

Environmental Services Full Council Report March 2014

Public Realm

The Smarter York team are now fully in place and the three officers continue to work closely with our Communities & Equalities and Community Enforcement teams and other council departments. This has led to the production of a co-ordinated list of all projects which include community engagement, which will be used to monitor progress on individual projects, identify where any available funding exists and to update all interested parties. Many of these projects cross over directorates and portfolios allowing us to reduce duplication of work and better coordinate work, ensuring we make the most of resources as well as officer and volunteer time to ensure the best results for residents. Projects range from building a new play area at King George V playing fields, to planting 400 new trees in Holtby and Dunnington, to organising 'Groundforce' clean up events around Heslington Road and Garden Street.

This year's Spring Clean is being planned to take place during March and April. Last year's campaign saw over 560 hours of work undertaken by Community Payback, over 1600 bags of rubbish collected, and over 20km of verges edged off. This year will build on that success by seeking to increase participation by local businesses and individual residents, both with specific local Spring Clean work as well as wider volunteering opportunities. This forms part of our wider volunteering strategy of building a consolidated pool of volunteer organisations and individuals – allowing better communication and coordination – signed up to our Smarter Charter. The Spring Clean itself will also feature promotional activity of the kind employed by campaigns such as Keep Britain Tidy, in partnership with city centre businesses.

For the first time a formal policy and procedure for the management of litter is now in place, which details and brings together the different strands of work to deal with litter related issues and encourage behavioural change by people taking responsibility for how they dispose of their litter. This, and many of the other actions described in this

update around city centre cleaning, street enforcement, work planning of clean up events and other projects are in response to feedback received in the Big York Survey. We have invested capital in our litter bins, upgrading our existing stock, introducing dual-use dog and litter bins where appropriate, and looking to expand the use of solar compactor bins to create capacity in collection rounds.

We have continued to develop our partnership with the York & North Yorkshire Probation Trust (Community Payback), where offenders carry out work as a way of giving back to their local community. Participants can now report directly to our supervisory team and are being deployed to work alongside our staff, as well as carrying out work under the supervision of their own supervisors. This has seen us increase the total hours worked from approx 5000 in 2011/12 to approx 13,000 in 2013/14.

A review of our city centre cleansing regimes is underway with two main aims. Firstly, we have recently invested in new equipment to improve cleanliness standards within the city centre, particularly around cigarette butts and stained pavements. This has highlighted some skills gaps within the team which will be addressed to maximise the impact of the new equipment. Secondly, we will address the issue of weekend working, as in line with most other local authorities this has historically been undertaken mostly by full time staff working overtime and puts unnecessary pressure on staff undertaking the work and supervisors who organise it, with the added complication of adhering to the Working Time Directive. The review is planned to be completed by mid summer.

Work is continuing on setting up the new ASB Hub. This is being led by Cllr Cunningham Cross but also covers the street enforcement function. CYC was successful in its bid to the national Police Innovation Fund for £58k towards IT, equipment and fleet costs. After proper procurement and assessment has been completed the Hub should be in place by mid-summer. Deploying environmental officers accredited with specific policing powers alongside police officers will benefit our communities by having a single frontline team whose sole purpose would be to proactively tackle issues like flytipping and graffiti.

Public Toilets

After the cross-party support given to the new regime at December Full Council, a 15 year contract for the provision and maintenance of all our public toilets has been let and includes the refurbishment of all our facilities. Completion of the refurbishments is planned for the end of July this year.

Overall, this will give the city a set of high-standard, much more accessible facilities for both residents and visitors alike, that meet our ambition for the city centre – especially in terms of the evening economy – and represent a good deal for York taxpayers.

Parking Enforcement

Over the past 12 months a number of changes have taken place within the team. The management structure has been streamlined with the Patrol Supervisor managing day to day service functions, the administration team being managed by the business support department, and the Customer Service Centre taking responsibility for incoming enquiries and directing residents to the administration team when needed.

The Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) team has shown significant progress since the disputes in 2012. Penalty charge notices have increased from 14,010 to a projected 16,866, reaching the level we would expect. This is a considerable achievement and – while my predecessor would have rebuked such a statement as invidious – I would like to draw attention to the work of the officers involved. In terms of next steps, we are planning to introduce new safety features for the CEO team including personal ‘video badges’ and are evaluating a possible relocation of the team into West Offices.

This month, a new 'Road Safety Camera Car' was deployed to compliment the CEO team and carry out mobile camera enforcement in areas of the city that was problematic or inefficient to foot patrol. Following an options appraisal a service level agreement was put in

place with Equita for an initial 18 month which will be reviewed every six months to evaluate the impact; this did not require any capital expenditure.

