

**TITLE: STREET SCENE AND LIVEABILITY – THE WAY FORWARD**

**TO/ON: THE CABINET / 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2005**

**BY: HEAD OF STREET SCENE AND LIVEABILITY**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET SCENE AND LIVEABILITY**

**STATUS: FOR PUBLICATION**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. To inform Elected Members of the outcome of the fundamental review that has recently been undertaken with regard to Environmental Services. This review has included Refuse & Recycling Collections, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance services within the StreetScene and Liveability Portfolio.
- 1.2. To inform Elected Members of the Service Improvement Plan developed for these services.
- 1.3. To outline the subsequent options appraisal process which has been undertaken following the fundamental review to explore the possible methods of service delivery in the future.
- 1.4. To enable the Council to explore market opportunities to identify an appropriate Partner to work with the Authority in the strategic management and operational delivery of street based services.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That the service improvement plan is approved
- 2.2. That Rossendale BC commences a procurement process to secure a strategic partner for the provision of the service.

### **3. REPORT AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 3.1. The Council is moving towards being an enabling local authority and a key part of this process is the establishment of new innovative partnerships with other organisations to achieve specific goals.
- 3.2. The Corporate Improvement Plan states that an Options Appraisal for front line StreetScene services be completed by the end of 2005. This is reflected in the StreetScene Business Plan which identifies that the procurement of any future arrangements should be underway in early 2006.
- 3.3. The council wishes to enable the progression of the StreetScene & Liveability Business Plan to deliver modernisation and continuous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of these services. To that effect the Council contracted Enterprise plc to provide consultants to undertake two roles:
  - Interim operational management
  - Review frontline StreetScene and Liveability services and provide recommendations for change
- 3.4. The change team carried out the review of frontline StreetScene and Liveability Services between May and September 2005. The analysis was completed by the autumn, including the planning and implementation of several immediate recommendations for service improvements.
- 3.5. The service improvement plans for Street Cleansing, Refuse Collection, and Grounds Maintenance, contain many actions for change, many of which should be undertaken before the Council enters into any future arrangements.
- 3.6. Although the project formally finished at the end of September, the Interim Operations Manager remains in post and will lead, with the Head of StreetScene & Liveability, the delivery of the changes in the service improvement plans.
- 3.7. The terms of reference for recommendations for change included examination of the following services and functions:
  - Sickness procedures
  - Back office Processes
  - Performance management framework
  - Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Refuse Collection and Recycling Collections
- 3.8. The service review demonstrates that within front line services of StreetScene and Liveability there are many good points - in particular the dedication of a majority of the workforce to do a good job even when unsupervised and under-resourced. However the review also revealed significant areas for improvement. Alongside the review, as areas for action have been identified, improvements have already been introduced.
- 3.9. Refuse Collection

- The current software system does not hold operational information is unable to collate missed bins information and present it in a usable and timely format for operations to improve the service.
- The back office is never informed of what action was taken, on what date, and by whom. There is no procedure for assessing enquiries (number taken, actioned, timed, and resolved) or complaints.
- Depot facilities like the workshop for maintaining RBC's own vehicles are not fit for purpose. The number of statutory maintenance activities appears excessive compared to those of some other authorities (though this evidence is anecdotal only).
- Numerous vehicles are not fit for the purpose they are intended and are causing inefficiencies in service delivery. There are at least four vehicles which pose a risk to the council due to the fact they are old, unreliable and are not suitable for the terrain.
- The fleet appears to be off the road and unavailable on a particularly frequent basis, there are sustained periods whereby every vehicle is off the road at least once every week.
- The crews do not have procedures to follow allowing them to make appropriate decisions/actions regarding missed bins or access problems.
- There is no set electronic process for managing the refuse and recycling service data on a day-to-day basis. Without a works management system in place that is used well by trained personnel, the service cannot be managed effectively on a day-to-day basis.
- Currently, contaminated bins are not well recorded on the rounds, and are 'just not collected' because they are contaminated
- There are 1,842 properties registered for assisted collection, though no update has been undertaken for some years. This is 6.19% of the total number of properties, higher than in most other LA's.

