

Service Inspection Report

March 2006



Environment - Street Scene

Peterborough City Council

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

Copies of this report

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0845 056 0566.

© Audit Commission 2006

For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Contents

Service Inspection	4
Summary	5
Scoring the service	7
Recommendations	10
Report	12
Context	12
The locality	12
The Council	12
The Council's street scene service	13
How good is the service?	15
What has the service aimed to achieve?	15
Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?	15
Service outcomes for users and the community	17
Is the service delivering value for money?	21
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	23
What is the service track record in delivering improvement?	23
How well does the service manage performance?	24
Does the service have the capacity to improve?	27

Service Inspection

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our Strategic Plan and Strategic Regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*.

Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater co-ordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self-assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

Summary

- 1 Peterborough City Council delivers good, two-star, street scene services that has promising prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council has clear priorities for street scene services, which contribute to the Council's corporate aims. However, given that Peterborough aims to be the environmental capital of England, the Council has not developed 'best in class' service standards.
- 3 Streets, wildlife sites, nature reserves and other open spaces are generally well-maintained and kept free from litter, graffiti, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles. Multi-functional teams are used to deliver street cleaning and grounds maintenance services. Local communities are empowered to help manage green spaces in such a way as to encourage biodiversity.
- 4 Services are accessible and delivered in a way to meet the needs of users. No charge is made for the collection of bulky household waste and an innovative scheme has been introduced to improve recycling access for communities and disabled residents via underground recycling banks. Information is provided in 22 languages, Braille and large print. In addition, frontline staff have received Islamic Awareness training. However, the Council does not promote standards and targets for all street scene services provided.
- 5 Peterborough's performance in recycling and composting household waste is amongst the best for unitary councils in the country. At the same time the cost of collecting and disposing of household waste is amongst the lowest in the country. Satisfaction levels with the service are some of the highest in the country. The Council has a track record of working with partners to increase recycling rates. However, the amount of waste collected from householders is amongst the highest in the country.
- 6 Effective partnerships are in place with the Probation Service, the Fire Service, the Police, Parish Councils, local schools, businesses and charities. These partnerships have been used to clean up and improve residential areas, reclaim green areas and address residents' community safety concerns.
- 7 The Council has an extensive education programme in place to promote waste minimisation and recycling. This includes hands on activities in the education room at the recycling materials facility, regular visits to schools and colleges, articles in the Council's newspaper, press adverts, road shows for specific campaigns and a range of advice leaflets.
- 8 The Council has a strong enforcement team who undertake high visibility operations as well as observation and surveillance. The team has taken action to enforce the Council's 'no side waste policy' and issues fixed penalty notices for, fly-tipping, fly posting, dog fouling and litter. However, whilst over 400 fixed penalty notices have been issued so far in 2005/06, a high number have still to be paid.

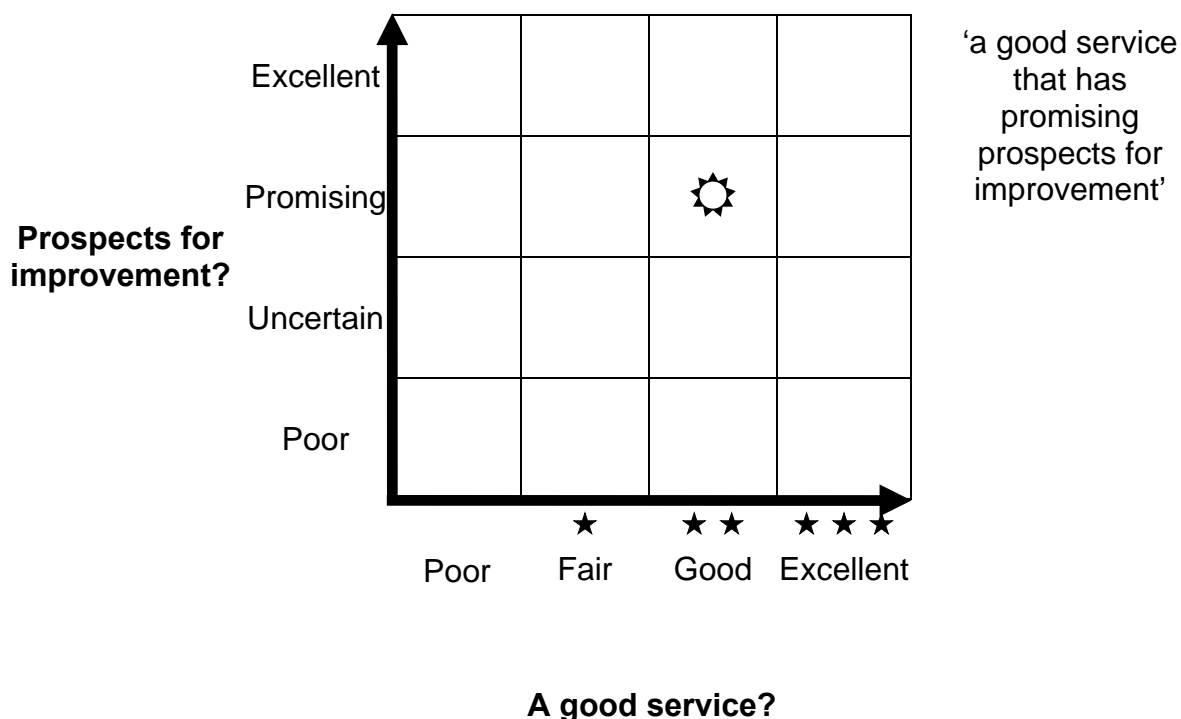
6 Environment - Street Scene | Summary

- 9 The Council has invested in the street scene. In the past two years, all high risk bus shelters have been replaced using vandal proof materials. New supervised public toilet facilities have been opened in the city centre. Extensive CCTV has been installed covering the city centre and car parks. High visibility street wardens, who carry out a meet and greet function, patrol the city centre and car parks.
- 10 The service has promising prospects for improvement. The Council has a positive record in responding to external inspections and internal reviews which has resulted in service improvements. For example there are now environmental action days to treat problem areas and swifter action to tackle fly-tipping and graffiti. Improvements have been achieved through effective partnership working both internally and externally.
- 11 The services enjoy strong leadership from senior officers and Councillors as well as having committed and motivated front line staff. Many of the building blocks for service improvement are in place such as effective service planning, target setting, project management and recently a revised performance management framework. However, the complaints system is not being actively used to drive improvement. Risk identification and evaluation is happening across the service and there are reviews of risk registers, but a consistent approach to risk management is not in place.
- 12 The Council has an effective medium-term financial strategy which ensures that resources are directed towards corporate priorities. In addition, The Council has successfully attracted external funding for environmental projects either delivered directly or in partnership. The 'Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme' strategy, which is currently out for consultation with partners, details how the Council will meet government targets beyond 2009/10. However, the Council is not maximising the benefits of modern procurement practice and as a result is not maximising savings from purchasing.

