

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Street Cleansing Review 2020/21</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee 25 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Parry Batth, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Chris Traill, Director of Place and Growth

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

To review the performance of the newly appointed street cleansing contractor (Urbaser) for 2020/21 (to date) and to ensure high standards are maintained for 2021/22 so residents and visitors alike can enjoy clean, safe streets.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee consider and note the progress report on the mobilisation and start of the Contract on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report sets out to highlight the overall performance of the contract so far this year as well as the successful de-mobilisation and mobilisation of the street cleansing service which undertakes the following essential services in the Borough:

- Sweep and litter pick to Grade A approx. 700kms of carriageways and footways and Council owned areas against set frequencies;
- Remove up fly-tips on Council land across the Borough within three working days;
- Provide three herbicide treatments per annum between April and October;
- Clear graffiti as requested on Council property;
- Empty approximately 1,000 litter bins against set frequencies across the Borough's highways, parks and open spaces;
- Plus any other work such as: Waste left after illegal occupations, clearances from special events, like the Henley Royal Regatta and work for Parish and Town Councils as and when required;
- Winter maintenance on footways as requested.

## BACKGROUND

Street cleansing is fundamental to first impressions and perceptions of the borough. It helps to improve the safety, environmental and aesthetic qualities of the area, benefitting the borough's residents, businesses and visitors. The Council awarded the street cleansing service to VolkerHighways in July 2019. This service is further sub-contracted to Urbaser who are currently carrying out the same functions in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. The Contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 with new vehicles (see appendix 2) and a full workforce. Urbasser are based with VolkerHighways at Toutley Depot.

## Progress to date

Initially, the contractor carried out additional work on areas which required to be brought up to standard. A lump sum of approximately £25k was invested in this and the results can be found in Appendix 1.

The table below outlines the street cleansing KPI's and interim performance from April to October:

KPI	Explanation	Interim performance (six months)	Comments
95% of litter bins emptied	That 95% of litter bins are emptied on the correct day.	100%	This was achieved due to the input of extra resources due to additional demand as a result of COVID.
95% of sweeping and litter picking completed on the scheduled day	That 95% of scheduled sweeping and litter picking is completed on the scheduled day.	69%	The reason for this shortfall was main due to the increased parked cars due to residents working from home which made access difficult.
100% of fly tipping removed within three days of instruction by the Localities section	That 100% of fly tips are removed within three days of the order being processed by Localities.	89%	The reason for this shortfall was primarily due to the significant increase in flytips, especially larger ones, across the borough as a result of lockdown/COVID and closure of the HWRC's.

It is evident from the table above that two of the three KPI's (a) sweeping/litter picking and (b) fly-tipping removal) were not met. The primary reason for this was due to Covid impacts on the service as well as the associated consequences. When the country entered its first lockdown, a huge proportion of the population were required to work at home. Although the cleansing schedules were undertaken by both mechanical and hand methods as scheduled, the issue was the number of additional parked cars on the streets. This meant that access to a large number of channels and pavements were obstructed and therefore could not be cleaned effectively. The number of flytips has dramatically increased during and after lockdown as compared to last year (see further details below). Data analysis continues to be undertaken to assess this ongoing issue and the Localities team are heading a flytipping strategy which focusses on education as well as enforcement. A variety of mechanisms are in already place to combat this issue including movable CCTV cameras in the borough which are deployed at 'hot-spots'. A number of fly tippers have been caught and have been successfully fined/prosecuted and work continues to raise awareness of this criminal activity and seek the public's assistance to stop it.

In terms of litter and litter bins, a significant number of people attended parks and Council owned open spaces during and once lockdown was lifted for permitted exercise and recreation which increased the amount of litter being collected. This was dropped litter as well as people filling litter bins at a rate quicker than Urbasser could empty them. In addition, the type of litter placed in the bins had an effect as there were a greater number 'picnic' items rather than smaller crisp packet type items which filled the capacity a lot quicker. The cleansing frequencies were increased significantly and the emptying of the bins did occur on the correct day.

It is clear that covid has impacted the way street cleansing has operated for 2020/21 and the associated consequences of additional litter in concentrated timeframes during the summer months. Learnings are being enacted to shape the way the service operates during a lockdown as per the current situation which will be less impactful than earlier in the year as the colder/wetter weather will reduce visits. It is unknown if further lockdowns will be put in place however the service is more resilient than ever through more street cleansing resources (staff and machinery), increased frequency of cleansing of roads, pavements and litter bins, more effective, efficient reporting and subsequent remedial actions in the correct timeframes. Furthermore, a communications campaign will commence in the spring of 2021 to highlight the issue of litter and to reduce this. It is expected that the street cleansing performance will improve over the next six months of 2020/21 as these measures are in place. Forward planning will take place early in 2021 to develop a strategy to respond to additional cleansing throughout the busier spring/summer months if lockdown occurs again. It is expected that through these actions and the deployment of the right resources at the right time the respective KPI performance criteria for 2021/22 will be met.

