

## BEST VALUE REVIEW OF STREET SCENE

### 1. BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 The Review Team

The review team was established by invitation and the first meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2001. The timetable for the review was initially set by the need to make a Stage I report to Monitoring Committee in April 2001 and to complete by September 2001. Changes to the Democratic process subsequently resulted in a requirement to report to the Environment and Transport Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2001.

As a result of the impact of the Council's Base Budget Review on Member and Officer workload in the Summer and Autumn of 2001 the timetable of the Street Scene Best Value Review was extended with a requirement to ensure completion within the financial year 2002/03.

Those invited to join the Review Team comprised:-

- Councillor Sheila Friend Smith (Liberal Democrat), Councillor Graham Stewart (Labour) and Councillor John Palmer (Independent) nominated by their respective political groups. Councillor Friend Smith was also able to represent the views of the City of Ely Council and City of Ely Forum.
- Stephen Clements, Executive Director, Environmental Services – with management responsibilities covering street sweeping, dog warden services and duties under the Civic Amenities legislation for the removal of fly tipping rubbish and abandoned vehicles.
- David Archer, Executive Director, Development Services – with overall responsibilities for management of open space, the client aspects of grounds maintenance and the provision of design advice on street furniture.
- Gerald Tickner, Client Officer for the Council's street sweeping contract and with responsibilities within the Environmental Services Department for dealing with fly tipping and abandoned vehicles.
- Kelley Green, Landscape Architect with responsibilities for the client-side of grounds maintenance and for the management of open space within the district.
- John Selby, Conservation Officer – whose responsibilities include the provision of design advice to agencies and organisations undertaking the provision of street furniture and conservation enhancements.
- Veronica Avory, Dog Warden – specifically appointed to provide a service to deal with stray dogs but with additional duties aimed at reducing fouling by dogs.
- Joanne Rogers, Town Centres Co-ordinator representing the perspective of the Economic Development Department with particular reference to the problems of markets and car parking areas.
- Nora Covill – invited on to the review team to represent the public perspective and to provide “critical friend” input into the review.
- Ray Harding Executive Director Community Services, Bob Palmer Depot Services Manager and a representative of the Legal Services Department were all involved in the Review but were unable to attend meetings of the Review Team.

## 1.2 Description of Service

At the outset the parameters of the service to be reviewed were established as including; not a specific service, but a range of services and activities which together make up the public perception of street scene. These included:-

- Street Cleaning
- Management of Open Space
- Grounds Maintenance – client functions
- Street Scene Furniture – design advice
- Dog fouling and stray dogs
- Litter
- Fly tipping

At their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2001 the review team agreed to add the problem of dealing with abandoned vehicles to the services covered by the Review.

It was also recognised from the outset that the services covered by the Review were closely dependent upon and sometimes complementary to those services covered by the parallel Depot Services Review. It was agreed that close working arrangements should be established between the lead officers of the two Reviews to ensure that services did not fall between the processes and thus fail to be included or considered in either Review. It was also recognised that the Improvement Plans of both Reviews would be intertwined and, as such, could necessitate a combined approach building on the respective strengths identified in the services.

## 1.3 Present Delivery

As previously noted in the introduction the services deemed to comprise the public perception of Street Scene are wider ranging and delivered by a variety of means.

- a) Street Cleansing services, including litter control and responding to fly tipping are carried out by Cleanaway under a competitively tendered contract commencing on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1997. The initial contract is for a period of 6 years with notice of intention to extend being given by January 2001.

As a result of the Best Value Review of Waste Management Services, the Council resolved to seek a four year extension of this contract given that the Refuse Collection and Recycling elements were performing satisfactory and formed the larger part of the joint contract with Street Cleansing.

In February 2000 the Council received the Governments Charter Mark Award for their Refuse Collection and Recycling Services. This award is for excellence in the provision of public services and the application to renew the award in May 2002 will include the Street Cleansing element of the service.

Contract monitoring, supervision of service delivery, promotion/education activities and enforcement in respect of litter and fly tipping are carried out by officers of the Environmental Services Department.

