

ITEM

ITEM

Environment Policy Development Group 8 July 2004

REVIEW OF STREET CLEANING

Head of Business Development and Head of Operations

Statutory Powers: Environmental Protection Act 1990
Local Government Act 2003

Financial Implications:

As part of setting the revenue budget for 2003/04 and 2004/05, Members agreed that savings totalling £65,000 should be identified and implemented within the current financial year. Clearly therefore this is the minimum level of saving that ought to be identified from the work of this review and the table below. However, Members may wish to take a view that further revenue reductions could be achieved by actioning the full list of potential savings detailed in paragraph 21 of this report and summarised below.

Option	Operation	Potential Revenue Saving £000's
A	Reduce parish sweeping	106
B	Reduce sweeping – urban town and villages	27
C	Do not sweep urban town area when staff are on holiday or sick	8
D	Reduce the amount of time sweeping mechanically	49
E	Cease sweeping town centres on Sundays out of season	13
F	Cease sweeping town centres in the evenings (July to September)	11
Total Saving =		214

Purpose

To consider options for re-modelling street cleaning operations in light of the extremely high quality of cleanliness in the district and the need to identify revenue savings in line with budget pressures. The street cleaning service and this review contribute directly to delivery of the Council's priority of maintaining a clean environment (CP4) and improving core service performance in a cost-effective way (CP6).

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive RESOLVES to:-

1. **Accept the savings identified in the report and consider how they may contribute to budget pressures elsewhere.**
2. **Amend the targets for performance with respect to the street cleaning service in light of the reduction in resources. Notwithstanding the need to remain in the top quartile of the service.**

Background

1. The street cleaning service is delivered in-house by the Operations Team as part of a contract won under competition in 2001 with the present waste collection service.
2. The composition of the street cleaning operation is made-up of teams of town or urban street cleaning and parish sweeping operatives supported by two mechanical brush operations. In total 26 staff are involved in the front delivery of street cleaning services operated and managed out of 4 depots (Torr Quarry Kingsbridge, Dartmouth, Totnes and Ivybridge).
3. The contract specification requires all roads, villages, town centres and open spaces to be cleansed to maintain a minimum standard of A/B classification under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 - Litter Code of Practice. This is achieved primarily by litter picking of highways verges and footways, litter bin emptying, manual street sweeping of footways, mechanical sweeping of channels and removal of fly tipped waste as necessary.
4. For 2004/05, the current annual revenue cost of street cleaning services is £966,800:-

<u>Street Cleaning Services</u>	<u>Revenue Budget</u>
Street sweeping	£713,200
Litter and dog bin collections	£200,700
Fly-tipping and special events	<u>£ 52,900</u>
	£966,800

5. Members will recall that a 'Common Size Comparison' survey was undertaken involving similar local authorities using 2002/03 data. For street cleaning the survey indicated that the cost of street cleaning calculated per head of population for South Hams was £12.11 compared to an average of £7.77 per head of population in the 13 local authorities participating in the comparison survey for that service.

6. Clearly from the Common Size Comparison South Hams' street cleaning costs appear high. In order to identify the reason behind this officers have conducted a review of street cleaning operations.

Terms of Reference for the Review

7. Officers have reviewed the current methods of cleaning the district and the current performance standards generated with a view to identifying potential efficiency savings with the help of an external advisor, Robert Long Consultancy Limited (RLCL), specialising in the field of Direct Service Organisations and cleansing in particular. The review sought to:-
 - Compare South Hams' service against other local authorities.
 - Investigate labour utilised and methodology against kilometres swept.
 - Compare urban and rural sweeping costs.
 - Review frequencies operated.
8. Part of the review involved benchmarking South Hams' performance against the Devon District Authorities, of which there are eight; and a Core Group of Councils from across the UK, of which there are nineteen. A summary of this comparison using 2001/02 indicators can be found in Appendix 1.
9. Where data was available an analysis of local authority performance nationally was undertaken.

Best Value Performance Indicator	Measurement	Performance 2002/03	Top Quartile for Local Authorities Nationally	Devon Districts
BVPI 89	Percentage of people Satisfied with cleanliness standards	82%	72%	71.26%
LI	Percentage of highways of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness	98.56%	n/a	95.52%
LI	Average time taken to remove fly tipped waste	1.05 days	n/a	2.19 days
BVPI 199	The proportion of relevant land and highways assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus (must be less than 30%)	13.43%	Not available (This is a new indicator)	Not available (This is a new indicator)

10. Appendix 1 and the above table show that South Hams' level of customer satisfaction is the highest in the Core Group and the Devon Districts Group. Indeed, RLCL reported that for customer satisfaction (BV 89) South Hams is ranked sixth highest in the country. The Local Indicators are more difficult to

use for comparison purposes with other local authorities. However it is officers' view that the removal speed of just over one day for fly tipped waste in a large geographic area such as the South Hams is also an extremely high performance rate.

