

**REPORT TO: BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE – 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2001**

**REPORT ON: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PILOT ENVIRONMENTAL RAPID RESPONSE TEAM**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT NO: 420–2001**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is the result of a Best Value Review into the pilot project to establish a Rapid Response Team which could deal quickly with city-wide complaints in respect of environmental problems such as litter, graffiti, dog fouling and weeds on roads and paths.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Rapid Response Team is established on a permanent basis, and that the proposals for continuous improvement outlined in Section 13 of this report are agreed and implemented.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The cost of implementing this recommendation is estimated at £65,693 in a full year. This includes staff and vehicle costs as detailed in Appendix 1. This funding will be met from the Councils 2001/02 Revenue Budget contingency provision.

3.2 This expenditure accounts for 0.5% of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Departments Revenue Budget for 2001/2002.

## **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report impacts on the following key Local Agenda 21 theme:

“Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments”.

## **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no equal opportunity implications arising out of this report.

## **6.0 DEFINITION OF SERVICE REVIEWED**

6.1 On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2000, this sub-committee approved a proposal to introduce a Rapid Response Team for a pilot period of six months. The purpose of the team was to deal quickly with complaints that had an adverse impact on people’s enjoyment of their environment such as litter, dog fouling, graffiti and weeds.

6.2 The team became operational on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000, and was staffed as follows:

- Driver 1
- Chargehand 1
- Loaders 1

## **7.0 JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEWING THIS SERVICE**

7.1 To determine whether the team has been successful in achieving the aims and objectives established prior to the trial period.

## **8.0 REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

8.1 The review team was led by the Special Services Officer in the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department.

8.2 The approach taken included comparing actual performance against targets set out in the original report passed by sub-committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2000. A survey of elected members and other appropriate officers was also carried out to assess the impact of the pilot project, and the degree to which the initiative had addressed the critical success factors.

## **9.0 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS**

### **9.1 Stakeholders**

The principal Stakeholders with an interest in this service are:

- the general public, including representative groups
- elected members
- Council departments, including Neighbourhood Service Teams which have a responsibility to promote the integration of service delivery at local levels

### **9.2 Critical Success Factors**

From analysis of the views expressed by stakeholders, the critical success factors have been identified as:

- speed of response
- ease of referral
- cost to the Council, and therefore impact on Council Tax levels

## **10.0 PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

10.1 As stated in paragraph 8.2 above, the approach taken was to compare actual performance against the targets set out in the original report, and the use of a customer survey which measured levels of satisfaction relating to the Rapid Response Team.

10.2 In addition, the number of calls received by the "hotline" and the origin of these calls was examined. This information was used to assess the degree to which the project had addressed its objectives and the critical success factors established by the stakeholders.

10.3 Actual performance was measured against the following targets:

- remove litter within 24 hours of complaint.
- remove graffiti within 4 days.
- remove racial/offensive graffiti within 24 hours.
- remove evidence of dog fouling within 48 hours.
- remove weeds from roads and paths within 5 days.
- remove public health nuisances within 5 days.
- remove miscellaneous complaints within 5 days.
- remove fly-tipping within 3 days.

10.4 The results were as follows:

- Of the 140 complaints received concerning litter, 91% were resolved in target time.
- Of the 45 complaints received concerning graffiti, 96% were responded to within target time.
- Of the 14 complaints received concerning racial or offensive graffiti, 100% were responded to within target time.
- Of the 237 complaints received concerning dog fouling, 96.2% were resolved within target time.
- Of the 19 complaints received concerning weeds, 100% were resolved within target time.
- Of the 75 complaints received concerning public health nuisances, 100% were resolved within target time.
- Of the 357 complaints received concerning miscellaneous matters, 100% were resolved within target time.
- Of the 448 complaints received concerning fly-tipping, 99.2% were resolved within target time.

Overall, the team responded to 98% of all complaints within target time.

10.5 It should be noted that to begin with certain operational difficulties were experienced in satisfactorily resolving some graffiti complaints. The times shown above therefore refer to the time taken to make the initial response to the complaint, rather than the time taken to finally resolve the complaint, which may be slightly longer. In all other categories, no such difficulties were experienced and the complaints were resolved at the initial visit.

10.6 At the outset of the project, a dedicated "hotline" was established and widely publicised to deal specifically with Rapid Response complaints. The purpose of the "hotline" was to cut down on bureaucratic processes and confusion about which department is responsible for dealing with individual complaints.

10.7 During the trial period, the number and origin of complaints/enquiries received via the "hotline" was as follows:

Elected Members	69
Council Departments	601
Public	373
Neighbourhood Service Team	33
Total	1076

10.8 In addition, a further 259 situations were identified and dealt with pro-actively by the team before they reached the stage of generating complaints. This takes the total number of jobs completed by the team in the trial period to 1335.

