

Service Inspection Report

November 2006



Environment - Streetscene

Stafford Borough Council

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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 (KLOEs) 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 Stafford Borough Council delivers a 'good' two-star environment streetscene service, and prospects for improvement are promising.
- 2 The Council has a strong vision of environmental improvements. It has set clear aims and priorities to maintain and improve open spaces, and waste management, within the borough. It has shown leadership and commitment to the environment and is investing extra money to improve the local environment. The Council links service plans to its own aims but does not always check that its actions, or the outcomes, have worked in the way they hoped in intended.
- 3 The streets of Stafford are generally clean. The Council:
 - regularly checks to see whether streets are clean;
 - responds quickly when an area gets dirty; and
 - is prepared to change how it looks after an area if this will help keep it cleaner or improve community safety.

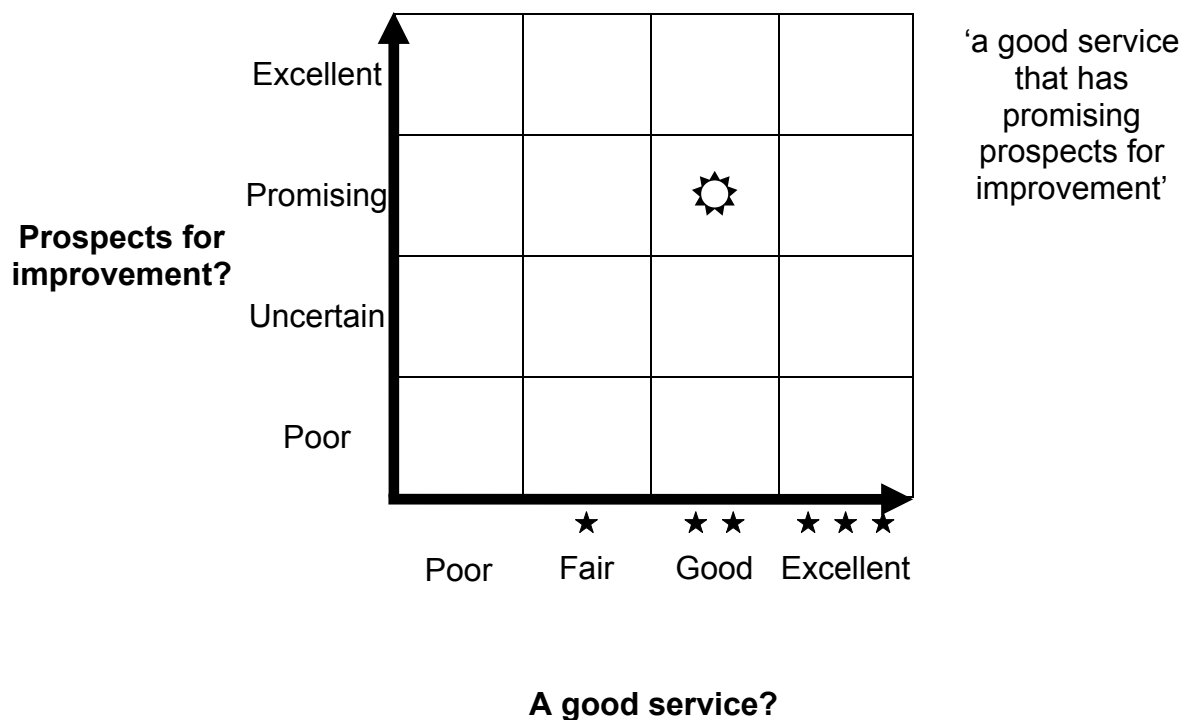
New vehicles, new cleaning teams and seven day working are helping keep the area cleaner but the Council has yet to use all its powers to encourage people to not drop litter in the first place.

- 4 Recycling is now effective but has been poor in the past. New recycling and composting collections have increased the amount of household waste recycled. The Council recycled more waste than it had to in 2005/06 and took less waste to disposal sites, but total waste collected is increasing. The Council does not fully understand why this is but plans are progressing well to ensure that improvements continue.
- 5 The Council takes a robust approach to environmental sustainability. It has introduced new local nature reserves, re-introduced some native tree species to the borough and has made changes to how the Council works. The compost from the garden waste collection is used to help grow a special grass that is then used to generate power in the borough.
- 6 Using Council services is not as easy as it should be. Not all Council offices are accessible to people with limited mobility and less than one-third of telephone queries are dealt with by the person answering the call. However, the Council will collect waste from householders who are unable to put the waste out themselves.

Scoring the service

- 7 We have assessed Stafford Borough 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.

8 The service is a good, two-star service because:

- the Council has clear aims and priorities in relation to management of its public space and waste management and has increased its financial commitment to these using both internal and external funds;
- the Council is keeping the streets free from litter and maintaining its open spaces to good standard;
 - it has a flexible and responsive 'streetscene' service, carrying out regular and comprehensive inspections and carrying out targeted action in litter hotspots;
 - public satisfaction with standards of cleanliness of the borough compares well against other councils;
 - the Council works well with local partners to maximise impact on the streetscene;
- recycling is now effective;
 - the Council exceeded its 2005/06 statutory recycling target, recycling 25 per cent of household waste (unaudited figures), although previous performance has been poor;
 - the amount of waste taken for disposal has dropped;
- a strong emphasis is placed by the Council on both biodiversity and sustainability and it has received a number of awards in these areas;
- the Council allocates resources in line with priorities and both waste and streetscene services have received priority monies aimed specifically at increasing value for money through improved service performance and satisfaction;
 - the waste management and street cleansing services both deliver value for money; and
- the Council is taking a number of actions to enhance education on waste and cleanliness issues.

9 However:

- kerbside recycling has yet to be fully rolled out across the borough to all areas where the Council considers this is viable although coverage has increased to 93 per cent;
- total waste collected is still rising;
- contacting and accessing the Council's service is not as easy as it should be;
 - there is no overall approach or assessment of services for equality and diversity;
 - some reception areas require people to climb stairs or use lifts;
 - over two-thirds of telephone calls have to be referred before a callers query can be dealt with successfully;

8 Environment - Streetscene | Scoring the service

- value for money is not systematically monitored and reviewed in relation to street cleansing; and
- the Council has not been pro-active in its use of enforcement.

10 The service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- the Council displays clear leadership in waste management. It has strong vision of environmental improvement which is clearly linked to community aims;
- the Council is investing in the Streetscene and Waste services such as infrastructure and recycling, to improve their impact on the overall streetscene of the borough;
- the Council's Streetscene service is establishing a track record of making improvements that the community notice such as improved fly-tip response, and street cleanliness in the Town centres and a truly integrated service;
- the Council's environment services have won a number of awards reflecting their commitment to the streetscene such as Green Apple awards, National Grid community 21 award and Britain in Bloom;
- the Council responds well to information from users;
- the Council's website has recently been improved in relation to information provision and on line facilities available; and
- the Council is actively preparing for the re-tender of the waste collection contract and using pilots in the borough to establish a range of potential service methods.

