

TO: ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 MARCH 2004

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY OF STREET CLEANSING

FROM: MEMBERS' SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the findings of Councillors following their individual scrutiny of street cleansing.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It was agreed by the Committee on 13 January that areas of street cleansing within Warwick district would be investigated by Councillors (in pairs) and that they would report their findings back to the Committee at this meeting.
- 2.2 The areas and the Councillors responsible for their investigation are as follows:
- Contract operation – Councillors Copping & Smith
Performance assessment – Councillors Gill & Sandhar
Enforcement\Education – Councillors Mrs Blacklock & Davies
Customer Liaison and joint working – Councillors Mrs Compton & Hatfield;
- 2.3 The findings of the Councillors are detailed at appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the report.
- 2.4 It was also requested at the January meeting that a presentation be made from the contractor on this item.

3. OUTCOME REQUIRED

- 3.1 Members are requested to consider the next step in the scrutiny of street cleansing and how they want to prepare their report for submission to the Executive in June.

Graham Leach
Committee Services Officer

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Agenda and Minutes 13 January 2004

Areas in District Affected: All wards.

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Environment Services – Mrs Begg

For further information about this report please contact:

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**Contract Operation
Councillors Copping & Smith**

1. We read the full details of the Verdant Cleaning of the Environment Contract, 2002-2008
2. We read ENCAMS Report, 2003 for WDC. It gives us 72% only, but we are top Council in the Midlands & above the UK national average.
3. We inspected 4 Roads in L/Spa, cleaned earlier in the day. 3 Roads we assessed as Grade B only (on the Contract scale of A to D) & one was only at Grade C (necessitating a repeat cleaning).
4. Generally Street Cleansing is thought to be improving in our District. We did not find this to be the case on scrutiny, & were disappointed.

Note: Recent windy weather had resulted in masses of twigs, "tree brush". The present footpath motor sweepers are too narrow, at 66cms. Verdant hopes to supplement them with 2m. wide sweepers @£55K each, so that wide pavements don't have to be done many times over.

**Performance Assessment
Councillors Gill & Sandhar**

I visited the waste management business unit (Cllr. Sandhar was not available due to work commitment) to gather some information for this task assigned to us by the Environment Scrutiny.

I met Jackie Webb Community Service Manager and Martin Chilvers Contract Monitoring Officer

We clean 14 Km (14000m) of our streets every day including week ends and bank holidays but not on Christmas Day & Boxing day. Most of these streets are our town centres and local shopping centres

We also clean a further 144 Km of our streets on weekly basis, 61 Km Monthly and 148 Km bimonthly

We also empty 600 rubbish bins mostly daily which in the town centre streets and local shopping areas

The annual cost of street cleansing is around £700k which is a large sum but it is a lot lower than other similar authorities

Assessing the contract

In our opinion ways to assess the contract performance are to listen to our officers who monitor the contract on a daily basis, listen to public opinion and monitor complaints from the public and councillors

Officers

Our officers are reasonably happy with the performance of the new contractor VERDANT. The quality of cleansing has improved slightly if not significantly since the new contractor has taken over.

The performance of Service Team was not satisfactory. Verdant too are facing some staffing problems and staff turn over is very high. It is difficult to recruit staff like dustbin crew. People's perception is that they do not like to be seen sweeping streets and foot paths. Also good supply of local vacancies means that staff leaves cleaner and better jobs. Contractors have to pay higher wages to keep good workers increasing cost and creating inflationary pressure when contracts are renewed

Our officers are doing 900 to 1000 inspections a year which takes up officer time as they are completed on foot. Some of them are scheduled which means that officers follow the contractor around to check the standard of the clean. If not up to the standards then the contractor is instructed to go back and do it again. Others inspections are unscheduled which means they are carried out a couple of days after the clean to see how the streets look then. It is a lot of walking and monitoring takes time

But from last year the inspection system has changed. Each inspection now has to include Best Value benchmarking. This means each inspection must include part of town centre and its surrounding areas, some council housing streets and some social housing areas. Inspections have become complex. We as a council have to do at least 900 such inspections to cover the whole district each year over the five years to run this contract. As I said before, this is a considerable task for one monitoring officer, especially remembering it must be done on foot

Public

Another key measure is people's perception.

The waste management unit consults with 1000 households across the district each year.

The Street Cleansing Satisfaction Survey covers all parts of the district and asks questions to understand what the public think of the standard of cleanliness in the district.

Street Cleansing Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The response rate of 20% seems very low to me but the officers tell me that this is above the national level of response to similar surveys

The most recent survey results are shown below.

Q4a Are you satisfied with overall standards of cleanliness of our town centre?

45% said yes, 49% said no and 6% no response

Q4b Are you satisfied with overall standard of street cleanliness of your area?

60 % said yes, 37 % said no and 3 % no response

Q4c Are you satisfied with overall standard of cleanliness in the rural areas?

48 % yes, 26% no and 26 % no response

Do you feel current frequency of street cleansing is adequate to maintain cleanliness?

54 % yes, 40 % no and 6 % no response.

Analysis of results

Results of small samples of 10 taken from each of 310 transects show that 31 % people were not satisfied with the standard of our cleansing

Another similar survey of 300 transects showed that 26 % of people were unsatisfied with our standard of cleanliness.

