

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2010

REPORT BY HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

5. CONTRACT PERFORMANCE – ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All.

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To advise Members on the current performance of the three main contracts for Refuse and Recycling, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

(A)	The current performance of the Council's main environmental management term contracts be noted.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Environmental Services delivers a number of services through a range of contracts and using in-house staff. The objective of this report is to provide members with an annual update of the performance of the main term contracts.

The Street Cleansing contract was let to Enterprise/MRS in May 2001. The Refuse and Recycling contract was let in August 2002 and was also won by Enterprise/MRS. Following a member review in 2006/07, the refuse and recycling and street cleansing contracts were extended to May 2011. The Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing contracts will be let together as a single contract in May 2011 and is currently out to tender.

The Grounds Maintenance contract was re-tendered in 2007 and awarded to John O Connor Ltd in April 2008 for seven years with a possible extension of up to seven years. The Grounds Maintenance Contract includes additional elements to undertake most highways grounds maintenance (A roads are excluded) on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council under contract and also the maintenance of grounds adjacent to ex-Council estates owned by Riversmead Housing Association.

2.0 Report

Contract Performance

2.1 Refuse and Recycling (Alternative Refuse Collection)

- 2.1.1 An Alternate Refuse and Recycling Collection Service (ARC) was introduced from November 2009. The refuse and recycling contract has accommodated significant changes to the way waste collection and recycling services are delivered. Dry recycling services have been expanded to include the collection of plastic bottles. Food waste and cardboard has been added to the garden waste and is now collected together in brown bins. Collections are carried out weekly alternating between refuse and recycling/composting.
- 2.1.2 This contract continues to perform at or above the expected levels. Since the beginning of the contract in August 2002, the Council has significantly expanded its kerbside recycling services, changing the number of collections per annum from around 3 million in 2002 to over 5 million in 2009/10, reducing to 4 million from November 2010 with ARC. In April 2008, the organic waste service was expanded to encompass the rest of the district, predominantly in the rural areas, so that the service is now available to over 47,000 households. This service is not available to communal properties.
- 2.1.3 The percentage of household waste recycled and composted has increased from 34.9% in 2008/09 to 41.24% in 2009/10. East Herts target for 2009/10 was 41%. This reflects the expansion in materials collected and the part year effect of ARC. The target for 2010/11 is 48%.
- 2.1.4 The number of missed bins has improved significantly since the start of the contract from over 200 missed per 100,000 collections to 42 in 2008/09 against a target of 50. In 2009/10 performance was better than target until the implementation of ARC (**See Essential Reference Paper 'B'**). The performance was adversely affected by the major scheduling changes required to bring in ARC and provide residents with same day, alternate week collections. The full year outturn was around 65.9 at the end of 2009/10. However levels have been rapidly improving and in March 2010 the level of missed bins was 43.72 per 100,000 collections, which betters the target. Early indications in 2010 support the belief that this trend will be maintained.

- 2.1.5 The commercial refuse collection service continued to expand in 2009/10 with gross income increasing from £359,423 to £423,510 and the number of customers rising from 478 to 581. The service is working to maintain this level during the economic downturn.
- 2.1.6 The Council's pest control team had no reports of increased rat infestations due to the alternate refuse collection. Actual reports received between November 2009 to March 2010 for rodents was 364, the lowest number since 2005.

2.2 **Street Cleansing**

- 2.2.1 The Environmental Protection Act (1990) determines the standards that must be met and the inspection criteria to be used in determining the performance of the street cleansing operation. Contractor performance is measured by the Council's Environmental Inspection Team who conduct both programmed and complaint led inspections, grading streets accordingly.
- 2.2.2 In addition, the Government requires additional inspections to be conducted against specific criteria and these are used to calculate statutory Best Value Performance Indicator BV199. This was introduced in 2004. From 2008 this was replaced by a new national indicator NI 195, however, the method of calculation is similar and comparison can therefore be made with previous years' performance.
- 2.2.3 This indicator is based upon sample surveys conducted three times a year. The format and sample size is determined by Government. It identifies the percentage of inspections which identify significant levels of litter and detritus. The lower the percentage, the higher the performance. East Herts performance against this indicator was 2% for litter and 12% for detritus in 2008/09. In 2009/10, litter fell slightly to 3% but detritus improved to 7%. The slight fall in litter standards is mainly due to an increase in litter on the main roads over the winter period in the last survey. The improvement in detritus is partly due to the successful programme of cleansing heavily parked roads. Two roads per week are cleaned using this intensive approach. It involves letters to residents, 'carding' of parking vehicles and contract staff arriving early to prevent commuters parking as residents leave for work. This has helped in bringing detritus levels in Higher Obstruction Housing areas down from 14% in 2008/09 to 4% in 2009/10. The contractor has also trialed and then introduced a small 'ride on' mechanical sweeper that is being used successfully to clean pavements in residential areas.

2.2.4 Street cleansing service complaints have fallen by 38% since 2004/05. There were 857 complaints in 2009/10 compared with 826 in 2008/09 - an increase of 4% (**See Essential Reference Paper 'C'**). This slight increase was due to the periods of snow disrupting litter picking in January and February particularly on main roads. Reports of motorists dispensing litter out of vehicle windows on fast roads further hampered performance during this time. Therefore, litter picking took longer; however, a co-ordinated and concentrated response by the contractor brought performance back up quickly.

