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## Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

### Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007

### Subject: Street Cleansing and Britain's Cleanest City Award – Update

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

Streetscene Services was formed in 2004 as part of the Closer Working: Better Services restructure. It brought together those services that have a direct impact on environmental quality. Street cleansing, refuse collection, public conveniences cleansing, needle picking and graffiti removal, and the operation element of waste management are all part of the service. In February 2005, Streetscene Services was also given the contract administration responsibility for the grounds maintenance contract.

Most Streetscene Services are delivered on a scheduled basis although the delivery of street cleansing focuses on outputs using schedules as a guideline only. This approach allows flexibility within the service to be responsive to specific area needs but also ensuring a consistent standard of environmental quality city wide.

Street cleansing is currently measured by the Best Value Performance Indicator 199, and since 2003, Leeds has seen a gradual improvement. From 31.2% unacceptable sites in 2003/04 to 17.3% unacceptable sites in 2006/07.

The intensive Neighbourhood initiative was launched in April 2006 aimed specifically at the most deprived areas within the inner city. Supported by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NFR) and the Safer, Stronger, Communities Fund (SSCF), the improvements have been significant and hopefully will be sustainable.

Leeds City Council has an aspiration to be Britain's Cleanest City in 2009 and Europe's Cleanest City by 2020. In terms of Britain's Cleanest City, Streetscene Services submitted an application to the British Cleaning Council's Clean City award scheme. Although not the winner, Leeds was short listed in the top ten as a finalist and won a certificate of merit.

The intention is to submit again in 2009 using the experience and lessons learned from the 2007 submission.

In terms of Europe's Cleanest City, as there is currently no officially recognised European measure of a clean city, Leeds is working in partnership with ENCAMS to develop a Euro measure.

This is a complicated process and the EuroCities network has been chosen as the vehicle to gain support for the developments and acceptance of a Euro measure of environmental cleanliness.

The purpose of this report is to make members aware of the current arrangements in place to deliver Streetscene Services and in particular the progress to date with the Britain's Cleanest City Award.

## **2.0 Introduction**

In 2004, Streetscene Services was formed to join up and coordinate provision of the previously separate services of refuse collection, bulky item removal, street cleansing, and graffiti removal and fly posting removal. Streetscene Services was established following a successful pilot that examined how local environmental services need to be specified, communicated and delivered to best meet the needs of the diverse social and economic characteristics of different communities.

Streetscene is a term which has been used within Leeds in its widest sense to describe:

"An integrated approach to all aspects of the street - public space that nearly all experience daily".

A successful Streetscene approach involves engaging voluntary, private and other public organisations and encouraging them to take responsibility for looking after the environment.

Therefore, Streetscene is about co-ordination of service delivery to meet customer aspirations and engaging all relevant parties in the approach. Working arrangements are already in place with Parks and Countryside, Police, Fire Service, Statutory Undertakers, Education, Environmental Health, ALMOS, Housing Strategic Landlord, Environment Agency, Trading Standards, Community Safety and Area Management Teams.

City Services Streetscene Services has taken the lead in bringing together a number of these key service providers as a Task Group and agreements have been reached about improvements which need to be made across the city to look after the environment

City Services Streetscene Services consists of Environmental Services (including areas such as refuse collection, street cleansing and graffiti removal), Enforcement and Recycling and Waste.

This document will concentrate on Streetscene's street cleansing and progress to becoming Britain's Cleanest City.

### **3.0 Streetscene Cleansing Services – Current Provision**

Below is a summary of the services currently provided by Streetscene Services.

*Litter bins (on programmed frequency)* - To collect and dispose of waste from litterbins and operate the maintenance of litter bins and liners, where appropriate.

*Ancillary Services (e.g. needle picking, graffiti removal, etc)* - These teams deal with needle collection, poster and graffiti removal and mechanical weed clearance.

*Street Sweeping* - the street cleansing service is completed by a mechanical and manual sweeps on both carriageways and footways. The service operates around a schedule covering all areas of the city. Sweeping removes litter, detritus and dead weeds.

*Manual Litter Picking* - Litter picking is used across the city in appropriate situations (for example, where a mechanical sweeper is insufficient or too cumbersome to operate efficiently).

*Street Washing* - District and local centres receive a scheduled street washing service. Power washes target spillages and areas of known heavy footfall / usage.

