

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 22 March 2022

Report by: Jess Khanom-Metaman – Head of Operations

Report title: Street Cleansing Contract Performance

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

This report provides an overview of the performance of street cleansing activities delivered by contractors on behalf of East Herts Council.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A. To review and provide comments on the update report on street cleansing.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 To provide an update on street cleansing services in East Herts.

2.0 Background

2.1 At the request of the overview and scrutiny committee the following matters were requested to be reported on by the Shared Waste Service for review by the Committee:

- a) Road cleaning and sweeping on roads and pavements
- b) Litter Picking on the highway

2.2 The following report will cover these items:

- Overview of Service
- Overview of performance

- Key challenges and areas for improvement

2.3 The Council is due to either extend or reprocure its waste and street cleansing contract, for implementation in May 2025, and with negotiations beginning later this year. Due to the Council's partnership working arrangements with North Herts Council. A cross-party joint Member working group will be set up to look at the strategic direction of the service, review the current contract and look at future contract design. Further information can be found in the Shared Service Governance report also presented to this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

Overview of Service:

2.4 In May 2018 East Herts Council implemented a Joint Waste contract with North Herts. The contract was awarded to Urbaser and managed by a newly formed joint client team across the two authorities (North Herts and East Herts).

2.5 A partnership board was also developed to oversee the monitoring and performance of the contract above and beyond the role of the contract monitoring team. The partnership board consists of key officers and members from both Councils including the Chief Executive, the Executive/Cabinet member for Waste and Recycling, Director/Head of Service responsible for Waste, finance and legal officers and the Shared Waste Service Manager.

2.6 Section 89(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on certain bodies to ensure that their land (or land for which they are responsible) is, so far as is practicable, kept clear of litter and refuse. Section 89(2) places a further duty on local authorities in respect of publicly maintainable highways in their area (except motorways and some major trunk roads), to ensure that the highway or road is, so far as is practicable, kept clean. This is in addition to the section 89(1) requirement and therefore means removal of detritus as well as litter and refuse. The removal of detritus is deemed to be practicable from metalled surfaces only. It is recommended, but not a duty, that detritus is also removed from

other hard surfaces.

- 2.7 The day-to-day performance of the contract is closely monitored by the shared waste, recycling and street cleansing service. This includes daily checks and inspections, weekly and monthly meetings with key members of staff at varying levels from both our contractor and the shared waste service.
- 2.8 Street cleansing/litter picking forms part a wider waste management contract. Services consist of mainly mechanical sweeping, on street litter bin emptying and manual litter picking across the District. This contract does not cover litter picking or bin emptying within our parks and open spaces.
- 2.9 A number of key performance indicators (KPIs) underpin the monitoring and contract compliance of the service delivered by our contractor.
- 2.10 The contract is predominantly “output based”, which means for normal street cleansing operations these are to be carried out at a frequency to ensure that cleansing does not drop below a required level specified within the contract. The contract does not require a set number of cleansing operations in the majority of the district, but the majority of this work is scheduled based on need.
- 2.11 To manage this type of output-based cleansing, regular monitoring is performed by the East and North Herts Shared Waste Service across the whole district to determine if the standards are being maintained sufficiently. If it is deemed that an area has fallen below standard the shared waste service requires a rectification to be undertaken, continued rectifications can lead to a location being classed as a ‘Hotspot’. If problems persist a default may be issued which incurs financial deductions. Each town centre is visited at least weekly to monitor cleansing standards. This forms the bulk of inspections completed by the Shared Waste Service see Graph 2. The shared waste service also undertakes a combination of post cleanse inspections and random inspections across the district. Aiming to proactively visit every street at least once over the course

of a year, however this is impacted by staff vacancies and complaint levels related to other disruptions to services, such as waste collections.

2.12 The Council's street cleansing and litter picking function covers the following areas:

- a) All public highways (excluding motorways), including adjacent footways and ancillary features (e.g., roundabouts and traffic islands).
- b) Separate public footways and alleyways.
- c) Small defined private forecourts and private shop entrances abutting the Highway. (usually demarcated with studs in the path.)
- d) Verges, open spaces (such as market squares) forming part of the public Highway (with the exception of those footpaths crossing parks maintained under the Grounds Maintenance Contracts)
- e) Public car parks.
- f) Cleansing around 'Recycling Bring Bank Sites' located on public Highways and in public car parks.
- g) The removal of fly tipped waste, abandoned shopping trolleys and discarded hypodermic needles.
- h) Cleansing following special events (e.g., carnivals, Remembrance Sunday, charity runs etc.)

2.13 The general cleansing requirements of the contract are:

- a) The sweeping of all metalled hard surfaces including kerbside road channels and around traffic islands.
- b) The removal of Litter, debris, dead weeds and other Detritus from all areas (the chemical weed treatment of weeds is not included within this contract).
- c) The emptying and cleansing of litter bins.
- d) The removal of leaf and blossom fall.
- e) Emergency cleansing of roads following accidents including the removal of animal carcasses.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 To provide an update performance of services across East Hertfordshire.

