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**STREET SCENE**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon, Neighbourhood Services and  
Community Safety Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report presents a mid term review of the Street Scene project, detailing what has worked well and areas for improvement. It also provides an update against the original objectives.

**Summary**

2. The first Leading Edge project carried out by the Council was to review a range of services such as street cleaning, grounds maintenance, refuse/recycling collection that later became branded as Street Scene.
3. These services, whilst performing well, required modernising to ensure that the services were providing value for money compared to other similar local authorities.
4. The project was split into two phases, Design Phase, which ran for 20 weeks and concluded in December 2005 and the Implementation Phase, which ran from January 2006 through to June 2006. A new approach to Street Scene services was implemented in July 2006.
5. The key objectives for the project were:
  - (a) Develop an innovative responsive and joined-up approach to Street Scene services that reflects good practice.
  - (b) Improve quality of life in Darlington through improved design and maintenance of the street environment.
  - (c) Improve residents' satisfaction with liveability.
  - (d) Empower local communities to take responsibility for the quality of their environment.
  - (e) Demonstrate value for money for the Council taxpayer and secure efficiency gains in street services.

6. The savings finalised and agreed represented £500,000 per annum with four years to reach the target. For 2006/07 to 2007/08, a saving of £140,000, for 2008/09 a further annual saving of £160,000 and for 2009/10 a further saving of £200,000 with the full amount achieved by 2010/11.
7. The service and staffing changes envisaged and the scale of financial efficiencies targeted, represent a very radical programme. In the context of continuing to pursue best value for Council taxpayers, this approach is important but it must be noted that the transition was always going to be extremely challenging.
8. Street Scene was implemented from Monday 3 July 2006 and has now been operational for just over two years. The programme of change was built in over a four-year period and has been kept under review with a number of changes made to adapt to changing circumstances and achieve improved service delivery. These are:
  - (a) Low level Highway Maintenance was returned to the Highway Maintenance Team because there was greater synergy between those services and the ability to share resource.
  - (b) The role of Coordinators was reviewed and changed so that the Coordinators supported all the Leaders and not one individual person.
9. As part of the ongoing review of the initial Street Scene project, a mid-term review has been completed, which is detailed in this report.
10. Cabinet have closely monitored the implementation of Street Scene and earlier this year asked for a review in response to residents' feedback with regard to performance issues in some areas, particularly around horticulture.

### **Recommendation**

11. It is recommended that Cabinet:
  - (i) Note the progress made in implementing Street Scene and the financial efficiencies achieved to date.
  - (ii) Endorse the action taken so far to improve Street Scene services and note further actions detailed in this report.

### **Reasons**

12. The recommendation is supported to ensure that Street Scene services continue to improve and are responsive to both Members and residents.

**Cliff Brown**  
**Director of Community Services**

## Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Ian Thompson : Extension 4446  
CLD

S17 Crime and Disorder	Services delivered by Street Scene do have an impact on crime and disorder, in particular Environmental Crime. Service targets are designed to reduce the impact on the environment to a minimum.
Health and Well Being	Making sure the Borough is clean and green does impact positively on the health and well being of residents.
Sustainability	Services delivered by Street Scene are designed to reduce their environmental impact.
Diversity	Services are delivered to all residents and do not discriminate against any individual.
Wards Affected	All Wards in the Borough affected equally.
Groups Affected	No particular group or community is impacted on differently to any other.
Budget and Policy Framework	The report does not recommend any changes to the Council's policy or budget framework.
Key Decision	The changes to Street Scene services contained in this report are not considered to be a key decision.
Urgent Decision	The content of this report does not require any urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The services delivered by Street Scene are key to assisting the Council and partners delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy by working to create a cleaner, greener, safer environment for all residents.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