### 3.10. Street Cleansing

- The overall cleanliness of town centres is good, with little graffiti or fly posting.
- Large areas have overgrown weeds and grass - inadequate weed control. One annual weed spray is inadequate. The current service is based on the 1998 CCT contract
- Residential areas, especially those of high density, maintained to a much lower standard
- Evidence of significant litter and detritus. Heavily populated housing estates frequently littered. It is impossible to identify which areas are not receiving a regular sweep or litter pick.
- Suitability of existing fleet; Age, condition, maintenance provision, cost effectiveness over the long term.
- High usage litterbins only emptied weekly causing them to overflow, litterbin-emptying regime is too rigid.
- No process or procedure audit trails to allow monitoring of performance delivery and effectiveness, operative productivity, and cost breakdown.
- The cleansing regime is ineffective and is geared up to ensuring the town centres are clean to the detriment of outlying areas.
- Current operational service delivery is not flexible enough - no stakeholder value factored into the service.

- Existing routes are utilised currently because...“They have always been there.”
- school run operatives are largely unsupervised and go straight to site from home. They travel to and from sites by, sometimes; the supervisor does not see the manual sweepers at all for a number of weeks.
- Operatives take up to 20 minutes to return to depot for a morning break of 10 minutes and 20 minutes to return to site. As much as 25% of an operative’s time during the working day can be taken up by travelling.
- Operatives take 10 minutes to wash hands before morning break and 10 minutes before lunch to wash hands. Some operatives receive 15 minutes pay per day as overtime and are paid at time and a half.
- Operatives and supervisors work to a “9 over 14-day agreement, which involves the operatives and supervisors working a five-day/four-day alternate week, and therefore the operative takes every alternate Friday as leave (buddy day).
- As a result, every Friday, the operational resources are reduced by half and the quality of service delivery suffers. In cases of sickness or leave, service is under-resourced.
- There are no in-progress checks; therefore, it is impossible to know how well the service is being delivered on a daily basis. No quality inspections are undertaken
- No actual realisation of the length of network to be cleansed (both footway and carriageway)
- There is a limited skill and training matrix in place for the service.
- It is currently impossible to produce a performance indicator for the resolution of enquiries for this service. It is impossible to accurately identify the exact number of complaints and enquiries.
- The service is and always has been a delivered using limited paper based processes with no use of any technology whatsoever.
- The paper systems are ineffective, provide limited operational or management use, have limited structure, and are un-auditable.

### 3.11. Grounds Maintenance

- The undertaking of ad-hoc commercial, internal and delegated works has an adverse knock-on effect
- The service is unable to effectively manage and deliver the projects in accordance with statutory (e.g. HSE) requirements, and the core service is stretched, putting a strain on resources
- Has a detrimental effect on the delivery of both the core maintenance activities and the tendered works.
- Approximately 48% of the bedding areas are the direct responsibility of the Parks, Grounds, and Open Spaces service, covered in the revenue budget.
- 46% of the areas are in-perpetuity graves that do not provide an additional income as they are incorporated in the revenue budget
- The greenhouse produces plants per annum to the sale value of, at most, £11,000, these plants are bought for £9500 by other East Lancs Authorities
- The greenhouse expenditure is nearly £57,000, the net loss of the greenhouses could be as high as £45,000.
- The availability of in-perpetuity grave maintenance agreements ceased around 2000, there are approximately 2500 graves maintained to a standard, which includes the planting of summer bedding and winter bulbs; these areas consist of half of all bedding areas in the borough.

- However, of the graves maintained, most will not be visited by family, as the agreements began in 1872; and the majority were issued before the 1950s.
- Evidence would suggest that the agreements are legally binding for up to 3000 years, with some agreements expiring in 4968 AD
- Most of the grounds vehicles are owned and maintained by the authority and although they are well serviced, most are quite old and unsustainable beyond the short term.
- A substantial amount of plant is either missing or has been scrapped, the plant and equipment is stored around numerous locations in the borough, repairs are not always documented
- There are limited records of plant breakdowns or accurate plant maintenance costs. The existing contract specification was established in the early 1990's under CCT.