The main purpose of the Road Safety Camera Car is to enforce against those illegally parking outside schools on the yellow zig zags, which has caused great concern for parents and teachers and was a recommendation arising from a past scrutiny review. A promotional campaign called the 'Parents Parking Promise' has been launched with support from North Yorkshire Police, asking parents to park carefully and considerately as well as encouraging walking or cycling to school; this has been well received.

As part of the Rewiring Public Services transformation programme a review of the parking enforcement team, administration and IT systems is being undertaken, with the final report expected next month.

Street Lighting

The Amey contract came to an end in September 2013 and the service was transferred in-house with all staff TUPE'd across to the Council. A consultation is ongoing with staff to restructure the team to eliminate duplication and create efficiencies. Response times to dealing with faults are consistently beating targets.

A benefit of bringing the service in-house was the potential to bid for private works and generate revenue for the Council, and officers have been successful in securing a number of section 278 and development jobs, including at the Oakgate development.

As an alternative to the approach taken by some authorities to switch street lights off, we are continuing to trial new technologies and techniques in order to reduce energy usage, carbon emissions and of course cost. A successful trial of LED lighting has been carried out this year on four streets within the Council area. As a result of the trial a tender through the YPO arrangement has been invited to supply LED lanterns to replace the least efficient lighting stock. We are planning on

working with partners such as the York Environment Forum and Safer York to communicate the advantages of the technology to the public in terms of increased brightness levels and decreased ecological impact. It is anticipated that 1600 LED units will be installed during this period.

We will also continue our rolling column replacement programme in response to the continued under-investment over the 8 years of the previous administration.

Winter Maintenance

The new gritting regime that brought York into line with others in our family group has been implemented, with the network being treated on 40 occasions compared to an average of 65 due to a relatively mild winter.

We are continuing to invest in new equipment where effective, with the 4 mini tractors which proved successful in treating footways and cycleways being added to the fleet.

Working with the Communities & Equalities team, we have been continuing to recruit new Snow Wardens, particularly targeting areas where salt bins have been removed. At time of writing, the number of Snow Wardens has increased by a third compared to the same time last year.

Highway Maintenance

As has been stated on previous occasions, the condition of both of the principal and non-principal classified road network compares favourably with most other Council's network, with the latest APSE service report placing both indicators in the top quartile.

It has been recognised that there has been some deterioration in the unclassified network, which along with feedback from the Big York Survey, has resulted in an investment of £2.3m with a particular

emphasis on footway maintenance. The detail of this will be set out in a report next month.

Successful awards for insurance compensation claims remain very low, demonstrating the robustness and cost-effectiveness of both our planned and reactive maintenance regimes.

As with street lighting officers have successfully been pursuing commercial opportunities while also looking to rationalise and streamline the service, with a planned rollout of a new IT system early this financial year; restructuring the maintenance gangs; and revising the grading classification of road conditions.

In terms of specific investments, we have now appointed a dedicated specialist engineer to provide an in-house resource to undertake asset management of the Council's bridge stock, with a prioritised programme of maintenance and inspections will be undertaken during 2014/15. We are also continuing to invest in high priority drainage works according to the criteria approved by the June 2008 City Strategy EMAP as part of the 5 year capital rolling programme totalling £1m.

Fleet

The work done by the Travel Management Unit on promoting best practice in staff travel resulted in the team winning the "Best Grey Fleet" category and coming second in the "Business Miles Management" category at the 2013 Fleet Hero Awards run by the Energy Savings Trust. A strong focus of the team has been to encourage staff to walk, cycle and use pool cars, which are increasingly popular. Both business miles and fuel usage are significantly down. Our fleet's ECO (Efficient and Cleaner Operations) Stars rating was recently upgraded to 3 stars after a number of equipment changes, recognising our commitment to improving efficiency, reducing fuel consumption and cutting emissions.

Workshop activity generating income from public and private sector organisations continues to develop, growing the work we do with existing customers such as the police, universities and housing associations and

targeting similar organisations with vigour. The workshop is now an authorised dealer and agent for vehicle weighing equipment and now has an MOT bay, allowing us to undertake work more cost-effectively in-house as well as to broaden our commercial activity, fitting and servicing equipment for customers across the north of England as well as offering discounts to CYC staff and other local workforces.

