

Climate Energy and Green Spaces, Landscape Review

Date: 10/05/2024

Report of: Head of Bereavement Services and Workshop

Report to: Chief Officer Climate Energy and Green Spaces

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report sets out the results of a substantive review of staff structures within the Landscape service area and seeks Chief Officer approval to cease the current function.

This would require support for requests from within the team to access the Voluntary Leavers Scheme (VLS) currently available to reduce employee costs, as well as the redeployment of remaining staff to vacant posts with the CEGS service.

These actions will address pre-existing problems with an aging workforce and skills shortage in the section and remove a budget pressure for 2024/25.

Recommendations

- a) The Chief Officer for Climate Energy and Green Spaces is recommended to approve ceasing the Landscape function as set out in this report.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report sets out the results of a substantive review of staff structures within the Landscape service area of Climate Energy and Green Spaces (CEGS) within the Directorate of Communities, Housing and Environment.
- 2 The Landscape structure has evolved from one first implemented in 2010 and since that time the needs and demands for site development works have changed with alternative delivery mechanisms in place elsewhere within CEGS and across the council. The operational budget for the landscape team had an annual income target above £500k and the service area consistently struggled to meet this.
- 3 In addition, the staff within the Landscape team are an aging workforce with capacity and skills shortage problems. A risk was identified where, should the senior team members (Landscape Construction Officer and 2 part time Landscape Supervisors) leave the service, the team would no longer be viable but may have work commitments and income targets that would still need to be delivered.
- 4 These problems presented an ongoing unacceptable risk necessitating a redesign of the provision.
- 5 The initial appraisal identified 10 posts in the budgeted structure for 2023/24 at a cost of £224K (including allowance for overtime and vacancy factors) with 9 staff in place.
- 6 Early in the review process the Landscape Apprentice was discounted from scope as this position is subject to normal rotation to other service areas for training and this has been actioned outside of these proposals with the budget reallocated to the receiving area.
- 7 In addition, the posts of Landscape Technical Assistant and Senior Landscape Architect have been realigned under other reshaping work to the CEGS Technical team.
- 8 Consultation commenced with the remaining 6 staff members in post on options available for the future with a proposal to cease the Landscape account and to reassign staff to alternative posts using approved HR policies. As a result, the Landscape Construction Officer and 2 part time Landscape Supervisors have reaffirmed an interest in leaving the council via the Voluntary Leavers Scheme (VLS).
- 9 Approval of VLS application on 8th May 2024 has reduced the headcount requiring redeployment to 3. These staff have expressed a preference to be considered for deployment to existing vacancies within CEGS. This would provide a longer-term sustainable working environment within existing supervision capacity undertaking appropriate work tasks reflecting grade and skill set of the subject employees.
- 10 In anticipation of the closure of the Landscape account, the approved CEGS budget for 2024/25 does not make any provision for staffing and other costs to continue the Landscape team and as expenditure is ongoing, release under VLS and staffing reassignment to existing vacant posts is essential to prevent an uncontrolled budget pressure.
- 11 The review is of management, professional, technical and support arrangements including operational front-line staff.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 12 Should the proposed actions be approved, the CEGS service would see an overall reduction in headcount with resultant savings on wage and transportation costs. It would allow those staff

that wish to leave the service to do so quickly whilst supporting those who wish to remain to be positioned into viable work teams undertaking appropriate work tasks at existing pay and grading terms.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 13 The revision of staffing structures enables rationalisation of delivery, providing long term support and supervision for staff remaining with the council and reduces the number of vehicle journeys and plant use overall.
- 14 All aspects of Equality Diversity, Cohesion and Integration have been considered, and an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening undertaken.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: None

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 15 These proposals have been shared with HR and Finance to ensure the proposed structural arrangements and financial planning align with relevant policies and procedures.
- 16 Consultation with trade unions commenced 16th January 2024 and with the staff team impacted on 31st January 2024.
- 17 The 3 staff members who wish to remain with the council have indicated a desire to be allocated to job roles that operate from the Arium site to limit disturbance and it is anticipated that this can be accommodated.
- 18 Comments from staff and the Trade Unions have informed final revision ahead of formal approval.

What are the resource implications?

- 19 The initial review identified 10 posts in the current budgeted structure for 2023/24 at a cost of £224K (including allowance for overtime and vacancy factors) with 9 staff in place. In addition, there was £313K of budgeted expenditure on plant, materials and transportation giving an overall spend of £537k offset by a net income target of £524K leaving a cost for 2023/24 of £13K.
- 20 These savings have now been realised for the 2024/25 budget.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 21 There are sufficient posts within the CEGS service to accommodate the 3 staff who wish to remain with the council therefore no employees are placed at risk by the proposals.
- 22 It is envisaged that the VLS processes and assimilation of remaining staff to vacant positions will be implemented from May 2024 to limit the budget pressures within the CEGS service.

What are the legal implications?

- 23 There are no identified legal risks at this stage.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

24 The service may choose to take no action at this stage however unbudgeted expenditure is now being accrued and this will contribute to budget pressures with the CEGS service that will need to be addressed.

How will success be measured?

25 The review and implementation of revised staffing arrangements will deliver a sustainable workforce and financial solution.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

26 It is envisaged to obtain Chief Officer approval to complete reviews and implement revised structures from May 2024. The Head of Bereavement Services and Workshop will be responsible for implementation.

Appendices

Background papers

- None