

Appendix A: Street Cleansing Review Executive Summary

- 1 The Borough Council's Street Cleansing service has, to date, had a very traditional view of its cleansing operations based on inputs reflecting the former compulsory competitive tendering.
 - 1.1 The service has good quality performance indicators with NI195 scores, one of the best in Kent and in the top quartile nationally. However, surveys have tended to be after cleansing and do not reflect the service over a longer period. This might contribute to a gap between measured performance and public perception of cleanliness, compared to other authorities in the Place Survey.
 - 1.2 Whilst benchmarking has been undertaken, the views received have generally been used to the best advantage.
 - 1.3 The recent review work has confirmed that when compared to similar types of authority (CIPFA groupings), the service is more expensive with greater numbers of staff and plant.
 - 1.4 Changes to the cleaning arrangements in the town centre over the past year have made a real difference and monitoring has confirmed that standards are improving. Independent views have also confirmed the improvements.
 - 1.5 Other local authorities have area-based cleansing systems which have generated pride and an element of competition between the various teams. Using an output/outcome based operation with inspection and monitoring as opposed to frequency-based automatic cleansing can be more efficient and cost-effective without impacting on service delivery. It will respond to customer feedback and this could improve satisfaction with the service.
 - 1.6 Options for an area-based operation mirroring the current town centre operation are provided in the report. Two areas, together with the town centre is the preferred option for both effectiveness and efficiency and it is considered that it will provide the best opportunity to improve customer satisfaction without impacting on service delivery.
 - 1.7 Detailed customer research has taken place with stakeholders at focus groups, residents via an internet survey and with Council Members and parish councils. It is clear from all this work that the majority of residents are satisfied with the service. However, the service enjoys no more than average satisfaction in Kent and nationally as measured by the 2008 Place Survey and action is required prior to the 2010 survey.

- 1.8 The survey work suggests external influences might be impacting on satisfaction with the service. These include the conditions of private land, the conditions of the road, pavements and related aesthetics and uncared for property.
- 1.9 There was a strong feeling from the surveys and focus groups that high visibility for operatives and plant combined with targeted education campaigns and strong visible enforcement would have positive impacts on customer perception.
- 1.10 It was also clear that close working with partners e.g. housing associations, rail companies and other private agencies could improve standards on private land and, again have positive impacts on customer perception.
- 1.11 In particular strong, visible enforcement where “zero tolerance” would have positive impacts on those likely to litter. This should extend to land owners who fail to maintain their land clear of litter.
- 1.12 The proposals in the report combined with targeted actions prior to the Place Survey will improve efficiency and effectiveness. Surveys can be made without impacting on service delivery and customer satisfaction should improve.
- 1.13 The report identifies savings that will meet the budget target of £120,000 without impacting on service performance, however, it recognises that further options to improve the strategic positioning of MBC’s street cleaning function with regard to reducing costs whilst achieving high performance will need to be investigated.

Maidstone Borough Council

Review of Street Cleaning

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the review

- 1.1.1 In common with many local authorities across England, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is facing a number of financial and operational challenges. The current economic climate will increase pressure upon the public purse and create greater pressure for cashable efficiencies. At the same time, environmental services such as street cleaning typically come under greater pressure during times of economic downturn, with expected increases in commercial fly-tipping and abandoning of vehicles, and potential increases in anti-social behaviour.. In addition, customer expectations on services and standards continues to rise, with services under greater scrutiny.
- 1.1.2 However, this is also a time of opportunity for MBC's street cleaning service. A new purpose built depot has been operational since December 2009, and a recent organisational restructure has strengthened the links between services concerned with the quality of the local environment. Performance data from the cleanliness performance indicator, National Indicator NI195, suggests that performance in street cleaning is high. However, there is also evidence that customer perceptions and satisfaction with cleanliness is no better than average, with the costs of service provision are comparatively high.
- 1.1.3 In the current *Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse*, the government makes clear that that it believes that better standards of street cleaning can be achieved without additional cost by more effectively deploying suitable resources at appropriate times and combining this with education and enforcement. The key challenge for this review was to achieve improvement at a lower cost, whilst at the same time raising levels of customer satisfaction.

1.2 Current service arrangements

- 1.2.1 The street cleaning service is carried out by an in-house team. The majority of this team has recently relocated to the Council's new depot in Bircholt Road, although there is a small contingent based within Maidstone town centre. A structure chart is shown in Appendix 1. The service is contained within the Council's Environment section, which includes Grounds Maintenance, Waste and Recycling collections, Environmental Enforcement and Environmental Facilities.
- 1.2.2 Street Cleaning services are substantially carried out in accordance with a specification for a contract originally tendered for and won some twenty years ago (1999), although there have been some incremental changes over the years. Current cleansing arrangements outside of the town centre area have remained largely

unchanged for some time, although there have been some recent changes within the town centre. There has been a move toward breaking down the distinction between “client” and “contractor” functions, although culturally many within the service still talk of the “contract”, and there is still some tendency to view day works charged to other departments as “profit”.

1.2.3 The service is based around a contract created around an input specification, with a somewhat inflexible frequency-based schedule of works. The frequencies for different locations have been established over a number of years and take account of things such as the typical levels of litter and also relate to the profile of an area. For example, many streets are swept on a six weekly frequency whereas bus routes and main arterial routes are cleaned as often as twice a week and shopping parades three times per week. An example of these different cleaning frequencies is shown below.

Location	Treatment	Frequency
Urban Streets	Small sweeper and operatives– litter pick and channel sweep	Every 6 weeks
Bus Route	Barrow Beat – operative and barrow – litter pick and sweep	Weekly & twice weekly
	Large mechanical sweeper – channel sweep only	Every 2 weeks
Victorian Areas	MARCH TO OCTOBER: 2 operatives and cage vehicle – deep cleaning Large mechanical sweeper – channel only	Every 6 weeks Every 3 weeks
	NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY: 2 operatives and small sweeper – litter pick and channel sweep	Every 6 weeks
Shopping Parade	Litter picking	3 times a week
School routes	Litter picking	Daily during term time
Car parks	Litter picking	Every week
Recycling sites	Litter picking	Daily
Traffic islands	Manual sweeping	Every 2 weeks
Village Streets	Small sweeper and operatives– litter pick and channel sweep	Every 6 weeks
Link Roads	Litter Pick and Large mechanical sweeper	Every 12 weeks

1.2.4 Whilst an input specified contract can be appropriate for services that are predictable and which are capable of expansion or contraction on an easily evaluated, unit-cost basis (e.g. refuse collection), for services that are subject to unpredictable fluctuations in demand, input specified contracts can be too rigid. For services such as street cleaning, organising services to achieve particular outcomes rather than a certain number of inputs should provide a more customer-focused and more flexible basis for service provision, with the emphasis more firmly upon the result attained. This is the approach that has been introduced within the town centre area (which is explained later in the report) and the options for service development put forward in this review build on this approach.

- 1.2.5 However, accurate information is still needed about the size and characteristics of the service to ensure sound resourcing strategies and good financial control. Outcome specifications are reliant on systematic and reliable monitoring and measurement systems if they are to work effectively, and provide assurance that best value is being achieved. In developing the service to an outcome based focus, care will still need to be taken to keep accurate and up to date records of street lengths, types of surfaces, number of litter bins etc, a Street Scene Officer is employed within the Environment section whose role is substantially about assuring that the integrity of such data is maintained.
- 1.2.6 In addition to the core service, the Council has invested, in conjunction with the Clean Kent partnership, in specialist gum removal equipment although removal of gum from hard surfaces is not a statutory requirement. In order to ensure that the overall appearance of the public realm remains attractive, a low-cost graffiti removal service is offered to owners and occupiers of premises which are outside of the Councils portfolio of properties where these have been subject to defacement.

2 Legislation, Enforcement and Policy

2.1 Legal and Regulatory framework

- 2.1.1 As the principal litter authority, Maidstone Borough Council has a statutory duty to keep “relevant land” clear of litter and refuse, and to keep clean highway that is maintained at the public expense, including the removal of detritus. These duties emanate from the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and subsequent guidance documents issued and updated from time to time by the appropriate Secretary of State, including the current *Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (CoPLR)*. In addition, the Council has other related duties and powers within various legislation, relating to issues such as abandoned vehicles, enforcement against littering, graffiti removal and dog fouling. A summary of all relevant legislation can be found in Appendix 2.