The street cleansing contract was mobilised during the COVID -19 pandemic and a number of initial concerns around the virus causing staff shortages and ongoing service failures were raised by VolkerHighways and Urbasser. Encouragingly, VolkerHighways and Urbasser managed the situation exceptionally well with strict adherence to the guidelines, taking extra precautions (including good PPE practices) and welfare checks. This resulted in relatively limited impact on the frontline service and this continues. However, the outbreak did have three significant consequences that put additional pressure on Urbasser as set out below:

- The closure of the HWRCs and additional resident DIY activity linked to an increase in fly-tipping in the Borough and generally across the UK. In 2019/20 there were 1,298 fly-tips across the Borough, which was a record high. So far, this year (April 2020-September 2020) there has already been 1,049 incidents and the end of year forecast is 2,656 which equates to nearly double 2019/20 figures. However, the reopening of the HWRC's was warmly welcomed by residents and the new booking system has received positive responses as there is no queueing at the site.
- High demand and footfall at our open spaces causing high levels of waste especially around litter bins;
- Due to the closure of pubs, the significant increase of glass at our recycling sites.

To address the continued challenges associated with fly tipping, litter and litter bins, VolkerHighways/Urbasser has increased the resource available to keep up with demand and this additional measure has worked well. There was also increased demand at our recycling sites as re3 struggled to keep up with exceptionally large deposits of glass left around the banks. VolkerHighways/Urbasser increased the cleansing schedule of the banks and surrounding areas to ensure they were safe and to prevent any anti-social behaviour. This demand receded as the pubs re-opened but preparation for a second closure of pubs has been undertaken.

## Customer Enquiries and Feedback

The reporting of incidents by residents and visitors has been upgraded by adopting Volker Highways HIMS for street cleansing to enable accurate recording and mapping of issues and delivering an improved customer journey.

Since April 2020 we have received 2,050 street cleansing enquiries:

- 173 were for the sweeping of the roads and pavements
- 170 for litter bins
- 1,709 different reports of various elements including graffiti and fly tipping.

It is noted that 96% of the users reported their issues on the WBC 'report a problem' webpage with 4% of the traffic coming through to the call centre. The link for the report a problem can be found here: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/roadworks-and-outdoor-maintenance/street-cleaning/>. Since commencement of the contract, there have been no complaints and a number of compliments received from a number of residents. An example of a compliment received

*"The street sweeper has just been round Clevedon Drive (15th October 09:30) and has done a brilliant job, driving very, very slowly and getting out regularly to dig out the bits the brushes wouldn't shift. If he's back late then don't tell him off but instead tell him he's done a great job and give him a pat on the back and a cup of coffee at the very least. I hope this message gets processed in time for you to work out who the chap who did the good job*

was. Feedback on how you handled this "well done - VG - Gold Star" message would be appreciated. Cheers, Mick."

### Next Steps:

**Driving efficiency** - During mobilisation, it was agreed that the current service standards and provision would be retained as is, including the sweeping frequencies. Further negotiations with VolkerHighways will now take place about possible contract savings by moving to an output-based service allowing resources to be concentrated where they are most needed, i.e. roads/footways that are more susceptible to encroachment/detritus or litter bins that require more emptying.

Work will also be undertaken with partners (i.e. re3 and CIPFA) to identify areas that could yield further contract improvements including analysis of collected materials for increased recycling.

**Footway encroachment** – As per examples in Appendix 2 this issue creates a safety hazard as footways become narrower. The cause is generally due to the inability to get access to the backlines of the footway (mainly due to overgrown trees/hedges etc) to clear detritus (built-up soil) which in turn gradually encroaches on the footway. A partnership between Localities, Clienting and the Wokingham Highways Alliance has been set up to:-

- a) Identify areas
- b) Agree a coordinated approach to clearing it
- c) To work with the Street Cleansing Contractor to proactively tackle the issue in the future.

**Working with Residents** – Sometimes it helps to understand issues more fully by having a joint site meeting and 'walkabout'. Appendix 4 details an example of action undertaken with residents which were discussed and successfully addressed.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the Covid-19 crisis. It is, therefore, imperative that Council resources are focussed on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

As detailed above in 'Next Steps' officers and VolkerHighways will discuss efficiency options in January to realise savings and this will be reported once known.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	N/A

Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	N/A

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
None
<b>List of Background Papers</b>
None

<b>Contact:</b> Richard Bisset	<b>Service:</b> Place Clienting
<b>Telephone No.:</b>	<b>Email:</b> Richard.bisset@wokingham.gov.uk
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**List of attached Appendices:**

**Appendix 1**

Extra work carried out at Start of Contract

**Appendix 2**

New street cleansing fleet

**Appendix 3**

Footway encroachment

**Appendix 4**

Working with residents

**Appendix 5**

Fly-tipping examples