11 However:

- whilst service plans have clear objectives linked to local and national objectives some of the targets are not SMART having defined milestones or responsibility.

Recommendations

- 12 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 Develop effective arrangements to manage the performance of Service Plans to include:

- *public facing, clear and challenging targets with quantified measurable outcomes and clearly assigned responsibility; and*
- *SMART action plans.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- *the ability to manage progress and take remedial action when required; and*
- *increased likelihood of desired outcome and improvement of service delivery such as improvements in waste recycling and minimisation.*

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2007.

Recommendation

R2 Develop and implement systems to support the monitoring, review and understanding of the value for money of the service and all its elements. To include:

- *benchmarking of service cost and performance and establishing a baseline assessment of value for money;*
- *establishing comparative unit cost performance and quality data; and*
- *ensuring managers and Councillors consider cost information alongside performance information as part of the performance management of the service.*

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.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- *full understanding of the value for money provided by all elements of its streetscene services;*
- *improved targeting of actions to improve value for money to areas most in need of this improvement action;*
- *improved value for money of services; and*
- *ability to demonstrate value for money of the service to the public*

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2007.

Recommendation

R3 Ensure a timely overview and scrutiny process is developed that truly challenges Council decision making to include:

- *timely reports that; reflect current performance, have effective commentary and analysis of information; and*
- *increased involvement of scrutiny in decision making.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- *improved focus on performance; and*
- *effective challenge of decisions.*

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2007.

Report

Context

The locality

- 13 Stafford is the county town of Staffordshire in the West Midlands region. The borough is mainly rural and covers almost 600 square kilometres, being the largest geographical area in the County which impacts on the streetscene and waste collection services. The borough has three main settlements of Stafford, Stone and Eccleshall and has a population of 122,500 of which around 60 per cent live in urban areas and the remainder in the rural area which accounts for two thirds of the borough. Stafford's economic activity is concentrated in the service sector and local government. The M6 and the West Coast Mainline both pass through the borough, resulting in a significant number of jobs in warehousing and distribution.
- 14 Compared with the England average, Stafford residents have marginally lower earnings, have slightly lower education attainment levels, have a lower unemployment rate and are slightly healthier. The proportion aged under 19 is below the national average. The age breakdown of the population mirrors that of the region and England.
- 15 The borough has a lower than average deprivation ranking of 244 out of 354 councils nationally with 1 being the most deprived. Three per cent of the population that live in the most deprived wards in the country live in Stafford. In the region of the West Midlands, Stafford is ranked 26 out of the 33 local authorities.
- 16 Unemployment for the borough is 1.5 per cent, which is lower than both the regional and national averages of 1.9 and 2 per cent respectively. The 2001 census of the population indicates that 4.43 per cent of the population of the borough come from black and minority ethnic groups, which is significantly lower than the regional average of 13.86 per cent and the England average of 13 per cent. The Indian community in particular is significantly smaller in Stafford compared with the rest of the West Midlands at 0.6 per cent compared to 3.4 per cent respectively.

The Council

- 17 Stafford has 59 elected councillors (40 Conservative, 14 Labour and 5 Liberal Democrat) and the next elections are due in May 2007. The Council has had a Leader and Cabinet style of governance since May 1999. The Cabinet has five portfolio holders, excluding the Leader, and all are drawn from the Conservative group. Twenty-seven new councillors were elected at the last local elections in May 2003. The Council's management team consists of the Chief Executive and two strategic directors with nine heads of service.

- 18 For 2006/07, the Council has overall net revenue spend of £14.8 million which is a 5.7 per cent increase on the previous year. Stafford Borough Council employs 663 full time equivalent staff across all services.
- 19 The Council is aiming to 'lead a community and borough which is Prosperous, Safe, Healthy, Clean and Green'. This is underpinned by four key priority areas for 2003 to 2007:
- Prosperity;
 - Community Safety;
 - Management of Public Space; and
 - Waste Management.
- 20 The Council's aims are closely aligned to themes in the Community Plan 2003/06:
- planning for the future;
 - employment opportunities;
 - attracting resources;
 - youth and community development;
 - community safety;
 - health and lifestyle;
 - waste minimisation;
 - recycling and the efficient use of resources;
 - protecting and enhancing the environment; and
 - transportation.

For each of the above theme a set of aims and objectives have been established, together with a number of projects. The key partners that contribute to each theme are identified in the Community Plan and it is clear that Stafford's environmental services need to play an important part to deliver these, especially 'Waste minimisation, recycling and the efficient use of resources' and 'Protecting and enhancing the environment'.

National context

- 21 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 Council was set a standard of 10 per cent recycling or composting by 2003/04 and 18 per cent by 2005/06. The Government has recently set the Council a recycling and composting standard of 20 per cent by 2007/08. In addition, the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme provides a powerful financial incentive for authorities to minimise waste sent to landfill.

- 22 Councils have a duty to keep their land clear of litter. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 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 2005 strengthens a council's legislative powers for keeping the area clean.
- 23 The Government has promoted the 'Cleaner, Safer, Greener' agenda and many local authorities have adopted similar aims.
- 24 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. District councils, such as Stafford, 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 habitats and promote biodiversity, reduce and mitigate climate change and promote more sustainable patterns of development.

The Council's environment services

- 25 The scope of this inspection was:
- street cleansing and street care (including litter, street furniture, public toilets, fly-tipping, graffiti, fly-posting and abandoned vehicles);
 - street care education and enforcement measures including the Council's approach to implementing the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005;
 - waste hierarchy (including waste minimisation, reuse and recycling, and waste collection);
 - partnership and joint working with Staffordshire County Council relating to waste and streetscene issues.
- 26 The Council's discrete environment services included in the scope consist of refuse collection, recycling, and Streetscene which consists of street cleaning and grounds maintenance. In 2005/06 the Environmental and Health services budget, which includes waste and recycling and environmental health, was £2.6 million and the budget for Streetscene services was £2.1 million.