2.2 Enforcement and Education

- 2.2.1 Enforcement of the legislation in relation to these waste related crimes forms part of the remit of Maidstone Borough Council’s Environmental Enforcement Operations Team.
- 2.2.2 Since the overall remit of the Enforcement Team is far broader than simply being that in relation to litter alone and taking into account the size of the Borough, it is important that the limited resources of this group are deployed as efficiently as possible. Whilst this team uses the powers granted under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs), a number of other approaches are also used to ensure that enforcement is not simply reactive to crimes having been committed.

- 2.2.3 Partnerships have been formed between the Enforcement Team and a number of other groups where there is a common interest in tackling waste related crimes as part of a wider drive against general anti-social and criminal behaviours. Representatives from the enforcement team regularly work with other groups such as local police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Kent County Council officers where information is shared in a more cohesive, joined-up approach to tackling environmental crime.
- 2.2.4 One such forum is the Environmental Crime Group which meets monthly and is chaired by the Assistant Director of Environmental Services. The group includes various stakeholders and uses the sharing of knowledge between the different stakeholders to help co-ordinate an effective overall approach to tackling environmental crimes. This Forum also helps in promoting pro-active and intelligence driven initiatives for tackling environmental crime.
- 2.2.5 The roles of existing officers within the enforcement team have been redefined and two new Environmental Crime Wardens have been recruited to improve the effectiveness of the team. Their role is primarily to engage, educate and enforce against environmental crimes and generally to assist with fostering civic pride, reassure local people and reduce the fear of crime and deter anti-social behaviour in public places.
- 2.2.6 The enforcement team also work closely with MBC's Education Officer and other organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy to undertake high profile campaigns. Recent campaigns have included the following:
- Clean Sweep Campaign – Local events held throughout Maidstone with community groups and local volunteers litter picking and cleaning up fly tipping.
 - Chewing Gum Campaign – A digital ad van was provided by the Chewing Gum Action Group to visit high profile areas throughout the borough. A day long event in the town centre included informational displays and promotional hand-outs to encourage members of the public to think more carefully about discarding chewing gum.
 - Litter 'On the Go' Campaign - Fast Food litter campaign – Roadshows were held in town and members of the public surveyed about litter in Maidstone. Promotional items were given out for those completing the survey. The aim of these events was to raise awareness of the consequences of fast food litter.
 - 'Litter & You' School Educational programme - designed to raise awareness of the blight and danger that litter can have on the environment and to encourage children to take pride in their surroundings. 'Litter & You' fits into several parts of the Sustainable Schools National Framework and Eco

Schools. A competition was included for children to write a poem or rhyme about litter with a novelty bin provided as a prize.

- School Litter sign competition - The competition is part of Maidstone Borough Council's educational programme to raise awareness of the environment and the effects of litter. More than 130 year three pupils from six primary schools got creative and produced some imaginative and colourful designs.
- Littering From Vehicles Campaign – The campaign was an awareness raising initiative. Officers held road-shows, giving out promotional items such as car stickers and asking members of the public to log instances of car littering (minus registration numbers) to raise the profile of this anti social behaviour.

2.2.7. The role of the Enforcement Team and the Education Officer provide an effective balance to the street cleaning operation by addressing some of the behavioural aspects of littering and promoting pride and ownership of areas amongst residents of Maidstone. They are considered to be very important strategic components in achieving and maintaining a clean and tidy borough.

2.3 Council's Policy Framework

2.3.1 In addition to its statutory duties, Maidstone Borough Council has policies and initiatives in place that are over and above minimum statutory standards that aim to enhance and improve the local environment.

2.3.2 The Council has five priority themes within its Strategic Plan 2009-12, one of which is to ensure that the Borough is *a place that is clean and green*. This demonstrates that issues related to local environmental quality are at the top of the strategic and political agenda within the Council.

2.3.3 The Council's website includes a set of promises to the community in relation to the standards of street cleaning that will be delivered.

The Council aims to keep Maidstone's streets clean and free from litter to the standards in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

We promise to

- Clean the Town Centre seven days a week.
- Empty the Town Centre litter bins as necessary.
- Litter pick the footways of the town bus routes every week
- Sweep the channel of town bus routes every 3 weeks.
- Clean all residential streets in urban areas and villages every 6 weeks.
- Clean shopping parades at least 3 times a week.
- Litter pick main inter-village link roads every 12 weeks and sweep every 6 weeks
- Provide additional cleans of the town's Victorian Streets from March to October.
- Provide 3 special 'Council Hit Squads' a 24-hour response to fly tipping and litter.
- Open and close public conveniences at the times advertised.
- Clean public conveniences within the Borough every day

3 Performance

3.1 Target setting and Performance Results

3.1.1 There are no national/statutory targets for street cleaning as such. However, within CoPLR there are response times for dealing with land that falls below an acceptable level of cleanliness, and failure to respond within these times might render the authority subject to a Litter Abatement Order or notice imposed by a magistrate's court.

3.1.2 Those standards and targets which do exist are set locally as part of the Council's service planning and performance management functions, and include targets for cleanliness, response times to particular types of incident, customer satisfaction, complaint handling etc. These targets have been developed in accordance with the 2006 Environmental Protection Act (EPA) Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (section 8) and are intended to be both challenging and, where possible, demonstrable of continuous improvement.

EPA Zone	Cleanliness standard (maximum time limit for restoring to base standard)			
	A (No litter/refuse/detr itus)	B (Predominantly free of litter/refuse/detr itus)	C (Widespread distribution of litter/refuse/detr itus)	D (Heavily affected by litter/refuse/detr itus)
1 (Town centre)		6 hours	3 hours	1 hour
2 (Residential urban)		12 hours	6 hours	3 hours
2 (Main roads)			1 day	1 day
2 (linking roads)			1 day	1 day
2 (Busy villages)			12 hours	6 hours
3 (Quieter villages)			12 hours	6 hours
3 (Rural area)			1 week	1 week
3 (linking roads)			2 weeks	1 week

No response required

- Zone 1 High intensity of use (busy public areas)
- Zone 2 Medium intensity of use (everyday areas, including most housing estates occupied by people most of the time).
- Zone 3 Low intensity of use (lightly trafficked areas that do not impact on most peoples lives most of the time).
- Zone 4 Areas with special circumstances

3.1.3 NI195 scores for Maidstone in 2008/2009 vary when compared to the rest of Kent.

- NI195a (Litter) ranked 1st out of 11 councils
- NI195b (Detritus) ranked 5th out of 11 councils

- NI195a (Graffiti) ranked 3rd out of 11 councils
- NI195a (Fly-posting) ranked 9th out of 11 councils

3.1.4 Maidstone also ranked in the top quartile for England under BVPI199 which was the precursor to NI195 which was introduced in 2008. These are self-assessed and no independent validation is yet available.

3.1.5 On these objective measures of service quality the service has generally performed well against the agreed targets. Local area agreements (LAA) have been established for Kent and these provide the link between government and local priorities. Targets are set within these local area agreements and the table below compares the NI195 results for neighbouring councils against the LAA target.

NI195 Neighbouring Councils 2008/2009	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Fly posting
Canterbury	4.3%	5.7%	3.3%	0.0%
Dartford	4.7%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Dover	3.0%	14.7%	0.7%	0.0%
Gravesham	5.0%	6.0%	2.7%	0.0%
Maidstone	0.2%	6.3%	0.4%	0.2%
Sevenoaks	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%	0.0%
Shepway	5.0%	17.3%	2.3%	0.3%
Swale	5.3%	8.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Thanet	7.7%	7.7%	3.3%	0.3%
T&M	5.4%	6.1%	1.3%	0.1%
Tunbridge Wells	0.4%	2.0%	1.6%	0.1%
LAA Target	7.0%	11.0%	5.0%	2.0%

3.1.6 Customer satisfaction with cleanliness within the Borough as scored through the independent national Place Survey was relatively low compared to similar councils (155th out of 352). This data is based on one question of a comprehensive satisfaction survey which asks residents to rate satisfaction of MBC's performance in keeping public land clear of litter and refuse. This survey is sent to 2000 properties every two years and these results relate to the last survey which was conducted in 2008.

