

28 July 2009

Preliminary Assessment of the Street Cleansing Service

Ward(s) All

1. Summary of Report

The Report sets out for the scrutiny panel the elements of the Council's Street Cleansing Service, its resources and the performance outcomes it has delivered. The report also outlines how the service has developed and how well it works with partners and identifies the areas for a street cleansing scrutiny working group to consider further.

1.2 Background

The cleaning of public highways in the borough of Walsall includes, carriageways, lay bys, traffic islands, paved areas, service roads, footways, highway verges, foot bridges, subways, central reservations and car parks operated by Walsall Council. The service is currently split into four geographical areas, each with a large mechanical sweeper, precinct sweeper and a team of litter pickers, dealing with hard-to-reach areas in district centres. In addition, two litter hit squads cover the whole borough mainly focusing on the removal of fly-tipping.

1.3 The **Gold Standard** initiative was introduced in 2003 to improve the environment of Walsall Town Centre and so ensure the residents and visitors to the centre enjoy a clean, safe environment while shopping in Walsall. This improved standard included:-

- An increase in staff numbers from six to nine
- Cover during the day extended from 6:00am to 7:00pm
- Frequencies of tasks increased from 6 to 10 occasions
- Litter Bins emptied an additional two times
- New, more effective equipment
- Paved areas washed
- Removal of Graffiti, Fly Posters and Chewing gum on a more regular basis.

This work is carried out by a dedicated team over a seven day period using a variety of equipment including hot wash cleaners, precinct sweepers and hand operating equipment.

1.4 The **Litter Hit Squad** is responsible for the clearance of litter and fly tipped waste from both Council owned land and unidentified private land across the

borough. The litter hit squads will respond to requests from the following information:-

- Fly tipping inspected via our inspectors
- Fly tipping inspected by Enforcement Officers
- Information from residents
- Information received from LNP
- Information receive from partners

- 1.5 In recent years the Council has tightened up its control of **fly-tipping** to the extent that unauthorised activity is no longer tolerated. Since this tougher policy was established, the incidents of fly posting across the borough have reduced by around 90%.

Incidents are either reported through the 'First Stop Shop' or seen by staff, with all street cleansing staff able to remove them. We have a target of doing so within 48 hours.

- 1.6 The **graffiti** removal teams work right across the borough of Walsall removing graffiti from Council buildings and structures. Most graffiti is removed within 10 working days of a report, with racist graffiti removed within one working day of it being reported.

The graffiti team will assist partners and residents to remove graffiti which is on private property following the completion of authorisation checks.

1.7 **Other areas of work**

Along with the routine parts of the service, additional tasks are undertaken by the service.

- Removal of drug waste and syringes. Staff are trained to expect to find needles anywhere and remove them.
- Removal of Gas Bottles from the highway.
- Removal of Asbestos (often moved as part of fly-tipping).

This more anti-social behaviour by a small percentage of resident/non residents has made the service more difficult and expensive to deliver and staff has to be more aware of what may be left in bins before emptying them.

2. **Reason for Scrutiny**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Panel has requested a review of the Street Cleansing service in the 2009/10 work programme and will receive a further report later in the year following the completion of the action plans and reviews identified and outlined in this report.

3. **Background Information**

This section sets out the proposed areas of work for the scrutiny Street cleansing working group to review.

3.1 Review of the Service

During the second part of this financial year, David Rosselli Ltd will be carrying out a review of the service on behalf of the Service. This work will cover service issues, such as the deployment of resources, operational performance data and performance management including benchmarking.

It is suggested that the Panel reviews the outcome of this review.

3.2 Internal Audit

The internal audit section are currently carrying out a routine audit of the service covering service planning, financial management, resource management, workforce planning and partnership working.

The Panel could decide to review the outcome of this review.

3.3 Cracking Environmental Crime Campaign

During June 2009, the Council launched the 'Cracking Environmental Crime' campaign to raise public awareness of the issue and encourage residents to help in reducing this anti-social behaviour. The campaign is going to run for up to twelve months and will cover:-

Fly Tipping – "Tackle the Tippers"
Graffiti – "Wipe it out"
Clean up days – "Take pride in your street"
Smoking Waste – 'No ifs or Butts'
Fly Posting – 'Fine the Fly poster'

The Scrutiny Panel could review the outcome of the review and comment accordingly.

3.4 Street Cleansing Action Plan

In April 2009, the Service set out in an action plan further operational improvements to be carried out and monitored throughout the year. This action plan pulls together all of the known issues to be carried out this financial year.

The Scrutiny Panel might find it useful to review the impact of this Action Plan.

3.5 National Indicator 05 (N105)

This National Indicator, 'Overall/general satisfaction with local area', has four elements:-

- ? Levels of Crime and Perception of Crime
- ? Condition of the road

- ? Cleanliness of the street and local environment
- ? Positive activities for young people to do.

Clearly, cleanliness of the street and local environment have direct links with the Street Cleansing services and the action plan and operational improvements, that will emerge as a result should result in improvements to the general satisfaction of our residents and so help to improve our performance against this indicator.

3.6 **National Indicator 195 (N1195 a, b, c)**

This indicator measures performance in respect of litter, graffiti and fly-posting. In support of this indicator, 900 sites are inspected independently once every 4 months and each site is assessed for the amount of litter and detritus, fly posters and graffiti present and graded from A (none) to E (lots found). Current outturns reported for 2008/09 are as follows:-

Percentage of streets found to have levels of litter, detritus, fly-posting and graffiti at or below Grade B.