27 In summary, the services offer the following.

- The Council's waste collection service is contracted to Biffa with a current contract value of £1.7 million and provides a weekly residual waste collection service for over 51,000 properties. The service also provides a bi-weekly dry recycling service to 51,000 properties and garden waste collection service to around 46,000 properties. Dry recycling collections are made of, paper, cans, textiles, hard plastics and glass. There are also 29 'bring to' recycling centres situated around the borough in Stafford, Stone and the surrounding villages and parishes at locations such as shop and public house car parks for the collection of paper, glass, mixed cans, textiles and cardboard. The Council also provides a chargeable special bulky waste collection service for items such as furniture, fridges, beds and mattresses.
- The Council's operation for street cleaning, grounds maintenance and grounds and open spaces management is carried out by its 'Streetscene' service which employs around 70 operational and eight managerial staff. The Streetscene service carries out the following functions: litter picking, street sweeping, litterbin emptying, dog fouling, dead animals, removal of sharps and broken glass, graffiti and fly-posting, cleaning of public toilets, grass cutting, maintaining flowerbeds and maintaining Council-owned sports pitches and play areas. Main roads in the borough are swept at least once every four weeks, housing estates at least once every nine weeks, shopping precincts at least once every two weeks and Stafford and Stone town centres are swept everyday. Litterbins situated in the town centres of Stafford and Stone are emptied daily. The ones situated outside smaller shopping areas around the borough are emptied approximately four times a week and bins in the parishes are emptied once a week, depending on use.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 28 The services aim to contribute to the four key priority themes identified in the Council Plan noted earlier. The priority themes are supported by key aims and within 'management of public space' and 'waste management' priority areas the services aims are linked to the following.
- Management of public space:
 - pay particular attention to our own role in street cleansing, litter graffiti and fly-tipping on public spaces;
 - continue to provide a high quality service in managing and maintaining an attractive landscape;
 - pay particular attention to our role in partnerships with others in maintaining quality town centres; and
 - ensure that our green spaces are protected and enhanced using the Local Development Framework and other strategies.
 - To help achieve these, the Streetscene service had set itself some specific targets for 2005/06 such as:
 - average time to remove fly-tipping one day;
 - 18 per cent of lands littered to a significant of heavy extent;
 - 95 per cent of public conveniences achieving high or acceptable standard of cleanliness; and
 - introduction of pressure washing into town centre pedestrianised areas.
 - Waste management:
 - ensure that our community continues to receive a high quality refuse collection service;
 - bring forward a new Waste Management Plan to meet increasing expectations for waste recycling;
 - outline proposals within our Waste Management Plan to increase the support of local people to take part in door step recycling initiatives;
 - work with Staffordshire local authorities and others to seek ways of developing waste management in the most cost effective manner; and
 - remain committed to environmental protection and the pursuit of sustainability, where practical.

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- To help achieve these, the waste and recycling service had set itself some specific targets for 2005/06 such as:
 - 85 per cent of households on kerbside collection;
 - garden waste collection service extended to 46,000 households;
 - 25 per cent of household waste recycled; and
 - 95 per cent of waste collection service requests within target time of one day.

29 The Council has signed up to the county-wide waste management strategy called '2020 Vision: Zero Waste to Landfill' in December 2003. The district councils, including Stafford, are responsible for waste collection and the County Council is responsible for disposal. Stoke on Trent Council being a unitary council is responsible for both waste collection and disposal. The partnership between the nine district/unitary councils and Staffordshire County Council aims to achieve:

- an average recycling and composting rate of 30 per cent by 2010 and 33 per cent by 2015;
- a decrease in the quantities of biodegradable waste landfilled to 75 per cent of 1995 levels by 2010, 50 per cent by 2013 and 35 per cent by 2020; and
- through a co-ordinated waste reduction/minimisation initiative across the county, restrict growth in waste generation to 1 per cent per year within five years of adoption and to halt growth in waste from 2010.

As part of this agreement the recycling target for Stafford in 2005/2006 was 18 per cent.

30 From the county municipal strategy the Council has further developed its own waste strategy, the Stafford Borough Council Waste Action Plan (SWAP). This plan has a clear vision for current waste collection arrangements so that the emphasis is on collecting recycled waste resulting in;

- recycling, consisting of dry recycling either every week or alternate weekly collection;
- alternate weekly collection of garden waste;
- alternate collection of residual waste; and
- same day collections for all recyclables and residual waste insofar as this is operational possible.

To help the Council achieve these aims the SWAP includes a three phase programme, which started in 2004/05, of garden waste and dry recycling extension and alternate residual waste collection via use of pilot areas to result in new waste contractual arrangements for 2008. To ensure achievement of the SWAP a dedicated team meets every month to monitor progress against the targets and review the results of the pilot areas.

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

Access, customer care and diversity

- 31** The Council has established and publicises clear service standards and targets, however the public are not well informed about performance against these targets. The waste service and environment service have established service standards such as, collecting missed bins within 24 hours, emergency response reports of sharps within three hours or by 9 am the day following depending upon the time reported, fly-tipping pick up within two days. Whilst these standards are now included on the Council's website, performance is only reported against some local indicators. As a result although the public can be clear on the level of service they can expect they cannot fully establish how the services are actually performing against these standards and targets.
- 32** Information about the Council's environment services is generally clear and widely available in a range of languages and formats. Information on service standards and service information booklets are available in the Council's reception areas. The Council's contact number is promoted in its literature and also on the Streetscene vehicles that tour the district. However the Council has still to achieve its aim of only having a single telephone contact number for all customer enquiries to coincide with its 'one-stop shop' approach. To minimise the impact of this currently telephone contact across a range of numbers is being diverted to a single number.
- 33** The Council is effective in responding to consultation to establish what community and local priorities are. Consultation undertaken as part of the development of the community plan played a strong part in the formation of local priorities. Consultation took place with a number of partnership organisations such as the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Police, Age Concern, Stafford Historical and Civic Society, Stafford District Access Group, together with hundreds of local individuals. Town centre cleanliness, waste pollution and biodiversity were highlighted amongst a number of other priority areas and have given Stafford the justification for its increased focus on these areas and this focus has been further confirmed through the West Midlands Regional Lifestyle survey carried out earlier this year which Stafford Borough Council signed up to.

