

# Achieving improvements in street cleansing & related services



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## Ministerial foreword

The quality of the local environment, and in particular standards of street cleansing, are increasingly becoming the barometer that the public uses to judge how well an area is being managed and its suitability as a place to live, work, visit or bring up a family.

Survey after survey have shown the importance the public attach to clean streets and that standards of street cleansing are a key factor in how people view their local council. There is no doubt that if the streets are dirty, people have less confidence that the council will be able to run its other services well.

The quality of the local environment, therefore, must be a central concern for Leaders of Councils and Chief Executives, as well as for responsible Cabinet Members, Service Directors, and Managers in ensuring and sustaining the prosperity of their districts.

I recognise that with constant pressures on local authority budgets, finding extra funding for street cleansing is not easy. As ENCAMS have reported, improved standards of street cleansing can often be achieved by using existing resources more effectively. This document is intended to help local authorities do this, and to improve their BV199 scores for street cleansing and contribute to the annual efficiency savings they need to find.

These internal improvements will be achieved through three broad areas of action:

- improving corporate management and inter-departmental co-ordination;
- enhancing skills and training at all levels of public service management and delivery;
- making detailed technical improvements, involving a range of professional disciplines in addition to street cleansing.

This document is part of a three year programme of action to improve local environmental service standards, led by Defra. It explains why local environmental quality must be a central corporate concern, outlines the main areas where improvements are needed, and signposts the training opportunities that are available, and indicates how any remaining training needs will be met.

Cleaner streets cannot be achieved solely through better cleansing – we need people to take responsibility for litter in the first place. This is why the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 gives local authorities a range of powers to deal with litter. We plan to bring these into force by April next year and I will be encouraging local authorities to make full use of them.

I look forward to working with you on this important, shared agenda!

**Ben Bradshaw MP**

# Preface

This document is published by Defra in support of its three-year Gershon Efficiency Review initiative to improve standards of street cleansing and related services. The department has been advised in this work by a Gershon Street Cleansing Working Group, made up of chief and senior officers from a range of representative bodies. Defra is grateful for the time and expert advice that has been given by the group members, who have also supplied many of the illustrations used in this and related texts.

## **Gershon Street Cleansing Working Group members**

- Birmingham City Council
- Blackburn with Darwen Metropolitan Borough Council
- Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
- Chartered Institute of Wastes Management
- Defra
- Ellesmere & Neston Borough Council
- ENCAMS
- Local Government Association
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Lewisham
- London Borough of Southwark
- Maidstone Borough Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

The work of the group was based on the Independent Review of Street Cleansing and Related Services, commissioned by Defra. A copy of the full text can be found at [www.XXXXXXXXXX](http://www.XXXXXXXXXX).

This document can also be accessed on the Defra website at [www.XXXXXXXXXXX](http://www.XXXXXXXXXXX)

# What is efficiency and how will it be measured?

In August 2003, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer commissioned Sir Peter Gershon to undertake an independent review into releasing major resources and redirecting them to frontline services with the aim of increasing overall efficiency.

The Review found that there was scope for some £20 billion pounds worth of efficiency savings across a range of government activities which could be used to boost frontline services. Local authorities are expected to contribute to this by finding savings of 2.5% a year, and Defra has been asked to ensure that efficiency savings of £299 million are found during the period 2005 to 2008 from waste and street cleansing, with £25 million coming from street cleansing.

Efficiency saving is all about getting more 'bang for your buck' – either reduced budgets while maintaining service levels, or a static budget with an increase in level of service. The former are 'cashable' in that they release cash that can be redirected to the frontline, while the latter are 'non-cashable'. We expect the majority of efficiency savings on street cleansing to be 'non-cashable, obtained by improved standards of performance as measured by BV199. This document is intended to help local authorities achieve these improved performance standards.

Efficiencies on street cleansing will form an element of Defra's Waste Implementation Programme's (WIP) wider work on efficiencies in waste procurement. In May 2005, the WIP team launched an Environmental Services Efficiency Toolkit<sup>1</sup> which gives local authorities a means to record the contribution that they are making on waste and street cleansing. The outputs from the toolkit can then be used directly for the Annual Efficiency Statements<sup>2</sup>. In addition, local authorities may wish to record improvements in BVPI 199 scores as a measure of efficiency savings. We will be circulating further guidance later in the year to help local authorities translate improvements in BV199 scores into 'non-cashable' efficiency savings.

## What is this document and how will it help you?

This document outlines the key findings of the Independent Review of Street Cleansing that was commissioned by Defra. It is intended to suggest areas of action for Council Leaders and Chief Executives and complimentary areas that local authority Cabinet Members and Service Directors might include in an efficiency review of their own street cleansing and related services in order to realise improvements. The full Defra Review document can be found at [www.XXXXX](http://www.XXXXX).

Defra has produced this guidance for local authorities to help them improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their street cleansing operations. The report examines how both the efficiency and quality of street cleansing, waste management and street scene services can be monitored and improved. It addresses the challenges associated with cleansing and local environmental quality, and offers strategies and solutions to overcome them. The document focuses more on the way efficiencies can be gained through strategic management decisions and how becoming more joined up can deliver better value for money and better quality services, rather than the

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rcoe.gov.uk/rce/aio/10785>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_localgov/documents/divisionhomepage/038244.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/divisionhomepage/038244.hcsp)

## **What is efficiency and how will it be measured?**

nuts and bolts of sweeping techniques. Increased quality of service often requires not extra resources but more effective use of existing budgets.

The key to achieving greater efficiency is better co-ordination in the planning and delivery of services, and investment in skills and management training across the sector. To this end, Defra will be working on a long-term programme, in conjunction with representative stakeholders, to deliver accredited training which will raise awareness and address the skills gaps identified in the industry.

# Striking the balance between....

## **Service efficiency and targeting the sources of problems**

The main focus of the Government's Gershon Efficiency Review has been on identifying ways of extracting more value from the way services are managed and executed, and this has been the case for this element of the Review.

Although the Gershon Street Cleansing Working Group recognised the importance of education, campaigning and enforcement directed at third parties who give rise to environmental problems, it was agreed that the focus of this document should be on how councils can improve the efficiency of their service delivery. Guidance on dealing with third-party effects on service standards will form part of the Government's roll out of its 'How to' programme and the implementation of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

The keys to achieving greater internal service efficiency are better corporate co-ordination; improved monitoring and delivery of individual services; and developing staff and management skills. Towards this end, Defra will be working on a long-term programme, in conjunction with representative stakeholders, to deliver accredited training where none already exists, which will raise awareness of, and address, the skills gaps that have been identified.

However, the drive for efficiency does not exist in isolation; it is intimately bound up with other reforms, such as Local Democratic Renewal, and the fact that the communities we serve and the individuals that comprise them are more diverse and changing faster than at any time in living memory. Therefore, services also need to be reviewed to ensure that they are best meeting customers' needs.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have a Performance Agreement which sets out the council's 18 key priorities. The Environmental Improvements priority includes the area of street cleansing and LEQ issues. The council reports to its elected members in relation to each priority at least once a quarter and through scrutiny.

## The basic relationship...

### **Local environmental quality is intimately linked to land use**

When the Annual Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (LEQSE) was devised, research showed that land use was the most stable structure upon which to base it. Each of the selected land uses is associated with a distinctive pattern of LEQ issues and problems.

Land uses are defined by the economic activities taking place within them the characteristics of the people and organisations that inhabit them, and the physical forms of the developments that accommodate them. These factors, compounded by attributes related to geographical location, generate significant differences in local environmental quality, including litter and other arisings.

Some land uses show greater differences in terms of littering and other challenges to street cleansing, e.g. 'Secondary Retail and Commercial Areas', 'High Density Housing Areas' and 'Other Highways'. Within land uses, different locations can be more littered than others, sometimes at different times.

Differences may occur on a daily, weekly or seasonal basis. For example, weekend nights in regional entertainment centres, and in seaside resorts when the weather is good. Other littering peaks relate to events such as sports matches, festivals, protests and celebrations.

The advent of the night time economy has also seen more people on the streets using pubs, restaurants and entertainment venues until later in the evening, leading to increased highway blockages. This has meant that the window for significant street cleansing has been cut to as little as 3 hours in every 24 (or even less). Service costs have correspondingly escalated for affected councils.