Satisfaction with the following service provided by the council						
	Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total Respondents
Keep public land clear of litter and refuse	10.8%	48.8%	19.3%	15.7%	5.5%	2139

3.1.7 59.6% of respondents were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied compared with 21.2% fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. 19.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and overall this was one of the lowest service satisfaction scores in the Place Survey. Within this data there appears to be quite marked variation in levels of customer satisfaction between different wards within the Borough. The table below demonstrates this variation between the most and least satisfied wards. Any wards not shown in this table produced results in between those shown.

Keeping public land clear of litter and refuse: Average 59.6% Satisfied

Most satisfied	Score	Least satisfied	Score
Allington	73.2%	North Downs	46.5%*
Downswood & Otham	72.7%*	High Street	48.5%
Bearsted	70.2%	Fant	49.4%
Boxley	68.7%	Shepway North	52.2%
		Shepway South	52.6%
		Park Wood	52.8%
		Coxheath & Hunton	52.9%
		Detling & Thurnham	53.0%
		Leeds	54.0%*

* Less than 50 responses

3.1.8 Comparisons of the Place Survey results with other councils show that Maidstone has performed below average in relation to similar councils (as defined by the Audit Commission which considers similarities between councils in national indicator results, crime levels, and demographics) although above average in relation to geographically neighbouring councils.

Place Survey 2008: Similar Councils

Vale Royal BC	54.9%
Ashford BC	57.5%
Colchester BC	58.2%
Maidstone BC	59.6%
Warwick DC	60.9%
Tonbridge and Malling BC	61.6%
Chelmsford BC	62.5%
Test Valley BC	62.7%
Braintree DC	64.0%
Wychavon DC	64.4%
Basingstoke and Deane BC	66.8%
Stafford BC	67.4%
Harrogate BC	69.1%
Similar group average	62.3%

Place survey 2008: Neighbouring Councils

Thanet	48.2%
Swale	49.7%
Shepway	51.1%

Gravesham	52.3%
Dover	55.8%
Dartford	55.9%
Ashford	57.5%
Maidstone	59.6%
Canterbury	60.9%
Tunbridge Wells	61.3%
T&M	61.6%
Sevenoaks	66.3%
Kent average	56.7%

3.1.9 The variation shown in the Place Survey results is also reflected in local customer satisfaction survey work conducted by MBC. Each of the 26 wards within Maidstone is sampled every year on a rolling basis such that typically 2 wards are sampled every month with each ward receiving 100 cards. Every effort is made to ensure that these surveys cover a range of land types in order to gain an accurate overall picture of satisfaction. An example of the cards used for these surveys is shown in appendix 3. Recently, better use has started to be made of local customer feedback data as a means of identifying exactly where customers perceive problems to be and driving service performance. This information can therefore be used to accurately target areas for cleaning and for developing the service to achieve higher customer satisfaction and improved perception of cleanliness by efficient deployment of resources.

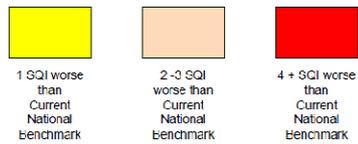
3.1.10 Street Cleaning and related performance is reported quarterly through the Council's Excelsis performance management system, whilst customer service data is reported via the "Reach the Summit" initiative, which aims to drive up the quality and speed of customer responses. Any shortfalls in reported performance or unexpected variances are investigated by the corporate Performance Management team.

3.2 Comparative performance

3.2.1 The comparative performance of the service of recent years shows a mixed picture. The independently assessed Local Environment Quality Survey (LEQS) results for 2006-7 (the last figures available) for MBC were below average for England. However this should be qualified, as some of the poorest marks related to the general condition of the highway infrastructure, which is a KCC responsibility. Nevertheless, the Council did not score as highly on litter issues as would have been hoped, and did not perform well on detritus, although greater emphasis on mechanical sweeping since the survey took place appears to have largely tackled the detritus issue.

Target Issues Matrix Report - Extended LEQSE 2006/07 - Maidstone Borough Council

	All Areas	Primary Retail/Commercial	Secondary Retail/Commercial	Transport Infrastructure	High Density Housing	Low Density Social Housing	Low Density Private Housing	Industry/Wareh/Log/Retail Sheds	Main Roads	Rural Roads	Other Highways	Public Open Spaces	Watercides
Cleansing Standards													
Litter	Yellow				Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow			Yellow	
Detritus	Yellow			Red	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Orange		Yellow			
Leaf Fall				Orange	Yellow		Orange						Yellow
Cleansing Related													
Weed Growth			Red				Yellow	Yellow					
Staining		Orange			Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange				
Flytipping													
Waste Placed Out	Orange	Red											
Graffiti													
Highway Infrastructure													
Paved Areas Obstruction		Yellow	Yellow	Yellow			Orange		Red	Orange	Red		
Paved Obstruction No Upstand				Orange	Red								
Channel Obstruction	Yellow		Red	Red	Yellow		Red						
Paved Areas Condition		Yellow		Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow			Orange		Yellow	
Channel Condition	Yellow	Yellow		Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		Yellow	Orange			
Carriageway Condition	Yellow			Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow			
Road Marking Condition	Orange	Orange	Red	Red	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Red	Yellow			
Vehicle Flows	Yellow					Orange	Yellow	Yellow				Red	
Pedestrian Flows		Yellow	Yellow										
Street Furniture													
Posts & Poles	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange		Orange	Orange			Yellow
Public Signs	Orange	Yellow		Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange		Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange	
Other Street Furniture	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Red			Orange		Orange		Yellow	
Buildings & Boundary Structures	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Litter Bins													
Cleanliness		Orange	Orange		Red	Orange		Red		Orange	Orange		Yellow
Condition	Orange	Orange	Orange	Red	Red	Red		Yellow		Yellow	Orange	Red	
Degree of Fill		Yellow				Orange	Red	Red		Orange			Yellow
Bus Stops Etc.													
Litter	Yellow	Orange						Orange					
Condition	Yellow	Orange											
Staining		Orange											
Flyposting													
Graffiti													
Landscaping													
Litter		Red			Orange		Orange	Yellow			Orange		
Maintenance		Orange				Yellow	Yellow	Orange		Yellow		Yellow	Yellow



Overall Quality Standard	06/07	National
Good	29%	26%
Satisfactory	12%	21%
Unsatisfactory	49%	47%
Poor	10%	5%

3.3 Monitoring and recording methods

3.3.1 The Street Cleansing service puts significant resource into gathering the data for NI195, using a methodology prescribed by DEFRA. However, NI195 is very much an experts eye view of street cleaning outputs that is not necessarily reflective of the customers experience (detailed guidance on the of the relevant grading scheme appears in Appendix 4). In order to ensure that performance monitoring is more reflective of customer interest, the service has developed a more outcome based monitoring scheme, the aim of which is to give a sense of how a resident might assess the overall look of a particular area, and includes subjective assessments of the quality of street furniture, planting areas, public conveniences, etc. An example of the results of this approach is shown below.

Town Centre Summary %	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
General (Litter, Detritus, Flyposting, Graffiti)	● 100	● 95	● 90	● 95	● 65	● 100
Furniture	● 100	● 100	● 100	● 100	● 100	● 60
Planters	● 80	● 60	● 100	● 100	● 40	● 80
Tree Pits	● 100	● 80	● 60	● 60	● 100	● 100
Grounds	● 100	● 80	● 100	● 100	● 100	● 100
Toilets	● 87.5	● 92.5	● 97.5	● 100	● 100	● 92.5

3.3.2 The new scheme has worked successfully within the town centre area, and it is hoped to use the same methodology across the Borough over the course of the coming year in order to ensure a high degree of customer focus within the service. The success of the initiative across the Borough will be dependant upon the availability of staff who are able to carry out performance inspections in a balanced and systematic manner, and to keep effective and reliable records of these.

