
REPORT TO:	DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	8 NOVEMBER 2001	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	JOHN HANSED EXT 5770	DOC: s:\cent_serv\committee reports\development services\8 nov 2001\cleansing the environment best value review.doc
SUBJECT:	CLEANSING THE ENVIRONMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW	REF: JRH/LJW
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the revised Action Plan arising out of the Cleansing of the Environment Review and endorse the decision to make the Hit Squad operational in December.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To obtain the approval of Members to changes to the Action Plan arising out of the Cleansing of the Environment Review.

3.0 Detail

3.1 At the last meeting of the Committee on 27 September, Members approved the Final Report and Improvement Plan for the Cleansing of the Environment Review. The final section of the report contained the detailed Action Plan drawn up to bring the required improvements into effect.

3.2 The Review's findings and proposals were inspected by the Best Value Inspectorate during the week commencing 8 October. During the week, the two inspectors gave feedback on their findings and asked for some supplementary information.

3.3 In addition they ran a focus group of service users, including parish councils and members of the public. They established from the group very broad support for the Review's recommendation for a Cleansing Hit Squad. As a result they recommended that the Council should consider as early an implementation of this proposal as possible.

3.4 Prior to completion of the inspection therefore discussions took place, including the Chair of the Committee, on the use of financial savings to make the Hit Squad operational by December. These savings are explained in Section 4.0.

3.5 With the Chair's agreement, the inspectors were advised of this revised programme and were given an amended Action Plan confirming these proposals prior to completing their inspection. They were also advised that the Committee's endorsement would be sought at this meeting.

- 3.6 Other amendments were made to the Action Plan in regard to concern by the Inspectors that the plan did not fully reflect the service objectives which had been included in the Baseline Assessment.
- 3.7 A copy of the revised pages of the Action Plan are enclosed at Annexe A. Amendments are shown in italics.
- 3.8 It is intended that the Hit Squad will deal with complaints about flytipping, litter, dog dirt and graffiti as well as placing legal notices on abandoned vehicles.
- 3.9 For the period from December to April it is intended to use a temporary hire vehicle and use the experience of these first few months of the service to properly and more appropriately specify a permanent vehicle from the beginning of next financial year.
- 3.10 Information will be made available to parish councils during November about the new service and items will be published in the local press. Items will also be included in Inside Out and the Members Bulletin; all staff will be encouraged to report flytipping, abandoned vehicles etc, seen anywhere in the district so early removal can be arranged.
- 3.11 The use of a freephone telephone number, allowing residents to contact the Council, together with an answerphone, is being investigated.
- 3.12 The Squad will comprise of two staff and a recruitment process is now underway. They will increase the number of operational cleansing staff to six and it is planned to rotate the two on the Hit Squad so that the six cleaners are multifunctional, thus increasing the flexibility of the workforce.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Specific savings on the budgets for Refuse, Cleansing and Grounds have been identified for the financial year 2001/2002 amounting to some £40,000. A saving of £21,840 was identified when compared to the overall 'Client' provision following the 'Soft Split' exercise. A further underspend of some £18,000 will be achieved on Transport, Fuel and Wages Oncost headings, mainly Employer's Superannuation and National Insurance contributions. Continuation of these savings is anticipated and the funding of the Hit Squad will be included in estimates for future years.

5.0 Community Implications

- 5.1 The early implementation of the Cleansing Hit Squad will enable the Council to improve its response to dealing with public complaints and concerns about environmental issues.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The inspection of the Cleansing of the Environment Review has led to some required changes to the Action Plan. The most significant of these is the implementation of the Hit Squad to an earlier timetable using operational savings arising out the corporate restructuring exercise.
- 6.2 To more fully reflect the service objectives in the Action Plan, it has been necessary to make further alterations. This will increase the confidence that the plan will lead to action that will meet objectives.