the city
- Attendance at Full Council, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny meetings, as well as local community meetings in wards

4. Waste Services – context

- 534,625 Birmingham properties collected from every week equating to 1.3 million bin collections per fortnight.
- Annually, we collect
 - 499,000 tonnes of waste per year (1,919 tonnes of waste collected every working day).
 - 239,790 tonnes kerbside residual waste is collected
 - 42,340 tonnes is dry recycling is collected
 - 17,681 tonnes of green waste is collected
- There are approximately 675,000 bins (residual, recycling, green)
- 5,000 kilometres (3,106 miles) of streets cleaned.
- 1782 bulky waste collections per month.

5. Parks Services – context

- 591 parks and open spaces.
- 4700 hectares of parks, green spaces and allotments managed by the Council (equivalent to 2,097 football pitches).
- 354 play areas & Multi Games Areas (MUGAS) and 6 skate parks.
- 1398 hectares of woodland within Birmingham's parks and open spaces.
- More than 1 million trees, equivalent to one per person in the city's population.
- 113 Allotment sites with 7,373 plots producing 2.9 tonnes of food with a value of £4.3m.
- Over a 25 year period, the parks and green spaces managed by the Council store 2.1 million tonnes of Carbon Dioxide.
- The annual net value of council-managed natural capital assets is £594m. This means every pound the Council spends on parks and green spaces returns more than £24 to society.
- The annual net value of health benefits provided by the city's natural capital assets is £164m.

6. Service Areas

6.1. Refuse Collection

On 24 September 2018 the refuse collection service moved to a five day working week for all refuse collection crews. This was negotiated with the Trades Unions and removed the

compressed working week and rebalanced the rounds. Maps were redrawn and issued to the crews, keeping to the constraint that there was no change of day of collection to residents. Whilst this generated significant challenges for crews, depot managers and senior managers and resulted in a regrettable dip in performance, improvement and stability in service delivery is now being seen across the city as the figures in the snapshot below show.

- Dropped Roads

5 July 2019 cumulative number 1096

16 September 2019 cumulative number 522

- Reported Missed Collections

5 July 2019 - 1005

16 September 2019 - 390

However, there is still progress to be made and whilst there will always be issues beyond the Council's control that will lead to missed collections such as parked vehicles blocking access and vehicle breakdowns, there are some parts of the city where we are failing to provide the service expected. Strenuous efforts are being made to identify and remedy the underlying issues in these areas and improvement will be seen.