3.3.3 Significant resource is employed within the service for performance monitoring. This includes the Street Scene Officer, the Town Centre Supervisor and a Team Leader carrying out on-going quality monitoring, with some further assistance by other officers, particularly during the three times yearly NI195 surveys. The table below shows the level of resource devoted to actual monitoring work, and does not include desk-based analysis or collation.

	Resources	Approx annual staff cost
Routine monitoring	Team leader - QA (65%) Street Scene Officer (10%) Town Centre Supervisor (25%) Total 1 FTE	£20k
NI 195 monitoring	Street Scene Officer (20%) Team Leader - QA(8%) Total 0.28 FTE	£7
Total	1.28 FTE	£27k

3.3.4 The current monitoring arrangements in Maidstone are very much linked to a client / contractor split which is no longer necessary. Some organisations have moved

toward a regime based upon self-assessment by area-based team leaders/supervisors rather than having a heavy reliance upon dedicated monitoring, with only periodic independent inspection for validation purposes (possibly via peer review or external audit from organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy). Such an approach might be both more cost effective and provide could provide a longer term outcome based view of the cleanliness of particular neighbourhoods. However, there would need to be a high degree of trust that the monitoring was entirely objective in its implementation and recording, as well as effective training of the staff concerned in order to ensure a high degree of consistency. The options for developing the service set out in this report all work on the basis of ceasing to have a dedicated team leader post for quality assurance, and instead integrating performance monitoring duties into the roles of operational supervisors/team leaders.

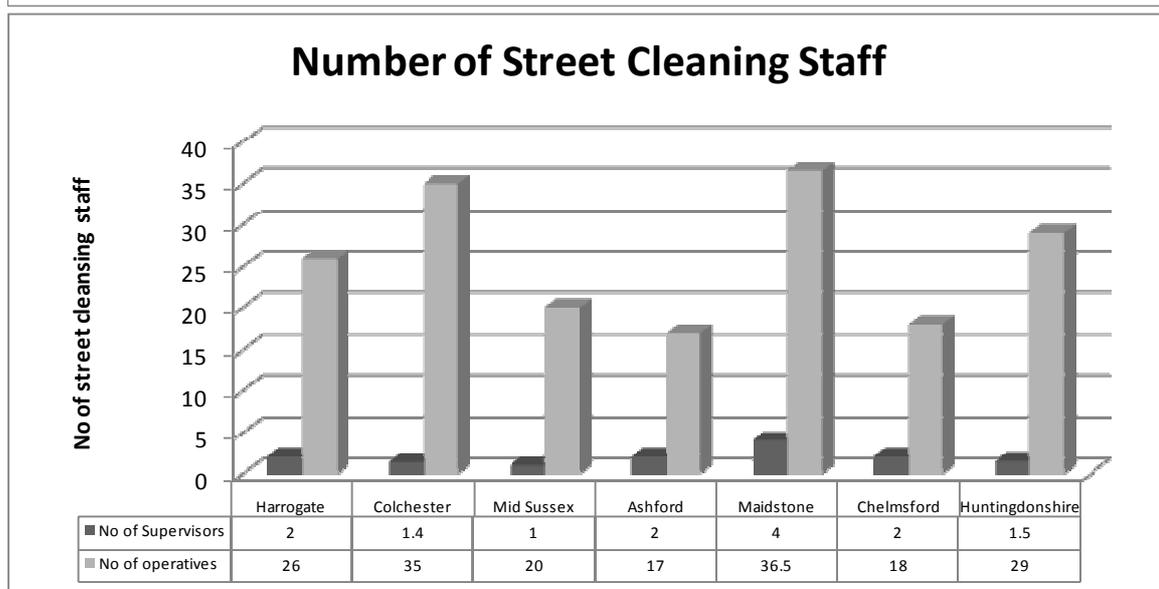
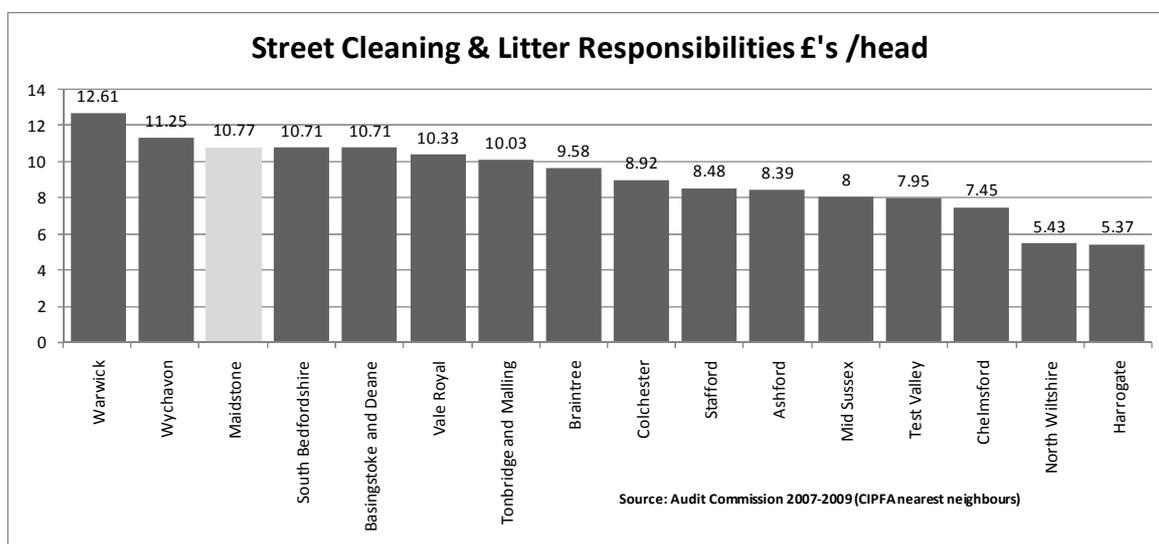
3.3.5 The vast majority of routine monitoring currently takes place on the same day that the area being assessed has been visited by the service. This is because the performance monitoring is rooted in the contract monitoring regime of the past, and the results are used for the purposes of performance managing individuals rather than the holistic management of the entire street scene. This methodology seems out of step with the more contemporary approach which is focussed upon outcomes for the customer, and these are not limited to the short period of time after which works are carried out – customers are likely to be more interested in how their neighbourhood appears most of the time. The new outcome based approach trialled in the town centre, and applied at random times rather than immediately after work is carried out, is more likely to give a more accurate picture of the on-going customer experience of street cleanliness. It is this approach that will be developed as part of the pursuit of increased customer satisfaction.

3.3.6 The data resulting from performance monitoring is captured and stored electronically, and can be easily retrieved if required. It is often supported by photographic evidence, which could be helpful in the event of a legal dispute or claim against the Council. However, traditionally little use has been made of the collected data as a source of intelligence for improving performance, although this is starting to change with the advent of the outcome-based surveys. With so much high quality data available, there is excellent scope for the service to map out and target areas that require improvement and monitor their progress.

3.4 Cost of Service

3.4.1 The most recently available benchmarking data (Audit Commission 2007-2009), indicates that the costs of street cleaning in MBC are at the average when compared with the rest of the country. However for similar councils (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants, CIPFA, Nearest Neighbour Group) the costs per head are one of the highest. The Council has always aimed to have high performing services at low cost. This is currently not true for the street cleansing service and in the interest of best value and in light of pressures on budgets this is an issue that has necessitated some detailed investigation and analysis. This analysis has shown that MBC has both more staff and a high reliance on overtime than Council areas of a similar size and type and has a higher cost of street cleaning per head of population compared

with similar councils (shown in Appendix 5). Whilst in some cases the CIPFA data may appear challengeable the average cost for the group is £9.12. In order to move Maidstone's costs to below average, whilst taking account of the night time economy, savings in excess of £200,000 will be required.



