



Diagnostic Review of Street Scene Services

Report for West Lancashire Borough Council

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 West Lancashire is a non-metropolitan borough in Lancashire, England. The council was formed in 1974 as a merger of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale and Up Holland urban districts along with part of West Lancashire Rural District and part of the former Wigan Rural District.
- 1.2 The administrative base for the council is in Ormskirk, one of two towns in the borough, the other being Skelmersdale. The population of the borough is 113,400 (mid-2016 estimates) with 48,690 households (from latest Waste Dataflow) and covers 346.8 square kilometres.
- 1.3 Front line services are provided through the Street Scene directorate, including refuse and recycling services, grounds maintenance, street cleansing and fleet maintenance.
- 1.4 The council asked APSE to provide a diagnostic review of the grounds maintenance and street cleansing elements of the Street Scene service against a backdrop of low performance and issues with the deployment of staff. The review was undertaken by APSE Associate Dave Henrys with the assistance of APSE Senior Consultant Ben Parsons during November and December 2017.
- 1.5 The principal objective of the review was to examine service delivery to establish how well the service currently performs against requirements and make recommendations as to changes that will improve efficiency and drive service improvement. A particular area to be included was the potential for realising greater productivity and efficiency savings through integrating the two workforces.
- 1.6 The previous two-tier approach to grass maintenance with Lancashire County Council has seen reduced standards of verge cutting and weed control on the public realm. Driven by complaints and a need to improve the service, it has been proposed that West Lancashire BC will undertake the maintenance of the public realm land with effect from April 2018. The review was also to look at the potential staffing requirements for the additional work associated with this contract.
- 1.7 As with the majority of UK local authorities, cuts to core budget funding must be passed on to service departments. For this service, the target is a £150,000 annual reduction, £75,000 in 2018/19 and a further £75,000 in 2019/20. Despite this, some areas are recognised as needing to be improved for the overall good of the council, for example gateway routes into the borough and council housing areas.
- 1.8 The review took place at a high level and provides only a snapshot of the service and its key priorities. It should be recognised that a significant amount of work is needed to establish a detailed analysis of current levels of service provision to facilitate the introduction of a comprehensive improvement programme.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The review found that grounds maintenance and street cleansing services currently operate independently of each other within Street Scene, despite the close synergies in the environmental tasks they perform and the areas of the borough in which they are undertaken. Both have been subject to efficiency savings over recent years that has reduced the workforce size, particularly grounds maintenance which also saw the loss of the public realm contract to the county council and the staff associated with it.
- 2.2 As part of the review, the workforce of both services completed "Service Improvement Questionnaires" and members of each, including trade union representatives, took part in a diagnostic workshop to illicit their views. The overarching theme of responses to both was the shortage of staff to enable a good standard of work to be achieved. Comparisons made with other authorities for the review found that the grounds service does have a lower budget per household than many others around the UK. However, street cleansing was found to be just above the average cost in a similar comparison.
- 2.3 Faced with further budget savings as part of the next round of cuts to the General Revenue Account, the review has focussed on achieving more with the current staffing levels, through greater productivity and efficiency of operation. Recommendations for savings for the next financial year are centred around not filling one vacant posts on the establishment and integrating the two workforces into area based Street Scene teams to provide a more efficient and effective service.
- 2.4 It should be possible to predict the number of employees that the service requires going forward, but that is dependent on having the right information. Although there is historical contract documentation for grounds maintenance and some routes for street cleansing that the operatives follow, none of the data that quantifies the work carried out is available in a digital format to enable proper scheduling to be undertaken. This needs to be addressed as a priority, not least to be able to provide work targets to help motivate the workforce, as anecdotally morale appears low at present.
- 2.5 Although the section is currently going through an exercise to digitally map the council's assets for Street Scene work, it needs to invest in suitable database technology to tie the geography to the work required and produce workforce projections and schedules. Such a system also needs to link to the council's new Customer Relationship Management software ('Service Now') and have a mobile capability to take advantage of current communications technology, which again will require 'invest to save' funding for smartphones, tablets or PDA's, as appropriate.
- 2.6 The main tasks for the grounds maintenance section are grass mowing during 6 months of summer and winter work such as shrub bed maintenance. The standards that the service is expected to achieve in summer is measured on the height of cutting and the number of cuts per annum. The specifications in the original contract documentation from 2007 have not been achieved for a number of years, resulting in pressures from complaints and bad

publicity. In addition, the county council work on the public realm was reduced in seasons 2016/17 and 2017/18 and this has also adversely affected the WLBC reputation, as the public do not tend to make a distinction between the two tiers of governance when it comes to this type of maintenance. This work is due to come back under borough council responsibility in April 2018 and needs including in new schedules.

- 2.7 To complete the scheduling process described above, frequencies need to be assigned to every work site in the borough and all associated tasks required there, for both grounds and street cleansing. It is imperative that these are set at an achievable level for the amount of staff that the budget will ultimately allow, and this will require elected members agreement and endorsement going forward to help manage public expectation, as would publishing the agreed standards as widely as possible. In addition, appropriate Service Level Agreements should be produced for internal clients such as Housing & Inclusion Services and Leisure and Wellbeing Services based on the agreed standards.
- 2.8 Having established the future demand for the service, there will potentially be a requirement for different equipment to carry out tasks such as grass cutting at a different frequency and the service needs to ensure that equipment is fit for purpose. The demand profile will also show that some of the operations, particularly around street cleansing, will be required over seven days per week and with a greater daily coverage than currently worked to. This will require negotiation on new working time rosters to ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time. Introducing these all at plain time offers the opportunity for savings on enhanced overtime rates currently paid at time and a third on Sundays. Payments for task based operations rather than the individuals substantive salary provides further opportunity to reduce overtime payments.
- 2.9 The integration of grounds maintenance and street cleansing offers the opportunity for a more efficient and effective service, tackling a wider range of tasks as area teams rather than two unconnected sections. The allocation of areas needs to be done on a geographical basis that also accounts for the apportionment of work sites and staffing requirements for the tasks therein. Again, this cannot be achieved until the scheduling has been completed, although the starting point should be to divide the borough into the appropriate number of wider areas of responsibility for supervision. The staff complements for each further divided area will also be dependent on competences of individuals. At present there is no definitive skills matrix to inform both this and future training needs.
- 2.10 The new integrated service will need to be more productive in order to meet targets set, as those will not take account of unproductive time currently spent in the depot at each end of the day or in returning to the depot at lunchtimes. This will likely require enhancement of welfare facilities on vehicles and for personal breaks in outlying areas. Further improvements in productivity should be made through the introduction of "hit squads" to tackle reactive work that is currently handled by redeploying operatives from their substantive work.