Scoring the service

- 13 We have assessed Peterborough City Council as providing a 'good', two-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Figure 1 Scoring chart¹



Source: Audit Commission

¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

14 The service is a good, two-star service because of the following.

- The Council has one of the highest recycling and composting rates in the country. This is supported by very high resident satisfaction levels for refuse collection and recycling.
- An extensive and effective education programme is used to promote recycling using a range of media which is starting to reduce the amount going to landfill.
- An effective response is made to graffiti, fly-tipping, fly-posting, and abandoned vehicles resulting in a tidy district.
- The service has strong enforcement resulting in over 400 fixed penalty notices being issued in 2005/06.
- The refuse collection and disposal services are provided at some of the lowest costs per head in the country.
- Reduced collection costs are offered to trade waste customers who recycle, resulting in recycling rates of 33 per cent for commercial waste.
- The Council has a track record of working with partners, both locally and regionally, to reduce the amount of materials going to landfill.
- The Council has responded positively to low resident satisfaction to turn around underperforming services such as removing abandoned vehicles.
- The services are accessible for residents and innovative solutions have been provided to improve access for disabled tenants. Information is available in a wide range of languages, Braille and large print.
- All frontline staff have received Islamic Awareness training and carry language cards. 'New Link' interpreters work with the education and enforcement staff.
- The Council has encouraged local residents to take control of parks, nature reserves and other open spaces and actively promotes biodiversity.
- The Council has invested in its street scene services resulting in all high risk bus shelters being replaced, new supervised toilets being built, additional security in the car parks and the introduction of street wardens.
- A strong commitment to partnership working is demonstrated through regular environment action days which are undertaken with the police, fire service and probation service.

15 However:

- service standards and targets are not promoted for all aspects of the services provided;
- the amount of waste collected per head is amongst the highest in the country; and
- adequate procedures have not been implemented to ensure the prompt payment of fixed penalty notices.

16 The service has promising prospects for improvement because of the following.

- The Council's track record of improving street scene services is strong over the past two years.
- Service planning procedures developed in environmental services are used in the corporate business planning framework. This is supported by a strong project management framework.
- Strong leadership is provided by Councillors and senior officers. This is supported by enthusiastic and motivated front-line and support staff.
- Weaknesses identified in previous inspections have been acted upon such as the programme of replacing all the bus shelters in the city.
- A Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme strategy has been developed to prepare the Council to meet its targets after 2009/10.
- The service uses consultation effectively to promote service delivery and can demonstrate learning from consultation exercises.
- Plans are in place for a more strategic approach for delivering city centre functions via the street cleansing teams, street wardens and CCTV services.
- The Council has successfully attracted external funding for environmental projects which are either delivered directly or in partnership with other agencies.

17 However:

- improvements in key performance indicators have been mixed over the last three years
- robust procedures are not in place to ensure that the Council achieves greater value for money;
- a consistent corporate risk management culture is not embedded within the organisation;
- although complaint procedures are in place, the system is not being used effectively to drive service improvement; and
- corporate procurement is not maximising the potential that modern procurement practice offers.

Recommendations

- 18 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the council. In addition we identify the approximate costs² and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context the inspection team recommends that the Council should do the following:

Recommendation

R1 Produce a set of environmental criteria and measurable goals which demonstrate how the service will contribute to the Council's aspiration that Peterborough will become the environment capital of England.

- *Success against these goals should be clearly defined.*
- *These should be supported by challenging service standards and targets.*
- *Progress against these targets should be regularly monitored.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the Council will clearly be able to measure progress against its ambitious agenda; and
- the Council will be able to demonstrate success to local residents and to a wider national audience.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by September 2006.

² Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 percent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

Recommendation

R2 As part of the development of strategic procurement, establish practical strategic procurement tools and procedures covering areas to include:

- *performance improvement;*
- *strategic aims alignment;*
- *whole life costing; and*
- *total cost of ownership.*

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- this will help front line managers meet their responsibility to deliver procurement strategically and ensure that they are accounted for systematically at key procurement stages.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by December 2006.

Recommendation

R3 Publish service specific standards so that service users and local residents can understand the level of service they can expect to receive.

- *Service request examples include: how quickly fly-tips will be removed; how quickly a missed bin will be collected; how quickly offensive graffiti will be removed etc.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- street scene services will be more accountable to service users and residents; and
- service users will have more information on which to judge the quality of service received.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by December 2006.

Report

Context

The locality

- 19 Peterborough is located 78 miles north of London, midway between the East Anglian coast and the Midlands, north of the county of Cambridgeshire. The administrative area covers 632 square kilometres. The city itself covers an area of 343 square kilometres and is the sub-regional centre for north Cambridgeshire, south Lincolnshire and east Northamptonshire. There are 21 sites of special scientific interest, three special areas of conservation, one special protection area, four national nature reserves, 106 county wildlife sites and four local nature reserves. Peterborough has been designated as a growth area by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
- 20 According to the mid-2004 population estimates, there were 159,000 people living in Peterborough. Eighty eight per cent of residents live in urban areas with the remaining 12 per cent living in the 28 villages outside the city. The number of residents aged 16 to 64 is higher than the England average. People from black and minority ethnic communities represent 14.3 per cent, which is higher than both the regional and national averages.
- 21 Peterborough is the most deprived upper tier authority in the region. It ranks 100 out of 354 local authorities in England and 4 out of 48 in the East of England, where a rank of 1 is the most deprived. Major employers include Merloni Elettrodomestici UK Ltd., Perkins Engines Co. Ltd., Fairline Boats Plc., and the Peterborough Hospitals Trust.
- 22 Peterborough has been designated as one of four UK environment cities since 1992. The other three are Leeds, Leicester and Middlesbrough. The Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) which includes over 200 partners carries out research and implements projects to protect and improve the environment as well as promoting sustainable development.

