

Environment Scrutiny Panel – 24th January 2007

Streetscene Informal Scrutiny Group Review

Report of Head of Environment

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Purpose of the Report

The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider this matter as part of its role in holding the Environment Portfolio Holder to account on the performance of the City Council's streetscene services.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

The Corporate Strategy places emphasis on safeguarding our high quality environment for the future. Streetscene services are an essential element of the package of measures to achieve this objective.

Recommended

That the Environment Scrutiny Panel:

1. considers the report and whether the review has adequately scrutinised streetscene services
2. adds any additional recommendations it feels are appropriate.
3. asks Cabinet to agree the following recommendations in order to improve streetscene services within the City Council's district.
 - a. A policy should be produced for consideration by the Environment Scrutiny Panel regarding the Council's options for potential response/guidelines to fly posters for commercial or community events.
 - b. It is recommended that Development Control staff should produce guidelines to ensure that posters displayed by applicants to advertise planning applications are appropriately placed and removed promptly when appropriate.
 - c. Because of improvements in contract performance it is recommended that a lighter touch be applied to the running of the grounds maintenance contract and any staff savings achieved be considered for Gershon Efficiency purposes.
 - d. Officers should consider additional ways in which the role of 'litter picker' groups can be better recognised and where possible supported with financial contributions. An annual event for recognition of 'Streetscene Unsung Heroes' should be held and publicised.
 - e. Hampshire County Council be asked to pay more attention to reinstatement by Utility companies and enforce additional works where the surface deteriorates at a later date.

- f. New street scene pages should be developed for the Council's website showing responsibilities and contacts for different issues. The pages should also explain the rationale behind some service standards such as grass cutting frequencies, leaf clearance and methodologies as these are the largest area of complaint.
- g. Reporting procedures for abandoned vehicles should be reviewed in order to achieve improved obtaining of correct information such as registration, location and model.
- h. The project to refurbish the Abbey Gardens Public Conveniences should be supported by Cabinet and completed by the end of 2007. The project should include improvements to the appearance of the frontage to Abbey House where possible.
- i. The adequacy of the public convenience maintenance budget should be considered at the earliest opportunity and addressed to ensure sufficient funding is available to pay for the annual repair programme.
- j. The proposed composting facilities at Bar End should be completed in time for the 2007 grounds maintenance programme.
- k. A scheme for monitoring customer satisfaction of open spaces and play areas should be developed in time for trial operation during 2007/08. Once completed the system should be used to provide a 'dashboard' of indicators to measure satisfaction and performance.
- l. Cabinet should be asked to consider the issue of artificial hanging baskets with varying designs for Council owned buildings in order to meet sustainability objectives and to offer these as an option to those businesses wishing to support these aims.
- m. The proposed project to collect and re-use rainwater from the roofs of Bar End Depot for watering of floral displays should be completed in time for the 2007 watering season.
- n. Members should consider how it could work with partners such as the Police and Fire Service to provide a programme of work aimed at promoting responsible citizenship within schools aimed at reducing litter, graffiti and vandalism.
- o. Information should be included on the City Council's website to remind residents to be pragmatic to assist with the increasing problem of flooding by promoting simple steps to deal with localised problems. The website information should also set out statutory responsibilities and give associated advice and contact numbers.
- p. The proposed Local Development Framework (LDF) should consider the issue of redevelopment of gardens in urban areas that can be a contributory factor to increased water runoff and surface water. The framework should also consider initiatives for developments using 'grey water' systems for toilet flushing and other non potable water usage.

- q. Highways maintenance staff within Hampshire County Council be asked to remove poster advertising and minor instances of graffiti on road signs.
- r. Lighting staff within Hampshire County Council be asked to repaint lamp standards in high amenity locations within the City Centre streets pending the replacement programme proposed under the PFI initiative.
- s. Officers should develop ways in which the roles of the proposed Police Community Support Officers and Hampshire County Council Accredited Community Support Officers can link up with existing work of the City Council's Neighbourhood Warden Service to support the Cleaner, Greener, Safer streetscene agenda.
- t. Officers should continue to make progress with the Environment Team Biodiversity Action Plan and Streetscene Improvements Action Plan and report back the results to the Environment Scrutiny Panel through the Business Planning and Performance management framework.
- u. Support should be given to the Winchester BID process as a means of providing additional funding to enhance streetscene services such as street cleaning, pigeon control and floral decorations.

Executive Summary

This study was requested in response to increasing pressure to further improve the City Council's Streetscene activities and raised public expectation as a result of new legislation. The review was designed to cover the background to the current interest in Streetscene issues and new provisions in order to suggest additional ways in which the City Council could develop these activities further across the district.

The review has highlighted the significant progress which has been made on the streetscene agenda over the last 2 years. With the emergence of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act and greater emphasis on the Cleaner, Greener, Safer agenda it is now appropriate to better integrate services with other areas such as Community Safety and external agencies such as the Police and Hampshire County Council.

During the review the Informal Scrutiny Group has considered many aspects in detail and these are described within the report. The conclusions of the review are contained within the recommendations put forward as part of this report.

Background Documents

Working documents held in the Environment Division.

Appendices

Appendix: Streetscene Informal Scrutiny Group Report



**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
REPORT EN 31**

24 January 2007

**Report by the Chairman,
Councillor Saunders**

**STREETSCENE
SERVICES**

SCRUTINY REVIEW – STREETSCENE SERVICES

REPORT OF STREETSCENE SERVICES INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group was set up by the Environment Scrutiny Panel in order to review Streetscene services following new provisions within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and ongoing integration of these services within the Environment Division.