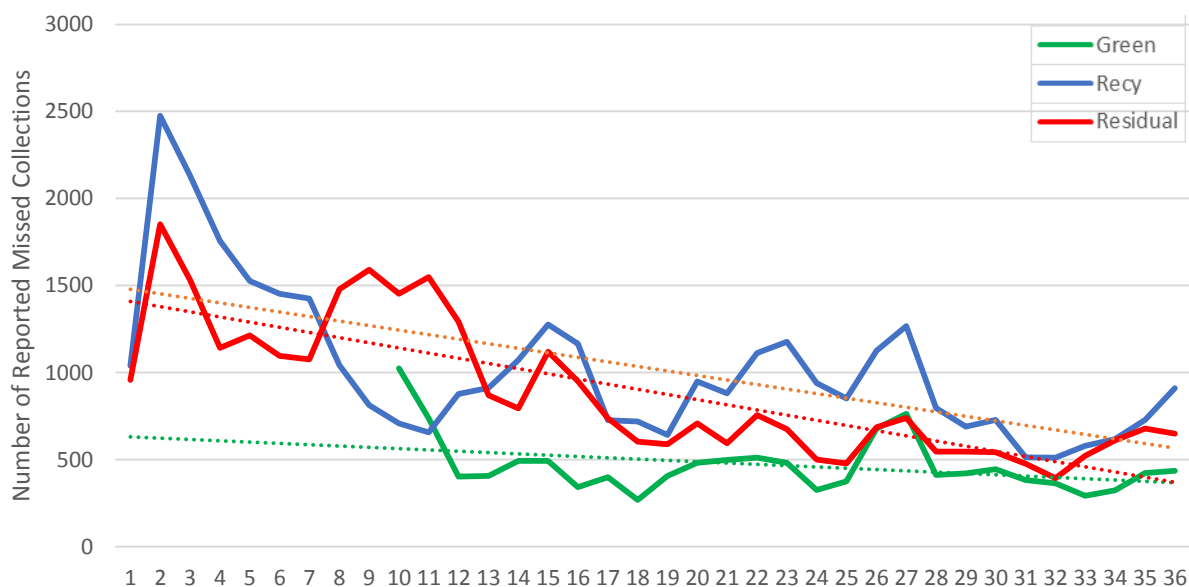
6.1.2. Detailed performance

Calls to the Contact Centre are reducing as the table below illustrates although we are still up over the same period last year:

Month	2018	2019	Difference
January	48,245	23,413	(24,832)
February	14,830	31,783	16,953
March	16,739	24,618	7,879
April	16,420	26,262	9,842
May	18,331	19,841	1,510
June	17,326	17,241	(85)
July	16,565	14,824	(1,741)
August	13,815	9,595	(4,220)
Total	162,271	167,577	5306

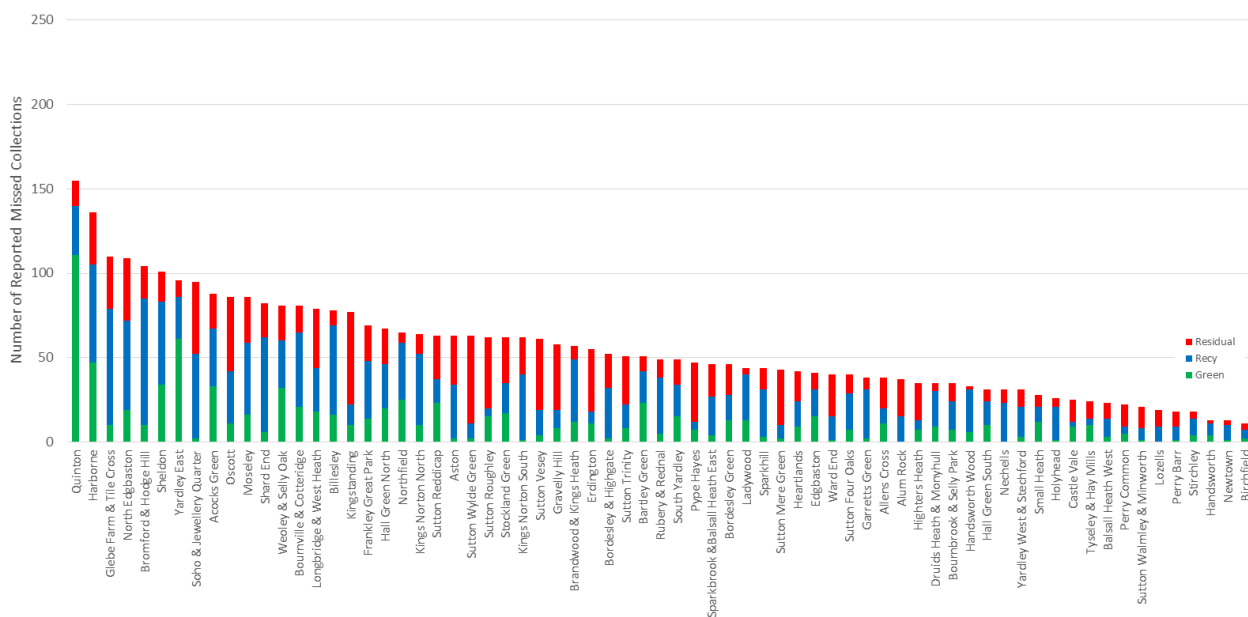
The average number of weekly calls is also reducing, using the same week in each month the downward trend is clearly visible and the graph on the following page also illustrates a gradual downward trend for this year:

January	8170
April	4401
July	2603
August	1712



Ward Analysis

The data shown below should be used as a guide only as it is clear that some residents in some Wards do not seem to report missed collections to the contact centre.



