

Report of: Environment Scrutiny Committee

To: Executive Board

Date: 10th September 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Encams Audit of BVPI 199a



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To present the recommendations from Environment Scrutiny Committee on the Encams audit of BVPI 199a to Executive Board.



decision: No



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jean Fooks

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment Scrutiny Committee



Board(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Sid Phelps, Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee, Emma Griffiths, Legal and Democratic Service, Nichola Stretton, Finance and Asset Management,



Policy Framework:



Recommendation(s): The Executive Board is asked to respond to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:



1. If it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations outlined.



2. If it agrees when will the recommendations be implemented and who will take the lead?



3. If it disagrees why?



4. If more information is required from other officers when that will be considered?

1. Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Committee – 6th August 2007

22. ENCAMS AUDIT OF BVPI 199A – STREET CLEANLINESS

The City Works Business Manager submitted a report and a report of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership – Audit of Street Cleaning Practice (previously circulated now appended) which detailed a countywide audit of Best Value Performance Indicator 199a.

Amy Morgan of ENCAMS attended the meeting and presented the report and its findings. She highlighted two key issues for the Council to address, visibility of street cleansing operatives and effective cleaning of detritus, such as moss, grit and leaves. If the Council were able to address these issues it was likely that results of BV199a would continue to improve and satisfaction with the street cleansing services would also improve (BV89).

Councillor Phelps said that it would have been helpful for the findings of just Oxford to have been highlighted as you had to read through the whole report which also detailed the other districts in Oxfordshire before you could established the results for Oxford.

Councillor Tanner asked what one thing could the City Council do to improve its service further. In response Amy Morgan said that basic training for operatives on why they are doing what they are doing and how to treat detritus waste such as moss on paths etc. and not just the litter they clean would be essential to aid improvement in the service.

Councillor Phelps asked why the cost per head was significantly higher in Oxford for the service. In response Colin Bailey said that Oxford had a large number of visitors and the service was tailored to deal with this. He said that Oxford had both a daytime and nighttime economy and the figures reflected this. Councillor Pressel said that maybe our costs should have been compared with a comparable City, rather than the other districts in Oxfordshire.

Sharon Cosgrove said that the report had been commission by the Oxford Waste Partnership and that KPMG, the Councils Internal Auditors was doing a Value for Money report on street cleansing which would be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Councillor Pressel wondered if the establishment of the NEAT's initiative had, had an effect on the figures and that the visibility of operatives should be included in any recommendations. She also asked about the clearing of litter on the ring road and how this was progressing. In response Philip Dunsdon said that he had been in discussions with the Oxfordshire County Council on safety issues for operatives while clearing litter from verges on the ring road and that a number of options were being considered.

Phil Dunsdon said that operatives were now taking the NVQ Level 2 qualification.

The Committee agreed:

- (a) To congratulate City Works Business Unit for its improvement on BVPI 199a*
- (b) To recommend the Executive Board:*

- (1) *Investigate the possibility of carrying out an annual independent audit of BV199a to ensure that the Council is following the guidance for this BVPI and data collection remains accurate;*
- (2) *That a written response setting out progress on implementing the 25 recommendations in the ENCAMS report should be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Board in 6 months time. The ENCAMS recommendations are:*
 - (i) *Each authority to ensure that the advice in the BV199 guidance manual (section 16) is followed regarding setting up files for external audit.*
 - (ii) *A BV199a Surveyors Forum is created to ensure accuracy and consistency of grading for the life of the local area management agreement target.*
 - (iii) *Authorities should share BV199a results with operational staff to focus their attention on relevant issues.*
 - (iv) *Identify poor performing land uses and assess options for improvement.*
 - (v) *Ensure footpaths, underpasses and alleyways are included on relevant schedules as data and experience suggests that these areas are being overlooked.*
 - (vi) *Where relevant, look to engage recreations and housing departments to ensure they understand their role within BV1991 improvements.*
 - (vii) *Look to work in partnership with registered social landlords (RSL) to agree common standards of cleanliness. This could also include options to provide a cleansing service on RSL land.*
 - (viii) *Where applicable look to replace Town and Parish Council cleaning with an integrated service delivery solely by the District Council.*
 - (ix) *The Clean and Green Group agree a common level and type of training for all cleansing operatives working within Oxfordshire. To be adopted by the five District Authorities and based on good practice from the County.*
 - (x) *Ensure all staff have the knowledge and skills to cleanse effectively with the equipment with which they are provided.*
 - (xi) *All Supervisors attend a BV199 Grading Training course to ensure the Supervisors have the knowledge to supervise the quality of work and to make sure it meets BV199a standards.*
 - (xii) *Oxford City to review reliance on agency staff both from cost and efficiency of service delivery when compared to employing full time staff.*
 - (xiii) *Look to tackle litter-picking culture and encourage sweeping.*