2. Background to the Study

- 2.1 This study was requested in response to increasing pressure to further improve the City Council's Streetscene activities and raised public expectation as a result of new legislation. The review was designed to cover the background to the current interest in Streetscene issues and new provisions in order to suggest additional ways in which the City Council could develop these activities further

- 2.2 **External Drivers for Change** - there are a number of significant national drivers which are influencing the overall Streetscene agenda as describe below.

- (a) **Cleaner, greener, safer agenda** from the government in which the local authorities are encouraged to adopt a joined up strategy to Streetscene activities which cover not only issues such as street cleaning and litter control but also the provision of more green areas and open spaces linked to activities such as community safety and anti-social behaviour.
- (b) **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005** which provides a wide range of provisions for local authorities to tackle Streetscene and environmental issues. This has resulted in increased pressure from not only the public but also other agencies such as the Environment Agency to tackle these issues.
- (c) **Local Public Sector Agreement Round 2.** There is increasing emphasis on joining up activities across the environment agenda under the LPSA2 agenda. The latest round of LPSA 2 targets include some relating to street cleaning and litter clearance activities linked to pavement repairs.
- (d) **Night time economy issues.** These will increasingly influence the amount of Streetscene activities requiring to be undertaken as the night time economy extends into the early evening and early hours which has an impact on street cleaning activities and anti-social behaviour.
- (e) **Revised BVPI 199:** This now includes additional activities covered by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act such as graffiti and fly posting and not just litter control as before.
- (f) **Gershon and Efficiency agenda:** authorities are required to adopt more joined up approaches to Streetscene activities in order to try and achieve economy and efficiency savings within such services.

- (g) **Smoking Ban** – with effect from July 2007 the ban will come into effect to prevent smoking in public places. This is likely to result in increased numbers of smokers outside of buildings with littering from cigarette waste and gum.

2.3 **Internal Drivers for Change** – there are also a number of additional internal drivers which have influenced their approach to streetscene activities.

- i. **Structural Change:** the grounds maintenance function has been moved to the environment team in order to provide a more coordinated approach to street cleansing and grounds maintenance with the aim of improving overall contract performance. This work has been in progress for approximately 18 months and has led to significant improvements in the overall Streetscene management.
- ii. **High quality environment best value review** of 2004 identified a number of specific issues relating to Streetscene activities including issues relating to the countryside, air quality and the need for champions to lead on these areas.
- iii. **Environment strategy** clearly identifies a number of activities which relate to the environment and other Streetscene activities although with the diversity of functions across Directorates though there is not yet any real clarity regarding the overall delivery of this strategy. The Strategy also needs revision in the light of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act and other recent developments.
- iv. **CPA:** The sustainable environment inspection identified a number of issues relating to the sustainability agenda which need to be considered and integrated within the overall Streetscene activities.

3. Terms of Reference and Work Plan

3.1 At its inaugural meeting the ISG considered draft terms of reference and agreed these as being

- To define what the ISG considers to be the City Council's definition of Streetscene activities
- To review current City Council performance on streetscene issues using existing performance data and to recommend any additional local performance indicators relating to streetscene activities
- To consider how best to assess public satisfaction with streetscene services
- To review the contribution and performance of other City Council Services and external partner agencies in relation to streetscene activities including
 - Abandoned vehicles
 - Neighbourhood wardens
 - Highway's Staff
 - Dog Control Staff
- To consider the new provisions of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act and propose draft policies for their implementation where appropriate.
- To review current budget provision and staffing resources for streetscene activities

- To recommend any improvements to streetscene activities and quantify any additional resources if required

It agreed that it would meet on a 3 weekly cycle and planned to report back to the Environment Scrutiny Panel on 24th January 2007.

3.2 **Defining Streetscene Activities** - whilst the ISG agreed there was variation within Local Authorities regarding the location of functions relating to the overall Streetscene issues the following aspects can be considered to be the key elements of this 'service'.

- (a) **Litter control** including the provision of bins, clearance of trunk road areas and the new responsibilities under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act.
- (b) **Fly tipping** including the clearance of land and on occasions the highway, private land with the possibility of prosecution of offenders.
- (c) **Abandoned cars** - The removal of all of these under with new powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environments Act to do this more swiftly.
- (d) **Fly posting** - This occurs not only on buildings but also on signing around the district and lampposts. There is a particular issue regarding the non removal of temporary notices advertising commercial events to road signs and fences.
- (e) **Graffiti** - This covers graffiti in all areas including the public utilities street furniture such as junction boxes and also walls and buildings around the City Centre and rest of the district.
- (f) **Street sweeping** - These activities are carried out within the main litter control areas and include ad hoc rural sweeping to remove detritus from roadways. It does not include the emptying of rainwater gullies.
- (g) **Grounds maintenance** - All areas of grass cutting, tree maintenance and shrub bed work. The works are undertaken in accordance with a contract with additional works to tree maintenance being undertaken. Increasingly it includes other areas such as the In Bloom activities and waterways maintenance.
- (h) **Dog fouling** - The activities within this area incorporate the provision and emptying of dog waste bins in addition to enforcement activities and the collection and return of stray dogs.
- (j) **Public Conveniences** – although not a statutory function the City Council provides a number of these around the district which play an important role in terms of tourism and antisocial behaviour such as urinating in the street.
- (i) **Hampshire County Council Activities** - Their responsibilities vary and include the following.
 - Weed control
 - Gully emptying
 - Lampposts maintenance

- Pavement maintenance
- Highway maintenance
- Road Signage

It was agreed that each of these would be looked at in more detail in addition to any other issues that came to light during the review.

4. Findings

4.1 The ISG agreed that considerable work had already been undertaken prior to the review to improve the overall coordination of Streetscene activities including the following measures.

