

Title: **Task and Finish Group
Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Brown – Environmental Services**

Reporting Member: **Cllr Oldrieve – Task and Finish Group Chairman**

Purpose

To enable the Scrutiny Committee to consider the findings and recommendations of the task and finish group on street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

Background

At its meeting on 7 September 2005 the Scrutiny Committee set up a task and finish group to look at a number of issues affecting the street cleansing and grounds maintenance service. Membership of the group consisted of Cllrs Cunliffe-Jones, Manasseh, Mudge and Oldrieve, with Cllr Oldrieve being elected chairman of the group. The group met four times and set itself the following three objectives:

- To ensure the Council has the ability to deliver an effective street cleansing and grounds maintenance service
- To make sure the Council introduces a more effective system to control weeds from 2006
- To ensure monitoring is carried out to allow regular performance assessment of the service

Main Issues

The group considered the issues affecting the service at present and the issues currently being addressed. Kevin Gibbs, Interim Commercial Services Manager, was present at each of the four meetings, as was Councillor Rosemary Brown, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services. The group focussed on the draft Commercial Services Improvement Plan, particularly the section concerning grounds maintenance and street cleansing, weed control, and performance monitoring arrangements. BV199 measures the levels of street cleanliness in terms of litter and detritus, graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping and Kevin Gibbs gave a presentation to the group on the monitoring arrangements of this performance indicator.

The group invited Councillor Brice to attend two of its meetings and Gaynor Polglase of Southwick Parish Council and the Parish Council Liaison Group also joined them.

Service provision – Spring 2005

The task and finish group noted that there had been under performance in the service in Spring 2005. Gaps in the management structure resulted in a lack of direction and consequently a drop in the quality of the service. In particular, the planning and maintenance functions were poorly organised.

Service provision – Summer 2005

Despite the weaknesses in the structure referred to above, the group acknowledged that a good and robust structure is now in place. An improvement plan has been finalised and this contains clearly identified issues to be addressed and clear goals. The improvement plan is fully supported by the task and finish group. The group were also encouraged by the proposed new structure and the discussions taking place with County concerning new arrangements for weed control.

Improvement Plan

The group expressly supports particular elements of the improvement including:

- The changes working towards achieving single status
- The introduction of team leaders to support control and work quality
- The critical work being carried out by the street scene maintenance officer on data collection

Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

The recommendations of the task and finish group have been categorised as either short or long term. Each recommendation has been rated as either essential (1) or desirable (2).

Short term

	Recommendation	Priority
1.	A timescale for finalising the agreement with the County Council concerning weed control needs to be established. The agreement should contain clear expectations and established priorities, setting out how the work will be organised and what methods will be used. An update should be brought back to Scrutiny Committee in March 2006	(1)
2.	The work of the street scene maintenance officer on data collection within the service is critical and should be monitored by the portfolio holder	(1)
3.	The street cleansing schedules should be published on the Council's website to promote standards and accountability	(1)
4.	Progress against the street cleansing and weeding schedules should be proactively monitored to assess how much work has actually been carried out	(1)
5.	Qualitative monitoring of street cleansing should be undertaken by a supervisor and this should be recorded	(1)
6.	Clarification to be provided on the monitoring arrangements for the contract with English Landscapes	(2)
7.	Incorporate into the Improvement Plan a method of reviewing its own effectiveness. CMT to review implementation.	(1)
8.	Establish a monitoring method to determine how many times the schedules of litter picking and grass cutting coincide as planned	(1)
9.	All monitoring tools in this report should be included in the Improvement Plan	(1)
10.	Cabinet should support the two capital bids for two new road sweepers and a new multi-purpose weed control vehicle.	(1)

11.	A report to be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in March 2006 to provide details of the progress of the Improvement Plan and progress against the recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Committee	(1)
12.	The use of digital cameras could be investigated for the recording of qualitative monitoring by supervisors	(2)
13.	Complaints should be used as another monitoring tool	(2)

Long term

	Recommendation	Priority
1.	Establish the costs and resources required to provide a first class service	(2)
2.	Look to recover from Wiltshire County Council the actual costs of the services provided by the District	(2)
3.	Priority should be given within weed control to town centres and hot spots, with lesser frequency for parishes. Hot spots can be identified across the district	(2)
4.	Consider the delegation of the authority to deal with offences under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 to the Parish Councils	(2)
5.	Consideration should be given to a litter campaign	(2)
6.	Consider further the implications of signing up to the Local Government Reputation Project. Ensure that this does not undermine the fundamental work that needs to be carried out.	(2)

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Endorse the recommendations of the task and finish group
- Consider whether there are any additional recommendations it would like to make to Cabinet
- Agree that a report is brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in March 2006 to address progress against the Improvement Plan and the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

The Human Rights implications of the actions recommended in this report have been considered.

Background papers

- Information Pack presented to the task and finish group
- Minutes of task and finish group meetings