

To: Chair and Members of the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 26th September 2012

Report of: Interim Director of Technical Services

Item:

To request that the Committee sets up a Member Task & Finish Working Group on the issue of “How can the Council’s STREETSCENE customer service approach better meet *Members’* needs”

Background:

The reasons, background, proposed scope and proposed terms of reference are set out in the attached paper and are self-explanatory.

The end of November timescale for completing the Task Group’s work is mentioned in the paper and reasons are given there for why this timescale is considered appropriate.

Decision sought:

The Committee is recommended to endorse the request in terms of the appended paper and to set up the Task & Finish Working Group accordingly.

Chris McCarthy
Interim Director of Technical Services

PAPER APPENDED

**Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Members' Task & Finish Working Group**

TOPIC FOR REVIEW

“How can the Council’s STREETSCENE customer service approach better meet *Member’s* needs”

Background to this Review

It has become clear from various feedback channels that many Members of the Council are seemingly dissatisfied with the service they receive from or through STREETSCENE.

This is of concern because the range of services and issues covered by the STREETSCENE approach represents the great majority of contacts received by the council from the public. They are also (as is common to any council) those issues which most concern Members in their capacities as Ward councillors.

There seems, however, to be a puzzling dissonance between the high, and sustained, measured levels of public satisfaction (which are regularly reported to the Committee) and what seems to be the total opposite of this as far as many Members are concerned. Clearly, this must be addressed and Members be given more confidence that the service is meeting what may be their distinctive needs. Hence the need for both a review and for direct Member input to help shape it for the future.

The purpose of this review is for Members, through this Working Group, to clarify just what *are* their concerns and to explain how and in what practical way the relevant STREETSCENE working practices might be changed better to suit *Members’* needs.

It is important for officers to fully understand Members’ viewpoint and distinctive needs before making changes. This Member led review is intended to give this understanding so that appropriate adaptations can be made where necessary.

(Note that this review is specifically targeted in relation to Members’ needs and is not a wider review of STREETSCENE in relation to the general public. That much wider context will be helpfully informed from the present Member-focused review but needs to be seen within a review of the wider customer service strategy of the Council as a whole).

Context

“STREETSCENE” is not of itself a distinct or budgeted department.

Rather, it is an approach (a “platform”, perhaps a “brand”) that attempts to give a more easily understandable single point of contact for customers making *requests for service, reporting problems or making complaints*, across a range of the Council’s outward facing public service departments.

Those customers include the general public and Council members.

The STREETSCENE range covers the following Council service areas:-

- Highway maintenance
- Street lighting
- Traffic management and parking
- Road safety
- Refuse collection
- Street cleansing, including fly tipping and dog fouling
- Parks and countryside

One purpose of the STREETSCENE approach is to reduce duplication, complexity and confusion in the way customer engagement is handled and to give a clear access channel to customers.

From an internal viewpoint, it provides a platform for requests and complaints to be handled more systematically by the respective department teams best suited to handle them. It thereby helps efficiency and enables better utilisation of staff and other resources than would be the case if direct contact points were widely spread across departments and individual officers.

Scope of the Review

The Review will be short-term and needs to be completed by the end of November 2012. Other than wishing to make early adaptations to STREETSCENE where these are needed better to support Members, the outcome of the Review would feed into the 2013/14 budget setting process. It would also help significantly to inform the design of the new, post-2014, Highways contract upon which work will by then have commenced and, later, a new refuse collection contract.

One immediate purpose of the Review is to ensure that officers clearly appreciate the Member viewpoint and needs. Another is to ensure that there is a good Member understanding of the practical issues facing STREETSCENE. Only by this mutual understanding can real progress be made in formulating a workable approach.

Working Group members would need to ensure, by canvassing the wider Member body within the Council, that those wider views are taken fully into account.

The Review and changes resulting from it remain bound by the Council's adopted policies for service delivery. Realistically, any changes stemming from the Review need to be mindful of the current and prospective financial and resource situation.

Terms of reference

- To identify those STREETSCENE issues and practices relating to enquiries, requests for service and complaints from Members that they

currently find frustrating, irritating or otherwise inhibiting in undertaking their councillor role effectively

- To assist in identifying changes to the current STREETSCENE operating approach that would help address those difficulties