The Council

- 23 In April 1998 the City Council achieved unitary status and is now responsible for all local government services in the district. The Council has a Conservative administration, with a majority of 33 out of 57 councillors. The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet political structure.
- 24 The Council's net revenue expenditure for 2005/06 is £205.5 million and general fund balances are £4.13 million. The Council employs more than 5,500 staff across all services.

- 25 Peterborough City Council has defined its strategy around six key priorities, which reflect both national and local priorities. They are:
- to improve the safety and feel of Peterborough;
 - to plan and deliver an attractive and environmentally friendly city;
 - to strengthen and diversify the economy;
 - to achieve the best possible health, housing and wellbeing;
 - to provide high quality opportunities for learning and ensure children are safe; and
 - to provide an effective, efficient and accessible council.

The Council's street scene service

- 26 In its publication *Street Scene – Learning from Audit and Inspection* (2002), the Audit Commission defined street scene as *'all the work that a Council does to care for its streets, including maintenance and management functions. This includes waste management and cleansing services, highway services, car parking services, grounds maintenance and integrated services.'*
- 27 The scope of this inspection has been based around these services apart from highway services. The inspection covered:
- waste management, including refuse collection, waste minimisation and recycling;
 - street cleaning, fly-tips, abandoned vehicles and graffiti;
 - car parks and public conveniences;
 - grounds and grass verge maintenance;
 - street furniture including bus shelters;
 - environmental sustainability; and
 - partnership working on wider environmental matters.
- 28 As a unitary authority, Peterborough City Council is responsible for both waste collection and disposal. The majority of residents have a black bin for refuse, a green bin for recycling and a brown bin for organic garden waste. This service is collected on alternate weeks; the black bin is collected one week and the brown and green the following week by different vehicles. Approximately 2,400 properties (such as flats) continue to receive a weekly collection due to space and access issues around the properties. In October 2005 the Council introduced a new fleet of collections vehicles.
- 29 The Council operates a materials recycling facility (MRF) in Fengate, two household recycling centres (HRC) in Dogsthorpe and Thorney, and 34 'bring sites' for recycling at various locations across the area.
- 30 The Council has a mixed service provision for environmental services. Some services are provided directly by the Council, some in partnership and some through contracts.

National context

- 31** The Government has set statutory performance standards for local authorities to reduce the amount of waste that is collected and to encourage more recycling. The Government is currently consulting on setting councils a recycling standard of up to 30 per cent by 2007/08. In addition, the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme provides a powerful financial incentive for local authorities to minimise waste sent to landfill.
- 32** Councils have a duty to keep their land clear of litter. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) gives a local authority power to deal with litter-based problems affecting its area, including issuing fixed penalty tickets to people who commit an offence by dropping litter. A Code of Practice, issued under the Act, recommends a 'clean as necessary' approach and specific levels of cleanliness for various environments. Under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act, an authority has the power to issue a notice to a private landowner to clean up their land and to undertake the cleansing itself if the landowner fails to act. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2003 strengthens a council's legislative powers for keeping the area clean.
- 33** The Government has promoted the 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' agenda and many local authorities have adopted similar aims.
- 34** Councils are expected to support the UK sustainable development strategy, 'Securing the Future', 2005. Indeed, many local authorities are at the forefront of efforts to achieve greater social, economic and environmental sustainability. Councils, such as Peterborough, are expected to use their powers as planning, housing and waste collection authorities, as well as their general wellbeing powers and community leadership, to achieve sustainable development. This includes working with others to promote energy conservation and efficiency, protect wildlife habits and promote biodiversity, reduce and mitigate climate change, and promote more sustainable patterns of development.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 35** Street scene services are provided by Environmental and Public Protection Services (EPPS) and Contract Services. The services aim to contribute to the six corporate aims, particularly those to improve the safety and feel of Peterborough; to plan and deliver an attractive and friendly city; and to provide an effective, efficient and accessible Council. To achieve these aims EPPS has developed its own specific aims:
- to protect, safeguard and improve the local community whilst ensuring effective street scene and waste management;
 - to promote and enforce the protection of health, welfare and safety of all within Peterborough;
 - to provide an effective public interface whilst supporting services through administration in EPPS and the provision of safe and secure facilities to enable the delivery of services through environmental services;
 - to encourage and promote a fair and safe trading environment; and
 - to encourage respect and high moral by the delivery of effective work life balance and providing opportunities for staff through development of their skills and abilities.
- 36** The community strategy (2005) has been put together by the Greater Peterborough Partnership based upon the views of local residents. The strategy includes eight 'breakthrough goals' one of which is 'to establish Peterborough as the environment capital of England'. The strategy states that growth has to lead to a cleaner and greener city based upon genuine environmental sustainability and an enhanced natural biodiversity. This includes exceeding English Nature targets for the provision of accessible open space, implementing the sustainable travel demonstration town initiative, encouraging businesses to seek alternative use for end of life products by March 2006 and achieve recycling levels above 40 per cent by 2008.
- 37** The Council has signed the Nottingham declaration and is currently preparing its first climate change strategy.

Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

Access, customer care and diversity

- 38** It is easy to contact the Council with a street scene issue. The Council has introduced one common telephone number for all street scene service requests and enquiries. The number is promoted extensively in publications produced by the Council. The Council website is easy to navigate and allows online reporting both directly through the site or via email.