Social, economic and physical environmental changes are happening all the time, and at faster rates than ever before. If they are not routinely monitored, tracked and understood, street cleansing and other related public services will increasingly fail to meet the needs of their communities.

### **Local environmental quality – the rising test of corporate performance**

Local authorities' local environmental service performance will play a much bigger role in the revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2005<sup>3</sup>. As part of the new environment block, councils will be scored on how well they maintain the local environment, using the extended version of the BVPI 199 on Street Cleanliness<sup>4</sup>, and the new BVPI218<sup>5</sup> on Abandoned Vehicles as indicators. Management of the local environment will now directly affect the corporate scores that local authorities receive. This will also allow the public to more easily benchmark the differing performance of local authorities in specific areas.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/CPA/Downloads/June05CPATheHarderTest.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.leq-bvpi.com>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_localgov/documents/divisionhomepage/037252.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/divisionhomepage/037252.hcsp)

## The key role of Council Leaders, Chief and Senior Officers

*“Local environmental issues are ‘touchstones’ that determine people’s happiness, their perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour, and the extent to which they feel cared for and respected by their council and other public agencies.”*

David Petford, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council

*“It is not just how much is spent on local environmental management, but how well it is spent. The public have every right to expect that we spend their money efficiently and we make sure that services are excellent. Civic leaders have a central role in leading the debate on how we achieve this”.*

Steve Bullock, Elected Mayor of Lewisham

The figures below show spend in street cleansing against customer satisfaction for the London Borough of Lewisham. This was significantly helped by tackling the causes of the high levels of staff sickness and absence, which reduced the amount spent on relatively inefficient agency staff.

	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5
Spend	£ 4,268,975	£ 4,094,603	£ 4,179,408
Resident Satisfaction % saying good – excellent	48%	53%	56%
Performance on BVPI 199	No comparable data available	Target 30%  33% of land as at unacceptable level of cleanliness	Target 30% and on target to achieve and even exceed.  21% of land as at unacceptable level of cleanliness

# Areas for action by Council Leaders and Chief Executives

The Defra report identified the following areas in which action by Council Leaders and Chief Executives is often necessary before the full range of efficiencies in local environmental services can be realised by the responsible Cabinet Members and Directors.

1. **Corporate monitoring of performance** – a corporate performance monitoring tool is needed in order to identify conflicts and other undesirable interactions between service departments – some of which are outlined below. This will ensure that Service Delivery Plans fully align with the Corporate Plan.
2. **Co-ordination** – where conflicts and inefficiencies are identified, political and executive leaders must resolve the sources of the problems if departments are to realise all the available service efficiencies.
3. **Design and maintenance standards** – common symptoms of lack of co-ordination and other problems between departments are: design solutions by one agency that create long-term maintenance problems for another; and, varying standards of maintenance for an activity that is carried out by more than one department.
4. **Estate and asset management** – unused and under-maintained buildings, landscaped sites, and damaged and redundant items of street furniture, are all too common hallmarks of public estate management, and frequent centres of poor local environmental quality. A more pro-active approach of assignment and disposal of assets is needed to overcome this widespread, *corporate* problem.
5. **Controlling capital and revenue commitments** – decayed assets are frequently symptoms of councils' past acceptance of capital funding (from Central Government and EU programmes, but increasingly from Lottery sources, also), and their failure to make adequate revenue provisions for the maintenance of the new assets. Better corporate methods of *linking and balancing* the maintenance of current and projected capital assets with current and projected revenue streams, are advocated.
6. **Knowing your customers** – in England, residents are both becoming increasingly diverse and behaving as *consumers* of public services, rather than as citizens. Furthermore, in most areas, turnover in named householders each year is significant, reaching up to 70% of properties a year in urban areas. In these circumstances, councils *need to know* exactly who their ever-changing customers are if they are to communicate effectively and deliver common services that are fit for widely varying need. The Review Report recommends that councils adopt more advanced, but cost-effective, 'Qual-Quant' market research methods pioneered by successful businesses, if they are to deliver public services that are both efficient and meet the needs of their increasingly diverse customers.

7. **Skills development** – Cutting across all the research for this review was the need for more and better training for all levels of staff involved in public services. Five main areas were identified where skills deficits currently exist:

- systematic service monitoring and management;
- service delivery strategy development and tactical delivery;
- staff training and motivation;
- knowing your customers and adapting services to their varied needs (and using the information gained in),
- better targeting of communications, campaigns and enforcement at the minorities of people and organisations that give rise to local environmental quality problems.

### Drawing a consistent line in the sands

Additionally, the Gershon Street Cleansing Working Group identified the need for Leaders and Chief Executives of Councils to ensure that a consistent approach is taken towards *all* types of enforcement action. This was needed in order that local people and organisations understand where the 'local line in the sands' is drawn, defining the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and public rights and personal responsibilities.

Finally, the Working Group emphasised the importance of partnerships and the central role played by Council Leaders and Chief Executives in promoting, establishing and sustaining these important relationships. Government is committed to extending and making central-local government partnerships more effective. Successful local partnerships, whether formal (such as LSPs and CDRPs), or informal ones involving all sections of the community are, perhaps, the most important test of Civic Leadership.

### Achieving efficiencies – The role of central government

The last three years have seen Local Environmental Quality rise sharply up the political agenda in response to public demand. The Government is fully committed to improving people's quality of life through its *Cleaner, Safer, Greener* agenda, which encompasses Defra, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Home Office, and others. Towards this end, a number of support and performance monitoring mechanisms have been introduced to ensure that local authorities deliver quality local environments, including: the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005; a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target on 'liveability'; the Nuisance Vehicle Strategy; and new and improved Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) on street cleanliness, graffiti, flyposting, flytipping and abandoned vehicles. A number of 'How To' guides to help practitioners deliver quality services in town centres, residential areas and parks and open spaces have also been introduced.

## **Areas for action by Council Leaders and Chief Executives**

Defra's three-year Gershon Improvement Initiative forms an important part of the Government's support for local authorities. The main components are:

- **Providing an officer to advise on using the expanded BVPI 199** (June 2005)
- **Raising corporate awareness of the importance of local environmental quality** (Autumn 2005)
- **Seminars for local environmental services cabinet members and directors** (Autumn 2005)
- **Cleaner, safer greener technical seminar series** (September 2005, onwards)
- **Publication of more information on local environmental quality service improvement** (Autumn 2005)
- **Publication of Guide to Existing Training Provision** (Autumn 2005)
- **Development of additional training to fill gaps in provision** (August 2005)
- **Periodic reviews of progress and support needs with local authorities**

The government recognises that although there is scope for increased efficiencies, there is currently a raft of good practice and forward strategic thinking being implemented by many local authorities. This programme aims not only to publicise and celebrate examples of current good practice, but also to build on it, raising local environmental service standards still higher.

## Summary : 5 challenges – 15 actions

The 15 points below summarise what actions can be taken by Cabinet Members and Service Directors in order to realise efficiency savings on street cleansing. The remainder of the report will explain these in more detail and give further guidance where necessary. It is recognised that many local authorities will already have implemented some of these action points. The list is not regarded, therefore, as a blanket indicator of what needs to be implemented across the country. However, in order to get the best possible value for money for its electorate, it is important that a council ensures that the maximum number of applicable actions are introduced.

### **Challenge 1: systematic monitoring and service management**

**Action Point 1 – Create corporate service performance monitoring systems.** This will assess the relative performance of different services, and identify inter-service conflicts and relevant changing social and economic factors.

**Action Point 2 – Create departmental service monitoring systems.** These should not only inform the departmental cleansing strategy and monitor service performance, but identify the sources and causes of performance shortfalls. The system's operation should be integrated with corporate market research, and demographic, social, cultural and economic trends data.

**Action Point 3 – Use effective quality assurance systems.** If a quality assurance system is used, its purpose should be focused on consistent and improving service quality, not limited to auditing production processes in isolation from service outputs.

**Action Point 4 – Develop effective financial measures.** Both corporately and departmentally to assess the effectiveness of service specifications and to assist in deciding the best allocation of resources. Measures should address both direct and indirect costs and benefits.

