

13 July 2017

ITEM: 9

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Clean it, Cut it Update

Wards and communities affected:

All

Key Decision:

None

Report of: Daren Spring, Frontline Service Delivery Manager

Accountable Head of Service: Julie Rogers, Head of Environment

Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place

This report is Public

Executive Summary

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 To note performance in relation to the Clean it, Cut it elements of the Clean it, Cut it, Fill it programme since last reporting in October 2016.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Resident Survey 2016 identified the following levels of satisfaction in relation to the services provided by the Cut it, Clean it elements.

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Don't Know
Grounds Maintenance Service	50%	28%	19%	2%
Parks, Playgrounds, Open Spaces	46%	28%	23%	4%
Street Cleaning	45%	35%	19%	1%

This report provides an update on the progress of the 'Clean it, Cut it' elements, an overview of the current status and outlines service aspirations for the future which seek to address and improve perceptions of street cleanliness, grounds maintenance and parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

- 2..2. In recognition of the reduced standards in street cleanliness and frequency of grass cutting and litter picking a three-month pilot to improve these areas was introduced in August 2016 under the banner of 'Clean it, Cut it'. Additional funding of £340k was agreed in year to fund Clean it, Cut it. Initially £150k to fund a 3 month pilot and then a further £190k to extend to the end of the financial year. Agreement for the programme to continue has resulted in an increase to the mainstream budget from 2017/18. Capital allocations as per paragraph 3.16 are within the capital programme. A service-based approach has been re-introduced, with a supervisor for each service area: Street Cleansing, Parks and Green Spaces and Major Routes Grass Cutting.
- 2.3 An additional twenty-five agency staff were recruited to support delivery of the pilot, working alongside permanent existing team members. It was necessary in the early stages to train and performance manage the poor performing staff which took a few weeks to embed before the new arrangements were fully effective. As the pilot and extended pilot scheme were successful a decision to continue the programme beyond 16/17 was taken. With this in mind we have now recruited all of these agency staff into permanent positions, along with thirteen vacant positions that we were holding (a total of 38 FTE). During 2013/14 the total number of FTE for the Street Services section was 202.7 FTE, with the additional 38 FTE's, Street Services currently have a total of 155 FTE's this includes 8 vacancies that we are holding for the possible introduction of apprentices.
- 2.4 Supervisors originally responsible for geographical areas of the borough are now responsible for service streams; Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Parks and Green spaces.
- 2.5 We are currently recruiting into the vacant Senior Area Supervisor to directly manage these Supervisors, a post which has been vacant for 16 months, impacting on the work of the Frontline Service Delivery Manager and Strategy, Projects & Operations Manager.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 **Clean it** - The standard of street cleanliness is regularly monitored and measured through a series of site inspections that cover a number of land types. The inspections are undertaken in 3 tranches; each covers a number of wards and land types and comprises 300 sites. The inspections are carried out in accordance with a well established methodology that is based on a series of pictorial references that enable the assessor to grade a 50m transect of the area. The figure reported is the proportion of sites that fall below an acceptable level. The inspections are a snap shot in time. As the same methodology has been used by Councils across the country for a number of years, the results can be used for trend analysis within our Borough and benchmarked.

The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target for littering is 4, with the 16/17 performance falling short of the KPI by 0.45. For Graffiti the KPI target is 2,

with the 16/17 performance exceeding the KPI by 0.45.

For the past 6 years the inspections have been carried out by Council Officers who are not members of the Street Cleansing Team. From 2017-18 inspections will be carried out by Keep Britain Tidy Inspectors, offering an independent and nationally recognised criteria and assessment. This change in methodology will result in the scores reported in 2017-18 being higher than the figures seen previously, due to the differing criteria and standards used.