- 39 The Council has introduced an innovative solution to improving recycling access for communities and disabled residents. Twenty-two underground recycling banks have been installed at eleven sites around the city. The banks have an access point that is just one metre from the floor which makes them particularly accessible for wheelchair users. Each bank can hold the equivalent of 22 wheeled bins. The sites are easier to clean and maintain than traditional 'bring' sites and are less obtrusive. In addition, noise pollution from these sites is significantly reduced.
- 40 The Council actively promotes its environmental services to new residents. An environment bag is delivered to new occupiers which includes how to recycle and compost, how to report fly-tipping, how to identify and report abandoned vehicles and details of partner organisations. The bags also contain free samples such as energy efficient light bulbs.
- 41 The Council has responded positively to complaints that rural parishes did not receive the same standard of service as the city. The 'Fix It Van' service, consisting of two specialist teams, provides planned and emergency street scene services to the 23 rural parishes. Works include, litter clearance, painting, repairs to street furniture, removal of fly-tips and graffiti, and general grounds maintenance work. Parish Councils can contact the teams via email, telephone or through the website.
- 42 The Council is addressing diversity issues in its actions. Frontline street scene staff have received Islamic Awareness training at the local mosque. Service publications are available in 22 languages, Braille and large print. All street scene staff carry a language card which they show to members of the public to identify their preferred choice of language. This information is then given to a 'New Link' interpreter. A 'New Link' interpreter goes out with the education and enforcement teams when they visit householders. However, the Council has not been successful in recruiting front line street scene staff from some of the ethnic communities.
- 43 Effective steps are taken to ensure easy and equitable access to environmental services. A 'pull out' service is available for infirm or disabled residents who may experience difficulty placing their wheeled bin at the boundary for collection. The service is reviewed annually to prevent abuse of the scheme. In addition, free clinical waste collections are available for householders.
- 44 The bulky collection service is well used by local people. Residents are entitled to one free collection of up to five items each year. The Council has decided that a free collection service provides better value for money than collecting fly-tipped material. In addition, it improves the visible appearance of gardens on estates where previously bulky items had been left. In the first nine months of the current financial year the Council has made 15,000 free collections. Residents have to pay if they want more than one collection each year. There have been 370 chargeable collections this year. However, customers are not able to pay for bulky refuse collection online. The Council is aware of this and is currently reviewing this part of the operation.

- 45 Whilst the Council widely promotes information on environment services it does not promote standards and targets for all aspects of the services provided. The Environmental Services Customer Charter is displayed in the Bridge House reception area, on the website and has been publicised in the 'Your Peterborough' newspaper which is delivered to all residents. This gives details on service response times for letters, telephone calls and reception visits. However, there is no information on how quickly service failures will be rectified or service requests actioned, such as time to clear a fly-tip or how quickly a missed bin would be collected for example. The absence of this detailed information makes it difficult for residents to be clear on the level of service they should expect to receive and are less likely to hold the Council to account for any underperformance. In addition, current service standards do not challenge EPPS to drive through improvements to make Peterborough become the environment capital of England.

Service outcomes for users and the community

Waste hierarchy – refuse, recycling and composting

- 46 The amount of household waste either recycled or composted in Peterborough is amongst the best of unitary councils. In 2004/05, the Council recycled or composted 27 per cent of its waste. During 2005/06, the Council has introduced a three bin collection scheme; a green bin for dry recyclables, a green bin for compostable garden waste, and a black bin for residual waste. The Council expects to exceed its 30 per cent recycling target for 2005/06. Unaudited figures for the first nine months of the current financial year show a combined recycling and composting rate of just under 38 per cent.
- 47 The refuse and recycling services are held in high regard by local residents. Satisfaction for both waste collection and with recycling facilities are amongst the highest in the country. The Council seeks resident opinion about the services provided on an ongoing basis.
- 48 The Council actively promotes recycling amongst its trade waste customers. Commercial recycling rates of 33 per cent are currently being achieved by offering reduced collection prices to customers who have agreed to join the recycling scheme.
- 49 The Council has an extensive education programme in place to promote waste minimisation and recycling. The Education Officer uses a wide range of media to promote this message. The materials recycling facility has a large classroom which can accommodate up to thirty students at a time. The facility is well used by local primary and secondary schools as well as voluntary organisations. Following a six months pilot at three primary schools, the Council has launched a major Environment project covering all key stage one and two national curriculum subjects for all the primary school pupils in the city.

- 50 The Council has a track record of working with partners to reduce the amount of materials going to landfill. These have included distributing furniture to needy households and converting waste materials into play equipment. A successful partnership has been in place for the past 18 months with a local charity to repair and reuse electrical equipment following the introduction of the waste electrical and electronic equipment directive which came into force in 2005. Compass is an organisation that provides electrical goods to qualifying households in the city as well as providing skills training for individuals who for whatever reason have not thrived in mainstream education. Staff at the Compass facility strip down electrical items for recycling as well as repair items such as computers, washing machines and fridges.
- 51 The Council has a track record of working with partners to increase recycling rates. Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) is a partnership between the Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the five Waste Collection Authorities in Cambridgeshire. In 2004/05, RECAP produced the highest recycling rates of any partnership in the country. The partnership has made a Beacon Award application in waste and recycling.
- 52 At 72 per cent, resident satisfaction with waste disposal is below average. The Council has responded to this by extending the opening times at the household recycling centre (HRC) and increased the number of staff available at the site to help members of the public with bulky items. In addition, a second split level HRC is planned for the south of the city.
- 53 The amount of waste collected per head is high when compared to other councils. In 2004/05, the Council collected 576 kilograms of waste per head. This is one of the highest collections in the country. The Council is working to improve this situation. Since April 2005, the Council has imposed a strict policy on not collecting side waste and is targeting the Gladstone area where high residual waste levels have been identified for additional education and enforcement work. Collection rates for the first nine months of 2005/06 are 1 per cent lower than at the same time in 2004/05. In addition, a waste minimisation officer has been employed who has put an action plan in place to focus on waste reduction and education across the city.