Update on performance

3.2 As mentioned, the contract is output based, in order to manage the cleansing programme, the areas of work have been divided up into zones based on the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (COPLAR) each zone is then considered by intensity of use in order to determine the response/recovery times for restoring land to acceptable cleanliness levels if it falls below the required standard. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Performance Zones

Zone	Intensity	Indicative total length (m)
Housing/Residential	High	4,410
Retail, Office, Commercial		9,790
Road - Up to 40mph		2,110
High Speed Road - 50mph or greater		48,000
Housing/Residential	Medium	200,730
Retail, Office, Commercial		1,290
Road - Up to 40mph		56,399
High Speed Road - 50mph or greater		47,350
Industrial Areas		2,480
Other Areas		1,210
Housing/Residential	Low	90,680
Road - Up to 40mph		419,574
High Speed Road - 50mph or greater		460
Other Areas		910
Total		885,393

- 3.3 The contract does not wholly follow COPLAR, and response times have been set to meet the needs of the district whilst balancing the costs of the contract. During monitoring by the shared waste service, streets are graded according to the information in 3.6 below.
- 3.4 Litter is most commonly assumed to include materials, often associated with smoking, eating and drinking, that are improperly discarded and left by members of the public; or are spilt during business operations as well as waste management operations. As a guideline a single plastic sack of rubbish should usually be considered fly-tipping rather than litter. Chewing gum although classed as litter when dropped, the standards in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse do not apply to trodden-in chewing gum. Duty bodies are not required to employ special cleansing methods to remove compacted gum or gum staining over and above normal cleansing regimes.
- 3.5 Detritus, which comprises small, broken down particles of synthetic and natural materials, arrive at the site through the same displacement effects associated with mechanical, human, animal and natural actions, most of which also determine the distribution of litter. Detritus includes dust, mud, soil, grit, gravel, stones, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, and fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials. Leaf and blossom falls are to be regarded as detritus once they have substantially lost their structure and have become mushy or fragmented.

3.6 Photos and descriptions of Grades

Grade A:

- 3.6.1 Grade A is where there is no visible litter or detritus. This is most often seen immediately after cleansing activities have taken place. Areas completely free of litter or detritus are often unrealistic when cleansing frequencies may be days, weeks or months apart.

Litter



Detritus



Grade B:

3.6.2 Grade B is the grade considered acceptable, this is where there may be one or two pieces of litter or small patches of detritus but is predominantly litter and detritus free.

Litter



Detritus



Grade C:

3.6.3 Widespread distribution of litter and/or detritus with minor accumulations.

Litter



Detritus



Grade D:

3.6.4 Heavily littered and/or affected by detritus with significant accumulations.

Litter

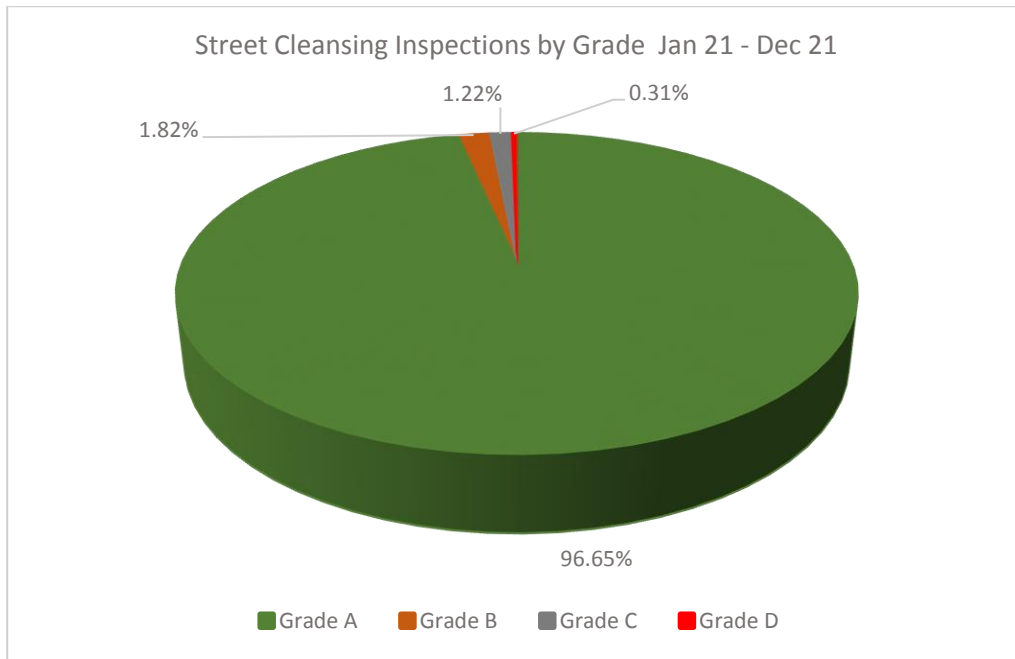


Detritus



3.6 The current performance levels for this service are illustrated in Graph 1 below, it demonstrates that overall, where monitoring has taken place the vast majority of streets are kept at Grade B or above, which is the stipulated level required contractually.