- (xiv) Reinforce the message with staff to clean all areas of the street including the back edge, behind utility boxes and around street furniture.
 - (xv) Encourage the correct use of the equipment to maximize the efficiency of cleansing. This is particularly important within town centres where a combination of obstacles and design make cleansing particularly difficult.
 - (xvi) Look to introduce peer mentoring as a method of tackling poor performance.
 - (xvii) Review current disciplinary procedures to determine whether current procedures provide the right tools to tackle poor performance.
 - (xviii) Supervisors to pay specific attention to the cleansing of detritus, and where applicable monitor and address poor performance.
 - (xix) Manual staff should be able to work more effectively with mechanical sweeping. This will ensure inaccessible areas are not missed by mechanical sweepers and aid manual staff to clean town centres more thoroughly.
 - (xx) Ensure the Supervisors and charge hands roles and responsibilities allow for maximum supervision on the street by streamlining their office-based duties.
 - (xxi) Authorities move away from the use of black sacks as sweeping bags, as this can encourage fly tipping and influence public satisfaction.
 - (xxii) Conduct an audit of street furniture to ensure the Councils assets such as litterbins function and do not adversely influence the perception of the Council.
 - (xxiii) Authorities to incorporate the recommendations and findings from the review, particularly from the observational assessments into service plans for 2007/08.
 - (xxiv) Look to reduce amount of litter dropped on the streets of Oxfordshire via targeted enforcement actions. This should include the sharing of intelligence and potentially countywide initiatives to increase awareness.
 - (xxv) The Clean and Green Group to consider the development of a countywide litter campaign. One coordinated campaign will prevent residents from being bombarded with conflicting campaign messages when moving across the county.
- (3) That the Executive Board take steps to improve the visibility of street cleansing operatives, for example by working in the City centre during busy periods (such as lunchtime), and better branded uniforms;
- (4) Efforts should be made with the Oxfordshire County Council and District Councils to ensure that the verges around the ring road are

cleaned at regular intervals. Progress should be reported back to the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

2. Background

2.1 In 2006 the Oxfordshire Community Partnership agreed two cleanliness related local area agreement targets with central government. One of the targets is to “reduce by nine percent (from the 2004/05 Oxfordshire average of 20%) the proportion of relevant land and highways assessed as having combined deposits of litter and detritus falling below an acceptable standard”. This effectively means that over the life of the three year target the five district authorities must collectively reduce the proportion of unacceptable relevant land as measured by Best Value Performance Indicator 199 part A (BV199a) to 11% or better. Oxford City Council’s score in 2006/07 was 14%. If successful the partnership will not only receive a reward grant but will be some way to achieving the second target associated with BV89 and the public’s perception of cleanliness.