Keeping the district clean

- 54 The Council is effective in keeping the streets free from litter in most places. Street sweeping is proportionate to need and is effectively undertaken resulting in a low level of litter in litter hotspots such as school routes and around shopping areas. Litter bins, which are regularly emptied, are appropriately located, such as near fast food outlets and at bus stops. Through the provision of its street cleaning service the Council is contributing towards Peterborough being an environment city.
- 55 The street cleaning service is highly visible with uniformed staff and standardised livery on all vehicles. The effective approach to street cleaning is reflected in performance information. Unaudited data for the current year indicate that 16 per cent of sites were below Grade B for cleanliness (BVPI 199a). This exceeds the national average of 25 per cent.

- 56 Fly-tips are removed promptly. On average fly-tips are removed within 24 hours. Known 'grot spots' have been identified through the fly-tipping action group (FLAG). FLAG, which has its own website, is a partnership involving the Council, Peterborough Environment City Trust, the Environment Agency, the Fire Service, Network Rail, the Drainage Board, Fenland District Council and ten resident associations. The ten worst fly-tipping areas were identified following public consultation. A series of measures have been put in place to prevent fly-tips in these areas. Measures have included surveillance cameras, shrub planting and publicised prosecutions. In partnership with a private waste company and UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development, FLAG has set up the 'Peterborough Ecotrade Recycling Centre' to capture and recycle construction, demolition and refurbishment waste from small trades. The Centre aims to recycle 80 per cent of the waste brought in.
- 57 The group have just introduced a business approval scheme to promote those businesses that take active care of the environment.
- 58 In 2003/04, customer satisfaction with the street cleaning service was very low. Of particular concern to residents was the high number of abandoned cars in the area. The Council has reacted positively to these concerns about abandoned vehicles. A specialist team has been set up to remove abandoned vehicles within 24 hours of identification. The police and other partners we spoke to stated that abandoned vehicles is no longer a problem for the area. The scheme has been extended so that untaxed vehicles are now removed and impounded.
- 59 The immediate area around the train station suffers from heavy littering. The current sweep and litter pick schedule for this area is not sufficient. The area spoils what is an otherwise predominantly litter-free city centre.

Maintaining and managing the street scene

- 60 The Council has improved the street scene in some of the worst areas of the city through partnership working. 'environment action' days are held approximately once a month involving the Council, police service, fire service and the probation service. A specific area is targeted, which could be as specific as one street, for improvement by highly visible teams. Residents receive advice on community safety, crime prevention and fire safety as well as having their area cleaned and repaired. We were shown several examples of where residents had taken on additional responsibility for maintaining the area after an action day.
- 61 The Council has an effective partnership with the probation service. A team of young offenders is made available to rectify street scene problems three days each week. The work which is co-ordinated by the Council includes graffiti removal, painting, repairs to street furniture, cleaning and rubbish removal.
- 62 The city centre park is maintained to a high standard. The park has received a 'Green Flag' award for the standards achieved. The park, which is included in the city's closed circuit television camera system (CCTV), is well-used by residents.

- 63 Car parking provision in Peterborough is good. The Council operates and maintains 20 car parks in the city. These are monitored by the Council's CCTV and are regularly patrolled by the street wardens and car park inspectors. Car park maps of sites are available for the public via leaflets and the website.
- 64 Grounds and verge maintenance is good. High visibility teams clean and trim the verges. Hedges are not trimmed in spring and summer so as to not disturb nesting birds.
- 65 The Council has taken a strong enforcement stance. The enforcement team has been working with the education team in high visibility operations to enforce the correct segregation of waste for the three bin scheme. In the first nine months of 2005/06 over 400 fixed penalty notices have been issued covering a range of street scene offences such as for fly-tipping, fly posting, littering and vehicle littering. Information is obtained through officer observation and surveillance, CCTV, and vehicle recognition software at the HRC. The team provide help to other services, for example, issuing fixed penalty notices to parents of truant children.
- 66 The Council has not implemented adequate procedures to ensure the prompt payment of its fixed penalty notices. If this is not rectified future enforcement work could be undermined.

General environment issues

- 67 The Council has taken a robust approach to promoting biodiversity and sustainability in the city and surrounding areas. The Peterborough in Bloom Forum was established in 2003 to promote environmental sustainability and support local groups with environmental projects. The Forum is a partnership between the Council, English Nature, the Probation Service and local residents and companies. The Forum has attracted external funding which has been used to successfully develop small recreation areas, allotments, reclaim waste land, and promote home vegetable gardening.
- 68 The Council has effective land use policies in place. In 2004/05, 97 per cent of all new development was on previously (brownfield) developed land. This places the Council amongst the best performers in the country. In addition, no brownfield land was classified as derelict.
- 69 The Council is a committed partner of the Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) which it helped to establish in 1999. The Council has encouraged and supported PECT's development to achieve self sufficiency and to access external funding. Close links are realised through an annual service level agreement between the two organisations. PECT and the Council have developed the Business and Environment Management Scheme to help businesses reduce their impact on the environment. Since it started over 100 companies have joined the scheme. They are helped to reduce waste production and increase energy and resource efficiency. Companies are supported to complete the requirements of Phase 1 of the new environment standard BS8555. The scheme was awarded a Green Apple for Environmental Best Practice in 2003.

- 70 The Council has developed strategies and policies to protect and enhance wildlife habitats. These include the 'tree and woodland strategy' to protect trees and woodlands, the 'living land project' to empower local communities to improve local biodiversity and green space, the 'hedgerow policy' to prevent disturbance to nesting birds and the 'wet woodland project' to increase the amount of wet woodland habitat. So far improvements have been made to Central Park, Woodfield Park, Stanley Recreation Ground and Cuckoo Hollow Werrington.
- 71 The Council does not have targets in place to reduce the amount of waste generated by each service. The LATS Action Plan has a target for each service to have waste minimisation and recycling targets in place by June 2006.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 72 Peterborough City Council understands value for money in providing street scene services. EPPS regularly and routinely benchmarks both costs and performance against other environmental service providers.

