

## Street Cleansing and Ancillary Services Considerations

### Background

East Cambridgeshire District Council is defined as a 'principal litter authority' under Section 86 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 with responsibility, under Section 89, to keep 'relevant land' and highways clear and clean of litter and refuse, so far as is practicable. In this context 'relevant land' is defined as 'land that is open to the air and is land which is under the direct control of such an authority to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access with or without payment'. It excludes private land and unadopted highways.

To address its statutory obligations, the Council through the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with ECSS, undertakes several duties including litter picking and manual sweeping of footpaths, mechanical road sweeping, maintaining and emptying litter and dog bins (street bins), bulky waste collections, refuse bin deliveries and removing fly tipping and graffiti. ECSS through its Business Plan allocated just over £1.4 million of its management fee to deliver these services.

The MoA details a zoned approach to street cleansing across the district. Each zone specifies the frequency of work to be undertaken. Zone 1 areas are on a daily cleansing schedule, Zones 2 and 3 areas are on a three times per week schedule and Zone 4 areas are scheduled every six weeks.

The service operates a 'blended' approach to street cleansing, incorporating a mixture of multi-disciplined mobile teams (x6), a single static cleansing resource in Ely and 2 mechanical sweeper lorries. The service is predominantly proactive in nature, however, as with most services has an element that is reactive, for example fly-tipping and graffiti removal.

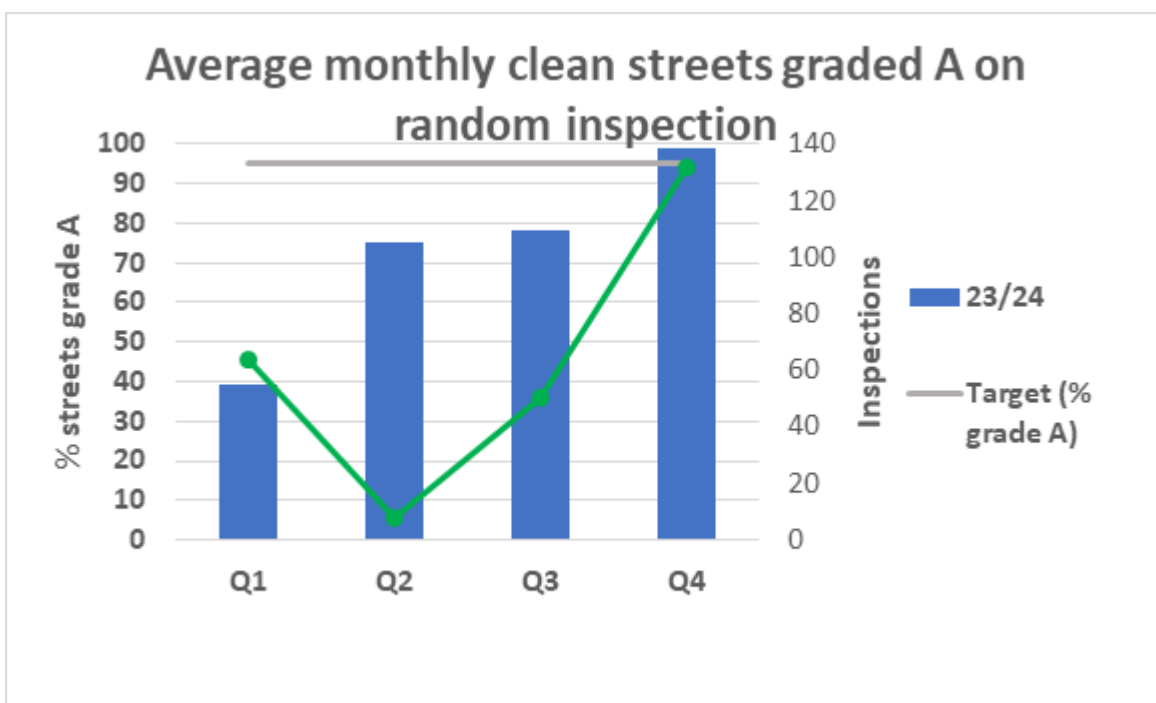
Whilst the management fee has been reviewed and increased recently, the service specification has not been since the MoA was agreed in 2018. New housing growth has not been factored into the different zones and human resources have only modestly increased in the period. Practices have been adopted by ECSS that have not been formalised in the MoA, such as emptying all dog bins every week despite them mostly located in zone 4 which stipulates emptying every 6 weeks. ECSS currently employs a dedicated operative and vehicle to complete this work.