13. The first Leading Edge project carried out by the Council was to review a range of front line services, involving street cleaning, grounds maintenance, refuse/recycling collection and routine Highway Maintenance, that later became branded as Street Scene. The project was split into two phases, Design Phase, which ran for 20 weeks and concluded in December 2005 and the Implementation Phase, which ran from January 2006 through to June 2006. A new approach to Street Scene services was implemented in July 2006.
14. The key objectives for the project were to:
  - (a) Develop an innovative responsive and joined-up approach to Street Scene services that reflects good practice.
  - (b) Improve quality of life in Darlington through improved design and maintenance of the street environment.
  - (c) Improve residents' satisfaction with liveability.
  - (d) Empower local communities to take responsibility for the quality of their environment.
  - (e) Secure efficiency gains in street services and demonstrate value for money.
15. The outcome from the Design stage of the project in relation to the objectives was as follows:
  - (a) *Develop Innovative Responsive Joined-Up Approach*

That Darlington Borough Council move to a zonal approach to Street Scene services creating five zones, encompassing such tasks as street cleaning, grounds maintenance, highway maintenance, minor repairs (street lighting), etc. Zonal teams to be generic in their duties, although it is acknowledged that this requires training and ongoing development.
  - (b) *Improved Quality of Life*

The zones to be led by a Team Leader assisted by a Coordinator to allow for external expertise and planning to be incorporated into the effective service provision of the zones. The generic approach within zones and the clear all policy (generic operatives) will enable a clear all policy with single pass collection of everything designed to be collected, e.g. refuse, back lane clearances, bulky household waste, litter collection, fly tipping, etc and will strengthen the strategic planning and coordination needed to ensure the joined up approach to service provision necessary to improve quality of life for residents of the Borough.

(c) *Improve Residents' Satisfaction*

The zonal approach to Street Scene services will allow for a transparent, measurable process offering value for money. A clear all policy will mean that operatives are not limited to individual tasks or limited by schedules. The team will be empowered to deliver the kind of improved, quality services that residents have indicated that they want.

(d) *Empower Local Communities*

The existing processes have been redesigned through the detailed designs to offer a more comprehensive management system, which places the community at the centre of service delivery incorporating evaluation and feedback mechanisms to facilitate continuous improvement.

(e) *Secure Efficiency Gains*

The concept design report identified that 15% of activity could be classified as unnecessary, non-value added, representing 19% of the actual wage bill or £658,000. The design then went on to identify a number of areas where potentially the overall realistic savings of £513,000 could be achieved. This included such things as reducing staff in areas where there was duplication, reducing overtime, reducing cover for holidays and sickness as a result of different ways of working. In addition, removing bureaucracy, improving fleet utilisation, remodelling refuse rounds and removing any overlap between teams and services.

## **Implementation**

16. Through the Implementation Phase and detailed consultation with staff and trade unions, some changes were made to the initial output from the Design Phase, in particular the services that would be included within Street Scene and the actual achievable savings. From the outset of Street Scene, the following services were included:

- (a) Refuse/Recycling Collection
- (b) Grounds Maintenance/Horticulture/Floral Displays
- (c) Litter and Dog Bins
- (d) Clinical Waste
- (e) Street Cleaning
- (f) Gully Flushing
- (g) Household Clearances
- (h) Bulky Household Waste
- (i) Parks and Open Space Maintenance
- (j) Graffiti Removal
- (k) Street Care
- (l) Low Level Highway Maintenance

17. The savings finalised and agreed would be a total of £500,000 annual saving with four years in which to reach that target. For 2006/07 and 2007/08, an annual saving of £140,000, for 2008/09 an annual saving of £300,000 and for 2009/10 and thereafter, an annual saving of £500,000.
18. Street Scene was implemented on Monday 3 July 2006 and has now been operational for just over two years. The programme of change was built in over a four-year period and since the start a number of changes have taken place to continue to adapt to changing circumstances and improved service delivery:
  - (a) Low level Highway Maintenance was returned to the Highway Maintenance Team because there was greater synergy between those services and the ability to share resource.
  - (b) The role of Coordinators was reviewed and changed so that the Coordinators supported all the Leaders and not one individual person.
19. Since the implementation of Street Scene, the environment the services operate in continues to be fluid and a number of changes have taken place that impact on the services within Street Scene:
  - (a) The Pedestrian Heart Scheme completed
  - (b) Introduction of a charge for Bulky Household Waste
  - (c) New waste contract to start in April 2009 and resulting changes to collection
  - (d) Mild winters and wet summers which are extending the growing season
20. As part of the ongoing review of the initial Street Scene project, a mid-term review has been completed, which is detailed later in the report.