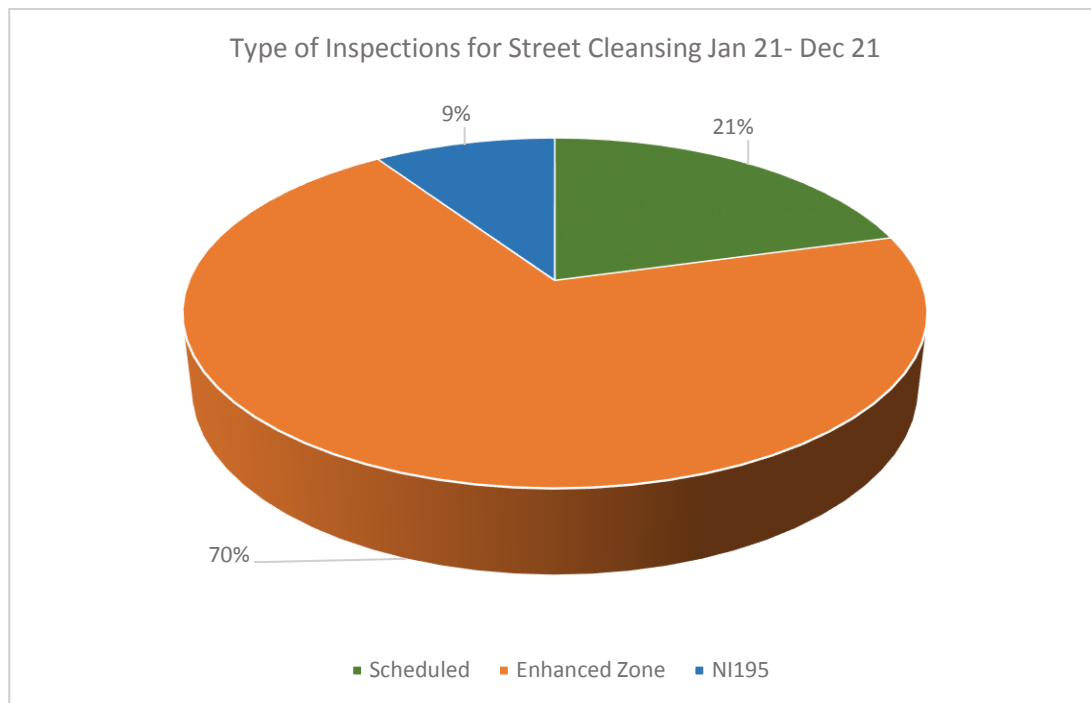
Graph 1: Street Cleansing Performance 2021



3.7 Due to the potential for a few hours to pass between cleansing and inspection. We also use a grade B+ which has been added to the A grades for this report. The B+ represents post cleanse inspections which may have very minor littering and detritus possibly moved due to recent weather, and therefore do not need immediate rectification.

3.8 Graph 2 shows the breakdown of the type of inspections that have taken place across 2021.

Graph 2: Breakdown of Inspections by Type



- 3.9 As an outcome from the previous report to Overview and Scrutiny, the Shared Waste Service changed the format of a proportion of the inspections for street cleansing. Historically the majority of these inspections were 'post-cleanse' essentially checking the work of our contractor. The graph above identifies that the majority of inspections are completed in Enhanced Cleansing Zones these are our town centres with the highest footfall.
- 3.10 The new format inspections, we have called NI195, and follow more closely the original National Indicator local environmental quality inspections. These began during 2021 and will continue throughout the contract to ensure that all streets are assessed for graffiti, fly posting, litter and detritus. Completing the NI195 ensures that a proportion of inspections are 'at random' ensuring the shared waste service are also reviewing the standard of cleanliness 'between' cleansing operations. By not only completing post cleanse inspections we can ensure the needs of individual streets in relation to the frequency of cleanses are assessed regularly.

3.11 Where performance levels have dropped below a Grade B, our contractor is issued a rectification and is required to complete works within the times set out in Table 3 below:

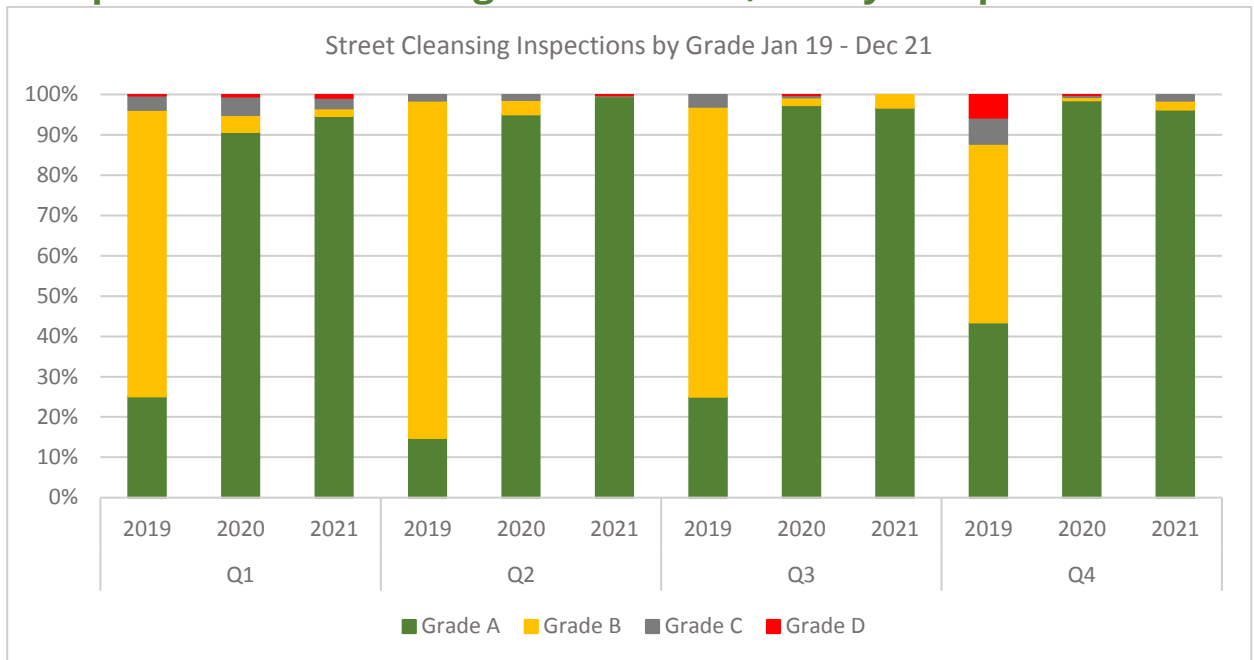
Table 3: Rectification Times

Cleansing Grade	Grade B <i>Predominantly free from Litter, Waste and Detritus apart from some small items</i>	Grade C <i>Widespread distribution of litter/waste/detritus with some accumulations</i>	Grade D <i>Heavily affected by litter/waste and/or detritus with significant accumulation</i>
Retail/Office/Commercial (High intensity of use)			
Town Centres Shopping Centres Shopping Streets	3 hours	2 hours	1 hour
<i>Sites to be restored daily to Grade A by 08:00</i>			
Retail/Office/Commercial (Medium intensity of use)			
Shopping parades/ School entrances Central Car Parks Attraction/ Park entrances	12 hours	6 hours	3 hours
<i>Sites to be restored daily to Grade A by 10:30</i>			
Housing/Residential Areas (High intensity of use)			
	2 days	6 hours	3 hours
Housing/Residential Areas (Medium intensity of use)			
	7 days	24 hours	6 hours
Housing/Residential Areas (Low intensity of use)			
	28 days	72 hrs	48 hrs
Industrial Areas (Medium intensity of use)			
		5 days	48 hrs
Industrial Areas (Low intensity of use)			
		7 days	48 hrs
Roads (High intensity of use)			
Rural/suburb Commuter routes Main roads into towns, Usually, 40mph routes		3 days	24 hrs
Roads (Medium intensity of use)			

	Grade B <i>Predominantly free from Litter, Waste and Detritus apart from some small items</i>	Grade C <i>Widespread distribution of litter/waste/detritus with some accumulations</i>	Grade D <i>Heavily affected by litter/waste and/or detritus with significant accumulation</i>
Cleansing Grade			
Rural/suburb commuter routes Other Car Parks		7 days	48 hrs
District and local roads (Low intensity of use)			
Paved Areas and Verges		14 days	7 days
High Speed Roads			
Paved Areas and Verges			60 or 28 Days (dependant on road closure requirements)

- 3.12 As you will note, there are some areas in which we do not have rectification periods as they are predominantly industrial areas and roads and are not deemed to need a rectification under the contract until they reach a Grade C. These areas will still receive scheduled cleansing activities.
- 3.13 The shared waste service carry out regular monitoring to manage the performance of our contractor, aiming to complete 1000 inspections across the contract (both East and North, including waste inspections) each month. Another key indicator of performance of contract is customer complaints. Complaints are followed up and investigated by the shared waste service to determine if a complaint is justified against the requirements set out in the contract. It is important to note that the contract levels of cleanliness and customer expectations of these levels can differ.
- 3.14 Graph 3 below shows the inspection grades carried out by the contract officers and compares them by quarter by year. Please note 2018 and 2022 have not been included as they do not have full year's data, and therefore do not show a true reflection of the inspection grades. 2019 data does not differentiate the B+ standard which are reported with Grade A standard from 2020.

Graph 3: Street Cleansing Performance, Yearly Comparison



- 3.15 As you can see from the graph, the grades fluctuate based on seasonal changes, showing higher reports of grade C and D in Q1 and Q4 (by calendar year) which spans the winter months when detritus is at its worst.
- 3.16 You will also see a change in reporting grades from 2019 and 2020, this shows the introduction of B+ to the local grading system.
- 3.17 Overall, of the 10,209 inspections carried out since the beginning of the contract in May 2018, only 3% of the streets across the district have been graded below a grade B. As you can see below there has been a huge improvement since the beginning of the contract and with continued understanding from new staff, we believe this will continue through this year and the remainder of the contract.

2018 – 407 street inspections, 29% below grade B
 2019 – 1593 street inspection, 6% below grade B
 2020 – 3166 street inspections, 1% below grade B
 2021 – 4514 street inspections, 2% below grade B
 2022 – 529 street inspections (at time of report), 3% below grade B
 winter months only.

3.18 The heat mapping from 2021 is shown below. These show the areas in which the grading of streets has been below a grade B at inspection.

