
***Executive Member For Neighbourhood
Services and Advisory Panel***

17 October 2007

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Update on Street Cleaning within the City Walls

Summary

1. To update members on progress being made for street cleaning within the City Walls following the City wide review of the street cleansing service.

Background

2. The Streetscene review took place in Summer 2006 involving a cross section of staff from the service. Key findings were presented to members in a report to Executive on 21st November 2006, at which Members agreed to how the findings of the review would be implemented.
3. Findings included the trial of new street cleansing practices to be tested in a pilot area of the city over a three month period. The new working practices introduced barrow operatives, cleansing by barrows and brushes, working to a defined beat, in addition to a mobile cleansing team to address other service needs.
4. The pilot also introduced new working arrangements between the Street Cleansing team and the Street Environment Officer (SEO), who were able to deploy resources where necessary. Finally the pilot introduced a dedicated enforcement officer to the zone to address environmental crime.

Objectives of the Pilot

5. The outcomes from the Street Scene Review provided five key objectives for service improvement, which was incorporated into the project planning and management of the roll-out across the City. The five objectives are:
 - To move to zone working, in recognition of different areas of the city requiring different cleaning arrangements
 - Improve performance monitoring, staff communication and morale
 - Develop environmental initiatives to support the new service

- Improve customer focus and a continual review of what we do
- Increase education and enforcement

Area within the City walls

6. Due to the unique characteristics of the area within the City walls, members at the Neighbourhood Services EMAP on 21st March 2007, agreed that this area would be reviewed separately to the main roll-out.
7. By the end of April 2007, the revised methods of street cleaning had been successfully rolled out to all areas of the city except the area within the City Walls. Officers then began a series of trials in order to identify the changes needed to create a step change in standards similar to those achieved elsewhere in the City.
8. A trial of the use of a small mechanical sweeper has been completed with very favourable results. In the areas in which it was used there was an increase in standards and a much improved reaction time to clearing of spillages etc. Budget within the existing resources has been identified to allow this type of machine to become a permanent part of the fleet.
9. A trial with the mechanical sweeper operating on a split shift arrangement of 5.00am to 9.00am and then 5.00pm to 9.00pm Monday to Friday, is currently underway. Early indications are favourable as sweeping can continue into the early evening and again first thing in the morning, before the period of heavy foot traffic. We intend to continue with this trial during the autumn and winter months to assess the need during the times of lower visitor numbers. A report of the findings of this trial will be presented to the Neighbourhood Services EMAP on completion.
10. The early morning street washing process is being closely monitored to ensure this process is still giving value for money. Some re-scheduling and changes in working patterns will be introduced next year to fully assess the effectiveness of this work. (Street washing is suspended from October to March as there is a risk of frost) The outcome of these tests will be a subject of a further report.
11. A barrow with a vacuum type attachment has been purchased and is currently undergoing trials in the city centre. It is designed to collect cigarette ends and other small items of litter from wall lines, tree grills, etc. The machine appears to be effective, but there are two issues which need closely monitoring. Firstly, it is noisy and may require limited use in narrow street with high foot traffic, and secondly the impact on the sand bedding of some of the block paving will need assessing in the longer term. However, the machine has shown to be successful in quickly clearing smoking related litter that further machines are to be acquired to focus on hotspots outside the city centre.

12. The cleansing of the market area is proving to require a high level of resources between the hours of 5.00pm and 7.00pm resulting in staff not being out in the city at these times. A review of the cleansing of the market area and the collection and disposal of waste from the stalls is to be carried out. This review will include the market traders and the city centre management team.
13. A barrowman has been introduced to the key residential areas within the city walls which mirrors the weekly service delivered outside the walls. A map, annex 1 and tabled at the meeting show weekly barrow rounds in the areas of Bishophill, the Walmgate area and Navigation Road.
14. Subject to planning approval, it is intended to trial an integrated bin system in the City Centre. Not only is it an opportunity to introduce litter recycling, it also has a top mounted ashtray which could reduce the amount of cigarette related litter. See annex 2. The top of the litter bin section has a cigarette stubber/ashtray integrated into it, allowing the storage of up to 50 stubs before being released with a key operation into the bin, see annex 3. It should remove the unsightly mounds of butts being left on top of the bins. The emptying operation will be part of the bin emptying process and will reduce the risk of bin fires. A recent consultation paper issued by The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is making recommendations that recycling bins for litter should be installed anywhere from high streets to shopping centres. The proposals have been developed together with the national campaign Recycle Now and Environmental Campaigns (ENCAMS). The use of dedicated ashtrays on top of the bins are also supported by ENCAMS, who's recent research into smoking related litter identified that 75% of smokers were reluctant to dispose of their stubs into normal litter bins as they were concerned as to the fire risk. Suggestions are that they are located in St Helen's Square, St Sampson's Square, Parliament Street and King's Square.
15. A standard uniform used by the rest of the service has been introduced into the City Centre area.
16. Slight changes to the zone covered by the City Centre SEO has been made. The zone now covers all areas within the city walls plus the railway station. This has improved the routine monitoring of public toilets, graffiti and ensures the city centre is free of commercial waste before the restricted traffic times.

Corporate Priorities

17. The new working practices have been developed in direct response to the Council's Corporate Strategy and in particular to the Corporate Priority, ***'Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces'***.

Implications

18. The following implications have been noted:

Financial

19. There are no financial implications associated with this decision. The costs associated with re-branding of uniform have been taken from current revenue budgets. Five new recycling bins can be funded from the bin replacement programme and the vacuums will be funded from the equipment replacement budget.

Human Resources (HR)

20. Street Scene employees and the Street Environment Officers have been continually kept abreast of developments. There will be on-going consultation with employees and their representatives about the proposed operational changes. Any operational, contractual changes will be implemented following Council policies and procedures and will be subject to full consultation with Trade Union officers and individual employees.

Equalities

21. Customers will be updated on the implementation city wide by a variety of communication channels including the provision of written information in alternative formats.

Legal

22. It has been established that the new working practices are compliant with the council's duties under Environmental Protection Act 1990 regarding responsibility to maintain cleanliness of the public highway.

Crime and Disorder

23. The introduction of the proposed enforcement team city wide, in addition to the work carried out by SEOs will enable greater impact on environmental crime, which leads to cleaner neighbourhoods, tackles anti-social behaviour and improves perceptions of crime. A clear enforcement policy and strategy for tackling environmental crime, gathering information to identify and combat hot spots, and using education and promotion to raise awareness amongst stakeholders will contribute to the council's duties towards crime and disorder, working closely with Safer York Partnership and North Yorkshire Police.

Information Technology (IT)

24. There are no IT implications.

Risk Management

25. Risks associated with the planning approval for the proposed new bins and the use of the vacuum cleaner have been measured in terms of impact and likelihood and a risk score has been assessed at 9 or less.

Recommendations

26. Members are requested to:-

- (i) Note the content of the report and the progress being made on the various trials.
- (ii) To request further reports as the trials are concluded.

Reasons

- (i) To provide an improved Street Cleaning service in the City

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Wards Affected: Hull Road, Guildhall and Micklegate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Executive Report 21st November 2006 – Street Scene Review
Neighbourhood Services EMAP report 21st March 2007 – York Neighbourhood Pride Service – Update of Pilot and Future Rollout