	Harrogate	Colchester	Mid Sussex	Ashford	Maidstone	Chelmsford	Huntingdonshire
<i>Typical weekly overtime for a street cleaning operative (actual hours worked)?</i>	Weekend work	Variable	7	Varies	6.5	Negligible	Between 0 and 8

4 Operations and Delivery

4.1 Service delivery

- 4.1.1 The current design of service provision is based upon contract specifications going back a number of years, and is substantially input based (i.e. focussing upon the frequency of visits to a given location) rather than being founded in the delivery of excellent outcomes for a range of different neighbourhoods and communities.
- 4.1.2 There have been some recent changes to service design, notably within Maidstone town centre, where there has been a growing emphasis on providing a flexible approach to cleaning in order to ensure that resources target key cleansing issues rather than following strict schedules. This has been possible largely because the town centre is cleaned by an integrated team working within a well-defined area, and with the benefit of a supervisor who is able to liaise with key agents within the community to ensure that priority issues are being addressed.
- 4.1.3 During August and September 2009, representatives from the Street Scene service visited a number of councils similar to Maidstone in order to see how this Council might benefit from the good practice of others. In particular, the focus of this research and analysis was to ensure that MBC will compare more favourably to other councils in terms of the cost of service and customer satisfaction in future, whilst retaining high quality standards.
- 4.1.4 The councils visited were substantially chosen from the CIPFA nearest neighbour group of 16 similar councils. This list is compiled using data concerning demographics, socio-economics, geography etc in order to ensure comparisons are made with councils that are truly similar in terms of size and the nature of their communities. From this list, officers chose a sample of councils that were within reasonable travelling distance to visit and analyse; these included the following:
- Ashford Borough Council
 - Chelmsford Borough Council
 - Test Valley Borough Council
 - Brentwood Borough Council (not in near neighbour group, but a relatively nearby council with high satisfaction rates)
- 4.1.5 In addition, a benchmarking questionnaire was sent out to all 15 councils within the CIPFA near neighbour group in order to make comparison on a number of objective indices. 6 questionnaires were returned in total, and these form the basis of the benchmarking data.
- 4.1.6 Key learning points from research and analysis of visits to other similar councils and the benchmarking questionnaires were as follows:
- 4.1.7 *MBC scores well on the objective NI195 measure of cleansing outputs compared to similar councils*

As presented earlier, MBC performs well against the government prescribed NI195 measures, and maintaining this level of performance has been a high priority for the service. NI195, however, indicates the cleanliness of Council controlled land alone; it does not consider land which is owned and controlled by third parties which may be a factor in some areas.

4.1.8 *Maidstone performs at an average on cost per head when compared nationally but is third highest when compared to the CIPFA family group.*

To reduce costs to just below the average a saving of over £200,000 would be required.

4.1.9 *MBC has significantly more cleansing staff and a higher ratio of supervisory staff to operatives than similar councils*

The average number of cleansing operatives for similar councils is 26 – ten less than within the MBC service. In addition, MBC has four supervisory staff for street cleaning compared to the average of 2. This difference in staffing levels is a key reason why the MBC service is expensive compared to others within the near neighbour group.

4.1.10 *MBC overall carries out substantially more regular work on overtime than similar councils*

Many of the councils surveyed carry out very little regular programmed work on overtime, whereas in MBC planned overtime is a significant element of weekly operations, particularly within the town centre area. Given that MBC also has significantly more staff than the average, this high level of overtime is a notable difference. A significant component of this regular overtime is used to service Maidstone's night time economy which is an important feature of Maidstone and different from some of the other towns which were surveyed.

4.1.11 *There is a comparatively high reliance upon mechanical sweeping within MBC (10 mechanical sweepers of various sizes compared to the average of 6.4).*

In recent years many councils have increased their use of mechanical sweeping equipment, particularly in response to issues of detritus in kerb channels etc. However, Keep Britain Tidy has questioned the efficiency and effectiveness of mechanical sweeping, citing four compromising issues (pavement and channel obstruction, mechanical reliability, operational standards; and unproductive time when vehicles are driving from operational bases to work sites). All these factors can increase considerably the net cost of sweeping. Within MBC there have been some serious issues with the reliability of some equipment, and unproductive time could increase for the pedestrian mechanical sweepers with the commissioning of a new out of town depot in December 2009.

4.1.12 *Those councils scoring highest for customer satisfaction operate area-based working, where operatives generally have a dedicated local beat that they look after all of the time, rather than being more mobile around their borough.*

With the notable exception of the town centre area, MBC's street cleaning operations are functionally based. This means that operatives tend to specialise in a function such as litter-picking, collecting fly tips, or cleaning neighbourhood recycling centres,

and may work across a wide expanse of the Borough over a period of time according to a strict time-based schedule. With area-based regimes operatives carry out a range of activities within a defined area or neighbourhood, within which they operate all or most of the time. The perceived benefits of area-based working are the ability to develop deep local knowledge in order to tailor activity flexibly to the sites of greatest need, and the opportunity to develop useful relationships within the local community. Area based services are a move toward focussing on positive outcomes for the community, with a knock on effect on customer perception, rather than being substantially concerned with inputs i.e. number of visits per year.

4.2 Non-Town Centre Service Development

4.2.1 As a consequence of this research, officers within the service have drawn up options for developing service delivery within MBC, and these options are aimed at ensuring that service quality is maintained at current high levels whilst increasing both customer satisfaction and value for money. The organisational structures associated with each of these options are set out in Appendix 6 and more detail of the area based approach can be found in Appendix 7.

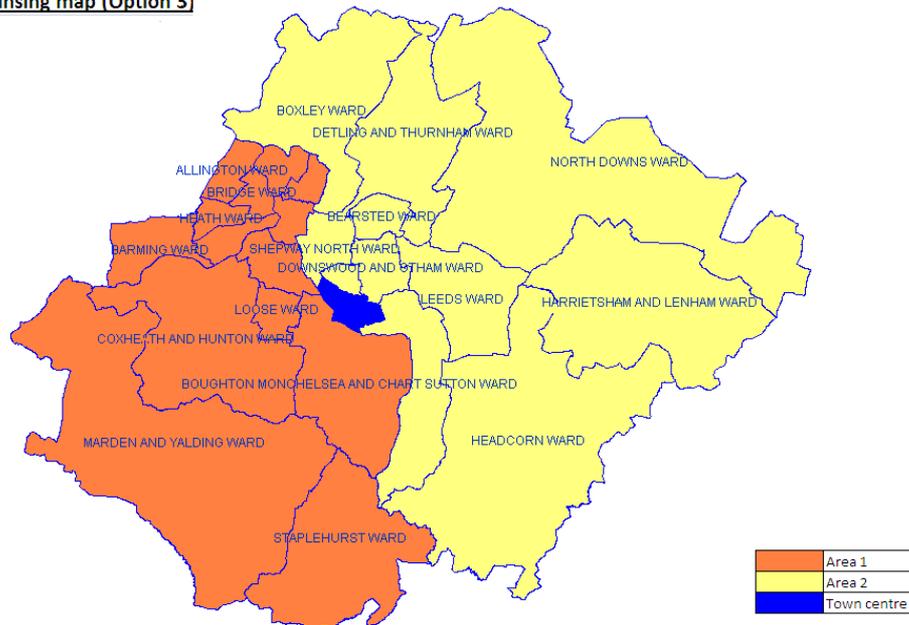
4.2.2 **Option 1:** This option proposes a move to area based working outside of the town centre area, as this form of more local and flexible working appears to be linked to improving customer satisfaction. This proposal divides the Borough (excluding the town centre) in to three areas, each area with a dedicated team. Each team would include a team leader and a charge hand, and their work would be focussed upon ensuring that resources are effectively targeted at the areas of greatest need within a flexible scheduling framework, rather than working exclusively to time-based schedules. A key part of the team leader role will be to carry out quality monitoring to ensure the quality of customer outcomes. It is proposed that this option should work with a total of 32 staff (excluding town centre based staff), representing a reduction in personnel of 3 full time employees. However, some income-generating activities could not be resourced under this option, and an additional transit type vehicle would be required at a cost of around £12k per annum. Thus the net overall cashable saving is estimated at circa £18-28k per annum.

