

Report to: **Community Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **18th November 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 first six months of 2008/09. 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 collection has continued to operate satisfactorily since the last service report.

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Christmas collections have now been agreed with the workforce and the Christmas card is being developed for delivery to all residents. All collections will back to normal by the 6th January 2009.

The two new refuse collection vehicles are now in service as previously reported. One vehicle is operating within the Green Waste Service and the other within Domestic Refuse Collections. The introduction of these new vehicles has helped to maintain a consistent service.

Following a number of serious incidents nationally, all staff have now received Banksman training to assist in the manoeuvring of vehicles in difficult situations. As well as this training, all refuse staff have been issued with a safe working booklet identifying all safety procedures. In addition to the booklet, every vehicle now holds a copy of safe working procedures relevant to this operation.

Agency workers are still being employed to cover for staff sickness and holidays and the backfilling of the employees who were transferred from other services to the Green Waste Collections. The Agency contracts will be terminated mid December when Green Waste Collections cease.

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 now the ruling has meant that any contribution from the composting element of the process cannot be counted.

Despite this we are on track to hit our target of achieving composting/recycling rates of 30% in 2008/09 due to the success of the kerbside collection and recycling service provided by Greencycle and due to the extension of the garden waste collection and composting service to the majority of households with gardens within the District.

The introduction of the extended garden waste collection service went very smoothly and residents have been very pleased with the result.

The change from the previous contractor delivering the basic recycling service, to Greencycle providing the new service with an additional bag for paper, cardboard and plastic did not go as smoothly as planned largely due to the unexpectedly high participation rates. Members may recall that there was a degree of dissatisfaction from residents with the performance of the previous contractor and after the initial bedding in period, Greencycle's performance has greatly improved and towards the end of the half year period was considered to be at an acceptable level.

4.4 Envirocall

During the first six months of 2008/09, 18962 special collection requests were administered, income from special collections for the same period was £7,520.

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

Envirocall	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	01/04/08 -30/09/08
Telephone Calls handled (Incoming & Outgoing)	61,136	103,896	125,957	117,854	111,943	136,209	71,381
Special Collection Requests processed	35,199	40,625	45,775	33,102	29,818	27,484	18,962
Environmental Cleanup requests processed	3,125	3,044	2,909	3,641	3,124	3,349	1,789
Other Service Requests processed	12,041	14,104	20,519	26,637	29,890	32,444	15,050

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 first quarter target as identified in Appendix 1.

From the 23rd June to 27th June the Pride in Easington Team actioned and coordinated a clean up working together with the Operations, Enforcement, Residents Groups, Parish Councils and members of the public in Easington Colliery, addressing environmental problems.

Two weeks in action were held during July and October 2008 in the pathfinder areas and during this time the Clean and Green Teams addressed overgrown hedges, fly tipping, litter, and dog fouling.

Operation Milkshake took place from 29th September to 3rd October. This included joint working with VOSA, Customs and Excise, Police, Fire Brigade and our own Enforcement and Operational Sections.

The grass-cutting cycles have been severely disrupted during the cutting season. This is largely due to the inclement wet weather which we have experienced over the summer months.

Staff have just completed the first of the beach cleaning operations with a significant amount of waste being removed. The second of the annual beach clean ups will be undertaken in early January. The area cleared runs from Ryhope Dene through to Crimdon Stream.

All winter bedding is now planted throughout the district. This includes polyanthus, bellis daisies and pansies.

The Tree Squad are currently experiencing a backlog due to the volumes of work being passed through to them. To overcome this problem, three staff have been transferred from

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Sedgefield Council to help reduce the backlog. It is envisaged that they will spend approximately four weeks with the Authority.

We have recently adopted land at East Shore Village, the former Hawthorn Colliery Site and the Social Housing Estates for regular maintenance. As this is additional work, it has been necessary to recruit additional staff. As this work is on a more seasonal basis, it has been agreed that seasonal temporary workers will be employed each year to undertake this.

The graffiti removal service continues to operate very successfully in keeping the amount of graffiti in the district to a minimum.

The total incidents of graffiti removed from between the start of the service in 01.06.05 until 30.05.08 across all areas of the district is **2990**.

Incidents of graffiti removed from June – September 2008.	
June	57
July	74
August	51
September	54
Total	236

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

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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.

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

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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 **52** properties gardens and yards cleared through personal visits, warning letters and **13 notices** between April and October 2008. New procedures have been put in place and are currently being rolled out across the district.
 - 'Duty of care' inspections for **80** businesses have been undertaken with **27** notices issued for improvement along with 2 stop and search exercises between April and October 2008.
- Environmental improvement schemes working with the Probation Service
 - Schemes have included land clearance, painting and over **550** hours employed to date between April and October 2008
- '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. This has now been removed from the intervention.
- Build community engagement to influence the intervention through weekly walkabouts in the various wards and being at the residents meetings and surgeries.

This post has been instrumental in reducing secondary deliberate fires and between July and October 2008 there have been just 1 secondary fires dealt with by the Fire Service in the North Peterlee Area

Bonfire Campaign

To follow on from a very successful 2007 campaign and reduce the activity caused by anti social behaviour, bonfire setting and deliberate secondary fires. A proactive partnership approach has been taken from within the Easington District directed through intelligence

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gained through the interrogation of historical data (last three years) of bonfires, secondary fires and combustible material removal. The data will identify areas of likely activity which will be crossed mapped with existing hot spot areas. Resources will then be deployed as per our action plan in an effort to achieve a successful reduction in multi agency activity over the bonfire period. The results from the 2007 campaign are shown below.

- 51% reduction in bonfires vs 2006
- 27% reduction in deliberate secondary fires vs 2006
- 66 bonfires removed during build up to Bonfire night vs 2006.
22 bonfires removed after Bonfire night vs 2006

The activities to improve on last years campaign include:

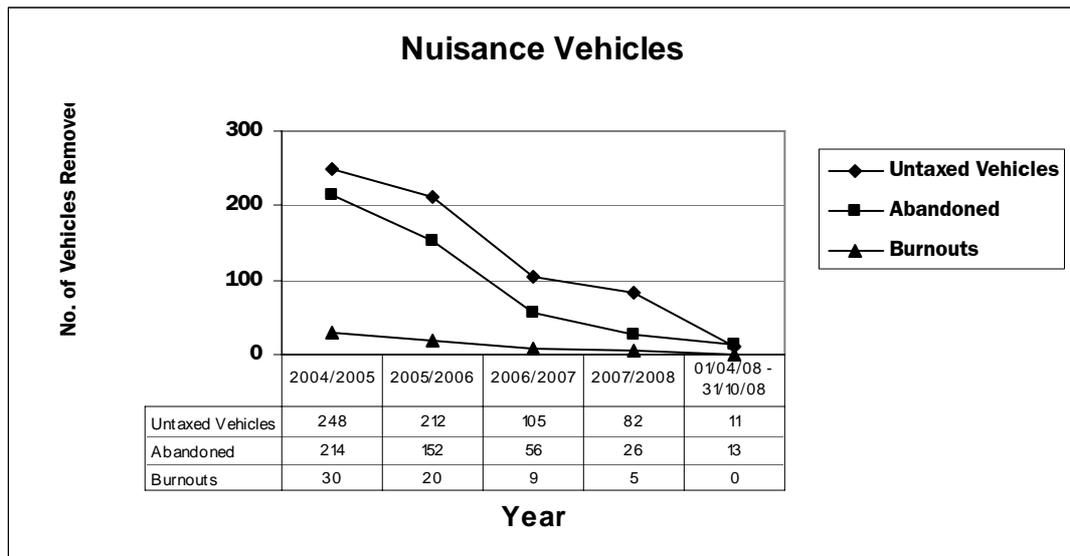
- Clean and Green teams working on an evening and weekend to remove potential bonfires
- Additional Street Wardens to support the crews, spot bonfire material and check scheduled special collections to ensure they are stored safely prior to collection.
- Focused activity by fire personnel on hot spots
- Educational work by the fire service and other agencies in schools
- Use of enforcement powers to remove waste
- Trading Standards and Fire Service checking retailers and conducting spot checks regarding the sale of fireworks
- Use of media to promote safety and the campaign

In the two weeks prior to bonfire night the clean and green crews cleared **77** illegally set bonfires. The fire service estimates that each bonfire if lit costs £2000 and so a great saving has been achieved through the collective approach. The redirection of the fire service to illegal bonfires also puts lives at risk. The campaign will continue until the 13th November.

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.



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 **37** vehicles removed under this scheme from April to September 2008.

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	01/04/08 - 30/09/08
Total reports received including all untaxed and uninsured vehicles	691	587	774	778	462	352	103
No removed immediately	0	117	122	101	37	25	12
No. served with 24 hour notice.	0	132	163	108	71	46	23

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.

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

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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	2007 /08	01/04/08 - 30/09/08
Dog Fouling Fines Issued	50	25	25	110	117	96	74	95	23
Complaints of stray dogs and fouling	845	892	896	797	930	1235	1325	1508	804

The changes in legislation and responsibility for stray dogs were reported in the previous Scrutiny Report. The 1st of July saw the 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 is taken in by a member of the public and **does not** cover catching them on the streets.

From July to October 2008 there have been 208 stray dogs picked up with 33% (67) of these being out of hours and demonstrating the need for the out of hours service. The need for a 24 hour service may need to be reviewed as only 10% of the out of hour's dogs being after 10pm.

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.

So far this has included:

- χ A stray dog zero tolerance week at the end of August resulted in the vast reduction in number of stray dogs collected through that week.
- χ A further million poop a scoop bags have been purchased with fixed penalty money to promote picking up.
- χ Responsible dog ownership leaflets have been put together and distributed through events and activities.
- χ Monthly 'free' micro chipping events across the district

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.

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

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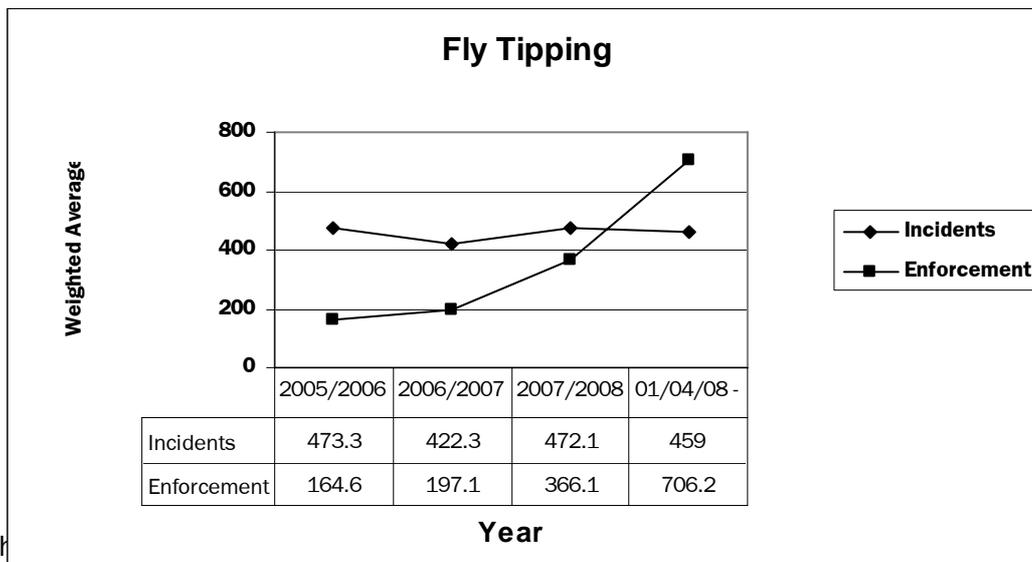
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	01/04/08-30/09/08
Litter fines issued	45	69	82	128	124	64

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. Fast food outlets are a common cause of littered streets along with the 'Tidy Business Award' a 'Voluntary Code of Conduct' is being launched in the next month for fast food outlets. 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 few years and a projection for 2008/9



The performance has now reversed with a reduction in incidents and a slight reduction in enforcement activity resulting in a current grade of 2.

Provided the trend for a reduction in incidents continues and the enforcement activities undertaken and planned increase (see below) then a grade 1 will result and is the highest score achievable.

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 outlined in the last scrutiny report 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 and specifically targeted operations and involve the inspection of licenses of vehicles who are carrying waste and where waste has

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come from and going to. The result of the operations carried out to date has been 6 warnings, 2 prosecutions and 5 fixed penalty notices for not having a 'waste carriers license'.

'Duty of care' inspections on businesses in the district have occurred through the last few months with two operations and over 200 businesses visited and 30% of these businesses requiring action to improve waste management.

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.

Designated Public Place Orders (DPPO)

Street Drinking is an ongoing problem across Easington and nationally, there are currently powers available to tackle this through the removal of alcohol from under aged drinkers these powers are employed on a regular basis by Street Wardens and Police. Following consultation and evidence from the Police we have introduced 23 DPPO's in the district in September 2008. These give the Police the power to request that anyone stop drinking where antisocial behaviour is occurring or may occur and is a discretionary power.

Other Operations

The enforcement team have been busy between the last Scrutiny report and October 2008 and have been active in supporting an number of operations and weeks in action and include:

- Operation Milkshake 7 – Wingate, Wheatley Hill, Thornley, Trimdon, Station Town & Shotton.
- Operation Milkshake 8 – Horden & Blackhall
- Pathfinder Week in Action Horden North & South
- Pathfinder Week in Action Easington Colliery & Grants Houses
- Pathfinder Week in Action Eden Hill North

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

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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