	Litter	Detritus	Combined	Fly Posters	Graffiti
Walsall 2008/09	7%	14%	10%	0%	7%

The action and review being undertaken this financial year will identify the actions required to deliver improvements in standards.

3.7 **National Indicator 196 (N196)**

This National Indicator outlines how the local authority is dealing with the issues around fly-tipping and enforcement. The out turn for 2008/09 financial year has not been published or confirmed but indications are that we have been classed as 'very effective'.

The Scrutiny Panel could review the Council's performance against relevant National Indicators.

4. **Resources**

4.1 **Financial**

The cost of delivering the street cleansing services in this financial year is broken down into the following areas.

Street Cleansing	£1599k
Gold Standard	£468k
Litter Hit Squad	£85k
Fly Posting removal	£15k
Graffiti removal	<u>£72k</u>
Total	£2,239k

These costs include all staffing, material, premises, transport and central charges for the above services.

4.2 **Legal**

There are no anticipated legal resource implications in this review.

4.3 **Staffing**

Street Cleansing services have the following number of full time employees:

Street Cleansing	36
Gold Standard	12
Litter Hit Squad	4
Graffiti	<u>2</u>
Total	54

5. **Citizen Impact**

- 5.1 Street Cleansing is a high priority service for local communities and has been developed and improved in recent years to take on board their views during that time.

Over time, the service has changed from a litter picking and road sweeping service to cover all environmental crimes. Expectations are higher than they have ever been and the government has introduced National Indicators to measure the levels satisfaction on one hand and how well local authorities are coping on the ground.

- 5.2 The introduction of the 'First Stop Shop' and the 653344 number at the Contact Centre has helped with the handling of calls from residents. During 2008/09 the help desk call centre took over 5000 enquiries for the street cleansing services, but has nevertheless speeded up our response times in dealing with service requests.

- 5.3 The service is proactively involved with the LNP process, attending all of the Community Action Tasking (CAT) meetings which deal with issues raised through this process.

- 5.4 In conjunction with partners, the street cleansing service carries out and assists with 'community clean up days' and deep cleaning of streets. This process so far has been targeted towards the more 'hard-to-clean' areas and requests from communities.

6. **Environmental Impact**

- 6.1 The service has a major impact on the environment across all communities within the borough. The scrutiny review will help to improve the outcomes of the service within available resources.

7. Performance and Risk Management Issues

The main risk is that levels of satisfaction with the Service are relatively low, that the borough is unattractive to inward investment, and that the Council's reputation suffers as a result.

8. Equality implications

8.1 Street Cleansing service affects all sections of the local community and its continued development will help to ensure an acceptable quality of life for all.

8.2 Close monitoring of service standards has allowed the service to develop quickly to improve individual area standards.

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on litter picking in 2006/07 but only focussed on litter.

9. Consultation

9.1 Walsall residents play a vital role in helping to develop the service, so it is important we listen to their views about the service and how each area is affected differently.

9.2 Over the past four years the authority has carried out a number of different consultation surveys, which have put cleanliness in the area they live high on their list of priorities.

9.3 Introduction of the First Stop Shop and Contact Centre has allowed residents to raise queries/enquiries about the service more effectively.

9.4 Service standards for each element of the service have been introduced to assist with informing residents of what to expect and how to contact us.

9.5 Local Neighbourhood Partnerships have allowed residents to raise queries/enquiries with the service and receive feedback.

9.6 The service works with local groups/forums i.e. Birchills Neighbourhood Forum, Brownhills residents and partner agencies, (e.g. Walsall Housing Group, Watmos) to carry out or assist in clean-up events and has worked successfully in the past with Street Champions across the borough. The Street Champions initiative is to be re-launched again shortly and the Service will work closely with them once again to improve standards of cleanliness.

Background Papers

National Indicator Action plan 5
Street Cleansing Action Plan 2009
David Rosselli Ltd initial report
Cracking Environmental Crime Campaign Action Plan

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Walsall Council Scrutiny and Performance Panel Work Group
Initiation Document

Work Group Name:	
Panel:	
Municipal Year:	
Lead Member:	
Lead Officer:	
Support Officer:	
Membership:	

1.	Context
	A request from Scrutiny panel to include a review of Street Cleansing within 2009/10 work programme.
2.	Objectives
	1. Working group to investigate and review elements of service identified in 3 below and propose priorities and improvements.
3.	Scope
	David Rosselli Service Review Internal Audit Report. Grading for crime campaign Street Cleansing action plan, National indicator results.

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6.	Equalities Implications				
	<p>Scrutiny panel should use a cross section of the Street Champions regarding this review and its outcomes.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment in Litter Picking was carried out in 2006/07, as the review was for only part of the service and over two years old, this only gives part of the outcomes required and will need to carry out a new equality impact assessment on all of the service.</p>				
4.	Who else will you want to take part?				
	<p>Street Champions</p> <p>Public Protection for enforcement issues.</p>				
5.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule				
	<p>Scrutiny panel working group meet monthly, reporting back October, January and March with interim and final reports.</p>				
6.	Risk factors				
	<p>Changes in priorities.</p> <p>Limited resources to participate in review</p> <p>Budget restraints</p>				
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Timetable:

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To be inserted once dates agreed.