4.2.3 **Option 2:** This option is similar to option 1, but proposes either two or three fewer operatives than option 1. This option could negate the requirement for an additional vehicle and increase the net saving in personnel to 5-6 full time employees, and thus the overall level of cashable savings would rise to circa £68-110k. However, a reduction of resources at this level might reduce the ability of the service to resource the early morning clean of the town centre at current levels, and thus there is a risk of some reduction in overall cleansing quality within the town centre area during weekdays.

4.2.4 **Option 3:** This option also proposes area based working outside of the town centre, but across two teams rather than three as considered in options 1 and 2. The ratio of supervisors to operatives is maintained at current levels, although still higher than the norm for similar councils but there is an overall reduction of 5 or 6 full time employees compared to current operations, as well as a requirement for one less vehicle. This

option is not expected to compromise support for the town centre in the early mornings, and is projected to produce cashable savings of approximately £100k/annum.

Area based cleansing map (Option 3)



4.2.5 All of the options set out above include an overall reduction in the reliance upon mechanical sweeping. Staff consultations within the service led to the conclusion that the smaller pedestrian mechanical sweepers add little value to the service overall, and are expensive to operate. By ceasing to use such sweepers and reverting to more hand brushing it is envisaged that there will be some improvements in detailed cleaning and an annual cashable saving in the region of at least £8k in addition to the savings projected above.

4.3 Town Centre Service Development

4.3.1 Separate options have been developed for the town centre part of the street cleaning operation. Early in 2009 changes were made to the way in which the Street Scene service (incorporating street cleaning, public conveniences and grounds maintenance) is managed within Maidstone Town centre. A single supervisor role was established, and an element of flexible, multi-tasked working was introduced in order to seamlessly manage the overall visitor experience. This project has been greeted with enthusiasm by traders and elected members, continues to develop, and is keeping with the area based approach adopted by authorities with high levels of customer satisfaction.

4.3.2 All weekend/night time work in the town centre is carried out on an overtime basis, at some considerable expense (budgeted at circa £120k per annum, although there

have been significant overspends in previous years). During the summer of 2009 the level of planned overtime was significantly cut in order to avoid any possible overspend, and this change does not appear to have reduced the quality of overall outcomes.

- 4.3.3 There is a case for continuing the existing town centre arrangements in order to enable a full evaluation of the extensive changes in due course, especially as the current regime does appear to be showing good quality results. However, as the level of overtime and the level of weekend and evening cover within MBC are significantly higher than that in similar councils, it was felt that options should be developed to realise additional cashable savings if these are critical given the current budgetary constraints.
- 4.3.4 **Option A:** This option is very similar to the current way of working with the exception of the weekend early morning overtime. This would be reduced from 9 Operatives to 7 Operatives on a Saturday, and from 8 to 6 operatives on a Sunday, working to an enhanced schedule. In addition, late night working would cease on Thursdays – which are considerably less busy than Friday and Saturday evenings and is not considered to be good value for money. This option can be implemented very quickly with very little change for staff. It would need fewer appliances in the town centre, and would result in the loss of some flexibility in weekend mornings, although this is not expected to cause significant problems. The projected saving per annum in town centre cleaning costs is £15,000, although the level of overtime would remain significantly higher than the average for similar councils. It is considered that this proposal would have no detrimental effect on town centre cleanliness and by targeting resources could increase customer satisfaction.
- 4.3.5 **Option B:** This option is an extension of Option A insofar as it makes similar but more significant cuts in regular overtime provision. Weekend morning cover is reduced to 6 operatives, and weekend daytime cover is also reduced. This does represent a significant reduction in weekend resources within the town centre, but is in line with provision in other similar councils. Annual revenue saving in town centre cleaning costs of £40,000 is projected if this option is adopted. This option may lead to short term accumulations of litter during off peak periods (e.g. Sunday evenings) although these should be resolved quickly by the early morning shift at the start of each day. It is however a step back from the improvements introduced to the town centre in 2009 which have been so well received and therefore carries a higher element of risk to service quality than option A.
- 4.3.6 **Option C:** This option is a more radical model for reducing the dependency of overtime within the town centre environment. It presents itself as a rota whereby operative work any five days each week on a flexible basis according to service requirements. Teams would work en block with common starting and finishing times, and supervisory cover for the early morning shift during weekdays would be reduced. Staffing levels throughout the day would need to be spread more thinly in order to ensure the core service is carried out throughout the day. This model could be reasonably expected to save around £50,000 per annum in town centre cleaning

costs (assuming successful re-negotiation of employee contracts), but it does carry some risks to service quality during the normal working day if unexpected peaks in activity occur. Nevertheless, overall levels of resource would be at a level common to other similar councils.

4.4 Staff training and motivation

4.4.1 The Council has made significant investment in training for operational staff in recent years, and now all cleansing staff have gained a work-based NVQ in street cleaning at levels 1 or 2. In addition, key supervisory staff have been given development opportunities in areas such as team leadership, quality assurance, managing highways works etc. This level of training and qualification is amongst the best for similar organisations.

4.4.2 There is a relatively low level of qualified drivers within the service, and this does limit the flexibility of operations in terms of operatives being able to use a variety of different equipment and vehicles if the need arises. It is recommended that future recruitments make the possession of a full driving licence an essential criterion for applicants.

4.4.3 In recent months a depot based staff forum has been initiated to ensure that the ideas and concerns of staff are given full consideration in the development of the service. The recent move to a new depot in December 2009 has substantially improved working conditions and facilities, with a consequential positive effect on both morale and productivity.

4.5 Cost effectiveness

4.5.1 As described earlier, MBC has achieved a good NI195 score both in terms of geographical neighbours and in relation to the country as a whole. Whilst performance at this level is ostensibly very positive, each additional percentage point of cleanliness above a certain level tends to come at a disproportionately high cost. On cost MBC has not fared so well, and has been amongst the most expensive within the Near Neighbour group. The benchmarking element of this review does demonstrate that the level of resource deployed by MBC is significantly higher than other similar councils.

4.5.2 The options for changes to service delivery outlined above should go some way to lowering the cost of service provision, by approximately £0.86/resident, without damaging service quality, and thus should increase cost effectiveness. However, in order to be amongst the more cost effective of similar councils further significant cost reductions will be required over coming years. From the benchmarking this is in excess of £100,000. These further savings will be likely to necessitate some reduction in NI195 scores, and thus a view will need to be reached about whether some degree of quality reduction, albeit still within the national top quartile, would be acceptable in order to provide greater value for money overall. If a near perfect performance in cleanliness is pursued a matter of strategic priority, MBC is likely to remain on of the higher spending councils. Further work will be undertaken during 2010 to evaluate the implications of further savings.

4.5.3 Operationally, MBC has historically given each area an equally high level of cleansing resource. By making smarter use of performance data and customer feedback, it should be possible to make targeted reductions in resources in those areas where the need is not so great. The challenge will be to do so without damaging public perception, and public perception is strongly influenced by the visible presence of street cleaning teams within local neighbourhoods.

5 Partnerships

5.1 General

5.1.1 As discussed previously, NI195 monitors the cleanliness of council controlled land only and neglects that controlled by other landowners. Public perception is likely to be influenced by the overall cleanliness of an area and not necessarily by those areas controlled specifically by the Council.

5.1.2 Within this Borough, substantial parts of the public realm are under the control of other landowners, including social housing providers, retailers and shopping centre management companies, public transport providers etc. However, in the eyes of many people every aspect of the public realm is the responsibility of the Council, and thus perceptions of MBC can be negatively affected by the poor performance of others.

5.1.3 Whilst the Council has certain powers to enforce the cleaning of land open to the public by owners and occupiers, such enforcement is difficult and expensive to carry out. It is also the case that other land owners, like the Council itself, are often the victims of anti-social behaviour that they struggle to tackle. Thus, recently the service has been increasingly seeking to work in partnership with other significant landowners to find joint solutions to maintaining the local environment, and keeping the option of enforcement as a tool of last resort.

5.1.4 A constructive dialogue has recently started with Maidstone Housing Trust (MHT), the largest social housing provider in the area, with a view to developing joint approaches to keeping some of the larger social housing estates within Maidstone cleaner. This dialogue has included a review of the cleaning that MBC carries out for the trust on a contract basis, as well as formulating ideas for community activities whereby residents take greater responsibility for their neighbourhoods.