The A14 and A11, which require traffic management in place to facilitate safe litter picking by operatives, and carries additional cost is also absent from the MoA.

There is no policy regarding installing new street bins at the request of Parish Councils (PC). The cost of the initial bin is usually met by the PC, but the ongoing emptying is absorbed by ECSS' budget.

In Spring 2022, the round reconfiguration, coupled with the national HGV driver shortage led to street cleansing resources being diverted to assist with the waste collection service. This resulted in decreased performance in street cleansing.

ECSS undertook an improvement project: Street Smart, to build a resilient, robust and high performing service. The Council also introduced new Key Performance Indicators in April 2023 to give stakeholders a more accurate and clearer record of the performance of the service. This measures performance in four areas; litter/detritus, graffiti, fly tipping and emptying of street bins. The cleanliness of the district's streets has shown steady improvement since the introduction of these measures, as shown in the below table for last year. Members will note this from the quarterly reports submitted through the Operational Services Committee.



*Performance of street cleansing service for 2023/4 – Each area is graded from A to D. Grade A means that an area has no issues whilst the worst affected areas will receive a Grade D.*

The removal of graffiti and fly tipping on public land generally misses the target of 98% within two working days.

Members of the Operational Services Committee have frequently asked whether residents can be advised of the schedule of cleansing activity, so they can move vehicles blocking the kerb line where the mechanical sweeper needs to access.

## Options

The modelling work for the service was completed by officers of the Council. As with collections, the current service was baselined, and then four options were modelled for comparison and consideration, with impacts on cost and resource summarised. The models and background are contained within Appendix 3: Street Cleansing Model.

Unlike collections, assumptions for the resulting performance from changes made to the specification are challenging. Street cleansing specifications tend to be output based, with the emphasis on the result achieved, rather than what resource should go into achieving it. The service is subject to seasonal fluctuations in demand (e.g. autumn leaf fall, litter during summer etc) and therefore needs to be able to be flexible, unlike an input specification, such as for collection services, where services are predictable (e.g. bin collection frequencies are prescribed).

The options considered focused on the cost involved:

Option 1: retain the existing approach but improve the response to clearing fly tips and graffiti with the provision of a rapid response team. Flexibility is maintained in the service as all crews can be deployed to unscheduled work during times of less demand on the service. More information added to the website around the zones (for residents they would know that their road would be cleansed every 6 weeks). Implement a digital management system to enable the effective management of this, i.e. a road would not be cleansed in week 1 of the first cycle, and week then 6 of the second cycle.

Option 2 – As Option 1, but zones would be re-mapped and assigned a crew so that each village would be aware of the week their cleanse would take place within a 6-week schedule. An extra crew would be required to ensure the completion of unscheduled work as the other crews would have to visit every single street and possibly clean 'clean' streets. Inefficiency has had to be designed into the service; if the crew completes their scheduled work in less than a week, work on the next village would be unable to take place since its scheduled completion was in the following week. However, as this is unpredictable, equally if it has taken a whole week to complete their work, then there is no additional capacity to complete the unscheduled work.

Option 3 – As option 1, but every road has a designated day of cleanse. This would result in a significant increase in the number of operatives and vehicles needed to provide certainty. As with option 2, inefficiency is designed into the service and a further additional crew is needed to ensure the unscheduled work is completed.

Each of the above options ensured dog bins were emptied weekly, formalised the litter picking of the A14 and A11 and implemented policy that parish councils would be expected to pay for ongoing costs of emptying new street bins that they request, if ECSS had determined there was no need for one in their parish:

Option 4 – This was requested by the WP at a later meeting, to understand the implications of finding savings within the service. Therefore, this option modelled the cost saving of removing a crew (one vehicle and two operatives). This would result in a reduced frequency of cleansing activity and dog bins emptied fortnightly.

It was acknowledged that as the collections service had stabilised through Project Street Smart, with no additional input, so had the street cleansing service. This could be noted through the quarterly performance report.

The service could be stabilised further through the implementation of a minimum resource level – that is to employ a buffer of operatives to account for times of absence through sickness or holiday. This resilience is not in place and performance notably decreases when any operative is off.