

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Streetscene

November 2008



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1. PREFACE

The inquiry into Streetscene was set up to examine the way the department's activities were organised and to suggest any service improvements.

We collected evidence from a number of sources including operatives and customers such as the Parish Councils and consulted the Council's Equality Forum.

The recommendations have no major budget implications; most are organisational and establish best practice.

I would like to thank the Task Group Members for their deliberations, the Officers and those who made a contribution to this report.

Councillor Adrian Lowe
(Chair)

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Streetscene undertook a Scrutiny Inquiry into issues around the Council's Streetscene service.

The main objective of the inquiry was to investigate and evidence the service currently provided by the Streetscene Section of the Neighbourhood Directorate.

2. Overview and Scrutiny Structure Task Group Membership:

Chair	Councillor Adrian Lowe	Councillor Shaun Smith
	Councillor Julia Berry	Councillor Joyce Snape
	Councillor Doreen Dickinson	Councillor Stella Walsh
	Councillor Pat Haughton	Councillor Peter Wilson
	Councillor June Molyneaux	
	Councillor Debra Platt	

Officer Support:

Lead Officer	Ishbel Murray, Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods)
Democratic Services	Gordon Bankes, Democratic Services Officer

Contribution of Evidence

The Panel would like to thank those Parish Councils and Chorley Council Members and Officers who have provided evidence and contributed to the Inquiry.

Meetings

The meeting papers of the Group can be found on the Council's website. These include the Inquiry project outline and other relevant information on policy and procedures.

3. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group, after taking account of all the evidence and relevant factors, recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schedules

1. That the bin collection document be made available to all Parish Councils and Borough Councillors to assist with service monitoring and made accessible on the internet. A master copy to be made available in the Members Room.
2. That the relevant Officer looks at the cleaning schedules and considers further strategic sweeping of streets and litterbin routes.
3. That a mapping exercise is undertaken to identify and target littering 'hotspots' and frequently full litterbins to target improvements in those areas of the borough. There should be more detailed mapping and targeting of those areas and we should target resources more effectively to maximise performance.
4. That team leaders and operatives should be empowered to depart from scheduled activity to deal with other problems, as appropriate.

Monitoring

5. To investigate the current cost of collecting/emptying of litterbins, particularly around hot spot areas such as schools, and consider installation of either further bins or larger bins.

6. To give consideration of a 'hit squad' to respond to problem areas.
7. To continue to pursue the Capital Programme on the mobile work system.

Bin sizes and related issues

8. Develop a bin provision policy in Chorley to identify the suitable design, size and material of bin for the location.

Reporting

9. Promote the use of the Contact Centre telephone number to enable calls to be monitored and actioned.
10. That a hotline number be issued on a notice on the litterbins and street furniture. The notice also to show the bin identification number and a dedicated e-mail address is created to the reporting of incidents.
11. Improve Communication amongst the workforce regarding procedures and review the schedules to avoid operatives from passing full bins and failing to collect from them.
12. Use of feedback from the operatives using the work schedule to shape how work is carried out.
13. To encourage the use of the Neighbourhood Officers and other Neighbourhood/Council employees to report problem areas.
14. To encourage Council Staff and Members of the public to monitor and report on local environmental issues.
15. That all Members be given the opportunity to go out on a litter collection scheduled route providing sufficient notification is given.

Communication and Publicity

16. That a campaign of awareness be undertaken with the fast food outlets as to their Community responsibilities and the powers of the Council with regard to setting up control zones.
17. To request all fast food outlets to display a notice reminding people to take their rubbish home and as an example of good practice for takeaway premises in terms of prevention of nuisance.
18. That a programme of education with the community and within schools is initiated to increase awareness and promote pride in the Community and knowledge of environmental issues.
19. To seek to maximise publicity for the fact that the Council will not tolerate littering, fly tipping and associated anti-social behaviour and a system be introduced whereby any successful prosecution for such offences area automatically notified to the Communication Team and are subject of a Press Release.
20. Issue periodic reminders of collection days and other information, to assist residents, including the use of various newsletters.

Joint Working

21. That in the light of the review, all Parish Councils be requested to give consideration to how the Council can assist them in the delivery of an efficient service.

22. To improve partnership working with the County Council and request more frequent sweeping and litter picking in any identified problem areas.
23. The Council will liaise with the County Council with regard to keeping the verges on highways tidy and litter-free in order to improve the perception of the Councils Service with the Parishes.
24. To support the development of Lengthsmen in the Parishes in the provision of storage and the purchase and use of equipment.

Enforcement

25. That a policy be developed identifying the procedure for escalating issues from clearing up to enforcement in all areas of the service.

3. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 25 March 2008 requested that a Task and Finish Group be established to look at Streetscene Issues.

In June of 2007 the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) were invited to the authority to facilitate a series of workshops for Members and Officers. It was apparent during the I&DeA training that Members had a large number of ideas for topics to be scrutinised. Several topics came out of the training exercise and as well as during and since the workshop the issue of street cleaning had been suggested.

On 22 May 2008 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed Members to a Task Group.

The subject of the Inquiry meets with the Council's vision and strategic objectives.

