

Briefing Paper to 7 July 2006 Executive Meeting

Street Cleansing across the District

Introduction

1. The Executive wishes to review the arrangements for street cleansing in light of Councillor Peter Saunders' proposed motion to Council.
2. This briefing paper summarises:
 - the Council's statutory obligations
 - the current cleansing arrangements undertaken by Cleanaway on the Council's behalf
 - recent Council policy on grant aid to parishes for street cleansing

What is covered under 'street cleansing'?

3. The street cleansing service covers:
 - Litter Collection from Relevant Land i.e. streets, pavements, alleyways, public car parks, lay bys, verges, traffic islands, cycleways, subways, bridleways and other public areas under the Council's control. Note: Parks & open spaces are dealt with under the Grounds Maintenance services contract, for which the DD (Procurement & Contract Management) has responsibilities.
 - Litter Bin Emptying
 - The Sweeping of kerbed highways
 - Pavement Sweeping
 - Seasonal and routine leaf-fall removal
 - The clearance of fly-tips from Relevant Land
 - The removal of dead animals from Relevant Land
 - The emptying of dog waste bins.
 - The collection of litter on fast roads (including the A420 and the A34 trunk road).

Statutory Obligations

4. Through the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires Councils to keep land under their control clean to specific standards as illustrated by photographs contained in the Code. Councils do not have any discretion as to whether they will meet the Code's requirements.
5. Councils are required to categorise land into zones, dependant on the density of population and usage of the land. The speed of response specified by the Code is determined by category of Zone and the extent of defacement by litter. The extent of defacement is measured in grades A to D where Grade A is free from litter and detritus and Grade D is heavily defaced. If a Council fails to achieve the response times, there is a potential for the matter to be referred to a Magistrate's Court.
6. Below is a brief description of the Zone Categories applicable to the Vale:

Category 1 Zones	Town Centres, Shopping Centres, Busy Public Places
Category 2 Zones	High Density Residential Areas
Category 3 Zones	Low Density Residential Areas
Category 7 Zones	Rural Roads

The current Contract Specification

7. Under the terms of the Contract awarded to Cleanaway Limited, the Council expects its statutory obligations to be fully met. This is achieved by a combination of **core inputs** and **responsive actions**.
8. The fundamental core inputs are:
 - Zones 1 & 2**, and Shopping Areas – Cleanse to Grade A standard (including emptying of litter bins) by 8am every day except Christmas Day.
 - Zone 3** – Cleanse to Grade A standard once per week.
 - Zone 7** – Cleanse to Grade A standard once every eight weeks.
9. Should the standard in any area fall below Grade A, Cleanaway are required to meet the following **response times**:

Zone	Grade	Restore to Grade A
Category 1	D	1 hour
	C	3 hrs
	B	6 hrs
Category 2	D	3 hrs
	C	6 hrs
	B	12 hrs
Shopping Areas	D	3 hrs
	C	6 hrs
	B	12 hrs
Category 3	D	6 hrs
	C	12 hrs
	B	1 week
Other Areas (Category 7)	D	5 days
	C	2 wks

10. Plans illustrating the various zones in the District will be provided at the Executive meeting. These zones have remained unchanged since the Environmental Protection Act Code of Practice was introduced in 1990. They indicate the following:

Zones 1 & 2	Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon
Zone 3	Abingdon, Wantage, Faringdon, Grove and Botley
Zone 7	All other Relevant Land across the District including parishes

Cleanaway Resources & Methods

11. Cleanaway deploy various resources in order to meet the requirements of the Specification. These comprise: a number of pedestrian operatives with barrows; a pedestrian-operated mechanical pavement sweeper; mobile crews with vans and large mechanical sweepers.
12. These resources tend to concentrate of the Town Centre areas (Category 1 & 2 Zones) to achieve the standards required in those areas first thing every morning after which they disperse to undertake schedule cleaning task in residential and rural areas. The pedestrian operatives concentrate on the Category 1 & 2 Zones throughout the working day to ensure that required standards are maintained.