Map 1: Heat map of street inspections below grade B in 2021

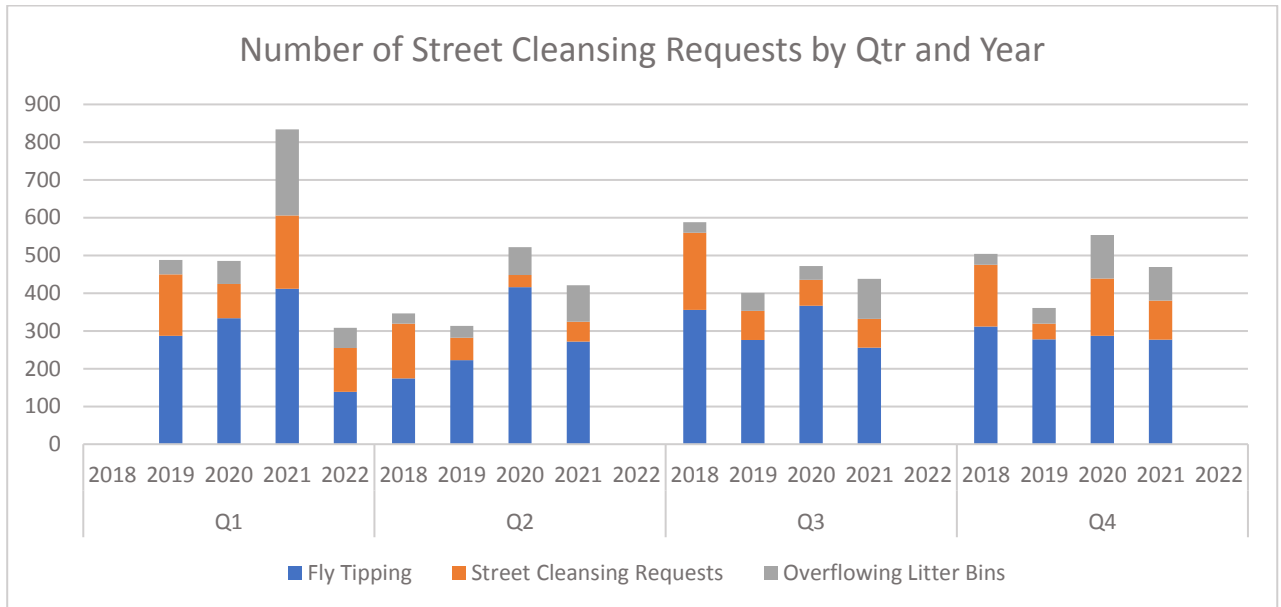


3.19 From the map above you can see the areas that have been graded below B. We look at heat mapping along with the inspections on a quarterly basis to ensure that scheduled cleansing is completed effectively, as well as ensuring that the frequency of the schedule is accurate.

3.20 Graph 4 below shows contacts relating to street cleansing. Please note 2022 has been included for reference, however, will only show full data for Jan 22. The majority of contacts received relate

to instances of fly tipping. The data below shows that on average approximately 23% of enquiries are street cleansing requests.

Graph 4: Street Cleansing Requests, Yearly comparison



3.21 We have seen an increase in Street cleansing requests since the last overview and scrutiny report, the previous report states 15% of enquiries were related to street cleansing requests, this looked at the period Sep 19 – Feb 20.

3.22 Street cleansing request increases can be attributed to a number of factors. These include:

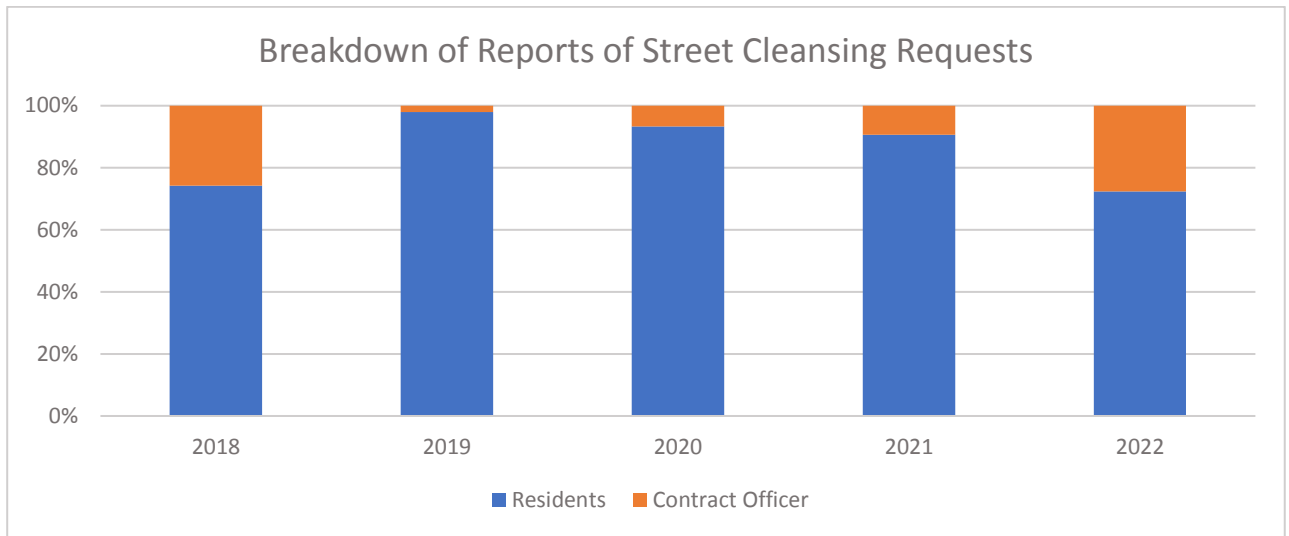
3.22.1 Changes in resident and visitor behaviour – higher footfall/more litter

