

Report to: **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **24th June 2008**
Report of: **Environmental Services Operations Manager and Environmental Health and Licensing Manager**
Subject: **Environmental Services Performance Report**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide information on the performance of the Environmental Operations Unit and the Environmental Health and Licensing Unit of the Community Services Directorate for the performance out turn for the financial year 2007/08. The report will also highlight initiatives and development occurring since the last report.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 This report is based on factual information and therefore no consultation has been necessary.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Community Services Scrutiny Committee will receive regular reports relating to the performance of a range of District Council environmental services, including horticulture, street cleansing, refuse collection, enforcement teams and Strategy Unit including Envirocall. The report gives a position statement regarding the performance of each team.
- 3.2 This report outlines the performance of the unit in relation to the Corporate Plan and the Service Plans of these units.

4. Performance Position Statement

4.1 Best Value Performance Indicators

Appendix 1 outlines Best Value Performance Indicator and Local Performance Indicator outcomes for 2007/08. The colour system signifies performance against targets where green indicates success, yellow a borderline situation and red shows where targets were not met.

A number of local performance indicators have been adopted in addition to the statutory indicators to give a broader view of performance and comments are welcome as to whether other indicators should be adopted.

Appendix 2 details complaints received in relation to Environmental Operations Services

4.2 Refuse collection

Refuse collections have overall operated satisfactory since the last service report. The

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Easter revised collections did however encounter some minor interruptions due to some areas in the district not presenting bins for emptying on the revised collection days causing a need for refuse collection vehicles to return back to some properties to empty missed bins. All collections moved forward 1 day to cover Good Friday, which we believe can sometimes catch out some of the residents even though the revised collections dates were well publicised. Consideration will be given to operate the service next Easter (April 2009) with collections remaining the same Tuesday – Thursday with Fridays collection being caught up on Saturday. This will only disrupt Friday's collection day, which is easier for residents. This option will also be subject to agreement from Premier Waste the management of Transfer Station (disposal site) and the Greencycle Kerbside collection service.

There are 2 new refuse collection vehicles on order, which will be delivered shortly and introduced into the service. One of these vehicles will move on to the Green Waste Service to accommodate the service expansion and the other vehicle is for an end of lease replacement in the Domestic Waste Service.

Agency workers are still being employed to cover for staff that moved over into the green waste service however successful recruitment will shortly see these posts backfilled and the agency workers short-term contracts terminated.

4.3 Recycling

Recycling performance has been adversely affected by the intervention of DEFRA in ruling out the aerobic digester contribution. During 2006/07 the aerobic digester contributed 19.7% towards our overall recycling performance and this years target was set at 34% anticipating similar performance.

The aerobic digester processes household waste to produce a "compost like output" (CLO) from organic material and separates glass, metal and plastic for recycling. DEFRA have ruled that the CLO produced is not of a suitable quality to put on land and this has had to be land filled. The contribution for other materials separated out during 2007/8 was 3.56%

Our overall BVPI outturn was 19.2% which is below the statutory minimum level for this council which is set at 20%.

We are advised that a programme has been put in place to improve the quality of the CLO. If this is successful some contribution towards our targets may be available later in the year but this is uncertain. This will mean that we are unlikely to hit our Local Area Agreement target.

During the year a "no side waste" policy was introduced and a major publicity campaign was ran to encourage residents to recycle rather than putting out extra waste. This resulted in many residents requesting new boxes and tonnages collected for kerbside collection increase significantly.

The contract with Durham County Council for Premier Waste to deliver the "Kerb-it" contract expired on the 31/3/08 and during the year the Council went out to tender following statutory

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procurement procedures to enter into a new contract. 11 different submissions were made by 5 different companies. These were assessed for quality and price and this resulted in a new contract with Greencycle PLC who started delivering the service from 1/4/08.

Significant service changes such as these usually result in some disruption and despite careful planning some of our residents experienced problems with collections.

