

Min52/06 Council Resolution 28.09.06

With reference to the street cleaning service

“This Council should examine the options for upgrading from yesterday’s methods and budget for the latest technological developments more quickly.”

Background - In July 2004 the Council reviewed its street cleaning standards and the cost of carrying out that level of street sweeping.

The findings from the study showed that almost all South Hams’ streets maintained an Environmental Protection Act (EPA) Litter Code of Practice Standard of Grade ‘A’ for cleanliness but that this exceptionally high level of cleanliness cost the Authority £12.11 per head of population as compared to an average of £7.77 per head of population when compared to the 13 other common sized local authorities¹ which are predominantly rural, coastal and holiday areas.

In some cases the study found that this maximum Grade ‘A’ quality standard was observed even in areas that were scheduled to be swept the very next day. The total street sweeping budget for 2004/05 was £713,200.

As a way of increasing the cost effectiveness of the overall service the report concluded that South Hams could afford to maintain a high quality Grade ‘A’ or Grade ‘B’ standard of cleanliness (acceptable quality standards and consistent with other similar local authority areas) by re-shaping the street cleaning service to be responsive as opposed to proactive (E.28/04).

Together, the budget reductions for 2004/05 and 2005/06 amounted to £211,000 and the street cleaning standard of cleanliness set and agreed as Grade ‘A’ or ‘B’. This makes the equivalent cost per head of population £7.59.

Summary of the current street cleaning operations

Street Cleaning Service - The current service operates with 4 mobile parish and 12 town sweeper operatives with area rounds to maintain and one 10 tonne mechanical sweeper for use on main (Class A) roads. An additional mechanical sweeper is deployed to supplement Parish Sweepers during the period of leaf fall.

Cost - Currently, with inflation, the budget for district wide street sweeping in 2006/07 is £622,000

Quality of Cleanliness - a recent Internal Audit inspection sampled twenty sites across the District and found that all sites achieved EPA Cleaning Standard Grade A or B (October 2006) for litter. Four of the twenty sites were however noted to have a build up of detritus (i.e. mud and salt debris). This

¹ The 13 similar and ‘common sized’ local authorities were East Devon, North Devon, Teignbridge, Torridge, Caradon, Carrick, Kerrier, North Cornwall, Purbeck, Rother, Shepway, Wyre and East Lindsay Councils

build up, mainly in the gutter, was thought to be caused by access problems due to parked cars and recent inclement weather.

Review of Possible Options for Street Cleaning

Option 1: Maintain current service operation - within existing budgets and working to the existing policy on the standard of cleanliness of EPA Grade 'A' or 'B'. This is a nationally acceptable level for street cleaning.

Within existing budgets there may also be opportunities to re-evaluate existing resources and methodologies to determine if a more effective service can be delivered including a focus on service visibility and working jointly with Town and Parish Councils to develop the new opportunities.

Additional cost = Nil

Quality of Cleanliness to be maintained = Grade 'A' or Grade 'B'

Option 2: Improved two tier joined-up working - as Option 1 but supplemented by better joint working with Devon County Council as Highway Authority responsible for highway infrastructure maintenance, clearance of road traffic debris and certain areas of cleanliness.

Some areas in the public realm and which impact upon the overall cleanliness of the footway fall to the County Council to maintain e.g. Mud on the highway including footpaths where it is deemed a health and safety issue due to break up of the surface and weed control. Better joined up working would improve value for money and may contribute to the overall appearance of the street scene.

Additional cost = Nil

Quality of Cleanliness to be maintained = Grade 'A' or Grade 'B'

Option 3: Introduction of a 'Hit Squad' – as Option 1 but supplemented by an additional responsive resource able to tackle problematic areas across the District should the need arise. To make any form of impact upon the District's grade of cleanliness, and taking into consideration the rural nature of the District, a total of 4 squads (each with a vehicle, driver and one operative) at a cost of £37,500 per squad would be required. The Hit Squads would concentrate efforts on the main drags outside of the village and town centres. Note: Less than four squads would not raise the cleanliness quality standard above Grade B.

Additional cost = £150,000 per annum

Quality of Cleanliness to be maintained = Grade 'A'

Option 4: Introduction of ride-on mechanical sweeping in town centres –

This option would maintain the current level of mobile parish and town operatives and supplement resources with additional ride-on mechanical equipment.

The distance between each town centre and a suitable waste disposal point (Chelston Meadow or Torr Quarry) will also incur additional costs in terms of either 'piggy backing' transport or the provision of tip/waste transfer facilities locally to each town. A summary of the issues which would require resolution are:

- There may be waste licensing issues in relation to the transfer and storage of waste on emptying locally.
- The mechanical sweepers will spray water and also pick up water in the course of sweeping. The discharge of fluid from the waste would have to be managed separately and drained off prior to the transfer of the waste. This comes with its own problems as the fluid can not be discharged directly to the surface water system i.e. road gullies but must be placed in suitable containers.
- The logistics of transferring sweepings into containers is also an issue and may require some construction work to resolve.

A proposal has been submitted for consideration by the Coleridge Association of Parish Councils which is based on implementing this kind of equipment (dated June 2006). However, notwithstanding both the capital and revenue costs, transportation of such vehicles and the physical infrastructure of South Hams' town centres i.e. narrow footways with limited pedestrianisation does raise considerable concerns over the viability of this option.

Additional cost = Note: for indicative purposes only, costs are based on the provision and utilisation of one ride-on mechanical brush working in one discrete location.

Estimated cost of a ride-on sweeper (including capital purchase, revenue running cost e.g. replacement of brushes and fuel would be £80,000 per annum. Cost of installing one interceptor sump for waste water collection and discharge would be £10,000 capital with an ongoing revenue service/pumping cost of approximately £10,000 per location.

Quality of Cleanliness to be maintained = Grade 'A'