2. Aims/Objectives

The Task Group's aims and objectives were:

To investigate and evidence the service currently provided by the Streetscene Section of the Neighbourhood Directorate with particular focus on:

- (a) The relationship between the land in the Chorley Wards with maintenance schedules.
- (b) The frequencies of maintenance schedules for street cleaning relating to: emptying litterbins, sweepers, tree pruning, grass cutting.
- (c) Are all the Council's land identified on maintenance schedules?
- (d) To identify those areas, which are neglected and are they on a maintenance schedule?
- (e) To identify those litterbins that require frequent emptying and if necessary for them to be replaced by one of a larger capacity.
- (f) Provision of lengthsman in Parishes.
- (g) To investigate the standards provided by the current streetscene maintenance schedules.

3. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the inquiry were as follows:

- (a) To assess the current service provision and identify service improvements.
- (b) To report on the Inquiry's findings and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and if required Executive Cabinet, consistent with the Inquiry's findings and desired outcomes.
- (c) To review any complaints received about the streetscene services.

4. Desired Outcomes

1. To make recommendations in areas where improvements are required.

2. To identify any barriers that may face the Council in delivering the improvement to the service and any solutions.
3. To identify any future improvements.
4. To maximise operational efficiencies.
5. To maximise improvements.
6. To improve the effectiveness of the maintenance schedules.

4. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The Panel decided to consider certain documents and evidence from the outset.

The information considered included:

- (a) Analysis of the maintenance schedules relating to Street Cleaning as well as for litter bins and recycling sites.
- (b) Analysis of the schedules relating to location and types of litter bins provided throughout the borough.
- (c) The Panel considered evidence from in particular the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods), Streetscene Manager, Street Cleaning and Transport Manager and the Waste and Contaminated Land Team Leader.
- (d) The results of consultation with Parish Councils and the Equality Forum.
- (e) Eight Parish Councils had responded to a request for comments on the Streetscene Service.
- (f) Consultation with the Equality Forum took place on 19 November 2008 and a request made for feedback on the following questions put to the Forum.
 - 1) The Council undertake grass cutting and mowing activities, street cleaning activities using sweepers, tree and shrub pruning activities – what particular issues do we have to be mindful of when we are organising and undertaking these street scene operations?

In response Members of the Forum pointed out the risk to those elderly people in home where grass cuttings are left on the pavements causing a slip hazard.

They also highlighted the slip hazard of wet leaves at this time of year, with particular reference to the Clayton-le-Woods area.

In response it was stated that this would be taken up with Lancashire County Council requesting them to make improvements.

- 2) The Council provide for and empty litter bins – these range from floor mounted bins, dog waste bins, small bins located on poles – what particular improvements, if any, could we make to this particular street scene activity?

Forum Members highlighted the lack of dog waste bins in the Rivington area and Withnell Parish areas.

It was pointed out that the majority of residents in the Withnell area had complained about dog fouling and the lack of dog waste bins.

In response these issues would be looked at.

- (g) The report findings and recommendations of the Value for Money review that was undertaken within the Neighbourhoods Directorate including the service area of Street Cleaning.
- (h) The Government commissioned report providing Chorley with an assessment of Local Environmental Quality standards within the authority between April 2007 and March 2008 including the street cleansing issues around litter, detritus and leaf fall. The report

provided the Council a means to determine what action should be taken to address the results of the survey.

- (i) Elected Members accompanied street cleansing operative on scheduled round of activities.
- (j) Case study information provided by a supplier of litter bin receptacles.
- (k) Visit to Bengal Street Depot for visual presentation of types of litter bins and associated costs.

5. FINDINGS

Members made it known that the authority should be looking at value for money and best practice for the streetscene service and noted the results of the recent Value for Money study and subsequent actions.

5.1 Schedules

Members raised concern that not all the Council's land had been identified on the maintenance schedules. Some areas of the borough had not been placed on a schedule of maintenance, therefore creating areas of neglect.

The schedule of maintenance for the following areas were considered by Members to be not as efficient or effective as its should be:

- Street cleaning
- Emptying litterbins
- Sweepers

5.2 Monitoring

Members were concerned that the monitoring of the Maintenance Schedule was not being carried out as most could identify areas within their Wards in which work had not been carried out. Members expressed concern that when told that side roads are swept six times per year they doubted this, as from their own observations this was not being carried out.

The Task Group believed that there was a need to review the level of monitoring required to improve street cleaning and emptying of litterbins.

It would be advantageous for monitoring purposes if all Parish Councils and Borough Councillors receive the schedule of locations of the litterbins and frequencies of emptying.

5.3 Bin sizes and related issues

Some concerns were raised from a number of sources over the frequency of emptying litter and dog bins and that they were not being emptied enough. Members found that in some locations the particular size and type of litterbins were not suitable for the location, with demand and repeated requests for litterbins to be emptied. It was noted that the ability to replace or upgrade bins is limited by budgets.

Complaints received regarding maintenance of cemeteries and the lack of emptying of the litterbins as well as the small size of litterbins in the cemeteries and around schools.

A number of reports of flytipping with people putting waste next to litterbins. Difficulties had been found in providing evidence as to who had done the flytipping and this meant that limited action could be taken.

Members experienced litter problems around fast food outlets.

5.4 Reporting

Telephone calls from the members of the public as well as from Councillors wanting to make a report should be channelled through the Contact Centre rather than calls direct to staff in the Streetscene to enable check and monitoring of complaints and observations to be made and to reduce the time taken to respond.

The recommendations have been made consistent with the Inquiry's findings and desired outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

After taking account of all the evidence presented to the Task Group a number of recommendations have been made and if approved and implemented will maximise improvements, maximise operational efficiencies, effectiveness of the maintenance schedules and overall provide value for money and best practice for the Streetscene Service.