- 2.11 Area teams will need to be mentored to have a new approach to their work, not just to be blinkered to their immediate tasks but to take responsibility for all the site and anything needed to be done to either avoid further contact from the public or to minimise the need for a return visit.
- 2.12 Cleanliness standards within the borough can be enhanced by investing in 'smart bin' technology (improves bin capacity and reduces emptying requirements) and barrows for operatives with vacuum hoses to enable a deeper clean. Additionally, the service should trial mechanical blowers with vacuum suction capabilities to increase workforce versatility.
- 2.13 There are currently many different types of litter bin around the borough, requiring a number of different keys to be carried by crews designated the task of emptying them. The introduction of 'smart bins' should be linked to the production of a corporate Litter Bin Strategy that seeks to standardise the process.
- 2.14 Several issues that were raised through the review concern areas where improvements can be made in-house aimed at improving workforce morale. Both workforce and supervisory staff commented on the level of communication they have with what is still a relatively new management team. It appears that some of this is due to a different style of management than they have been previously used to. Despite a more regulated team meeting structure being introduced, they don't believe there is the same level of day to day engagement (whether it is necessary or not needs to be established) but coupled with uncertainty around future working arrangements, this has seemingly left staff with concerns and management needs to find a way to address this.
- 2.15 Small changes could have the dual effect of improving morale and increasing productivity, such as providing secure tool boxes on vehicles and improving the quality of bin sacks.
- 2.16 There are several areas that have been raised during the review that will require further review. This includes the link between Leisure & Wellbeing functions in parks, playgrounds and with park rangers and environmental enforcement functions within Environmental Protection.
- 2.17 The requirement for scheduling and the work involved in achieving that is going to need staff input that Street Scene don't currently have capacity for. This needs to be further examined alongside the future method of inspecting for cleanliness on streets and associated land zones (currently carried out to the now-defunct national indicator standard). Capacity may be released by adopting the Land Audit Monitoring System (LAMS) which also includes grounds maintenance inspections but at a reduced frequency.
- 2.18 At a time when the council is facing reductions in its core funding, it should ensure that Street Scene is the first choice for any work which it can carry out for other departments. The review has found that there are a number of such areas where external contractors are being employed, resulting in money going out of the authority.

2.19 Additionally, once Street Scene has successfully managed the in-house changes required, it should seek to maximise income generating opportunities for carrying out its work for other public bodies (such as the health service, education or emergency services) and other private companies. There are also opportunities to raise income through sponsorship of litter bins, verges and roundabouts (with buy-in from the county council) that should be further explored. It should be recognised that Street Scene's Management structure is very small and that extra capacity is needed for a technical person in addition to the business development post. Changes being introduced next year as a result of the new national 'Litter Strategy for England' will increase the fines that can be imposed for littering. The council should look to increase the income from environmental enforcement as a result, as this also should act as a deterrent that ultimately improves cleanliness standards across the borough. This could be optimised further by giving consideration to different delivery models to issue fixed penalty notices under a favourable contract arrangement.

3.0 Current Situation

- 3.1 There are currently two distinct service areas, grounds maintenance and street cleansing with one supervisor overseeing each section.
- 3.2 The grounds maintenance section provides the following primary services: -
- Grass maintenance
 - Flower beds
 - Shrub beds
 - Hanging baskets
 - Parks (and Country Parks)
 - Sports pitch and bowling green maintenance
 - Tree maintenance
 - Cemeteries maintenance and provision of graves
 - Hedge cutting
- 3.3 There are no current schedules driving the work of this section. The last standards document produced was the "Contract for Grounds Maintenance 2007 to 2012". At the beginning of that contract, the supervisor informed us that there were 30 staff. This was later reduced by 4 for efficiency savings before the loss of the Lancashire CC public realm contract saw a loss of 6 further members of the workforce. A further 3 staff have left the authority since, leaving a permanent staff level of 17 staff filling 20 posts. The two vacant posts (1 Chargehand and 1 Operative) have not been filled permanently pending the results of this review. The other vacant post (1 Chargehand) has been changed to enable two apprentice positions to be created in April 2018.
- 3.4 Because of the staff reductions, the contract standards for elements such as grass cutting have had to be reduced as they had become unachievable.

- 3.5 The service operates a 36-hour standard week with no seasonal variation as there is considered to be as much work in winter as summer due to the amount of established shrub beds requiring maintenance after the traditional growing season.
- 3.6 The street cleansing section provides the following services: -
- Litter picking
 - Road & footpath sweeping
 - Removal of fly tipping
 - Emptying litter and dog bins
 - Clearing dog fouling
 - Graffiti removal
 - Removal of fly posting
 - Removing dead animals
 - Autumn leaf clearance
 - November - Bonfire clearances / Prepare cenotaphs
- 3.7 The current service has 30 full-time posts, made up of;
- 4 x Team Leaders
- 6 x Mechanical Sweeper Drivers (2 of which are LGV qualified)
- 19 x Street Cleansing Operatives (2 posts are currently vacant currently temporarily filled)
- One further street cleansing operative post on the establishment will be reassigned to the Waste Transfer Station with effect from April 2018.
- 3.8 There are no dedicated staff or machinery to undertake a deep clean of areas. As a result, it is felt that the borough does not get the deeper clean that it needs to reach the grade 'A' standard that should be achieved immediately after cleansing.
- 3.9 The hours of work do not particularly meet the demand for the service, being predominantly a four-and-a-half-day service (finish 12:30 p.m. on Friday) with overtime paid after that time if required. On a rota basis, two employees work 8 hours each on Saturdays (on overtime but at plain time) and Sundays (at time and a third) in prestige areas. The service also currently deploys a small mechanical sweeper every Sunday for 8 hours (also at time and a third).

4.0 Performance Measures

- 4.1 During this review, West Lancashire Borough Council have become members of APSE's Performance Networks benchmarking service, now in its 20th year of comparing data

between local authorities across many front-line services and recognised as the largest benchmarking club for councils in the UK.