- b) Management of Public Open Space and the client-side aspects of Grounds maintenance activities are delivered by the Landscape Architect employed within the Council's Development Services Department. The particular issue of client-side management of care of trees within Council maintained land is undertaken by a Trees Officer originally appointed in July 2001, although this post is now vacant.

The work managed by these client roles is carried out by the Council's Depot Services Team under service level agreements or by private contractors to separately defined specifications.

- c) Street Furniture – Design Advice is a discretionary service, providing advice to statutory undertakers and parish councils and, indeed, to other departments of the Council and is delivered by the Council's Conservation Officer. The Conservation Officer is employed within the Development Services Department and may provide advice on the provision, repair and removal of street furniture, usually as part of a wide enhancement scheme.

As a result of the success of the advice services and the Council's high profile conservation area enhancement schemes, expectations have been raised about maintenance of the high quality street furniture provided. In many instances these expectations have required the Council to undertake repair and maintenance rather than removal of the item concerned.

Such works may be carried out by the Council's Depot Services Team or by private contractors.

- d) Responding to reports of stray dogs and prevention of dog fouling activities from part of the work of the Council's Dog Warden with assistance in promotional/educational initiatives and enforcement from other staff of the Domestic Team of the Environmental Services Department.

In the detention, keeping and disposal of stray dogs, the Council work in partnership with the local Police. In return for the provision of an out-of-hours reception service and the use of emergency kennelling facilities provided at the police station opposite the Council offices, the Council then take full responsibility for the further kennelling and rehoming/disposal of all dogs. Whilst the police authority are required by legislation to deal with any stray dogs brought to them, by this agreement, the Council undertake and co-ordinate the kennelling and further processing and, in return, avoid the need to duplicate the out-of-hours and emergency kennelling facilities.

Subsequent kennelling, together with veterinary services and re-homing (or in certain cases, disposal) are undertaken by Wood Green Animal Shelters under contract to the Council.

(See Appendix )

The promotion of responsible dogs ownership and enforcement of by-laws in respect of dog fouling are undertaken by the dog warden with assistance from a number of officers who have delegated authority to issue fixed penalty tickets under the Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

- e) Abandoned vehicles within the district are dealt with by officers of the Domestic Team located within the Environmental Services Department.

The task of removal, storage and disposal is contracted to Wayne Meadowcroft of Melbourne, Nr Royston, Cambridgeshire who operates as a licensed scrap metal dealer at a site in Newmarket Road, Bottisham within East Cambridgeshire.

The process of disposal of abandoned vehicles is the responsibility of the County Council and re-imburement of the costs of disposal aspects of the process are made at an agreed rate (see para 1.5 below).

#### 1.4 The Statutory Framework

##### (a) Street Cleansing

Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued under section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

##### Objective

To provide practical guidance on the discharge of the duties under section 89 by establishing reasonable and generally acceptable standards of cleanliness which those under the duty should be capable of meeting.

##### Basis of Code

This code of practice provides a cleanliness standard based on land use and time which duty bodies should comply with when discharging their duties. It sets out grades of cleanliness and divides land into zones according to usage and volume of traffic. If the cleanliness of an area falls, the Code sets out a response time which is the target for the duty body to restore the land to a particular grade of cleanliness. What matters is maintaining the cleanliness of an area, rather than how often it is cleaned. (Appendix #)

##### The Duties

Section 89 (1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on certain bodies to keep their relevant land clear of litter and refuse so far as is practicable. In most cases, relevant land is publicly accessible land which is open to the air and which is under the direct control of the body. Section 89 (2) also creates a duty in respect of most highways to keep them clean so far as is practicable.

##### (b) Management of Open Space

The Council has responsibility for approximately 30 hectares of public open space, comprising:

- 18 hectares within Council ownership
- 12 hectares not within Council ownership, but for which the Council has responsibility for maintenance.