### **Challenge 2: Overcoming Impediments to Service Delivery**

**Action Point 5 – Develop a comprehensive cleansing service delivery strategy**

**Action Point 6 – Develop corporate strategies, policies, procedures and design standards.** To address current problems and prevent them reoccurring.

**Action Point 7 – Create a corporate service improvement programme.** Using information from corporate and departmental monitoring systems, the Corporate Centre should drive a programme that is focused, first on eradicating inter-departmental and corporate causes of service shortfalls, then on identifying ways of improving service standards. This should include identifying new ways of delivering services that traditionally have been managed separately.

**Action Point 8 – Improve corporate financial and asset management.** This would ensure that capital expenditure is matched by adequate revenue funds and the clear allocation of departmental responsibility to maintain assets. There should be a regular review of assets in terms of their management, use, development and retention or disposal.

## Summary : 5 challenges – 15 actions

**Action Point 9 – Employ suitable contractual frameworks.** For all public services, even if they are managed and delivered 'in-house'. Contracts should be seen not as representing a particular ideological perspective but a proven method of managing resources and processes.

### Challenge 3: Adapting services to social and economic change

**Action Point 10 – Adopt a 'qual-quant' approach to market research.** So that the impacts of demographic and economic factors can be monitored, particularly at the sub-ward level. The use of carefully profiled, independent 'Mystery Shoppers' is also recommended.

**Action Point 11 – Ensure all aspects of service are adjusted to local geographical and seasonal variations.** In terms of both the capital equipment involved and the way maintenance operations are devised and delivered.

### Challenge 4: Staff training and motivation

**Action Point 12 – Provide appropriate training and change management support.** When significant alterations in service structures and methods are introduced. Routinely, ensure that staff clothing and equipment are smart and maintained in a clean condition; that continued training is provided to staff and that they are involved in service monitoring and improvement processes.

### Challenge 5: Targeted communication, campaigning & enforcement

**Action Point 13 – Engage with the community.** Think about community-based service development workers, local 'one stop shops', and improvement in facilities for young people.

**Action Point 14 – Know your customers.** Carry out geodemographic studies and fit-for-purpose questionnaires.

**Action Point 15 – Actively enforce against enviro crimes.** Raising awareness and consistently applying enforcement measures is central to maintaining high LEQ standards.



# Challenges and solutions

### Challenge 1: Systematic monitoring and service management

#### Action Point 1 – Create corporate service performance monitoring systems

#### Action Point 2 – Create departmental service monitoring systems

The low importance attached to monitoring systems is perhaps the single biggest factor leading to inefficiencies in street scene services.

A routine, systematic and effective monitoring system should be applied to all street cleansing and street scene services.

Existing monitoring systems are usually partial and hard to verify. When applied to service management, the data can distort the allocation of resources, and lead either to over-optimistic or unduly pessimistic conclusions about service performance.

As another support measure, the Government recently introduced the new Best Value Performance Indicator BV199. Local authorities have a central role in delivering good quality local environments and it is vital that there are performance management systems in place to ensure this is being achieved. The results are evaluated in light of the independent national findings from the annual Local Environmental Quality Survey of England, carried out by ENCAMS on behalf of Defra

Apart from improving street cleanliness, one of the main aims of BVPI 199 is to install a basic, routine monitoring system in local authorities in England, to develop within them an appreciation of its management benefits, and to allow them to make continuous improvements.

#### General characteristics of a monitoring system

A sound monitoring system must:

- reflect customers' interests, yet be fair to the contractor;
- be cost-effective;
- make routine and reliable assessments;
- create and maintain a database on service performance and on the operation of the system itself;
- be a tool that enables service improvement through analysis of the data;
- provide a common language of communication for partners involved in the delivery of the service;
- be able to verify the proper expenditure of public monies;
- provide evidence that would stand up to scrutiny in the event of a legal or other dispute.



### Other aspects of monitoring

Other areas that should be routinely monitored for their impacts on efficiency are:

- changes in local communities through the sensible and regular use of market research;
- Meteorological Office five-day weather forecasts to predict intermittent and seasonal weather events that affect littering and service delivery, including wind, sunshine, frosts and snow; and
- ensuring that street service managers are routinely informed by events managers and police about civic, entertainment and political events and protests.

### Using IT and other communications to monitor service delivery

The rapidly widening range of mobile computing and communication technologies that are being introduced at affordable prices, offer tremendous opportunities for public service providers to improve their speed of response, diagnosis of the sources and causes of problems, and service standards. Some authorities are already innovating and benefiting from these technical advances.

At present, there is a relatively low level of IT use within street cleansing departments, and the level of connectivity of different technologies remains low.

The appropriate use of IT can considerably improve communications within a local authority's service departments. Simply equipping operatives with radios, mobile phones, or other remotely connected data collection devices can ensure that a constant stream of information is fed back to the service centre, improving response times and monitoring capability.

## Challenges and solutions

Electronic collection of site information; Global Positioning System (GPS) stamping; monitoring data, complaints and other computer records that are shared by the service delivery partners; and the use of Global Information System (GIS) to plot and analyse data on a spatial basis are all options to local authorities following recent technological advances – and with competition rife, these are often inexpensive in relation to the benefits they bring.

There is also central government support to help local authorities realise the potential of having e-strategies. The Government has developed a national strategy in order to communicate a common vision for local e-government, with a supporting website<sup>6</sup>. The site provides detailed resource packs to help local authorities e-enable their organisations.

the London Borough of Lewisham has equipped a wide range of its staff with Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to allow them to report a broad spectrum of environmental problems, using their Cam2Web software<sup>7</sup>. This has enabled the involvement of refuse drivers and many other front line operatives in reporting fly-tipping and graffiti. Additionally, the Mayor, Chief Executive and many councillor have been equipped with the device and they regularly report problems back to base. Street Wardens, Town Centre Managers and the Grounds Maintenance Contractor use the device to liaise with operational staff and resolve problems. The web application displays the photos and allows people to see what action has been taken to deal with an issue. This is particularly rewarding for refuse operatives who are able, for the first time to see effective enforcement action being taken against regular offenders. This helps emphasise their role as part of a wider environmental team rather than a narrow waste collection service. Cam2Web allows Lewisham to deal with problems much more effectively, long before they become an annoyance to residents. It also helps keep problems out of the casework system, allowing them to focus resources on improving the environment rather than administering complaints.

The London Borough of Hounslow has introduced a vehicle tracking system which covers street cleansing and waste collection services.

The installation is quick and only takes a couple of hours to install on each vehicle.

Once the system is up and running a variety of information can be retrieved, including:

- Observing the route a vehicle is using by way of a snail trail, to identify if the vehicle is following the most efficient route.
- Setting the computer to run reports on any vehicles that are exceeding speed limits (these reports can be set to run automatically at any frequency).
- Programming in any known areas for monitoring, areas such as cafés, home addresses etc to see if any vehicles stop there over a period of time. This report can be automatic and the time period can be altered to reflect policies on breaks.
- Reports showing the exact movement of each vehicle, including speed and road names.

cont.

<sup>6</sup> [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> [www.cam2web.co.uk](http://www.cam2web.co.uk)

The tracker also has a playback facility that allows the viewing of vehicles, either separately or in groups on any day, to give information such as:

- Location of vehicle
- Time vehicle was in road
- Speed vehicle was travelling
- If the engine was switched off
- If the vehicle was idling

Hounslow now use the tracker to check insurance claims and to carry out ad-hoc monitoring of the workforce.

All staff are aware of the system and how accurate the information obtained from it can be.

### Action Point 3 – Use effective quality assurance systems

Formal, independently verified contract Quality Assurance systems tend to be accredited systems operating under ISO9000 and its successors.

In the past, these systems have tended to fail to contribute directly to service output quality because they focused on process management: issues such as the maintenance and fuelling of vehicles, rather than with the quality of sweeping delivered by the vehicles. Although this picture is now changing, it is important that quality systems are focused, firstly on service outputs, and secondly on process inputs.

### Action Point 4 – Develop effective financial measures

#### Estimating external costs and benefits of a service

Much public service cost results from the actions of third parties. High and low service standards can impact on the perceptions, and therefore the decisions of third parties. These can include existing and potential *quality* investors in an area. There is generally little awareness of these effects.