5.1.5 Other key potential landowning partners have been identified, including Network Rail, Maidstone Town Centre management, Kent County Council, as well as other key agencies such as the Police and Parish Councils. Network Rail, for example, recently attended a partners meeting at Maidstone Borough Council and commented that it was the first time they had been invited by a council to participate in partnership approach to tackling litter.

- 5.1.6 The partnership approach, whilst being the preferred and generally more effective route to improve cleanliness, does need to be followed up with enforcement if the partnership option fails to deliver results to ensure land owners fulfil their legal responsibilities to maintain their land clear of litter.

6 Public views and Community Engagement

6.1 Place Survey

- 6.1.1 The Place Survey results referred to in previous sections provide a benchmark for comparison with councils, nationally and locally, in 2008 (**par 3.1.6 – 3.1.8**).
- 6.1.2 An analysis by SMSR, the market research company that undertook the survey on our behalf, reveals that residents aged 16-24 are most likely to feel satisfied with the keeping of public land clear of waste and refuse (74%), while those aged 45-54 are least likely to feel very or fairly satisfied (54%). Female residents (62%) are more likely to feel satisfied than male residents (57%).
- 6.1.3 The council has analysed the results to find the most and least satisfied wards within the borough (**par 3.1.7**).
- 6.1.4 For the purposes of this review it was felt that more detailed and up to date feedback from stakeholders was needed. This was achieved in a number of ways.

6.2 Focus Groups

- 6.2.1 Two focus groups were held, one with partner organisations and another with elected borough and parish members, to explore aspects relating to street cleaning within the Borough. See Appendix 8 for the detailed results of these meetings. Several common themes emerged from these groups.
- 6.2.2 General Impression of Cleanliness. The focus groups were asked to identify variations and good and bad points:
- Overall there was a positive impression of the cleanliness of the town centre.
 - The rural areas were considered to be generally less clean than the town centre.
 - Some problems with littering on roads into and between villages were identified.
 - Dog fouling was considered to be much less of a problem than in the past and graffiti was not considered a problem in Maidstone.
 - Areas close to secondary schools were identified as high in litter.
 - Overgrown weeds were a problem and impacted on perception of cleanliness.
 - Chewing gum and cigarette ends are significant litter problems.
 - The fabric of the street (e.g. quality of the surface, making good the surface after maintenance work, street furniture, curbs, etc) is poor in a lot of areas and has a negative impact on perception.
 - Residents do not differentiate between who owns which land and this can impact on perception of cleanliness and whether the council is doing a good job.

6.2.3 Views on Campaigns. The focus groups looked at awareness of the council's street cleansing campaigns and were asked to examine whether they were a positive or negative influence on satisfaction.

- There was generally good awareness and positive views on the types of campaigns which had been run by Maidstone Borough Council. Some of the campaigns such as a recent anti-chewing gum litter campaign involving boards on which to stick spent gum were considered innovative and effective at engaging with teenagers. However par 6.2 above suggests that young people are most likely to be satisfied with the service.
- Anti-litter signs and banners on main routes into Maidstone were generally considered to convey positive messages and help with the perception that Maidstone is a clean place.
- Signs often referred to enforcement but people did not know exactly how much enforcement actually takes place or whether the perceived risk of being caught was high enough. The role of enforcement was considered to be an essential component of maintaining street cleanliness.
- Further campaigns on chewing gum, cigarette ends, engaging with teenagers and those which target changing the culture of littering habits were considered as good areas to develop further. No opinions were put forward to suggest if these campaigns, which often highlight the extent of a problem, might have a negative effect on satisfaction.

6.2.4 Ideas to Improve Cleanliness and Perception of Cleanliness. The focus groups were asked for suggestions to improve the cleanliness and perception of cleanliness in the borough. Partners and parishes were asked if they could help in this area work:

- A number of ideas were suggested on ways to improve cleanliness such as - increasing enforcement, using CCTV footage or images in campaigns to highlight littering habits, publicising how much litter is collected, developing funding partnerships for different schemes with private firms, working more with secondary schools on awareness and devolving budgets to parish councils to carry out local cleaning campaigns.
- It was widely thought that there was a need to encourage people to take personal responsibility for litter and to work on initiatives to help change behaviour.
- Developing good communication between partners was considered important to help overcome the perception problems linked with litter on land which is not controlled by the council.
- Other ideas included improving the painting and maintenance of street furniture (e.g. benches, bins, bollards, etc) and improving the thoroughness of cleaning when it is undertaken.

6.2.5 An attempt was made to hold a focus group of residents from areas where satisfaction is below average for the borough. Letters were sent to 200 properties but there was insufficient take up to hold the meeting. This option will be kept under review and if any trends emerge from service level satisfaction surveys, then options for local focus groups or meetings will be pursued. This could include appearances at existing community meetings or events.

6.3 Internet poll

- 6.3.1 An independent internet poll, by Lake Market Research, examined opinions of cleanliness in the borough, identified areas which were not considered to be clean and sought suggestions to improve cleanliness. The survey was sent to 450 Maidstone residents. 109 completed the survey. 70 (64%) were satisfied with the cleanliness. 39 were not satisfied and they were asked to identify areas for improvement and actions to improve cleanliness.
- 6.3.2 The areas identified by these residents in most need of attention were - Maidstone town centre, High Street, Week Street, and residential areas/villages.
- 6.3.3 These residents said that the cleanliness could be improved by – road sweepers and cleaners, litter campaigns, more bins and more fines for dog fouling.
- 6.3.4 Benchmarking has shown that Maidstone has a heavy deployment of resources, both in terms of personnel and equipment, so the suggestion to apply more sweepers and road cleaners could be interpreted as a need to increase the visibility of the cleaning operation.

6.4 View of Parish and Borough representatives

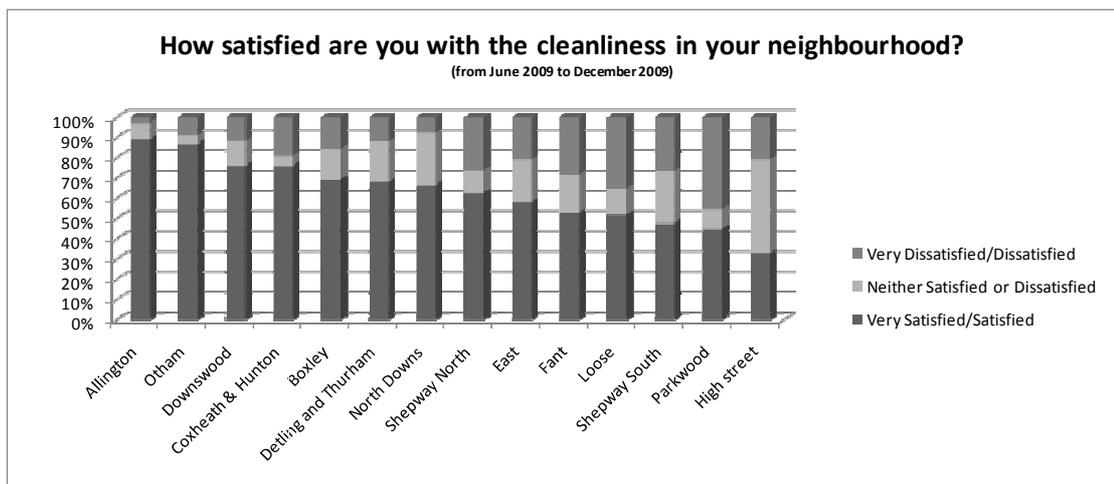
- 6.4.1 We know from the Place Survey the wards where satisfaction levels are lowest.
- 6.4.2 Parish and borough councillors in these wards were asked if they knew of any views of their constituents about the cleansing service in those areas. In particular, we wanted to find out if they were aware of any issues regarding flytipping, enforcement or dog fouling.
- 6.4.3 A number of responses were received.