*Fly tipping removal* – Fly tipping on the public highway is reported by the public or discovered by crews and removed accordingly or passed on to relevant agencies. Enforcement action is usually taken where evidence is available.

*Gully Cleansing* - To carry out routine servicing of gullies in order to prevent minor and major flooding incidents. Current provision allows gullies to be emptied and cleansed every 8 months to remove the build up of leaf and blossom fall, silt and detritus. An upgrade to the service is currently being discussed

*Grass Cutting* – Contract with Glendales currently under management of Streetscene Services. Since March 2005 the co-ordination includes the cutting of grass on Authority land prior to street cleansing.

### **4.0 Current Method of Operation**

#### **4.1 Core Services**

Core services are deployed on a scheduled basis to cover all areas of the city. All areas of the city receive the same level of core services when needed.

Currently, Streetscene Services works on an area wedge basis. There are 5 wedges in Leeds excluding the City Centre. Each Wedge has specific management and frontline staff to deal with arising issues as well as day to day service provision. Recently, the division of the city has been discussed and new working arrangements have been proposed. The Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOS) (Housing) are the first to divide into three areas as opposed to the original 5 areas. Area Management will follow suit in the near future.

In light of “Strong and Prosperous Communities” – the 2006 Local Government White Paper (which aims to support local authorities and their partners in improving services and reshaping them to meet the needs of different communities,) Leeds City Council is discussing options of ‘Neighbourhood Devolution’ or ‘Double Devolution’. This process is based around Area Management teams having more influence over service

provision in their area to better meet the needs of the differing communities that make up Leeds.

## **4.2 Intensive Neighbourhood Management (INM)**

The INM programme helps focus on the improvement of existing public services in the most deprived communities in the city. It also helps provide new services that will address needs that have been identified in these areas.

In April to June 2006, Environmental Pride Teams were recruited, trained and deployed in each of the five wedges within the city. These teams have received a detailed seven week training programme to equip them with relevant skills and techniques to deliver high quality visible improvements in the communities in which they work. The teams undertake tasks such as graffiti removal, minor construction works, horticultural works and intensive cleaning; leaving each street at a grade 'A' level.

To facilitate the delivery of sustainable improvements in our most deprived communities an application for NRF and SSCF was made. Funding was granted and coordinated activity targeted at the 31 most deprived SOAs commenced.

The INM programme was set up using NRF and SSCF funding. As well as supporting the Environmental Pride Teams, the funding also secured extra enforcement officers, partnership officers (to work directly with businesses and Duty Bodies), a resident's gardening scheme (to assist with poorly managed domestic properties), extra highways signage, extra graffiti teams and also to fund Groundwork to co-ordinate work around the Cleaner, Greener agenda (including bin yard improvements).

## **5.0 What is Streetscene Services (cleansing) Performance to Date?**

Streetscene Services has a significant number of national and local performance indicators against which service delivery is measured. These indicators are published and are subject to an annual scrutiny by the Audit Commission to ensure that they are robust.

### **5.1 Best Value Performance Indicator 199**

Leeds has achieved a significant improvement in the level of cleanliness (both litter and detritus) across the city in recent years. BV199a results (the lower the better) highlight the level of the authority's performance improvement:

2003/04 – 31.2%

2004/05 – 27.05%

2005/06 – 20%

2006/07 – 17.3%

Graffiti (BV199b) has also reduced in the city over the last few years. The percentage of unacceptable sites has fallen from 11% in 2005/06 to 6% in 2006/07.

These results are testament to the hard work of the council, its partners and the community in improving local areas.

The national statutory user satisfaction survey in 2006/07 highlighted that 63% of people in Leeds were satisfied that land and highways were clear of litter and refuse. This placed Leeds above the metropolitan authority average of 60.9%.

As part of the work around the Task Group, a secondment was arranged from ENCAMS to assist with cleanliness monitoring (DLEQS) and various other projects.

## **5.2 District Local Environmental Quality Surveys (DLEQS)**

DLEQS surveys assess areas in terms of litter and detritus, graffiti, fly posting, fly tipping, staining, weed growth, the position, condition and degree of fill of litter bins and the cleanliness of landscaped areas. They are more detailed than BVPI 199 surveys.

