

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 JUNE 2008

REPORT BY HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

10. CONTRACT PERFORMANCE – ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION – that the current performance of the Council's main environmental management term contracts be noted.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

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

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

Pride in East Herts

Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.

Caring about what's built and where

Care for and improve our natural and built environment.

3.0 Background

3.1 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.

3.2 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 Grounds Maintenance contract was re-tendered last year 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 on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council under contract and also the maintenance of grounds adjacent to ex-Council estates owned by Riversmead Housing Association.

4.0 Contract Performance

Refuse and Recycling

- 4.1 This contract continues to perform satisfactorily. Since the beginning of the contract in August 2002, the Council has significantly expanded its kerbside recycling services, increasing the number of collections per annum from around 3 million in 2002 to over 5.5 million in 2008/09. From September 2006 the service was expanded so that paper, glass and cans are now collected from 93% of households. A programme of rolling this service out to flats is ongoing, with the majority of communal properties now added where space, access and suitability allow.
- 4.2 Recycling performance has increased from 14.5% of household waste recycled in 2006/07 to 17.83% in 2007/08.
- 4.3 The percentage of household waste composted has increased from 12% in 2006/07 to 12.15% in 2007/08. This equates to a combined recycling and composting performance of just under 30% against a government target of 20%. Performance in 2008/09 is expected to reach 36.5%. The composting service was expanded by a further 14,500 households in April 2008. The Council had intended to add kitchen waste and cardboard collections to the Brown Bin scheme in 2007, but unfortunately the site proposed for a new processing plant to deal with these materials proved to be unsuitable. Hertfordshire County Council is now considering an alternative location for the east of the County. An update is provided separately on this agenda.
- 4.4 The number of missed bins has improved significantly since the start of the contract from over 200 missed per 100,000 collections to around 34 at the end of 2007/08, against a target of 50.
- 4.5 The commercial refuse collection service continued to expand in 2007/08 with 100 new customers bringing the total number to 433 customers at the end of the year. This in turn has resulted in a 25% increase in gross income from £185,187 in 2006/07 to £231,657 in 2007/08.

Street Cleansing

- 4.6 There have been significant improvements in the performance of the Street Cleansing contract in the last 3 years but there remain opportunities to do better, particularly with respect to detritus.
- 4.7 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 Inspection Team who conduct both programmed and complaint led inspections, grading streets accordingly. 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 is to be replaced by a new national indicator NI 195.
- 4.8 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 10% in 2005/06. It increased to 5% in 2006/07 and fell to 10% in 2007/08 against a Government target of 25%. This apparent deterioration in performance is due to a recalibration of inspection criteria to ensure staff undertaking inspections are complying with ENCAMs standards.
- 4.9 There is growing pressure from campaign group ENCAMs (which sets the BV199 standard) to raise local authority performance and this is resulting in a stricter interpretation of this standard than that which is laid down in the Environmental Protection Act. It is likely that performance measured using this indicator may fall in future, unless the Council raises its cleansing standards. Officers are developing a detritus management programme focusing on issues such as heavily parked roads to address this issue. A trial of this at Marshgate Drive was a success with a number of positive comments from members of the public.
- 4.10 Street cleansing service complaints continue to fall, with a 17% decrease between 2006/07 and 2007/08. Details of this are shown at Appendix B. Requests for service however have increased by 17% due to a publicity campaign increasing focus on reporting environmental crime through roadshows in town centres and leaflets to householders. Results of this included reporting of abandoned shopping trolleys up by 47% to 55 reports and all dog fouling reports

have risen from 116 in 2006/07 to 177 in 2007/08. In 2008 the service is aiming to further increase enforcement, through working with Police Community Support Officers and further promotion.

- 4.11 Unfortunately despite an increase in enforcement actions fly tipping has continued to increase from 1078 fly tips removed in 2006/07, to 1565 removed in 2007/08. This is partly due to an improvement in reporting arrangements, but also reflects an increase in fly tipping nationally due to rising disposal costs. Of these 54% were small fly tips in 2006/07 and 63% in 2007/08. Small fly tips include black bag waste picked up by the street cleansing contractor during scheduled operations and includes waste left at recycling sites. Despite its size East Herts has much lower fly tipping than many neighbouring authorities.
- 4.12 The numbers of abandoned vehicles removed has fallen from 55 in 2006/07 to 46 in 2007/08. The Council is part of a consortium of 9 Districts within Hertfordshire that have arranged to have abandoned vehicles removed by this contractor. From 2003 Universal undertook the contract and up to 2006/07 contract performance was excellent with 90% of abandoned vehicles removed within 24hrs of point of legal entitlement. However for 2007/08 this company was bought out by Copart and performance has fallen to around 67%. The service will be re-tendered and a new contract let in October.
- 4.13 A number of improvements have been implemented including:
- The weed spraying programme continued with two rounds of spraying in 2007/08. The standard of appearance of channels and footpaths continues to improve.
 - Pavement washing / chewing gum removal was undertaken in Sawbridgeworth and some local shopping areas.
 - Following the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (2005), the Council has adopted a range of enforcement measures and these include taking a more proactive approach to dealing with enforcement against litter, flytipping and trade waste infringements. These have now been implemented. The number of enforcement actions against environmental crime has increased from 37 in 2006/07 to 61 in 2007/08. In the last 12 months this included 4 prosecutions and issuing 11 fixed penalty notices to householders and businesses.
 - The public convenience service was reviewed in 2006 and measures to improve standards have been put in place, including

'deep cleanses', a capital improvement programme and extension of opening hours to 8pm in the summer months. Complaints about this service that relate to contractor performance are very low (under 20 per annum). A new public convenience was provided at the Wash in Hertford as part of the development of a new public house. This is operated at no cost to the council. The nearby convenience at Gascoyne Way car park that did not meet disability discrimination standards was closed at the same time. In Bishops Stortford new toilets were opened in the autumn of 2007 as part of the new Sainsburys /Jackson Square development.

- The programme for replacing broken and undersized litter bins providing dog bins on the public highway continued. In the last 12 months 30 litter bins have been replaced and 8 dog bins installed on the public highway.
- As part of a 'cross-border' working arrangement with Broxbourne Borough Council, East Herts continues to carry out litter picking of the Broxbourne section of the A10.
- A training programme was initiated with contractor staff to speed up the removal of graffiti. Officers are currently working with Hertfordshire Highways to see if it is possible to remove graffiti on street furniture more quickly.

Grounds Maintenance

- 4.14 Validated complaints continued to fall in 2007 over 10% from the previous year, despite higher complaint levels in the peak summer months due to the very high summer rainfall. Of the 210 complaints half of these related to grass cutting. (See Appendix C on page 39).
- 4.15 Contract Performance is also monitored through a weekly audit involving inspections of sites throughout the district undertaken by the inspection team. The percentage of work that has failed these inspections has fallen from 17% since the tests began in 2003 to 4% in 2007, resulting in a marked improvement in the quality of service provided.
- 4.16 The new grounds maintenance contract with John O Connor commenced 1 April 2008. Initial teething problems and warm weather has contributed to concerns with grass cutting however the contractor is putting in extra resources and working with client managers to resolve these problems.

4.17 A separate report on this agenda details initiatives in parks and open spaces and progress with development plans.

5.0 Consultation

None.

6.0 Legal Implications

None.

7.0 Financial Implications

None.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

None.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The services provided through the contracts detailed within this report have a high public profile and therefore performance issues may impact upon the Council's standing and reputation.

Background Papers

None

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Missed Refuse & Recycling Containers per 100,000 collections