- 4.2 Street Cleansing and Parks & Open Spaces have their own individual data sets and performance indicators, some of which have been designated as “key”. Many of the key indicators are designed to provide a balance between cost, quality and customer satisfaction.
- 4.3 Data from 2016/17 is still being gathered in order to populate the relevant data templates. However, it has been possible to make some early comparisons based on financial data provided and performance measures already being reported as part of the corporate “Council Plan”.
- 4.4 Cost data analysis for street cleansing is shown below for the respective “Cost per Household” performance indicators. The indicators used are for both inclusive and exclusive of Central Establishment Charges (CEC). The top quartile mark shows the cut-off point that would place the authority in the top 25% in the country: -

| Performance Indicator – Street Cleansing | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|--|---|--------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| PI 03 | Cost per household (incl. CEC) | £34.39 | £31.25 | 44 | £22.80 |
| PI 04 | Cost per household (excl. CEC) | £30.03 | £29.12 | 51 | £19.20 |
| PI 19 | Cost per head of population (incl. CEC) | £13.76 | £14.03 | 45 | £10.66 |
| PI 05 | Cost per head of population (excl. CEC) | £12.02 | £12.53 | 51 | £8.42 |

- 4.5 The data indicates that the street cleansing service is slightly above average in the cost of service performance indicators, although this is an area where the average has been reducing year on year for some time due to budget constraints.
- 4.6 The cost per household indicator for grounds maintenance is shown below. There are other cost indicators in the Performance Networks suite for this service, but they relate to the hectares of land maintained by the council. At the current time, this information is unavailable for West Lancashire.

| Performance Indicator – Grounds maintenance | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|---|-------------|------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| | | | | | |

| Performance Indicator – Grounds maintenance | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|---|--|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| PI 43 | Maintenance cost per household (incl. CEC) | £26.78 (*£32.30) | £42.70 | 52 | £29.16 |

(* This figure includes the LCC public realm sum of £250,360 for 2018/19 for a more accurate comparison of the total cost of maintaining WLBC land and LCC)

4.7 The figures show that the cost for grounds maintenance is comparatively low by national comparison, even bringing in the county public realm funding, potentially supporting the workforce's view about the under-resource suffered by the service.

4.8 A breakdown of the costs shows interesting comparisons on the proportion of expenditure, as shown in the tables below.

| Street Cleansing | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Performance Indicator | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
| PI o6 | Total staff costs as percentage of total expenditure | 58.40% | 67.39% | 49 | n/a |
| PI o8 | Transport costs as percentage of total expenditure | 32.18% | 19.95% | 46 | n/a |
| PI o8 | Central establishment costs as percentage of total expenditure | 14.20% | 7.67% | 44 | n/a |

| Grounds Maintenance | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Performance Indicator | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
| PI 14 | Total staff costs as percentage of total expenditure | 46.21% | 66.59% | 47 | n/a |
| PI 31 | Central establishment costs as percentage of total expenditure | 3.16% | 8.12% | 38 | n/a |

(transport costs are not collected as a performance indicator on this service)

4.9 The staff costs figure for grounds maintenance shows a relative mismatch between cost of employees and the rest of the service (such as fleet and equipment) again backing up the

under-resourcing argument. The same can be said of Street Cleansing but certainly not to the same extent.

4.10 One of the measures of whether the street cleansing service is being affected by staff shortages is the results of the cleanliness inspections carried out under the old national indicator NI 195 as a corporate performance indicator. As can be seen from the data below, the results show the authority in a good light, although it should be recognised that the same areas are often inspected due to a lack of some of the required land use zones (e.g. Ormskirk town centre) which can result in a good score. Keep Britain Tidy used to carry out their own independent inspections every two years but their funding for this was cut. However, independent checks are always considered useful against self-inspection systems.

| Performance Indicator | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|-----------------------|--|-------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| PI 37a | Percentage of sites surveyed falling below grade B for cleanliness (litter & detritus) | 1.62% | 4.79% | 17 | 1.07% |

4.11 The third part of the triangular scorecard of performance measures that APSE Performance Networks ranks as key indicators, alongside cost and quality, is those relating to customer satisfaction. West Lancashire reports customer satisfaction ratings for both services as part of its 'Council Plan Annual Report'. The latest figures are shown below and, in comparison are comparatively moderate indicating that there is scope to improve both services.

| Performance Indicator | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|-----------------------|--|--------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| PI 39 | Community / customer surveys undertaken – Street Cleansing | 71.00% | 69.69% | 17 | 80.00% |

| Performance Indicator | Description | WLBC | APSE Average | Total no. of participants | Top Quartile |
|-----------------------|---|--------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| PI 38 | Community / customer surveys undertaken - Grounds Maintenance | 71.00% | 78.62% | 29 | 91.70% |

4.12 The data comparisons shown above give a rough and ready view of the current position until the full data sets are completed, which is planned for early 2018. This will form a baseline for tracking the effects of reducing budgets as well as improvement progress which the regular completion of data in future years will be able to provide, showing the journey of travel against national trends.

5.0 Workforce Questionnaires / Diagnostic Workshop

- 5.1 The importance of the involvement of the workforce was agreed early in the review process and attempts have been made to engage with staff from both services. Firstly, all staff were invited to complete a "service improvement questionnaire", designed to establish both their level of understanding of the standards required of them and whether they feel that they can achieve those standards, as well as enabling them to make their own suggestions regarding improvement areas.
- 5.2 73% of the respondents say that they have not been made aware of cleansing standards for the borough.
- 5.3 There is a 47%/53% split on whether they are aware of the required standards for the rest of the services, with 63% saying that they would benefit from a better understanding of them.
- 5.4 74% do not feel that they have enough time "to deliver a high standard of service".
- 5.5 The recurring theme amongst the reasons given for this is that there is "not enough staff".
- 5.6 The following were raised as changes that they would like to see: -
 - Increased Communication
 - More mechanical sweepers
 - More areas need proper cleaning
 - More training is needed for those who want to further their careers
 - More involvement in choosing fleet and equipment
 - Weeds need clearing (needs co-operation of county council)
 - New litter bins are required
 - "staff need to take pride in their work and try and improve workplace morale"
 - More frequent mowing is needed
 - 'Hit Team' to do the other work they get redeployed to do
 - Better boots / PPE
 - Better mowers that don't struggle
 - Share grave digging work out amongst workforce
 - Equalise workloads across teams
 - Tool boxes needed for vehicles
- 5.7 A cross-section of the workforce from both services were invited to take part in a diagnostic workshop, the purpose of which was to examine the operation of the Street Scene service as part of the overall review, to identify strengths, weaknesses and the scope for service improvements and potential efficiency savings and find out what it is like to work for West Lancashire's Street Scene Service. Although the trade unions had

representation, none of the management team were in attendance in order to better facilitate open conversation.