During the last two months of Premier Waste's contract complaints of missed collections increased significantly and despite officers working closely with the County Council, and using the agreed default procedure, the disruption remained high.

Problems were experienced in Greencycle taking over the collection service due to;

- Late delivery of bags by the supplier,
- Late delivery of collection vehicles to Greencycle,
- A dramatic increase in recycling rates and more people recycling,
- Slower collections due to the more complicated sorting of materials at the vehicles by the crews.

During the first month of the contract Greencycle did not complete the allocated days collections which created a backlog building up each day and requiring weekend working to complete the weeks work. Officers have worked closely with the company to develop efficient collection rounds which has helped reduce the period of disruption. Officers are currently investigating complaints about missed collections, litter and the behaviour of crews and ensuring the area manager is taking the appropriate corrective action. The number of such complaints are now relatively low.

The green Waste Collection Service has now been extended to cover most houses with gardens within the District. This is proving to be a very popular service and the quantity of waste being collected will contribute greatly to 2008/09 recycling performance and make great savings in landfill tax and government penalties.

4.4 Envirocall

During 2007/08 27484 special collection requests were administered, income from special collections for the same period was £15,700.

882 trade refuse contracts have been administered by the Envirocall team.

Envirocall	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Telephone Calls handled (Incoming & Outgoing)	61,136	103,896	125,957	117,854	111943	136209
Special Collection Requests processed	35,199	40,625	45,775	33102	29818	27484
Environmental Cleanup requests processed	3125	3044	2909	3641	3124	3349

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Other Service Requests processed	12,041	14,104	20,519	26637	29,890	32,444
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4.5 Clean & Green Teams

The 4 Area Teams are working well to maintain the districts cleanliness and have all worked hard to achieve the 2007/8 set target of 13% in BVPI 199. There has also been a number of initiatives outside of the normal programmes of cleansing which have helped to contribute to the successes of this service as seen below.

From the 14th of January through to 8th February Pride in Easington Team actioned and coordinated a district clean up working together with the Operations, Enforcement, Residents Groups, Parish Councils and Members of the Public addressing environmental problems on the district. During this period 67 tonnes of litter and fly tipped rubbish was collected throughout the district.

A week in action was held during December 2007 in the pathfinder area (Horden South) and during this week following a walkabout of the area the Clean and Green Teams addressed overgrown hedges, fly tipping, litter, and dog fouling. There are further weeks in action planned in the pathfinder areas during the months of July, August, September and October of 2008.

The probation service continues to work successfully in partnership with the council "Mayors Project" tackling environmental schemes throughout the district this work is carried out on Weekdays and Sundays and is contributing to improving the environmental appearance of the district.

The 2 new replacement compact sweepers have been delivered and have been operating in service since mid April maintaining a designated sweeper for each of the 4 zones. We have also decided to purchase 1 of the return sweepers from the leasing company to give us cover for breakdowns and programmed maintenance thus allowing each team to be operating with a mechanical sweeper in each zone at most given times. This will also give us an additional sweeper to deploy during the leaf fall in autumn, which does attract a large number of service requests during this period.

The value for money review of horticultural services has now been completed. The findings revealed that costs for the service were below average, outputs demonstrated above average performance and satisfaction was rated as average. Conclusions from these findings clearly demonstrate that overall this is a value for money service. A detailed VFM report has been submitted to Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The grass-cutting programme and flowerbed preparations were delayed slightly due to all of the horticultural staff being used to deliver the green waste bins ready for the new scheme to commence in April. Grass cutting in the District commenced on the Tuesday 3rd April 2008 and to date is progressing satisfactory. The warm wet weather we have recently experienced is causing rapid growth, which has increased the cutting cycle and left large deposits of grass cuttings on some of the greens, which has left areas looking untidy. Hopefully recent dry weather will continue and slow down the grass growth, which will allow the service to get back onto our normal programme. We have also purchased and introduced into the service teams an additional 8 grass blowers to help further reduce grass on paths.

