

Environment & Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel

REPORT

Best Value Review Street Services

Best Value Review - Street Services Executive Summary & SCIP

1.1. The Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel (E&T O&S) has overseen the completion of a Best Value Review of the Council's Street Services. It has taken a very wide view of what constitutes "Street Services" recognising the Government's Liveability Agenda, which emphasises the social, cultural and health benefits of clean streets and high quality open spaces.

1.2. A list of Council functions is set out below. To ensure a complete overview, some services already subjected to Best Value or Scrutiny Reviews have been revisited to check that their Review findings remain relevant. Such functions are marked with an asterisk.

Parks and Open Spaces *
Tree Management
Fly Tipping
Public Conveniences *
Street Cleaning
Waste Collection
Recycling *
Dog Fouling

Abandoned Vehicles
Public Art *
Community Safety *
CCTV *
Pavements and Lighting
Street Furniture
Road Safety

1.3. The review was carried out using the "4 Cs"; Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete.

1.4. The review established that:

1.4.1. Challenge

Many of the services provided are a statutory obligation, where this was not the case both Councillors and the Public valued the services highly and there was no support for abandoning or downgrading services views as essential to the well being of the District and its perception by residents and visitors.

1.4.2. Compare

A benchmarking exercise comparing our services with similar local authorities indicated that we compare well on both cost and quality. Visits to other high performing authorities were undertaken by officers and Councillors. Again, visits established that SDC performs well in comparison, although new ideas on commercial waste collection and abandoned vehicles were garnered.

1.4.3. Consult

The Panel interviewed a wide range of organisations. They were almost universally of the opinion that our services were of a high quality and that their provisions were essential to the well being of the District's environment. However, strong support was offered for further improvement to cleansing and recycling.

I.4.4. Compete

The Panel believes that the major areas of service provision have been the subject of competition under the old CCT regime. Current costs benchmark well against a basket of public and private services provided by other authorities.

I.5. The Panel used the “4 Cs” process to draw up a Service Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP). The SCIP, amongst other things, recommends that:

- A Communications Strategy is needed partly to inform the public on the services available, but mainly as a means of educating people on reducing litter.
- A Service Review of Cleaning is needed to address the issues of Sunday Trading, improved litter picking and cleaning in rural areas.
- An Enforcement Strategy is needed to deal with the causes of litter.
- Refuse collections from back doors and long drives should cease to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
- Commercial Waste Collection standards should be review to examine timing and frequency of collections as well as charging and enforcement arrangements.
- Fly Tipping Removal should be improved by the provision of a specialist vehicle.

I.6. Many of the improvements included in the SCIP are consistent with the Council’s investment priorities (the majority are classified as “Essential”). Nevertheless, improvements will need extra resources and the Council will need to take care to balance the need to move forward with capacity constraints and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Service Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP)

An analysis of the suggestions for change or improvement garnered from the Best Value exercise. The Panel has used many of these suggestions to formulate its SCIP, which is set out below.

The Panel did not agree with all the suggestions, and identified some actions, which should be taken outside the SCIP, either because they are issues outside the Council's direct control, or they are matters already identified for internal action. These are:

- Liaise with the County Council's Clarence scheme to improve response to public enquiries on matters such as grass cutting.
(This is also an area which may be improved by the current joint working on customer services/ contact centre.)
- Seek assurance from the County Council that the high quality York stone paving in the City Centre will be maintained and not replaced with tarmac patches.
- Liaise with the Environment Agency to seek agreement on the rapid removal of rubbish on riverbeds.
- Carry out the Cabinet instruction to control abandoned vehicles within one Council unit.
- Press the County Council to maintain and clean gutters, channels, gullies, drains, run-offs etc in those areas prone to flooding.

There are also a number of suggested improvements which have been undertaken, these are:

- The use of herbicides has already been reduced, particularly in areas close to a watercourse.
- The perceived lack of a tree management system has been dealt with by a district wide survey soon to be underway. This will also be used to try to tackle tree roots damaging footpaths.
- Queen Elizabeth Gardens public conveniences are in the process of refurbishment.
- The suggestion of kerbside collection of garden waste will be introduced to 27,000 households in 2004/5 as part of the Council's Waste Strategy.
- The use of returnable bags will be reviewed as part of the process of enhanced kerbside collection on 2004/5.

No	Improvement	Lead Officer	By When
1.	Devise a Communication Strategy to regularly and consistently: 1. Inform the public on how to use street services, eg availability of RADAR keys for disabled people and a GIS web page for all parishes showing who is responsible for grass cutting and 2. Educating people on their responsibilities for reducing litter eg dog fouling advice, disposal of chewing gum. The Strategy must integrate and be consistent with SDC's Corporate Strategy.	Reg Williams / Bob Chequer	Dec 2004
2.	Instigate a policy for a consistent supply of litterbins in all open spaces	Reg Williams	July 2005
3.	Prepare a strategy to cover sponsorship for planting schemes and tree planting.	Reg Williams	Nov 2004
4.	Ensure proper coordination between providers and maintainers of street enhancements to ensure siting and types of materials	Geoff Silver/ Graham Wright	July 2004

No	Improvement	Lead Officer	By When
	allow proper maintenance.		
5.	Prepare a service review of the standard of cleaning across the district which also addresses Sunday trading, litter picking, the cleaning of York Stone etc.	Reg Williams / Nick Darbyshire	July 2005
6.	Develop an Enforcement Strategy to identify those responsible for causing litter, flyposting and graffiti and a proportionate response where persuasion to voluntarily improve fails.	Reg Williams / Bob Chequer	Sept 2005
7.	Review the level of provision of public conveniences and planned maintenance requirement.	Geoff Silver / Reg Williams	July 2005
8.	Cease collections from long drives and back doors except from the infirm.	Geoff Silver / Bob Chequer	Oct 2004
9.	Develop a fully costed financial strategy to deliver the objectives contained in the Waste Minimisation Re-use and Recycling Strategy.	Geoff Silver	May 2004
10.	Undertake a review of the standards of commercial waste collection to include timings, charging and enforcement.	Bob Chequer/ Nick Darbyshire	Apr 2005
11.	Review the revival of the dog warden service and the benefits and dis-benefits of providing the service.	Bob Chequer	Sept 2005
12.	Review the effectiveness of the abandoned vehicle service in 12 month's time.	Bob Chequer	April 2005
13.	Prepare a report on the provision of a service to allow members of the public to dispose of vehicles legally and sustainability.	Bob Chequer	April 2005
14.	Additional resources and specialist equipment would enhance the fly tipping service and officers should prepare a report for the corporate planning process to cover a growth bid. This would allow the separation and recycling of fly tipped waste.	Bob Chequer/ Nick Darbyshire	July 2004
15.	The exercise currently being undertaken regarding signage should take account of the council's corporate image and the need to reduce street clutter.	Graham Wright	Ongoing
16.	The Council should establish a planned maintenance programme for street furniture and investigate an improved method of reporting problems for members of the public.	Reg Williams	Sept 2005