5.8 In order to understand the influences that particularly affect Street Scene services, attendees were asked to think about the external factors that the section faces, using a P.E.S.T.E.L. analysis (political / economic / social / technological / environmental / legislation). The results are shown below (and are not intended to be a comprehensive list): -

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • Austerity / budget cuts • Individual Councillor requests • Certain areas get different response • Pressure to clear fly-tipping on private land • Community events | <p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuts • Less people to do the job • Less equipment (inc. sweepers) • Reduced County Council weed spraying programme affects sweeping • Reduced County Council grass cutting • Loss of free bulky waste collection service -> increased fly-tipping • Reduced resources for leaf clearance • Vehicle repairs and age of fleet |
| <p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New housing developments – more residents • Fly-tipping • Social attitudes in Skelmersdale • Anti-social behaviour | <p>Technological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment not up to current technology • Chipping in dead animals (takes time to follow up) |
| <p>Environmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weather conditions • Extended growing season • Weedkiller types • Leafing season changes (resource issue) • Shelter for mechanical sweepers in adverse weather • Placement of street furniture | <p>Legislation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in weedkiller regulations • Asbestos • Traffic management (training required) |

5.9 In addition, the attendees were asked to look at internal factors and complete a S.W.O.T. analysis of the service as they see it from their perspective, looking at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, by way of “what does the service do well?” and “what does the service not do so well?” The results are shown below – again they are in no way intended to be comprehensive.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt service • Polite service • Proper job with right resources • Customer interaction • Compliments passed down • Grounds supervision is spot on with H&S etc. | <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Management not accessible • Supervision style – needs to be more dynamic • Supervisor morale seems low • Can’t provide the good quality service we would like to • Reactive working • Manpower shortages • Frequency of operations • Not enough qualified staff • Not enough training • Low morale • High average age – no young blood • Light duties workers from other services • Vehicle specs – not fit for purpose • Not got the right kit for the job e.g. grass heights • Skips are too old – need repairing or replacing • Don’t use people’s strengths – skills matrix needed • Relationship with workshop • Downtime for repairs / waiting for spares |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved management communication • Better relationship with local press • Better equipment • Replacement policy for equipment • Job evaluation • Street Scene integration | <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public criticism • Negative press (from County Council operations) • Management perceptions • Reactive working • Low morale • Street Scene integration |

5.10 The group then examined the resources that the service operates with in terms of people (including management), fleet and equipment and depot facilities, asking in each case whether they consider them to be fit for purpose.

5.11 The following were identified and discussed: -

Street Cleansing

- 2 x Johnston VT650 mechanical channel sweepers (one dual sweep / one single sweep – dual sweep rarely used) – about 5 years old.
- 1 x Scarab Minor mechanical pavement sweeper – predominantly used on footpaths in outlying areas (due for renewal – Feb 2018)
- 3 x Johnston CX201 compact mechanical sweepers – pavements and precincts (due for renewal February 2018)
- 2 x 7.5 tonne Linktip (dismountable) vehicles
- Ford Transit Tipper vehicles (9 on fleet list)

Grounds Maintenance

- Ford Transit Tipper vehicles (8 on fleet list) – 2 caged (no tool boxes, nowhere to store tools)
- 1 x John Deere 6330 tractor (used to be 2 - one was taken off-hire when county council work ceased. Used to have flail on one and trailer on the other)
- 3 x John Deere front-deck rotary ride-on mowers (“very good”) – two are cabbed. Slow road speed.
- 2 x John Deere ride-on mowers (Hi Tip) (“good for previous standards but not good enough on 3-4 weeks growth”)
- Scag 52” zero turn pedestrian mowers (2 on fleet list) – good on short grass, not on longer growth – need cutting blades not mulching.
- 8 x John Deere pedestrian mowers (rotary box mowers)
- 2 x Ransomes Greens Mowers (for bowling greens)
- Scag rotary pedestrian mowers (“not good enough”)
- Stihl hedgecutters (“used to have “Echo” which lasted longer”)

5.12 The main complaint around fleet and equipment was that they, as the operatives who use the machinery, do not get enough say in choosing which ones should be brought in. However, management suggest that Chargehands have recently been involved in the demonstrations of new kit.

6.0 Stakeholder Interviews

6.1 To gain a greater understanding and feedback on the Street Scene service from both an internal and external perspective, a series of interviews took place with key personnel and stakeholders on November 29th 2017 at the Robert Hodge Centre.

6.2 The interviewees were: -

- Cllr Kevin Wilkie – Street Scene Services Portfolio Holder
- Derek Hill – Operational Supervisory Officer (Grounds Maintenance)
- Graeme White – Operational Supervisory Officer (Street Cleansing)
- Simon Burnett & Steve Kent – Leisure & Wellbeing Services (includes park rangers and playground inspectors)
- Colin Brady & David Thornber – Development & Regeneration (includes technical services, town centre management, parking, markets and arboriculture)
- Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey, Nicola Bradley, Leigh MacFarlane and John Powell – Housing & Inclusion Services

6.3 In all cases, the interviewees were asked to say from their perspective what did Street Scene do well, what they don't do so well and where improvements could be made in relevant areas. Generally, the service received praise from the external stakeholders for improvements that had been made under the new management arrangements, but recognising that there was still much to do and that it was likely to be a lack of resources that was reducing standards.

6.4 From an internal perspective (including the political level) there is a recognition that productivity is not high enough and that standards are lower which is causing frustration as the resources aren't there. Better co-ordination of tasks was considered by the Portfolio Holder to be a requirement, not helped by different responsibilities in different departments and with the county council in the case of highway verges.

6.5 Internal consultation – what is done well?

- Good public interface;
- Good response, dealing with issues quickly;
- Small team gives value;
- Good knowledge and familiarity of area;
- Top of the range equipment, leased so serviced regularly and efficiently run;
- Proactive in leaf and fly-tipping removal;
- Litter picking in grass areas.

6.6 Internal consultation – what is NOT done well?

- Productivity can be further improved;
- Not enough staff to do a good job;
- Communication between management and supervisors and being consulted on things that affect specialist areas;
- Don't achieve a Grade 'A' clean. Deep cleansing not done often enough;

- Workforce don't take ownership of their areas;
- React too quickly to councillor complaints;
- Insufficient training to properly and confidently deal with complaints on trees.

6.7 Stakeholders from other council departments were asked whether there was duplication between work that their workforces carried out, whether there were services that they bought in from external sources that could be done in-house by the Street Scene team (in the right circumstances) and where improvements could be potentially made.

6.8 These are the summary points: -

Leisure & Wellbeing Services

- Some grey areas over responsibility for fly-tipping on Leisure Services land;
- 'Us and them' relationship between park rangers and grounds staff;
- Playground inspections will be delivered in-house shortly, two staff under park rangers. There may be some scope for carrying out LAMS inspections;
- Consider that an area-based approach working together is the way forward;
- Street Scene need to take wider responsibility than just contract specified work;
- Scope for letting some grass areas grow longer, but managing them not just leaving them;
- Standard of street trees (county council responsibility) is not up to those of parks trees;
- Some northern parishes have been handed areas of land to look after – a good model for further efficiency savings providing that parishes don't want paying or to receive a grant;
- Scope for cross-boundary working with neighbouring local authorities.