An effective financial measure of these impacts would assist in justifying appropriate levels of investment in different public services.

For cleansing a measure such as *Net cost / kilometre or m<sup>2</sup> of **effective** sweeping achieved* could be considered. This would measure how much different technologies cost to produce a given length / area of satisfactory output. It would allocate costs associated with a given technique and divide it by the quantity of effective service (only) that is achieved in a given period.

### Challenge 2: Overcoming Impediments to Service Delivery

#### Action Point 5 – Develop a comprehensive cleansing strategy for service delivery

A coherent, comprehensive strategy is essential to deliver an efficient, quality cleansing service. Such a strategy should consider:

- **the appropriateness of the cleansing technology being applied** in relation to physical characteristics and patterns of activities throughout the area;
- **the mix of techniques**, especially the quantity and quality of sweeping that is being achieved;
- **the timing of service delivery** – to maximise sweeping quality and to make most effective use of resources;
- **the skills and diligence of the operatives** – to ensure not only that the quality and quantity of cleansing is being maximised, but also that tactical responses to changing circumstances are optimised;
- **setting up a service development function** that evaluates routine data from service monitoring and feedback from operatives, customers, councillors and other stakeholders; and
- **where applicable, establishing a contract management system**

#### The effective use of equipment & methods

Developing a sound cleansing strategy means using the most suitable method at the optimum time.

In a country where between 50% and 80% of urban highways and footways are typically obstructed by parked vehicles, street furniture and other objects, it is an aspect of street cleansing where significant efficiencies can be achieved.

In the case of one particularly misaligned cleansing strategy, ENCAMS estimated that 80% of the £1million cleansing budget was being wholly or substantially wasted on unsuitable cleansing methods.

At Southwark Council a systematic approach is employed when assessing and implementing the street cleansing needs of the borough. Both mechanical and manual sweepers are employed within the London Borough of Southwark, the most effective usage of both these cleaning methods is ascertained via a five-step process (See Diagram).

Each road is inspected and scored using the BVPI 199 methodology on littering and detritus. This information is then collected and stored into a database and independent verification on the information collated is undertaken three times a year by ENCAMS. All Southwark's Area Managers and street supervisors have been trained on BVPI 199.

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Once a cleaning schedule is in place using the five-step method, the whole delivery plan is then reviewed quarterly to ensure it achieves the results expected without wasting resources. This is done by:

- Monitoring data
- Random inspections
- Customer feedback
- Staff feedback
- Trial changes to frequencies to assess impact

A fundamental annual review ensures all five steps are repeated annually, which enables the street sweeping delivery plan to remain fluid and responsive.

Southwark Council also inspects 10% of its roads each week: any roads that fail more than twice are mapped and gradually any 'hot-spot' areas become apparent. This information is used to concentrate available resources into the problem areas until they have been resolved.

### Five step structure





### Litter picking

Over the last 20 years, many English authorities have relied increasingly on litter picking, due to the popular view is that it is cheaper than sweeping. Unfortunately in relation to litter, it can usually only achieve Grade B (predominantly free of litter and refuse apart from some small items) in circumstances where Grade A (no litter or refuse) could be achieved using diligent sweeping<sup>8</sup>.

Litter picking is unable to remove detritus, and is often ineffective with wet litter, blossom fall, and most leaves and twigs.

There are circumstances however where litter picking is appropriate, for example on granular and grassed surfaces and landscaped planting beds.

The high levels of detritus and the low achievement of Cleanliness Grades A and B+ identified by the LEQSE, are largely the results of councils' over reliance on litter picking. BV199 is seeking to reverse this trend through the inclusion of detritus as part of the indicator.

### Manual sweeping

As litter picking has increased, *effective* manual sweeping has declined sharply. Despite extensive research by ENCAMS over 15 years, including observation and measurement of different types of cleansing activity related to the cleansing standard achieved, there is no proof that sweeping is more expensive than litter picking.

<sup>8</sup> The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse sets out cleansing standards in relation to a local authority duty under the Environment Protection Act 1990 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/litter/index.htm#foodcop>

What research has shown is that, compared to diligent manual sweeping on paved surfaces, litter picking does not achieve as high a standard of cleanliness, and in many circumstances *it took longer than sweeping and achieved a poorer standard.*

Effective manual sweeping requires operatives to be properly equipped with a suitable range of brushes and to be trained in their correct and effective use. All too often one or both of these criteria is lacking, leading to ineffective, or even no use being made of the brushes.

### Mechanical sweeping

Most equipment in England can be divided into four categories:

- small *pedestrian operated* pavement sweepers;
- small *ride-on* sweepers for pedestrian areas, precincts and some light channel sweeping;
- small-medium sized *ride-in* precinct and road channel sweepers, which some authorities also use for pavement sweeping;
- medium-large higher output, vehicle mounted road channel sweepers.

In line with the rise in litter picking has been the increasing use of mechanical sweeping equipment, which promises higher productivity in return for *considerably higher capital and revenue costs.* Unfortunately, four issues frequently compromise this aim:

- *pavement and channel obstruction;*
- *mechanical reliability;*
- *operational standards;* and
- *unproductive* time when vehicles are driving from operational bases to work sites.

All these factors increase considerably the *net cost / kilometre or m<sup>2</sup> of **effective** sweeping achieved.*

### Timing of service delivery

Considerable efficiencies can be achieved in urban districts through more careful timing of service delivery.

Although high density housing areas can be continually obstructed, this does not apply to other land uses. Unfortunately, many activities either preclude effective sweeping during standard hours, or do not create litter until after 1700 hours (for example, pubs, night clubs).

Due to a culture of fixed hours working, relatively few councils exploit the potential for high-quality, cost-effective cleansing by timing their operations to take place when areas are free of traffic and other activities.

Noise sensitivity and cost are often given as reasons for not adopting more flexible operating times. However, many of the affected areas do not contain large resident populations, and there is considerable scope to adopt and develop quieter cleansing techniques.

## Challenges and solutions

The benefits of carefully timed operations can be dramatic:

- all industrial areas in one medium-sized metropolitan district could be swept to a high standard at night in half a shift using a large channel sweeper. The same machine had failed to sweep most of the areas during the scheduled day-time shifts;
- the café-bar, pub and night-club culture can generate large amounts of food and packaging litter. Many councils do not clean the affected areas until the following morning, due to the health and safety risks to staff. Yet research shows there are often 'windows of opportunity' for vehicle-based staff to carry out basic cleansing operations to remove most of the putrescible and packaging wastes.
- Evening through to early morning cleansing operations would be routinely applicable also on many main roads and in secondary retail areas.



## Detritus and weeds

Poor cleansing strategies can result in accumulations of unswept detritus, and weed growth from seeds germinating in moist detritus.

Detritus mainly comprises decayed and eroded organic matter, particles derived from surrounding structures, and a variety of small, unidentifiable materials derived from old litter. A significant and *avoidable* source of detritus is uncollected grass cuttings.

The proportion of weeds loosely rooted in detritus can be up to 30% where widespread accumulations have lain for extended periods. Large accumulations of detritus built up over months and years can contribute to the 'uncared for' impression an area exudes.

### The potential for innovation

While technology has moved on in both street cleansing and waste collection over the last 15 years, the pace of change has been relatively slow, with a general lack of innovation.

However there is considerable scope for innovation in street cleansing through:

- creating strategies that do not start from pre-conceived ideas of how cleansing has always been done;
- considering technologies outside the limited range of 'municipal' machinery commonly used;

Example: some industrial cleaning equipment uses different, robust and effective technologies; some landscape and horticultural machinery makes effective use of blowing, suction and mechanical picking methods; while electric powered vehicles of all sizes could provide quiet, environmentally preferable platforms on which to mount a range of (sound-proofed) devices.

- encouraging local and central government to rethink existing regulations and system specifications relating to wastes arising from micro-businesses, extended family units, and one/two person households.

The London Borough of Islington introduced a pilot scheme in the Upper Street area called the 'Green Bag Scheme' after it was realised that their commercial streets were looking dirty, untidy and cluttered, due in part to black sacks/ carrier bags of waste being left out on the kerb-side and cluttering the highway all day.