11. All indications are that the relatively high cost of running the street sweeping element of the street cleaning service is delivering a very high standard of cleanliness. This raises an interesting challenge – can top quartile performance standards be maintained at less cost?
12. The judgement that Members need to make is how far revenue costs can be reduced whilst still ensuring levels of customer satisfaction are maintained within the top quartile. From analysis of the Core Group and Devon Districts authorities it would appear that as long as customer satisfaction levels remain above 75%, the Council could stay within the top quartile on street cleaning performance and benefit from a reduction in revenue costs.

Key Findings

13. Keeping the district's public areas clean is vitally important to maintain the image of the South Hams as a clean place in which to live, work and visit. As such it is imperative that any modification in cleaning methods does not significantly lower cleanliness standards in so far as they will have a detrimental effect on the local economy and tourism in particular.
14. As part of the review the external advisor, Robert Long Consultancy Limited (RLCL), studied street cleaning activities in operation across the South Hams and spoke to frontline operatives and office-based staff responsible for the service.
15. The findings and views of the external advisor are summarised below:-
 - Based upon RLCL's knowledge of the District, RLCL believes that the overall standard of street cleansing is very high.
 - In terms of public satisfaction, South Hams scores exceptionally well with only five other local authorities (Runnymede, City of London, Cheshire, Lancaster and New Forest) scoring higher nationally for public satisfaction in street cleaning services in 2001/2002.
 - Most of the areas visited by RLCL in the South Hams, including typical litter hot-spots, were seen to achieve the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) Litter Code of Practice Standard 'A' even in some instances, on the day before the area was scheduled to be swept. For example, RLCL observed one area which was scheduled for litter picking every week by the rural cleansing operatives. During the visit RLCL observed one plastic bag on the verge in a 1.5 mile stretch. This would suggest that the frequency of cleansing may be too high, since it was commented that the

operative would, in all likelihood, simply drive down this road and 'confirm that it is clean' (while picking up the one bag).

- Based upon RLCL's observations of the rural villages of South Hams, it appears that a certain amount of cleansing is conducted because it is scheduled rather than because it is actually needed. Based upon the fact that often cleansing operatives are only required to check villages rather than actually undertake any cleansing within them, the number of rural rounds could be reduced.
- On the basis of benchmarking with other similar rural districts across the UK, there is an appropriate balance between mechanical and manual street sweeping operations.
- There is acknowledgment that the South Hams is a popular tourist area with busy town centres which require a high frequency of cleansing to achieve the required standard. On that basis, it is unlikely that the cleansing frequency in town centre focal areas could be reduced.

The Way Forward

16. With the above findings to hand officers have analysed current street cleaning operations in terms of frequency, type of area, and overall visual impact. The issue for Members to consider is if the Council wishes to reduce street cleaning costs how could it do so and still remain in the top quartile for customer satisfaction and cleanliness standards.
17. Looking at the top performing authorities in the Core Group and the Devon Districts for street cleaning services (Appendix 1), it is evident that the percentage range in levels of customer satisfaction within the upper quartile (Quartile 1) stretch from 82% customer satisfaction to as low as 71%. In the comparison year South Hams' rate was 82%.
18. Additionally it is also helpful to look at the cost of cleansing per km² as a comparator where data was available. Again in the comparison year the cost of street cleansing of those authorities in top quartile range from £89,841 per km² down to £18,304 per km² with South Hams cost being at £34,297 per km².
19. Taking the external advisor's findings into consideration and comparing South Hams with similar authorities, the difference in revenue costs appears to be attributable to frequency of cleaning areas of the district which are already up to an acceptable cleanliness standard i.e. why utilise resources on an area if it is already up to Litter Code of Practice Grade A or B?
20. To remain a top performing authority for both customer satisfaction and cost will require maintenance of current cleaning standards for less cost. One way of achieving this would be by altering cleaning frequencies for some areas.

Potential Service Alterations

21. The proposals in the following table are based on the views of the external advisor and of officers. The cleaning activities identified for potential savings would affect the rural areas, outer town residential or urban areas, and to a lesser extent, town centres.

Option	Description of Area of Savings	Justification	Effect on Service	Potential Revenue Saving £ 000's
A	Mobile parish sweeping rounds.	Existing cleaning standard of rural areas is exceptionally high. Grade B standard can be maintained with reduced frequency of cleaning regime.	Fortnightly cleansing service as opposed to weekly frequency by the use of four as opposed to eight mobile rounds.	106
B	Manual urban sweeping in outer town areas & villages areas.	Outer areas classed as residential only require a reactive cleansing regime as opposed to the existing proactive service to maintain Grade B standard.	Reduced frequency of cleaning in outer town residential areas.	27
C	Manual urban town sweeping.	Assuming areas are regularly up to standard a saving could be made by cessation of cleaning in scheduled areas during periods of annual leave or sick of operative.	Reduced frequency of cleaning in outer town residential areas.	8
D	Mechanical sweeping activity district-wide.	Most roads in the District are swept weekly by hand (by town or parish sweepers) and also mechanically all year round. Given the high standard of cleanliness offered by manual sweeping, mechanical sweeping activity could be used to clean Main 'A' roads and town centre areas when a build-up of detritus occurs only.	Main 'A' roads to be the priority for mechanical sweeping all year round. Mechanical resource to be used to supplement manual sweeping during the leaf fall period only.	49
E	Town centre Sunday sweeping service	Town centres require less resource to maintain Grade A/B standard in the off-peak season.	During the off-peak season sweeping could cease on Sundays	13