##### Statutory Basis

PPG17 - 'Sport and Recreation'

*"The Governments main planning objectives for sport and recreation are to:*

- *promote more sustainable patterns of development by creating and maintaining networks of recreational facilities and open spaces, particularly within our urban areas;*
- *Promote social inclusion, health and well-being by ensuring that everyone has access to good quality sport and recreational facilities and open space; and*
- *Support an urban renaissance, by making our towns and cities more attractive places in which people will choose to live."*

Where the Council own land, they have a requirement to maintain it (and is it also a question of Health and Safety legislation). In addition, the following pieces of legislation may apply.

- Local Government Act 1972 - duty to maintain closed churchyards where responsibility is passed over by the Parish Council
- Open Spaces Act 1906 - Local authorities have the power to adopt and maintain open space (affects a large number of our open spaces).
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 3: Goods, facilities and services - local authority required to provide equal services and facilities for both able-bodied and disabled people.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and supplementary standards such as the EN standards and British standards affecting materials and workmanship.
- Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 - Land owner must ensure those entering and using its land are safe.
- National and Local Bio-diversity Action Plans (stemming from Local Agenda 21) - to enhance the diversity of wildlife on open space.
- Duty of care arising from trees and other features on our land.
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act - duties where rights of way cross our land etc.

#### Development Plan

The Statutory Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire comprises the 1995 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan and the East Cambridgeshire District Local Plan (June 2000)

#### Policy SP13/2 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan

*"Appropriate Provision of Pocket Parks and Picnic Sites should be included in proposals for major residential developments in villages, or on the urban fringe."*

#### Policy 108 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

*"All developments involving 9 dwellings or more shall make an appropriate contribution towards meeting the recreational needs of the development being proposed, either on site, or through contributions to the improvement of off-site facilities. The Council will normally seek the provision of recreation and amenity space to a minimum standard of 4 hectares (10 acres) per 1000 population, or part thereof."*

#### Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

Public Open Space - Adopted January 1998

Planning Obligations - Adopted October 2000

#### (c) Conservation - street furniture

##### Street Furniture

The Council owns a splendid array of items of street furniture. It is responsible for the maintenance of these. The Council provides items of street furniture as part of enhancement schemes in conservation areas and town centres. The responsibility for the maintenance of the majority of these items is passed subsequently to County, Parish/Town Councils. The Council also provides litter bins and park benches.

##### Statutory Basis

The Council is responsible for any public liability resulting from the lack of maintenance of street furniture in its ownership.

The Council has no statutory responsibility to provide street furniture. However, in meeting government guidance on sport and recreation (PPG17), items of furniture (eg

park benches) are required. Similarly, the Council has a responsibility to enhance designated conservation areas (section 71 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; PPG15 "Planning and the Historic Environment"). This may involve the provision of street furniture.

The County Council, as the local highways authority has a statutory responsibility to provide street furniture (eg traffic signs, street lights). The District Council's role is often to provide additional funding to ensure street furniture of quality is used in visually sensitive locations. In order to meet its responsibilities to keep streets clean, the Council provides and maintains litter bins.

(d) Dog Fouling

Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 88  
Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996, Section 4

Objective

To monitor the designated areas for dog fouling, to which the law applies and to take appropriate action against offenders under the above Act.

Basis of Law

The Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 allows local Councils to designate land to which the law applies. The extent of land covered will therefore, vary from area to area. The type of land that can be designated is very broad. Public footpaths, open spaces, churchyards and playing fields. In East Cambridgeshire, all roads with a speed limit of 40mph or less and all footpaths and grass verges immediately parallel to such roads are designated. The new law has replaced the by-laws that covered these areas. In addition, the Council is proposing to cover most land accessible to the general public in all the towns and villages in the district. For example, village greens, public car parks, and school grounds will be designated.

