

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2014**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND SHARED  
SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Jennifer Shepherd**

**1. REVIEW OF THE STREET CLEANSING SERVICE**

1.1 Issue for Consideration

- 1.1.1 To consider the conclusions and recommendations identified from the review into the Street Cleansing Service.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Environment and Street Scene

It is recommended:

- 1.2.1 That the Committee notes the work which has been undertaken as part of the Review; and
- 1.2.2 That the Committee considers the recommendations identified within the review and makes further recommendations as appropriate.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Background

- 1.3.2 The Council is committed to continually developing street cleansing operations to ensure Maidstone is a clean and tidy borough. Over the past 2 months a review of the Street Cleansing Service has been carried out to identify the core cleansing requirements for the borough and the service best suited to achieve the required standards.
- 1.3.3 It has been recognised that the fabric of the Borough has changed significantly over the past few years along with the needs of our residents and visitors. Therefore our current service may no longer fit the evolving environment.

1.3.4 The purpose of the Review was to identify whether the current service meets the needs of residents and visitors to the Borough and is able to adapt to future challenges.

1.3.5 The key objectives of the Review were:

- To provide greater transparency and visibility of the Service
- To ensure the Service reflects the actual needs of the borough, particularly the 24/7 culture and diverse geography of the area
- To ensure the Service is robust and able to adapt to change more effectively
- To provide a service which offers greater attention to detail and good levels of cleanliness across the Borough

1.3.6 The last significant change to the Street Cleansing Service was in 2010 when Area Based Cleansing was introduced. This enabled the service to make substantial efficiency savings by focusing cleansing on streets which fell below the required standard. However this did not substantially change the staff structure or working arrangements.

1.3.7 This Review has enabled a more comprehensive analysis of the Service.

1.3.8 The current service is based on the Borough being split into three areas; the Town Centre, Area A – the west of the Borough and Area B – the east of the Borough. There are 31 frontline operatives within the Cleansing Team, excluding the Support Crew and those responsible for cleaning public conveniences.

1.3.9 At present the work is split between core hours and paid overtime. The majority of reactive work, such as the removal of fly tipping, as well as scheduled cleansing outside of the Town Centre is only carried out during core hours which are 6am to 2pm Monday to Thursday and 6am to 1.30pm on Fridays.

1.3.10 In 2013/14, the Street Cleansing Service cost just over £1.5 million, with £529,780 spent on direct salary costs and an additional £123,600 spent on overtime payments.

#### 1.3.11 Work Undertaken

1.3.12A significant amount of work has been undertaken to understand the current needs of the Borough, the levels of cleansing required, appropriate productivity levels and identify the most effective and efficient service which meets these needs.

1.3.13 The following detailed work has been carried out:

- Analysis of current working structure and practices
- Previous changes to the Service
- Review of team structures
- Information gathering from the private sector and other local authorities
- The level of cleansing required to achieve a good standard across the Borough
- Benchmarking proposals against the private and public sector

1.3.14 As a result of this work, a Street Cleansing Directory has been produced which details the cleansing requirements for every road within the Borough. This also includes the centreline length data for the street enabling productivity to be measured.

#### 1.3.15 Review Conclusions

1.3.16 The Review has identified that the current productivity levels are below that of comparable services, with a high reliance on overtime to cover essential, core duties.

1.3.17 The main reason for this is that the Service has been continually developed over a long period of time in an effort to make it fit the changing needs of the Borough. However this has resulted in lower levels of efficiency and a fragmented structure.

1.3.18 It is therefore recommended that a complete re-design of the Service is carried out to enable increased productivity levels and performance standards to be set and the resource tailored accordingly. This will ensure the Service is specifically designed to meet the needs of the Borough.

1.3.19 The current team structure also does not support a high level of efficiency and a more structured management model is required.

1.3.20 The Review has also highlighted the need for a higher level of detailed cleansing to improve customer satisfaction and ensure the service can deliver a consistently good level of cleanliness.