Development & Regeneration

- Arboriculture – some issues in past over standards of tree work which have been a bug-bear. Previous tree management has created issues where trees have been trimmed when probably should have been removed;
- Need to find a systematic way to deal with residents whose quality of life is being blighted by overgrown trees that don't meet the criteria for being dealt with (again, more often a county council responsibility);
- Don't find Street Scene particularly customer friendly – they need a code for everything. Is this necessary nowadays?
- No public consultation with residents where tree work affects them has led to complaints in the past;
- Tech services pay for outside contractors to erect street nameplates, signs, carry out painting etc. as well as man + van with jet washer. All could potentially be done by Street Scene (but on Tech Services terms).

Housing & Inclusion Services

- A customer-focussed Service Level Agreement (S.L.A.) is needed for grounds maintenance in Housing areas. There is nothing in place to inform standards;
- Some overlap with Housing's gardening team of 4 – Team leader (scale 4) and 3 operatives (scale 1) whose duties include mowing OAP gardens for £5 per week- *subsequently agreed to be moved to Street Scene from February 2018 as part of the corporate restructure*;
- Communication has improved in past 12 months but as there is no transparency, Housing don't know what they are paying for;
- Separate payments to external contractors are made to treat Japanese Knotweed, shrub beds, tree cutting and to maintain gardens in vacant properties;
- Would like to see a 'Parks' standard in sheltered Housing but know that isn't necessarily financially viable;
- Shrub beds are problematic, many being either overgrown or no longer have any plants in;
- Savings could be made by investing in mobile technology, tightening up on fly-tipping and being more geographically efficient;
- Potential to generate some income from cutting Housing gardens for tenants who don't meet the criteria for the subsidised service.

7.0 Key Issues

Area working / integrated service delivery / work scheduling

- 7.1 The predominate issue that threads through the review is the perceived lack of resources by the workforce to achieve the standards of work that would be preferred. Unfortunately, a lack of up-to-date information and without an information technology solution to process the amount of data involved, the optimum numbers cannot be calculated.
- 7.2 The instinctive feel, which is backed up somewhat by the benchmarking comparison in section 4, is that the grounds maintenance function is indeed under-resourced for the amount of work there is, whilst the street cleansing service is maybe staffed about right, but this needs properly calculating to prove either way.
- 7.3 A GIS exercise is currently ongoing to map all the assets that Street Scene is responsible for. This will be an invaluable exercise going forward, particularly if it can be coupled with the acquisition of scheduling/asset management software such as 'Mayrise', 'Composer' or similar established system. Failing that, a less sophisticated approach using spreadsheets, and/or a locally-developed database, will be a step forward that will allow the calculation of the resources required.

- 7.4 The second requirement for the calculation is an agreed frequency for each of the required tasks on both grounds maintenance and street cleansing. As there is no statutory requirement for grounds maintenance, the frequency should be based on what is acceptable aesthetically. For street cleansing, cleanliness standards are determined by the 1980 Environmental Protection Act and the relevant code of practice. Standard times can then be applied to these against each asset to produce weekly / monthly / annual employee demand. An agreed element of non-productive time is then applied to each task to cover travelling to and from site, personal time, dealing with the public etc. This would vary depending on the geography of each particular site although an average could be agreed and applied.
- 7.5 Work tasks are then allocated across the whole year and some smoothing out will usually follow before a core workforce requirement is known. At this point, if that figure exceeds current levels, the council may need to make adjustments to the standards it can deliver within budget or consider how to fund any additional posts that may be needed. Some suggestions on how this might be achieved are discussed further on. At the end of the process though, the council will be able to agree some affordable standards. It should consider publishing these in order to manage public expectation.
- 7.6 Scheduling software enables that demand-led information to be transferred on to daily / weekly / monthly worksheets as appropriate. Again, this is more easily facilitated via a specialist piece of software.
- 7.7 Once standards have been agreed for grass cutting in different areas and types, it is important to ensure that staff are provided with the best 'fit for purpose' equipment capable of dealing with grass growth at the level it will be maintained. The workforce are also best placed to have an input into the selection of the right machines, they know the job and they will have to use the equipment, this however needs to be balanced with cost.
- 7.8 The agreed standards also need to form the basis of a Service Level Agreement with Housing & Inclusion Services and Leisure and Wellbeing for work to be carried out on their land. At present they don't appear to know what standards Street Scene are working to and therefore can't control the financing of this part of the service. They also need to be part of the discussion on what the different standards should be in their areas, particularly where there is a knock-on effect in helping to let council properties, such as in sheltered accommodation.
- 7.9 Where tasks on both services are required in the same areas, teams from each are currently deployed in isolation. Greater productivity and efficiency can potentially be achieved by integrating staff together into area teams. It is envisaged that their responsibility would then be widened to cover all tasks of council responsibility in those areas, either to maintain / repair themselves or to report for further action (having made safe as necessary).

- 7.10 In order to work most efficiently, the teams need to take advantage of mobile technology to ensure that the status of tasks can be updated on site to keep the system “live” and work towards a future paperless operation. Linking in to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (the council is due to change over to ‘Service Now’ which should support any established asset/scheduling system alongside it) it would allow reactive work to also be allocated to teams while they are in the vicinity when necessary.
- 7.11 Some training will be required to match work requirements to skill sets. There is currently no ‘training needs’ strategy based on a skills matrix of staff competencies. Having this in place helps greatly in planning cover for sickness, holiday and other absences, as well as for succession planning and service delivery resilience.
- 7.12 Following examples of successful implementation of area working in other areas, it is envisaged that West Lancashire may follow a model that sub-divides the borough into areas, resourced accordingly based on local demand. These then need to be sub-divided into smaller geographical zones of generally even workload, which would be overseen by an operational Team Leader in each. It would be their job to co-ordinate the workforce according to the required tasks, prioritise work, liaise with the local community and report back to the relevant supervisor on progress and any issues.
- 7.13 The results of the calculation of workload described above would dictate the number of staff required to cover each area and would also form the basis for changes in working time to meet the identified demand. One area where this will impact is street cleansing which currently receives minimal coverage from Friday lunchtime through to Monday morning (some overtime covers prestige areas only) despite the increased amount of footfall and associated rubbish being generated in that period. In line with service demand, working hours should be reviewed and demand led rota's developed. This would eliminate the current overtime requirements and it is envisaged that increases in productivity (see later in this section) will enable the additional work to be absorbed within the current workforce.
- 7.14 Specialist roles such as horticulture in parks and prestige areas, mechanical sweeping and tractor work would likely sit outside of the areas and work in partnership with them in rotation, as required.

