

**Care For Your Area Services – Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation Review.**

Care for Your Area is an umbrella organisation that provides a large number of different front line services. The scope of this review is to consider the following services: Refuse Collection, Street Cleansing, Horticultural Services, Urban Parks, Recycling Services, Markets, Public Conveniences and Workshops and Vehicle Maintenance. This review will consider each of these separate services in turn. Other services that fall within CFYA that are subject to previous and ongoing reviews include Commercial Waste Services, Highway Maintenance, Countryside Parks, Bulky Household Waste.

**HORTICULTURAL SERVICES**

<b>Service Baseline / Initial Challenge</b>	<b>Guidance</b>	<b>Information</b>
Description of Current Service	Who provides the service?	<p>The service is provided through an in-house service provision by Care For Your Area based at Yarm Road Depot, Stockton.</p> <p>The Horticultural Service provision includes grass cutting, spring and summer bedding and hanging baskets / tubs, seasonal works such as edging and shrub maintenance across all council open spaces, parks and countryside sites as well as burial services and maintenance of the boroughs open and closed churchyards the team also manage and maintain a number of sports pitches.</p> <p>The service uses a mixture of seasonal contract hire and SBC owned vehicles to carry out its work programme. There are 39 SBC employed operatives (including eight cemetery staff) that are complemented with around 45 seasonal staff.</p> <p>In April 2011 an external contract for provision</p>

		<p>of tree maintenance came to its natural end and the service transferred across to Horticultural Services, the team now includes four tree surgeons responsible for maintenance of all trees and high hedges as well as response to emergency situations, such as trees falling on the highway.</p> <p>Following the EIT review of Arts, Leisure and Culture the Countryside Ranger Service was subject to review and as such the Ranger Service was reduced by four Rangers to carry out a management and maintenance function only on all parks and countryside sites. As part of the review the remaining eight Park Rangers transferred across to Horticultural Services with affect from June 2011.</p>
Baseline	History - how was the service formed and why does it exist?	<p>Until 2003 the Council's Horticultural Service provision was delivered by two separate contractors. As with the externalised Waste services, the quality of service delivery was extremely poor, complaints were very high and customer satisfaction levels were very poor. As the contracts came toward the end of their natural conclusion, the decision was made to bring the entire service back 'in house', a process what was completed in April 2003.</p> <p>Since then the team has not looked back and is now nationally recognised as being one of the best service providers within this industry.</p>

Challenge	What influences impact on the service? ( political, social economical, technological)	<p>The horticultural service provision is a high profile and politically sensitive service. Due to the improvements right across the borough in grass cutting, bulb planting and bedding displays, expectations of the service are extremely high.</p> <p>With the current focus upon healthy lifestyles, play and recreation there has been a rise in demand and visitor numbers within parks and countryside sites over the past five years. Sport and recreation is another area of growth and with a record number of teams using the sports facilities in the borough, maintenance expectations has increased.</p> <p>Cemetery management and the burial service is one of the most sensitive areas within the Council. With an increase in obesity throughout the population the current manual excavation of graves and lowering is becoming more difficult. New lifting devices and excavation techniques are being explored.</p>
	How does the service perform?	<p>Stockton's Horticultural Service is recognised as being one of the top performing services in the UK and has received international acclaim.</p> <p>There is no real industry measure for Horticultural Services, though there are a range of local, national and international recognitions.</p> <p>Three of the Countryside Parks, one Local Nature Reserve one urban park and one</p>

		<p>cemetery have Green Flag status Stockton has won the award for the 'Best City' in the regional Northumbria in Bloom Awards consistently since 2004, gaining a silver award in Britain in Bloom in 2006 and received overall category winner in 2007 and 2009 reaching the highest gold standard in 2009.</p> <p>In 2008 Stockton received the highest five bloom awards in the international communities in bloom awards and then went on to be crowned with a gold award in the European Entente Florale in 2010.</p>
	<p>What does inspection tell us about this service?</p>	<p>The last Best Value inspection by the Audit Commission (31<sup>st</sup> October 2003) rated the services at the best possible rating of an "excellent service with excellent prospects for improvement" with a 4 star rating for all Council under CPA in 2009.</p> <p>Horticultural Services were also inspected during 2009 as part of the Customer Excellence Charter by the centre for assessment gaining full compliance in 2010.</p>
	<p>What resources are used?</p>	<p>There are currently 31 FTE operatives including four Team Leaders on Horticultural Services, eight Cemetery staff including two Foreman, 4 four Tree Surgeons and eight Rangers (including one Head Ranger) with up to 45 temporary staff providing cover for holidays, sickness and seasonal duties.</p> <p>A detailed staffing structure is detailed within this report.</p>