Missed roads reported by crews by depot

This table shows the total number of outstanding roads by depot.

Week ending	31 st May	29 th June	27 th July	31 st August
Lifford Lane	17	27	13	0
Montague St	100	358	57	248
Perry Barr	238	282	138	185
Redfern Rd	646	627	255	133
Total	1001	1294	463	566

Lifford Lane depot has consistently been able to clear dropped roads over the following week since the introduction of the 5 day operating model.

Montague Street depot's performance has been inconsistent over the last few months and this in the main has been due to staffing issues and vehicle reliability, this has now settled down and performance has improved.

Perry Barr depot's performance has been erratic on a daily basis but fairly consistent on a monthly basis. The management team in waste management in conjunction with the Trade Unions have been working throughout June and July to stabilise the rounds to improve their performance. In July damage was caused (by driver error) to a building spanning the vehicle entrance and this prevented access to one of the depot weighbridges. This had an adverse effect on the performance as it slowed tipping times. Refuse collection vehicles from Montague Street (that use the Perry Barr depot) had to be diverted away from Perry Barr which resulted longer trips consequently having an adverse effect on their performance too.

Redfern Road depot has historically not performed well, however through the introduction of some additional interventions performance over July and August has improved. The interventions in July have allowed Redfern Road crews to catch up on some of the outstanding work and this has resulted in the lowest number of outstanding roads since the introduction of the 5 day model.

The figures in the table below indicate the number of new roads dropped in a sample week during July and August of this year. Whilst this is not the cumulative total of outstanding roads it does show improvement (except for the week that was affected by the bank holiday when 163 roads were missed).

July	Dropped Roads	August	Dropped Roads
Week 1	325	Week 1	25
Week 2	220	Week 2	109
Week 3	177	Week 3	127
Week 4	118	Week 4 (BH)	276

6.1.3. Interventions

The waste management team has introduced further interventions to improve performance, these include:

- Regular Trade Union meetings - There has been an increase in discussions with Trade Unions to jointly improve the performance of the service, these take place at the Joint Service Improvement Board (JSIB) chaired by the Cabinet Member.
- Depot meetings – These have been held with all collection teams and demonstrated the joint working with Trade Unions, Cabinet Member and management showing a clear determination to improve the service by a combined effort.
- Older refuse collection vehicles have started to be replaced and the procurement of new replacement vehicles has commenced including receipt of demonstration vehicles.
- A dedicated manager has taken control of the HR cases. This has speeded up response times and brought down outstanding cases. At the time of writing this report there are 24 on-going cases and 35 cases relating to sickness.

- There has been an increase of on-site monitoring of depot teams, the tracker data is also monitored using the contact centre data as a guide. Daily completion talks are being undertaken with crews and every missed collection is reported on a daily basis and analysed.
- Additional Agency Drivers have been recruited by changing the criteria for acceptance, but still complying with legislation and passing out through the driver training school.
- Lifford Lane depot has been supporting Redfern Road depot by taking some of their work on Monday and Fridays. The 2 Service Managers have also provided additional support and guidance to the team at Redfern Road.
- Contact Centre data is received and reviewed on a daily basis. Regular meetings are held with both the Service and Contact Centre Managers.

6.1.4. Areas for development.

There has been an increase in residents presenting waste outside of the normal collection times. The service will need to start to re-engage with residents to improve recycling and compliance with service standards.

There are more planned staff engagement sessions designed to keep everyone informed on progress and build on the sessions carried out in July.

The IT support for the teams will need further work and development. This will provide real time updates to the Contact Centre and ensure that the teams are clear on their collection instructions and assisted collections.

Vehicles continue to be a pressure point. The management team is looking for alternative ways to service the vehicles outside of operational times and will continue to source newer hire vehicles. The procurement of the replacement vehicles has started. We are currently at the top of our 'O' licence permitted vehicles meaning we are unable to bring in anymore without either upgrading our licence or removing other vehicles.