2.2.5 Fly tipping in the district has been steadily increasing over the last few years however, there was a slight reduction (3.4%) in 2008/09. In 2009/10 the numbers of fly tips continued to fall by 19%. Efforts to tackle waste related environmental crime continue and East Herts have joined a partnership with the Police, Environment Agency and other Hertfordshire Districts to prevent further fly tipping from occurring. Since November 2009, the following achievements have taken place:

- Ensuring that website information is available to both the public and industry was consistent across councils.
- Sites where waste is habitually dumped have been identified as 'hotspots' and surveys carried out to identify solutions such as signage, physical restrictions, or increasing site surveillance.
- Temporary 'No Tipping' signs have gone up in hotspots at Gore Lane, Barwick and Widbury Hill, Ware.
- Three vehicle check events have been carried out in partnership with the Police and Vehicle & Operator Services Agency (VOSA). 12 vehicles carrying waste were asked to produce documentation following these events. Some of these have led to further action.
- In partnership with Hertfordshire Highways, Lea Valley Regional Park Authority a fly tipping hotspot on the A414, Netherfield Lane was gated to prevent all but emergency access.
- In 2009, three people were prosecuted for fly tipping and received fines plus costs, totalling almost £4,000 between them.

2.3 The following 32 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued since April 2008 (last 2 years) as follows:

- 15 have been £300 fines, issued to people for failure to produce documentation to prove that they have taken care to ensure that their waste is passed on to an authorised person.
- 7 issued for other waste offences (included businesses who leave a mess outside their premises in town centres).
- 7 issued by Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – mainly for littering.
- 2 issued for nuisance vehicles – for sale on the highway
- 1 issued for unauthorised distribution of free literature.

2.4 The service is continuing to undertake Environmental Crime road shows, to raise awareness about these issues and the associated penalties. A further series was conducted in the four main towns over the summer period.

2.5 The Council has worked in partnership with Police and PCSOs to jointly raise awareness on these issues, address anti social behaviour and carry out enforcement. For example, from locations identified by the area inspector, the Probation Service arranged for offenders to clean up graffiti in Hertford town centre as part of the national initiative Community Payback.

2.6 **Abandoned Vehicles**

2.6.1 A new Contractor was appointed in December 2008 – via the Herts County Consortium. The contract will run until 2013. Local Performance Indicator LPI218b measures collection rate within 24 hours. In 2009/10, performance for collection rate was 100% against a target of 96%. In 2009/10, vehicle removals remained low (5 per month). The number fell from 30 vehicles collected in 2008/9 to 20 in 2009/10 (a 33.33% reduction).

2.7 **Grounds Maintenance**

2.7.1. The grounds maintenance contract with John O'Conner (GM) Ltd has now been in place for two years. Performance in 2009 has improved greatly following the early start up problems that were experienced in 2008.

2.7.2 The overall level of validated complaints dropped by 16% in 2007. There was an isolated problem in August resulting in an increase in validated complaints against the same period in 2008 of 71%. This was due to the failure of a sheltered housing team to carry out the programmed works effectively. The contractor was made aware and dealt with this swiftly and effectively. There was no further recurrence.

- 2.7.3 Rectification notices have reduced by 41% against the previous year and are largely resolved within the set target periods. The level of defaults where rectifications have not been resolved satisfactorily or where the breach has been more serious has remained extremely low with the overall number remaining stable over both years of 6 issued in each. **(See Essential Reference Paper 'C')**.
- 2.7.4 The more onerous enforcement measures available in the contract relating to wide scale non-performance and unacceptable levels of complaints have not needed to be employed.
- 2.7.5 The contractor has developed a strong and effective level of supervision utilising a carefully revised programme of works and working closely with EHC monitoring officers. The weekly "compliance audit" tests against five elements of performance. It shows the levels of performance relating to the efficiency of the contractor's work programme and the accuracy of their own supervision reports. Both these tests revealed a near faultless performance in these areas of 2% for 2008 and 2009. The other three tests that monitor the standard of work carried out and whether all the work due across the district has been completed show that there have been no significant problems.
- 2.7.6 In addition, considerable improvements have been implemented to ensure that the contract achieves a consistently high standard. The following elements are now being used:
- A revised and improved program of works for the whole year which ensures that all tasks are carried out at the correct time of year taking into account seasonal variations and customer requirements.
 - Sensory equipment (Tiltmasters) have been installed on every grass cutting machine to measure gradients ensuring that staff are operating safely.
 - Land that has previously been managed on an adhoc basis has now been categorised to determine a long term rotational programme of works.
 - The contract supervisors and operatives meet on a regular basis throughout the year with the Council's Area Environmental Inspectors to discuss performance and operational issues.
 - Play inspections are now managed electronically with hand held computers and a data base that streamlines response

times and record keeping between the contractor and the council.

- Council officers take an active part in the contractors' periodic audits that cover health and safety, quality and environmental management systems.
- Performance Indicators have been reviewed and revised to further improve monitoring of the contract.
- The contractor has introduced seasonal hours for their staff (longer hours in summer and shorter hours in winter) providing a more efficient use of resources.
- The contractors' shrub manual has been completed to identify the precise types and quantity of shrubs in beds across the district and their specific horticultural needs.
- Winter works are planned to a precise program with input from the contractor supported by their shrub manual records and in parallel with the overall parks improvement plans.
- The programmed initiative to improve the standards of roundabouts covered by the sponsorship scheme has been completed.
- A new herbicide has been introduced utilising a more efficient, light weight application method (Total Droplet Control)- an electronic system which control dosage more accurately.
- The contractor has provided all staff with the opportunity to take NVQ level 2 qualifications. All those that embarked on the course have passed this year. The two contract supervisors are currently completing their level 3.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives <i>(delete as appropriate)</i> :	Pride in East Herts <i>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i> Caring about what's built and where <i>Care for and improve our natural and built environment.</i>
Consultation:	None
Legal:	George Robertson
Financial:	Mandy Barton
Human Resource:	None
Risk Management:	None