		<p>In addition to the assets listed below, there are a range of other resources used at Yarm Road Depot and a variety of specialist equipment.</p>
	<p>What assets are used to deliver the current service?</p>	<p>Other than the labour identified above, vehicles are the next most valuable asset the service uses. A combination of both contract hire, spot hire and owned vehicles are utilised, dependant on the type and nature of the vehicle being used. All vehicles are subject to regular and rigorous procurement exercises, that ensure best value is delivered at all times.</p>
	<p>Are there any limitations or barriers affecting the delivery of the service?</p>	<p>Expectations of what the service is able to deliver are extremely high and meeting these expectations is a real challenge. For example, weed growth prevention and removal is an incredibly difficult and time consuming task, made more difficult by recent changes in EU legislation. Changing working regimes to fit in with climate change and the changes in weather is challenging as well as responding to requests for additional seasonal bedding displays.</p> <p>The ageing nation and growth in obesity affects the burial service and puts additional strain on resources as well as responding to differing cultures and faiths that require 24 hour emergency burial service.</p>
	<p>If the service is outsourced or provided by a third party, how are service standards monitored?</p>	<p>Service standards could in theory be monitored by means of the Client (i.e. SBC) insisting upon certain performance standards that the Contractor must abide by. In reality and the experience when the service was previously subject to external contract there is</p>

		<p>little the Client can do to control / enforce performance delivered by a wholly separate organisation, other than through formal proceedings, which are time consuming, costly and don't provide the customer with the immediate service improvements required.</p>
	<p>Could the service be provided through a different mechanism?</p>	<p>Through external contracts or part external contract, stopping some of the services altogether, such as no traditional bedding, reduce number grass cuts per year.</p>
<p><b>Customer Baseline</b></p>	<p>Who are the customers what are their needs now?</p> <p>How are service users consulted and how do their views shape delivery?</p> <p>How satisfied are the customers?</p>	<p>There is a population of around 182,000 and around 3,200 roads and streets, there are over 861 hectares of green space with eight Urban Parks, three Formal Countryside sites, thirteen Local Nature Reserves and a number of sports pitches and recreation areas. There are five open cemeteries and 11 closed churchyards. There is no provision within Horticultural Services budgets to allow for population growth or to maintain any additional new parks and green spaces which are developed</p> <p>Through viewpoint on any service improvements, via the various friends groups, volunteers and through Green Stat</p> <p>2008 Ipsos Mori satisfaction survey results demonstrate that the service has a customer satisfaction rating of 76% satisfaction for parks and open spaces with internal customer satisfaction for Horticultural Services at 80.08% in 2010/11</p>

	<p>How do you communicate with your users?</p> <p>How are these services promoted / marketed? What do Viewpoint Surveys/ internal audit reports tell us about the service?</p>	<p>Communication through resident meetings, walk the wards and using the Council's view point surveys.</p> <p>Regular articles appear in Stockton News and monthly telephone surveys are conducted, we have three established in bloom groups, over 100 volunteers and various friends groups as well as formal sport clubs and leagues.</p> <p>In addition, on-line service request facilities are available for customers to use. The service is very highly regarded by our customers and the last internal audit report in 2010 gave full assurance.</p>
<p><b>Customer Challenge</b></p>	<p>Are there customers who could use the service but don't?</p> <p>Are there customers using the service who shouldn't be?</p>	<p>Some customers may not access parks and recreational facilities; however these are available to all residents, businesses and visitors of the borough. Planting schemes and formal bedding are stretched across the borough but mainly on major routes.</p> <p>Customers who use crematoria services rather than burials in the cemeteries, may not access the burial service, however some customers do still purchase ashes plots and burial of ashes. Stockton do not have a crematorium available at this time therefore there is little scope to increase the usage as it is essential that customers still have a choice for funeral arrangements</p> <p>No the service is available to all</p>