3.22.2 Higher public expectations

3.22.3 Intermittent service provision – resourcing difficulties

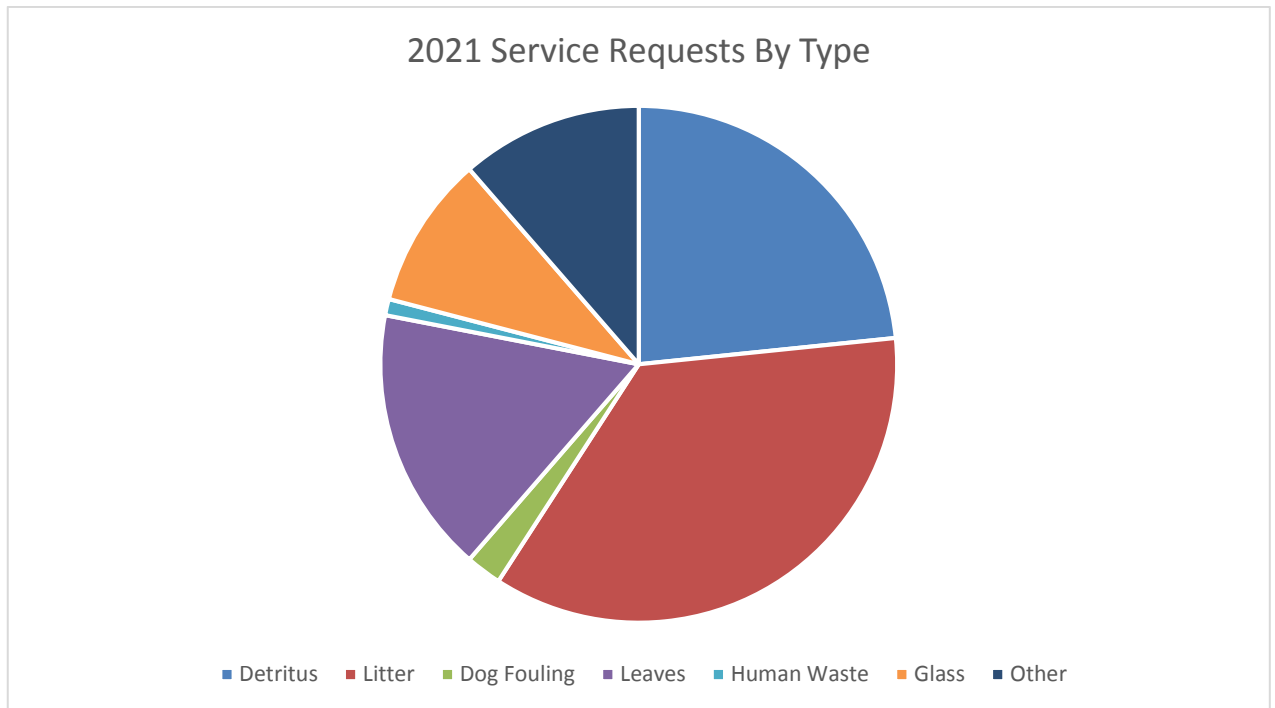
3.23 Graph 5 shows the % of Resident reported street cleansing requests and those raised by the contract officers. Again, to note, 2022 has been included however only shows full data for Jan 22.

Graph 5: Street Cleansing Requests breakdown, Yearly comparison



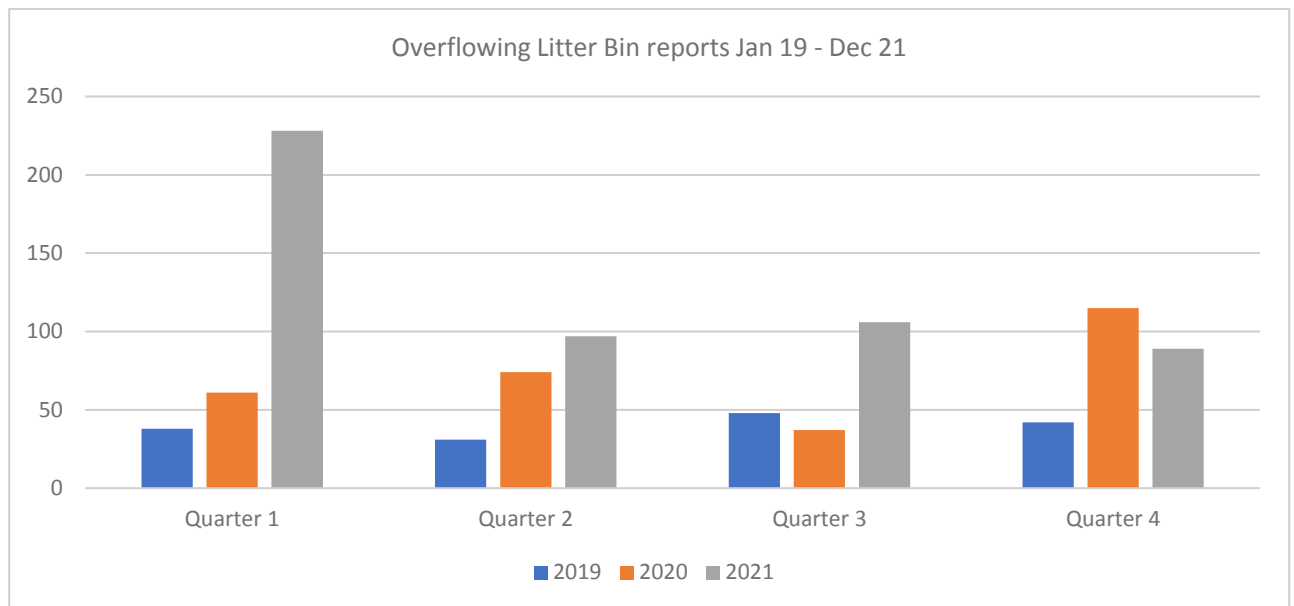
3.24 Street cleansing requests from residents and contract officers can vary in nature. The majority of the street cleansing requests raised by contract officers will be for ad-hoc street cleansing, roads/channels/litter picking that isn't due on the schedule, however, needs to be cleansed. Requests from residents can range from dog fouling to detritus and is inclusive of clearance of human waste and drug paraphernalia.

