

Report to: **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Date: **17 October 2019**

Title: **Locality Service Update**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Immediately following this meeting.

Author: **Kate Hamp** Role: **Case Management Manager**

Contact: **01803 861302 kate.hamp@swdevon.gov.uk**

Recommendations:

That the Panel support the proposed way forward for the Locality Service as outlined in Section 5 below.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report is presented in response to a proposal from the Panel to review the Locality service on 5th September 2019.
- 1.2 The report summarises the activity and reviews performance of the Locality service during 2019 and looks to the future challenges over the next 12 months.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Locality Service was born in 2015 to consolidate and deliver the statutory duties carried out 'off site' in the local area and also engage with our communities, enable our customers and build partnerships.
- 2.2 This flexible resource delivers a visible on street service to our residents and communities.
- 2.3 The Locality Service in South Hams is made up of 6 Mobile Locality Officers, 3 Local Engagement Officers and 1 Localities Case Manager (shared with West Devon). The team is managed by the Localities Team Leader, Richard Easthope.

- 2.4 The Mobile Locality Officers (MLOs) are the frontline response team carrying out a wide range of tasks including, private water supply testing, tree inspections, putting up planning notices, carrying out initial visits for planning enforcement cases, play park inspections, election canvassing, dog control and littering and fly tipping enforcement. They are also the first responders to

Tasks	Total number carried
fly tipping, graffiti and environmental nuisance.	

- 2.5 The Locality Engagement Officers (LEOs) work at a more senior level, leading on more complex, place based issues, handling formal complaints and supporting the MLOs. They also take a proactive role, engaging with the local communities as well as attending town and parish meetings and building partnerships. They are key contacts for Members when resolving customer issues and also manage the Members' Sustainable Community Locality Fund. Additionally they take a role in education, consultation and digital roll out.
- 2.6 The Localities Case Manager looks after the inbox (to which all Localities queries are sent) and prioritises and coordinates the team's activities to ensure that they are deployed effectively and safely at all times.
- 2.7 The workload of the Localities team does not stand still and over the last 12 months we have taken on new work including the monitoring of the new waste collection and cleansing contract. The team have also taken on taxi rank inspections, carrying out the housing survey for the New Homes Bonus and larger scale tree inspections. The introduction of the new waste and cleansing contract has seen the LEOs take on a more visible town centre role, ensuring any issues are identified and rectified early.
- 2.8 During the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny on 5th September 2019, the Panel acknowledged the role played by the Mobile Locality Officers in supporting the Enforcement function, however there were concerns that competing demands were affecting their ability to support the service
- 2.9 The Localities Service strongly supports the Corporate Themes of 1) Council, by delivering frontline statutory services; 2) Communities, by engaging and supporting our local communities; and 3) Environment by playing a key part in keep our local area clean and safe.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The table below shows the volumes of work managed by the Locality Service in 2019.

	out Jan – Aug 2019
Play Park inspections	1360
Private Water Supply Quality Testing	200 approx.
Toilet Inspections	150 (started Jul 19)
Street Inspections	300 (Started Jul 19)
Recycling Bank Inspections	170 (started Jul 19)
Reporting Full Litter Bins	110 (started Apr 19)
Fly Tip – investigate report or collect	227
Abandoned vehicle labelling	90
Routine Tree Inspections	800 approx.
Dog patrols	160
Empty Home Inspections	538
SeaMoor lettings Housing Inspections	51
Annual residential land availability site survey	202 visits
Planning Enforcement Visits	72
Planning Notices put up	1016
General Street Scene Enquiries	129
General Waste Enquiries	174
Formal complaint stage 1	108
Formal complaint stage 2	1

- 3.2 The new work generated by the waste and cleansing contract both in terms of monitoring and assisting with the transition has created some challenges for both the MLOs and LEOs. The MLO work has been managed carefully to ensure that those duties that need to be done within a strict time window are prioritised. Play park inspections are still done as scheduled on a monthly or weekly basis depending on use. Requests for planning enforcement visits, housing inspections and responses to fly tips or putting up planning notices are prioritised and completed promptly. The monitoring responsibilities for the waste and street cleansing are scheduled around these other duties and can be flexed depending on demand, meaning that the team remain agile and responsive. This also allows us to ensure that the MLOs are usefully employed throughout their working week.
- 3.3 In response to the concern that the conflicting demands were impacting the MLO's ability to support Planning Enforcement, it was found that over the busy summer months it could take up to a week to respond to requests for sites visits. Outside of peak periods, visits are usually carried out within 2 working days.
- 3.4 The LEO workload has changed significantly to accommodate the additional town centre monitoring and resolution of complaints and issues related to the transition period. Dealing with Waste related issues and monitoring can now take up in excess of 60% of their time.

- 3.5 Key to coping with this continuously evolving workload is the Localities Case Manager who constantly monitors the Localities inbox and deploys the tasks as they come in.
- 3.6 The team are dedicated to providing high quality customer service and feed into our Customer Satisfaction meetings on a weekly basis, suggesting improvements and discussing customer feedback.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Much of the MLO work supports our statutory duties so therefore their workloads are very structured and any change or decision to stop doing a piece of work would require arrangements for this work to be picked up elsewhere.
- 4.2 The LEO role, being largely proactive and supportive, is more flexible and allows focus on initiatives or areas of particular need. Much of this is discretionary work, with the exception of the work in relation to the waste contract, therefore the Council can decide how to best deploy the team in order to support the Corporate Themes.
- 4.3 A recent workshop with the LEOs identified strong partnerships that had been built in many of our town centres, with the LEOs clearly identified as a 'go to' person to resolve issues. The LEOs also reported good productive relationships with Members. However, they are aware that their role has changed significantly over the 4 years since the service was formed and would welcome a refocus to ensure they are delivering a service that reflects the needs of the Council.
- 4.4 Informal consultation with Members has shown that in general Members are happy with the service provided by the Locality service including the support of the LEOs, but there does seem to be some lack of understanding as to the full extent of their duties.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The focus on continuous improvement in customer satisfaction, alongside roll out of more digital services provides plenty of challenges for the Locality service over the next 12 months. We need to support the rollout of digital services in our communities, as well as identify and support those vulnerable customers who are struggling to make contact.

- 5.2 A refocus of the duties of the LEOs incorporating feedback from Members is planned to ensure that they are providing the best value and reflecting the current needs of the Council.
- 5.3 The review of duties will take into account the planned roll out of the Devon aligned waste service in 2020. This will place additional pressure on the team, engaging with communities via roadshows and educational events and resolving issues on the ground.
- 5.4 The review will also include an investigation into what further support could be offered to the Planning Enforcement function, both in terms of ensuring prompt response to visit requests and a look into compliance and monitoring support.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	There are no legal implications to this update report to Members but the Localities Service supports many of the Council's statutory and discretionary services.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	
Risk	Y	A risk assessment will need to be carried out in the event of a decision to cease any duties currently undertaken by the service.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	The Localities Service strongly supports the Corporate Themes of 1) Council, by delivering frontline statutory services; 2) Communities, by engaging and supporting our local communities; and 3) Environment by playing a key part in keep our local area clean and safe.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	Travelling around the district is intrinsic to the work of the Localities team which does has a negative environmental impact. Prior to the formation of the team, individual duties were carried out by officers across the organisation making separate journeys – this would have had a far greater negative impact.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	

Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

Supporting Information

Appendices: None

Background Papers:

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 5 September 2019