3.2 The cleaning of roads throughout the borough is predominately carried out by two large and two medium size mechanical sweepers. Under area-based working, teams were only able to litter pick areas on an 'as required' basis. This also restricted the amount of time that could be spent litter picking high profile areas, such as Grays Town Centre, as well the other main retail, or high footfall, areas of the borough. The re-introduction of barrow beats has allowed for a more concentrated level of cleaning within specific recognised 'hot spot' areas. The additional 'Clean it, Cut it' funding has allowed for eleven additional barrow beats in the following areas:

- An additional round in Grays Town Centre (this allows the Town Centre to be covered from 6am – 6pm, Monday – Friday)
- Northern area of Grays
- Central area of Grays
- East area of Grays
- Outer area of Tilbury
- East Tilbury
- Stanford area
- Homesteads area
- Aveley area
- Northern area of South Ockendon
- Additional major routes team member

The introduction of the additional barrow beat in the Grays Town Centre, along with the trial of an electric operated litter vacuum and mechanical sweeper, meant that the standard of cleaning was rapidly improved. Due to the improved level of cleansing the litter vacuum became less effective and was returned. The electric sweeper is still being used in Grays Town centre. The level of cleanliness was also raised by the enforcement activity that has taken place by Kingdom, issuing over 1490 FPN's in the borough since the beginning of December 2016. This joint approach has assisted in maintaining a consistent level of cleansing in the Town Centre.

3.3 It had taken a number of months to fully realise the benefit of introducing the remainder of the additional barrow beats, although on an anecdotal basis feedback suggests an improved level of street cleanliness has been recognised. Throughout the duration of the extended pilot scheme operational changes have been made to the roads covered by the barrow beats and two additional charge-hands have been introduced to increase the standard of

cleanliness across the borough, along with the reintroduction of the Major routes litter picking team. This team focus on litter picking the major routes in and out of the borough, as well as some of the rural roads which are not appropriate for barrow beats. The team's schedule focuses on a ten working day cycle for these areas.

- 3.4 The introduction of this new approach enables the service to better focus on known 'hot spot' areas for litter and has allowed for an increased frequency of cleaning to a minimum of every ten days, in areas where the barrow beats are situated, and a daily frequency to areas such as the Town Centre.
- 3.5 An added benefit of this approach is that residents can see the additional level of service, and are able to relate to a 'recognised' barrow beat sweeper, providing an opportunity to engage with them. Once litter levels in the areas that the barrow beat sweepers are improved, there can be more focus on manually sweeping the back lines and channels of the pavements which will result in an even higher level of cleanliness and reduction in detritus.
- 3.6 The Street Cleansing team were supportive of the recent Great British Spring Clean event (March 2017), where community groups across the borough carried out litter picking, some groups disposed of their own litter collected, however the Street Cleansing team supported in the collecting of 313 bags of litter with a total weight of 1400kg during the event.
- 3.7. A capital bid was submitted and agreed by Cabinet in March 2017, to purchase ten big belly bins to be strategically placed across the borough. The big belly bins have a built in compactor along with a system that sends an email to confirm that the bin is full. This system is solar powered and therefore does not require electricity to operate, the bins are currently on order and we anticipate rolling these out in the next 6-8 weeks. The bins will be trialled over a range of sites, which will include lay-by's and parks where we are receiving reports of overflow. The team is currently reviewing complaints/reports and consulting with the crews to establish the most challenging areas to ensure the bins are located to maximum effect.
- 3.8 Increased cleaning of the Council maintained section of the A13 has taken place, from 3 to 4 times per year. This additional litter pick will enhance the appearance of the A13 from A1089 through to the Five Bells interchange. During the last quarter of 16/17 scheduled works was enhanced to include the centre reservation, both side verges, cleaning of street furniture and signage. This quarter's scheduled work started on 19th June and ran for six nights.

There has been continuous dialogue between the Environment Department and Connect Plus, Highways England's contractor, responsible for cleaning the A13 from Wennington through to and including the A1089. Highways England's section of the A13 is regularly below standard and these discussions have attempted to address this. More recently a letter escalating ongoing concerns has been sent to the CEO of Connect Plus.

- 3.9 One of the challenges, not factored in to our resource levels for Clean it, Cut it, is the increasing number of fly tips. There has been an increase in fly tips

collected over the past six months, some of which have been industrial sized. We have on occasion engaged a contractor to assist with the removal due to the specialist content of the waste. We are currently monitoring the number of fly tips and working alongside partners, including the Police and the Environment Agency. Partnership work is also being undertaken alongside other local authorities, Farmers and Private Land owner groups. This includes multi-agency operations with the police patrolling and stopping suspect vehicles.

- 3.10 **Cut it** - Prior to the introduction of the 'Clean it, Cut it' pilot two tractor mounted grass cutting units were used to cut the majority of the parks and green spaces across the borough at a frequency of every 4 to 5 weeks. The grass areas which were not accessible to the tractor units were cut by the area teams every six weeks or so, along with litter picking and bin emptying at these sites. The Parks and Green spaces team have removed 12233 bags of litter and bin waste. This equates to 94.503 ton of general litter, 9.600 ton of which was fly tipping.