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All the flowerbeds in the District are now planted up with summer bedding, which consists of Geraniums, Marigolds and Ageratums.

The graffiti removal service continues to operate very successful in the district and from the introduction of the service it has continued to be successful in keeping the amount of graffiti in the district to a minimum.

Total of graffiti removed from 01.06.05 – 31.05.08.

Pathfinder areas - **1629** Other areas in the district - **2754**

Graffiti removed from February – May 2008.

Pathfinder Areas		Other areas	
February	10	February	33
March	23	March	17
April	33	April	46
May	15	May	27
Total	81	Total	123

4.6 Environmental Enforcement Team

The 2007-2008 Dog report which is being given to Parish Councils and Area Forums is shown in Appendix 3.

The street wardens operate from Peterlee, Seaham and Easington Police Offices which is proving to have great benefits in promoting joint working with Police Beat Officers and Community Support Officers.

Anti- social behaviour

One of the focuses for the last year has been on swift intervention with the increased use of the antisocial behaviour warning letter system. This system picks up on antisocial behaviour in all forms by Street Wardens, Police and PCSO's to alert parents in the first instance to the conduct of their children. During 2007 816 warning letters have been sent with only 7% reaching the 3rd warning letter, this demonstrates the impact that early intervention can have. Throughout this system other interventions and support are considered and include parenting or floating support, Youth Inclusion referral along with others. More recently if alcohol is removed from a young person twice then they will now be referred onto an educational programme facilitated by the Primary Care Trust.

In terms of working with the community over the last year Street Wardens have spent more than 2000 hours working with residents across the district and are often eyes and ears along with others to help improve neighbourhoods. To provide increased reassurance foot patrols over the last year have increased by 98% although the large areas that Street Wardens have mean that travelling across the district requires a significant use of vehicles.

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As Police Accredited officers Street Wardens are able to act as professional witnesses and continue to impact on areas of crime that are not strictly in their remit but acting as eyes and ears they assist on a regular basis on the apprehension of individuals. Within the past few months as an example they have:

- Spotted drunk drivers and followed prior to Police arrests
- Talked down a suicidal lady and sought further help for her
- Recognised a stolen horse box and followed prior to arrests
- Gathered video evidence of public order offences and passed on for arrests and convictions
- Several Mini Motos driven illegally have been seized

Work within the Community Safety Partnership is ongoing to improve how collectively neighbourhoods can be improved with the further falls in Crime and tackling Anti Social Behaviour.

Mediation Service

A further development has been the contribution to the District wide mediation service with Unite. Community mediation is promoted by the government through the Respect Agenda as an effective early intervention tool to help reduce anti-social behaviour. Disputes between neighbours can often escalate and failure to find a resolution may affect a person's quality of life, and place tenancies in jeopardy. Effective community mediation can enable issues between neighbours to be resolved peacefully with a 'win/win' outcome for all concerned.

During 2007/2008 Council Enforcement Teams and East Durham Homes accessed community mediation services by purchasing specialist 'impartial' services on a case by case basis however, disputes may often be across mixed tenure Discussions have therefore taken place over the last few months with representatives from East Durham Homes the Council's ASB Unit, the Community Safety Partnership and the Housing Options Service and a full options appraisal has been carried out. Agreement has now been reached to commission a comprehensive mediation service for 2008/2009.

The service will be provided by UNITE who will provide mediation to help people resolve their disputes. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) is currently being drawn up however key points of the service are as follows:

- The service will allow for open referrals from any person or agency.
- As part of the SLA, multi agency training and awareness sessions will be carried out.
- Leaflets will be available in the near future for distribution once the District of Easington and East Durham Homes have been included in the leaflet. The service will also be promoted in resident's newsletters.
- As well as mediating between neighbours, Unite have indicated that they will also mediate in appropriate cases between private landlords and their tenants and also with representatives of community meetings should there be disputes in this arena.
- The original commissioning group will continue to meet as a working group to consider performance information and relevant feedback will be referred to the Community Safety Partnership Operations Group.

