

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 JUNE 2009

REPORT BY HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

6. CONTRACT PERFORMANCE – ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - the Committee note the current performance of the Council's main environmental management term contracts.

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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 Objectives

2.1 This report links to corporate priorities:

**Caring about what's built and where**

*Care for and improve our natural and built environment.*

Improve standards of neighbourhood management in our towns and villages.

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. In April 2008 the garden waste service was expanded to encompass the rest of the District, predominantly in the rural areas, so that the service is now available to some 48,700 households, with only 300 properties unable to receive of the service due to access problems. This service is not available to communal properties.
- 4.2 The percentage of household waste recycled and composted has increased from 29.9% in 2007/08 to 34.9% in 2008/09. East Herts target for 2008/09 was 36.5%, however this assumed the implementation of Alternate Refuse Collection in January 2009 and the inclusion of kitchen waste and cardboard collections to the Brown Bin scheme. Unfortunately this had to be delayed as the County Council was unable to provide a suitable composting plant in time. A new facility to process this waste will be available from November 2009. The County Council provide a weekly progress report on construction of the two new composting facilities (at Cumberlow Green, near Buntingford and Ridge, near Potters Bar). Works are currently ahead of schedule and assurances have been given that any delays will not impact on East Herts Council's plans for ARC. Collections will commence on 2 November 2009.
- 4.3 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. Performance in 2008/09 was 42 per 100,000 collections. This is a good performance considering the extension of the Garden Waste scheme to the remainder of the district in April 2008, which included the rescheduling of collection rounds attached at Appendix A (page 6.7).

- 4.4 The commercial refuse collection service continued to expand in 2008/09 but at a much slower rate than previously with gross income increasing from £304,735 to £359,423 with the number of customers rising from 433 to 478. The service is working to maintain this level during the economic downturn.

### **Street Cleansing**

- 4.5 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. 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.
- 4.6 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 2007/08 (litter 2% and detritus 16%). This improved in 2008/09 to 7% (litter 2% and detritus 12%). This reflects the work done by the service to improve performance on detritus. Following a successful trial to address cleansing issues on heavily parked roads at Marshgate Drive in 2007, the scheme has been extended district wide and 2 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.
- 4.7 Street cleansing service complaints have fallen by 29% since 2003/04. There were 826 complaints in 2008/09 compared with 845 in 2007/08 a reduction of 2.2%. The reduction would have been greater but for an increase in complaints about weed growth in road channels and pavements which increased from 31 complaints in 2007/08 to 73 last year, reflecting the wetter weather conditions during the summer months which delayed the application of chemicals and resulted in an extended growth period.

- 4.8 The number of complaints about nuisance vehicles and the distribution of free literature also fell last year, possibly reflecting the increased level of enforcement undertaken. Details of this are shown at Appendix B (page 6.8).
- 4.9 Flytipping in the district has been steadily increasing over the last few years, however, there was a slight reduction (3.4%) in 2008/09. Officers consider that the current economic conditions combined with rising costs of commercial waste disposal could result in a further increase this year. Efforts to tackle waste related environmental crime continue. Since April 2007 (in the last 2 years) 39 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued in total as follows:
- 22 of these 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 (including businesses who leave a mess outside their premises in town centres.
  - 7 issued by PCSOs – mainly for littering (the latest of these was in March to a youth who threw down a beer can on Hartham common).
  - 2 issued for nuisance vehicles – for sale on the highway.
  - 1 issued for unauthorised distribution of free literature (fliers placed on cars in Castle Street, Hertford, by a nightclub).
- 4.10 The service is continuing to undertake Environmental Crime road shows, to raise awareness about these issues and the associated penalties. A further series were conducted in the main towns in May this year.
- 4.11 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, by sharing information on offenders and conducting 'stop and search' events to catch illegal waste carriers / flytippers.
- 4.12 Abandoned vehicles are removed as part of a County wide contract managed by St Albans Council. Although reports were investigated quickly by our officers, contractor performance was poor with only 41% being removed within 24 hours against a target of 90%. A new contractor was appointed in November last year and performance has improved significantly. Although collection performance was disappointing, this needs to be viewed in the context that the numbers are extremely small in East Herts (less than 3 per month). The number fell from 46 vehicles collected in 2007/8 to 30 in 2008/9 (a 53% reduction)