### Satisfaction Indicators

21. When comparing the results from the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) General Survey, the relevant indicators for Street Scene services show a continued improvement.

<b>BVPI</b>	<b>2000 %</b>	<b>2003 %</b>	<b>2006 %</b>
BV 89 – Satisfaction with cleanliness	50	58	67
BV 98 – Waste collection	80	81	83
BV 90b – Waste recycling (local facilities)	59	63	71
BV119e – Parks and open spaces	59	66	77

22. There is a slight contrast when comparing the Community Survey data to that of the BVPI data. Generally the survey data shows reasonably consistent performance since 2003 with small variation year on year.

23. Both the Best Value Performance Indicator Survey and the Council's own Community Survey are carried out by an independent organisation and are representative of the population of Darlington. There are approximately 1200 surveys completed with a plus or minus confidence level of 3%.

<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>2003 %</b>	<b>2004 %</b>	<b>2005 %</b>	<b>2006 %</b>	<b>2007 %</b>	<b>2008 %</b>
Parks and open spaces	63.6	67.5	73.2	72.7	72.3	75.8
Cleanliness of the town centre (Note: only introduced 2007)					80.6	77.6
Upkeep and appearance of the town centre	86.3	81.9	74.8	58.8	81.6	79.1
Refuse collection	78.5	84.1	85.1	87	82.4	81.1
Street cleaning		60.6	65.3	64.4	62.7	59.3

24. Best Value Performance Indicator 199 measures the percentage of streets that fall below an acceptable standard of cleanliness. When comparing annual performance there has been significant improvement from 28% in 2003/04 to last year's performance of 11%. For this year, the new indicator NI 195 shows significant improvement, with only 3% after the first survey and 4% for the second, of streets falling below acceptable standard.
25. What this performance information shows is that generally there has been an improvement in overall satisfaction levels with Street Scene Services, although residents' satisfaction with street cleaning has seen a small decline in the last two years from 64.4% in 2006 to 59.3% in 2008. With regard to the two indicators for the town centre, it needs to be taken in the context that in 2007, the refurbishment of the town centre was completed and therefore high profile and new. This may help explain the slight fall in satisfaction for the following year. With regard to BV 199 and now NI 195, this has consistently improved therefore there is a perception gap to address with regard to the reality for the standard of cleanliness as opposed to residents' perception.
26. When comparing service requests for Street Scene services prior to its implementation, from January to June 2005, there were 12,869 calls for service requests. This year, January to June 2008, there were 11,695 service requests, a reduction of 9%, which clearly demonstrates that the services delivered by Street Scene continue to improve, resulting in fewer calls to the Contact Centre.

## **Benchmarking**

27. The high level core services within Street Scene are benchmarked as part of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Performance Networks. When comparing the data for 2006/07, the following is evident:

(a) *Refuse Collection*

The cost of refuse collection is one of the lowest and top quartile, along with the number of properties serviced by each vehicle. For recycling/composting, Darlington Borough Council is one of the poorer performing authorities, although this will be addressed through the new Waste Treatment, Recycling and Disposal Contract commencing in April 2009.

(b) *Street Cleaning*

The cost of street cleaning per household is in the second quartile and the performance indicators for service quality fall between the second and third quartiles.