- (a) **The dog waste bin emptying contract** has been moved to the environment team to provide a coordinated approach to general contract maintenance and links to the litter bin emptying contract.
- (b) **Neighbourhood wardens** – Links have been made with the neighbourhood wardens in order to try and coordinate activities within the areas defined for their activities. Further improvements are planned in this area with a proposal to include the staff within the Environment Division.
- (c) **Tree works** – A strategy has been developed to tackle this issue and considerable progress has been made with the inspection works and remedial works to deal with the dangerous trees found during the inspections. Progress has also been made with recording the information on GIS mapping and this is due to take place during 2007. Funding bids have been submitted to provide a base budget to deal with remedial safety works.
- (d) **Lead roles** – Within the environment team the Streetscene activities have been clearly defined within a Streetscene team leader and separated away from the main waste management issues which tend to be routinely undertaken within the contract.
- (e) **Grounds maintenance performance** – Considerable progress has been made in improving the overall grounds maintenance monitoring within the contract which has resulted in improvements in performance across all areas of the grounds maintenance contract. Contract monitoring is now more routinely undertaken and the overall standard of grounds maintenance has improved to the extent that a lighter touch can be taken to running of the contract due to consistently high levels of performance.
- (f) **Better integration** – Within the overall Streetscene agenda the opportunity has been taken to improve the integration of services. In public open spaces it is now possible to tackle issues such as litter control, grounds maintenance and bio-diversity in a much more joined up way.
- (g) **Biodiversity** - following a workshop attended by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Environment team have developed an action plan to support the Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan.

- (h) **Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act** – an action plan had been developed to tackle the main issues arising from the act and link up with these with the main streetscene activity areas.
- (i) **On line reporting of problems-** the City Council's website now includes the option for the public to report streetscene issues on line and link these to GIS mapping for accurate location purposes. It is hoped that this will make reporting of problems more available outside of office hours and reduce the need for direct contact with staff.

Looking at specific issues in more detail the findings were as follows:

4.2 Fly posting

- 4.2.1 This was not considered to be a major problem on walls in the district; however it was a problem on street furniture, notably street signs. This included that for commercial events and also events such as the Farmer's Market (although a notice for this event was usually taken down). It was noted that an approach could be taken to supporting notices for community events other than purely commercial (with the exception of the Farmer's Market). It was noted that HCC was responsible for most street furniture and it was not currently their priority to rigidly enforce (although the Clean Neighbourhood Act could possibly allow for a proactive approach to deal with the issue, including guidelines for the reporting of instances).
- 4.2.2 It was agreed that a draft policy could be produced for the Group regarding the Council's options for potential response/guidelines to fly posters for commercial or community events.
- 4.2.3 Insofar as the work of other agencies was concerned the ISG noted that if a complaint was made to WCC that was not its statutory responsibility, officers would contact HCC. Although liaison generally worked well, their response to the matter was occasionally slow. Likewise, officers would often notify utility companies with regard to their responsibilities.
- 4.2.4 Although the Group considered that producing a directive from the Council to the public indicating that it had a responsibility to notify instances of Fly Posting, officers would be cautious in raising expectations before response could be adequately resourced.
- 4.2.5 It was noted that posters produced by WCC advertising planning applications, were now sent to the applicant to put up. It was considered that guidelines could be produced to ensure that they are appropriately placed and removed promptly.

4.3 Fly Tipping

- 4.3.1 The ISG reviewed the work of the 'Hit Squad' contracted from SERCO which provided a rapid response service but at present their role did not include the removal of graffiti.
- 4.3.2 The ISG were advised of a new BVPI regarding the number of enforcement cases taken against fly tippers. It was suggested that the Council could improve its performance in this area in order to meet the new requirements although the number of instances was low. It was acknowledged that WCC was unlikely to be in a position

similar to larger Metropolitan Councils in terms of resources but should consider surveillance / CCTV to assist with possible prosecutions. However, the ISG noted that plans were in hand to recruit an enforcement officer to address this deficit. There would be some co-ordination with Neighbourhood Wardens, but in relation to their respective areas of the City.

- 4.3.3 The ISG also considered the control of tipping on privately owned land. It was explained that this was an Environment Agency/Planning/Licensing matter; depending on the scale of the operation, otherwise the Council could serve notice if the matter was deemed a public nuisance. The ISG also noted that it was difficult to successfully enforce action against individual litter offenders because of the difficulties in obtaining personal details with no power of arrest.
- 4.3.4 The Group acknowledged that the role of 'litter picker' groups was important and should be supported. It was felt that an annual event to recognise 'Streetscene Unsung Heroes' should be held and publicised.

4.4 Graffiti

- 4.4.1 The ISG noted that this was not a major problem in Winchester compared to some of the larger urban areas. However, there were instances of it on utility boxes, street furniture and playground equipment etc. The Council dealt with offensive graffiti quickly without worrying about the ownership of the object vandalised.
- 4.4.2 The ISG noted that the Council had a number of options regarding combating graffiti including working with the probation service (i.e. 'graffiti busters'), the tool kit, Neighbourhood Wardens. Members also noted the role of links with the Crime Reduction Partnership. The Clean Neighbourhoods Act gives the Council some additional powers i.e. it could send utility companies bills for removal of graffiti from their equipment or to request contributions up front.
- 4.4.3 The ISG agreed that new street scene pages on the Council's website showing responsibilities and contacts could be a positive 'quick win' in order to help clarify appropriate contacts for different issues.

4.5 Abandoned Cars

- 4.5.1 The ISG noted that the Licensing Team were responsible for this function in conjunction with the Legal Department. The Environment Team's responsibilities were limited to posting notices on abandoned vehicles.
- 4.5.2 One problem experienced was difficulties in obtaining the correct information on vehicles as many complainants did not provide adequate details, such as registration, location and model. It was suggested that reporting procedures could be improved and the officers agreed to look into this.
- 4.5.3 The ISG felt that vehicles were generally dealt with very efficiently and that it was in the council's best interest to get abandoned vehicles moved as quickly as possible as they could be burned, used to dump other rubbish or stripped for parts. They also noted that this was not a major issue in the Winchester District currently but that stricter legislation on the disposal of vehicles was due to come into force shortly. This could prompt a rise in vehicles being abandoned.

