



Summary Report

Introduction

Derbyshire Dales District Council commissioned a fundamental review of its Street Scene and Grounds Maintenance Services to be undertaken to establish if the service could become more efficient economic and effective.

Following this review it is proposed to merge the services of Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning to gain efficiencies. These efficiencies will be harnessed to make the service more resilient, deliver higher satisfaction levels and make savings to the council budget .

To address variable standards found across the district the report recommends that core standards of operations are adopted by the Council following consultation with Members of the Council and other stakeholders.

Recommendations

Organisational issues

- That the two main services namely Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing are merged together to form one operational public realm service undertaking all green and clean operations.
- That employees be required to report to their designated work base which could be located anywhere within the boundaries of the District Council.
- That revised job descriptions be prepared for all front line operatives on the basis that individual employees will be required to undertake a broad range of tasks dependant on their experience and qualifications.
- That the revised job descriptions be evaluated under the District Councils job evaluation scheme.
- That the present working hours for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning are changed to reflect the seasonal nature of the work and that differential hours for spring/summer and autumn/winter are introduced.

- That the proposal be put to employees to work seasonal hours. This would involve working an additional 5hrs per week for six months of the year from April until the end of September and 5hrs per week less for the remaining six months of the year. That the seasonal hours be based around reference points of the 1st of April and 1st October.
- The leave arrangements would be altered so that no more than half the leave entitlement can be taken over the summer period. The allocation of leave in units of hours rather than days should also be adopted as this will provide an incentive to staff to take their leave during the off season. These radical changes to working hours would be subject to further consultation and negotiation with employees and their Trades Union representatives.
- Undertake a detailed review of overtime working and revise the operational arrangements to ensure value for money was being achieved.
- That a separate consideration be made of the benefits of a different set of seasonal hours for the ABC staff based around the peak season for cattle sales.

Levels of service

- Introduce round based work for all the main core activities which is scheduled into geographical boundaries so as to reduce unnecessary unproductive travelling time. This will move some operations that have become purely reactionary to a more frequency based proactive service. This work would include the following functions;
 - Grass cutting (all types). Gully cleansing. Mechanical sweeping. Channel sweeping. Shrub bed maintenance. Sports pitch maintenance. Bowling green maintenance. Leaf collection. Town centre cleansing. Floral decoration maintenance. Litter picking. Litter bin maintenance.
- To encourage greater pride and ownership among the workforce, divide them into teams dedicated to designated geographical areas in which they work on all tasks necessary to keep public space attractive.
- Set out an estimated frequency for all core services and during the first year of operation and monitor and revise these frequencies to reflect various issues such as resource constraints and public opinion. Ensure that any frequencies set out in the schedules are strictly maintained to ensure service standards are applied consistently throughout the District Council.
- Review some of the very high standards operations that are currently being achieved with a view offering an adequate standard whilst enabling the resources released to be redirected to the more high profile basic maintenance operations. The areas for review would include;
 - Sports pitch maintenance. Cricket ground maintenance. Bowling green maintenance.
- Introduce some form of quality assurance system to ensure service standards are consistently being assessed and monitored/acted upon as required.

- Currently there are two seasonal bedding regimes one is planted out in summer and another in winter and it is recommended that in future winter bedding schemes should be omitted and a spring bedding regime(bulbs) introduced in its place this will have a greater visual impact during the main tourist season.
- The current bedding schemes should be reviewed in relation to their cost and aesthetic impact with a view to the reduction of costs via the introduction of more perennial species of plants, a reduction in planting densities and a rationalisation of the current number and size of beds.
- The switch from growing bedding plants to buying in plants has been partially achieved but, to capitalise on the full efficiency potential of the initiative, this should be adopted completely. The land formerly used for greenhouses at the Dimple and currently used at Bakewell should be evaluated for potential capital release. Any capital raised could be used to reinvest in the service to enhance local bases or to replace vehicles and plant. However, it is essential that adequate standing ground for receiving and storing bedding should be retained.

Community engagement and communications

- That town centres become more visually attractive with the encouragement of a summer bedding initiative as part of a wider `Derbyshire Dales in Bloom campaign` which could be funded through working with local businesses, stakeholders and Parish Councils.
- That the District Council formally adopts the relevant environmental legislation to enable it to issue fixed penalty notices etc. as soon as practically possible.
- That nominated employees be delegated the authority and given training to issue fixed penalty notices and taking enforcement action upon the District Council adopting the powers it has available to it.