Islington spoke to their waste collection contractor and asked if they would be prepared to introduce a collection during the night ( 7 days of the week) for residential waste in the main thoroughfares, which they agreed to do.

As a result of this the enforcement team delivered 30 green sacks and an explanation letter to each property in Upper Street, asking the occupier to use these for 30 days and to put out their refuse as they went to bed or after 9pm. They also requested the residents to inform the council of any problems with this arrangement, for any other feedback or alternative suggestions for their refuse collection.

A positive difference was seen almost immediately, which has continued. To date, no additional cost has been imposed by the contractor who sees the benefits of the service in the way the street sweeper can do a more effective job, the litter bins are less full as refuse is no longer deposited in them, and there is less fly-tipped waste to collect throughout the day. Independent street surveys have also shown a marked improvement in cleanliness.



### Action Point 6 – Develop corporate strategies, policies, procedures and design standards

Areas where councils could achieve greater efficiency by becoming more 'joined-up' include:

include:

- *implementing corporate policies, standards, design guidance and procedures across all departments (e.g. maintenance departments are consulted over the ease of cleansing of proposed developments);*
- *ensuring cohesive control of council land holdings, to address the issue of variable maintenance standards or areas with no departmental accountability;*
- *minimising the crossover of similar functions being undertaken by different departments (for example, cleansing and horticultural maintenance);*
- *increasing the levels of inter-departmental accountability to prevent one service causing difficulties for another;*
- *Addressing the issue of significantly different resources being available to different departments for similar functions on different land holdings.*

In 2001, Maidstone Borough Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee examined the issue of fly-tipping in response to a sudden dramatic increase in the number of incidents. The report led to improved joined-up working on two levels: internally within the Council and externally with partners.

Internally, a number of Council departments had historically been responsible for prosecuting fly-tipping offences: Environmental Services, Environmental Health and Legal Services. The report led to the production of a flowchart showing how the various departments should interact and to the establishment of targets in the Council's Strategic Plan for the number of fixed penalty notices issued for fly-tipping and littering offences. This work has culminated in

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the appointment of two full-time 'enviro-crime' officers in the Council's most recent budget agreed in March 2005.

Externally, the Council has been promoting joined-up working with partners to tackle issues such as abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping. Maidstone pioneered an 'intelligence-led' approach to dumped cars through Operation Cubit – a multi-lateral task force involving the Police, DVLA, county and district councils. The initiative led to a meeting with the then Minister for the Environment to examine how the scheme could be rolled out across the country. A similar campaign has now been set up to tackle fly-tipping by targeting unlicensed waste carriers.

### **Action Point 7 – Create a corporate service improvement programme**

Local authorities could achieve efficiencies by reviewing the processes they and their partners are responsible for, and the effectiveness of existing corporate structures and procedures. The choice is often perceived as being between taking blanket action or taking no action. Evidence indicates that targeted action is not only more affordable, but is the best approach for most LEQ issues.

Corporate governance and technical issues that can affect street cleansing are:

#### **Domestic and commercial waste collection**

Most waste systems perform satisfactorily, resulting in small amounts of spillage.

Service delivery problems, especially waste collection and recycling, generally occur with a minority of residents and smaller businesses.

Common shortfalls include:

- inadequate containers for extended family groups and households with large outputs;
- unsuitable provision for properties in multiple occupation and 'above-the-shop' bed-sits;
- the lack of any or suitable commercial waste services for 'micro-businesses'. As a result, commercial waste is placed out and collected either by the domestic refuse service or by the street cleansing service, and many proprietors take waste home and place it in their domestic bin.

Some local authorities still use plastic sacks for domestic, and especially commercial waste. These can increase littering by up to nine times over levels achieved by well-specified and operated wheeled bin systems.

### Recycling systems

Some local authorities provide exemplary recycling facilities. Problems experienced by others include:

- 'bring' sites being heavily littered because there are no containers for the carrier bags and boxes used to bring recyclables, and/or because the sites are not routinely swept;
- 'kerbside' sorting and collection schemes that spill from open topped boxes;

micro-businesses are often forbidden from using public facilities, but can find they have no other cost effective recycling options available.

### Remedial design and works

Local authorities can rarely afford to replace large capital works simply because the original design was poor from cleansing or other maintenance perspectives.

Similarly, as the layouts of some areas become out-dated it is not possible or necessarily desirable for them to be comprehensively redeveloped. A rolling review of a district's fabric, with a view to improving ease of cleansing, through a programme of remedial design and improvement works, can be cost-effective.

### Highways

There is considerable potential to improve efficiency and service standards within the highways function.

The main problem areas are:

- *design and detailing* – which can aid or hinder effective cleansing. This particularly affects pedestrian areas, where poor placement of street furniture is a major impediment. Other issues include paved surfaces with joints that retain small items, and surface colours that emphasise chewing gum and other staining.
- *maintenance and works* – badly maintained infrastructure is difficult to cleanse and encourages weed growth, and poorly managed works create litter, detritus and obstruction; and
- *traffic management* – effective planning and enforcement plays a major role in improving street cleansing by restricting the obstruction caused by parked vehicles.

### Economic development, planning and urban design

These three areas should function closely together. Otherwise, consequences can include:

- the drive for jobs and grant-funded development overwhelming the other two processes;
- the pressure to grant planning permission within prescribed time limits resulting in details crucial to long-term maintainability being overlooked; and
- urban design schemes funded through voluntary contributions from developers or from heritage grant funds, placing emphasis on design and aesthetic considerations over ease of maintenance.



### Landscape design and public space management

The long-term decline in parks and public open spaces has been well documented, and its reverse is now being championed by Cabi Space.

However all types of landscaped areas, from native landscapes to small container planting, are often under-maintained and littered.

Common challenges are:

- a lack of corporately agreed landscape strategies, policies and procedures;
- many departments and agencies being involved in creating landscaped areas, which are not responsible for their long-term maintenance;
- many schemes are impractical for the locations where they are installed; and,
- maintenance being split between leisure and street cleansing functions, e.g. litter is not removed before grass is mown, making the area difficult to cleanse afterwards.

## Challenges and solutions

Actively and effectively managing the whole of the public realm through careful design is essential to ensure safe, attractive, convenient and sustainable spaces are created in which people feel comfortable to interact socially, economically and culturally.

A major project was recently undertaken in Southwark to tackle areas in the borough that were cluttered with street furniture and where signage was poorly designed and in a poor condition.

The Bellenden Renewal Area in Peckham exemplifies how artists, architects and designers have worked effectively with a community to improve a local area. A number of local artists (some internationally known) worked with the council and residents to design out various environmental issues and help address the negative stereotypes about the area.

Some of the projects undertaken included:

- Installation of specially designed street bollards, service covers, lampposts, bus stops, gates, seating, mosaic murals and children's play equipment;
- Pavements inscribed with poems chosen by the residents;
- Choumert Market, formerly a health hazard, was redesigned to reflect the culture of the large and long established Caribbean population.

The design and installation of street furniture was implemented to make it physically easier to clean the streets in the area.

The people living in Bellenden not only have an improved quality of life, but are part of a highly distinctive and sustainable community. The area has received national and international recognition and acclaim, and was awarded Visit London's Local Tourism Initiative Award last year.

### Action Point 8 – Improved corporate financial and asset management

There is a clear need for public bodies to develop a budgeting method where one side of the account details existing and proposed capital investments, and the opposite side lists the revenue costs of maintaining them. If the totals exceed the combined capital and revenue income available, decisions need to be taken to balance the account.

Two common instances where councils have inherited large areas of land and property with major cleansing and maintenance problems are:

- *ex-New Town Development Corporation (NTDC) areas*, which frequently have large areas of landscaping that local authorities struggle to maintain and cleanse;
- *ex-Urban Development Corporation (UDC) areas*, where the issues tend to be different. Although there is often extensive hard and soft landscaping provision, the main issue relates to one of responsibility for maintenance.
- *Lottery Funded Projects* – a similar pattern of capital investment and subsequent neglect and decline is being detected in some National Lottery funded schemes



Council departments can compound problems when such transfers of assets take place by being reluctant to accept responsibility over land for which there is no specific revenue provision.