4.6 Public Conveniences

- 4.6.1 The ISG noted that there were a number of public conveniences provided in the Town Centre and others in the District in major towns and that this was not a service that legally had to be provided. They were advised that the toilets adjacent to Abbey Gardens were due for refurbishment and reviewed draft plans for this work. The project was subject to approval within the Capital Programme and that the current plans were within the confines of the listed building legislation.
- 4.6.2 The Group noted that the project could also include the frontage of Abbey House where a large Laurel tree was blocking much of the light and visibility in the area and could be removed. This would not only improve the aesthetics of the building itself but would also address safety as the area would be more open. The ISG supported the Abbey Gardens project and felt this would significantly improve services and appearances in a key location for visitors and residents alike.
- 4.6.3 The ISG reviewed the option of paying for use of the toilets and noted that this had already been considered and rejected for legal reasons. They also noted the difficulties with the adequacy of the public convenience maintenance budget which had been recently reduced and was no inadequate to meet all of the annual repair costs.

4.7 Stray Dogs

- 4.7.1 The ISG considered that the problem of stray dogs was not a big issue in Winchester and that most dogs seized were reclaimed by their owners often subject to payment of a fee to have their dog released plus kennelling costs. They noted that the dog warden's work was integrated within a more comprehensive Animal Welfare Service including enforcement powers to deal with animals on private property as well as council property.
- 4.7.2 Officers reported that the number of incidents of dogs being found out of hours was increasing but that currently there was no service to deal with these complaints due to lack of resources. This problem had been earmarked for a budget growth bid for 2007/08 onwards although there may be a difficulty in finding local kennels that would take stray dogs at weekends. The ISG supported this project as a means of dealing with this problem.

4.8 Street Sweeping

- 4.8.1 The ISG were advised that street sweeping was done on eight-week cycles in residential areas and that the council also used a 'hit squad' to respond to complaints. They noted that leaves on the road in autumn were a big problem and that the sweepers could not cope with all the leaf fall at once. They acknowledged that those areas that were deemed a priority were dealt with first and that the litter pickers and hit squad were switched to leaf collection in this situation.
- 4.8.2 The ISG noted that leaves were currently not composted because of contamination problems such as oil and dog faeces but that it was planned to install a compost facility in Bar End for some types of green waste for 2007 onwards.

4.9 Playgrounds

- 4.9.1 The ISG were advised that the Environment Team had only recently taken on the management and maintenance of playgrounds. SERCo maintained the equipment following WCC inspections and that a safety check was carried out annually by ROSPA. The ISG considered that it was important to evaluate customer satisfaction and agreed that the idea of ad-hoc surveys should be looked into.
- 4.9.2 The ISG noted that there were currently not enough resources to maintain the play areas to the highest possible standard and that equipment may have to be removed in the future unless this was addressed. They therefore supported the growth bid submitted for consideration in 2007/08 onwards.

4.10 Pigeons

- 4.10.1 The ISG noted that pigeons presented a problem in Winchester town centre and a few other locations elsewhere in the district, such as Wickham. The main problem caused was the fouling of pavement areas. There was a particular problem at Winchester in the Bridge Street area and surrounding buildings. This was caused by a combination of good roosting areas and a regular food supply which had led to an increase in numbers. The ISG appreciated that the public could not be prevented from feeding ducks at The Weirs and Abbey Gardens; however there had been instances of individuals depositing large amounts of food and they had been approached by officers as appropriate.
- 4.10.2 In comparison to mice and rats, there was no legal duty (or budget) for the Council and its contractor to control pigeons as a pest. However their impact upon the Street Scene was a relevant consideration regarding possible additional resourcing.
- 4.10.3 The ISG considered various preventative measures including the proofing of roofs and enclaves and also control measures such as trapping (and humane disposal) or shooting. They also revisited comments made in the previous High Quality Environment Best Value Review that contained aspects of pigeon control. The provision of 'dovecots' had been trialled in some areas, as were desirable roosting areas, but with easily accessible for the removal of their eggs. However the control of the pigeon population over the long term by this method had yet to be proven. Other control measures suggested by specialists included hawk flying; however its long term effectiveness was also unproven. The Group was mindful that some control measures were potentially emotive to some members of the public.
- 4.10.4 The ISG noted that generally, there had been few public complaints regarding pigeons but it was acknowledged that some effort should be made to address the issues including prompt removal of litter (including deposited take-a-ways) should continue, as was a potential food source for pigeons.
- 4.10.5 The other option for funding improvements in pigeon control is through the proposed Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) which had identified pigeons as an existing amenity issue within the town centre, and had highlighted the need for action for their control. In this respect the Council had undertaken to proof most of its buildings against pigeon roosting to reduce the impact that they had on the town centre. It was suggested that businesses could do likewise.
- 4.10.6 Overall the ISG noted that initiatives to control pigeons (including on-going proofing, cleansing and other preventative measures) were desirable, but these required

appropriate resourcing. It was agreed that the Council should monitor the impact that the Winchester BID may have regarding this issue. Should businesses then come back to the Council with on-going complaints then this should be revisited.

4.11 Grounds Maintenance

4.11.1 The Group noted that Grounds Maintenance was one of the Council's largest contracts and that recently there had been few incidences of remedial notices in comparison to a few years ago.