The Duties

East Cambridgeshire operates a fixed penalty scheme (£25) for an offence of an owner failing to remove dog faeces (first offence, warning only). An owner being observed causing an offence by the dog warden or an appointed officer of the Council will be served a notice of opportunity to pay the fixed penalty. If the owner refuses to pay the fixed penalty within 14 days they may be liable to conviction for the offence. (Appendix #)

(e) Abandoned Vehicles

Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978

Objective

To keep all relevant Highways, By-Ways and Public Areas in East Cambridgeshire free of abandoned and burnt out vehicles as far as is practicable in accordance with the above Act.

Basis of the Act

Where it appears to a local authority that a motor vehicle in their area is abandoned or burnt out without lawful authority. On any land in the open area or any land forming part of the highway, it shall be the duty of the authority, subject to certain provisions in the Act, to remove the vehicle. Where in pursuance of this Act a local authority propose to remove a vehicle which in their opinion is in such a condition that it ought to be destroyed they shall, not less than the prescribed period before removing it,

affix to the vehicle a notice stating that the authority propose to remove it for destruction on the expiration of that period.

#### The Duties

East Cambridgeshire operate an abandoned vehicle procedure where a visit by an officer is made to take all reasonable steps to ascertain whether or not the vehicle is abandoned. If the officer decides it is abandoned and requires removal then a rather complicated process takes place to remove the vehicle in accordance with the legislation laid down in the above Act. (Appendix #)

### 1.5 Costs of the Service

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

2.1 The real customer base of the services covered by the review is all inclusive. The service impacts on all residents, visitors and businesses in the district although, to many, this impact will be in the abstract with recognition of failure rather than success being the norm.

2.2 The principal aim is to provide a range of high quality services which are linked directly to public expectation through the following corporate objectives and the manifesto commitment to “protect and review the local environment” and to “enhance the provision of open space parks and gardens .....

1. To encourage the reduction in the use of finite resources and the reduction of pollution to the natural environment.
2. To protect and enhance the wealth of wildlife and to maintain and improve access to the natural environment.
3. To promote healthy living and create opportunities for people to eat safe, fresh, local food.
4. To promote equal access to service delivery through the activities of licensing, regulation and enforcement under a variety of legislation intended to safeguard the rights of the individual and to protect public health and the environment.
5. To provide and promote opportunities for sport and leisure and promote tourism.
6. To create a safer environment where people can live and work free from crime and the fear of crime.

Nevertheless the Review Team recognised at the outset that, whilst some services were delivered as a result of statutory requirements to specific aims and targets which had been clearly defined in policy and subsequently translated into service plans and accountabilities, this was not true of all activities.

It was clear that some of the activities covered by the Review had evolved from historical decisions and had then been translated into action by professional officers seeking to deliver as high a quality service as possible within a pragmatic assessment of the staffing and financial resources available.

The Review Team saw the political definition of policy in such cases as an essential starting point in order to then enable the definition of the resources available and required to provide the quality of service desired. It was acknowledged that the policy would need to be driven by a process of public consultation and expectation.

### 2.3 Performance Indicators and Targets

The range of activities covered by the Review are the subject of only three Best Value Performance Indicators.

BV85 The cost per square kilometre of keeping relevant land and highways, for which the authority is responsible, clear of litter and refuse.

In the twelve month period ending 31-3-2001 the cost of this service in East Cambridgeshire was £63,039.15.

The target for 2001/02 agreed within the Council's Best Value Performance Plan is £67,001.00.

The Audit Commission have indicated that the requirement to collect this indication will cease. The authority will, however, continue to monitor performance against other authorities using this measure where possible.

ACE1 The percentage of highways that are either of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness.

In the twelve month period ending 31-3-2001 the Council's performance against this indicator was 99.80%.

The target for 2001/02 as agreed in the Best Value Performance Plan is 98.00%.

ACE2 The average time (in days) taken to remove fly tips.

In the twelve month period ending 31-3-2001 the Council's score against this indicator was 1 day.

The target for 2001/02 as agreed in the Best Value Performance Plan is 1 day.

The Council monitors performance against a number of service targets and local indicators as follows:-

### 3.0 COMPARE

3.1 Initial attempts to undertake an examination of comparative data and to benchmark services with other Councils have produced differing levels of success.