The day of collection is being looked at for some residents to enable the service to equalise workload and provide a consistent service to residents.

6.2. Street Cleansing

Cleaner Streets is a programme of work that looks at improving the efficiency of street cleansing, improvement of the quality and cleanliness of streets and to build sustainable neighbourhoods for the future.

In addition, the programme looks to coordinate all activities being undertaken in wards that contribute to clean streets and this will feed into a public facing dashboard that will inform residents and citizens of street cleansing and collection schedules and community activity that contribute to Civic pride.

The main priorities within the street cleansing service are to:

- Implement Street Cleansing Blueprint aligning services to ensure synergies between Grounds Maintenance, Highway Maintenance and Street Cleansing activities
- Implement 'Community Offer' and actively support Community and Civic Pride initiatives such as the Great British Spring Clean and Britain in Bloom entries
- Identify and implement a Performance Framework for Street Cleansing and Street Scene (LAMS)

Whilst much of the work in rescheduling individual street cleansing schedules has already been undertaken progress since then has been to restructure the service so that the city centre has its own separate cleansing service and ward based cleansing moved to the ward depots. Recruiting to the 60% vacancies in Street Cleansing has also been carried out.

In addition to the new model, the service has embarked on its Street Scene restructure and work is actively underway to ensure that services are coordinated via active operational group meetings with not only Street Cleansing but with Highways, Grounds Maintenance and partners such as BIDS - mapping joint approaches to litter picking, grass cutting, weed spraying, fly posting removal and highway obstruction and repairs and coordinating community clean up days (now known as Love your Street).

Since April 2019 progress in implementing the Community Offer has secured £194k from the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government to purchase equipment for communities to use in areas they determine.

75 sweeping barrows and over 5000 pieces of equipment have been purchased and working with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum and ward councillors are now being rolled-out to communities to use. The equipment ranges from garden maintenance tools through to graffiti kits, with Birmingham's biggest investment in helping communities tackle graffiti with the distribution of over 1600 kits.

A training programme has also been developed and is covered with community groups prior to the equipment being issued, the programme includes:-

- Safe working practices/ Risk assessments
- Insurance
- Do's and don'ts- clearing up private land
- LAMS – Environmental surveys
- Equipment training/safe usage including Graffiti removal
- What to do if dangerous materials are found (needles, drugs, knives etc)
- Recycling
- Light grounds maintenance
- Social Media - how to promote events and attract volunteers

The Great British Spring Clean has been undertaken for the third consecutive year with very positive results, over 120 litter picks and over 60 tonnes of litter removed from Birmingham streets.

3 Britain in Bloom entries have been supported since April 2019 utilising the cross agency, partnership approach with each being awarded gold.

The first 'Love your Street' day was held in Alum Rock on 28 August with over 30 officers in attendance clearing up over 3 tonnes of waste and providing engagement and education opportunities for residents and businesses. The outcomes were:

- Almost 4 tonnes of litter and fly-tipping cleared from Alum Rock Road.
- 25 parking tickets issued.
- Dozens of traders and local residents (including streets off Alum Rock Road) engaged with about local issues and legal requirements relating to business waste.
- 12 businesses challenged about their goods encroaching onto the highway.
- Recovery of CCTV evidence and material for police forensic examination from a van load sized fly-tip which had occurred early that morning – investigation ongoing.

- 5 trade waste compliance inspections (4 compliant, 1 under investigation).
- A trader speaking to his trade waste provider to get a bin that he can fit in his business's back yard rather than the bin he has on the street which attracts fly-tipping.

Plans are being drawn up to repeat this initiative in other parts of the city, data such as that from Pioneer Ward plans, LAMS, Fly Capture (for logging incidents of fly-tipping) will be used to determine which areas will be selected.