- 34 The Council has retained clear ownership of complaints by residents about the waste service. Despite a waste contract, the waste service clearly acknowledges itself as the contact point for residents. Service requests and complaints, such as missed bins are dealt with by the call centre who log the item and pass on to Biffa to deal with. Formal complaints are dealt with under a two stage process where initially it is reviewed by the relevant head of service or equivalent who will acknowledge the complaint within seven days and formally respond within a maximum of 20 days. The second stage of the process is if the complainant is still unhappy with the response they can ask the Chief Executive to address the complaint. In 2003/04 at 37 per cent, the percentage of people making a complaint who were satisfied with the handling of the complaint was above average. Explanation of the complaints procedure is available on the Council's website and in leaflet form and a complaint can be made in person, by telephone, fax, e-mail or online.
- 35 Physical access to the service is variable. The main receptions at Stafford and Stone are readily accessible and have clear signage to the reception desks. These particular receptions are Disability Discrimination Act compliant. Hearing loops are in place at the Civic Centre in Stafford and ten portable loops are also available. However, the Council operates a number of receptions in its offices and overall these are at various standards. Some require visitors to either climb stairs or use lifts and can present some difficulties for individuals with physical disabilities. In 2004/05 only 29 per cent of the Council's buildings open to the public were accessible to people with mobility disabilities.
- 36 Resolution of customer enquiries or problems via telephone is currently a weak area but improving. Over 80 per cent of Council contact is via the telephone and corporately 85 per cent of calls are answered within 15 seconds. The Council has extended its telephone service using the recently purchased Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to provide service access 8am until 8pm daily and now also provides a texting service to send in reports and other enquiries. Whilst the Council aims to resolve 80 per cent of customer enquiries at first point of contact, due to the system still being implemented and all the staff having to yet be fully trained it is currently only resolving around 29 per cent without passing the call on. This level of performance is not unexpected in light of the stage of its implementation. In addition, the system still has teething problems such as the number of live screens being limited to one screen resulting in operators having to still make hand written notes at busy times and entering this information into the system later.

- 37 Online access to the service and information has been poor but now improved. In 2005, the Council's website was independently reviewed by the Society of Information Technology Management SOCITM which graded the website overall as below average for usability, as it was found to be satisfactory in only one of a number of scenarios that it used to test all councils' websites nationally and also quoted the website as poor in relation to having 'dead or empty' user forums. The website has been assessed as accessible in accordance with W3C standards and the website has recently been improved and problems experienced in the past such as blank opening pages, dead links and pages simply ending up at a telephone number have now been resolved. Online functionality has been improved and the LA21 part of the site has been recognised nationally. Information such as service standards for the environment service and opening times etc are now fully covered on the website.
- 38 There are barriers to accessing particular services. In 2004/05 the proportion of the population served by kerbside collection of recyclables at 85 per cent was in the worst quartile (25 per cent) nationally. Recent improvements have been made to the kerbside collection service which include dedicated recycling centres for houses or flats that are unable to accommodate the storage of recycling boxes and the Council's unaudited figure for 2005/06 is now around 93 per cent coverage. The Council recognises that specific rural villages and parts of the borough predominantly on the East and West borders suffer from a lack of a kerbside collection service and acknowledge that it would not be cost effective for 100 per cent coverage. The borough does however have access to a free Civic Amenity site provided by the County Council in Stafford town and Stafford Borough Council provides a range of 'bring to' recycling sites throughout the borough to supplement and provide an alternative to the kerbside recycling service.
- 39 The waste and recycling and Streetscene services do take actions to address some diversity issues such as:
- assisted waste collection service for people who are unable to place their refuse at the edge of their property;
 - provision of mini recycling sites;
 - discounted bulky waste collection service;
 - extra bin facility for large families;
 - all car parks have free disabled parking; and
 - most public toilets include disabled facilities.
- 40 The Council's approach to diversity is not sufficiently systematic or developed. It has a Race Equality Policy which incorporates a Race Equality Scheme. The Council has assessed itself as achieving only Level 0 on the Equalities Standard, but feels this needs to be reviewed as it is not reflective of current performance. The Council has produced a Managing Diversity Action Plan that is designed to achieve improved performance in diversity and has already completed a number of key actions.

Service outcomes for users and the community

- 41 The outcomes for users and the community are reported below, using the key priority themes of the Council Plan 2003/06 'Management of Public Space' and 'Waste Management'. An analysis of the actual performance is included in the Appendix.

Management of public space

- 42 The streets of Stafford Borough are generally clean. In 2004/05, 17 per cent of the streets were littered to a significant or heavy extent which was better than the national average and the Council expects a similar figure to be achieved in 2005/06. The Council also places heavy reliance on the attractiveness of its streetscene through use of flowers in the district and focus placed on maintenance of grounds etc which has been recognised through both Stafford and Stone being consistent winners of the Britain in Bloom award.
- 43 Public satisfaction with the standards of cleanliness is high. Although the percentage of residents expressing satisfaction dropped from 78 per cent in 2000/01 to 74 per cent in 2003/04³, this was less than the national trend and moved the Council from a position of above average to best quartile nationally.
- 44 The Council systematically monitors street cleanliness to allow remedial action to be taken. Visual checks on cleansing effectiveness are carried out by the Streetscene service manager twice per month on car parks and town centres. Car park cleanliness is also monitored monthly as part of the safety inspection carried out by the Group Engineer. Public toilets are checked daily to ensure cleanliness and no complaints have been received within the last 12 months.
- 45 The Council effectively identifies and targets hotspots. Six hotspots have been identified as a result of the analysis of the Roving Task Forces work load. These areas are now subjected to a short 'blitz' every four weeks and community associations are encouraged to join in with these to help build up a level of pride within the locality and reduce further problems. Supervision of such areas has been increased to monitor the quality of these hotspots. Fly-tipping on private land is resolved either through the Council collecting the rubbish or contacting the landowner to arrange for its removal. The type of action taken is dependant upon the size of the tip and any safety issues, but the approach is generally to get the load cleared and to prevent further occurrence whilst recognising that the Council does not have the resources to collect all such fly-tips. Use of the legislation against landowners is not normally sought by the Council.

³ Figures are expressed after being adjusted for deprivation.

- 46 The Council is successfully establishing a flexible responsive and highly visible Streetscene service. The bringing together of the street cleaning and grounds maintenance services has given it added flexibility in responding to problems such as litter dumps and fly-posting etc. The service can also easily switch operatives between grounds maintenance and cleaning duties as necessary to account for differing demands at different times of the year. The Council has also set up a rapid response team to specifically address problems identified by the community. These actions have resulted in fly-tipping being dealt with promptly (90 per cent removed within two days)⁴, a low incidence of fly-posting and dog fouling, improved cleanliness of toilets. All Streetscene vehicles and operatives uniforms have a distinctive logo and helps the service to be highly visible within the streetscene. In addition to instilling pride and a sense of value within the operatives it also helps promote the Streetscene service 'on the street'.
- 47 The Council is proactively engaging with the community in relation to providing education on cleanliness issues. In July 2005 it appointed a Customer Initiatives Officer based within the Streetscene service whose role is to increase awareness and engagement of the public on streetscene issues. The officer has held a number of assemblies at local schools and days have been organised where groups of schoolchildren and the Streetscene service litter pickers have jointly collected litter from streets around their schools to raise awareness of the problems and increase pride held in the community. Through the officer, regular contact is being set up with local parish councils and non-council associated community groups such as residents associations to give presentations and identify problem areas that need action by the Streetscene service.
- 48 The Council is taking action to help improve local streetscene through the reduction in the fear of crime within the local town centres. The CCTV system currently consists of around 40 cameras covering Stafford and Stone town centres linked to a control centre at the Civic Offices. With help from Staffordshire Police some blind spots in coverage have been identified and planned improvements are covered later. Other initiatives currently underway are a 'pub watch' scheme in Stafford and Stone, funded through the Stafford Borough Community Safety Partnership (SBCSP) which allows licensed premises to communicate with each other to help counter crime and disorder within the town centres. In addition a similar 'Store Watch' approach has been taken in the Guildhall Shopping Centre in Stafford and this is currently being set up in Stone. These initiatives are relatively recent and consequently measurable outcomes are not yet available.

