

TO: THE EXECUTIVE
16 DECEMBER 2008

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT ON STREET CLEANSING
[Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection]

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 To determine the Executive's response to the recommendations in the report by the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Working Group on Street Cleansing.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Executive notes the responses to the recommendations of the Working Group and supports the responses given; and**
- 2.2 **that the Working Group be thanked for their work.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Working Group spent considerable time reflecting on all the issues with the support of appropriate officers. As a consequence the report and recommendations are fully informed and merit proper consideration.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Each of the recommendations have alternatives and these options were considered by the Working Group and the Executive Member. The detailed reasons why the recommendations are being proposed are highlighted in the supporting information.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The report of the Working Group is attached as Annex 1. The recommendations arising are considered in detail below.

Review of recommendations

- 5.1. *The balance of resources deployed between preventing littering occurring and dealing with littering after the event should be reviewed, as the presence of litter generates more littering and prevention is generally better than cure.*

Response - resources are available within budgets across the Council to deal with litter related issues. Each service area has a responsibility to maintain the land that they are responsible for and there is of course a key role for Education and reinforcing the message whenever possible. Each service area needs to look at how it contributes to that need. The Working Group were advised by the Head of Culture

and Visual Environment that a key post had been filled and therefore more work is expected to be done to help raise the profile (Para 3.20).

- 5.2 *Implementation of the Departmental Environmental Amenity Action Plan 2008-2011 be the subject of a report to the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at each year end; (paragraph 3.42).*

Response - this 'officer operation' plan was developed partially in response to the comments coming out at the early stages of the Working Group and as a result of the change of management. The responsibility for environmental management goes across a number of service areas. The Plan has identified key areas to focus upon and by co-ordinating resources it is being used to drive through improvements such as the reduction in fly tipping now being noted in the Borough. The recommendation for an annual report is supported on the assumption that the group continues to meet because the need/value is still evident. The group will be disbanded when it is no longer required.

- 5.3. *The additional funding of £100k for the environmental improvement programme continues to be included in the consideration of the general revenue budget provision in future years, as such an annual programme will facilitate consistent improvements to key areas each year.*

Response - decisions on funding are matters for the Executive to consider but the availability of this funding is enabling some specific targeting of additional resource into environmental management issues. Of the £100k available this year, £30k has been spent to good effect deep cleansing the neighbourhood centres. Another £30k has been committed to more work on the high speed roads, the most notable change so far being to Nine Mile Ride where the vegetation has been cut right back. Doing this will enable cheaper and more effective routine maintenance in future years. The Visual Environment Upgrade team continue to provide a valuable back up to the landscape management arrangements by dealing with one off small schemes.

- 5.4. *The measuring and comparing of performance against national indicators and benchmarking figures relating to street and environmental cleanliness in terms of levels of litter, detritus, graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping continue to be reviewed through the Performance Monitoring Reports.*

Response – agreed. These measures provide a useful means of monitoring as do others such as the ENCAMS report the details of which were presented to the Executive on the 18 November 2008. It is important however, to keep such reports in context and to apply the findings in a balanced way having proper regard to local knowledge and experience.

- 5.5. *'Take Pride' and similar local campaigns be rejuvenated and co-ordinated to encourage more voluntary litter picking to improve the street scene.*

Response - with the filling of the post in the Culture and Visual Environment Section it is expected that the profile will continue to rise. Already this year there have been a number of initiatives in this regard such as the support given to local groups in setting up and running litter picks.

- 5.6. *Regular articles appear in 'Town and Country' to promote anti-littering and advertise related campaigns.*

Response - the principle is right and this is something that the services aspire to effect but there are many demands for space and decisions have to be taken having due regard to need. Locally the scale of the problem is small. Where we have specific problems we seek the support of the local media eg Grafitti problem with particular tags, and we promote the work done to help reinforce the need for community pride and support through local stewardship eg neighbourhood cleansing work.

- 5.7. *Consideration be given to identifying effective methods of educating and encouraging against littering, particularly in relation to teenagers, other secondary school pupils and drivers on fast road.*

Response - this is a problem that really needs a national solution. There is of course a role that schools can and do play but it goes further. In some countries chewing gum for example is banned, but the problems associated with dealing with litter from cars is not one easily dealt with by the Council under existing legislation. Officers will continue to look for local options in light of experience. Realistically the best we can hope to achieve is incremental progression to improvement though changes in social attitude. We have seen this to good effect with dog fouling where the incidence has fallen as a result.

- 5.8. *More severe cutting back of grass verges in the spring and creation of verge areas wide enough to accommodate litter pickers be undertaken to facilitate litter picking without the need for road closure.*

Response - agreed and as per the response above this is already happening. If such money were to continue to be made available such investment would be a good use of resource.

- 5.9. *Ward Members be provided with information concerning waste dumping 'hot spots' in their wards to facilitate monitoring of dumping.*

Response - there is already an arrangement in place to ensure that Parish and Town Councils receive information regarding the planned street cleansing activity and comments are sought as to any new problem areas. The feedback tends to be minimal. In addition the cleansing manager uses the Ringway Rapid Reaction to deal with specific problems.

- 5.10. *In due course, the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel be consulted on the Supplementary Planning Guidance seeking to bring the three strands of street scene, planning policy and highway engineering together and featuring a departmental multi-disciplinary approach involving planning and asset management etc.*

Response - this will be a matter for further consideration is due course when such Guidance is drafted. It is important that we consider any such policy to ensure that the Policy is robust when it comes to being both deliverable and affordable. In the meantime the need for officers to take due regard to the implications associated with asset management have been reinforced.

- 5.11. *Thames Valley Police be asked to encourage their officers to use their powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of littering more vigorously.*

Response - The Police and the Council both have such powers. There is liaison with the Police and this has been raised in the context of the use of PCSO time. The Council has appointed a number of officers to be able to issue such notices.

- 5.12. *Consideration be given to equipping grass cutting vehicles with a facility to store collected litter (paragraph 3.14).*

Response - there is very limited space to store a sack on the mower safely so the operative can't really fill the sack to capacity. They also have an issue as to what to do when the sack is full. However, the working practices have changed this year, so that the team that carries out the follow up tasks like strimming around obstructions now work with the mower operator on an almost street by street basis with the follow up team. The results are encouraging and by joining together the operation more of the litter is being picked up in advance. More work has to be done in this regard in respect of effecting the right level of supervision and "motivation" for the staff on the ground.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Nothing to add to the report

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 Nothing to add to the report

Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equality impact issues arising from the recommendations of the Working Group

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are no strategic risk management issues arising from the recommendations of the Working Group

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The Working Group included representatives of the Town and Parish Councils and they interviewed and took information from a number of interested parties.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Direct interview and presentations to the Group.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable.

Background Papers

Report of the Working Group – October 2008.

Contacts for further information

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