6.3. Independent Review of Waste Services

The Independent Review into the waste services has started. Wood Environmental and Infrastructure Solutions are reviewing all of our procedures and practices, have met with a citizens, staff and Trade Unions through organised forums, and a workshop with Scrutiny colleagues is planned. Initial findings will be presented to Cabinet in October.

The Combined Authority Study funded by DEFRA is also underway and will model best practice across the individual authorities. These two studies along with continuing the progress made to date will achieve the service the residents of Birmingham deserve.

6.4. Parks and Allotments

6.4.1. Overview

The Parks Service is part of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and is committed to the advancement of a green, sustainable city providing parks, open spaces and services that are accessible to all. The Parks service consists of the following:

- Maintenance of 4700 hectares of green spaces including parks, country parks, public open spaces, woodlands and allotments.
- An in-house Grounds Maintenance Operations team managing and delivering grounds maintenance activities across parks, highways, schools, housing amenity and sheltered housing schemes, social services and bereavement sites.
- A tree service which manages the City Council's tree stock (excluding trees on highways).
- Green waste recycling facilities at Cofton Park and Bromford Drive and provision of a woodland management team to maintain 1,398 hectares of woodland throughout the city.
- The allotments service which manages 7,373 plots across 113 sites.
- Asset management service managing Park buildings and 50 pools and reservoirs in compliance with the Reservoir Acts.
- Playground services which maintains outdoor play equipment in 245 play areas, 6 skate areas, 19 outdoor gyms and 109 multi-use games areas.
- Birmingham Park Ranger Service to protect and enhance designated nature conservation sites and country parks throughout the city, and monitor regional targets for local biodiversity for the city.
- The in-house Landscape Practice Group (LPG) which provides a full range of project development, community consultation, landscape architectural and urban design services.
- Floral decoration through three greenhouses at Cofton, Kings Heath and Coleshill.
- A team of District Parks Managers who liaise with local members, over 108 Friends groups and manage all park sites.

- A climate and sustainability service which leads on the implementation and development of the Green Living Spaces Plan, Liveable Cities and Biophilic Cities.

6.4.2. Priorities and progress

6.4.2.1. Grounds Maintenance Insourcing

In July 2018 Cabinet approved the in-sourcing of Grounds Maintenance to commence 28th March 2019. The total value of the GM contracts to come back in-house was in the region £8.2M, not including the existing in-house contracts delivered by the existing in-house provider Birmingham Parks and Nurseries (£3M)

Mobilisation included:

- The TUPE transfer of approximately 160 staff from Glendale and Idverde.
- The de-commissioning and re-commissioning of three GM depots and associated IT provision.
- The procurement of a new fleet of ride on mowers, tractors, trailers, tools and equipment.
- The hire of a fleet of vehicles

In order to accommodate increase costs from the introduction of the Real Living Wage (the previous contracts were in place prior to the introduction of the Living Wage and so this was a new cost for the Council) and remain within the existing budget envelope, the purchase of new equipment created an opportunity to move away from cylinder mowers to newer rotary mowers which enabled amenity grass cutting frequencies to reduce from 12 cuts per season to 10 cuts.

Given the quantity of ride on mowers required and the availability of these from the suppliers, there was some delay in some areas of the city in achieving the 3 weekly cutting cycle whilst machinery was being delivered. Whilst this did cause some complaints over lack of grass cutting in some areas of the city all machines were in place by June and the 3 weekly cycle was back on track across the whole city by early July.

With the GM function and staff now in-house there is the opportunity to review the amount of “rank grass” around the city and, working with local Councillors and community groups to identify where the priorities are and where capacity allows, some of these areas could return to an annual grass cutting programme.

6.4.2.2. Land disposal

Work continues to review and dispose of under-used and or surplus land for Housing (BMHT) as agreed by Cabinet in 2016/17. This year’s priorities are for the partial disposal of un-used allotment land at Wyrley Birch and West Heath to achieve this year’s targets. The Birmingham and District Allotment Confederation (BDAC) is supportive of these two schemes going forward and we shall shortly be requesting Secretary of State approval for disposal.