Waste

It has been an incredibly busy year for Waste Services, successfully restructuring collection rounds with limited impact on residents, introducing changes at Household Waste Recycling Centres, and implementing the findings arising from the public consultation on garden waste. In order to ensure effective performance management of these changes, closer integration with related teams such as Highways, and more efficiencies are brought forward, the management structure of Waste Services has also been changed.

This came into effect in last month and was followed by the start of a wide-ranging review to look at ways of increasing diversion from landfill performance, operating efficiencies, and commercial income opportunities. A report outlining the findings from this review, leading to a revised Waste Strategy document, should be available next month, and this will be brought to the Community Safety OSC for input.

The main project being undertaken at the moment is the Smarter York Challenge to increase recycling participation in a targeted area (in Clifton) and comparing this to a similar area to measure improvements (in Heworth). Each area is made up of predominantly semi detached properties with a high density of council owned housing. One area will be used as a control whilst the other will be a test area where a targeted bespoke service enhancement and communications campaign is delivered. This research should enable us to understand the issues surrounding those areas, which have currently low recycling rates, and how we might improve them. This will include both qualitative and quantitative research to establish the effectiveness of promotional work, campaigns and schemes designed to increase participation in kerbside

recycling. This project has been developed with advice from the Community Safety OSC and a report will be prepared and presented to that committee at the earliest opportunity following the project's conclusion. This is in parallel to work being done with Social Services in order to ensure that the most vulnerable families are able to maximise their opportunities for waste prevention.

Citywide, we are carrying out a wide range of ongoing activity in relation to waste prevention and reuse, including:

- Continued promotion of love food hate waste, Choose2Reuse, and home composting campaigns.
- Linking in planned campaigns and projects with the York & North Yorkshire Waste Partnership.
- Maximising reuse through contracts procurement.
- Exploring opportunities for developing a reuse centre or shop.
- Investigate feasibility of establishing a city wide network of social enterprise and third sector groups to develop a community hub and reuse centre.
- Targeted waste prevention work at communal properties and, where appropriate, moving terraced properties to individual front-of-property rather than communal alley-based collections for residual waste.
- Food redistribution scheme.
- Additional recycling banks.
- Swap shop reuse events.
- Creation of a new re-use service to generate revenue income from waste that can be re-used and sold
- Continuing successful waste prevention work in partnership with the Universities and organisations such as the British Heart Foundation.

In addition, following our extension of the kerbside collection service to more rural properties, we are continuing to work in partnership with Yorwaste to increase the range of materials we can accept through this service, such as electrical goods, batteries, 'Tetrapak', and a wider variety of plastics.

The contract for management of Household Waste Recycling Centres is to be reviewed and officers are currently exploring options available such as bringing the service in-house or alternatively introducing a new TECKAL arrangement with Yorwaste.

We are working with city centre businesses, scrutiny and Yorwaste to review our commercial waste service, with a view to achieving a number of outcomes: increasing our commercial recycling offer to reduce landfill; addressing commercial waste left out overnight in recognition of the impact this has on the evening economy; making operational savings; and of course, driving more revenue.

At the core of all of these activities is our drive to achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2020. As I have said previously, recycling rates nationally have started to plateau (and in some cases reduce), due to the struggling state of the national economy, changing consumer habits and the reducing number of potential “step changes” that can be made. However, we continue to perform well within our APSE family group, climbing the rankings in the latest set of figures.

In relation to the Allerton Park Waste Recovery Plant the contractor (Amey Cespa) is currently finalising the funding package with its banks. Once this has been completed a report detailing the final cost of the scheme will be brought to Members. This is currently anticipated to be in the summer.

Rewiring Public Services

The place based/public realm services stream of the transformation programme has commenced and will change the approach to service delivery so that residents, businesses and partners will be placed at the centre of service design and provision. Waste, highways, and public realm are all within the scope of this work, as are planning, housing, community safety, and others, and will integrate with other transformation streams to ensure the best outcomes and value for money.

Given reducing grant from central government and the desire to keep Council Tax low, we need to change the way we operate so as to get the most from capital investments (particularly in new technology); ensure we are working at peak efficiency and targeting resources where we need them most; and maximising commercial opportunities to generate a return for the benefit of the York taxpayer. As such there will be a focus on building sustainable business models in order to meet the future challenges of the city.

Working more effectively internally, and alongside the public and our partners, we will continue to seek to deliver the high-quality environmental services that York residents expect and deserve. However, ultimately – as has been said before and is worth saying again, and is true for all Councils of all political colours – we as a Council (including Opposition Councillors) need to recognise that it is simply not possible to deal with the magnitude of cuts that have been made without any impact on frontline services.