Closely aligned to this is the allocation of departmental responsibility for new works and processes to ensure they are maintainable. Public assets tend to have low environmental standards where they are not actively maintained, especially where there is a reluctance to dispose of them.

Examples include:

- areas of land being held in the hope that the council would have the resources to build large-scale public housing schemes becoming heavily flytipped and littered;
- closed libraries, community and youth centres that are allowed to decay;
- inherited networks of unadopted roads and alleyways that are frequently littered and flytipped. *(Although the local authority may not be under a statutory duty to clear these areas, many do anyway. This not only makes a vast improvement to the amenity of an area but also stops repeat offences in the area).*

Public assets should be well maintained to safeguard their value, or be in a condition that will achieve full market value if it is decided to dispose of them.

During the 1990s following considerable concerns regarding security Maidstone Council closed off some alleyways in Coombe Farm. Following the closure no residents objected as security to the rear of their properties was considerably improved. They were given the opportunity to take the land into their gardens.

### Costs and benefits of transferring / disposing of unsupported assets

Alternatives for authorities that decide not to maintain an asset include:

- i. selling the asset to another public or private body;
- ii. renting the asset to a not-for-profit body to retain it in a publicly beneficial use;
- iii. transferring ownership to a third sector body to maintain the asset in beneficial use by accessing other income streams.

Birmingham City Council have taken an innovative approach to using derelict land.

They, alongside Groundwork and the Lozells Recreation Group transformed a derelict piece of land into a community recreation facility.

The owner of some waste land in Handsworth agreed to secure the site with fencing once it was cleared. The land is now being used as a car park for a local business which takes employees' cars off the road and removes competition with local residents for on-street parking.

### Lowest life-costs

In order to get maximum cost effectiveness from procured goods, it is essential to assess the capital and revenue costs incurred by an item of equipment over its serviceable life.

Although the lowest cost option, personal preference, manufacturers' claims and industry belief systems and 'showroom appeal' can all contribute to procurement decisions, they should not be the overriding factors.

As part of the National Procurement Strategy, the Government has set up 9 regional centres of procurement excellence, each hosted by a local authority, and which will build on the good practice that is already being achieved by some councils, buying consortia, and trading partnerships<sup>9</sup>.

### Litter bins

Several aspects of litter bins have financial implications for street cleansing services. These include:

- the extent to which their size is adequate;
- generally, the larger a bin, the lower the servicing cost per litre of litter emptied;
- the design of bins;
- open topped bins are prone to having litter spread from them;

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.constructingexcellence.org.uk/sectors/lgtf/nps/centres.jsp?level=1>



- plastic bins can suffer damage in some locations while metal bins corrode quickly in saline environments;
- some bin materials and designs are capable of being easily repaired, many are not.

Another factor is the way litter bins are often procured. Traditionally, many are bought towards the end of a financial year as a way of 'mopping up' budget surpluses. This means that:

- the number of bins ordered can often be small, resulting in relatively high unit costs. The fact that suppliers are under pressure between October and April means that prices can even be raised;
- Authorities tend to place orders for types of bin that may not be their preferred choice;
- Consequently, many councils have a large variety of different bins, which makes servicing problematic and requires an unnecessarily large inventory of spare parts and replacement units to be maintained;
- Large authorities can have in excess of £1million in capital deployed in their bins.

Finally, the placement as well as sizing of litter bins is of prime importance to their effectiveness. A litter bin placed outside the entrance to a fast food shop may be less effective than one placed 200 metres away where the food and packaging litter may be deposited.

### **CASE STUDY – MAIDSTONE AND LITTER BIN PROVISION**

Improved corporate policies, planning, design guidance, and inter-departmental working could bring about significant savings in relation to litter bins and many other items of street furniture.

### Action Point 9 – Employ suitable contractual frameworks

#### Are contracts necessary?

While the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) regime often led to low-cost, low-quality contracts, involving cumbersome and adversarial administrative mechanisms, it should not blind us to the benefits that a carefully constructed contract can bring to a service, even when it is being operated 'in-house'.

A good contract clearly sets out the scope of the work and the approach being taken; the time scales involved in discharging the various tasks; the costs of the work that is involved; how it will be measured and varied; as well as defining key terms and providing mechanisms, such as for contract communications and the resolution of disputes – all good management practice.

#### Input versus output contracts

The fundamental decision in devising a contract is what type of contract is most appropriate to the type of service and circumstances in question.

Our generalised conclusion is that an input specified contract is more suited to services that are predictable and which are capable of expansion or contraction on an easily evaluated, unit-cost basis. Some types of waste collection service could fall into this category, although the danger with input specified contracts is that the specifier can open themselves up to considerable costs if the stated inputs prove inadequate for the task.

However, for services that are subject to unpredictable fluctuations in demand, input specified contracts can be too rigid, resulting in many cost adjustments being required throughout the life of the contract to take account of variations in service. These can be both difficult to estimate accurately and administratively costly.

For services such as these (including street cleansing, and perhaps recycling during the market development stage) output measured contracts can provide a more flexible basis. However, accurate information is still needed about the size and characteristics of the service if tendering contractors are to be able to devise sound resourcing strategies that are competitively priced.

Output contracts depend on systematic and reliable monitoring and measurement systems that are trusted by both the contractor and the client. This approach to contracting also holds out the potential to incentivise the contractor to achieve stretch performance targets, which would benefit an authority by meeting or exceeding national cleansing and recycling targets. Whether an authority should seek a share of any cost savings should be considered in relation to the length of any contract, the size of the savings, and any disincentivising effect on the contractor.

The forgoing characterisation of contracts is deliberately simplified. Many variants are possible and contract formulation is evolving rapidly in other fields of activity, including manufacturing, construction, as well as some other public service areas. A review of these would appear to be worthwhile.



### Integration of different service areas

Much evidence has been presented about the ways in which different local authority service areas can impact adversely on others – for example grass cutting before litter clearance has taken place. Similarly, the report has noted aspects where clear synergies are often being missed: for example, where different departments employ short-term contract or agency staff to undertake seasonal work when a full-time, multi-functional team could be retained to undertake all this work.

Some authorities are already exploring issues such as these, but there appears to be considerable scope for further development, which should render greater efficiencies and / or higher service standards.

The London Borough of Lewisham entered into a ground breaking 10-year contract with Glendale Grounds Management in February 2000. This private finance style contract brought with it £1.5 million of up front investment to be spent on parks improvements within the first 3 years of the contract.

The benefits of this investment were clearly seen, new children's playgrounds, park toilets, resurfaced footpaths etc and further investment was secured both internally and from external bodies.

The new parks contract has helped to stabilise the revenue budget and Lewisham provides a high quality service for an average (just under £3million per annum – contract and client), based on the London authority average spend for parks.

The council continues to measure the performance of its parks contractor Glendale. This year Glendale has continued to perform above the acceptable performance target and officers are continuing to work in partnership with Glendale's management team to improve the service and continue the rise in satisfaction levels. This year the parks ranger service has been reviewed, the new Parks Services Team will include new on-site park keepers, a dedicated parks security team and an improved cleansing team.

The satisfaction rate for parks is measured by the independent Annual Residents Survey. In 2004, parks had reached an all-time high of 52% of residents saying parks were good to excellent, being 4% above the London average. This figure also indicates a year on year increase from 1998 when the satisfaction level was 32%.

### Challenge 3: Adapting services to social and economic change

#### Action Point 10 – Employ a ‘qual-quant’ approach to market research

This is another area where efficiencies can be achieved in terms of time, cost and effectiveness. Fortunately, it is a problem that private enterprises have resolved through the development of tools such as the ‘qualitative - quantitative approach’ (*Qual-Quant*) and the development of sophisticated segmented market research databases.

ENCAMS has been adapting these systems for the needs of public service delivery, with much of the work revolving around a bespoke database linked to the ‘Mosaic’ system. Mosaic is one of the largest commercial market research systems used by major companies, operating down to individual postcode level.

The *Geodemographics* service for local authorities identifies customers’ social and economic characteristics by postcode, related to 11 segmented groups. Through the overlaid public service information, *Geodemographics* lets local authorities know how they should specify, communicate and deliver services such as street cleansing, refuse collection and recycling, in order to ensure maximum engagement by their customers. All of this is achieved without the need for local questionnaires or other market research work.