DLEQS surveys were performed on the 31 most deprived SOAs in Leeds from December 2005 to March 2006 to establish a baseline of cleanliness standards in these areas. Overall, the average rating across the SOA's showed that 29% of sites had unacceptable levels of litter and detritus.

Further surveys were performed between December 2006 and March 2007 to assess the changes that had taken place over the 12 month period. Overall, the average rating across the SOA's showed that 14% of sites had unacceptable levels of litter and detritus; a significant improvement on the previous year.

The surveys showed that across the 31 SOA's the average rating for sites with unacceptable levels of litter was 33.5% and in 2006/07, this has improved to 15.1%. Performance on detritus also improved on the whole; in 2005/06 24.4% of sites had unacceptable levels of detritus and in 2006/07 this improved to only 12.6% of sites. Overall, improvements were noted in 28 of the 31 most deprived SOA's; testament to the hard work of the council, its partners and the community in improving local areas. The performance on graffiti and fly posting also improved across the SOA's (on average) between 2005/06 and 2006/07.

## **6.0 Britain's Cleanest City – Progress so far**

The Clean Britain Awards (formerly 'Britain's Cleanest City Award') is an award scheme run by the British Cleaning Council (BCC). Up until 2007, the awards were subjective with no quantifiable data. In 2007, ENCAMS (who run the national Local Environmental Quality Surveys for DEFRA) joined BCC and sat as a judge for the awards, with them they introduced a quantifiable measure of cleanliness (BV199). With the introduction of an objective measure, Leeds City Council decided to enter the awards. The awards have 3 categories (City, District, and Town). Leeds decided to enter the City category but to specify an area of the city where a good cross section of the different types of communities are represented (The South Wedge). Most other cities entered their cleanest areas such as Birmingham and their City Centre. Streetscene services wanted a realistic assessment of an area that represents the city. For the 2009 application the areas to be entered will be re-assessed having considered the scope of the areas entered by other cities.

Leeds CC was a finalist in the City Category and was invited to deliver a presentation to the judging panel in Northampton on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006 which was well received. We also created a DVD highlighting the issues we face in the city and our recent achievements.

The judging panel made 3 unannounced visits to the city and assessed various areas, unfortunately due to a mix-up at BCC, they visited the wrong area and went to Pudsey. Still, this achieved our objective of receiving a realistic view of our city. In March 2007, the results were announced with Birmingham winning City Category.

Leeds City Council received a certificate of Merit in the 2007 Clean Britain Awards. The overall conclusions of the judges were that cleansing operatives were seen to be working well, all areas visited were judged to be of a reasonable standard and in some cases achieving 'A' grade standard and that the view 'for a tourist' was good.

We will re-enter the awards for 2009 using experience from the 'trial run' in 2007.

## **7.0 Europe's Cleanest City**

Based upon Local Environmental Quality work carried out in Europe by ENCAMS, Leeds City Council is working in partnership with them to develop a unique Euro measure for environmental quality. The proposal is to evaluate the use of ENCAMS' Local Environmental Quality Survey protocols as the standard monitoring, benchmarking and diagnostic tool for the local environmental quality of Europe's cities.

The project will produce a standard cleanliness measure that would be beneficial to all involved European Cities. To promote the concept across Europe, the EuroCities network was identified as the appropriate way forward. A two-part project was devised and agreed by ENCAMS, supported by Leeds City Council and the Clean Cities Working Group.

In 2007, with pump-priming funding from Leeds City Council, ten EuroCities members have been involved in assessing the applicability of LEQS to their social, physical, and economic / activity settings. Five of these - Oslo, Rotterdam, Madrid, Sofia and Leeds - have been visited by ENCAMS to examine the issues in detail, about which a report is being prepared proposing ways in which LEQS might be modified to meet the diverse needs of the continent and its peoples. This work also identifies several improvements to ENCAMS' UK LEQS protocols, and to Defra's Best Value Indicator, BV199.

The findings of this Stage 1 investigation will be reported to the EuroCities Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden. If these findings are accepted and, *if* up to 5 contrasting EuroCities members' offer to fund full LEQS surveys of their areas, then Stage 2 of the current project will proceed – probably in spring 2008. For this, not only will individual LEQ reports be prepared for each sponsor-city, benchmarked against the group's overall standards, but also a summary report will identify further changes that may be needed to make LEQS fully applicable across Europe.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

Members are requested to note the contents of the report.