North Peterlee Pathfinder Project

During 2007 an application was made to the North Peterlee Pathfinder Board for an intervention that would be environmentally based approach to impact on secondary deliberate fires and criminal damage.

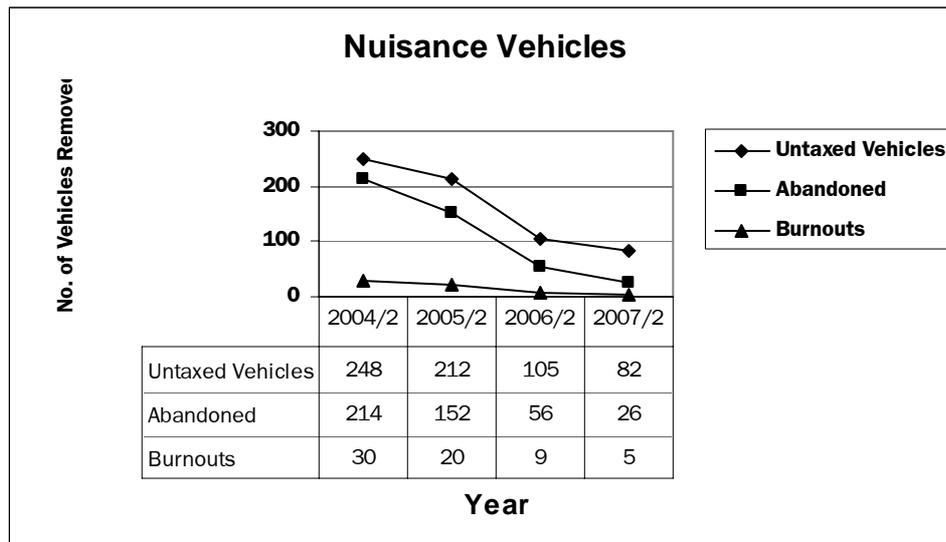
The project runs for 18 months and ends 31st March 2009 and has several themes

- Improving Waste Management through working with residents and businesses
 - Education and engagement with residents and business on how their waste is stored through personal visits, presentations to organisations such as East Durham Business Service.
 - Promotion of the special collection service
 - The use of new powers relating to litter clearing which has seen 33 properties gardens and yards cleared through personal visits, warning letters and 9 notices. New procedures have been put in place and once established the system will roll out across the district.
 - 'Duty of care' inspections for businesses are due to commence along with further stop and search exercises.
- Environmental improvement schemes working with the Probation Service
 - Schemes have included land clearance, painting and over 800 hours employed to date.
- 'swift response' service for the removal of flammable materials set up to reduce secondary and primary fires with good success through the fire service and wardens
- A house clearance scheme is being worked on to prevent new tenants arriving in a property and dumping of previous tenants' property. Further work is required in the area.
- Build community engagement to influence the intervention through weekly walkabouts in the various wards and being at the residents meetings and surgeries.

Nuisance Vehicles

Untaxed and Abandoned vehicles are an area that continues to positively reduce and reflects the investment to a proactive approach.

The graph below shows how the number of abandoned and untaxed vehicles and their reducing numbers. ERA (Easington's Response to Arson) launched at a time when abandoned vehicles were being set alight across the district and along with other areas gave powers to Street Wardens and Police to immediately remove abandoned vehicles to prevent arson.



In January 07 the Government made producers of vehicles responsible for the disposal of them through a network of authorised treatment facilities (ATF's) which is **free** to the public. The Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 has also provided local authorities with the ability to issue fixed penalty notices for 'abandoning a vehicle', fixed Penalty Notices are now being issued to drivers who abandon vehicles in the District.

Working with the DVLA on an ongoing basis, Street Wardens, PCSO's and other agencies identify untaxed vehicles and a target list for an operation for the DVLA to pick up untaxed vehicles.