	(Between 1 st October and 31 st March only).		and be held-over for the scheduled Monday cleaning without a detrimental effect on cleaning standards.	
F	Town centre evening sweeping service (12-week service from July to September)	Town centres could be maintained to Grade A/B standard during the day which would prevent the need for evening sweeping on most occasions.	Cessation of the two hours of sweeping per evening in town centre areas.	11
Total Revenue Saving =				214

22. Members are asked to consider the above table of proposals with a view to making revenue savings in this service. In making their decision Members need to remember that a minimum £65,000 per annum savings must be realised to meet the existing budget commitments of the Council.

Risk Assessment

Risk Identified	Mitigating Actions
The standard of cleanliness constantly falls below Grade A/B.	Redirect staff to deal with the situation in a reactive manner.
	Council may need to fund extra resources to bring standards back.
	Encourage the public to keep the South Hams clean through proactive publicity.
The Council has committed the savings and does not have sufficient funds to bring the standard back to A/B if the overall standard did fall.	Accept that the standard of cleanliness will be lower.
	Redirect staff to deal with the situation in a reactive manner rather than proactive.
	Encourage the public to keep the South Hams clean through proactive publicity.
The level of customer satisfaction falls below the existing 82%.	Accept that the level of satisfaction will drop if the standard of cleanliness falls.

Human Rights Act

23. There are no significant Human Rights Act implications.

Conclusion

24. Clearly there is a fine line between reducing the resource allocated to street cleansing and maintaining the level of cleanliness that is acceptable to both the Council and the public. In making the decision Members will need to appreciate that customer satisfaction may fall. This may not relate directly to the standard of cleanliness but simply to the fact that members of the public do not observe the presence of street cleansing operatives as regularly as they once used to.

25. In summarising the position it is accepted that the standard of street cleaning in South Hams is exceptionally high. Clearly there is an opportunity to reduce the amount of resource applied to this activity. Consequently Officers have made educated judgments with the assistance of Robert Long Consultants to determine the level of changes proposed and the likelihood of sustaining them.

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Environment PDG
8th July 2004

Background Documents:

None.

Reference(T:\Agenda\EPDG\ Street Cleaning Review.doc)

Council	Population	Hectares (ha)	No. of Households	Satisfaction Survey Cleanliness of Streets /Relevant Land			Cleansing Cost/km ²		
				%	Position in Rank/396	Quartile Position	£	Position in Rank/396	Quartile Position
Devon Districts									
South Hams	83,200	89,646	39,752	82	6	1	34,297	85	1
West Devon	49,000	116,123	21,091	77	16	1	36,180	90	1
East Devon	127,400	81,297	58,482	72	69	1	55,311	136	2
Teignbridge	122,500	67,538	53,112	71	83	1		329	4
Torridge	57,800	97,899	26,677	70	98	2	52,297	129	2
Mid Devon	69,900	91,028	29,962	67	142	2	25,212	65	1
North Devon	88,000	108,315	39,625	66	159	2	77,753	179	2
Exeter	111,200	4,774	45,076	65	174	2	161,325	270	3
Core Group									
East Lindsey	130,500	175,455	58,775	77	16	1	18,304	47	1
Lewes	92,800	29,212	40,248	76	22	1	89,841	201	3
North Norfolk	98,500	96,463	48,349	76	22	1	21,896	55	1
North Cornwall	84,200	119,246	37,651	75	33	1		15	1
Carrick	88,100	46,564	39,430	74	45	1	83,718	190	2
Kerrier	93,000	47,285	40,011	72	69	1		329	4
Rother	86,000	51,053	40,732	71	83	1	68,657	168	2
Mole Valley	79,400	25,851	42,000	71	83	1		329	4
Canterbury	135,400	30,808		68	123	2	88,784	199	3
Sedgemoor	106,500	56,478	45,384	66	159	2	39,110	95	1
Wyre	106,000	28,391	46,665	64	187	2	44,091	106	2
Caradon	79,700	66,754	36,077	65	174	2	49,984	120	2
Scarborough	106,200	81,426	51,220	64	187	3	20,367	52	1
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	135,600	143,347	61,853	62	214	3		329	4
Shepway	96,200	35,557	44,452	59	249	3	56,077	139	2

Source: Review of Street Cleaning Services, May 2004

Robert Long Consultancy Services Limited