The team have maintained 74 sites and since October they have carried out winter pruning maintenance to 29 sites, 31.990 ton of green waste was removed as result of this work. The remaining sites have been added to a programme and will be completed over the coming winter periods.

- 3.11 The additional 'Clean it, Cut it' funding has enabled the introduction of an additional grass cutting schedule for a tractor mounted grass cutting unit, bringing the total to three. This allows for all grass in the parks and green spaces, which are accessible to tractors, to be cut at three weekly intervals. In addition the service has purchased two new grass cutting units to replace the old unreliable units, improving operational efficiency. March Cabinet gave authority to procure new plant and fleet vehicles, which will improve reliability and maximise operational efficiency. The procurement of the plant is complete, we expect the replacement plant to be delivered in August. Once the stage 2 award has been signed off we expect to take delivery of the fleet vehicles from January 2018.
- 3.12 Two teams of four operatives have been introduced to cut the grass in areas which are not accessible to tractors on a three weekly basis. The introduction of these teams has also enabled litter picking, emptying bins and inspection of the play sites to be completed on a weekly basis.
- 3.13 A review has commenced of the parks and green spaces, initial work has brought parks and green spaces to an operational standard, for the start of the season.
- 3.14 **Proposed Future Approach** - A training programme is being developed for the permanent grounds maintenance team to reintroduce the horticultural skills removed from the service in previous years, this will provide an improved standard of maintenance. Recent training for the Street Cleansing

team has taken place, which has been designed to enable the Street Cleansing teams to identify enforceable evidence when attending a fly tip. This will increase resilience and maximise staff resources, the team will call an Enforcement Officer when evidence is present, for a full and thorough investigation, prior to clearance. This approach ensures no time is wasted by Enforcement Officers carrying out checks for every fly tip that has been reported, when the majority have no evidence present.

- 3.15 The service has recently carried out a procurement exercise resulting in the purchase of the Bartec system. A previous version of the system has been used in the waste service and the decision to prioritise grounds will enable a review/refresh of GIS data and introduction of electronic scheduling. This will enable ground operatives to report issues, while out and about, and provide a live system for the call centre and depot staff to receive updates throughout the working day. This will also enable the service to upload finance data, produce a bill of quantities and facilitate costing models for future income generating work.
- 3.16 The council has agreed to an improvement programme to promote greater use and enjoyment of the parks and open spaces and encourage positive activity. This programme is specifically intended to support the Council's priorities of: a) to "**promote** and protect our clean and green environment"; and b) the Health and Well-being Plan objective of 'creating open spaces that make it easy for residents to be active'.

To fund the required improvements the Council has allocated the provision of £500,000 for open space enhancements within the 2017/18 Capital Programme. A further £725,000 has been allocated for 2018/19 and £125,000 for 2019/20.

Officers have been reviewing the approach to prioritising investment in the parks and open spaces on the basis of the following-

- Quality and value findings from the Active Place Parks and Open Space needs assessment (draft)
- Parks and Open Space public consultation
- Residents survey
- Health data
- Known operational requirements and issues
- Areas of Vandalism and Anti-Social behaviour

The highest priority parks will receive investment in 17/18. (Please see Appendix 1, A and B for further details and scope)

- 3.17 The Environment Service will continue to explore creative and innovative ways to continue to enhance and improve the service delivery in the most effective way.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This report provides Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the positive work taking place in relation to the 'Clean it, Cut it' element of the Cut it, Clean it, Fill it' programme.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Carl Tomlinson**
Finance Manager

Additional funding of £340k was agreed in year to fund Clean it, Cut it. Initially £150k to fund a 3 month pilot and then a further £190k to extend to the end of the financial year. As per para 2.2, the mainstream revenue budget has been increased to enable continuation of the programme. Capital allocations as per paragraph 3.16 are within the capital programme.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Law and Governance

There are no Legal implications associated with this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

There are no Diversity and Equality implications associated with this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 – Parks, Play and Open Space Improvement Plan Phase 1 - 2017/18

Appendix A and Appendix B – Overall Assessment of Need and Priorities

Report Author:

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