

COMMITTEE:	SCRUTINY
DATE:	12 DECEMBER 2001
SUBJECT:	BEST VALUE REVIEW OF CLEANSING SERVICES (ADDENDUM TO REPORT)
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF AMENITIES
Ward(s):	ALL
Purpose:	To respond to a Briefing Note prepared by Councillor Ron Parsons.
Contact:	Mark Probyn, Head of Amenities, Telephone 01323 415240 or internally on extension 5240.
Recommendations:	<p>That Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(a) advise of their recommendation with regard to including an option for a six day working week for any future Cleansing Services Contract (excluding Sundays) should this be to the benefit of the Council; and</p> <p>(b) advise of their recommendation concerning the need for a further report on the removal of all identified vehicles that are considered to be abandoned, by a Contractor engaged by the Council through tender.</p>

1.0	<u>Points of issue</u>
1.1	The Cleansing Services Best Value Review including Refuse Collection, Recycling, Abandoned Vehicles, Street Sweeping, Commemorative Seats and Litter Bins is now complete. Arising from the review is a Best Value Improvement Plan which is contained within the body of the main report.

1.2	Further to circulating a copy of the first draft report to be put to this Committee, Councillor Ron Parsons has put forward a Briefing Note, on the outcome of the Best Value Review, in which he says "Whilst I support most of the recommendations made, there are two recommendations on which I have registered my own concerns, and each of these is based on principle."
2.0	<u>The Recommendations</u>
2.1	<p>A. The Working Week</p> <p>The first recommendation to which Councillor Parsons refers to in his Briefing Note is a recommendation of the Best Value Review Team that there would be no objection in principle to a six day working week for refuse collection in the Cleansing Services Contract.</p>
2.2	The Review Team did debate this issue in the context of one of the Key Challenges for the Review, principally to identify options for delivering the Cleansing Service from 2003 onwards within the current cost envelope. Through flexibility in working hours, potentially over six working days, there could be benefits to any future contractor and to the Council. These would need to be determined however through the tender process for the Cleansing Services Contract that will commence in January 2002.
2.3	From Councillor Parsons Briefing Note it would appear that although he recognises the potential benefits to the Council in this regard he is concerned that such an arrangement could also result in the Contractor working on a Sunday.
2.4	Further to this I feel it appropriate to confirm to this Committee and to Cabinet that other than in exceptional circumstances it is not envisaged that the collection of household waste would ever take place on a Sunday. And, that it is likely that this would be expressly excluded in the Cleansing Services Contract.

2.5	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Committee is therefore recommended to endorse the recommendation of the Review Team in 8.1 (q) in the main report to the effect that Committee agrees that flexibility in working hours, potentially over six working days, should be a matter to be considered and determined through the tender process for the Cleansing Services Contract.</p>
2.7	<p>B. Abandoned Vehicles</p> <p>The second recommendation to which Councillor Parsons refers to in his Briefing Note is a recommendation concerning abandoned vehicles in which he says "During the course of the Review, work was ongoing within the Amenities Service Centre to amend the then current procedures in partnership with the Police and East Sussex County Council for the collection and disposal of abandoned vehicles. The agreed new arrangements will, I am told, reduce the time taken to identify, collect and dispose of vehicles at a more beneficial cost to the Council."</p> <p>Councillor Parsons continues "However I do understand also, that a number of other Local Authorities collect the vehicles from their streets in a much shorter period of time than the new procedures are likely to achieve, without the hassle for the Council. I believe that this possible 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."</p>
2.8	<p>Further to this, as Lead Officer for the Review Team, I confirm that the Team did not consider in detail other opportunities in dealing with the potential removal of abandoned vehicles.</p> <p>I believe that this was mainly for the reason that as Councillor Parsons suggests, the Team very much focussed on improving current arrangements which through the Review it has done by effectively removing some fourteen days, if not more, from the time taken to check and to remove a <u>confirmed</u> abandoned vehicle.</p>
2.9	<p>Should Scrutiny Committee consider it appropriate, then a further review of opportunities for dealing with abandoned vehicles could be included within the Improvement Plan.</p>

<p>2.10</p>	<p>On a cautionary note however, I am convinced that any arrangement whereby a contractor is engaged to remove all potential abandoned vehicles off street immediately and to hold them in a pound for verification, or prior to disposal, would have significant cost implications.</p> <p>From a recent telephone conversation that I had with a Contractor engaged in a pilot scheme for the removal of abandoned vehicles with a number of London Boroughs, I was left in no doubt that there would be costs to the Council well in excess of those which the Council currently meets through administration and disposal charges.</p> <p>A suggestion that the full costs for such a service could be recovered by charging a fee for the return of a vehicle removed as potentially abandoned was not supported. Particularly, as found by this Contractor that there are likely to be, in reality, very few vehicles claimed to offset considerable costs in terms of administration, transport, premises, labour and vehicle disposal costs.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p><u>Other Considerations</u></p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Members should also be aware of a Consultation exercise currently being undertaken jointly by DEFRA and DTLR on abandoned vehicles.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Clearly, abandoned vehicles are a national problem and not one common only to Eastbourne. Through the consultation process the Government are seeking views on proposals that include removing 'dumped' cars within 24 hours and new powers to track down and prosecute owners and offenders.</p>

<p>3.3</p>	<p>A brief overview of these proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reducing the notice periods before cars can be removed, from seven days to 24 hours in the cases of vehicles <u>with no value</u> - considered to be the overwhelming majority of dumped cars; · Enabling local authorities to use the DVLA's powers to clamp and remove unlicensed vehicles. (Pilot schemes in the London Boroughs of Lewisham and Newham involved the local authority acting as DVLA contractors, removing and <u>impounding</u> unlicensed vehicles; · Promoting best practice for the agencies dealing with abandoned and unlicensed cars; and · Tightening vehicle registration procedures to ensure that those who dump cars can be tracked down and prosecuted. <p>There are also other short term measures concerning the reduction of specific time periods that local authorities are obliged to hold abandoned and unlicensed vehicles for, prior to their disposal.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p>From this brief overview it can be seen that the Government is seeking to address this national problem of abandoned vehicles and although I am not yet in a position to respond formally to the consultation document I am concerned over potential cost implications to the Council with these proposals.</p> <p>Of equal concern to me and by inference, there is a likelihood that local authorities may also be expected to take greater responsibility with regard to vehicle tax evasion which again, could have significant cost/manpower implications for the future.</p>
<p>3.5</p>	<p>Members should also be mindful of the implementation of a decriminalised parking regime planned for 2004/05, which may give rise to opportunities for removing vehicles off street for Road Traffic Order infringements and where vehicles are abandoned.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Further Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to advise of their recommendation concerning the need for a further report on the removal of all identified vehicles that are considered to be abandoned, by a Contractor engaged by the Council through tender.</p>

Mark Probyn

HEAD OF AMENITIES

Mp/ntenv/22_11_Best Value Review Team Report_Addendum Report