

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 29th Oct 2014

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PART I

STREET CLEANSING SERVICE

1 Purpose of Report

This is an information report on the provision of the street cleansing service in Slough.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- The Committee is requested to note the report for information

3. History of Service

- I. In 2002 the street cleansing service was externalised to Accord as part of an integrated contract to provide Environmental Services to Slough Borough Council. This was done to address the poor standard of services being provided at that time to the residents of Slough.
- II. The contract is self monitoring by the Contractor with a small client contract management/monitoring team. This design was to maximise the investment in service delivery by the Council and the Contractor.
- III. As a result of the introduction of the contract, during the mid 2000's Slough was reported as one of the cleanest towns in the south east of England. Therefore, expectations have been lifted over the years as the quality of service increased and time passed.
- IV. Since its start, the contracts has passed from Accord to Enterprise and now to Amey as larger contractors have bought out the smaller contractors; however, the contract requirements remained the same and the quality has been maintained within the parameters set by the Council.
- V. The service contract was to provide and 'output' service to the borough based upon the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) qualities set down in the 'Code for Litter & Refuse'.

- VI. It required the borough to be kept clean, but did not specify how this was carried out, that responsibility was with the Contractor.
- VII. The requirement for streets is to bring them back to a standard grade 'A' should the street fall below grade 'C' within a specified time as described in the EPA.
- VIII. In respect of litter bins, they should be emptied as necessary to ensure they do not over fill, and if required to be emptied because they are full, the bin should be emptied within the specified rectification time.
- IX. At the start of the contract the minimum visits to residential streets by the Contractor was once a week to litter pick and once every six weeks with a mechanical sweeper.
- X. Slough High Street and other shopping areas received multiple cleanses during the day between 06.30 and 20.00 to keep the areas to the standard laid down in the Contract.
- XI. When the High Street was redesigned, additional funding was provided to enable street washing to take place, both in the High Street and the Bus Station.
- XII. With the redesign for the Heart of Slough the Contractor was asked to provide a higher level of cleansing at no extra cost to the Council.
- XIII. In 2008 the Contractor was asked to take on the cleansing of parks & open spaces and the cleansing and operation of the sports changing provision as part of the Council's rationalisation of services.

4 **RECENT CHANGES IN SERVICE**

- I. In 2010 as a saving £75,000 was taken out of the service to cut the overtime payments for early starts by the Contractor which was to complete the cleansing of shopping areas before 08.00 as prescribed in the Contract and the EPA.
- II. Around the same time the Contractor was asked to incorporate the park cleansing service into the street cleansing service to reduce the overspend of circa £80,000 per annum and at the same time cleansing crews became the first line of playground inspections whilst cleansing the play areas.
- III. As a result the frequency of visits to residential streets by the crews was reduced across the borough to enable park cleansing and to ensure the main routes and high use areas are maintained to standard.
- IV. In 2012 the £96,000 funding for street washing ceased, but the Contractor has been asked to continue to provide a service at no additional cost.
- V. During the period 2010 to date the Contractor has continually been asked to increase the cleansing in areas of the borough at no cost to the Council; this is largely due to improvements within the Borough requiring a higher level of cleansing to maintain the required quality; High Street, Heart of Slough & Bus Station.
- VI. Although this has been at no cost to the Council financially; there is a cost to the service for all the changes requested, staff and resources are finite and are moved from other areas of the service to ensure the quality in higher profile areas.

- VII. There has also been an increase in service requests to cover issues outside the normal contracted service provision; clearances for community clean up projects, Community Payback clearance, one off actions for departments not included in the contract and areas outside the Council's responsibility.
- VIII. The Contracted Street Cleansing Service across the Borough is now delivered from 07.30 apart from the High Street where cleansing commences at 06.30. until 19.00.
- IX. Street washing is provided as and when resources are available when does not affect other areas of the service.
- X. The Contractor has absorbed and additional costs with the placing out and collection associated with the new litter split bins and the separation of litter & recycling by the solo barrow operatives.
- XI. The Environmental Services contract management/monitoring team has been reorganised a number of times since the start of the contract and changes over the years has had an impact on its capacity to deliver ideal levels of contract compliance and performance monitoring.

5 PERCEPTIONS IN SERVICE PROVISION

- I. There is a perception by some Members and the public about what the contract provides in relation to service provision and this includes some misconceptions.
- II. **Streets in the Borough are cleansed on a specified day;** residential streets are visited on an area based programme at various frequencies and streets requiring attention are cleansed. If a street has not fallen to a level requiring cleaning it is not cleaned. The Council is paying for dirty streets to be cleansed (output system) and not all streets will receive a clean whether littered or not on a specific day (input system).
- III. Due to the vagaries of littering, streets can deteriorate between the scheduled visits and if this is reported, the contractor will respond to rectify.
- IV. **Litter bins are emptied every day;** litter bins are emptied at a frequency specified by the Contractor to prevent them over flowing; however as with street littering, bins can become full between visits and if reported the Contractor will rectify.
- V. **Fly tips,** the Contractor has up to 48 hours from receipt to clear reported fly tips, in earlier years of the contract, the Contractor responded far quicker than is required under the contract which set expectations higher; however, due to the changes outlined previously, resources are now more stretched and clearance is more inline with the Contract requirements than previously.