For the past five years Peterborough City Council has consistently delivered some of the lowest waste collection and disposal costs in the country. In 2004/05, the cost of waste collection was £36.31 per head and the cost of waste disposal was £33.13 per head. Both of which are amongst the most cost effective 25 per cent of councils in England. At the same time, the Council has one of the highest recycling and composting rates in the country. The RECAP partnership has the highest recycling and composting rate for a partnership in the country. Strong performance with recycling has generated annual savings for the Council of over £130,000 from landfill diversion. These savings have been reinvested back into the service.

- 73 The materials recycling facility (MRF), an asset wholly owned by the Council, helps to keep disposal costs low as well as improving recycling and composting rates. The MRF is the basis for the partnership known as the Peterborough Cell which involves Waste Collection Authorities from Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. Income realised from the MRF is reinvested in the facility and in reduced processing costs for the Council. The additional waste handled also helps to keep operating efficiencies high.
- 74 The Council can demonstrate value for money improvements with its electrical appliance recycling facility provided in partnership with Compass. Part of the set-up costs were funded through the European Regional Development Fund. The facility avoids hazardous waste disposal costs, reuses 50 per cent and recycles 35 per cent of throughput. The facility aims to be completely self financing by April 2007.
- 75 The Council has invested in the street scene. In the past two years all bus shelters have been replaced using vandal proof materials. New supervised public toilet facilities have been opened in the city centre. Extensive CCTV has been installed covering the city centre and car parks. High visibility street wardens, who carry out a meet and greet function, patrol the city centre and car parks.

- 76 Environmental and contract services have demonstrated strong professional and technical experience in specifying services and managing contracts. Goods and services are procured on an objective basis within transparent contract standing orders. Historically, contracts have been awarded on a quality and cost evaluation and tendering exercises have been taken as opportunities to review the way how services can be delivered. However, it is not clear how fundamental this review process has been or what innovative forms of service delivery have emerged as a result. There is no presumption towards public or private sector provision of services but rather environmental services looks to select providers that will produce a good service at an acceptable price. For example grounds maintenance is provided by both public and private contractors which enable the service to make up to date comparisons on quality and price. Through benchmarking and working with other local authorities, contract services has developed good market intelligence. There remains scope for improving cost effectiveness through innovation in procurement practice and the service is committed to working with the recently formed corporate procurement unit and the regional centre of excellence to achieve greater efficiencies in the future.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 77 The Council has a positive record in responding to external inspections and internal reviews and service improvements have followed. The most recent Corporate Assessment judged the Council is improving well and demonstrating 2-star overall performance when compared to other upper tier councils. The Council has improved access to services and made performance improvements in priority services such as recycling, community housing, and contributed to improvement in some areas of community safety. Between 2002/03 and 2004/05, half of key performance indicators improved. Half of performance indicators are now above average.
- 78 Weaknesses identified in the 2003 inspection of environment and street scene have been addressed. For example, the Council has targeted improvement action on litter hot spots and graffiti, seeking to engage community groups and partners in providing solutions. There is an increasingly co-ordinated approach to education and enforcement and investment in street sweeping equipment. A positive response to external inspection and critical friend reviews enables the environment and street scene services to maintain its track record of achievement and continuous improvement.
- 79 There have been service improvements which are visible and are clearly recognised by both councillors and the public. These have been achieved through effective partnership working both internally and externally. This is evidenced through environmental action days and by the close working relationship between CCTV, street cleansing, street wardens, community support officers and the police. This has led to quicker removal of abandoned vehicles, improved enforcement and publicity to tackle fly posting and fly-tipping and dedicated quick response teams to tackle graffiti.
- 80 The Council has worked effectively with partners to increase recycling rates. In 2004/05 RECAP produced the highest recycling rates of any partnership in the country and in March 2006 the partnership was awarded Beacon Status.
- 81 There have been improvements in parks and open spaces. For example, Central Parks has received the prestigious Green Flag award and the council, in partnership with the Peterborough Environment City Trust has enlisted the assistance of 'friends of the park' groups to report problems and even get involved in clear up operations.

24 Environment - Street Scene | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 82 The Council has reacted positively to criticism from a previous environment inspection concerning the quality of bus shelters in the area. All shelters have been replaced over the past two years. Shelters in the city centre are maintained by Adshell. Other shelters have a mesh instead of glass. The mesh is very tough and very easy to clean as paint does not bond easily to the surface. The shelters are clean and well-maintained. Toilets are regularly checked and cleaned. A redundant underground toilet in the central square has been closed pending redevelopment of the area and new supervised toilets opened at the welcome centre in the car park next to the town hall.
- 83 Improvements in environmental performance indicators have been mixed. The Council has achieved good rates of both recycling and composting and is set to exceed the target set for it by the government during 2005/06. Public satisfaction data is mixed but the most recent results are from 2003/04 and a number of improvements have been introduced since then. However, there has been a failure to reduce the volume of waste collected which has been in the lowest 25 per cent of all councils for the last three years. There had been some reduction in volume between 2003 and 2004, but the introduction of the three bin collection in 2004/05 saw volumes rise again. The Council predicts there will be a small reduction in volume collected during 2005/06 but this is still likely to mean that the Council will be amongst the worst performing. Failure to improve consistently upon its environmental performance indicators calls into doubt the Council's ambitions to be the environment capital of England.
- 84 The Council has not established a robust process to ensure it consistently achieves greater value for money. The Council has no ideological opposition to contracting out services; indeed Service Team operates in the north of the city, and favours a mixed economy of service provision. However, the Council recognises that more rigorous challenge of current service delivery is needed; comparing with the best that other service providers can offer through the application of more innovative practices and has engaged a consultant to investigate options. Ineffective or cursory challenge of existing service provision is unlikely to lead to step change in service improvement or the achievement of value for money.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 85 Peterborough is designated as an environment city and the Council has clear environmental priorities and targets. These are reflected in the community strategy, the corporate strategy, the best value performance plan and business plans. The Council has developed a joint waste management strategy with Cambridgeshire County Council and the five other districts, which has aspirational targets around waste minimisation. It is less clear how the Councillors intend to meet the challenging aspiration to be the environment capital of England. There are no measurable criteria for achieving this goal and no action plan to ensure that step change occurs.