⁴ Provided by Council for period to 31 March 2006.

- 49 The Council works well with local partners to maximise its impact on the local streetscene. It has a good working partnership with the County Council to cover street furniture maintenance in town centres and grass cutting to ensure that work is not duplicated between the councils. An example of this is where the Streetscene service cut grass verges that would normally be maintained by the County Council as part of their regular grass and border maintenance programme. In addition as part of reverse area agreement street furniture is maintained on behalf of each partner to prevent duplication and bureaucracy. Stafford has also entered into a partnership contract with Adshel so that Adshel have provided 68 new bus shelters and cleans these every month together with 48 shelters owned by the Council.
- 50 Public satisfaction with the Council's parks and open spaces is mixed. The percentage of residents expressing satisfaction has dropped from 73 per cent in 2000/01 to 67 per cent in 2003/04 which was below average at that time. Following the introduction of the re-engineered Streetscene service Stafford have carried out a survey in March 2006 to establish public opinion on specific aspects of the streetscene related to grounds maintenance. Together with a number of recommendations this identified that satisfaction overall with parks was 86 per cent and over 90 per cent in relation to the floral displays. The service provides 'open days' where it gives gardening advice and tips to the public and also helps give the community the opportunity to get an insight into the service's preparation for Stafford's In Bloom contest. This approach is appreciated by the public as evidenced by reports and comments in the local press.
- 51 The Council has not been proactive in its use of enforcement. In the past the Council has used enforcement against fly-tipping and had some success which generated national interest for its work on the removal of unsightly illegal advertisements adjacent to the M6. This was largely successful and the Council have not had a repeat of such advertising at similar levels since. The Council however, acknowledges that it is not using its enforcement function proactively and has not issued any fixed penalty notices to date.

Waste management

- 52 Current recycling arrangements are effective. In 2005/06, the Council exceeded its statutory recycling target by recycling 25 per cent of household waste (unaudited figures). But this has not always been the case. In 2003/04, satisfaction with recycling was lower than the national average and overall recycling performance was poor. The Council recycled just 10 per cent of household waste. Although this increased to 16 per cent in 2004/05, the Council was still amongst the poorest 25 per cent of English district councils. Changes made during 2005/06 led to a significant increase in recycling.
- 53 The Council has been successful at sending less waste to disposal sites. The Council has introduced new recycling and composting collections, and supplied over 7000 home composting bins. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06 the Council tipped approximately 5,000 tonnes less waste. This helps reduce the impact on the environment.

- 54** Waste minimisation is still weak. Although the Council does not empty overflowing bins and does not take waste that is not left in a bin, they collect more household waste, per person, than the average English district council. In 2004/05, the Council collected the equivalent of 441 kilograms of waste per person. The amount of waste collected increased to 454 kilograms per person in 2005/06. This high level of waste reduces the positive impact that the new recycling and composting initiatives are having.
- 55** The Council has been poor in assessing whether recycling schemes have been effective. The Council does not know how many home composting bins are used or how much waste is diverted from the waste stream because of home composting. Similarly, although the Council claims that by introducing its garden waste collection there is a reduced need for people to visit the civic amenity sites, it has not worked out whether people are making fewer trips, and if so how many. As a result, the Council cannot fully assess whether schemes are effective or meeting their objectives.

Environmental sustainability

- 56** The Council has a good awareness of sustainability issues and plays a leading role on environmental and sustainable development issues. It takes a strong role in working with partners and the community to raise awareness of climate change. From 1996 to 2005, the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) partnership work has resulted in an overall improvement in energy efficiency of 13.2 per cent which is still short of the 30 per cent national target. The Council has established a number of projects to promote sustainability, which include the following.
- Brick by Brick - conference arranged to highlight the need to achieve sustainable construction within building projects and for these to be designed for sustainable living.
 - Annual Green awards scheme - designed to highlight organisations that demonstrate good environmental and sustainability practice.
 - Local Farmers Markets - establishment of monthly farmers markets at Stafford and Stone, attracting up to 30 local producers of meats, vegetables preserves etc.
 - Local Sustainability Accreditation Scheme - aimed at local firms and organisations who sign up to a Sustainability Charter and then assessed for accreditation.
 - Back to Bikes - charitable project set up by the Council to promote the re-use of bicycles through their refurbishment and re-sale.

The Council promotes sustainability issues and information on its website and also through 'Sundial' a dedicated newsletter for Local Agenda 21.

- 57** The Council has a robust approach for its support of renewable energy. The Biomass project is a Stafford Borough Council led project delivered in partnership with Stafford Chamber of Commerce and co-funded by the Stafford SRB6 partnership. The overall aims of the Biomass project are to;

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- examine the viability of generating power from energy crops;
 - deliver a fully operational heat to energy facility utilising locally grown crops; and
 - provide an alternative produce opportunity for local farmers.
- 58 The Waste service is linked to this project by having the green waste from the borough used to help create compost which is then used by local farmers and some of which helps grow local crops of grass which is intended to power the Biomass energy facility. The Council followed Best Practicable Environmental options (BPEO) on the selection of this choice of composting site for its garden waste disposal as its close proximity was an important consideration.
- 59 The Council takes its sustainability responsibilities seriously and promotes this in-house. In May 2005 Stafford had a report carried out at four of its sites by the Carbon Trust to identify potential reductions that the Council could make on energy use and establish energy saving projects that it could implement. The report identified potential energy reductions of around 18 per cent and scheduled nine priority actions to help achieve this. Lighting improvements have since been made and variable speed drives for the air conditioning system at the Civic Centre are currently being sourced to help achieve energy and cost reductions. The Council also has established its own green transport plan to encourage staff to use more environmentally transport options.
- 60 The Council has a robust approach to promoting biodiversity and sustainability in the management and maintenance of open spaces. The Council has a biodiversity strategy in place established in 2000, with a clear aim of conserving and enhancing the characteristic biodiversity of Stafford Borough for present and future generations. Stafford was one of only a few to have such a strategy in place at such an early stage and it was originally recognised as demonstrating good practice through the national 'Green Apple' awards. The strategy was updated in 2004 and a number of species and habitat targets updated or introduced. The Council has been successful in obtaining funds from the national Wildspace project to fund a Community Biodiversity Officer post to help achieve some of the actions and targets in the strategy. Since the introduction of the strategy a number of initiatives have been introduced:
- the setting up of five Local Nature Reserves at, Astonfields Balancing Lakes, Barlaston and Rough Close Common, Kingsmead Marsh, Kingston Pool Covert and Stone Meadows;
 - habitat management programmes introduced at sites such as, Barlaston, Rough Close Common, Astonfields Balancing Lakes, Stone Meadows;
 - restoration of sections of species rich hedgerow in Stone;
 - protection of 16 sites of special scientific interest; and
 - re-introduction of native trees within the Borough.