Ward	Issues
Fant	“Dog fouling is a problem across the ward. The poor state of the pavements is confused with cleansing.”
Shepway North	“Litter along Plains Avenue, Cumberland Green, Sutton Road and Loose Road.” “Dog fouling in Mangravet, Cumberland Park, Somerset Park and Northumberland Road.
Park Wood	“Dog fouling in Bicknor Road. Litter hotspots include Wallis Avenue/Sutton Road area, Wallis Avenue shops, Longshaw Avenue Play Area.”
Coxheath and Hunton	“Flytipping is a constant problem in Hunton.”
Detling and Thurnham	“There can be a problem of parked cars, when the mechanical sweeper visits the village“

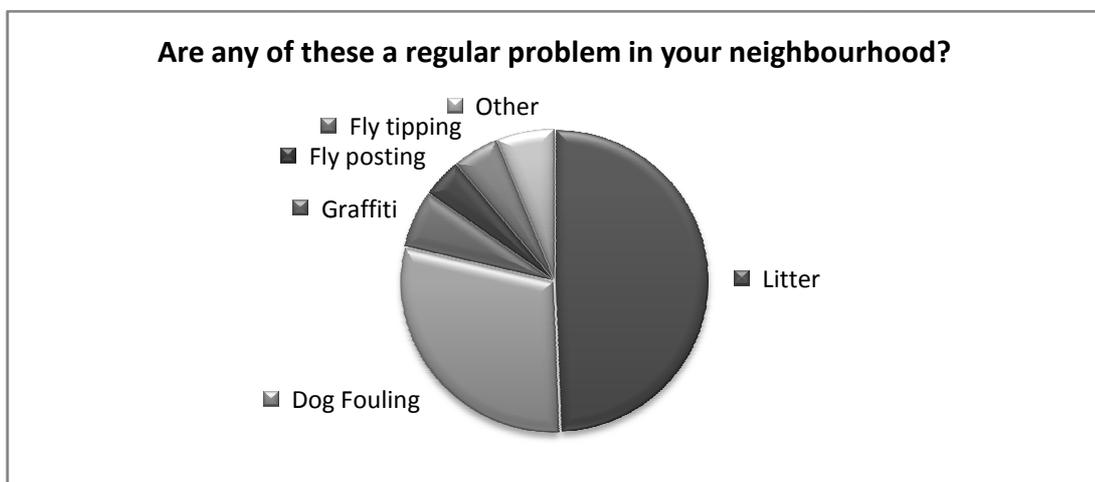
6.5 Service level customer satisfaction cards

- 6.5.1 Each of the 26 wards within Maidstone is sampled every year on a rolling basis such that typically 2 wards are sampled every month with households in each ward receiving 100 cards.

- 6.5.2 Every effort is made to ensure that these surveys cover a range of land types in order to gain an accurate overall picture of satisfaction.
- 6.5.3 An example of the cards used for these surveys is shown in Appendix 3.
- 6.5.4 Recently, better use has been made of this feedback data as a means of identifying exactly where customers perceive problems to be and driving service performance. The information is used to accurately target areas for cleaning and for developing the service to achieve higher customer satisfaction and improved perception of cleanliness by efficient deployment of resources.



6.5.5 Looking at the general picture across all wards it is possible to establish the main areas of concern to residents with regards to the perception of cleanliness of their neighbourhoods. These results, shown below, reveal that litter and dog fouling are considered by 79% of respondents to be regular problems in their neighbourhoods. Paths and roads were considered by 76% of respondents to be the areas which tended to get most dirty.





6.6 Community Engagement

- 6.6.1 All the customer insight suggests that the majority of residents, approximately two thirds, consider Maidstone to be clean. There is however a significant minority who do not agree.
- 6.6.2 The Council recognises the importance of community engagement in enhancing the local environment and developing the street cleaning service. There has been significant success in acquiring external funding for a number of high profile campaigns as detailed in section 2.2.6.
- 6.6.3 These have led to some success in reducing levels of litter within the town centre in particular. The public views and customer insight above suggests that the council should target its efforts on the areas where satisfaction is lowest and on specific education and awareness campaigns, including for example enforcement activity against people who drop litter or who let their dogs foul. Fast food outlets and fast food litter remains a priority.
- 6.6.4 If options to reduce overall costs are exercised, their success in maintaining cleanliness standards and customer satisfaction will substantially be determined by the extent to which the service engages with its communities.
- 6.6.5 Effective education, promotion and, where necessary, enforcement will impact upon the occurrence of litter and other environmental issues to a degree. The use of customer feedback as intelligence to both pro-actively plan the smart deployment of resources, or to engage with partners and other land owners to ensure that they fulfil their obligations, will ensure that operational activity is well matched to issues on the ground.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Maidstone Borough Council has a street cleaning service with demonstrable quality. It does, though, need to respond positively to data which indicates that its service is comparatively expensive but perception of the service is considered by residents to be average.

- 7.2** It is clear from all the customer insight that the majority of residents (about two thirds) are satisfied with the service.
- 7.3** However, the views also confirm the need for ongoing campaigns and education together with visible and targeted enforcement activities to help address the perception of those who either have no opinion or who are dissatisfied with the service. This will also help bring other land owners up to the standards which are being maintained by MBC on land which it does control.
- 7.4** High visibility, both in cleansing and enforcement, is likely to have the strongest influence on public perception and satisfaction.
- 7.5** The role of partners is essential to improve perception of the service and every effort should be made to engage partners to improve their areas. However if they will not respond then the Council should use all related powers to ensure improvement occurs.
- 7.6** Recent developments have begun to address these issues, in particular with operations becoming more outcome based, greater use of customer engagement, and research that has sought out good practice in delivering value from other similar councils. By developing services that are closer to communities and neighbourhoods through area based supervision and delivery, there is every reason to believe that the key aims of reducing costs and improving customer satisfaction can be achieved without materially affecting objective street cleaning performance.
- 7.7** Cost reductions have been identified which support the budget strategy savings of £120,000 for 2010/11 by restructuring the street cleaning function whilst maintaining the current high quality as measured by NI195. Through the course of this review, benchmarking indicates that there is further potential to improve the strategic positioning of this service to produce quality results for average or below average costs. Further work to evaluate the implications of further changes to the service will be undertaken during the current year.

8 Recommendations

- a. That option 3 for street cleaning outside of the town centre area is adopted, as a means of introducing a more flexible, community focussed area based approach, whilst making significant revenue savings (approximately £100k) without compromising the cleansing arrangements for Maidstone town centre or impacting on overall performance.
- b. That option A is introduced for the town centre operations in order that the new arrangements can continue to be monitored without significant disruption or reduction in cleanliness whilst achieving a slight saving to the overall street cleaning budget (approximately £15k)

- c. That reliance on small mechanical sweepers is reduced to yield a saving of approximately £8k. This option is not expected to result in any reduction in the quality of the service and may actually improve the service by allowing more detailed cleaning to take place.
- d. That further development of town centre operations is considered over the forthcoming 12 months to review the values of option B or C.
- e. That flexibility within the operations team continues to be developed.
- f. That routine monitoring of the service is developed to give a more representative measure of performance over the whole course of the cleaning cycle and away from being a snap-shot on the day of cleaning to better reflect the customer's experience of street cleanliness.
- g. That greater use is made of performance monitoring results to develop the service and to assist in the targeting resources into the areas of greatest need.
- h. That working with partners is further developed to improve the perception of the Borough as a whole to help overcome cleanliness issues relating to land which is not owned or controlled by Maidstone Borough Council. However if partners are not willing to improve their areas that the Council use all necessary powers to ensure the improvement occurs.
- i. That future campaigns continue to engage the community and encourage reduction in chewing gum litter, cigarette litter, litter associated with high schools and teenagers and litter associated with fast food outlets
- j. The underlying message with these campaigns should be to promote pride in the area and the cleanliness of the area.
- k. That enforcement against people who drop litter or allow their dogs to foul public areas is further developed as a tool to change people's behaviour.
- l. To continue to develop the enforcement function as a proactive, intelligence driven team which aims to engage residents through its activities as well as enforce against environmental crimes.
- m. That high visibility campaigns both in cleansing and enforcement are undertaken to promote the service and inform public perception and satisfaction.
- n. That further options and potential implications are identified to improve the council's strategic positioning of the street cleaning operation to deliver good/high performance at average or below average cost.