3.2 The Executive Director Environmental Services is a member of the G16 Benchmarking Group, comprising CIPFA Family Group authorities. The results of the work of this Group and, in particular, the information produced by using the Hampshire CEHON Matrix (Appendix ....) has been useful in benchmarking the services of the Dog Warden and performance in dealing with abandoned vehicles. This latter activity has also been the subject of much discussion within the Cambridgeshire Authority's Pollution Group stemming from

the massive increase in vehicles abandoned throughout the County, the need to control costs and to improve working arrangements county-wide. (Appendix ....)

- 3.3 Exact comparisons have not been possible in respect of management of open space and the design service provided for street furniture since it has proved impossible to discover other authorities or organisations which provide the same services in the same, or a similar manner.

In addition, whilst the statutory services of Street Cleansing (including control of litter, abandoned vehicles and fly tipping) and Dog Warden activities operated a well developed complaints recording system, the other services concentrated on the response process.

As a result the Review Team recognised, not only that better recording systems would need to be developed, but that the public consultation process should concentrate on discovering the aspirations of the public for these services. In this way the Review would be able to use the response as a measure of existing performance feasibility of meeting these aspirations in the future.

#### 4.0 CONSULT

- 4.1 Recognising the importance of establishing a public benchmark for the services covered by the Review, the Review Team used the Council's Citizens' Panel of 1000 residents to test satisfaction and also aspirations for the services in June 2001. (Appendix ....). A previous survey in December 2000 also include questions pertinent to the Street Scene review (Appendix ....)

##### Street Scene

Respondents were asked to give a rating of their satisfaction with specified features of the outdoor environment of the district. Ratings were given on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied, and 5 is very satisfied. The majority of respondents express satisfaction with each of the features, particularly the upkeep of parks and open spaces, which achieves a mean rating of 3.68 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very dissatisfied, and 5 is very satisfied. However, a significant minority of respondents that give a rating express dissatisfaction, particularly as regards the cleanliness of roads and streets.

Respondents that expressed dissatisfaction with any of the specified elements of the East Cambridgeshire outdoor environment were asked the reasons for this dissatisfaction. The most common reason given is the amount of litter in streets and on roadsides (39%), reflecting the finding that the cleanliness of roads and streets is the area of great dissatisfaction.

Overall, more than three-fifths of respondents feel that there are not enough litter bins in the area in which they live (61%), whilst approaching two-fifths feel that there are about the right number (38%).

##### Local Problems

Respondents were asked whether they feel litter, graffiti, vandalism, or dog fouling are problems in the area in which they live. Dog fouling is the largest of these problems, followed by litter and vandalism, with only a minority of respondents feeling that graffiti represents a problem in the area in which they live.

Respondents were asked what improvements they would like to see. A range of suggestions were made for improvements that East Cambridgeshire District Council could make in the areas of litter, graffiti, vandalism, and dog fouling, most commonly the provision of dog bins (15%), more rubbish bins (13%), and prosecution for dog fouling (10%).

## Open Space Priorities

Respondents were asked to rate which three specified aspects of the open space service they consider to be most important:

- Keeping costs to a minimum by only carrying out essential work;
- Allocating resources to improve existing areas of public open space;
- Allocating resources for acquiring new areas of public open space.

Responses to this question indicate that the majority of respondents prefer the balanced approach. Two-thirds indicate that they consider the allocation of resources to improve existing areas of public space to be the most important objective of the open space service (66%). Almost a fifth feel that it is most important to allocate resources for the acquisition of new areas of public open space (19%), and only one in twenty feel that resources should be restricted to essential works (5%).

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of different areas of the work of the open space service. Visitor facilities and wildlife friendly areas are revealed as clear areas of priority, although a majority of respondents also consider the provision of nature reserves and publicity to be important. In fact, with the exception of publicity, all of these areas achieve mean ratings of over 4.00, indicating high levels of importance to respondents.