Savings

- 7.15 The implementation of integrated roles and area working, as described above, may afford the opportunity to reduce the workforce to make the cost savings that the council is looking for. In the first instance, bringing the two workforces together could enable the upskilling of some of the street cleansing staff to build capacity.
- 7.16 On this basis there is a vacant post on street cleansing that can be removed from the establishment. It is envisaged that this could be done from the start of the next financial year (2018/19), realising an annual saving of **£22,230** (operative scale 3)

- 7.17 A review of working time arrangements for street cleansing will result in savings on overtime payments. This needs to be done once a new structure is known and the quantity of work to be delivered.
- 7.18 The additional support at area level that integrating the services would give, coupled with anticipated increases in productivity, should enable the budget for employing additional agency workers to be reduced by a sum of **£7,700** per annum.
- 7.19 Although there may need to be some adaptation for changes in working, different team sizes and different equipment requirements, it is envisaged that efficiency savings could be made to the vehicle and fuel costs. This needs reviewing once the new working arrangements have been agreed.
- 7.20 The savings achieved by the above changes total **£30,000** for 2018/19. Further savings will be apparent in 2019/20 once the further work has been completed.

Productivity

- 7.21 When there are perceived shortages in staff, it is important to ensure that productivity levels are high. This means getting as much out of the working day as possible and minimising non-productive time as much as possible. Travelling is one of the biggest elements of non-productive time, particularly where there are teams of staff to manoeuvre around the borough. Optimisation of routes for grass-cutting and mechanical sweeping should ensure that the most efficient method of travel is scheduled.
- 7.22 Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a problem with the workforce getting out of the depot in the morning and arriving back early at the end of the day, endemic of not having targets to work to which allows slippage in productive working. Although this can be changed by introducing realistic schedules, management and supervisors should be looking to improve this situation as soon as possible.
- 7.23 Linked to this is the issue of the workforce returning to the depot at lunchtimes. Whereas this may be acceptable for those working nearby, there will be a number of employees who are travelling distances from their work site and back afterwards during working time. Staff argue that they don't have welfare facilities on their vehicles or at outlying sites, but given the amount of council-owned buildings around the area, there should be opportunities to negotiate for use of toilet and wash facilities closer to work sites. The council should also consider kitting out vehicles with wash facilities (wet or dry wash) or ensuring that provision is included in future specifications.
- 7.24 The additional time spent on site should enable targets to be met and standards to be adhered to, as well as the opportunity to ensure that all other Street Scene requirements on site are dealt with either there and then or reported as appropriate for further action.
- 7.25 The other area where productivity is lessened, that has been highlighted by staff through the review, is the amount of reactive work which is given out and results in staff being

taken off their core work. Agreeing service standards will reduce this demand and consideration should be given to introducing a "hit-squads" that have responsibility for carrying out this type of work. To ensure that there is enough cover every day, working times should be reviewed. It is envisaged that this works most effectively when daily duties are added to the start and end periods which can be carried out by a single operative (e.g. emptying litter bins). This minimises the period where two people work together, a period when two-person jobs can be allocated.

Improving standards

- 7.26 It is important that the standard of work to be achieved needs to be agreed and used to form the basis of the calculations for staffing levels. This will include frequency of cuts for grass, visits for sweeping, winter work etc. The standards should be agreed and signed off by elected members so that they are in a position to give informed advice to their constituents. The council should also consider publishing the agreed standards to help manage customer expectations.
- 7.27 Resuming delivery of the public realm contract from the county council should allow Street Scene to have sufficient control over the work required to ensure that the schedules are adhered to, which would improve the situation faced over the past two years. Management believe that they will be able to deliver this initially by sub-contracting work alongside high-speed roads that will require traffic management. This can be reviewed during the 2018 growing season.
- 7.28 This would leave a proportion of mechanical sweeping to be scheduled in with traffic management lane closures and pedestrian mowing to be completed in other areas. Although staffing levels are based on historic working arrangements, the remaining budget supports the employment of a number of temporary operatives on a seasonal basis for the grass cutting element and it is felt that the mechanical sweeping element can be absorbed within existing resources.
- 7.29 A priority for enhancing standards will be the gateway routes into the West Lancashire borough, important for "first impressions" of visitors and potential business investors.
- 7.30 Street cleansing standards are considered to require improvement, despite some impressive cleanliness inspection scores. Many of the street cleansing operatives only carry litter picking prongs and a bin sack which is ineffective at achieving a deeper clean. There are no traditional barrows in use that would facilitate the carrying of the tools necessary to provide a deeper clean as they were regarded as inefficient in the past. However, modernisation from manufacturers in recent years has seen several models appear on the market that are more than just a mobile tool station and bin sack container. Some have motorised vacuum hoses that enable smaller, harder to brush items of rubbish, such as cigarette butts, to be picked up.

- 7.31 At present, there are no storage facilities for barrows, so some lock-ups will need to be sourced in appropriate locations where possible and the vehicles or trailers reviewed to transport them around the Borough.
- 7.32 In addition to the barrows, there would be benefit in investigating the feasibility of investing in petrol powered blower vacuums which have dual use on the service in blowing or sucking litter and leaves as required.
- 7.33 There are many different types of litter bin deployed within the borough, not all in the right places and not all the right size. To avoid frequent emptying of litter bins in busy locations, many local authorities around the country are converting to "smart bins", such as the "Big Belly Bin" which has a solar powered sensor and compactor to extend the time before it needs to be collected. In addition, they take advantage of mobile technology to alert the department when they are at a certain fill level and need servicing. In other parts of the country, the installation of these bins has led to savings in the service which helps to justify the initial outlay. There is also sponsorship opportunities on the bins themselves to generate income.
- 7.34 To ensure better standardisation of litter bins and cut down on the number of keys that must be carried by personnel deployed to empty all the different bins, the authority should consider producing a corporate litter bin strategy for all departments to follow. This would ensure that bins were of the right type and quality.

In-house service improvements

- 7.35 The review found that morale is low amongst the workforce. They have seen a change in management over the past year which has seen new ideas and ways of working coming forward, but operatives (and supervisors) don't feel that they have been told enough about what is going on and what is being planned. Management suggest that they have been involved in the review and kept updated in meetings however, as well as looking at ways to improve communication, there are other issues that have been raised during the review and outlined previously that could help improve team spirit.
- 7.36 The afore-mentioned changes to integrate the grounds maintenance and street cleansing on an area working basis could be sold in a very positive manner, accentuating the need for teams to engender a "can-do" attitude to the work within their area, a "right first time" quality attitude and concentration on "avoidable contact" for the public by taking wider responsibility. A sense of ownership and subsequently pride in their work should result from this approach. There also needs to be a pride in being associated with Street Scene and wearing the uniform.
- 7.37 The provision of tool boxes on the vehicles for storing tools and equipment, which would reduce some of the non-productive travel between work site and depot as task requirements change through the day, would also be seen as a morale boost due to the strong feelings expressed about it.