4.11.2 The main area of complaints related to grass cutting and their frequency (3 weekly on average between March and November) and of residual cut grass left behind. The ISG was advised that ride on rotary mowers were utilised to cut both verges and amenity areas. Grass was not collected in boxes as it was cut, as this would potentially double current costs and was a slower process. However this method of grass collection was utilised in some formal grassed areas. Litter was generally always removed before the grass was cut to avoid its shredding and dispersal. Mr Heathcock also reported that cut grass blown onto pavements that created potentially slippery areas (especially near residential homes and sheltered accommodation) was now better controlled through removal using leaf blowers.

4.11.3 The Group noted that there was no particular area of the district where complaints had been concentrated. Complaints originating from housing estates were usually related to discrepancies in cutting regimes (such as verges and amenity areas) that was not apparent to residents.

4.11.4 The ISG felt that the process of grass cutting could be better explained via the Council's website. They acknowledged that some residents aspired for a length of cut similar to that of their own gardens, whereas others were appreciative of it being left longer, or for some areas to be retained as wild flower areas. It was suggested that residents and Parish Councils should be consulted and educated as necessary, especially as wildflower areas could appear merely as untidy, unkempt areas at certain times.

4.11.5 The ISG were advised that the Council occasionally received requests from groups (such as the Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) for the retention of areas for wild flowers for conservation purposes. The management of such areas under the Council's control was an important aspect of its obligation for the appreciation of biodiversity.

4.12 Hanging Baskets & Floral Decorations

4.12.1 The ISG reviewed the current approach to floral decorations within the town area but focused on hanging baskets as one of the main aspects. They noted that hanging baskets within the town centre were currently paid for from the town account and approximately 300 baskets were purchased each year from a contractor. Businesses were invited to buy the hanging baskets at approximately £45 each, which included their watering by the Council.

4.12.2 The Group were advised one possible project within the proposed Winchester BID regarding the enhancement of the Street Scene was the potential ear marking of funds for the maintenance of hanging baskets.

4.12.3 The Group were invited to study an artificial hanging basket, and photographs of them in situ. They were advised that a number of these had been trialled on some City Council buildings this summer. The baskets were particularly realistic and could be made up of differing flowers and cost approximately £37 each and lasted around 3 years. The ISG were advised that they could continue to be utilised on all Council owned buildings and possibly offered to businesses as an alternative to "real baskets". The Group agreed that they were generally a good idea as they were an example of sustainability, although it recommended a variation in their design.

4.12.4 The ISG considered options for the use of rain water ('grey water') for watering floral decorations. They were advised that there was a project underway at present to investigate options for its collection, and utilisation, from the roofs of the Bar End Depot. The ISG wished to see this project pursued in time for the 2007 watering season.

4.13 Chewing Gum

4.13.1 The ISG considered the problem of inappropriately disposed of chewing gum. This was a particular problem in the town centre, especially in the Jewry Street vicinity and was particularly prominent here outside the pubs, and bus stops.

4.13.2 They noted that chewing gum was not currently removed from paving areas as it involved a relatively costly and an abrasive procedure. It was noted that a quote two years ago for the one-off cleansing of the Broadway/Jewry Street area had been approximately £8000 although a long term contract would reduce this accordingly. It was noted that steam cleansing was the best way for the removal of chewing gum; however this was not suitable on some paved areas in the town centre due to the likelihood of them being damaged.

4.13.3 The Group was advised that 12 bins were currently being trialled within the town centre. These included receptacles for the disposal of cigarettes and chewing gum. Investigation has shown that these were generally well used. Other options used by some Local Authorities included the use of boards for chewing gum to be stuck onto. However, it was agreed that this would be particularly unsightly.

4.13.4 It was noted that when a smoking ban in public places was implemented, there would be a particular need for bins to be provided outside public buildings (including pubs) for the disposal of cigarette ends and gum.

4.13.5 The Group referred to the need for education regarding responsibilities of litter as part of the Citizenship Education Initiative at schools. It was agreed that this was a wider issue than that specifically related to the Street Scene but should be considered within a wider framework

4.14. Hampshire County Council Services

4.14.1 The ISG interviewed Chris Wilson, Assistant Chief Engineer and Tony Stephens, Chief Lighting Engineer regarding these services

4.14.2 **Pavement/Highway 'Patching'** – ISG Members referred to areas of 'patching' in College Street and Canon Street and was concerned of their unsightly appearance in this historical area that was frequented by tourists. The Group was advised that patching was usually a practical and cost effective response to the safety issue of

paving slabs having been broken, usually by vehicular traffic. Eventual replacement with suitable slabs (especially resistant to overrunning by vehicles) was usually dependent on their location. Some patching was undertaken due to utility works and/or temporary reinstatement. Utility companies were chased as appropriate although the ISG members felt that more attention should be paid to this area particularly where reinstatement work deteriorates at a later date. A policy of increased flexibility should also be applied to work such as pothole filling to avoid the necessity for revisits to the same area at a later date.

