

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry into Street Cleaning

Summary report of the working group meeting held on 24th November 2008.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A working group of the Board met on 24th November 2008 to consider evidence in line with session two of the Board's Inquiry into Street Cleaning.

1.2 Session two of the Board's Inquiry focused on the following areas:

- Comparative case studies of successful beacon authorities in relation to the 'better public places' theme;
- Street cleaning enforcement powers of the Council and opportunities for joined up enforcement with other individuals/groups/organisations;
- Frequency and monitoring of street cleaning services;
- Resource pressures relating to street cleaning services.

1.3 The following Members and officers attended the working group meeting to discuss the evidence submitted:

- Councillor B Anderson (Chair of the Scrutiny Board)
- Councillor A Blackburn
- Councillor B Cleasby
- Councillor G Hyde
- Councillor G Kirkland
- Councillor L Mulherin
- Angela Brogden (Principal Scrutiny Adviser)
- Andrew Mason (Chief Environmental Services Officer)
- Stephen Smith (Head of Environmental Services)
- Graham Wilson (Head of Environmental Action & Parking)
- Phillip Turpin (Principal Projects Officer, Environmental Services)
- James Holmes (ENCAMS)

1.4 During the meeting, the following personal declarations were declared:

- Councillor Anderson in his capacity as Chair of the West North West Homes;
- Councillor Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes
- Councillor Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes

2.0 Main issues raised

Comparisons with other local authorities

2.1 The working group welcomed James Holmes from ENCAMS to the meeting and was able to benefit from his knowledge and experience of working with

other local authorities around the performance of street cleaning services.

- 2.2 Particular importance was placed on utilising resources effectively and achieving a minimum standard of cleanliness across the city. Examples were given of where other local authorities had prioritised resources within city centre areas which consequently led to a reduced service being provided to residential areas.
- 2.3 In terms of performance measures, reference was made again to the National Indicator 195, which was introduced in April 2008 and replaced the Best Value Performance Indicator BV199, used for measuring environmental cleanliness.
- 2.4 James Holmes explained the process for monitoring performance against this indicator, which primarily involves a structured sample of 900 sites each year. The working group learned that the performance data gathered is based on surveys carried out three times per year covering five electoral wards on each visit. Within each ward, the monitoring officers will take into account the different types of land uses and each year the 15 wards are chosen on a rotated basis. However, it was noted that within Leeds, every ward is surveyed in just over a two year period.
- 2.5 When comparing Leeds' performance against other local authorities, emphasis was made on ensuring that any comparable data takes into account the size of Leeds and also its uniqueness in terms of its different land uses. However, the working group was reminded of the performance table provided at the last inquiry session which showed how Leeds was performing against other comparable Core Cities in terms of the previous best value performance indicator (BV199) and also the spend per head of population. This table is provided again below.

2007/08	Spend per head of population	BVPI 199a (litter and detritus)	BVPI 199b (Graffiti)	BVPI 199c (fly-posting)
Leeds	£14.24	13%	5%	1%
Birmingham	£17.96	10%	19%	1%
Bristol	£13.14	13%	8%	2%
Liverpool	£26.31	7%	8%	1%
Manchester	£23.31	8%	1%	0%
Newcastle	£28.94	16%	22%	7%
Nottingham	£16.98	8%	13%	1%
Sheffield	£12.55	16%	19%	2%

- 2.6 The BV199a result states the percentage of streets across Leeds that were found to be in an unsatisfactory condition, therefore the lower the result the better the performance. It was highlighted to the working group that Leeds' performance was considered average when compared to the other Core Cities. In consideration of this information, the working group suggested that the Scrutiny Board may find it beneficial to request information from

Manchester, Liverpool and Nottingham about their service provision to evaluate whether any lessons could be learned for Leeds.