Recent Council Policy on Parish Street Cleansing

13. In order to provide an enhanced standard of cleanliness, compared to that set out for zone 7 Relevant Land above, a number of Parish Councils employ their own staff to carry out additional street cleansing activities. In the past the Council has recognised the contribution made by these Parish Councils to the District's general cleanliness levels by inviting the Councils to apply for grant aid.
14. There is no formal Council policy on parish street cleansing or grant aid. The Council's approach in recent years is set out below:

2003/04

Area Committees can award grants out of their community grants budget of 50% of the staff costs incurred by the Parish Council.

2004/05

Area Committees can award grants out of their community grants budget of 50% of the staff costs incurred by the Parish Council.

2005/06

Area Committees had reduced community grant funding following a £100k budget saving. Other than the following two exceptions, no change to the previous approach:

West Area Committee reduced the limit to 25% of the staff costs incurred by the Parish Council.

North East Area Committee imposed a £1,000 grant limit instead of a percentage.

2006/07

Other than the following three exceptions, no change to the previous approach:

West Area Committee Grants limited to 50% of the first £500 cost; 25% for the remainder

North East Area Committee 50% limit up to a maximum grant of £500

South East Area Committee 40%limit, applying an hourly wage rate of £6

Grant Aid

15. The following grant aid has been awarded by Area Committees to Parish Councils for street cleansing in recent years:

	2003/04 £	2004/05 £	2005/06 £	2006/07 (part year) £
West Area Committee	5,880	6,669	3,400	4,335
North East Area Committee	1,118	1,657	2,417	1,801
South East Area Committee	2,234	2,590	2,566	1,946
Abingdon Area Committee	344	652	652	545
Total	9,576	11,568	9,035	8,627

16. The Council has been unusual in providing grant aid to Parish Councils for street cleansing. Having spoken to other Waste officers, it is clear that most district councils focus on their statutory duty, which directs more frequent cleansing to the areas most in need, i.e. urban centres. If individual Parish Councils choose to supplement the district council's statutory service with an enhanced service, they are expected to meet the cost themselves.

Conclusions

- 17. The Council complies with its statutory obligations.
- 18. There are uniform cleanliness standards enforced across the District. The objective is to maintain the highest Grade A standard across all zones. If an area falls to Grade C or D the Council takes action to bring it back up to Grade A. The main differential between Zone A urban centres and Zone 7 parish areas is the frequency of planned cleansing and the response times for reactive cleansing – which reflect practical constraints and the need to provide a cost-effective service.
- 19. The Council's support to Parish Councils for street cleansing is unusual. No other District Councils are known to do so, for example neither West Oxfordshire nor the City Council do so (Cherwell is being checked).
- 20. Each Parish Council has the authority to make its own locally-determined street cleansing arrangements and set its own standards. In accordance with the principle of local accountability the cost of locally determined street cleansing should fall entirely on the Parish Council.
- 21. Notwithstanding the above, Area Committees have the authority to provide discretionary grants for any purpose, including street cleansing. However, the spread of grant applications and consequently the cost of such grants do not fall equally on all Area Committees. Therefore, if any Area Committee chooses to support Parish Council street cleansing it reduces its available funds for other grant purposes.

Options

- 22. Status quo - continue the present scheme whereby Area Committees have the discretion to award grants for street cleansing purposes out of their grants budget.
- 23. No further support - The Council could focus on its statutory duties. Clear and unambiguous local accountability should be restored by withdrawing all support for Parish Council street cleansing, allowing individual Parish Councils to determine and finance their own arrangements. Street cleansing would no longer be eligible for Area Committee grants.
- 24. Alternatively, if the Council wishes to continue supporting Parish Council street cleansing it could centralise street cleansing grants so that each Area Committee's available grant budget is not distorted. Members may wish to introduce a cap on all grants.

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