- 7.38 Equally, this would be the case in considering improving the quality of bin sacks which was raised during discussions, the current design deemed to be too flimsy and too cheap to be of proper use inside litter bins, sometimes needing two at a time to make sure they are strong enough. An investigation should take place, again involving the workforce, to see if this is a false economy that needs improving and whether it is affordable to do so.
- 7.39 The continuation of the inspection process for cleanliness, even after the demise of national performance indicators, is key to measuring the success or otherwise of the service. Whether this function may be better sited within another area is being discussed, but there are several other members of staff, even across other departments, that could help out while they are in the area, such as Playground Inspectors. The council might also wish to look at the Land Audit management system (L.A.M.S.) that APSE have assisted in developing and reporting. Although this was originally set up to provide a cleanliness score for grounds maintenance sites, it was quickly recognised that it could easily be extended to cover cleanliness inspections on all aspects of the service while the inspectors are there (e.g. street cleaning, litter bin emptying, graffiti, fly-tipping etc.) with a slightly less onerous inspection regime than that demanded by the now defunct national indicator NI 195.
- 7.40 Although raised briefly within the review, the synergies with elements of the current Leisure & Wellbeing Department, such as formal parks, park rangers and playgrounds, which will soon transfer under a single Director with Street Scene services have not been covered in any great detail. However, it is recognised that there is potential for investigating the potential for restructuring some of the work under new arrangements to create better working arrangements and to avoid future duplication which could go toward savings for 2019/20.

Income generation

- 7.41 In addition to making savings to cover decreasing expenditure budgets, as detailed previously in this section, Street Scene could look to replace some of that funding through external funds. The first and most obvious of these was covered in interviews with stakeholders and concerns monies spent by other departments on external service provision where Street Scene would potentially be able to undertake the tasks and avoid the money being spent outside of the council. There appears to have been some history with previous regimes that has clouded other department's views on using Street Scene, which has resulted in silo working. However, current financial circumstances dictate that every effort should be made to try and make sure money remains in circulation within the council's overall budget, even if this raises the need for additional training within Street Scene.
- 7.42 Further opportunity to raise additional funds can come from work carried out for external clients. Legislation has changed in the past few years regarding trading and charging that allows the council to extend its operations much more into the private sector. The list of

tasks that are carried out on internal contracts includes many that could also be offered to other customers, both in other public-sector premises (such as hospitals, clinics, police and fire stations) and those of private companies (such as industrial units and car parks), particularly where such sites are in close vicinity to those of the council.

- 7.43 Other areas where external funding can be sought involves making use of potential advertising space on council assets, such as litter bins, verges and roundabouts (the latter two requiring county council buy in) .
- 7.44 There are several potential issues to raise on this topic. Firstly, it takes time and effort to liaise with potential customers and bring about profitable contracts. Where councils nationally have been successful in this area, they have often employed the skills of a business development specialist (on the basis that they can earn more for the council than they cost). There is also a wider remit within Street Scene that could potentially include Trade Waste as well. This position could be considered alongside the need for a technical post referenced earlier and enforcement (see below).
- 7.45 The council may also decide to increase its income from the enforcement of environmental crime, such as fly-tipping, litter offences and dog-fouling, all of which can be subject to fixed penalty notices (FPN's). Penalty charges for littering are set to rise in April 2018 as a result of the new National Litter Strategy (Defra) which will increase the potential income that could be achieved, whilst also providing a more effective deterrent that should ultimately improve cleanliness standards. This enforcement currently sits with Environmental Protection, but it may be more effective to bring it together with Street Scene who already deal with abandoned vehicles. They would also like to do more with Waste Carrier Licence enforcement, as this often links to fly-tipping by unlicensed carriers.
- 7.46 Quite a few local authorities in England and Wales have hired private enforcement companies to take on the role, some with notable financial success, although it is noted that the percentage of FPN income that council's take varies from contract to contract, even with the same companies, so comprehensive research and contract preparation is recommended to get the best possible deal.

8.0 Recommendations

Area working / Integrated service delivery / work scheduling

- 8.1 An asset management / scheduling solution is required. It is recommended that the council look to fund an established package, such as 'Mayrise' or 'Composer' etc. as an "Invest to save" opportunity. The system should be able to link the current GIS mapping work being undertaken and the new CRM 'Service Now' system.
- 8.2 The frequency of operations needs to be agreed for every task to be carried out, particularly those affecting grass cutting, road sweeping and litter picking.

- 8.3 Applying standard minute values to those tasks will enable optimum staffing levels to be established for different weeks/months of the year, based on demand. After allowing for elements of non-productive time, like travel and personal breaks, some levelling out would then need to take place before the size of the workforce required to undertake the work becomes known.
- 8.4 At that point, there may need to be some changes made to standards for some tasks and/or locations to make sure they are achievable. Once the standards are determined, approved and signed off by the Council, they should be published as widely as possible, including the council website, to better manage public expectations.
- 8.5 Once the standards are known, the council should ensure that the equipment required is the correct type for the conditions e.g. the right mower to cope with the height that grass is to be maintained.
- 8.6 The standard of operations for the Housing & Inclusion and Leisure & Wellbeing Directorates needs to form part of a Service Level Agreement with them so that they know what they are paying for and have something to monitor Street Scene against.
- 8.7 Grounds maintenance and street cleansing should be integrated into area teams, who then have a responsibility for all work required on the identified assets, be they grass sites, hard standing, flower beds, litter bins etc. in order to achieve greater efficiency and productivity by working and travelling together.
- 8.8 Area teams should be provided with mobile technology (either smart phone, PDA or tablet) to enable the council to work towards a paperless work solution. This should link to all the IT aspects, asset/scheduling system, GIS mapping and CRM system.
- 8.9 A skills matrix should be produced to track the competencies of current staff and to identify future training requirements, both for new working arrangements and for succession planning.
- 8.10 The area should be divided accordingly and supervisory resources allocated to manage each area. They need to be assisted by operational team leaders who will provide the focal point for the area working arrangements, the number to be determined by what is deemed to be the optimum geographical split.
- 8.11 Once the areas have been determined and the tasks in each are known, the workforce should be allocated to particular areas based on the work demands matched to the competences of individuals. There will be some (mechanical sweeper drivers, tractor drivers etc.) who will need to work across a number of different areas, as per demand requirements.
- 8.12 Working times need to be aligned to work demands. This will mean providing a demand led service for street cleansing operations in town centres and other areas of high weekend footfall.

