

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change**New Post - Senior Environmental Development Officer****1. Purpose of Report**

To seek approval for the creation of a new Senior Environmental Development Officer position within the Parks and Open Spaces team and for the deletion of the Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator post (T20). This is in accordance with the Council's Corporate Priority for Environment – 'Protect the environment for the future'.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that the creation of a new Senior Environmental Development Officer post, at a projected Grade 9, be approved. The new post would be partially funded by the deletion of the Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator post (T20) from the establishment, with the net cost of up to £22,650 being met from the General Fund Reserve balances.

3. Detail

The Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator position has been vacant since June 2024. While a potential restructure was considered at that time, the team has managed the workload and found it more cost-effective to outsource sign fabrication to external contractors rather than retain the role in-house. Since then, the duties previously undertaken by this post have been absorbed by the two Environmental Development Officers and the Conservation and Green Spaces Development Manager, supplemented by external contractors where necessary.

Over recent years, the workload of the Parks and Open Spaces team has increased significantly due to:

- Implementation of Blue/Green Asset Management requirements.
- Addition of further open spaces for management.
- Delivery and ongoing maintenance of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), with two sites already operational and a third due this year.
- Refresh of the Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Development of the Pride in Parks programme
- Expansion of responsibilities under the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy.

These strategic priorities have placed considerable pressure on the team, making the current arrangement unsustainable.

To address this, it is proposed to create a Senior Environmental Development Officer post, funded by the budget previously allocated to the Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator role. This new position will provide the necessary capacity and expertise to support delivery of the Council's environmental and climate objectives.

The proposed Senior Environmental Development Officer post will not include line management responsibilities. The role is intended to provide technical and operational support rather than direct staff supervision.

Justification for the Senior Level Post

The proposed role is at Senior Environmental Development Officer level rather than an additional Environmental Development Officer for the following reasons:

Bridging the Gap: The new post will provide an intermediate level of responsibility between the existing Environmental Development Officers and the Conservation and Green Spaces Development Manager, ensuring clearer delegation and improved operational oversight. See **Appendix 1** for the current and revised structures.

Development Opportunity and Skills Retention: Creating a senior post offers a progression pathway within the team, supporting staff development and retention at a time when there is a recognised skills shortage in this environmental sector.

Operational Support for Strategic Focus: The Conservation and Green Spaces Development Manager requires additional support with day-to-day operational tasks, including structural and engineering checks, compliance monitoring, and project delivery. This will allow the Manager to concentrate on strategic priorities and high-profile programmes such as Pride in Parks.

Capacity to Deliver Expanding Workload: The senior role will bring enhanced technical expertise and leadership capacity to manage complex projects linked to climate resilience, biodiversity, and infrastructure, aligning with the Council's Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy and Climate Change and Green Futures Programme.

Next Steps

If approved, the newly created Senior Environmental Development Officer post will be submitted for job evaluation. It is anticipated that the role will achieve Grade 9, and once confirmed, this post will replace the current Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator position (T20) which will be deleted from the establishment.

4. Key Decision

This report is not a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012?

5. Updates from Scrutiny

Not applicable.

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer were as follows:

The Sign Fabricator, Painter and Decorator post (T20) is included on the establishment at Grade 5 which for 2025/26 is an overall budgeted cost of £35,250 including oncosts.

The proposed new Senior Environmental Development Officer role at Grade 9 would require an annual budget of up to £49,500 (including oncosts). This additional cost of up to £22,650 would have to be met from General Fund Reserves balances.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Whilst there are no direct legal implications that arise from this report, it is important that this recruitment process is in accordance with the Council's Recruitment and Selection policy.

8. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

9. Union Comments

Not applicable.

10. Climate Change Implications

While the creation of the Senior Environmental Development Officer post has no direct climate change implications, it will play a key role in supporting initiatives related to nature recovery, the Blue-Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy. These activities collectively contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

13. Background Papers

Nil.