Revised Structure

- That the revised management and workforce structure be implemented subject to further formal consultation with individual employees and their Trade Union representatives.
- That revised job descriptions for the public realm services operational employees be introduced to facilitate work across the whole of what were previously two separate functions.

Financial issues

- That the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing budgets be merged to form one public realm green and clean budget and introduced as soon as practical.
- That the present procurement arrangements be reviewed and strengthened to ensure any existing arrangements are registered and auditable and that any further savings

that can be made from introducing a more robust approach to procurement of materials and equipment are identified.

- Negotiate with suppliers to move away from individual invoices for single item purchases to compound invoices in order to reduce administrative costs.

Vehicles, plant and equipment

- Undertake a vehicle utilisation study with a view to reducing the requirement for vehicles and plant.
- Introduce a 4 year vehicle renewal/ replacement strategy. It was noted as part of this review that the current mechanical sweepers, and ride on grass cutting machinery was in urgent need of replacement and these should be given priority over other items that may also need to be replaced.
- That the current practice of permitting individual member of staff to take vehicles home is terminated and that the individual employees concerned are consulted on the issue prior to a final resolution being made by the District Council.
- That an examination of works mileage completed over the last year be made to inform a review of whether the provision of works or private vehicles (supported by user allowance) is most appropriate for each of the supervisory posts.

Depots: Future Proposals

- That the Ashborne depot be utilised to as a starting base for employees working in that area. This will require increased secure parking space and the provision or improvement of basic rest room facilities. The Council allowed for this contingency in its previous plans and has retained suitable land adjacent to the current depot.

Resource Allocation

- It is recommended that the District Council is divided into two main areas; North and South and within each area there are a number of teams/operations.
- Town Centre Teams would undertake a full range of activities from grass cutting, floral decoration to litter picking in the town centres. The teams would be multi -functional and therefore would need to have a broad range of skills available to them. They would undertake duties in accordance with the set core standards and in relation to public demand and service requirements.
- Mobile maintenance units – these mobile units would be responsible for the maintenance of designated areas surrounding specific towns and would undertake a broad range of tasks mainly relating to the core standards of the service such as grass cutting ,shrub bed maintenance, litter picking/sweeping, litter bin maintenance, weed control, assisting the head grave digger in digging graves etc.
- Specialist operations - a number of operations, such as landscaping work, are currently undertaken currently by a designated unit. However, it is evident that it is sometimes

difficult to cope with the work load of this unit. It is recommended that this unit be slightly extended in size and it becomes a special operations unit (SOU) which would not only just undertake work of a specialist function such as landscaping but also respond to peaks in demand in any of the of the areas within the District Council.

- Play area inspections are currently undertaken by an employee within the Grounds maintenance section and it is recommended that this work is transferred to the newly created posts of public realm officers. These redeployed post holders would create an additional presence in parks carrying out safety checks whilst on the alert for littering or fouling infringements against which they would use the new fixed penalty powers.

Adopting core standards of service

- It is recommended that core standards are adopted to ensure that the levels of maintenance throughout the entire District Council in relation to the following areas.
- Cleanliness is of paramount importance and therefore all public spaces irrelevant of whether it's in a park or on a highway should be kept litter free and also free from dog faeces, fly posting and graffiti and in doing so employees need to recognise that priority should be given to areas of high public use.
- A strategy of Education, Engagement and Enforcement (3E's) will require the introduction of an enforcement function. This will provide a substantial boost to the cleanliness of the area and the public's sense that the council is fighting the battles that are important to them.
- Grass cutting is an area which has a major influence on the public's perception of well-being and as such the current standards of service need to be improved. It is recommended that all grass areas that are within an urban/public area are cut on a more frequent basis.
- Some areas within the District would benefit from a more naturalistic approach to maintenance to encourage a more vibrant and diverse landscape and in such cases it is recommended that grass cutting is reduced to cultivate bio diversity and the formation of natural habitats for wide life flora and fauna.
- It is recommended that weed control be part of the services core standards and that a consistent approach is adopted by the entire service and that all public areas are maintained so as to be weed free.

Financial implications

Potential savings

There are a number of sustainable financial savings that can be made and these are estimated to deliver a recurring annual saving in the region of £142,000.

Furthermore a reduction in the number of vehicles and plant required by the service between now and March 2014 is estimated at £476,000.