- 86 The Council has responded effectively to the financial risks posed by legislation on the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) and prepared a robust draft LATS Strategy based on extensive analysis and options appraisal. This recommends a preferred option for the achievement of reductions in the volume of waste being sent to landfill whilst also recognising that in the longer term investment in treatment facilities will be required if the Council is to divert kitchen waste from its black bin residual waste collection. This is accompanied by a draft action plan, which will be finalised once councillors have adopted the strategy. The key aims for the period to 2008/09 centre on waste minimisation; improving reuse of waste materials; increasing the proportion of waste recycled and composted; establishing other waste treatments as an alternative to landfill and updating the joint waste management strategy in the light of the national context and emerging technologies.
- 87 The council has recognised that local communities have differing needs with regards to open spaces. It has engaged specialist consultants to help develop a strategy for the future of open spaces. This follows on from an open space survey which was undertaken in-house.
- 88 The Council has introduced many of the elements of an effective corporate performance management framework but they are not yet embedded. To improve focus on delivery and better alignment with strategic priorities a 'business planning' approach was introduced in June 2005. The associated performance management framework has introduced quarterly reporting of business plans and key performance indicators to directors' group, cabinet and scrutiny committee. Reports are produced in a user friendly 'traffic lights' format which allows the reviewer to focus quickly on problem areas. A performance review group of officers and members has also been introduced which reports to the corporate programme management board. Services are also monitored monthly at departmental management team meetings where corrective action, if required, is initiated. Effective performance management is an essential prerequisite for continuous service improvement.
- 89 Effective service planning in environmental and contract services pre-dates the revised corporate business planning framework. Notwithstanding, environmental services demonstrate commitment to the revised performance framework and have been formulating business plans during this year for the period 2006 to 2009 with the aid of corporate performance improvement advisors. Business plans include a strengths, weaknesses, improvements, performance and education (SWIPE) analysis, service improvement plans with largely SMART targets; a detailed costs analysis and workforce planning considerations. Staff interviewed confirmed that appraisal performance development (APD) interviews are happening across the department and are helpful in linking the job they do to corporate objectives. Robust service planning allows services to be resourced and effectively managed in a way that supports strategic aims.

26 Environment - Street Scene | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 90 Project management has been a strength in Environmental and Contract Services for some time. For example, the three phases of the alternate weekly three bin refuse and recycling scheme was delivered to timescale and budget with learning transferred from one phase of the project to the next. The Council has over the last twelve months strengthened its corporate project management capability with a corporate methodology based on Prince2. Four project management boards have been established reflecting the Council's priorities for action, which report to that corporate project management board. This activity is supported by the corporate programme and project management team who have facilitated introductory training for over 200 officers since June 2005. Effective project management better enables the effective use of resources in pursuit of corporate objectives.
- 91 The approach to setting targets is proportionate and challenging across the services. There is a focus on incremental continuous improvement but also taking account of relevant national targets. Delivery on target performance is more mixed. Of the nine environmental performance indicators reported to councillors at the end of 2004/05 only three hit their target, five had not been achieved and one was not relevant. Unaudited data for 2005/06 suggests that performance has improved in the last year. Ambitious but realistic target setting is essential for a culture of continuous improvement.
- 92 Councillors are supportive of environmental services objectives. Ordinary ward councillors are active in walking the streets and reporting problems and issues of concern to their constituents. Cabinet members and the Leader of the Council also meet with directors and service heads on a monthly basis to discuss performance and get early warnings of potential problems. Both cabinet members and ordinary ward councillors have demonstrated a willingness to be involved in environmental action days. The active involvement of councillors reflects the strategic priority which the Council attaches to planning and delivering an attractive and environmentally friendly city.
- 93 Leadership is strong from both senior officer and cabinet members, and other officers exhibited knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm. Councillors are regarded as supportive even when they are reporting issues or service failures as they are acting as 'eyes and ears' for service improvement. There is willingness to solve problems collaboratively and staff recognise that 'silo working' and departmental barriers have diminished in the last 18 months. There is now a requirement that business plans and project plans be circulated among directors and heads of department to ensure that resource implications of cross-cutting initiatives be accounted for at an early stage. However, it is not clear whether cross cutting initiatives are assessed for their environmental impact.

- 94 Environmental and Contract Services supports personal development and is committed to staff training. All council directorates have Investors in People (IIP) accreditation and the environmental services were re-accredited in November 2005. Some of the key features are; the annual ADP interviews with six-monthly reviews to measure progress against objectives; a departmental training programme managed by a training co-ordinator and regular one to one meetings between line managers and staff. In contract services, managers or supervisors have regular meetings with refuse or street cleaning teams to discuss team targets and to cascade relevant corporate or service management messages. Environmental services had a staff suggestion scheme well in advance of the corporate scheme and this has led to practical improvements in the way that services are delivered. Good communication with staff and commitment to personal development offers everyone the opportunity to understand the role they play in achieving corporate and service objectives.
- 95 Environmental and contract services has an effective computer system for managing service requests. All service requests or complaints are logged on a proprietary computer system which both allows officers to diary their work commitments more efficiently and offers management reporting which can provide data on service performance. Thus far, the management reporting capability has not been fully developed to support more efficient and effective ways of working.
- 96 A consistent corporate risk management culture is not yet embedded within the Council. Risk management was identified as a weakness in the Council's 2002 corporate performance assessment. Significant improvements have been made since then including the introduction of corporate and operational risk registers and regular reviews. However, the Council recognised that there was not a standard approach across the council and produced risk management guidelines in November 2005 to set out a consistent approach to manage the Council's risks.
- 97 The complaints system is not being used to drive service improvements. There is a rigorous complaint procedure and each complaint is logged and investigated. Some service delivery has been amended as a result but some of the complaints records the Council holds are incomplete making follow up difficult. As a result, the Council cannot demonstrate it has resolved all complaints made against the service. Furthermore, there is no mechanism for systematic learning from complaints which is shared across services. Failure to learn systematically from complaints is an opportunity lost.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 98 There are robust proposals to ensure a more strategic and cohesive delivery of city centre functions through the creation of a City Centre Director post. This will include bringing street wardens and CCTV services under the direction of one manager, transferring the commissioning role for landscape, street cleaning, and car parking to build services which are more responsive to the needs of the public and other city centre stakeholders.