A scheme has also been initiated in partnership with the Police to remove uninsured vehicles from the roads. There have been 98 vehicles removed under this scheme from April to December 2007.

These schemes collectively have positively impacted on nuisance vehicles and will continue.

Indicator	Total 2002/03	Total 2003/04	Total 2004/05	Total 2005/06	Total 2006/07	Total 2007/08
Total reports received including all untaxed and uninsured vehicles	691	587	774	778	462	352
No removed immediately	0	117	122	101	37	25
No. served with 24 hour notice.	0	132	163	108	71	46

This reduction in reports reflects the work that continues to tackle nuisance along with other factors. The ERA scheme developed in Easington has now also been adopted by all the other Districts in Durham.

Dog Control

Dog fouling and stray dogs remains an area that has a high level of service requests in the District. A report on dog control and fixed penalties is attached in the appendix 3 and

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details the activities over the past year.

Four Environmental Wardens are responsible for the collection of stray dogs throughout the district. They also have responsibility for issuing fines and dealing with other environmental crime such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and waste.

As reported in the last Scrutiny report the number of complaints for strays and fouling has increased due to the increase in stray dogs.

	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	02007 /08
Dog Fouling Fines Issued	50	25	25	110	117	96	74	95
Complaints of stray dogs and fouling	845	892	896	797	930	1235	1325	1508

From January 08 Environmental Wardens on additional targeted patrols have been recording the number of dogs that they seen fouling and those who pick up and those who do not. The results show that 95% of owners pick up after their dog.

With the development of the district a new Dog Control Order was introduced on 1st April 2008 which was required to ensure dog fouling offences were enforceable on areas not covered previously, at the same time the level of fine was brought in line with that of littering to provide a consistent approach.

The changes in legislation and responsibility for stray dogs were reported in the previous Scrutiny Report. The 1st of July will now see out of hours stray dog responsibility transferred from the Police to local authorities in Durham. Here in Easington the public will be able to phone and environmental wardens will come and collect the dog. This provision will be for where a stray dog are taken in by the public and **does not** cover catching them on the streets.

Work is ongoing with Pride in Easington, Clean and Green Teams along with the kennel contractor to devise an action plan for the coming year to tackle stray dogs and dog fouling and reverse the trend improving the environment for the community of Easington.

Litter

Litter enforcement through the district is carried out by Environmental Wardens and Street Wardens and is programmed and reviewed based on hot spot information. Overall the payment rate for fines for both dog fouling and litter remains over 90% and very high compared to other authorities locally and nationally.

The table below shows how the number of litter fines has increased over the past few years.

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	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Litter fines issued	45	69	82	128	124

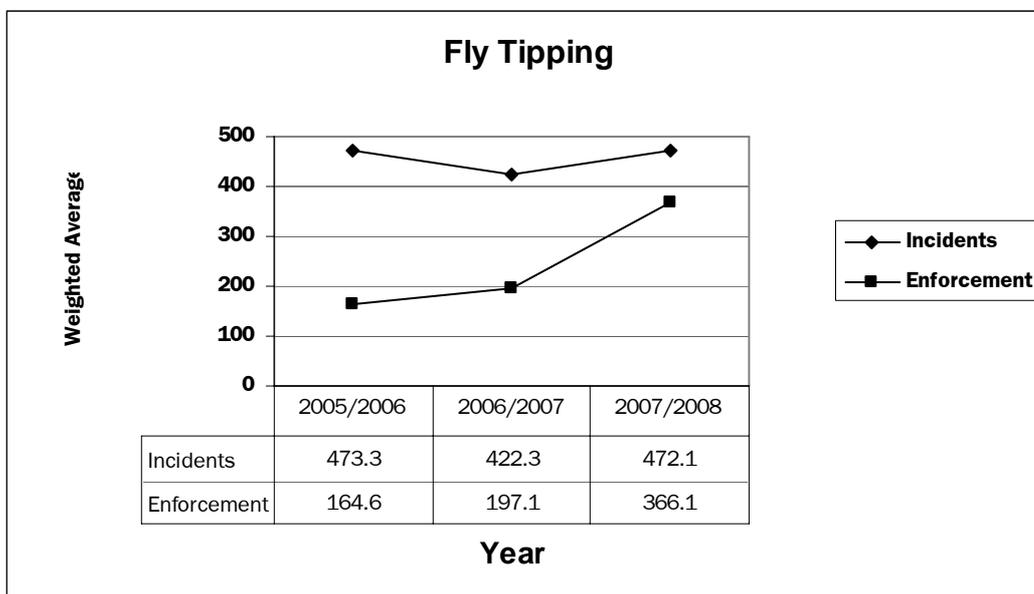
The importance of tackling the ongoing littering of the streets has meant the investment of additional targeted patrols so far in 2008/9 resulting in 51 fixed penalty notices being issued to date.

Actions are also ongoing to work with businesses in conjunction with the Pride in Easington Team and Clean and Green Teams to target specific areas. Where this is unsuccessful Street Litter Control Notices and Litter Clearing Notices are also being employed to improve the environment for the District.

Fly tipping

During the 2006/7 we achieve a grade 1 BVPI 199 rating for our efforts to tackle fly tipping. This is the highest score and an improvement from a score of 4 from 2005/6. To achieve this there must be a reduction in fly tipping incidents and an increase in enforcement activities.

The graph below demonstrates the performance over the last two years and a projection for 2007/8



The incidents that have contributed to the majority of this increase mainly come from vans and small wagons tipping in the district.

Enforcement activities are through areas such as prosecutions, fixed penalty notices, formal cautions, and warning letters along with other means. There are two new areas of enforcement that have improved the level and variety of enforcement, 'stop and search' operations and duty of care inspections. Stop and searches taken place during Police organised multi agency operations to date and involve the inspection of licenses of vehicles who are carrying waste, the result of the operation carried out to date has been 5 warnings

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and 2 prosecutions for not having a 'waste carriers license'. 'Duty of care' inspections are happening, through working with our commercial enforcement colleagues. During food hygiene visits officers are checking where waste from the premises is being disposed.

In addition to the council staff dealing on a day to day basis with fly tipping criminals this year we are part of a partnership with other councils across Durham and the Environment Agency to employ a specialist to assist with expert advice, interviews of suspects, prosecution and training for staff. The officer has recently provided training to all clean and green teams on how to gather evidence when they come across fly tipping.

This support has helped the ongoing operations against fly tipping which include such things as:

- Investigation into each and every report
- Warning signage at hotspots
- Covert cameras at hotspots have captured evidence of some fly tipping perpetrators
- Joint stop and search operations with the Environment Agency
- Extensive media coverage, including highlighting house holders responsibilities and our actions to prevent fly tipping.

Work is ongoing and an action plan currently being drawn up that focuses on the main cause for the increase so far this year and includes such actions as:

- Stop and search exercises
- Working with partners such as Police to raise their awareness
- Publicity regarding rogue traders.
- Targeting advertising traders
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5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications
There are no policy implications.

5.2 Legal Implications
There are no legal implications

5.3 Policy Implications
There are no policy implications

5.4 Risk Implications
There are no risk implications

5.5 Communications Implications
Regular press releases and Info Point articles are issued relating to enforcement performance e.g. relating to dog fouling and litter fines and anti-social behaviour to act as a deterrent.

5.6 Corporate Implications
The Unit is performing well with respect to performance indicators incorporated in the Best Value Performance Plan and objectives set in the corporate Plan to help deliver the Council's priorities.

5.7 LGR Implications
There are no LGR Implications

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members views are welcomed on the contents of the report.

Paul Penman; Operations Manager

Keith Parkinson; Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Background documents referred to:

- i) Best Value Performance Plan 2007
- ii) Unit Service Plans