



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 26th August 2009

Subject: Environment & Neighbourhoods Inquiry into Street Cleansing

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

Executive Summary

In June 2008 the Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) requested an inquiry into the street cleansing services provided by Environmental Services.

A working group was established to conduct the inquiry and received evidence from Streetscene Services about the Council's responsibilities in terms of environmental cleanliness, how the services are currently delivered and issues that impact on the service provision. In addition witness evidence was heard from the three ALMO's Parks & Countryside, Education Leeds and Area Management.

In addition ENCAMS (now The Tidy Britain Group) were asked for their professional and independent opinion based upon their national experience in addressing Street Cleansing issues.

The findings of the working group were reported through the Scrutiny Board where fourteen recommendations were made. This report identifies the fourteen and the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods' response to each.

In accordance with the requirements of the constitution, the response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations need do be agreed by the Executive Board. Attached to this report is the report of the Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) Appendix 1.

Recommendation 1

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts a piece of research over the next 6 months to determine the wider implications, including any consequential management arrangements and potential costs of bringing the Council's responsibilities under the Environmental Protection Act for keeping its land clear of litter and refuse into one single service area.

That the findings of this research are brought back to the Scrutiny Board for consideration.

The Director agrees to this recommendation and will report back on the general principles outlined in the recommendation, as well as the detailed issues in relation to any changes to management and financial arrangements as appropriate. However, in terms of this recommendation the Director does not envisage that it will include any of the contained land owned by the Council such as parks (including recreational/amenity open spaces) and school grounds (currently covered by formal maintenance agreements).

Recommendation 2

That unless the research findings from recommendation 1 identifies clear reasons not be, then

- (i) The Executive Board supports the principle of having one single service area responsible for undertaking the Council's duty to keep the city clean.***
 - (ii) Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods produces an action plan within 6 months aimed at bringing the council's responsibilities under the Environmental Protection act for keeping land clear of litter and refuse into one single service area.***
- (i) The Director feels that it would be more appropriate to await the outcome of the work mentioned in Recommendation 1 before producing an action plan as recommended here.

Recommendation 3

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods conducts an urgent piece of work aimed at strengthening the communications links between the different street cleaning service areas and reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months.

The Director agrees with this recommendation and will bring a report back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board outlining current arrangements for communication between the various service areas within the Council. In terms of longer-term arrangements again, it is thought more appropriate to await the outcome of piece of work suggested in recommendation 1.

Recommendation 4

That the Council uses the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse 2006 to produce a Charter for Leeds that clearly sets out the statutory duties of the Council and the other Duty Bodies for keeping land free from litter and refuse and also the minimum standards of street cleanliness that the public can expect to see across the city.

The Director agrees with this recommendation and in addition, feels that the charter could include additional information in terms of how the Council actually intends to fulfill its duty under the Code of Practice, for example, information can be given on proposed cleansing arrangements including use and types of machinery etc. It may also be the case that in some areas the minimum standards required by the Code of Practice are felt to be inadequate and need to be enhanced – where this is the case this will be pointed out.

Recommendation 5

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods commissions a detailed assessment of the full cost required to roll out DLEQ's across the city and reports the findings back to the Scrutiny Board within the next 6 months.

The Director agrees with this recommendation and in addition to identifying the costs of rolling-out the DLEQ'S survey, we will also outline the benefits in terms of service improvements and efficiencies that can be delivered.

Recommendation 6

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods ensures that robust monitoring and recording mechanisms are put in place for all street cleansing services to look into in order to produce an audit trail of when a particular street or area had last been assessed and cleaned.

All scheduled street cleaning activities are currently identified on area-based paper maps that are allocated to street cleaning crews on a daily basis. Upon completion of work, these maps are returned identifying all streets that have been visited and cleaned, or by exception, where this is not the case, with additional information. This would allow an audit to be undertaken in response to specific queries. The service is currently looking at the potential for new technology to provide a more immediate and useable record of schedule sweeping activities and will report on progress to the Scrutiny Board as part of responding to its recommendations.

Recommendation 7

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods ensures that training around minimum cleanliness standards is included as part of the formal induction training for all staff responsible for keeping land clear of litter and refuse in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act.

The Director agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 8

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods conducts a review of the current cleansing schedules to ensure that correct minimum cleansing frequencies are being set across the city, and also reflects areas of priority in terms of cleanliness needs.

The Director agrees with this recommendation and sees it as an important part of providing clear information to the public and other bodies, e.g. Area Committees, in relation to what standards they can expect with regard to street cleaning.

Recommendation 9

- (i) That the Director of Environmental & Neighbourhoods explores all possible routes of addressing the problem of on-street parked cars to help minimise obstruction to effect street cleansing operatives.***
- (ii) That the Director of Environmental & Neighbourhoods writes to the Transport Minister requesting that consideration be given to introducing enforcement powers that will enable local authorities to minimise obstruction to street cleansing operations caused by on-street parking.***
- (iii) That an update report on this issue is brought back to Scrutiny within 6 months.***

- (i) The Director agrees with this recommendation and in the first instance, this will involve detailed discussions between colleagues within Environmental Services, Highway Services and West Yorkshire Police.
- (ii) Following the discussions in relation to recommendation 9(i) above, the Council will submit a request to the Transport Minister outlining current problems within Leeds and seeking support and guidance on ways to minimise obstructions preventing effective street cleaning operations being carried out.
- (iii) The Director agrees with this part of the recommendation.

Recommendation 10

That the Director of Environmental & Neighbourhoods produces an action plan within the next 6 months for delivering street cleaning, enforcement and education campaigns across the city and particularly within hotspot areas.

The Director agrees with this recommendation, and can confirm that work in this area has already begun working with a range of groups to spread the dual messages of education and enforcement.

Recommendation 11

That all street cleaning services link into the community engagement plans for Area Committees to help improve their communication links with the public.

The Director agrees with this recommendation, and can confirm that work has already begun by presenting reports to all Area Committees earlier on this year, asking for suggestions as to how Area Committees can influence street cleaning services in their areas.

Recommendation 12

That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods works with Area Committees and local Town & Parish Councils to produce an action plan within the next 6 months aimed at strengthening their links with the Council's Street Cleansing Services and also maximising resources in terms of engaging with the public.

The Director agrees with the recommendation.

Recommendation 13

That the Director of Environmental & Neighbourhoods ensures that Area Committees receive regular street cleansing performance data. This should include information about their respective community Action Services Teams (CAST) or community Pride Teams to ensure that these are being utilized effectively and are responsive to the needs of the Area Committee.

The Director agrees with this recommendation, and with reference to recommendation 11 above, is already working with Area Committees to determine the type and format of information that they will need.

Recommendation 14

- (i) That the Council remains proactive in engaging with Local Community Groups and continues to offer training which will enable such groups to carry out street cleanliness assessments.***
- (ii) That such training opportunities are offered to local Town and Parish Councils too.***

The Director agrees with both parts of this recommendation, and would comment that there are clear links here between comments made in relation to recommendations 10, 11 and 12 above. It is proposed to work with established national interest groups, e.g. Keep Britain Tidy Group, to ensure that we use the most appropriate and up-to-date communication arrangements available to us. There may be resource implications in doing some of the work outlined, and these will be determined and reported on in due course.

Recommendations

That the Executive Board approves the responses from the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods as outlined in this Report.

Background Papers

May 2009 – Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) – Draft Inquiry Report – Street Cleansing