4.13 A number of improvements have been implemented including:

- The pavement washing/gum removal programme has continued and expanded to cover all town centres and neighbourhood shopping areas, where surfaces permit. The programme should enable streets to be washed twice a year.
- The programme for replacing broken and undersized litter bins providing dog bins on the public highway continued. In the last year 10 litter bins were replaced and 14 new litter bins and 5 new dog bins provided on the public highway. The capital programme for installing dog bins on the highway is now complete.
- A pilot of street recycling bins '*Recycle on the go*' has commenced in Ware and Bishop's Stortford with the objective of encouraging residents to think about how they dispose of waste while walking in town centres.
- Management of the Street Cleaning and Refuse and Recycling contracts has been integrated and the services co-located at Buntingford Service Centre. This has generated savings and additional income of approximately £60,000 per annum without impacting upon service performance.

### **Grounds Maintenance**

4.14 The new grounds maintenance contract with John O Connor commenced 1 April 2008. Initial start up problems and warm, wet weather resulted in lower performance than in 2007 with validated complaints increasing by 19%. Of the 245 validated complaints received 63% related to grass cutting and 62% were in May and June alone. However, these problems were resolved by the end of June and for the remaining months of the year performance was better than the same period in the previous year. Good performance has continued into 2009 (as shown at Appendix C, page 6.9).