- 4.2 Notwithstanding the support for a balanced approach to the management of open space by the respondents, in many other respects the survey produced some conflicting answers. This is reflected by the level of concern attached to litter in the streets when other surveys have shown a high standard of cleanliness. The difference may be a reflection of the levels of cleanliness deemed acceptable for different zones of the district with respondents focusing on the problems on trunk roads as opposed to town centres and urban areas.
- 4.3 The Review Team supplemented the information gained from the Citizens' Panel Survey by distributing a questionnaire to staff and elected Members, again seeking a view on the need for existing services and possible improvements. (Appendix ....)
- 4.4 Finally, Parish Councils were surveyed in respect of their role in the activities covered by the Review. (Appendix ....)
- 5.0 CHALLENGE
- 5.1 In the process of challenge the Review Team initially examined why the individual services are required. (See Para. 1.4 - statutory framework).
- 5.2 In the case of those discretionary services included within the Review, the Review Team considered the drivers for providing the service, whether the service should be continued and the options for delivery.
- 5.3 In the majority of cases, where the activities comprise the whole or part, of the Council's response to statutory requirements the Review Team went on to consider how the service was provided and the options for delivery. The Review Team also examined the public's expressed priority for these services in considering whether or not they should continue.
- 5.4 In the case of the activities detailed below (in 6.) the Review Team considered that the service was intrinsically bound in with other activities or responsibilities and could not be extracted in a way which would provide for meaningful competition. In some instances, there was a need to await developments in national or regional policy and organisation, to examine the

benefits which could accrue from such change and to compare these options with the advantages of short term change.

- 5.5 As a further part of their challenge, the Review Team, explored with Parish Councils and the principal Registered Social Landlord within the district, the possibility of transfers of responsibilities, particularly in respect of grounds maintenance. In each case the option was refused unless significant financial resources were also made available.

#### 5.6 Outcome of Challenge

It was recognised that the principal challenge would be to secure improvements in the services provided which would meet the aspirations of the public and elected members, whilst delivering value for money. This was particularly relevant in the case of open space management and grounds maintenance, where the general desire for enhanced provision was most clearly demonstrated without public recognition of the potential cost.

#### 6.0 COMPETE

- 6.1 In examining the issue of compete the Review Team recognised that each element of the services under review would need to be considered separately. However, it was also recognised that the nature and size of many of these elements did not constitute packages which would prove attractive to other organisations.
- 6.2 Street Sweeping and Litter Control - in the first instance it was noted that these services formed part of a competitively tendered contract which included Refuse Collection and Kerbside Recycling. The Review Team considered that these services could not be separated from the longer contract during negotiation for an extension of the whole, without detriment to this process.
- 6.2.1 Subject to the successful conclusion of these negotiations, the full contract would be re-tendered in 2007. At this time it was considered likely that Refuse Collection and Recycling contracts would be procured jointly with other authorities (Ref: Regional Waste Management Strategy) leaving the opportunity to re-specify and re-tender the Street Sweeping/Litter contract separately.
- 6.2.2. The Review Team recognised that the present contract delivered a good service and offered value for money. Two issues would need to be addressed in the future via the Best Value Improvement Plan and
1. the additional contract cost of cleaning new roadways will continue to escalate because of existing and planned housing growth in East Cambridgeshire
  2. the need to examine the quality of a defined service where compliance with national guidelines and standards for cleanliness do not meet the aspirations of the public. The Review Team considered a recommendation that, in common with Burwell Parish Council, be encouraged to supplement the district-wide service when public demand for higher than specified standards, was identified.
- 6.3 Fly Tipping - Again the service comprises part of the Refuse Collection/Street Sweeping and Kerbside Recycling contract and provided no scope for separation.
- 6.3.1 The Review Team consider Council proposals to introduce changes for both refrigerators and freezers and for bulky waste generally. Whilst the proposals could result in an increase in flytipping it was acknowledged that the free service, particularly for white goods containing CFCs, was not sustainable and that the charging scheme proposed still offered a value for

money service to the public with the opportunity to use private contractors or to deliver waste to Household Waste Recycling Centres, still available. (Appendix ....)