- 61 The Council is successfully ensuring that biodiversity is strengthened through interdepartmental working. Planning is routinely using the LA21 officer as an internal consultee to review planning applications for issues on biodiversity and where these are evident bringing these into the application discussions to establish solutions to the potential problems.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 62 Whilst overall the Council is achieving relative value for money in relation to the cost of its waste collection and street cleaning services, there is no systematic approach to the monitoring and review of value for money. In the street cleansing and streetscene there is a lack of detailed information on cost comparisons and benchmarking of against other councils on a systematic, periodic basis.
- 63 The Council is achieving value for money in its waste management service. The cost of waste collection and recycling at £33.73 per head in 2004/05 was within the lowest cost 25 per cent of English district councils. The Council's unaudited figures for 2005/06 indicate that this will have only increased to £35.91 and is expected to still compare very favourably with national comparisons. Performance is, however, mixed. Recycling performance in 2004/05 was in the worst quartile nationally however this has improved recently and is on schedule to achieve the national targets for 2005/06 (unaudited data). The latest published BVPI data for public satisfaction with waste collection was above average and just below top quartile but satisfaction with recycling was below average. Waste minimisation figures for 2004/05 as measured by the amount of waste collected per head is worse than average at 441 kilograms and the Council's own unaudited data indicate that this will increase further to 487 kilograms for 2005/06.
- 64 Street cleansing is delivering value for money. The latest cost of street cleansing per head is £7.26 (2003/04), and is below average for similar councils. In 2004/05 published BVPI data indicates that the Council has better than the average proportion of streets that are not littered to a significant or heavy extent. Satisfaction with the Council's street cleaning service in 2003/04 at 68 per cent was in the highest quartile nationally. Performance in relation to fly-tip removal is better than target. The Council has a target of two days and in 2004/05 fly-tipping took an average of 1.38 days to be removed.
- 65 The Council is allocating resources in line with priorities. Each year the Council earmarks funds for priority areas. Both Waste and Streetscene services have received priority monies aimed at specifically providing value for money through increased service performance and impacting on satisfaction. Around £100,000 per annum has been allocated for each priority and in the 2006/07 budget £236,000 has been allocated to management of public spaces and £356,000 to Waste Management. Examples of such expenditure are employees and machinery and increased washing in the Streetscene service and continuation and expansion of the recycling service for the Waste collection service.

- 66 The Council has managed to obtain cost savings in its setting up of the Streetscene service. £74,000 was saved in managerial costs through the amalgamation of four separate contracts. Further savings have also been made due to the investment of £9,000 in new equipment which has enabled the Streetscene operatives to now carry out work previously undertaken by an external contractor at a cost of £22,000 per year. A net saving of £73,000 has been made replacing toilet attendants with an improved cleaning regime provided by the Streetscene service.
- 67 The Council has managed to obtain contract cost reductions on the waste collection contract. The current waste contract was extended for two years which gave the Council the benefit of a £40,000 per year cost reduction over the remaining two years of the contract.
- 68 The Council is taking advantage of external funding to help improve value for money. The waste collection service has received DEFRA funding to help it provide a garden waste collection service. In 2003/04 Stafford received £256,400 for it to give 11,000 householders a garden waste service and in 2004/05 and 2005/06 a further £871,000 was awarded to Stafford for it to increase this number by a further 35,000 households.
- 69 Procurement procedures are developing. The Council has a procurement strategy developed in 2002 and applies a selection matrix for tenders which considers issues such as cost and quality issues. Recent work on Value for Money and Direction of Travel carried out at Stafford by the Audit Commission noted that corporately, in relation to procurement, there were no clear procedures for tendering of contracts and that the Council had not progressed enough on national procurement priorities. The Council has established an action plan to make improvements to its procurement procedures covered later in this report.
- 70 The Council is making good progress in relation to its Gershon efficiency targets. The Spending Review 2004 set a target for local government of 2.5 per cent per annum efficiency savings for three years for 2005/06 onwards. This set a savings target of £346,000 per annum for Stafford resulting in a target of £1,039,000 by March 2008. Stafford has been making progress against these savings targets and up to the end of 2006/07 has either made or identified savings amounting to £916,000 leaving £123,000 to be identified.
- 71 There are examples of the Council obtaining value for money in purchasing. It purchases its wheelie bins through Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation to ensure these are at a lowest cost. Stafford is also part of a Southern Area Partnership of neighbouring district councils for bulking and baling facilities to secure economies of scale.
- 72 The Council's trade waste service is a diminishing asset. This service is currently provided by Biffa alongside its own trade waste service. An agreement is in place to 'ring fence' the individuals that were originally serviced by the Council. This Council service is not marketed either by Biffa or the Council and consequently, the size of this ring fenced group is diminishing year on year. The Council has now made the decision to sell the trade waste service and for it not therefore to form part of the new waste contract from 2008.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 73 The Council's website has recently improved. The website is acknowledged as stable and operationally sound as noted in recent SiteMorse tests. The Council has recently improved the level of information available on the site and also the range of online functions such as, reporting of fly-tipping abandoned vehicles etc, missed bins collections, bulky item requests and assisted refuse collection requests.
- 74 The Council has a mixed track record of delivering service improvement in waste management. Performance against some published performance indicators for the period between 2003/04 and 2004/05 have deteriorated; BVPI 91 (kerbside collection) has fallen from 92 per cent to 85 per cent and dropped from average to worst quartile; BVPI 84 (kilograms of household waste collected per head of population) fell from better than average to worse than average and BVPI 119 satisfaction with parks and open spaces has fallen from 73 per cent to 67 per cent and from best quartile to average from 2000/01 to 2003/04. However, the cost of waste collection (BVPI 86) remains in the lowest quartile, despite a range of improvements in waste management.
- 75 The Council is managing to improve recycling performance relative to waste collected. Whilst waste minimisation is still a problem for the Council the rate of waste recycled is increasing faster than waste collected overall. Waste recycled increased by 6 per cent in 2004/05 and 9 per cent (unaudited) in 2005/06, whilst the percentage of waste collected increased by 4.5 per cent in 2004/05 and 8.8 per cent in 2005/06.
- 76 The Council has shown clear commitment to its previous decision on limiting waste through a 'closed lid no side waste policy. Despite some initial resistance, it maintained a no side waste and closed bin lid policy which has enabled it to have some positive impact on reducing residual waste collected. Stafford Borough Council achieved this by preparing the community for change via leaflets and letters. In addition, the Council allowed waste to be collected once, when a sticker and letter would be left to inform householders that side waste and overfull bins would not be collected again. This helped win support for the change and to reduce the potential resistance.