Graph 6: Street Cleansing Requests by Type



3.25 Since the last overview and scrutiny update in June 2020 overflowing litter bin 'hotspots' have been introduced. These were initially collated in September 2021. This means that any litter bin that has been recorded as overflowing 3 times in a 6-month period will be monitored by our contractor for frequency changes and/or misuse by the general public. This remains as a hotspot until such time as there are fewer than 3 reports in a 6-month period to allow for continuous monitoring over an extended period.

Graph 7: Overflowing Litter bin Reports



3.26 The number of reported overflowing litter bins has decreased in Q4 of 2021, this we believe is due to the frequency review of the litter bins that have been carried out as part of the implementation of the hotspot list.

4.0 Options

Challenges:

- 4.1 Since the COVID-19 outbreak and the national driver's shortage, it has been difficult for our contractor to ensure that they have sufficient staffing levels to complete the scheduled work. Vacancies accrued over the last year have been difficult to fill with permanent staff and as a consequence, vacancies are covered by agency staff, this means that staff are not consistent across cleansing operations and not always as knowledgeable of the area or issues as full-time members of staff.
- 4.2 There has been a national shortage of labour resources, which has also has also been felt locally by our contractor. Increased incentives have been offered to help with the recruitment drive, however this is yet to yield any significant increased levels of staff

resource.

- 4.3 Although a number of agencies are used to back fill vacancies it is inevitable that higher than planned levels of sickness absence or unexpected 'no shows' at the beginning of the day will impact on operations where agency staff cannot be sourced at short notice. In these instances, some backfilling occurs with supervisory staff and an officer of the Shared Waste Service who has an HGV licence has also been assisting by driving on waste collection rounds.
- 4.4 It is necessary, when staff shortages affect services, to focus on ensuring the waste collection service is delivered to residents and this is to the detriment of street cleansing operations where it is necessary to run with only skeleton staffing. Monitoring has shifted focus in street cleansing to ensure that broadly standards are being met even when scheduled cleanses have been 'missed' due to intermittent staff resources.
- 4.5 In addition to staff resource issues, during 2021 we have also encountered ongoing issues with one of our street cleansing vehicles. Availability of parts has become an increased problem since Brexit and vehicles have been off the roads for long periods than would be normal awaiting servicing This puts pressure on the ability to complete the scheduled works with reactive works (rectifications and defaults) also often pulling resources from schedule works. This is currently being reviewed by the new management team to determine if there is a more efficient allocation of available resource.
- 4.6 Service specific challenges during litter picking operations relate to undertaking works safely, this is particularly difficult in rural parts of the district with either narrow or no verges and where footpaths are not adjacent to roads. The majority of rural roads are classed as 'high speed' requiring additional safety measures (often road or lane closures in agreement with Hertfordshire Highways) in order to undertake litter picking safely. Road/lane closures are disruptive and also costly requiring additional resources to manage traffic.

Areas of Improvement

- 4.7 In March 2021 the Shared Waste Service introduced a new 'Adopt an Area' initiative. This facilitates residents who wish to regularly litter pick the district by providing equipment (part funded by our contractor) and arrangements for the collection of litter picked waste and recycling. During the initial promotion we had 59 residents sign up and we will be promoting this again this year alongside promoting the Great British Spring Clean campaign.
- 4.8 The Shared Waste Service also provided the opportunity for parish councils to purchase litter picking equipment at cost through us, enabling them to benefit from our purchasing contracts. 11 parish councils took up this opportunity.
- 4.9 Vacancies over the last year have meant a change in staffing and supervisors, this has given us an opportunity to provide some additional retraining for the streets team, ensuring they fully understand the requirements of the contract. We can already see the changes in the service provided, using Cats Hill as a case Study Example. Please see further details of the issues and resolutions below in 4.23.
- 4.10 Given the size and nature of the District the inspections by the shared waste service span across a large area and currently focus on town centres. Although regular monitoring is carried out to ensure our contractor is carrying out their duties in accordance with the contract. Inspection levels may also vary with complaint work being prioritised over scheduled monitoring to ensure customer service standards are maintained particularly during times of officer leave.
- 4.11 There will be an opportunity at the cross party joint working group identified in the Shared Service Governance report to review how the shared service monitoring operates and whether for example prioritising town centre cleansing should remain the priority for the service.