- 4.14.3 The ISG was informed about recent problems of reinstatement at the upper part of the High Street due depleted stocks of matching slabs. Funds were also ring fenced for the imminent replacement of an area of broken slabs close to Marks and Spencers. The Middle Brook Street area would not be repaired at this time due to the eventual Silverhill redevelopment and had therefore been temporarily repaired with grey tarmac. The Group discussed alternative permanent surfacing, such as coloured/patterned tarmac or imprinted concrete material. They were advised that in some areas, a shallow foundation to surfaces was required due to the utilities beneath.
- 4.14.4 The Group noted that Hampshire County Council undertook a process of prioritisation regarding resurfacing. Bids were submitted and that these were then rated by a team. Schemes consequently scheduled were also subject to the approval of the Council's budget in February.
- 4.14.5 The Group also noted the recent establishment of Hampshire County Council Highway Action Teams that comprised of County and District Councillor representatives. They were advised that this was the most appropriate forum for Winchester City Council to influence the County Council with regard to highway repair priorities. Winchester City Council's representatives were Councillors Beveridge and Wood.
- 4.14.6 **Gulley Maintenance and flooding** – ISG members referred to Highway matters that were related to regular flooding and suggested that Hampshire County Council should liaise more regularly with Parish Councils who were usually aware of such areas. This would assist with prioritisation for necessary maintenance. Mr Wilson advised that although maintenance was often an issue, the design of infrastructure was also occasionally a contributing factor.
- 4.14.7 The ISG were advised of the responsibilities of district and county authorities with regard to gulley clearance. Winchester City Council was responsible for street sweeping and collection of leaves to stop gulleys and drains becoming blocked. Hampshire County Council responded to gulley clearing and infrastructure maintenance, usually in response to their blocking etc. A Maintenance Team of two people were responsible for carrying this out over a large area.
- 4.14.8 Group Members considered the impact of more regular occurrences of intense rain in recent years with more instances of 1 in 10 year storms (which was what design infrastructure was usually based on). The Group discussed the responsibility of residents to assist in clearing gulleys and drains and noted that home owners in rural areas fronting onto ditches had an obligation for their maintenance. It was agreed that the Council's website could be utilised to remind residents to be pragmatic to assist with what was an increasing problem. The website could also be used to set out statutory responsibilities, give associated advice and contact numbers as well as directing individuals to options for sourcing sandbags locally.

- 4.14.9 The Group discussed redevelopment of gardens in urban areas that, for example, was a contributory factor to increased water runoff and surface water. It was noted that initiatives for developments to comprise 'grey water' systems (for toilet flushing) were costly, but could be a condition as part of subsequent planning approvals by the LPA. The Group agreed that sustainability issues in general should be addressed as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) system as it was recognised that developers could be seen to be indirectly responsible for increasing highway maintenance costs.
- 4.14.10 **Sign posting** – officers advised that with regard to traffic management schemes, the County Council were responsible for the removal of temporary signs although the work was performed by the City Council on an agency basis. Members raised particular concerns regarding temporary signs being left in place for long periods of time.
- 4.14.11 The Group was advised that the County Council was responsible for the ongoing maintenance and cleansing of permanent signs. Insofar as the obscuring of signs, junctions and footways by vegetation was concerned Hampshire County Council did not have the resources to cut this back and instead notified landowners as appropriate. Some Parish Councils assist with the 'cutting notices' on the County's behalf.
- 4.14.12 ISG Members questioned the County's approach to traffic control sign 'clutter' particularly in areas such as St Paul's Hill. They were advised that there was statutory regulation for certain signage although, notably in rural areas, consultants had been employed to assist in addressing this issue in conjunction with agencies such as the CPRE.
- 4.14.13 Members raised the issue of instances where lorries occasionally became stuck in the narrow streets close to the cathedral. It was noted that this was an increasing problem from drivers utilising satellite navigation that did not differentiate between access routes for cars and lorries. It was agreed that this was also a particular problem in narrow rural lanes and were advised that the County was attempting to engage with groups supplying data to the systems to establish a separate network for large HGVs.
- 4.14.14 Members considered the issue of developer's signage. It was noted that this was sometimes not authorised and was addressed by Winchester City Council as part of its agency arrangement. It was agreed that the LPA should continue to take enforcement action as appropriate.
- 4.14.15 It was agreed that highways maintenance teams could, as an easy 'quick win' remove poster advertising and also remove minor instances of graffiti on road signs. County officers agreed to consider this request.
- 4.14.16 **Lamp posts and maintenance** – The ISG interviewed Tony Stephens from Hampshire County Council regarding this issue. ISG members expressed their concern about the appearance of some lamp standards in the vicinity of the Cathedral and other City areas.
- 4.14.17 The ISG was advised about the forthcoming PFI initiative to replace street lighting. Which was the government preferred option to handover responsibility to a contractor for the replacement, and ongoing maintenance. Some briefing and consultation had

been undertaken with Districts, Town and Parish Councils to date, and that further extensive briefing would be arranged in due course. Through this initiative 'instant' funding would be made available via the PFI over a 5 year 'core' period, followed by a period of assessment of 'savings' achieved to the wider community from, for example, a reduction in crime and accidents from the improvements to lighting. The funding over the 5 year period would total around £90 – 100 million. Replacement structures would have a notional 30 year life. The scheme was inclusive of street lighting on all adopted roads but did not include off highway lighting (such as at car parks).

4.14. 18 Members were told about progress with the bid process to date in Hampshire and the associated liaison with the Districts and Town and Parish Councils. It would also be necessary for Hampshire County Council to draft an outline business case and engage with legal and financial consultants. Three main contractors would be consulted. The estimated date for commencement of the new PFI contract was estimated to be April 2009. The existing maintenance contract was due to expire in 2007 but was to be extended for a further year. The contract would operate using an 'output specification' to monitor contractor performance with penalties to deal with any defaults.

4.14.19 Under Government rules neighbouring local authorities had to demonstrate why it may be considered that they were unable to work in association with regard to the initiative. As a consequence the 'SouthCoast PFI Group' had been established, comprising of Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council and West Sussex County Council.

4.14.20 The ISG was interested to note that the future contract would include the cleaning and removal of graffiti in addition to ongoing maintenance. The Group noted that the contract would also include all illuminated street furniture. In this respect any items, such as 'keep left signs' that were 'de-illuminated' (i.e. replaced with reflectors) would be removed from the contract during its period.

4.14.21 The Group also discussed lighting on un-adopted highways and were advised that any areas that remained as such would be the responsibility of the landlord or land owner initially. However, all would be transferred once completed to the correct standard.

4.14.22 ISG member questioned the appearance of lamp standards in College Street and other City centre streets. It was acknowledged that the painting of those 'high visibility' lamps would be a quick win and could be arranged if a list was provided. In some areas painting could not be carried out as it could inadvertently obscure areas of serious corrosion which needed inspection. Members were also advised that consultation would be undertaken with the districts and conservation groups regarding any additional investment required for a more appropriate style of lamp in conservation and heritage areas.