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77 The Council's Streetscene service is establishing a track record of improvement that the community would notice. Improvements include:

- response to fly-tipping (unaudited data shows a reduction in time taken to remove fly-tips from 1.38 days in 2004/05 to 0.86 days in 2005/06);
- improvements in removing chewing gum from streets; and
- better co-ordination between grounds maintenance and street-cleaning, so that grass cutting is undertaken after litter picking.

Public satisfaction with the standard of cleanliness remains in the best 25 per cent.

78 The environment of Stafford has improved. The Council won a number of awards for its environment services, for example.

- Green Apple awards for conservation each year since 2000, for various sustainability projects.
- National Grid Community 21 Award, for its Walking for Health Project.
- First place in the West Midlands Environmental Index.
- Britain in Bloom.

79 The Council has delivered a number of recent improvements to the streetscene. For example in Victoria Park where community safety has been enhanced by reducing the height of large bushes that restricted visibility and the new park entrance improves access to the town centre from Stafford railway station.

80 The Council has delivered improvements through the effective use of planning. Section 106 agreements have been used to improve facilities in local parks and open spaces, for example in Wildwood Park and Woodlands Road where recreation facilities have been enhanced.

81 The service responds well to information from users and delivers improvement. The service systematically responds to complaints and where possible takes action to prevent a repeat of the problem. For example, following complaints about rubbish tipped at the dry brook in Woodlands Road public open space, in addition to removing the rubbish, the Council also removed bushes to prevent re-occurrence and addressed a potential community safety issue.

82 The value for money provided by some key service elements is improving. A number of projects have been undertaken by the Council where 'value for money' considerations are apparent. For example, the creation of a Streetscene 'fast response team' which has specially equipped vehicles and can be sent to deal with urgent requests for action, such as removing clinical sharps and broken glass, or clearing grassed areas prior to cutting. However systematic value for money comparisons has yet to be fully established and embedded.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 83 The Council displays clear leadership in the sphere of waste management and streetscene. The Council's Vision is to lead a community and borough which is Prosperous, Safe, Healthy, Clean and Green and is underpinned by four key priority areas, one of which is waste management. There is a clear link between the Boroughs Community Plan priorities, its corporate priorities and waste management strategy.
- 84 The Council is clear about its aims and future priorities with regards to the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 and has identified areas for improvement in respect of streetscene. It has established a task and finish group whose work concluded in May 2006 which has identified required actions in key areas such as enforcement activity using Fixed Penalty Notices and accompanying this with a publicity campaign to raise the public's awareness. These actions have yet to be implemented.
- 85 The Council has a clear vision for the Environment and Health service and Streetscene service in Stafford. Service plans have clear objectives that are linked to local and national targets that relate to issues such as recycling and removal of litter. Performance management, however, is not yet fully embedded. Performance is being monitored and reported on a monthly basis to the corporate management team and portfolio holders, and quarterly to councillors. The environment portfolio holder is well-informed about the service he oversees. However some of the Council's performance targets are not SMART and do not have defined milestones or accountability assigned to key individuals. SMART performance targets enable a Council to more effectively manage performance.
- 86 Performance management has improved. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment published in 2004 identified the need for a robust performance management framework. The Council is implementing its improvement plan and since the CPA some progress has been made in managing performance and strengthening overall arrangements. The Council is currently working with the Audit Commission to achieve further improvement. Since April 2004, the Council has had one service inspection on economic regeneration; the Audit Commission judgement was that it was a two-star service with promising prospects for improvement. Improvements have subsequently been made to Stafford and Stone town centres including the creation of pedestrianised areas and the Council has helped to secure Market Town Initiative status and funding for Stone.
- 87 The Council has achieved change as a result of learning from best practice. The service is not carrying out systematic benchmarking but review's best practice to address specific problems. For example:
- Lichfield City Council's approach to waste collection to inform the design of their waste collection pilot in Parkside (which will test one of two alternative waste collection models); and
 - experience gained from Tamworth Borough Council and Leeds City Council to design Operation Impact (a two day joint agency initiative designed to engage with the local community).

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- 88 Corporately procurement in the Council is underdeveloped and not being used strategically. It is, however, being developed through the implementation of an action plan resulting from its Best Value Review of its procurement procedures. The Council has a procurement strategy which is being reviewed following this review and the demerger of its housing stock. The revised strategy will employ evaluation check lists to identify the most economically advantageous tender, taking into consideration equality issues, specialist experience, resources, innovation, cost and risk management.
- 89 The Council is using Scrutiny to inform and review improvements in streetscene services. The environment scrutiny committee is used to challenge decision making and task and finish groups are established where necessary to review specific service areas and make recommendations where appropriate. For example, the Council recently used a Cleaner Neighbourhoods Task and Finish Group. However, across the organisation as a whole, the Council is reviewing how scrutiny can be developed, for example to be more involved in decisions before they are taken. Furthermore, Cabinet and scrutiny committees receive reports quarterly, and meet five times a year, however, the information they receive relates to the previous financial period and is often therefore three to four months out of date. In addition performance reports generally contain little commentary or analysis of information, such as variance analysis. The Council recognises these issues and plans to examine performance reporting and also improve the effectiveness of the scrutiny function.
- 90 The Council is working effectively with other organisations to address cross-cutting issues. The Joint Operations Group (JOG) is a multi-agency group with representation from organisations such as the Council, police service, health providers and voluntary sector. It is an action focused group, designed to tackle any matter that may impact on the local community which affects levels of crime, disorder, or fear of crime such as, fly-tipping, graffiti and criminal damage. For example, Operation Impact is a multi-agency initiative coordinated by the JOG. It will bring together a range of services such as; Streetscene, fire service, police force for two days to 'blitz' on the Highfields area of Stafford. The object of this is to engage with local people (for example, through organised 'litter-picks', provision of skips, advice, etc.) to address local issues related to crime and anti-social behaviour. Through working with the County Council plans are in place for the provision of a new civic amenities site at Stone which should increase access to waste disposal facilities throughout the borough.
- 91 Stafford Borough Council is using pilot areas effectively to improve service planning in the waste service. Trial areas in Eccleshall and Parkside have been used to analyse different models for collecting and recycling waste. This information will be used to provide local councillors with a range of options to inform their decision about the next waste contract which is due to be let in 2007.