People's responses vary from one segment to another but this does not reveal whether the standard of cleanliness has changed or their perception

It is worth noting that the national average of dissatisfaction is 30%.

An independent survey of Warwick District's actual cleanliness standard showed that we had a validated cleanliness index (CL) of 71 points. This is just within the satisfactory level

COUNCILLORS

Another measure is the perception of the district councillors.

There are not many complaints from the councillors to the business unit. We also e-mailed to all councillors for their comments on the state of our street cleanliness for our report. Only 10 councillors responded to the request. Sincere thanks to all who responded. Again the comments from the councillors suggest that the general state of cleanliness is satisfactory with certain reservations

Concerns

These comments were received from the councillors

- (a) Alleyways all over the district need more attention from the waste management team
- (b) Rubbish blown into hedges & bushes is not collected. Rubbish also accumulates alongside railway embankments and under arches. Main types of litter are Sweet Wrappers, Plastic Bottles, Beer Cans and Cigarette Packets
- (c) 15 % of bins are overflowing and the rubbish is blown around. But most of these bins are near the shops and sometimes shopkeepers throw their rubbish into the bins and the officers say that it is very hard to police it
- (d) Lack of coordination between the street cleansing team and parks litter picking team. Litter is left on the grass verges near the parks
- (e) Parked cars obstruct the sweeping vehicles. When the cars move the streets look dirty and rubbish is blown off before the next clean
- (f) We are short staffed in this unit. Inspections can only be carried out by walking so we need more pairs of feet.
- (g) We are under resourced in this unit

Suggestion to councillors and to the public

If you feel the streets in your area are in a very poor state and need urgent cleansing please ring Jackie or Martin and make use of the Rapid Response Team

**Enforcement\Education
Councillors Mrs Blacklock**

WDC has a Waste Enforcement Policy, dating from July 2003. It seeks to balance enforcement with education ie. sticks AND carrots. Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 summarise the legal duties and discretionary powers. Appendix 4 deals with enforcement procedures.

*** General waste/ street litter**

the siting and type of litter bin is crucial in encouraging the public to make proper use of them. Sturdy, vandal-proof, well-designed bins give better value for money. The major cost in providing bins is not however the initial capital outlay but the cost of emptying regularly.

A large part of street litter is smoking-related [number of items, not volume] and our smoking-cessation policy and other health education measures may – eventually -- have an impact.

The WDC policy for the Provision and Emptying of Litter Bins is comprehensive, it includes a monitoring element which is clearly very demanding.

***Fly-Tipping and Abandoned Vehicles**

these are serious crimes. The detective work needed and the complex procedures make them difficult to tackle and no prosecutions have been brought to date.

EDUCATION

* WDC has affiliated to ENCAMS [ENvironmental CAMpaignS] at £5.000 per year.

It gives training and information on good practice, updates on research and legislation, success stories and partnerships. The 2004/5 subscription is cancelled.

* Encams manages ECOSCHOOLS, a Europe- wide scheme to involve young people in the whole field of environmental issues, including litter. It means improving the school's own environment and environmental practices, and promoting green citizenship. 4 of our schools, 3 secondary, 1 primary, are joining. Officers try to publicise it but no longer have time to visit schools regularly.

* A litter leaflet is planned for all households, hopefully leading to greater public co-operation.

ENFORCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Street Litter Control Notices, for areas around take-aways and chip shops etc
- Fixed Penalty 'on the spot' fines; Council now allowed to keep the money
- Occasional showcase prosecutions, could strongly affect people's behaviour
- Liaise with CCTV officer
- Liaise with Warwickshire Police Community Officer [county] and Community Support Officers [local]

Existing staff already seem fully stretched. Investment in new staff, a person who could patrol the District, be proactive, would lead to significant increase of enforcement and public co-operation.

A Blacklock, Feb 2004

**Customer Liaison & Joint Working
Councillors Mrs Compton & Hatfield**

Meeting with Jackie Webb Councillors Compton & Hatfield on Monday 16 February at Riverside House.

A leaflet will be produced within 12 months outlining which services the Council provide – a separate leaflet will go to businesses. These will outline what we do and what the residents/businesses can do to keep the area tidy.

The EnCams (Environmental Campaigns) scheme which the Council belongs to gives great help to the officers in ways to respond to criticism and also provide information on the People & Places programme with links to how other authorities work.

There is much work involved in receiving complaints from customers – e-mails, phone calls, letters and all want immediate response. The A46 is of particular concern and work is done with the Police, optima and Coventry City Council.

It appears that liaison with other departments at WDC could be improved by notifying the department of events, markets etc. so that the area could be swept soon after the event has finished. Also supermarkets, Alleyways, Businesses pose concern.

New residents should be issued with a leaflet giving details of refuse collection, recycling, collection of bulky items etc. Councillors would also appreciate a leaflet of “who does what” to enable them to make direct contact.

The department works with Warwickshire County Council on the Waste Management Forum and joint working with EnCams, etc is of great benefit. Work also with the Police re fly tipping. Some Parish Councils and Voluntary groups have taken advantage of the clean up packs which are available from the Department. These encourage communities to clean their environment.

The best value review considered that the contracts for cleansing streets/car parks/housing estates should be done together but this has not happened.

The main issue as ever is a lack of resources so that more staff could be deployed to further the aim of raising Warwick District Councils cleanliness index of 71 at August 2003 – although this is slightly above average there is much room for improvement.