(c) *Parks, Open Spaces and Horticulture*

Performance information indicates that Darlington Borough Council is one of the best performing authorities with regard to the amount of open space it maintains per thousand head of population and the hectares maintained per front line employee. The cost of maintenance and cost per hectare maintained is between average and the best authorities, although when considering cost per thousand head of population, it is closer towards the most expensive. For the service, the performance information shows that the Council is efficient at maintaining its open space but does have a significant amount of open space per head of population as opposed to other authorities.

28. Generally APSE performance data information demonstrates that the services are providing value for money. There are some areas of performance to address, particularly relating to street cleaning.

### **Street Scene Review**

29. The mid-term review has looked at what has worked well to date within Street Scene and what needs to be reviewed and changed to continue to improve. The key areas that have worked well are:

(a) *Generic working*

Staff work generically across a range of services from refuse collection, recycling, street cleaning and a range of grounds maintenance/horticultural tasks. The range of jobs carried out by each individual is appropriate to their level of training and competence and the appropriate pay scale. Generic working is monitored to ensure that all staff do work generically.

(b) *Area based approach*

Street Scene operates in five areas and has done so successfully for the past two years. Residents, staff and Members have got to know their Street Scene Area Leader and staff in that area. In addition, a number of other services are now delivered on the ground in the five Street Scene areas, for example, Children's Services, Police and others.



- (c) *Seven Day Working*  
Street Scene operatives work across a seven-day week on a shift pattern covering Saturday and Sunday as part of that normal working week. Staff are on duty in each area on Saturday and Sunday attending to key hot spot locations such as play areas, main thoroughfares and the town centre.
- (d) *Community Engagement*  
Street Scene has been involved in a number of initiatives to engage residents in Street Scene services, attending Community Partnerships, residents meetings, CDRP and has been the cornerstone of the Talking Together programme. In addition, Street Scene has recruited in excess of 200 Street Champions that are actively involved in improving their local neighbourhood and reporting issues to Street Scene. An independent evaluation of the Street Champions was carried out in July this year and attached at Appendix 1 is the summary from that report.
- (e) *Financial Savings Delivery*  
The extremely challenging financial savings built into the Street Scene change programme over the four years has been delivered and from next year, annual savings of £500,000 will be achieved. In addition to this, as part of the budget process last year, an additional £80,000 saving was identified by changing the bulky household waste service. This has also been delivered.

30. There are a number of areas where further improvement is required to ensure that initial objectives are fulfilled:

- (a) Since the implementation of Street Scene, grounds maintenance has always caused the greatest difficulty to provide the expected standard because of the skills involved and the need for significant training.
- (b) Ensure that strong staff identification with their Area does not produce a silo mentality.
- (c) The pace of change in the culture of Street Scene services to be proactive as opposed to reactive. There are good examples of where the culture is changing, although this process needs to be speeded up to deliver a clear all approach.
- (d) Other than customer satisfaction indicators and Best Value performance information, it has been difficult to obtain robust information out of the Contact Centre software, Lagan. Significant time and resource has been put in to develop bespoke reports for Street Scene from Lagan, to enable problem areas to be identified and acted upon.

31. Initially Street Scene was highly visible and information was out in the community for both Members and residents. Over the past 12 months, this area of work has not been as proactive as it was at the inception of Street Scene.

### **Action Taken To Date**

32. Following requests earlier this year by Cabinet to carry out a mid term review of Street Scene, a number of actions have already been implemented:

- (a) The implementation of the new management structure discussed later in this report was brought forward.
- (b) Area Leaders produce a weekly report for Director of Community Services and Assistant Director – Environmental Services.
- (c) The Head of Street Scene to keep Members informed of any issues/difficulties being experienced with service delivery, for example, because of exceptional weather conditions.
- (d) Additional resources were brought in and overtime worked to get on top of grass cutting, shrubs, cemeteries and other grounds maintenance tasks. The additional costs associated with this work was approx £35k which will be contained within existing Street Scene budgets.
- (e) Greater focus was put on the Grounds Maintenance Service.
- (f) A number of teams were put in place to tackle hot spots and improve the appearance of for example.