- 92 The Council is actively preparing for the re-tender of the waste collection service in 2008 and has robust plans in place to inform its re-tender basis and decision. The Council recognises whilst the current contract cost compares well, it faces a potential significant increase if the current collection arrangements are maintained. The Council is collecting information on options for a new service (for example, using its trial areas to assess various models of waste collection) and are linking this to potential options to improve waste minimisation. An options paper is due to be presented to Cabinet that will identify three options, with comprehensive costing. The options are:
- household waste weekly, garden waste alternate weekly, dry recycling alternate weekly, no cardboard/plastic;
 - household waste alternate weekly, garden waste alternate weekly, dry recycling weekly, cardboard/plastic; and
 - household waste alternate weekly, garden waste alternate weekly, dry recycling alternate weekly, cardboard/plastic alternate weekly.
- 93 The Council is focusing on addressing issues that are important to local people. Stafford Borough Council commissioned independent research, using the SIMALTO Modelling approach, to ask local people to identify their service priorities from a range of defined alternative levels of service. The Council intends to use this information for future service design. Similarly, the Streetscene improvement plan emphasises the importance of consultation to measure success and to deliver improvement and provides a comprehensive information and consultation plan for the service. Environmental issues are considered in the Local Environment Quality Group, established by the Council, which has representation from local groups, Council officers and local councillors. The group considers a number of issues including developments in the Borough and wildlife areas. A consultation calendar for 2006/07 provides clear information about planned consultation, who has responsibility for the consultation and the contact officer.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 94 The Council overall is in a sound financial position. Its medium-term financial strategy and capital programme are soundly-based and designed to deliver the Council's objectives. The budget is balanced and comprehensive and is informed by the positive involvement of budget holders.
- 95 The Council is investing in the Streetscene service infrastructure to improve capacity and performance. Examples include purchasing a range of new multi-use vehicles, such as fast response team vans that will enable it to deliver the service more effectively, seven day a week contracts are now in place to provide a weekend response and a comprehensive training programme for Streetscene operatives to improve their ability to deliver the service.

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- 96 The Council is developing tools to improve sustainable development in the Borough. The Local Strategic Partnership has developed a sustainable development checklist that it promotes with all its members. This is used as the basis for an interview with individual organisations to assess their performance in sustainable development. The Council is further developing the methodology and intends to extend its use as part of launching the next Sustainable Community Plan.
- 97 The Council seeks out external funding to boost capacity. Local Agenda 21 has attracted in the region of £350,000 since 2000 to fund a range of projects such as, biodiversity, walking for health and bicycle recycling. The Council has also achieved additional enforcement capacity by using the planning delivery grant to appoint a planning enforcement officer for use in both Streetscene and planning.
- 98 Through effective partnership working the Council has used joint procurement to improve access to its services. Telephone access has been extended via the customer relationship management system from 8am to 8pm. The customer relationship management system was procured as part of the 'Staffordshire Connects'⁵ partnership which itself has received Beacon status. The Council has now set a timetable (from June 2006 to January 2007) for refurbishment of the civic centre reception area into a one-stop shop, providing a single point of contact with the Council.
- 99 Improvements to the CCTV system have been agreed that aim to improve streetscene through a reduction in the fear of crime. Discussions with Staffordshire Police have highlighted blind spots in current CCTV coverage and Stafford Borough Council have committed £90,000 to provide extra coverage in these areas and upgrade some existing equipment. In addition the Council have successfully bid to Stafford Borough Community Safety Partnership for a capital grant for two mobile CCTV cameras that will be assigned to street furniture and respond to hot spot crime locations.
- 100 The Council is making further investment to improve recycling to deliver improvement. The Council has agreed to half finance extension of waste collection and recycling service with their waste collection contractor, Biffa to an additional 5,000 properties to cover the remainder of the borough. In addition, funds have been obtained to undertake a waste stream analysis exercise together with the County Council and other Staffordshire Districts with the aim of improving recycling.

⁵ A partnership of ten Staffordshire authorities that aims transform service delivery, through a variety of access channels.

- 101** The Council is investing in partnerships to deliver improvement. The Council provided £20,000 initial funding to start the Town Centre Partnership. This provides a valuable link between the Council, its partners and the local business community which enables town centre issues to be effectively addressed. The Council has plans for the regeneration of Stafford town centre. Plans have been approved for the development of a new leisure centre at Lammascote Road. Once this is completed, work will commence on the Riverside Regeneration Development. This new development will include car parking, retail premises, leisure facilities housing and a riverside walk, which will have an ongoing significant impact on streetscene.
- 102** The Council is identifying and meeting the training needs of its staff. The Council is using the Performance and Development Review (PDR) scheme to ensure individuals are clear on their priorities in relation to the Council's corporate objectives. A comprehensive programme of training for Streetscene staff is being provided through the PDR process that has both enhanced individual skills and reinforced their feeling of identification with the Council's corporate objectives. Staff say that they now feel part of the organisation and both service users and partner organisations report that Streetscene staff present a positive image of the Council.

Appendix 1 – Outcomes

Table 1 BVPI performance for Stafford Borough Council

Indicator	2002/03		2003/04		2004/05		2005/06 unaudited
	Result	Quartile	Result	Quartile	Result	Quartile	
BVPI 82a & b Percentage of household waste recycled or composted*	9	Worst	10	Worst	16	Worst	25
BVPI 91 Percentage of population served by a kerbside collection of recyclables	87	Worse than average	92	Worse than average	85	Worst	93
BVPI 90b Resident satisfaction with recycling facilities (adjusted for deprivation)	96 (NOTE)	Best	77	Worse than average	Next survey 2006/07		N/A
BVPI 84 Kg of waste collected per head	431	Better than average	422	Worse than average	441	Worse than average	454
BVPI 86 Cost of waste collection per household*	£29.89	Better than average	£32.80 (Qualified)	Not Comp	£33.73	Best	£35.91
BVPI 90a Resident satisfaction with waste collection	90 (NOTE)	Better than average	89	Better than average	Next survey 2006/07		N/A
BVPI 199 Percentage of land significantly littered	(new in 2003/04)		0 (Qualified)	Not Comp	17	Better than average	17
BVPI 89 Resident satisfaction with standards of cleanliness (adjusted for deprivation)	78 (NOTE)	Better than average	74	Best	Next survey 2006/07		N/A
BVPI 119 Resident satisfaction with parks and open spaces	73 (NOTE)	Best	67	Worse than average	Next survey 2006/07		N/A

Note – Figure relates to 2000/01