The need for more local baseline data

- 2.7 Whilst the performance data gathered as part of the National Indicator 195 is considered a robust measure of performance from a city-wide perspective, the working group raised the importance of gathering baseline data on a more local level.
- 2.8 It was highlighted to the working group that the Council had adopted the District Local Environmental Quality Survey (DLEQS) within areas of Intensive Neighbourhood Management (INM) where the focus is on improving services in the most deprived communities in the city. The DLEQS is adapted from a national survey and reports factually on selected environmental standards prevailing within a particular area. The DLEQS monitors cleansing issues (litter, detritus, leaf fall); cleansing related issues (weeds and staining of roads); environmental crime (flytipping, flyposting and graffiti); litter bins and wastes placed out for collection; landscaped areas (litter and maintenance); grading of environmental elements; and the location of problems within the transect. Within the INM areas, it was highlighted that every street had been surveyed and monitored. This proved to be a very complex and resource intensive exercise. However, such detailed survey data had meant that more accurate information was provided to enforcement and streetscene services and also helped to identify any need for targeted education campaigns.
- 2.9 It was explained to the working group that the additional resources allocated to the INM areas to gather the DLEQS information had made a huge impact on services and that the intention is to roll out this process across the city in order to achieve baseline data on a more local level that would help to enhance the service in the long term. However, it was acknowledged that this exercise would be very resource intensive.

The need for more robust monitoring mechanisms within the service.

- 2.10 As well as achieving more accurate baseline data at a local level, the working group also identified a need for more robust monitoring of street cleaning services.
- 2.11 The working group acknowledged the cost effective benefits of the service adopting a more responsive approach to street cleaning that is based around outputs and targeting particular hotspots rather than adopting a cleansing schedule based on set frequencies. However, concerns were raised that such an approach did not appear to be backed up with a robust monitoring and recording mechanism.
- 2.12 It was highlighted that Area Managers are responsible for carrying out their own quality checks in relation to street cleaning services, which would involve visits to staff and also spot checks. However, it was recognised that Area

Managers are covering large areas of the city and street cleaning supervision was just one of a number of their duties.

- 2.13 Whilst operatives are encouraged to exercise their discretion to determine levels of street cleanliness, the working group was concerned that such actions were not being recorded systematically, which causes difficulties for the service to provide categorical evidence of when a particular street had last been assessed or cleaned.
- 2.14 The working group felt that Area Managers and operatives should also be more proactive in observing and formally reporting back any incidences of where streets were not meeting the Council's cleanliness standard in order for this to be addressed immediately. It was perceived that only Elected Members and members of the public were being proactive in this respect.
- 2.15 Although the working group acknowledged that the performance assessment process is very much outcome based, it was felt that more robust monitoring of street cleaning services would only enhance the audit process by demonstrating where best value is being achieved by the service.

Cleanliness standards – dealing with public expectations

- 2.16 The working group identified a need for the Council to communicate better with the public in explaining what it considers to be a minimum standard of cleanliness in order to address any differing views of the public in terms of their expectations.
- 2.17 In session one of the Board's inquiry, Members had received details of the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse 2006. This Code of Practice defines grades of cleanliness for street cleaning and includes accompanying illustrations showing examples of what constitutes as a particular grade of cleanliness.
- 2.18 The working group therefore suggested that the Council uses this Code of Practice to produce a Charter for Leeds that clearly sets out the minimum standard of street cleanliness that the public can expect to see across the city and for them to refer to this Charter whenever it was felt that this standard was not being met.

Street cleaning enforcement

- 2.19 In relation to street cleaning enforcement, particular emphasis was made around changing public behaviour and educating people not to drop litter by making them aware of the penalties that can be incurred as a result. Signage was considered important in this respect and it was highlighted to the working group that this has made an impact in the past. The signs which have made the most impact have been those which appear on street name plates.
- 2.20 Particular reference was made to a number of known hotspot areas across the city, such as Headingley, Hyde Park and Holbeck, which are densely

populated and also often include temporary residents such as students. Other densely populated areas also throw up issues elsewhere in the city. The working group felt that more resources for targeted enforcement was needed within these particular areas due to the intensive nature of the work experienced in these types of area.

- 2.21 It was highlighted to the working group that enforcement services do link in closely with streetscene services. The streetscene service also works closely with the Council's call centre to ensure that information regarding any service failure is communicated effectively to the public. In relation to missed bin collections, it was explained that this would usually be addressed by the service within 48 hours. However, where any planned or prolonged service failures occur, the service would write directly to the affected properties.
- 2.22 Reference was also made to the use of bin yards and the difficulties experienced by the service in terms of gaining access to the yards to collect waste and also reported incidences of arson attacks in the south of the city from West Yorkshire Fire Service, particularly where bin yards had not been serviced. However, the working group noted that the service was seeking legal advice regarding private bin yards where such problems are occurring, particularly as the cost of dealing with these issues are coming from the Council.
- 2.23 The working group also acknowledged the successful work of the enforcement team in terms of enforcing matters relating to transient groups across the city and also the numbers of successful prosecutions in relation to flytipping.