	<p>Who are the customers of the future and what are their needs?</p> <p>What is likely to impact on demand for these services in the future?</p> <p>What do complaints/ compliments tell you about these services?</p>	<p>Residents of new households in the borough, users of new roads, footpaths and cycle ways, new visitors in parks, new parks developments.</p> <p>Demand and users of the service has grown inexorably in recent years and there is no indication this trend will alter.</p> <p>In 2010/11 we received eight complaints and 51 compliments.</p>
<p><b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b></p> <p>Baseline</p> <p>Challenge</p>	<p>Is the service required by statute?</p> <p>Is there a statutory level of service?</p> <p>Is the service responsive or proactive or a mixture?</p> <p>Is the service needed?</p> <p>What would happen if the service was not provided either in whole or part?</p> <p>How would the service react to new pressures? - What capacity would be required to deal with additional / new demands?</p>	<p>Yes in relation to maintenance of trees, burial services, some maintenance of hedges/shrubs in relation to site lines</p> <p>Only for some areas, such as tree inspection and maintenance</p> <p>It is a mixture, there is a programme of planting and grass cutting as well as general maintenance. We will be responsive to emergency situations such as falling trees, burial service is also responsive</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Would need to provide a burial service and some form of maintenance even if only responsive, although reductions could be implemented however this would mean a drop in service/standards and satisfaction.</p> <p>The service has coped, though with great difficulty, to the recent additional demands on the service – for example burial demands, population growth and new developments</p>

<p><b>Aims &amp; Objectives</b> Challenge</p>	<p>Who provides a similar service to this using a different delivery mechanism e.g. external partnerships, shared services etc?</p>	<p>Some Council's have outsourced the service entirely.</p>
<p><b>Relevance / Context</b> Baseline / Challenge</p>	<p>How does the service fit with the overall aims of the Council?</p> <p>How does the service contribute to key policy areas?</p> <p>What policies, plans and strategies impact on the service e.g. statutory, policy, function, other services?</p> <p>Are there any political judgements / decisions involved in determining the level of service?</p>	<p>The service contributes to both the Sustainable Community Strategy and Council Plan, notably through the following policy area:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the Borough a cleaner, greener and more attractive environment.</li> </ul> <p>There are a number of Acts relevant to the Service such as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countryside &amp; Rights of Way Act (CRoW)</li> <li>• Wildlife &amp; Countryside Act 1981</li> <li>• Natural Environment &amp; Rural Communities Act (NERC)</li> <li>• Open Spaces Act 1906</li> <li>• Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regs 1994</li> <li>• Town &amp; Country Planning (Trees) Act 1999</li> </ul> <p>As well as a number of internal policies and strategies, such as the Green Infrastructure Strategy, local planning policy and guidance, Cemetery management policies and procedures</p> <p>This is an extremely high profile and politically sensitive service that can attract both positive and negative media attention.</p>
<p><b>Financial / Resource Considerations</b> Baseline</p>	<p>What are the costs of the service?</p>	<p>The Horticultural Services budget (including cemeteries) for 2011/12 is £1,781,360 – the main costs are:-</p>

	<p>Salaries - £1,349,864</p> <p>Transport £232,709 (including fuel £107,110)</p> <p>Supplies and Services - £654,151, the final budgets/costs are still to be determined for the Ranger and Arboriculture Services following the EIT reviews</p> <p>Capital and revenue costs?</p> <p>What is the level of 3<sup>rd</sup> party expenditure?</p> <p>What contracts or other arrangements are in place (spend analysis)?</p> <p>What is the Councils commitment to contracts / other arrangements?</p> <p>Do you have any charging policies?</p> <p>How have Gershon efficiency savings impacted on the service and how were the service planning to meet future Gershon efficiency targets?</p> <p>How will the current financial climate affect the service?</p>	<p>All revenue costs</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>None</p> <p>Private work is carried out in some schools with annual contracts and Tristar Homes has a new SLA for over £120,000 in 2011/12</p> <p>The greatest risk to the financial stability of the service are those issues that are beyond any control – such as rising fuel costs, additional developments, ageing population and rising population etc.</p> <p>There has already been a loss of some school income, however recent benchmarking proves that the service is competitive and therefore further private work could be generated.</p>
<b>Financial / Resource Considerations Challenge</b>	How can you demonstrate that the service is cost effective overall?	Whilst the current cost per household is no longer a national reportable measure, recent

		benchmarking in association with the Tristar Homes contract showed that rates are currently very competitive.
	Do external contracts offer value for money?	No external contracts
<b>Service Drivers</b>	What do we need to change and why?	<p>Part of the service has already been subject to change, in recent years we have produced two job descriptions that are more generic with a split in roles of gardener and operative so that teams can become multi-skilled and carry out a range of tasks with a programme of workforce modernisation and changes to working hours to meet the needs of the service and climate change issues.</p> <p>There are further savings made through the amalgamation of services, such as parks and countryside rangers, arboriculture. Further workforce reconfiguration could be carried out with a view to introducing flexible working patterns, overall generic job descriptions with estimated savings by 2014/15 of £100,000. The budget could also contribute pro-rata to a reduction of £100,000 within Supplies and Services budgets across CFYA.</p>
	What are the main drivers of change?	Ageing population, pressures on cemetery management, and rise in expectations.