

Meeting:	Scrutiny
Date:	12 December 2001

28. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CLEANSING. The Committee considered the report of the Cleansing Best Value Review Team regarding the outcome of the Best Value Review of Cleansing.

Members were informed that the Cleansing Services Best Value Review including Refuse Collection, Recycling, Abandoned Vehicles, Street Sweeping, Commemorative Seats and Litter Bins was now complete. Arising from the review, undertaken over eight months, was a Best Value Improvement Plan, which was detailed at 10.0 of the report. A summary of the Improvement Plan was as follows:

- To improve communication with the public by developing and maintaining Cleansing Services pages on the Council's web site further to developing e-Government.
- To develop improved links with the Community by setting in place a Cleansing Services Forum to which all Community Groups would be invited to attend at which cleansing service issues may be addressed and in which Members would have a key role.
- To secure a quality based and most cost effective Cleansing Services Contract to be implemented by the Council in April 2003.
- To ensure the proper management of the tendering of the Council's Cleansing Services Contract by setting in place a Project Steering Group that would report to the Best Value Management Committee and subsequently Cabinet on matters determined by the Best Value Review Team in the report and progress with the tender negotiations.
- To seek to improve communication with the Community on waste minimisation and recycling, whilst providing improved security of continued employment for the current temporary post of Recycling Officer.
- To improve joint working with other agencies to ensure the most expeditious processing of abandoned vehicle reports and removal of abandoned vehicles.
- To improve visual amenity and opportunity for the provision of commemorative seats and other commemorative presentations.

Members noted that the review had been complex. It had to take account of a number of factors that had not only influenced the review but also its outcome and Improvement Plan.

The Improvement Plan included matters which would influence, and be influenced by, the outcome of the tender process to commence in January 2002 for the Council's Cleansing Contract, incorporating refuse collection, recycling, street sweeping, public conveniences and attendant services, and dog litter collection. This contract was due to commence in April 2003.

Another major issue, which affected the review, was the need to integrate the Borough's refuse collection and recycling services with an Integrated Waste Management Contract currently being tendered by Brighton and Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council. The Contract for the disposal of the County's waste was due to be awarded in 2002.

Further to these considerations a report was made to the Best Value Management Committee on the 25 September 2001, which sought agreement of the Committee to a revised approach for the review to that which was endorsed by Cabinet in April 2001.

Councillor Parsons outlined his concerns in respect of two of the recommendations of the review team, the details of which were circulated with the agenda. With regard to the inclusion of an option for a six-day working week, he expressed concern that with the requirement to 'catch up' as a result of public holidays, this would inevitably extend to a Sunday, depriving staff of a normal day off in the week. A Sunday collection would not be welcomed or in the best interests of residents.

The Head of Amenities reported that through flexibility in working, potentially over six working days, there could be benefits to any future contractor and to the Council. This would need to be determined however through the tender process for the Cleansing Services Contract that would commence in January 2002. It was confirmed, that other than in exceptional circumstances, it was not envisaged that the collection of household waste would ever take place on a Sunday and that it was likely that this would be expressly excluded in the Cleansing Services Contract.

With reference to the Council's procedures for dealing with abandoned vehicles, Councillor Parsons indicated that this area of service provision should have been included in the Review and the possibility of securing a contractor by tender to provide all of the service requirements should have been investigated and reported on. He referred to a number of other Local Authorities who, as he understood, collected vehicles from the streets in a much shorter period of time than the Council's procedures were likely to achieve.

The Head of Amenities reported that the review team had not considered in detail other opportunities in dealing with the potential removal of abandoned vehicles but had focused on improving the current arrangements. This had been achieved by removing some fourteen days from the time taken to check and remove a confirmed abandoned vehicle. Members were advised that following consultation with a Contractor engaged in a pilot scheme for the removal of abandoned vehicles with a number of London Boroughs, it had been established that there would be significant cost implications for the Council if a contractor were engaged, well in excess of those currently met through administration and disposal charges.

Members were advised of the consultation exercise currently being undertaken jointly by DEFRA and DTLR on abandoned vehicles, which was clearly recognised by the Government as a national problem. Views were being sought on proposals including the removal of dumped cars within 24 hours and new powers to track down and prosecute owners and offenders. The Committee Members agreed that the review had adequately covered the issue of abandoned vehicles and that no further report was required at this stage.

RESOLVED: (1) That Cabinet be recommended to approve that the collection of household waste on a Sunday be expressly excluded in the Cleansing Services Contract.

(2) That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Improvement Plan as set at 10.0 of the report including the option for a six day working week for any future Cleansing Services Contract (excluding Sundays) should this be of benefit to the Council.

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