4.15 Neighbourhood Warden Services

4.15.1 Because of the clear links between the streetscene agenda and the role of the neighbourhoods the interviewed Nigel Devlin, Neighbourhood Warden Supervisor. They were informed about how their work supported the Cleaner, Safer Greener agenda including graffiti removal, abandoned cars, fly tipping etc).

- 4.15.2 ISG members were interested in the warden's community events and their proactive approach to their work including closer association with schools and other projects. In addition they had an excellent working relationship with the police and in general were well respected within the communities. There was a target of an 80% 'out time' although the number of officers and vans restricted this occasionally to an average of 60%. The job descriptions of the wardens were purposely fairly unlimited within the scope of their work, although there were occasional geographical limitations. The wardens worked some shift and evening work – usually up to a maximum of 9 or 10 pm.
- 4.15.3 ISG member also noted links of this work to the proposed Police Community Support Officers and Hampshire County Council Accredited Community Support Officers. Members felt that these links should be maximised as much as possible to provide a joined up approach to these issues.
- 4.15.4 The Group discussed the 'mobility' of offenders and 'through routes', and whether the warden's work had inadvertently dispersed criminal activity elsewhere.
- 4.15.5 Members were interested in how the community based work of the wardens could link in with the streetscene agenda to provide a preventative approach to problems such as littering and graffiti. They also noted recent proposals to include the neighbourhood warden service within the Environment Division in order to improve these links. They recommended that this work should continue and also consider the possible expansion of such services to rural areas in partnership with Parish Councils.
- 4.16 Interview of Councillor Pearson – Portfolio Holder For Environment, Health And Safety
- 4.16.1 Councillor Pearson was interviewed regarding those areas of his Portfolio related to street scene issues. He acknowledged that street scene issues were usually cross cutting and impacted upon the budget of a number of departments at all tiers of local authorities. The recommendations of this scrutiny review should reflect this and of the joint responsibility to address.
- 4.16.2 The Portfolio Holder was questioned whether enough detail was given to the design of new housing estates, such as avoidance of unguarded areas etc. Councillor Pearson referred to policies to 'fire fight' issues and also initiatives such as Police Community Support Officers and Hampshire County Council Accredited Community Support Officers. He suggested that the former only work in areas of statistically high crime. Police officers now only increasingly dealt with instances of actual crime, as opposed to anti social behaviour. The work of the '101' telephone number was referred to, including the recording of instances of ASB.
- 4.16.3 ISG members were told of new provisions within the Crime and Justice Act, of which the 'Community Call for Action' was an element. This sought to enhance the role of the Ward Councillor to address instances of complaints from constituents regarding the reaction of the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Such matters would also be referred to a scrutiny committee (should the Ward Member be not able to resolve) where representatives of the partnership would then have a duty to respond.
- 4.16.4 It was also noted that the recent Government White Paper sought to instigate more community based 'self help' groups working with the local authority.

- 4.16.5 Councillor Pearson acknowledged that greater partnership working with Hampshire County Council could assist in the improvement of matters related to the appearance and safety of pavements and roads.

5. Consultation Exercise

- 5.1 In order to evaluate current perceptions of performance on streetscene services the ISG agreed to consult some local stakeholders using a standardised questionnaire as shown at appendix 1. The questionnaire was designed to gauge basic opinions on services and its limitations were recognised. It will be noted that one of the recommendations of this review is to develop a more consistent basket of indicators and survey methodologies in order to track progress.
- 5.2 The questionnaire was circulated to all Parish Council Clerks as it was felt that they had the best local knowledge of performance in their area and included sufficient rural locations to get a better understanding across the services. Copies of the questionnaire were also sent resident groups or interested parties using details provided by local members.
- 5.3 25 questionnaires were returned and the results were as follows (it will be noted that not every respondent answered every question)

Satisfaction Rates	Litter Control	Fly tipping	Abandoned cars	Fly posting	Graffiti Removal
Very satisfied		2	4		4
Satisfied	12	13	15	10	7
Dissatisfied	7	7	4	6	3
Very dissatisfied	6			1	
Total	25	22	23	17	14

Satisfaction Rates	Street sweeping	Grounds Maintenance	Dog Fouling	Public Conveniences	HCC activities
Very satisfied	1	1	1	1	1
Satisfied	10	11	14	9	6
Dissatisfied	10	4	3	1	10
Very dissatisfied	3	3	1		4
Total	24	19	19	11	21

- 5.4 In general there appears to be overall satisfaction with the services provided by the City Council other than for street sweeping where many of the comments related to leaf fall as the questionnaire was completed during this period and this may have skewed the results. As many of the questionnaires are from rural areas it may also be due to the removal of the rural sweep programme as part of the budget savings agreed for 2006/07 onwards. However, this result does represent an issue which needs to be addressed in increasing awareness of the works undertaken in this area and the difficulties experienced during leaf fall periods.

5.5 The other results are encouraging particularly the improvement in grounds maintenance which was subject to a large number of complaints a few years ago.

5.6 The results and comments made about Hampshire County Council services seem to reflect concerns expressed by the ISG members and these will be passed on to the officers interviewed for further consideration.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Following the completion of this review by the Streetscene Informal Scrutiny Group the following recommendations are proposed in order to improve the services within the City Council's district.