Savings

- 8.13 The budget needs to be reduced by £75,000 for 2018/19 and a further £75,000 in 2019/20.
- 8.14 As there is currently one vacant post on street cleansing this should be removed from the establishment from 1 April 2018, saving £22,230 per annum in each of the years. More work is needed to determine the level of savings that can be achieved in 2019/20.
- 8.15 Overtime payments are currently paid to street cleansing for addressing town centre and prestige sites at weekends. This needs reviewing and negotiations on overtime rates on Sundays to be undertaken and the increases in overall productivity are anticipated to enable the work to be absorbed by the new service arrangements. Further options include reviewing and reducing the level of works undertaken and looking at task based payments rather than substantive post payments.
- 8.16 Further savings of £7,700 can be made each year from the street cleansing budget for agency workers, which it is envisaged won't be needed if productivity is improved on the service.
- 8.17 Integrating service teams is also expected to realise productivity and efficiency savings on fleet costs for vehicles and fuel. This needs exploring further once the new working arrangements have been embedded to understand if any cost reductions can be achieved.
- 8.18 The savings achieved by the above changes total **£30,000** for 2018/19. More work is required to realise the savings for 2019/20.
- 8.19 An element of the savings is expected to come from the capacity for generating income (see 8.38).

Productivity

- 8.17 Grass cutting and street cleaning routes established from the schedules should be optimised to ensure that they are operated in the most efficient geographical patterns to maximise productivity, which will require robust supervision.
- 8.18 Time spent in the depot at both ends of the day should be minimised as much as possible to increase the amount of work actually undertaken. The schedules will form targets that only include an appropriate amount of time for necessary functions at commencement and close of day.
- 8.19 Street Scene should ensure that wherever possible operatives are able to take their breaks out on site rather than spending time returning to the depot. This will mean providing adequate welfare facilities both on vehicles and near to work sites.
- 8.20 Team leaders and the operatives under their leadership must take responsibility and deal with all aspects of work when on site, either maintaining, repairing (or making safe) or reporting where it is outside the skill set.

8.21 To minimise the amount of reactive work that takes operatives from their scheduled tasks, it is recommended that "hit squads" be established to cover the borough. Litter bin emptying could be scheduled at both ends of the day to be completed either side of reactive work tickets.

Improving standards

8.22 It is important to adhere to agreed standards which is why it is important that elected members agree them and act on behalf of Street Scene in corresponding with their constituents on these matters.

8.23 The public realm work currently undertaken by Lancashire County Council is proposed to be delivered through a partnership agreement from April 2018. The budget with it allows for traffic management and grass cutting alongside high-speed roads to be sub-contracted out.

8.24 This leaves areas for pedestrian grass-cutting to be undertaken in-house, an estimate of three temporary seasonal staff being the requirement.

8.25 In order to maximise improvements on a contract that caused much bad publicity in the past year or so, priority should be given to working with the county council, ensuring that gateway routes into the borough are particularly well kept next year.

8.26 The manual street cleaning element needs to achieve a deeper level of cleaning than just litter picking. The operatives are currently ill-equipped for this and their equipment needs reviewing. It is recommended that the council invests in modern barrows that incorporate powered vacuum hoses to deal with cigarette butts and other small debris. It may be of benefit to trial one or two in the first instance.

8.27 If equipment changes it may need to be either transported out daily to site or the council needs to find suitable locations for them to be left overnight, the latter being the preferred option especially if use can be made of existing sites.

8.28 Further investment should be made in back-pack blowers that have both blow and vacuum suction options, making them much more versatile on site. Again, it may be of value to trial some in the first instance.

8.29 The council should consider investing in 'Smart Bins' such as the 'Big Belly Bin' with solar-powered compactor and fill sensor technology, which require less frequent emptying and can let you know when they are approaching full. The positioning of such bins is key to the greatest efficiency gains.

8.30 Furthermore, with a myriad of different litter bins on the streets and parks as there has been inconsistency in how bins have been procured and sited, the council needs to produce a corporate 'Litter Bin Strategy' that standardises specifications and the best types for each situation, aimed at having a much smaller selection in the future.

In-house service improvements

- 8.31 There is a perception from the workforce and supervisory staff that communication from management needs improving. Management need to take account of this discernment.
- 8.32 A change of culture is needed, driven by management, to engender more of a 'can do' attitude under the new working arrangements, underpinned by a 'right first time' quality approach and 'avoidable contact' mentality.
- 8.33 To maximise time on site and minimise return travel to the depot during the day, suitable secure tool-boxes should be fitted to vehicles so that everything needed for the tasks of the day (and other common eventualities) can be taken to site.
- 8.34 Street Scene should investigate the issue of the quality of bin sacks in current use as anecdotal evidence suggests that they are cheap and unsuitable as litter bin liners and for containing quantities of rubbish.
- 8.35 The service currently carries out cleanliness inspections to the old national indicator NI195 standard. With pressure on a small number of staff likely to increase with the introduction of technological solutions, at least in the first instance, the council should consider adopting the slightly less onerous LAMS approach, which covers grounds maintenance areas as well as street cleansing sites and who could undertake them.
- 8.36 The restructure of Leisure and Wellbeing Services alongside Street Scene presents the opportunity to investigate synergies and work overlaps on both sides, but particularly with formal parks, park rangers and playground inspectors where there is potential for efficiency improvements.

Income generation

- 8.37 The council should ensure that wherever possible Street Scene are the main supplier of relevant services for other departments, to avoid money going out of the council budget by being spent on external contractors.
- 8.38 Once Street Scene has implemented the necessary changes to allow it to work more effectively and efficiently, they should consider the potential for raising income from related tasks in other areas, such as with other public bodies or private companies.
- 8.39 Other opportunities for generating income should be investigated, including the potential for sponsorship on litter bins, roadside verges and roundabouts (with buy-in required from county council on the latter two).
- 8.40 The current staffing structure is fairly lean and the capacity to undertake the work required to bring in external funding is unlikely to be there. Street Scene should consider bringing in a business development specialist, possibly on a self-financing basis, to alleviate some of the work pressures, including other areas of the directorate like trade waste.

- 8.41 In light of the increases in individual fixed penalty fines that local authorities will be able to make from April next year under the new national litter strategy, the council may wish to look at the potential for increasing the amount of money raised through the further enforcement of environmental crime, such as those for litter offences.
- 8.42 That consideration should also include the option of hiring a private enforcement company to issue fines, as this has been shown to be quite lucrative in other areas, subject to agreeing a good deal on how income is to be split.

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