- 4.12 Staffing levels in the shared waste service have also been affected by vacancies and with the size of the district residents and Members are encouraged in the first instance to report issues to the Customer Service Team at EHC, where reports are directly logged on the waste management IT system they are sent immediately to our contractor for action or investigation. This provides valuable additional information, which is analysed, and long term will improve the service we provide by informing frequency needs.
- 4.13 In addition, work requests in the waste management IT system are included in the Performance Management Regime. Each having specific contractual Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which; if not completed within specified timeframes may result in defaults being issued under the scheme.
- 4.14 Reports coming in by other means such as email may inadvertently by-pass the logging process, being passed between officers for action.
- 4.15 As part of the contract, we have identified hard to reach areas in which there is typically a large amount of parking on streets. This is often the case close to town centres or railway stations. The Shared Waste Service have developed a yearly schedule to ensure these areas are receiving a deep clean on an annual basis. Letters are sent to residents and signage mounted to street furniture informing residents prior to the cleanse that vehicles will need to be moved on the scheduled day of cleansing to achieve the best results. This process has been implemented to ensure that the difficult areas to cleanse receive more attention and to prevent them dropping below standard.
- 4.16 In 2022 we will be implementing a programme of annual 'walkabouts' for each major town and will be inviting our contractor and local councillors along to allow them to see what we do and how the grading is decided. This will give councillors the opportunity to understand some of the difficulties our contractor faces, as well as giving the opportunity to raise specific queries or concerns

regarding areas within their ward.

- 4.17 In advance of the extension/retendering of the waste and street cleansing contract a cross party, joint working group will be formed. The shared waste service will be facilitating workshops in the coming months to discuss service provision across the contract including street cleansing.
- 4.18 As part of our litter and dog waste bin review we have been working with the parks and open spaces team to review all the litter bins in the district in order to make reporting of issues easier for residents, having a combined mapping system will enable all staff including customer service staff, to ensure that any overflowing bins are reported to the correct department, ensuring their swift rectification. We will also be looking to carry out a review of the parish council litter bins to assess operational and cost efficiency.
- 4.19 The review of litter bins has helped the Shared Waste Service identify areas where litter bins are too close together, where by moving bins the coverage of litter bins could be improved. This work will be ongoing through the spring and summer to monitor the effectiveness of any changes.
- 4.20 Larger wheeled-bins have been trialled in some high speed road laybys to determine if this improves the problem of littering in laybys. However, at the moment despite being installed in frames they are tending to attract some mis-use with people dumping in the bins rather than reducing littering and dumping in the laybys.
- 4.21 As part of the High-Speed Road cleansing programme we work alongside Hertfordshire Highways and utilise the traffic management plan they have in place for grass cutting in order to litter pick the verges and central reservation before the grass is cut. The partnership hasn't been operating effectively over recent years, as partnership working was suspended in 2020 due to Covid 19 working arrangements. However, in 2021 our contractor and the grass cutting contractor worked on aligning schedules to

ensure that we could piggyback on the planned road and lane closures. Liaison throughout the grass cutting season ensured we were all aware of any changes to schedules to allow us to redeploy resources. This approach to cleaning high speed roads does limit our ability to cleanse roads relying on planned closures only but does enable the Council to undertake cleansing at reduced cost. The traffic management associated with closure of high-speed roads is expensive and disruptive to road users.

- 4.22 We will be sharing our 'deep clean' schedules with Hertfordshire Highways in 2022 in the hope that this will give gully cleaning operations a an opportunity to clear hard to access drainage gullies.

4.23 Cats Hill Case Study

- 4.23.1 A joint inspection was carried by two Contract officers and a street inspection worksheet was raised as the footpath was found not to be at standard. The street inspection worksheet was raised 8th Feb with follow up contact made on the 9th Feb via a local councillor who informed us that Cat's Hill footpaths had not been cleansed and that there were leaves and detritus running the whole length of the footpath.



- 4.23.2 The photos above show the pictures that were taken on inspection and this was graded a D, as the footpath hadn't been cleared as

part of the scheduled cleanse.

4.23.3 Our contractor returned and marked the work as complete in our IT system within the required timescales. However, the Contract Officer revisited to ensure it had been cleared to standard and it was apparent an operative has not followed the instructions fully having cleared the road rather than the footpath.

4.23.4 A more formal 'rectification' was then raised in order for our contractor to return, which they did on the 9th February. Please see below pictures of outcome of footpath cleanse.

4.23.5 The level of Contract Officer resource is limited and therefore the Shared Waste Service are unable to return to check all work requested is undertaken to standard by our Contractor. We therefore prioritise our sampling of requested work based on the initial grading. This area being graded a D meant that a reinspection was necessary.



5.0 Risks

5.1 Insufficient resources both operationally and in the shared waste service may have an impact on performance levels, complaints and have financial implications.

5.2 This is a risk that the expectations of standards of street cleansing may be greater than contractual requirements.

5.3 There are reputational risks if performance levels expected from the contract do not meet the expectations of residents.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Not applicable

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