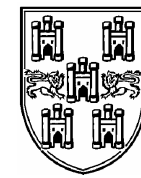
- a. A policy should be produced for consideration by the Environment Scrutiny Panel regarding the Council's options for potential response/guidelines to fly posters for commercial or community events.
- b. It is recommended that Development Control staff should produce guidelines to ensure that posters displayed by applicants to advertise planning applications are appropriately placed and removed promptly when appropriate.
- c. Because of improvements in contract performance it is recommended that a lighter touch be applied to the running of the grounds maintenance contract and any staff savings achieved be considered for Gershon Efficiency purposes.
- d. Officers should consider additional ways in which the role of 'litter picker' groups can be better recognised and where possible supported with financial contributions. An annual event for recognition of 'Streetscene Unsung Heroes' should be held and publicised.
- e. Hampshire County Council be asked to pay more attention to reinstatement by Utility companies and enforce additional works where the deteriorates at a later date.
- f. New street scene pages should be developed for the Council's website showing responsibilities and contacts for different issues. The pages should also explain the rationale behind some service standards such as grass cutting frequencies, leaf clearance and methodologies as these are the largest area of complaint.
- g. Reporting procedures for abandoned vehicles should be reviewed in order to achieve improved obtaining of correct information such as registration, location and model.
- h. The project to refurbish the Abbey Gardens Public Conveniences should be supported by Cabinet and completed by the end of 2007. The project should include improvements to the appearance of the frontage to Abbey House where possible.
- i. The adequacy of the public convenience maintenance budget should be considered at the earliest opportunity and addressed to ensure sufficient funding is available to pay for the annual repair programme.

- j. The proposed composting facilities at Bar End should be completed in time for the 2007 grounds maintenance programme.
- k. A scheme for monitoring customer satisfaction of open spaces and play areas should be developed in time for trial operation during 2007/08. Once completed the system should be used to provide a 'dashboard' of indicators to measure satisfaction and performance.
- l. Cabinet should be asked to consider the issue of artificial hanging baskets with varying designs for Council owned buildings in order to meet sustainability objectives and to offer these as an option to those businesses wishing to support these aims.
- m. The proposed project to collect and re-use rainwater from the roofs of Bar End Depot for watering of floral displays should be completed in time for the 2007 watering season.
- n. Members should consider how it could work with partners such as the Police and Fire Service to provide a programme of work aimed at promoting responsible citizenship within schools aimed at reducing litter, graffiti and vandalism.
- o. Information should be included on the City Council's website to remind residents to be pragmatic to assist with the increasing problem of flooding by promoting simple steps to deal with localised problems. The website information should also set out statutory responsibilities and give associated advice and contact numbers.
- p. The proposed Local Development Framework (LDF) should consider the issue of redevelopment of gardens in urban areas that can be a contributory factor to increased water runoff and surface water. The framework should also consider initiatives for developments using 'grey water' systems for toilet flushing and other non potable water usage.
- q. Highways maintenance staff within Hampshire County Council be asked to remove poster advertising and minor instances of graffiti on road signs.
- r. Lighting staff within Hampshire County Council be asked to repaint lamp standards in high amenity locations within the City Centre streets pending the replacement programme proposed under the PFI initiative.
- s. Officers should develop ways in which the roles of the proposed Police Community Support Officers and Hampshire County Council Accredited Community Support Officers can link up with existing work of the City Council's Neighbourhood Warden Service to support the Cleaner, Greener, Safer streetscene agenda.
- t. Officers should continue to make progress with the Environment Team Biodiversity Action Plan and Streetscene Improvements Action Plan and report back the results to the Environment Scrutiny Panel through the Business Planning and Performance management framework.

- u. Support should be given to the Winchester BID process as a means of providing additional funding to enhance streetscene services such as street cleaning, pigeon control and floral decorations.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This review has highlighted the significant progress which has been made on the streetscene agenda over the last 2 years since the grounds maintenance function was integrated within the Environment Team. This move helped to improve the contract monitoring approach in this area and built upon the existing good practice which existed for waste management and street cleaning services.
- 7.2 With the emergence of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act and greater emphasis on the Cleaner, Greener, Safer agenda it is now appropriate to better integrate services with other areas such as Community Safety and external agencies such as the Police and Hampshire County Council.
- 7.3 Performance monitoring will continue to be an important aspect of contract monitoring and measuring overall progress so the need to develop a suite of performance indicators for these areas becomes even more necessary.
- 7.4 Ultimately, public understanding of the issues and their involvement in improving standards will be an important aspect of future improvements. As has occurred with dog fouling for instance, public peer pressure in dealing with matters such as littering and vandalism/graffiti will be just as important as services to clear up the problem after it has occurred. The links with community based workers such as neighbourhood wardens will therefore increase in importance. Recent proposals to relocate these staff within the Environment Division will assist with this process.
- 7.5 Insofar as taking the agenda forward it is likely that an area based approach provides the best opportunity for tackling Streetscene issues at a local and coordinated level. Any work at neighbourhood level needs to be linked in with existing approaches including partnerships, Parish Councils, the voluntary sector and work through the crime reduction partnerships. The City Council has previously trialled the use of town forums to tackle these issues and the forthcoming possibility of area based committees through the Crime Reduction Partnerships seems an ideal opportunity to tackle these issues in a coordinated way.



ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

Name

Organisation.....

Contact

Address.....

Phone

Email

Litter control

What aspects of the service work well?

How could the service be improved?

How satisfied are you with this service?

Very Satisfied

☐

Satisfied

☐

Dissatisfied

☐

Very
Dissatisfied

☐

Fly tipping

What aspects of the service work well?

How could the service be improved?

How satisfied are you with this service?

Very Satisfied

☐

Satisfied

☐

Dissatisfied

☐

Very
Dissatisfied

☐

Abandoned cars							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fly posting							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Graffiti Removal							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Street Sweeping							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Grounds Maintenance							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Dog Fouling							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public Conveniences							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hampshire County Council Activities							
What aspects of the service work well?				How could the service be improved?			
How satisfied are you with this service?							
Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>

When you have completed this form please return to

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO GIVE US YOUR VIEWS