#### 1.3.21 Proposal

1.3.22 Based on the conclusions above and the information identified during the Review, it is recommended that a task-based team is introduced with a greater focus on detailed manual cleansing. This will provide an increased visual presence and allow time to achieve a greater attention to detail. There would also be a re-introduction of hit squads to deal with responsive issues alongside the retention of inspection-based cleansing teams for scheduled cleansing of residential areas.

- 1.3.23 The team would include a higher number of barrow beats, staff patrolling on foot, enabling closer attention to detail in areas of high footfall and on key routes, such as the removal of weeds.
- 1.3.24 The large mechanical sweeping vehicle schedules, operated by Biffa, have also been included in the Street Cleansing Directory. This will ensure that the mechanical and manual cleansing operations complement one another to provide a higher level of cleansing.
- 1.3.25A key area identified in the Review is the reliance on overtime to cover part of the core service. There is a concern regarding the reliability of the Service to continue this way. It is therefore recommended that as part of the new team structure we develop ways to incorporate this work into core hours. We will involve the workforce in the development of the detailed arrangements.
- 1.3.26 The proposed changes are mainly focused outside of Maidstone town centre which already receives a high standard of cleansing. This will ensure there is a greater presence outside of core hours in residential and rural areas including for the faster removal of fly tipping.
- 1.3.27 The roles within the new team will also be more clearly defined to ensure levels of responsibility are recognised and strong management lines are in place.
- 1.3.28 The proposal supports the work which has already been undertaken by the mobile technology project which allows residents to report issues online , meaning responsive requests can be dealt with swiftly and information can be passed easily back to the customer.
- 1.3.29 It is also recommended that a greater level of monitoring is carried out. Currently the levels of detritus and litter are recorded from sampled roads; however a more robust quality assurance monitoring regime will be introduced which builds upon this. This will become the responsibility of the Cleansing Manager.
- 1.3.30 Overall, the proposal has been developed to ensure the Service delivers a good level of cleansing across the Borough, taking into account the 24/7 culture, diverse geography and that it can continue to adapt to change.
- 1.3.31 Next Steps
- 1.3.32 The street cleansing staff affected have been briefed on the proposed changes and an initial discussion is being held with the Union representatives. Staff working groups will be set up to discuss the proposal and develop a more detailed plan.

1.3.33 This work will form part of the final recommendation which will be presented to the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Housing in early February 2015 for a decision.

1.3.34A full consultation will be carried out with staff following Portfolio Holder approval of the proposal and regular staff briefings will be held.

1.3.35 It is proposed that the final recommendation is implemented from April 2015, although this date will remain flexible until after the formal consultation process is completed.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 There are other options which could be introduced; however these are not recommended as they are unlikely to address the underlying issues identified with the service.

1.4.2 Alternative actions include:

- Implementing the service changes without changing team structure
- No changes to the core service, however changing overtime payments to reflect the role being carried out
- Retaining area-based approach but working outwards from the Town Centre
- Retain current service and structure

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Corporate and Customer Excellence – The proposal will increase the Council's ability to respond quickly to customers and a greater presence in areas of high footfall. The changes will also ensure a reliable and robust service is provided.

1.5.2 For Maidstone to be a decent place to live – The proposal will ensure increased cleansing is provided in areas of high footfall and the outskirts of Maidstone town centre, and that responsive requests across the borough are dealt with more swiftly.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The risks associated with the proposal relate specifically to the staff and consultation process. These risks will form part of the staff engagement and a full risk management strategy will be completed as part of the decision making process.

## 1.7 Other Implications

### 1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

X
X

1.7.2 Financial – In 2015/16, the recommended changes will not have any financial implications. However it is projected that there will be a saving of £50,000 per annum from 2016/17.

1.7.3 Staffing – A full consultation will be required with all staff affected and Union representatives. Staff will be engaged in the process throughout and will be given the opportunity to help develop the final proposal which is not expected to see a reduction in the number of staff

## 1.8 Relevant Documents

### 1.8.1 Appendices

1.8.2 None

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

**THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED**

Yes

☐

No

☒

If yes, this is a Key Decision because: .....

.....

Wards/Parishes affected: .....

.....