

REPORT TO: Place Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee
Date of Meeting: 8 and 13 September 2016
Report of: Assistant Director Public Realm
Title: Clean Streets Strategy

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1. To seek adoption of the new Clean Streets Strategy.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Place Scrutiny Committee requests Executive support for the adoption of the Clean Streets Strategy 2016, and that work commences towards the delivery of the actions set out in the Strategy's Action Plan.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1. To adopt the Clean Streets Strategy as a new strategic approach to the street cleaning services provided by the council, with a focus on resourcing against demand, behaviour change, improving productivity and community engagement.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources.

4.1. The strategy does not, in itself, commit the council to any additional expenditure. However, its central objective is to improve the standards of cleanliness in the City, particularly the city centre. In order to achieve this, resources will need to be redirected and business cases will be made for investments in the service. Where approval is required, these will be the subject of further reports.

5. Section 151 Officer comments

5.1. There are no financial implications contained in the report. Any future requests for funding will be considered when the report is presented taking into account the Council's financial position.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1. Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that a person is guilty of an offence if he throws down, drops or otherwise deposits litter in any place within Exeter city area which is open to the air.

6.2. Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that it shall be the duty of each principal litter authority, as respects its relevant land, to ensure that the land is, so far as is practicable, kept clear of litter and refuse.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments

- 7.1. In the event that the Council is minded to take a more proactive enforcement approach, then Members should note that the prosecution solicitor was made redundant some while ago and therefore additional legal resource would be needed to meet the expectations contained in the strategy.

8. Clean Streets Strategy

- 8.1. Exeter has always been proud of being a beautiful and well looked after city, thanks to the thousands of people who live here and value its fabulous environment. Today, with a growing population and more and more disposable goods, keeping the city looking good is getting more challenging.
- 8.2. There is no doubt that dirty streets - littering, graffiti, dog fouling, fly-posting etc - impact upon people in every community and, where it is a problem, it can depress property prices, increase the fear of crime and impact on economic development. Indeed, local authorities and central government have duties to keep roads, highways and public spaces free from litter under Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. As a result, the City Council invests over £1.4M every year to keep the city looking good.
- 8.3. The City Council provides a street cleaning service for the whole of the city and Topsham, which includes street sweeping, pavement cleaning, graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping removal, and servicing dog and litter bins. The exceptions to this are the privately managed Princesshay Shopping Centre, which provides street cleansing services specifically for that development, and other areas of privately owned land. While there is some evidence that Exeter compares well to other areas, the comparison between adjacent streets with different street cleaning regimes in the retail heart of Exeter and the gradual decline in local authority resources available for street cleaning has led to calls for cleaner streets overall.
- 8.4. The number of people and organisations with an interest in the state of Exeter's streets are many and varied. They include school children, students, residents, workers and visitors, retailers, tourist attractions and other businesses, schools, colleges and the University as well as specific organisations such as the Exeter Tidy Group, which runs campaigns for cleaner streets and celebrates the hard work of the staff every year, and Exeter's Business Improvement District, which invests in additional hotwash and rapid response services in the BID area. Community Associations and Residents Groups are also important bodies with an interest in improving their local environment, organising litter picks and entering award schemes such as Britain in Bloom.
- 8.5. Demand for clean streets is highly subjective and not all neighbourhoods require the same amount of cleaning resource. Some areas receive a disproportionately high amount of cleaning yet the standards remain relatively poor, yet others get very little cleaning while the standards are relatively high. The psychology of clean streets maintains that people will tend to keep a nice environment tidy but care less about more degraded environments. Customer complaints about dirty streets are rare in Exeter. Complaints arise when people's perception of the cleanliness of the area drops below a particular but undefined level. Where the environment degrades, complaints arise particularly if street sweepers are less visible, in times of staff sickness for example.

8.6. The Council is keen to improve standards of cleanliness in the city centre and at least maintain standards elsewhere. The principles of the new strategic approach are to:

- Invest more resource into reactive and high impact activities
- Organise the service based on need rather than frequency
- Target staff resources at the times of highest demand
- Mechanise to improve productivity and standards
- Change public behaviours to reduce demand particularly in hotspot areas
- Engage and empower communities
- Measure and publish information about our performance

9. Financial Implications

9.1. Exeter spends relatively more on staff and less on transport than the national average and the cost per household is lower, reflecting the compact high-density nature of the area in comparison to the national average. In 2014/15, the Council spent a net £1.4M on clean streets, including £1.2M on staff, £230K on transport and £40K on supplies, with around £260K income from recharges and external contracts. Around 50% of the budget is spent on clearing litter and emptying bins. There is no budget allocated for enforcement or behaviour change initiatives.

9.2. The strategy does not, in itself, commit the council to any additional expenditure. However, in order to achieve improvements in the standards of cleanliness in the City, business cases will be made for investments in the service. Where approval is required, these will be the subject of further reports.

10. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

10.1. This proposal supports the Council's Mission Statement to "enhance Exeter as the Regional Capital working with our partners to improve the quality of life for all people living, working in and visiting the city." Moreover, it supports the Corporate Plan objective to "improve cleansing of the city centre".

11. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

11.1. This strategy seeks to improve cleansing standards in the City. There are few identifiable risks associated with this aspiration.

12. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

12.1. The equality impact assessment shows that crime rates could be improved in deprived areas of the City Centre if the streets were cleaner and that the proposals should have a positive effect on community relations by engaging communities to take pride in and responsibility for the state of their streets.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1. There are many ways in which a cleansing service can be delivered to Exeter's residents, including contracting the service out.

13.2. The Council could choose not to seek improvements and maintain standards as now.

SARAH WARD
Assistant Director Public Realm

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275