- 6.4 Abandoned Vehicles - represent an escalating problem as a result of a number of social and legislative pressures. The Review Team considered the present service to represent value for money with a contractor charge at the lower end of the local scale and with a process which was, properly becoming more administratively focused.
  - 6.4.1 As with the issue of fly tipping of bulky items the Review Team considered that the best options for improvement lay in the possibility of negotiating county-wide solutions and contracts. Whilst recognising that, in both cases costs would inevitably rise, it was considered essential that future procedures would speed up the process of removal of vehicles, particularly those still with current tax, by providing centrally located, large scale storage and disposal facilities. This would be a matter to be decided through the Waste Local Plan at present out for consultation. (Appendix ....)
- 6.5 Management of Open Space/Grounds Maintenance - the Review Team considered that this service comprised a number of activities which, as a whole, could be an attractive package for competitive tender. This was particularly relevant as the grass cutting service in the south of the district was already delivered by contract and that many of the problems associated with the service, from the delivery perspective, were associated with lack of capacity within the DSO team.
  - 6.5.1 Nevertheless, whilst the Review Team acknowledged this opportunity, they also acknowledged the lack of an appropriate inventory of land holdings, specification for maintenance and policy which would define the standards of service to be provided. Similarly they recognised the existing, undefined partnership with the Cambridgeshire County Council in respect of maintenance of certain land.
  - 6.5.2 The Review Team decided that the first priority within the BV Improvement Plan, given the general level of satisfaction expressed by the public, would be to compile an inventory of public open space and a schedule of maintenance. Operational policy could then be defined and matched with financial resources.
  - 6.5.3 In the main the Review Team considered that it would not be appropriate to cease to take responsibility for the maintenance of public open space provided in new developments as a result of local planning policy. However, it was considered imperative to define the funding gap which had arisen as a result of delays in implementation of past Section 106 agreements by developers.
  - 6.5.4 The Review Group also considered the issue of inherited responsibility for closed churchyards and concluded that, whilst this apparent statutory requirement could possibly be passed to Parish Councils for grass cutting activities, the issue of repairs to walls and graves would not be accepted without financial provision. It was also considered that the Council should be in control of the Health and Safety risks associated with closed churchyards.
  - 6.5.5 Again, there was a need to develop clear inventories and specifications of work before identifying the best service provider.
- 6.6 Dog Warden Services - until 19... the Council's dog warden service was provided by outside contractors to a written specification which included statutory duties and complimentary activities.
  - 6.6.1 With the failure of the initial contractor and escalating costs predicted by the successor agency, the decision was made to take the service back in-house. The Review Team considered the costs and information on levels of service provided by other authorities and

contractors and concluded that the service should remain in house. The Review Team were particularly concerned at the low levels of remuneration for Dog Wardens employed within the private sector and considered that this would be reflected in the quality of service provided.

- 6.6.2 The Review Team considered the option of joining with another Authority to delivery statutory Dog Warden Services to deal with stray dogs. It was recognised that any savings would be more than overtaken by the need to use higher paid staff to delivery the linked discretionary services or to respond to complaints about dogs covered by Environmental Protection legislation.
- 6.7 Street Furniture, Design Service - whilst it was recognised that the demand for this discretionary service could reduce as conservation area improvements are completed, the Review Team concluded that the available expertise should remain in house at present to deal with the issue of repairs and maintenance. Although, this element was essentially a matter of public expectation placed on the Council it was important to be "seen" to respond to notification or complaint.
- 6.8 Outcome of Compete

The Review Team found limited unfettered opportunities for competitive tendering of activities covered by the Street Scene Review.

In the first instance several of the activities are constrained by outside influence and imminent change where it was considered advantageous to await the outcome before make short term decisions.

Secondly, the Review Team recognised the urgent need for the Council to carry out an inventory of their commitments, to define future operational policy and to examine the resources required to deliver that policy prior to competition. These issues would therefore form the early work in the BV Improvement Plan.