### **Mid Term Review Actions Planned**

33. In order to address the areas within Street Scene that have not worked as well as intended and to address the issues the satisfaction indicators and benchmarking results are showing, the following actions have either been implemented or are planned to take place:

(a) *Management Structure*

A new management structure has been implemented from mid-September 2008, which provides for a much more coordinated, rounded overview of Street Scene. The changes have resulted from opportunities presented within Street Scene and the movement of services from the former Development and Environment Department to the Environmental Services Section within the Community Services Department. The changes resulted in:

- (i) Reduced Street Scene leadership role to two Area Managers with a lower grade role of Street Scene Leader within the existing five areas.
- (ii) Dedicated Parks and Countryside management team.
- (iii) Dedicated Crematoria and Cemeteries service managed by the Crematoria and Burials Manager.

A review of the administration support to Street Scene will be carried out to take account of the new management structure recently implemented with a view to contributing to 2009/10 Street Scene savings.

(b) *Grounds Maintenance*

There is now greater focus on the Grounds Maintenance Service. Within the new structure, one of the Area Managers is taking the lead in this area of work. In addition, specialist teams will be set up to deal with issues such as sheltered housing, Council house gardens, schools and other more specialist work. During the summer months where additional staff are required for grass cutting, consideration is being given to employing temporary staff that will be dedicated to this function and not generic Street Scene operatives. Where specialist teams are set up or staff employed for specific tasks, these roles will be subject to job evaluation.

(c) *Refuse/Recycling Rounds*

By aligning refuse and recycling rounds to the Street Scene areas, greater efficiency is provided which will release financial resource through reductions in fuel and labour, which can assist in delivering the overall savings required. In addition, bringing refuse rounds into individual Street Scene areas will assist in delivering the clear all approach where appropriate to do so as the original concept is not deliverable with one vehicle and crew.

Refuse and recycling rounds were changed successfully week commencing 13 October 2008. Any initial teething problems have now been resolved and **Appendix 2** provides an update on the implementation of the changes.

(d) *Street Cleansing*

The performance information for street cleansing is conflicting. Residents' satisfaction has fallen in the past two years while performance measured by national indicators has remained relatively consistent. A review of cleansing routes will be carried out to ensure they are still fit for purpose, using all available information. In addition, the changes to the refuse rounds will help with ownership of a problem as the rounds will be based in Street Scene areas.

(e) *Communication with Members*

Key to the vision for Street Scene is good, proactive communication with Elected Members and with residents. This is an aspect of change that can take longer to achieve given that it relies on the skills and aptitudes of staff, who may not have worked with these expectations previously. However, improving communications is key to ensuring that, for example, street cleaning services are meeting expectations. It is worth noting that the adoption of the Street Scene brand embracing a wide range of previously separated services can lead to dissatisfaction with one element affecting the reputation of the entire service. Good communication is key to ensuring that residents and Member queries and concerns with Street Scene are traced back to the specific source of the problem and resolved.

Specifically relating to Ward Members' relationship and contact with Street Scene, revised arrangements will cover:

- (i) Weekly updates from each Street Scene area, highlighting progress and operational issues using the intranet. This service is planned to be available for piloting from early 2009. If successful the pilot will form the basis of a weekly update on the Council's website for public access.
- (ii) Ward Member tours as requested.
- (iii) Access to electronic performance information.
- (iv) Monthly phone call to each Member (or nominated Member from each Ward) from their Street Scene Area Manager to update on work in their area and discuss any concerns that individual Members may have.
- (v) When Members contact Street Scene, if they are requesting a service to be carried out, they will be given a timescale when this can be done.
- (vi) The existing Street Scene Communications Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed to take on board new campaigns throughout the year.

