

Committee: Scrutiny 2 (Resources & Environment)

Date: 9 October 2002

Agenda Item No: 5 (ii)

Title: Best Value Review of Street Cleansing – Draft Improvement Plan

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Members: Councillors R. Green (Chairman), D. Gregory and J. Ketteridge

Summary

- 1 This report brings together information gathered from the Challenge and Comparison stages of the Best Value review and provides a Draft Improvement Plan.

Progress to Date

- 2 Since the last report to this Committee, a comparison questionnaire attached as Appendix 1 was sent out to eight nearby local authorities. These were chosen mainly because of their similar nature, but also to improve response rate and quality.
- 3 The reference group has analysed this information together with information from the challenge events and produced the attached Draft Improvement Plan.

Issues of Interest

- 4 Comparisons have been difficult to make in some service areas because of a combination of the variations in population and size of local authority areas. Consequently, there is an element of subjectivity in the recommendations.
- 5 A number of issues worth noting, but not requiring action have arisen from the process thus far. These are:
 - Private contractors are more common than DSOs. Of those using DSOs, only Uttlesford has kept the client/contractor split required under CCT. Uttlesford DSO is being reviewed separately from this Best Value Review. The DSO review will cover this issue, which will complement this review, as the recommendation will be based solely on service delivery.
 - Costs appear to be significantly lower than other authorities'. This suggests that good value is being achieved in terms of cost, even

though the length of roads is relatively long being a rural area. The small retail areas do, however, generate less litter than most authorities.

- Considering that all the authorities surveyed have larger urban areas, Uttlesford seems to have excellent equipment levels. Due to their greater efficiency levels, mechanical sweepers should be used for the longest periods possible.
- The service provided in Uttlesford appears to be more comprehensive and flexible than other authorities – in terms of variety of services and target times.
- Similar to UDC, all the surveyed authorities have input-specification, frequency-based contracts. This makes the service easier to monitor and much easier to cost, whether the contractor be in-house or external, and subsequently cheaper.

Draft Action Plan

- 6 Additional information has been received since the last report that has enabled the questions raised in the Terms of Reference to be answered more fully. These are encompassed in the table below. The questions will be referred to specifically again, in the final review report.
- 7 Information gathered from the two review phases and discussions at Member Reference Group meetings have enabled the production of the following Draft Action Plan. The final improvement plan will be more specific in targets and dates by which these should be achieved.

Objective/Issue	Action	Financial Implications
The standards set out in the contract were felt to be appropriate during the challenge events. Complaints received, however, hint that the edges of Zone 1, in particular, appear to be getting worse.	Monitor relevant areas. If standard is below what the contract requires, expand Zone 1 areas to account for this.	Minimal – if limited expansion of Zone is deemed necessary.
The performance of the contract outside the main town centres is felt to be below the standard required.	Enforce contract more strongly, especially where street cleansing staff are being used for non-contract jobs.	None
Now that performance is below what the contract requires, Clause 4 (a) of the contract to provide cleansing schedules must be enforced, to enable	Ensure schedules are in place by the end of October 2002 and ensure that the necessary resources are utilised to achieve acceptable standards.	None

positive monitoring of the contract by the client and to provide information for Town/Parish Councils and the public.		
Cutting of grass verges poses a problem as it unearths and shreds previously unseen litter.	Engage in partnership with Essex County Council and Town/Parish Councils to enhance cleansing arrangements, including advance notice of verge cutting.	None
There is a distinct preference for competitively tendered contracts as opposed to untendered direct services or extension of existing arrangements.	Contract retendered at the expiry of the current arrangement if performance and benchmarking do not favour current arrangements.	Cost of tendering exercise similar to previous rounds of CCT. Predominantly internal costs to client and legal services.
Parish Councils to be better informed of the facilities available to them as an encouragement for "Spring Cleans" and sponsored litter picks.	Mail shot to all Parish Councils and assist as appropriate. Promotion to encourage participation should be more proactive and well in advance of spring.	Minimal – postage, officer time, refuse sacks and disposal.
Educational events appear to be the norm in many local authority areas.	Investigate further and assess the perceived benefits. Subsequently make recommendations with respect to UDC's future activities. Investigate possibility of using latest Tidy Britain Group campaign (rats scare story) locally.	None with regard to publicity material. Significant to employ theatre groups in local schools, as has been done in the past. This is likely to be in the region of £5-10,000 p.a.
Services provided to reduce litter creation and fly tipping are unanimously endorsed.	Continue to provide free of charge special collections and vehicle collections; and continue to provide village civic amenity service. Review this when Dunmow Civic Amenity Site opens (2004).	None
Many canvassed authorities require more	Limited weekend monitoring including lay-bys and	Minimal – TOIL/overtime.