Investigations are now underway into the suitability of some of the land at Bordesley Green Allotments to also be declared surplus and suitable for Housing as the main part of next year’s land disposal targets to generate savings. Where land is sold off, allotments will always be left with some space to offer to new plot holders.

6.4.2.3. Future Parks Accelerator (FPA)

Birmingham is one of eleven cities in the UK that have been successful with their application for the Future Parks Accelerator Fund - created nationally by the National Trust and Heritage Lottery in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Future of Public Parks. The city has prepared, and been awarded a £900k award that will lead to the total re-design of the future Parks Service and Parks offer to citizens.

This is a corporate bid supported by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team - in principle to connect all 5 strategic priorities and many parts of the whole council plan to grow the organisational capacity to deliver better neighbourhoods for people.

The FPA programme will last 2 years 2019-2021 and Birmingham would become a flagship authority for parks having built a transferable roadmap for all cities for the sustainable future of Parks.

6.4.2.4. Commercialism

Work continues on a growing number of initiatives to bring additional revenue into Parks, including:

- The introduction of car parking charges at a number of sites including Lickey Hills, Sutton Park and Victoria Common.
- Informal consultation has concluded at Victoria Common, is underway at Lickey Hills and will commence at Sutton Park later this year.
- Boating and adventure golf have been introduced at Sutton Park.
- A Framework Agreement for “open air cinemas” across the city parks has been agreed.
- Expressions of interest for further commercial activities (interest mainly at Lickey Hills) have been advertised for, been received and are being assessed for suitability over the coming month.
- An advert for mobile catering opportunities across 20+ parks is scheduled to go live this month.

6.4.2.5. Community involvement

Parks officers continue to work closely with a wide range of community groups and third sector organisations. Of particular note are:

- The work of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) and 108 active Friends of Park Groups in 2018/19
- Parks worked with 28,413 volunteers committing 22,543 volunteer days in 2018/19 and engagement in the first 6 months of this year suggests that the Service is on track to match last year's totals. Last year, the value of the days volunteered in our Parks was £882,558.
- Volunteer days come from working with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF), Birmingham Tree People, The Ranger Service, The Trekking Centre, with Grounds Maintenance Service Providers and Birmingham Tree for Life (BTFL)

7. Finance

7.1. Street Scene Service – Overspend £5.440m (8%) (Period 3 £6.330m)

Service	Annual		
	Budget £m	Forecast £m	Variance £m
Waste Management	54.591	59.251	4.660
Parks and Nature	11.452	12.232	0.780
Net Expenditure for Service Committee	66.043	71.483	5.440

- The £0.890m improvement relates to lower prudential borrowing charges in line with capital spend on Street Scene Vehicle replacement schemes This is based on an assumption that the capital investment in replacement vehicles will have a lead time of 6 to 9 months.

Previously reported financial position for P3 June was an overspend of £6.330m consisting of the following movements against budget:

7.1.2. Waste Management

- £3.000m relates to repairs and maintenance and hire costs of waste management vehicles. This is based on an assumption that the current capital investment in replacement vehicles will have a lead time of 6 to 9 months.
- Due to centralisation of IT services and capital investment there remains a £0.500m budget pressure to cover specific IT licences for waste collection services.
- Loss of recharge income of £0.750m from fleet repairs service, where internal customers have either opted for leasing or have opted for long term hire from external providers.
- Loss of business to competitors associated with street cleansing at major events at City Centre £0.500m.
- The service is undertaking a redesign of its street scene service in order to deliver on a number of savings initiatives. The design is anticipated to become operational in October 2019 in the meantime there is a staffing pressure of £0.800m.

7.1.3. Parks Service

- A past savings initiative regarding the disposal of land, £0.600m, has not delivered due to resistance from the community of selected sites. The Parks service has identified additional sites for disposal to offset this pressure, however lead time will mean this remains a pressure.
- An increase in income across the service through sports hire and car parking income of £0.180m is subject to market demand and the implementation of three new sites has not been realised due to delays associated with consultation process.