(f) *Resident Communication*

- (i) A more proactive approach to publicising the work carried out by Street Scene and informing residents of how they can get involved and help improve the quality of their neighbourhood. This will be achieved through a number of campaigns such as Pride In Your Street, Street Scene Spring Clean and encouraging local companies to sponsor areas of the town where through a volunteering programme they can release staff to get involved with tidying up that area.
- (ii) Greater involvement of Street Champions in monitoring the performance of Street Scene by completing pro formas on quality standards.
- (iii) Include information on the web site behind individual's postcode of when litter bins and dog bins will be emptied in their area, street cleaning carried out, grounds maintenance tasks and other related information.

(g) *Performance Management*

We are now in a position where the information coming from Lagan is robust enough to inform service delivery and be made available to both Members and the public. In addition to the previous Best Value and new national indicators set, the following type of information will become available:

- (i) Number of requests for service in specific areas and whether they were completed on time.
- (ii) Number of complaints received.
- (iii) Number of compliments received.
- (iv) Number of contacts by Members and Street Champions.

Attached at **Appendix 3** is a list of the performance information that in the New Year both Members and residents will be able to access via the website.

In addition to this information, the standards of service delivery monitored through quality assessments carried out by staff within the service, the Quality Section within Community Services and Street Champions will also be available on the web site for residents to view, alongside a set of national indicators appropriate to Street Scene.

(h) *Technological Improvements*

Work is currently underway on mapping information from Lagan and other sources into GIS, which will assist in decision-making with regard to resource deployment, hot spot analysis, recurring issues and emerging concerns. Vehicle tracking has just been fitted to the majority of the Street Scene fleet, which provides improved management information on utilisation and availability of the vehicles. The next technological improvement within Street Scene will be introducing mobile working whereby information will go straight from the Contact Centre to appropriate operatives on the ground. Work is currently ongoing to develop the requirements of mobile working with the intention of a pilot being introduced in spring 2009. This will obviously speed up response and reduce administration time.

### **Comparison Against Initial Objectives**

34. To conclude this mid term review a comparison of current performance against the initial objectives follows:

(a) *Developing an innovative responsive joined-up approach*

Street Scene continues to work across the five areas with a range of front line services under the generic banner. Individual employees work generically across that range of services and the development of a proactive as opposed to reactive approach is ongoing. Where necessary and subject to seasonal demands, this has been supplemented by dedicated teams.

(b) *Improved Quality of Life*

As detailed earlier, changes have taken place to the overall approach within Street Scene and now there is a lower level Leader in each area overseen by two Area Managers. The coordination role has changed and continues to be under review. The generic approach across all areas continues and the clear all policy where it is appropriate will be further rolled out with refuse round changes.

(c) *Improved Residents' Satisfaction*

Generally residents' satisfaction has remained constant since the implementation of Street Scene with only small changes in certain areas. The new management structure and other changes discussed in this report will continue to improve services and residents' satisfaction with the overall performance of Street Scene.

(d) *Empower Local Communities*

Team Leaders have worked hard to build up links with their local communities and have done so through the Community Partnerships, residents groups, Member walkabouts, Talking Together events and other informal gatherings. Working with Groundwork through the Local Area Agreement, there are now approximately 200 Street Champions working across the Borough reporting incidences through the Contact Centre and assisting in service delivery where appropriate. In addition, 197 young people have been directly involved in 17 environmental projects and 512 young people have been involved in consultation on play areas. Two young people who were at risk of exclusion, who joined the Motiv8 programme have now secured permanent apprenticeships within Street Scene and other young people are gaining valuable experience on environmental projects, which all have close links to Street Scene.

(e) *Offer Better Value for Money*

Street Scene provide extremely important Council services. One of the main challenges in delivering the change was maintaining a consistent high level of performance whilst delivering significant improvements in efficiency. Since Street Scene went operational, the service this year is costing £300,000 less than when first implemented and is on target to be £500,000 cheaper from next year and annually thereafter.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

24. As part of the ongoing review of Street Scene, consultation with residents through satisfaction surveys and involvement in local groups has continued to help shape the design and delivery of services. When necessary, formal consultation has taken place with staff and unions to deliver staffing changes as required.