2.2 To help the five district authorities make the necessary improvements the Community Partnership appointed ENCAMS to conduct an audit of Street Cleansing Practice. The audit was to include the following five aspects:

- Establish current street cleansing practice in each of the five Oxfordshire districts and highlight examples of good practice
- Identify how each council assesses its performance in relation to BV199a and catalogue significant variations in practice
- Review the liaison arrangements with the county council, principally when it is carrying out highway verge maintenance
- Make recommendations for a common assessment methodology for BV199a
- Make any other recommendations ENCAMS sees fit in the light of the audit work it has undertaken to improve performance

3. Oxford City Council’s Performance

3.1 Oxford City Council’s performance in this indicator improved from 27% in 2005/06 to 14% in 2006/7. Encams also found that the Council was planning and conducting the BV199a survey correctly and in line with the guidance. Councillors and members of the public can be confident that the data collected is accurate. ESC welcomes this and congratulated City Works on the improved performance of the street cleansing service.

- 3.2 In order to sustain consistency, the Environment Scrutiny Committee recommends that an annual audit of BVPI 199a be carried. Peer challenge, involving the other districts might be an appropriate way to do this.
- 3.3 At the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 6th August, members asked what the City Council could do to improve performance for BVPI 199a. The Committee was told that effort should be made to ensure that all operatives receive appropriate training for BVPI 199a, so that they know to focus on litter and importantly, detritus. Detritus (such as moss, grit, leaves etc) was more of a problem in all the districts than litter and shouldn't be ignored by operatives. Recommendation ix from Encams deals with training for operatives.
- 3.4 The other improvement the Council could make is to the visibility of cleansing crews. Public perception is improved when they see operatives at work cleaning the streets. Therefore, Encams felt that operatives should be deliberately tasked with cleaning certain areas of the city, such as the city centre, when most people are around e.g. lunchtime. The Scrutiny Committee has recommended that the Executive Board consider this.
- 3.5 The other significant issue of concern to the Scrutiny Committee is the litter on the verges around the ring road. Members are encouraged that steps have been taken to work with district partners and the County Council to improve cleanliness on the ring road. The Committee hopes that a regular cleaning schedule can be agreed and would like to see details of this as soon as possible.
- 3.6 The Scrutiny Committee also endorsed the recommendations made by Encams and has requested that a written response, setting out progress against each recommendation, is submitted to Environment Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Executive Board is asked to consider the Environment Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and decide whether it wishes officers to implement them.

5 Comments from the Strategic Director (Sharon Cosgrove)

- 5.1 This is a welcome and comprehensive report from ENCAMS that endorses the good work of the Council and the recent improvements it has made in street cleansing. More importantly the report clearly identifies many ideas for further improvement, which will assist the Council in delivering its aspirations for a top class service in this area.
- 5.2 Executive Board has been asked to endorse that the service implements all ENCAMS' recommendations. To assist the Executive

Board in its decision-making officers propose providing a report that assesses relative priorities alongside resource implications and then builds this information into a fully resourced action plan. It is recommended that the Head of City Works be instructed to bring a full report to the Executive Board.

6 Comments from the Portfolio Holder (Councillor Jean Fooks)

- 6.1 With reference to recommendations (1), (3) & (4) from ESC, I have asked the Head of City Works to investigate if funds permit the proposed audit, improved visibility & branding and regular ring road verge cleansing. It is important to note that improved partnership working through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) has already brought officers together from all five districts and the county council. The partnership promotes and shares best practice and it is already mooted that we should be carrying out “peer audits” rather than spending vital funds externally.
- 6.2 The ring road is a longstanding problem as it is classed as a high-speed road and therefore attracts specific safety requirements (traffic management), resulting in huge expenditure. Increasing the frequency of cleansing without engaging with all stakeholders (who could operate during the traffic management provision) would be an opportunity missed. I therefore propose that the OWP discuss the matter further to ensure that maximum benefit is achieved at minimum cost. I shall ask that ESC receive a report on the situation.
- 6.3 With reference to recommendation (2), I shall ask that such a response be made, though we need to identify which recommendations:
- Have already been adopted since the audit was carried out
 - Can be adopted within the current budget
 - May need new budgetary provision in 2008/9

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Background papers:

