

10 October 2011		ITEM <u>5</u>
Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Multi-skilled cleaning and greening team pilot		
Report of: Cllr James Halden (Conservative, Homesteads), Chairman of CGS O&S and Cllr Steve Liddiard (Labour, Tilbury St Chads), Vice Chairman of CGS O&S		
Wards and communities affected: East Tilbury initially	Key Decision: Yes	
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Murphy, Head of Environment Department		
Accountable Director: Bill Newman, Director of Sustainable Communities		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: The purpose of this report is to provide details of the findings and recommendations of the Multi-skilled Cleaning and Greening Team Working Group.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2011 a report was brought forward to the Overview and Scrutiny committee that indicated previous interest in the establishment of multi-skilled teams across the various wards of the Borough. As that report had not been advanced due to the workload of the budget setting period, and in addition to concerns expressed By Cllr Palmer and Cllr Purkiss, it was agreed that a working group would be formed to further investigate the appropriateness of implementing a pilot multi-skilled team in East Tilbury (due to its geographical size, it would display a wide array of cleaning and greening issues). In particular the working group, chaired by Cllr Halden would consider need, feasibility and costs impacts of the proposed scheme.

It is proposed that the multi-skilled teams would consist of a team of grounds maintenance and street cleansing operatives with appropriate tools and materials, to carry out duties within a specific area or ward rather than supporting the Borough wide work programmes that are currently in place for those functions. The core driver for change would be to improve the flexibility of the grounds maintenance and street cleansing functions for residents and therefore the service.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 East Tilbury be designated as the pilot area and that a pilot run for a period of six months from Mid May to November 2012.**
- 1.2 That three front line workers from the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing teams be designated as exclusively East Tilbury workers and are provided with any further training required to enable them to cover all grounds maintenance and street cleansing work anticipated to occur in that area.**
- 1.3 During the period of the pilot, it is recommended that current pre-planned maps, routes and schedules of work are supplemented for worker initiative and ward member direction.**
- 1.4 To support the pilot, it is recommended that one of the front line workers is supplied with a council Blackberry. This will be used to provide daily updates of activities to ward members and identify projects planned for the following days.**
- 1.5 The ward member would be designated as a primary point of contact for service consultation in addition to a Senior Officer from Street Services (such as the Street Services Manager) would be designated as the sole officer to manage the pilot scheme in consultation with ward members.**
- 1.6 The senior officer in charge should compile a data base to be updated every three weeks where comments of ward members, forum representatives and residents can compliment the NI 195 indicator and be used to influence the service.**
- 1.7 A new incentive scheme to be implemented to reward examples of excellence in terms of service engagement for front line works involved in the pilot.**
- 1.8 That the working group meet during the pilot to review progress and outcomes to support reporting at the end of the pilot and advise on the current status.**
- 1.9 That the committee offer their sincere thanks for the work carried out by the Street Services team.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 As front line services the work carried out by grounds maintenance and street cleansing teams has a direct impact on the appearance of an area, the appearance of our streets and parks can often be an emotive issue.
- 2.2 In 2010 a proposal was introduced to change the working patterns of the grounds maintenance and street cleansing teams from a borough wide programme of work, to smaller teams with broader skills who would be responsible for both street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations in specific areas of the borough. This proposal was re-introduced in July 2011. Due to committee members being interested in progressing the work, a working group was established to consider whether a pilot to assess the feasibility of local multi-skilled teams was appropriate. The working group was chaired by Cllr Halden and vice chaired by Cllr Liddiard.
- 2.3 An officer led tour of East Tilbury was undertaken to assess the severity of the issues raised and to consider the appropriateness of the site for a pilot scheme.
- 2.4 The working group then undertook a thorough review of information available regarding the service, including schedules of work and scope of activities. This is including an overview of the key method of assess street cleanliness, namely NI 195. Additionally, the working group met with front line workers from both grounds maintenance and street cleansing teams.
- 2.5 A final meeting of the working group was convened to review the data gathered and agree recommendations.
- 2.6 The purpose of the working group and this report, is to provide members with the necessary background to enable a decision on whether the alternative method of working described in the recommendations above should be adopted.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The core issue identified by the working group was the inflexibility of the service and the little scope for ward members and the community to influence and engage with it due to an over-centralised set up. This has contributed to the perception that grounds maintenance and street cleansing services are detached from local communities and are not responsive to local needs.
- 3.2 The importance of local opinion in contextualising statistical data such as NI 195 was noted, and it was suggested that a mechanism be identified for capturing resident's views in future.

- 3.3 The working group's recommendations to pilot a multi-skilled team are based on the idea that by working more closely with ward members and thus the community, will see the front line operatives focusing their efforts on areas and tasks that are most important to local residents and will make community engagement more possible.
- 3.4 One issue regarding the pilot that would need to be resolved prior to implementation is the scope of activities that would be included. Some grounds maintenance functions are carried out on a borough wide programme due to the investment required to procure the necessary vehicles and the cost impact of operating such vehicles in small areas only. The prime example of this is the tractors used by the grounds maintenance service. The chair and vice chair would be consulted before hand.
- 3.5 The working groups expressed thanks for the hard work put into the service, and admiration to the front line workers for hard and essential work that they do.
- 3.6 As the scheme is a pilot, there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the impact. The working group has proposed that the pilot be closely monitored and that there continues to be scope to change the pilot.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 The working group have consulted with ward members and officers and front line workers from the street cleansing and grounds maintenance teams.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 5.1 This service impacts directly on the corporate priority to ensure a safe, clean and green environment as does the driver of providing a better and more community focused service.

6. CONCLUSION

The working group have concluded that in order to further evaluate the benefits of areas based multi-skilled teams, a pilot should be under for six months in East Tilbury, commencing in May 2012.

The potential benefits of the pilot would be closer communication between front line workers and ward members allowing for a street cleansing and grounds maintenance service that is more responsive to the priorities of the community.

By moving away from pre-planned and scheduled work patterns, the front line workers will have an opportunity to use local knowledge and initiative when undertaking their duties introducing a greater degree of flexibility. This would foster greater pride in work undertaken, stronger links with the community and potentially greater job satisfaction.

That these recommendations would fulfil the working group's aim of improving communication and engagement between the public, their elected members and the council and therefore the service itself.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- None

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

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