10.9 The number of complaints received via the dedicated "hotline" and the speed with which they were dealt with is a strong indication that the "one-stop access" approach has been a success.

10.10 During April 2001, a survey of Elected Members and Neighbourhood Service Team Chairs was carried out to assess the impact of the pilot project, and to help identify areas where the service could be improved.

10.11 A total of 36 survey forms were sent out, 19 of which were returned, and a full breakdown of results is contained within the Best Value Audit file.

10.12 Of the 19 forms returned, 5 stakeholders stated that they had never used the service, 3 stakeholders had used the service on one occasion and 11 had used the service on more than one occasion.

10.13 The breakdown of complaints made was as follows:

Litter	10
Dog Fouling	5
Weeds	2
Graffiti	7
Other	3
Total	27

10.14 From the 14 responses, 12 expressed satisfaction with the time taken to respond to their complaints, while 2 were unsatisfied. The two stakeholders who expressed dissatisfaction had complained about graffiti.

10.15 10 stakeholders agreed that their complaints had been resolved satisfactorily, although 4 felt that they had not. All four stakeholders who felt their complaint had not been resolved agreed that they were offered an explanation why their complaints could not be resolved.

10.16 Overall 11 out of the 14 stakeholders were happy with the service they received from the Rapid Response Team.

## **11.0 OPTION APPRAISAL**

11.1 The final stage of the review was to carry out an option appraisal.

11.2 The following options were considered:

- a) Discontinue provision of this service at the conclusion of the six month trial period.
- b) Continue provision of this service on a permanent basis and implement the recommendations for continuous improvement outlined within this report.

## **12.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS**

### **12.1 SPEED OF RESPONSE**

12.1.1 It is clear from the performance appraisal and customer satisfaction survey that graffiti related complaints have been a major cause for concern. While the actual number of graffiti complaints received has not been particularly high, (less than 5% of the total), many of them have proved extremely difficult and time consuming to resolve, often occupying the Team for the best part of a full day if not more.

12.1.2 Some larger jobs have also required the use of specialist equipment, namely a portable powerwash and water bowser, which due to their size and weight require the use of a specific vehicle. This has meant that if the team are engaged on a graffiti complaint and get a call to attend to a matter of some urgency, they must first return to the depot in order to change vehicles, causing an unacceptable delay in response times.

12.1.3 The very fact that the Team are spending a full day or more resolving individual complaints not only greatly reduces their effectiveness in other areas, it also detracts from the overall purpose of the project, ie providing a rapid response.

12.1.4 In order for the service to be further improved the Department should continue to seek more effective and efficient means of dealing with graffiti complaints. To this end, the number and nature of graffiti complaints being dealt with should be closely monitored, and if necessary consideration should be given to the introduction of a separate team that would deal solely with complaints of this type. A target has been set to resolve 98% of graffiti complaints in target time by April 2002.

### **12.2 EASE OF REFERRAL**

12.2.1 Planning and Transportation are currently planning the implementation of a Helpline and computer system to deal with complaints relating to streetlighting, roads and pavements. The possibility of integrating the Environmental "Hotline" into this system should be explored. In the meantime, the existence of the current "hotline" should be more widely promoted in order to increase the number of calls received direct from the public. A target has been set to increase the number of calls received from the public by 5% by April 2002.

12.2.2 The number and nature of requests to the service, and the levels of performance against target, will continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the Team is effectively meeting the needs of the stakeholders.

### **12.3 COST**

12.3.1 The cost of providing the service should be closely monitored and should be maintained within the budget outlined elsewhere in this report.

**13.0 CONSULTATION**

- 13.1 The Directors of Environmental and Consumer Protection, Finance and Corporate Planning have been consulted on this report.
- 13.2 All Elected Members and Neighbourhood Service Team Chairs have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

**14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1 Best Value Submission to the Secretary of State for Scotland Report to Policy and Resources Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> December 1997.

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**Signature**

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**Date-**

## Appendix 1

### ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST OF RAPID RESPONSE TEAM

#### Staff Costs

(including basic pay, bonus, holiday/sickness relief)

Grade 3 Driver x 1	-	£19,088
Grade 2 Operatives x 2	-	£38,102
Total	-	£57,190

#### Vehicle Costs

(based on lease of 3.5 tonne box tipper)

Leasing Cost	-	£3034
Maintenance/Repairs	-	£850
Vehicle Excise Duty	-	£155
Insurance	-	£500
Fuel (based on 12,000 miles)	-	£1764
Total	-	£6303

#### Equipment/Consumables

Protective Clothing	-	£200
Graffiti Removing Chemicals	-	£2000
Total	-	£2200

**TOTAL PER ANNUM - £65693**