The same ‘Qual-Quant’ approach has underpinned Defra’s recent national campaigns, which have had considerable success in achieving their awareness and public behavioural change targets within tight budgets.

The quality and suitability of any market research undertaken should be routinely assessed as part of the monitoring programme discussed in Section 1.

#### Costs and benefits of targeted action

To be successful, service delivery and communication need to become both more targeted and flexible. Deciding which targets to pursue and in which order, would be greatly enhanced if a costs and benefits technique is used. This method should build on monitoring and market research data to work out the pay-backs from different courses of action.

An example: in one area, 27 business sectors were identified as contributing to fly-tipping and litter. Just nine of those sectors created 40% of the material. The proposed costs and benefits technique would identify the pay-backs if that segment of the problem was abated, and how much should be invested in targeted community engagement. Market research data would then identify the best ways of engaging the business sectors in question.

### Action Point 11 – Ensure all aspects of service are adjusted to local geographical and seasonal variations

Geographical effects can present specific challenges for cleansing in some locations.

Examples include:

- **coastal zones** where high winds, sand deposits and salt corrosion can affect street cleansing;
- **areas with a friable (loose) geology / soil structure** that can create higher levels of detritus;
- **estuarine areas** where the effects of friable soils and rocks are compounded by twice-daily, tide-related winds;
- **remote rural areas** that can be difficult to service and demanding on equipment; and
- **areas that are attractive to visitors and tourists**, such as national parks, coastal resorts and historic towns and cities.

A core skill for service managers is understanding the varying demands of the different parts of their district, and realising that 'one-size-fits-all solutions' are unlikely to work. A key aim of BV199 is to supply councils with service performance information related to land uses in order to identify whether all the varying challenges are being met to a consistent standard.

### Social and economic factors

Social and economic factors, including demographics, levels of literacy, employment and wealth are the main drivers of street cleansing, waste collection/disposal and other environmental services. If insufficient attention is paid to them when specifying, communicating and delivering services, the consequences will include waste accumulating or remaining uncollected, being placed out on streets for prolonged periods, or being flytipped.

## Challenge 4: Staff training and motivation

### Action Point 12 – Provide appropriate training and change management support

For the Gershon review to significantly change the structure and perception of waste collection, disposal and street cleansing, adequate change management planning, training and development programmes need to be put in place for service managers.

Low pay, low technology and relatively low productivity still form a backdrop to the sector. Although most workers are employed as permanent staff, others are employed on short-term contracts.

Traditionally, short-term contract staff have been employed to handle seasonal peaks of work. However, at the time of writing, workers were increasingly being supplied by employment agencies throughout the year. In areas with wages competition or high staff turnover, both local authorities' and contractors' workforces can include a significant proportion of agency staff. Research indicates that agency staff, in particular, can be the source of low standards of work and poor productivity.

## Challenges and solutions



### Training

Although National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) have been set up for manual cleansing work, the industry has not historically seen much need to train people. However, evidence clearly indicates that knowing how to sweep well is not an innate human skill.

But it is not just at the lower end of service delivery where skills need bolstering. The 5 challenges that this guidance is centred around highlight the need for increased skills and strategic direction within the upper echelons of local authorities. In recognition of this, Defra has appointed an independent consultant to investigate and map current training provisions through existing training providers covering these 5 broad themes, and to make recommendations for action where gaps in training provision are found. More details can be found in the Annex attached to this guidance.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Environmental Regulatory Unit Enforcement of Enviro-crime Utilising, Colleagues For Evidence Gathering]

Due to the increasing emphasis being put on issues such as dog fouling, littering and fly-tipping by the public and Barnsley MBC, it became apparent last year that the resources available to the team tasked with investigating and enforcing relevant legislation fell short of what was needed to create a major impact and make enviro-criminals feel exposed.

In order to achieve greater coverage, the Environmental Regulatory Unit team developed bespoke training for other key staff, namely the Neighbourhood Pride (Cleansing Team) Supervisors, Housing Estate Managers and all Local Partnership Team staff (including Police & Police Community Support Officers PCSOs). Training included legal levels of proof for evidence, how to approach people, Health & Safety, evidence gathering and recording.

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Pocket books have been designed to take an officer through the process of information gathering that is required to produce sufficient evidence to a legal standard, to enable Environmental Regulatory Unit Officers to undertake interviews, investigations and/or enforcement action against potential offenders. Feedback on actions taken is provided by Environmental Regulatory Unit staff to the staff who have gathered evidence.

An immediate benefit to the Borough is the fact that the 3 Enforcement Officers now have 150+ other pairs of eyes & ears out in the community assisting them. Through publicity and news releases, the public are also made aware that many people are looking for litter louts etc - not necessarily uniformed as they might expect - and that not only does Barnsley MBC remove fly tipping swiftly, but all offenders that are identified when the waste is removed will face formal action where possible.

### Empowerment, potentials and conditions

Generally, manual and mechanical cleansing staff are given instructions about their work, from the 'beat' to follow or sites to visit.

Evidence strongly suggests that training and developing staff can achieve significant improvements in standards and efficiency. For example:

- if manual operatives are empowered to take tactical decisions about where and when to clean, higher standards can be achieved (especially in busy locations);
- vehicle based staff (especially those seated in an HGV cab) are in a very good position to see and report service problems and to undertake some aspects of routine monitoring;
- all service staff have considerable knowledge about the sources of littering and other problems, and how they could be put right – if they were asked regularly.

All these situations would benefit greatly from staff being equipped with radios or mobile phones. Data capture devices and other communications systems mean there are suitable and affordable options available.

Team morale and efficiency can suffer if the standard of vehicles, uniforms and team bases are poor. Treating manual staff with respect is an important factor in optimising productivity and efficiency.

The work on street cleansing efficiencies will aim to locate where there are particular skills gaps in the industry, which are ultimate barriers to efficiency gains. Government will then endeavour to fill those gaps through the promotion of existing training courses or by the creation of new accredited courses where none exist.

### Work standards and productivity

When low pay, skills, and empowerment are combined with under-developed cleansing strategies, it is unsurprising that variable and unsatisfactory work standards and productivity frequently occur.



### Challenge 5: Targeted communication, campaigning and enforcement

#### Action Point 13 – Engage with the community

Responding to the needs of the whole community is essential in developing an effective cleansing strategy, but well-planned strategies will only succeed if they are communicated well to the target audience.

#### Engaging with the community

Community engagement by local authorities in terms of street cleansing and waste collection is often variable and relatively unstructured, although democratic renewal processes are bringing some changes.

A number of patterns have been identified:

- in deprived and demographically dynamic communities (especially those with diverse ethnic groups), there is a need to employ community-based service development workers.

As well as ensuring that services are properly specified, communicated and delivered, they could help residents and businesses to engage with the tailored services.

Local, 'one-stop-shops' could provide easy access to council services, as well as a base for service development and other staff;

- in more established communities (including business communities), multi-functional, area-based teams could deliver all local environmental maintenance services in an efficient, integrated way that is responsive to local priorities;

- another engagement that can improve local environmental quality is the provision of an appropriate youth service. In many areas there are no facilities for young people, and they can become associated with activities including littering, firing of litter bins, damage to public infrastructure, graffiti and minor flyposting.
- generally, people's relationships with their councils have been changing from that of a citizen to a consumer. This requires many councils to rethink the way in which they relate to their communities.

As a partner authority working with ENCAMS to develop the District version of the Local Environmental Quality Survey, Lewisham has trialed the use of the methodology to engage the local community in the use of LEQS.

Local Streetleaders (volunteer residents interested in the local environment), the local business community and street wardens were identified to pilot a mini Local Environmental Quality Survey of their local area. The methodology has been simplified to only include land uses that are relevant to the particular area in question and only a number of the local environmental issues were surveyed - highlighted by the group as topics that they wanted to address.

A training session took place with the group to explain the land uses, the grades, the issues that were to be identified and the way the survey would be analysed. The group was then taken out to undertake the survey.

