
REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	2 nd JUNE 2005	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PETER McEVOY	DOC:
SUBJECT:	CLEANER STREETS ACTION PLAN	REF: PE
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS 09

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members consider the options for delivering cleaner streets laid out in Annexe A and indicate their choice as to the extent of improvements to be made.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The importance of clean and tidy public space has been recognised in public opinion polls, both national and local, and this has increasingly been reflected in central government priorities and emphasis e.g. in the Liveability agenda and more recent DEFRA campaigns such as "Clean, Green and Safe.
- 2.2 The Government introduced a new Best Value Performance Indicator (BV 199) in April 2003 in order to provide a robust and reliable indicator that measures the cleanliness of the street and local environment in Local Authorities.
- 2.3 BV 199 requires all Councils to carry out 900 inspections a year across all the Authority's wards, covering ten different classes of land use.
- 2.4 BV 199 surveys for litter and detritus. Detritus comprises dust, mud, soil, grit, gravel, stones, and other finely divided materials (the type of waste most effectively cleansed by mechanised sweeping). Cleanliness is measured in terms of both the absence of litter and detritus.
- 2.5 BV 199 uses a grading system to measure the percentage of sites surveyed that fall below a level that is considered good i.e. predominantly free of litter and detritus except for some small items or some slight scattering (Grade B).
- 2.6 The next sections analyse the results of the first two years' inspections and move on to explore the way forward.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Council's performance for 2003/04 was that 34% of sites fell below a Grade B. The outturn for 2004/05 is 27%. The national average performance in 2003/04 was 21% and the bottom quartile was 29% and worse.

3.2 The analysis of the Council's performance can be seen below:

2003/04	Litter % below Grade B	Detritus % below Grade B	Overall % below Grade B
Urban core	27%	46%	36%
Outside the Urban core	12%	56%	32%
Combined	18%	51%	34%
2004/05			
Urban core	22%	42%	27%
Outside the Urban core	4%	48%	26%
Combined	12%	45%	27%
N.B. The overall % figures are not a direct average of the combined figures for litter and detritus but are delivered from a prescribed formula given in the definition of BV199.			

3.3 The table shows that the litter score in the urban core is significantly worse than the rural areas. However for detritus the pattern is reversed being worse in the rural areas.

3.4 Among many factors contributing to this pattern, such as population density, the presence of more fast food outlets, social factors etc, are certain strategic choices that have shaped the service.

3.5 When the last tender for Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing was issued in 1999, Members approved a change in specification whereby the frequencies for the mechanised sweeping of footways and carriageways were reduced and a targeted approach to litter picking was introduced. This effectively redirected resources from mechanical sweeping (which removes detritus), towards litter picking in the areas with the greatest litter problem. This was based on the perception that litter figured higher in the public's list of concerns than detritus.

3.6 The frequency of carriageway sweeping was reduced in general from five times to twice a year although certain targeted parts of the urban core have a frequency of three sweeps a year. In addition, the frequency for sweeping all the main roads throughout the district was increased from five times to eleven times a year.

3.7 Public concerns about litter still appear to be the strongest. The Clean Team responded to over 200 litter incidents in 2004/5. The number of detritus complaints is negligible, nevertheless allowing detritus to accumulate is not without consequence as it will encourage the growth of weeds, which are unsightly and damage the fabric of the highway.

3.8 Although the BVPI 199 figure provides the percentage of surveys in which either litter or detritus fall below Grade B and the detritus is the most frequent cause of failure, it can be seen that, even when taken on it's own, litter is a significant problem within the urban core. (In 2003/4 had detritus failures been excluded entirely the urban core would have still been on the threshold of the worst quartile nationally).

3.9 In the report to the previous Environment and Development Committee on Operational Efficiencies the independent consultant drew attention to the comparatively low costs of the street cleaning service in South Derbyshire and this clearly sets some limits as to the level of service that can be provided. Service Development Proposals have been submitted in the last two years aimed at improving the Council's performance relative to BV 199 but the proposals were not selected for funding.

3.10 The remainder of this report seeks to identify improvements that will impact positively on the BVPI 199 whilst maintaining the emphasis on litter as the most significant of the two factors measured by the indicator, as perceived by the public. The next section outlines current plans to make improvements and outlines some options for further improvement should members view it appropriate to identify additional funding.

4.0 Current Plans and Options for the Way Forward.

4.1 The Street Cleaners themselves have a great deal of knowledge and experience on the subject. It is proposed to engage them and draw on their expertise in a review of the service in order to elicit ideas on improving performance.

4.2 Current plans allow also for the following:

- Extra street cleansing in Newhall on Saturdays.
- The purchase of an additional sweeping machine for use by one town centre Street Cleaning Operative to allow faster coverage of much greater area extending out into other areas of the urban core.
- Initiatives to encourage "fast food" outlets to contribute to litter reduction.
- Enforcement and publicity to reduce instances of fly tipping.

4.3 Options for further improvement include the following:

- Increasing the frequency of litter picking.
- Increasing the number of litter bins.
- Increasing the funding to Parishes.
- Increasing the frequencies of channel and footway sweeping.
- Increasing the frequency of weed control treatments.

4.4 To achieve Cleaner Streets it will be vital to prevent as well as cure litter problems. The Plan needs to be a fully integrated one underpinned by the following:

- Education and awareness initiatives.
- Community engagement (including links with Community Wardens and Police Community Support Officers).
- Enforcement (the Environmental Protection Act allows Councils to issue fixed penalty notices for litter offences and to keep the receipts).

4.5 Details of the current plans, timescales and options for the future are appended at Annexe A.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The financial implications of the various options are detailed in Annexe A.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 The 2003 Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys showed that "clean streets" came fourth in the ten most important things that need improving in the area. The importance of environmental issues has remained consistent in the community over time.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The standard of cleanliness of public space being achieved during the first year of the Government's chosen system of measurement, is such that around one third of the sites inspected fell below the required standard. This placed the Council in the lowest quartile for District Councils.

7.2 Without increase in budget the service has brought about improvements so that in 2004/5 the results just edged out of the lowest quartile. Further operational improvements, which will deliver further incremental improvements, within existing budgets, have been identified, and are set out in Annex A.

7.3 Given the major importance to the local residents and in Central Government Policy of a clean and safe environment, it is possible Members may wish to consider targeting a more significant level of improvement than planned within existing resources. Options for further improvement, alongside costings, are also set out in Annexe A for consideration.