### 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.

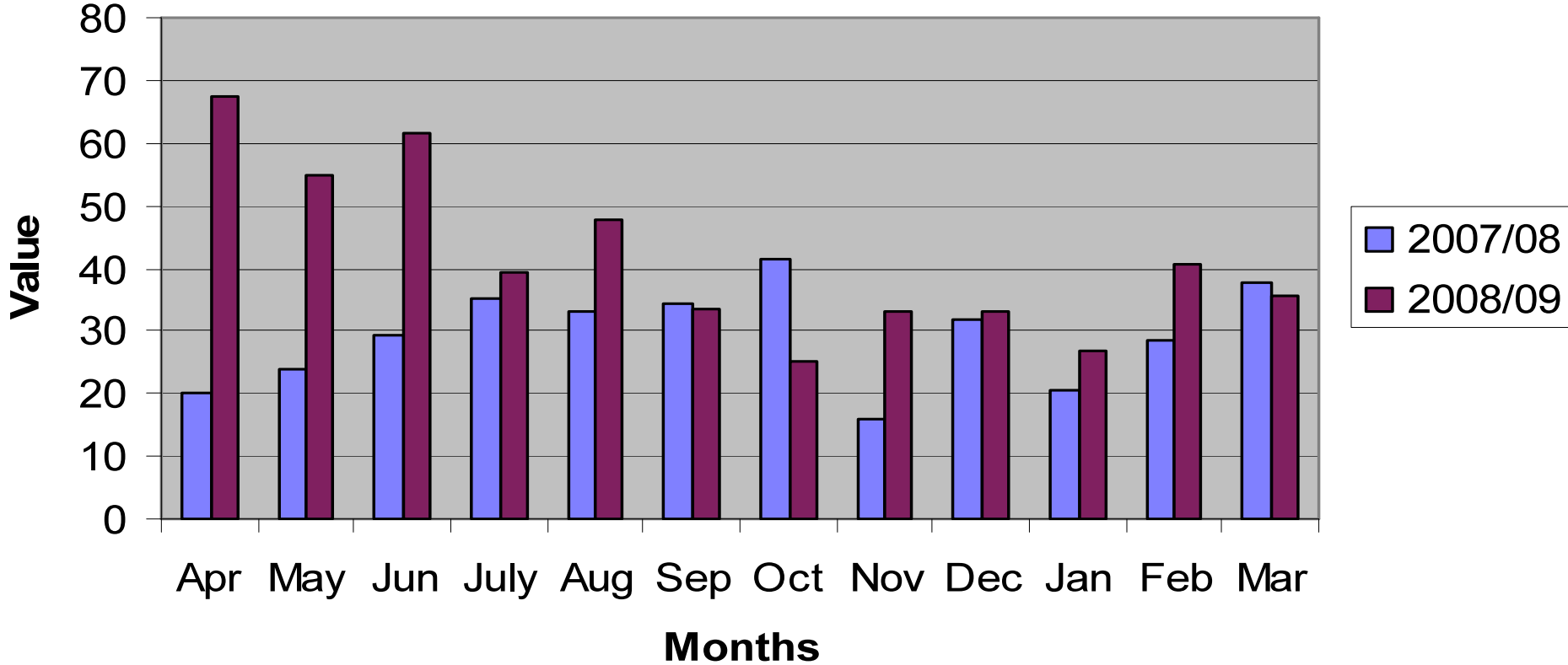
Background Papers

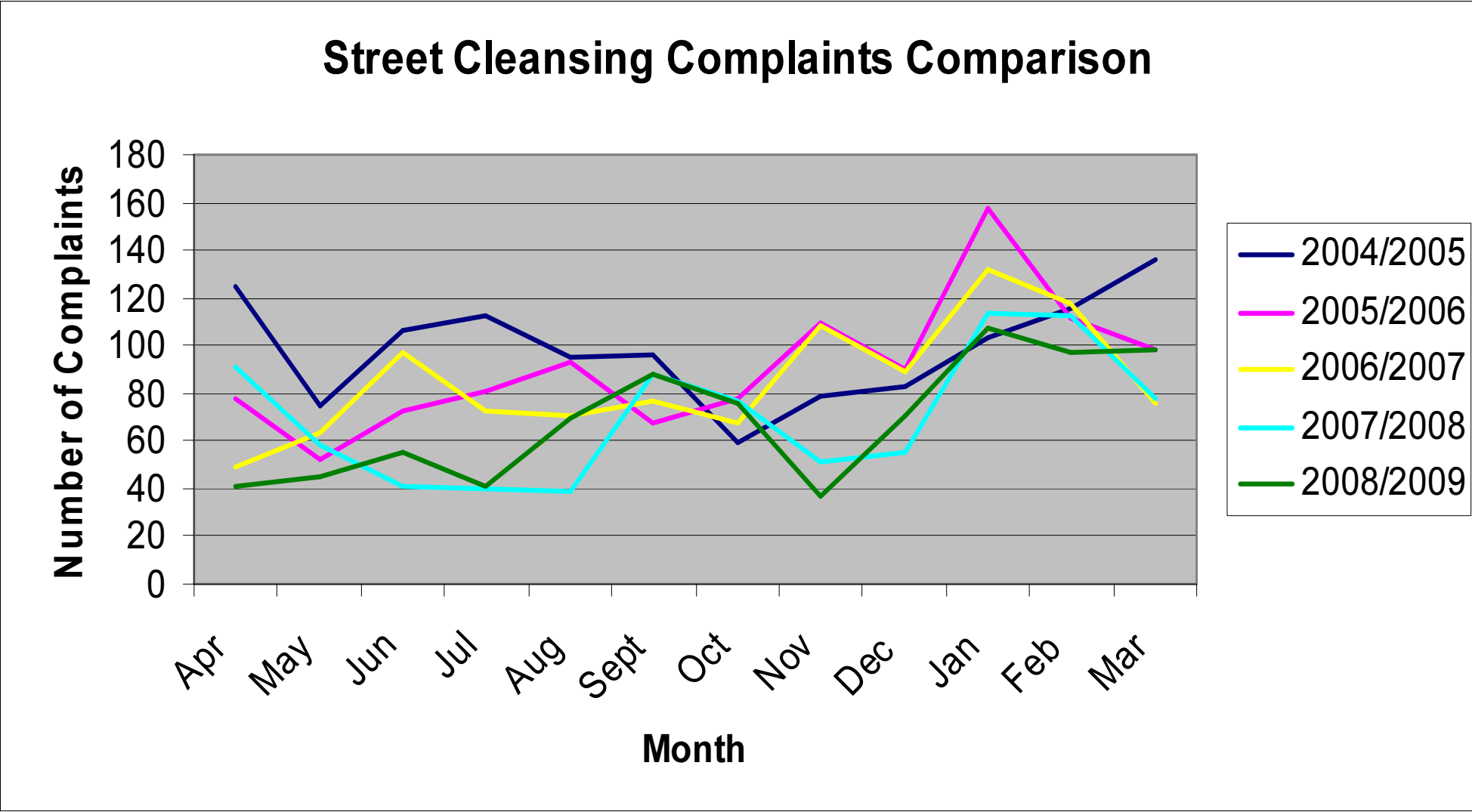
None

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### Missed Refuse & Recycling Containers per 100,000 collections







### Grounds Contract - All Validated Complaints 2006 - 2008