28 Environment - Street Scene | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 99 The Council has an effective medium-term financial strategy which ensures that resources are directed towards corporate priorities. This is a rolling three year strategy which complements the tight budgetary control exercised by cabinet members, directors and heads of service. This has meant that additional posts to meet legislative requirements have been secured and the funding of Street Wardens has been mainstreamed into Council budgets allowing the service's continuation after time limited government funding has ceased. All service developments and bids to the capital programme must now be supported by a robust and costed business case.
- 100 Opportunities to maximise income are pursued to reduce the burden on Council budgets. For example the MRF accepts waste from Milton Keynes and this has helped to fund investment in the development of the facility. Contract services have also undertaken glass collections from bring sites for Huntingdonshire District Council. The Council also has a recognised capability to bid for external funding and will seek to access alternative sources of funding in the future, either on its own or as part of partnership arrangements. The funding of some new posts will be possible because high recycling rates for the next three years will generate income from the sale of landfill credits to other authorities.
- 101 Human resource practices have been developed which support the needs of the Council. Departmentally led workforce planning has been introduced as a feature of business planning to assist with predicting staffing requirements, skills or capacity gaps and succession planning. A management competency framework has recently been introduced to set out the behaviours which characterise successful job performance. There are consistent efforts to address absence management through the Council's attendance policy and the early involvement of occupational health. This has resulted in achievement of best quartile performance of 8.58 days in 2004/05. Environmental services has recently been re-accredited with 'Investors in People' status.
- 102 The Council is now making better progress on diversity issues. A Diversity Officer was appointed in 2005 and a race equality scheme (RES) action plan developed. The Council expects to reach stage 3 of the RES process by March 2006 and both EPPS and contract services submitted RES plans well in advance of the deadline. Following a review the Council is now developing department-based race and disability equality schemes for implementation in 2006/07.
- 103 There is effective and improving internal communication with important messages being made available on the public drive, through cascade briefings and the staff magazine. The Council has also recently developed an internal communications toolkit for managers to ensure consistency and complete coverage in the way that corporate messages are disseminated. Good internal communication ensures staff are clear about what is happening in the Council and how they can contribute to corporate priorities.
- 104 The Council is making progress on diversity issues. A diversity officer was appointed in 2005 and a race equality scheme (RES) and action plan developed. The Council expects to reach stage 3 of the RES process by March 2006. Following a review the Council is now developing department based race and disability equality schemes for implementation in 2006/07.

- 105** The service has a number of knowledgeable and committed officers throughout all levels of the structure who demonstrate a desire to improve services and achieve the corporate objective of 'To plan and deliver an attractive and environmentally friendly city'. Officers interviewed recognised the need to work in partnership, both internally and externally to deliver improvement and the need to better engage the public.
- 106** The ability to build effective partnerships which supplement the Council's capacity is a strength. Some of these are less formal, for example the partnerships with Probation services or the 'friends of the park' groups, while others are more structured with formal service level agreements, for example the partnership with the Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) which draws in £36 of external funding and sponsorship for every £1 spent by the Council. PECT was originally set up by the Council as a new charitable trust specifically as a vehicle to draw in additional funding. Environmental services are also seeking to develop a regional approach to capacity building and is working with other councils and the regional assembly to achieve this goal.
- 107** Environmental and contract services are recognised within the Council as one of the most proactive and innovative departments in the development of consultation and communication. For example there was comprehensive consultation on the introduction of the three bin refuse collection with road shows, articles in the local press and the Council's newsheet and interviews on local radio. There is also regular dialogue with residents' associations and community leaders of ethnic minority communities. An officer from New Link is working with environmental services one day a week to improve dialogue with diverse communities. Corporately, the Council is also building its capacity with the development of a communication and consultation strategy and the recent appointment of an engagement and consultation officer. There is a consultation diary on the Council's website which prevents overlapping consultation exercises being run at the same time and the citizens' panel is about to be relaunched. Effective engagement and communication means that the Council can deliver services that the public understands.
- 108** The Council's website is being continually developed to allow service users both to access information about services. For example there are now 'frequently asked question' (FAQs) sections on how to report fly-tipping, street cleaning, graffiti removal and syringe removal. Development of electronic media improves the accessibility and responsiveness of the service.
- 109** The Council has been willing to use external consultants or draw on external experience to supplement capacity. The review of contract services and the removal of the depot to another location by September 2006 is being project managed by an external consultant.

30 Environment - Street Scene | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 110** The Council has been unable to deliver Peterborough Direct as the 'one stop shop' that was envisaged at the outset. Technological difficulties with customer relationship management software and the location of the 'walk-in centre' in what prove to be an unsuccessful location in the Central Library have been barriers to success. For environmental services this has meant that Peterborough Direct has only been the first point of contact routing callers to administrative staff in Environmental Services, so anticipated efficiencies and business process re-engineering have not been achieved. The Council recognise this weakness and has now secured funding of over £1 million from efficiency savings and developed a project plan, which is reported to the corporate programme board managed by the Director of Environment. The target date for the integration with Flare system is now the end of July 2006.
- 111** Corporate procurement is not maximising the potential that modern procurement practice offers. The corporate procurement strategy has only been in place since September 2005 and the corporate procurement team, which has only been in place since August 2005 is still developing its skills, and capacity and building relationships with the Regional Centre of Excellence. Historically, there has been a devolved approach to procurement and some departments including Environmental services and contract services have demonstrated professional and technical expertise in specifying services and managing contracts. It is anticipated that devolved procurement will continue but with increasing input from the corporate procurement team. However, there has been little innovation and the Council recognise that they are not as advanced as some other councils, the concept of whole life costing is only now emerging. The immediate objectives of the corporate team are to develop e-procurement, a contracts database, revisions to contract standing orders and the development of e-tendering. A disjointed approach to procurement means that savings are not being maximised and costs are not being driven out of purchasing and service delivery.