

TO: THE EXECUTIVE  
16 DECEMBER 2008

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**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 helpful 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. As can be seen the majority can be accepted and acted upon. Indeed in some instances the work of the Group has already informed and helped change working practice.

**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

- 5.2 *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** – this is agreed as it is a long held view of this Council that one of the more effective ways to influence behaviour is by showing society that we care for the environment. Prevention is therefore a key element to any such approach and there are several ways by which we can seek to prevent the problem in the first instances.

Resources are already available within budgets across the Council to deal with litter related issues in a variety of ways and each service area has a responsibility to maintain the land that they are responsible for. There is of course a role for having an educational approach to such problems as a means to help reinforce the message whenever possible. In light of these comments it is agreed that each service area needs to look at how it contributes to that objective. 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 this profile (Para 3.20).

- 5.3 *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 is agreed. 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.

- 5.4 *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** – whilst 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. This is in line with the commitment given in the Corporate Objectives. Taking account of some of the comments coming from the Working Group as it sat, 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.

- 5.5. *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** – this is 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.

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

**Response** – this is agreed and 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.

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

**Response** - the principle set out above is agreed. 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. We have to ensure that what space we can secure is used to the best effect in this regard and officers are ever mindful of the need to be creative when it comes to getting the right message across in a timely way. Locally, we know that the scale of the litter problem is small when compared to other towns. Where we have specific problems we seek the support of the local media e.g. the current graffiti problem with 3 particular tags. We are also look to promote and support work done locally to help reinforce the need for developing local community pride e.g. the neighbourhood cleansing programme.

- 5.8 *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** – Agreed, however, 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.

- 5.9. *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. In the current year a number of sites are being extra attention. This should help us better maintain such sites in the future. The current arrangements seeks to include for a hard cut every three years during the autumn, but the ability to do this is sometimes hampered due to other demands.

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

**Response** – this is agreed. Such contact is welcomed and encouraged. Ward Members and the Parish and Town Councils are best placed to know their local problem areas and through the current contract arrangement they have the opportunity to be able to influence the planned street cleansing activity and to provide comments on any new problem areas. When the problem is on BFBC land the cleansing manager can use the Ringway Rapid Reaction to deal with specific problems. When the problem lies on private land then a different thought process is required. Should there be specific problems then these can now be dealt with through the cleaner borough group.

- 5.11 *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. It is evident from the work done by the Working Group there the Members have gained a greater understanding of the link between the various strands and are in a strong position to test thinking in a constructive way should the opportunity arise. In the meantime the need for officers to take due regard to the implications associated with asset management have been reinforced and are being actioned.

- 5.12. *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** – Agreed 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. This is a matter that will be kept on the agenda and where possible joint operations will be organised.

- 5.13 *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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