The trial proved to be successful and is one that is being rolled out to other interested groups. In terms of the wardens they see the benefit in terms of collating baseline data for their own targets and to identify any areas to improve the local environment. The local Streetleaders' and businesses' perception prior to the grading was worse than the reality that they saw as they were grading - in fact the grading undertaken by the local community recorded higher standards than that undertaken by the local authority officers.

Following discussion of the survey's results, a clean-up day was organised, in which graffiti and remnants of fly posting were removed, and litter and detritus were cleaned.

Through this process a local Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team (NEAT) has been formed. The Council has asked the NEAT to undertake a survey every six months in order to identify possible ideas for action through which the local environmental quality of their area can be continually improved.

In Southwark there are two One-Stop-Shops, Walworth, which opened in 1998, and Peckham, which opened in 2000 and is situated on the ground floor of the award winning Peckham Library. The Council's vision is that customers can have any enquiry dealt with in a single contact, rather than being passed around from department to department.

At a One-Stop-Shop, residents with comments or complaints to make about issues, such as cleansing, are directed to the public access personal computers that are available on-site. Here they can fill in an on-line complaint form, which is transmitted to the right service department  
cont.

## Challenges and solutions

for action. Staff are on-hand to assist with the form filling, if required.

The One-Stop-Shops are adept at helping customers with language and hearing difficulties, providing access to a telephone interpreter, for more complex issues, and a face-to-face interpreter (who can be booked). The One-Stop-Shops are fitted with a TextBox, allowing people equipped with a text-phone or minicom in their own homes to have real-time discussions with our staff. The advantage of this system, (which is advertised on our website) is that our staff are aware that the caller has a hearing impediment, and so allows them to advise accordingly.

In June 2006, a brand new state of the art One-Stop-Shop will open in Bermondsey managed by Pearson Government Solutions. Pearson, working in partnership with Southwark Council, will take over the delivery of customer services through a new Customer Service Centre based at London Bridge which will deal with telephone and e-enquiries and through the 3 One Stop Shops for face to face enquiries. With the new Bermondsey One Stop Shop, there will be a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which will be linked between front and back offices. This will make the process of logging complaints and issues around cleansing and the environment both easier and more efficient.

## Customer communications and market knowledge

Most local authorities model their work on requirements set out in various standards, which for street cleansing requires a three-yearly MORI-style survey to be conducted among residents. A significant minority of councils have gone further with more intensive questionnaire survey programmes, supplemented by focus groups, usually drawn from 'citizens panels'.

However, these are labour intensive and involve considerable co-ordination and expense. Some authorities report that their frequency has caused 'consultation fatigue'. Other problems with this 'quantitative' approach include:

- the assumption that the questions asked reflect the issues that are important to customers; and,
- the scope of the questionnaire and the content of questions and set responses can cause people to select or offer answers that are suggested by the questionnaire, rather than reflecting their views.

For these reasons, more sophisticated market research approaches are advocated.

Results of local surveys in the East Riding of Yorkshire council identified that many people living in rural areas felt that the majority of frontline resources were devoted to urban areas. East Riding set up a Parish and Liaison Team to provide a single point of contact within the council for street scene services and to ensure empowerment of local residents.

A series of 'Village Walkabouts' were carried out which involved elected members and operational units visiting rural villages personally and speaking to residents, enabling them to highlight works/problems that the residents wanted putting right, including litter picking, road and footway repairs and tree and hedge pruning. A schedule of work was then formulated and agreed in writing along with a date by which the work would be completed. Monthly meetings were held to monitor progress against objectives and post work inspections were carried out to check the quality of work.

### Action Point 14 – Know your customers

#### Private residential customers

Some local authorities underestimate the impact of factors such as: differing household size; adult functional literacy levels; access to a car; people's confidence / preference in using different media; and differing cultural mores and levels of affluence. Many variations occur at a sub-ward level and they have been difficult to identify through commonly used public data sets.

Evidence indicates that while many services meet the needs of most customers falling within the central section of the 'customer distribution curve', significant mismatches happen at either end of the curve. These can be broadly described as being deprivation at one end and affluence at the other. In the latter, problems can stem from higher levels of waste per person ('the effluence of affluence'), and communication and timing problems caused by people being at home for only a short time in a day, or being away for prolonged periods on business.

Other characteristics shared by communities at either end of the curve is that they can be the most dynamic in terms of demographic churn and the speed with which they become established in an area through processes such as gentrification, urban renewal, and the arrival of asylum-seekers.

#### Business customers – activities and effects

Some large national firms, for example the carpet and furniture sectors, have poor waste management practices. Many create litter either as a result of their operations, or indirectly through their customers.

A simple categorisation is:

- *businesses operating from fixed premises* – including all types of fast-food retailers; pubs and night clubs; and processing companies such as waste paper merchants;
- *transport companies* – including haulage contractors (from materials shed whilst in transit, by drivers in lay-bys, and on many company sites); and public transport contractors, mainly from customers, but also staff and on and around garage sites;
- *construction and utilities contractors* – while some contractors achieve high standards, many more fall short. While the utilities sector appears to have improved, the widespread use of sub-contractors still gives rise to extensive cleansing and other problems.

## Challenges and solutions

Smaller businesses also can have significant impacts on street cleansing, and a lack of effective enforcement by highways, planning, police and other authorities can exacerbate problems. For example:

- *retail and food businesses* often hinder cleansing operations by placing advertising boards, goods and tables and chairs on pedestrianised areas;
- *motor traders* repair vehicles on highway land, place vehicles for sale on roadsides, and even keep unroadworthy vehicles on public thoroughfares<sup>10</sup>;
- *industrial and warehousing businesses* frequently convert off-street parking areas (agreed as part of their planning approvals) into storage and production areas, increasing vehicle obstruction.

However, evidence shows that many managers of 'micro businesses' (with 20 employees or fewer) are unaware of their environmental obligations and consequently 'offend out of ignorance'.

This problem can be compounded by:

- lack of availability of suitable trade waste and recycling services for small enterprises; and
- in deprived areas, business managers and staff suffering types of deprivation which affect their ability to acquire knowledge and skills and achieve satisfactory environmental performance.

Therefore, before taking enforcement action it is essential to identify whether there are shortcomings in the services that are available to all customers, and/or whether they are aware of the existing facilities and their obligations under the law.

### Action Point 15 – Actively enforce against environmental crimes

#### Enforcement

Raising awareness and consistently applying enforcement measures is central to maintaining high LEQ standards. This applies to all sectors of the community, from discouraging flytipping to informing businesses of their responsibilities. Effective enforcement should be seen as an essential element of any cleansing, waste management and LEQ strategy.

Enforcement should be used alongside and as a compliment to targeted education and awareness raising campaigns. When well publicised, an enforcement campaign can be an effective deterrent.

<sup>10</sup> Powers to deal with these blights are available through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/20050016.htm>



Innovative is certainly one way to describe Southwark's approach to education and raising community awareness about the quality of the local environment. Supported by a strong communications strategy, our targeted activities deliver the right message in the right way, often delivering a serious message in a light-hearted manner, ensuring that it is both accessible and memorable.

Our current youth focused campaign asks if you are "blingin' or mingin'!" and is incorporated into our schools programme and outreach work in youth clubs. Articles and adverts are being published in local youth focused magazines, and an online questionnaire provides a fun approach, asking "which one are ya? – if you drop litter, you're mingin'!"

We are touring the schools, playgrounds and events of the borough with our "Bling Bin," and everyone using the bin responsibly is rewarded with a 'golden ticket' that is entered into a prize draw. We couple each event with the provision of information using ENCAMS materials, as well as info about fixed penalties and other issues such as dog fouling.

Our other campaigns are no less innovative, and just as difficult to miss; 'shop em and stop em' rewards residents who give evidence to catch graffiti taggers; envirocrime scene stickers on fly tips both inform and warn, and 8ft cigarettes informing people they can be fined for littering all mean we stand out from the crowd.

Developed as a single document, our 'Community Environment Pledges' (CEP) set out our policy towards all aspects of managing the public realm, clearly stating the penalties that non-compliance can bring, as well as making clear what is expected and how to get further involved in schemes such as StreetLeaders. Its full version acts as a 'One-Stop-Shop' for the management of our environment, setting out everything from trade waste regulations to placing A-boards on the street and illegal street trading.

## Notes



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