weekend working than is provided in Uttlesford. Assess suitability of current weekend arrangements.	recycling centres.	
Staffing levels appear to be relatively low. This cannot realistically be reviewed until all current resources are deployed on street cleansing.	This may be related to the high level of mechanical equipment. Review once best performance is achieved from existing resources and the separate DSO review is complete.	Not Known.
Many authorities have self-monitoring contracts for street cleansing.	Consider this approach for the next contract. Obvious concern over self-monitoring of under performing contract.	Not Known.
Many authorities issue fixed penalty notices with little success. Colchester appears to be the exception – with over 100 successes.	Investigate further into Colchester's approach and the financial implications.	None to investigate. Implementation costs not yet known.
Civic Amenity Site opening hours are not widely publicised. This may contribute to fly tipping.	Encourage Essex County Council to improve publicity.	None
Many authorities have partnerships with and make financial contributions to Parish Councils with respect to street cleansing services.	In advance of the next contract/arrangement, analyse views of its constituent parish councils to see whether this could work in Uttlesford.	Must not be significant in terms of increasing overall contract cost.
Vacuum-filled backpacks for litter collection are an innovative technique Colchester BC is trialling.	Assess benefits if this trial, with a view to implementing in Uttlesford.	Purchase cost. Could be offset by increased outputs.
Improvement in service (as perceived by the public) required for Essex County Council's Public Service Agreement.	Continue to send out survey cards. Work to schedules (once provided) to ensure improvement.	None – will provide extra income if successful.

Further Work

- 8 Once an agreed draft action plan is produced, the next stage of the review is Consultation.
- 9 The draft improvement plan will be sent to stakeholders, requesting their views on proposed changes and improvements to this Council's street cleansing services.
- 10 Tangible improvements need to be shown from the suggested actions. These are not included in this report, but will be a fundamental part of a final review report.
- 11 Targets for improvement will be set through agreement between Environmental Services (the client) and Contract Services (the contractor). The aim of setting these improvements will be to justify extension of the street cleansing contract to its full 10-year term. This extension needs to be granted by the end of September 2003.
- 12 It is proposed that those stakeholders will be Town and Parish Councils of Uttlesford, Essex County Council and Uttlesford Local Agenda 21.
- 13 The results of the consultation part of the review will be reported to this Committee on 4 December 2002. It is at this meeting that a final improvement plan is hopefully agreed for recommendation to Environment & Transport Committee.

RECOMMENDED that this Committee accepts this report and approves the basis for the final Improvement Plan for the Street Cleansing Best Value review. This will be submitted to the next meeting of this committee.

Background Papers: BVPP 2002/03
 Street Cleansing Review Documentation (R Secker's
 file)

Appendix 1

Uttlesford District Council
Street Cleansing Best Value Review
Benchmarking Questionnaire

Local Authority Name: _____
Contact Name and Telephone Number: _____
District/Borough Population: _____
District/Borough Land Area: _____

1. Are your services competitively tendered? Yes/No
1.1. If so, at what frequency? _____

2. Is the contractor private or DSO? Private/DSO
2.1. If DSO, are they direct employees, or via a separate DSO?
Direct/separate

3. What is the approximate annual value of the contract? £

4. What levels of manpower, supervision and equipment are employed on Street
Cleansing Services?

5. Does the contract cover:
5.1. Footpaths? Y/N
5.2. Road Channels? Y/N
5.3. Roadside verges? Y/N
5.4. Litter Bins? Y/N
5.5. Dog waste Bins? Y/N
5.6. Lay Bys? Y/N
5.7. Fly Tipping? Y/N If yes, what is the response time? _____
5.8. Abandoned Vehicles? Y/N If yes, what is the response time? _____

6. For those areas in Q. 5 that your contract does not cover, what is your authority's
policy?

7. What, if any, degree of weekend sweeping/litter picking is provided?

8. Does the contract only require compliance with the Code of Practice standards?
Yes/No

9. If additional/frequency based inputs are required, please indicate what they are.

10. Please describe what quality control or monitoring arrangements are in operation.

11. Are any partnership/joint working arrangements in place with Essex County Council or any Town/Parish Councils? Yes/No

11.1. If so, please describe.

12. Has any educational work been undertaken with schools or the public to minimise waste and prevent litter etc. Yes/No

Please describe and comment on any work and its degree of success.

13. Are litter or dog fouling penalty notice systems employed? Yes/No

If so, please comment on their success and methods of operation and enforcement.

14. Litter on roadside verges outside urban areas is a problem in this District, particularly when hidden by growth and distributed by mowers (ECC Highways etc.). If you also have this problem, what methods/systems have you adopted to minimise/overcome it?

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire.

Should you wish to discuss any relevant points or issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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