### 3.12. Sickness & Absence

Sickness and Absenteeism had not been addressed for some time, leading to a culture of absence throughout the service. This resulted in an increase in agency expenditure and a reduction in the quality and effectiveness of the service. Some of these issues have now been addressed and a new procedure has been adopted to enforce the policy.

### 3.13. The Way Forward

The Council currently delivers all services in Streetscene and Liveability using an in-house Direct Labour Organisation. The options appraisal process indicates that this is not a viable option. The main reasons for this are:

- The service is not improving – in fact the recent review of service shows that in some area the performance is deteriorating;
- Income is reducing and budget reductions are required;
- The staff have an aging profile with no succession planning in place;
- The services have a tired and ageing fleet but do not have modern procurement processes to replace them effectively;
- Performance management of the service has been poor for some time and at certain levels there is a lack of capability;
- Significant investment is required in a depot facility and IT systems;
- There is no integrated asset management system that links to an enquiry or CRM system resulting in manual processes that are outdated and inefficient;
- Financial accounting in the service is outdated resulting in a lack of data in some key areas; and
- The council is currently in special measures and needs more than a step change in performance. It needs to find a way of accelerating change.

3.14. Although several improvements have been made there remains much to be done to place front line services in a position to improve the CPA rating and to comply with Best Value.

3.15. A Service Improvement Plan has been developed and where areas of high risk were identified implementation has taken place to address the main issues in the short term. See Appendix One

- 3.16. It is evident that the council does not have the resources to carry out the significant amount of improvement required to ensure the standard and quality of the service improved in the short or medium term.
- 3.17. There are a significant number of high risk areas which need immediate improvement and investment which the council cannot commit to at this time. For instance, partnering arrangements will bring the opportunity for large scale procurement of fleet and investment in depot facilities.
- 3.18. Members are asked to approve commencing a procurement process to secure a strategic partner for the provision of the frontline services of StreetScene and Liveability

#### **4. CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES**

- 4.1. This report addresses all the corporate priorities

#### **5. FINANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1. The review of services has identified a number of future risk areas for the Council.
- 5.2. The procurement of a strategic partner is part of the approach to risk mitigation. The financial requirements that are necessary to invest in the service are beyond what is available to the council in the short to medium term.
- 5.3. Issues surrounding the fitness of purpose for vehicles and the need to invest in new fleet arrangements early in 2006 must be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 5.4. The depot facilities at Henrietta Street and various cemeteries are not DDA compliant and do not offer even basic amenity to staff.

#### **6. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS**

- 6.1. No direct implications

#### **7. HUMAN RESOURCES**

- 7.1. No direct implications
- 7.2. There would be some significant HR implications which will need to be addressed in a separate report should there be a progression to any partnering arrangements.

#### **8. ANY OTHER RELEVANT CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 8.1. Equalities
- 8.2. Finance

8.3. Risk Management

**9. RISK**

9.1. If no action is taken there will be significant financial implications for the Council.

9.2. There will be a risk to the Council's ability to deliver the significant improvement in the quality it is committed to achieve in the services it provides to its residents.

**10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT**

10.1. The conditions of working at Henrietta Street Depot and other council depots in the parks and cemeteries are in a very poor state of repair. There are no proper amenities for staff and conditions are cramped and do not comply with DDA legislation.

**11. EQUALITIES ISSUES ARISING FROM THE REPORT**

11.1. The conditions are no proper amenities for staff and conditions are aged and cramped.

11.2. Buildings are not DDA compliant and would require significant investment to bring into compliance

**12. WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All

**13. CONSULTATIONS**

13.1. There has been some work undertaken with a working party from the workforce. An options appraisal has been carried out with the working party and staff are aware of the need for the service to move forward in a partnering direction.

13.2. The relevant Trades Union were represented within the working party, together with members of staff from Refuse Collection, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance. Clearly these were only preliminary consultations and there will be a formal consultation process undertaken in accordance with the council's policies.

Background documents:

Appendix One - Service Improvement Plans – StreetScene & Liveability

Appendix Two - Options Appraisal Documentation

For further information on the details of this report, please contact: Carole Todd – Head of StreetScene & Liveability