

# North Yorkshire Council

## Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee

04 June 2026

### Improving the Public Realm: A Comprehensive Review and Reset of Street Cleansing Services

#### Report of the Corporate Director - Environment

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines a comprehensive service reset for Street Cleansing operations, including new performance indicators, aligned operational standards and an improvement in the quality of cleanliness, alongside an expanded role for local communities in maintaining high-quality public spaces.

#### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Street cleansing is a statutory responsibility that contributes to public health, environmental quality, and community pride. In April, the strategic oversight of the service transferred from Highways and Infrastructure to Environment and Transport. It is proposed that, over the next few months, responsibility for the mechanical sweeper fleet associated with road cleansing and the ten associated posts will move from Waste Operations to North Yorkshire Highways (NYH). This will support an enhanced level of service by enabling closer integration between road cleansing and gully emptying and other highways functions. Direct dialogue and formal consultation are taking place with affected colleagues. This proposal does not affect pavements and pedestrianised areas which will remain the responsibility of Waste and Street Scene.
- 2.2 Bringing together both the strategic and operational elements of street cleansing across North Yorkshire provides an opportunity for a comprehensive service review and reset. This will help improve consistency, modernise service delivery, and strengthen local accountability. Currently, there is no single countywide policy for street cleansing, and provision is shaped largely by historical practices, presenting potential for improvement. While Waste Operations leads the function, the Parks and Grounds Service also undertake substantial aspects of public realm cleansing. This results in several operating models across the county, which can create confusion and duplication and to limit the ability of teams to take full ownership for delivering a high-quality local environment.
- 2.3 Across the County, NYC supports several environmentally focused groups, however many community volunteers contribute their time to help keep the area clean, often without any direct engagement with the Council. Where engagement does occur, there is no single point of contact - volunteers may work with Parks and Grounds, Waste Operations, the Coastal Team, or Localities. This fragmented approach potentially discourages participation and limits the potential for coordinated initiatives, such as the Great British Spring Clean and locally focused intensive programmes. In addition, other key partners, including the National Parks and Business Improvement Districts, play an important complementary role in helping maintain a clean and welcoming North Yorkshire.

### 3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 To provide sufficient capacity to undertake a review of the Service, a new fixed term post of Street Scene Policy Officer is currently being recruited to. This role will have responsibility for ensuring the street cleansing service is responsive to local service demand but is delivered consistently to maximise the opportunities from LGR. The post will be key to creating a suite of performance indicators and creating a programme of work to deliver service improvement and efficiency savings. Over the coming months, the street cleansing service will have delivered £100k worth of savings through the HAT-03 transformation programme with a further £50k to be delivered in 27/28 [currently unallocated]. This has been achieved through a review of working practises [NYH operating model for mechanical sweepers], a reduction in overtime and a more integrated approach to local litter disposal practises.
- 3.2 The role will also be responsible for developing a single, accessible consistent approach for how the Council engages with community litter-pick groups and to encourage more to get involved. This will include establishing a standardised offer from NYC, providing appropriate tools and support such as generic risk assessments, tabards, and an accessible network of locations where volunteers can collect equipment. Work will also be undertaken to benchmark our offer against that of other Local Authorities to help maximise volunteer participation and ensure individuals are signposted to the most appropriate organisations or groups.
- 3.3 Alongside the support provided to community groups, opportunities will be explored to pilot new collaborations with Business Improvement Districts, Parish and Town Councils, social landlords and other partners. These arrangements may draw on double devolution principles or involve contributions to enhance street cleansing provision in specific areas, for example dedicated village/town caretakers. The service will also explore the development of a closer working relationship with the Probation Service and Community Payback teams, ensuring environmental improvement initiatives are effectively delivered for the benefit of local communities.
- 3.4 A fixed-term litter campaign was delivered across the County in 2023/24; however, it did not form part of a cohesive long-term strategy. Since then, the Council has participated in several initiatives - including the Great British Spring Clean and the Sprucing Up Scarborough project - but again these have not been connected to a broader communications approach, limiting their overall impact. A key element of the future service model will therefore be the development and use of consistent messaging, vehicle branding, litter-bin infrastructure and aligned participation in national campaigns to maximise influence and visibility. The policy officer will be working closely with other services within Environment and Corporate Communications experts to develop and deliver a communication strategy fit for the prominence of the service, to work with other stakeholders, Division Members, MPs etc. Educational outreach directly and supporting others with additional messaging will be key, this would be with schools and others such as the Scout and Girlguiding Associations. The Service has applied for, and secured, funding from Keep Britain Tidy's Chewing Gum Task Force, this has delivered high profile improvements with the potential for scalability across North Yorkshire.
- 3.5 The Service has developed strong working relationships with Division Members across the County. Feedback from engagement sessions, Member Seminars and ongoing dialogue indicates, a continued high level of interest in street cleansing and community support activities. Building upon this, to maintain a standardised service that is reflective of local demand, will be key to the long-term success of the Service.

- 3.6 At present, there are limited formal Performance Indicators for the Street Cleansing Service. The intention is to establish and monitor performance measures across all localities. Likely indicators include:
- i. Percentage of scheduled cleansing tasks completed within agreed SLAs
  - ii. Litter grade performance (A–D) by area (based on nationally recognised standards)
  - iii. Number of overflowing litter bins reported and resolved within 48 hours
  - iv. Community-reported issues resolved within target times.
  - v. Customer satisfaction with local cleanliness, informed by complaint data
- 3.7 While enforcement does not fall within the operational Street Cleansing Service, it is clear that enforcement activity plays a vital role in maintaining a clean and welcoming North Yorkshire. To provide a more complete view of overall performance in this area, consideration will be given to reporting indicators from both service areas together.
- 3.8 The delivery of a high-quality public realm is about far more than simply keeping spaces free from litter and detritus. It is about clean beaches, a street scene free of graffiti and guano, well-maintained street furniture, effective weed control, and a shared sense of pride in the environment. Achieving this standard, cuts across multiple service areas - both within and beyond the Council. Over the coming months, work will continue to identify and align the most effective elements from the different operating models and practices in operation between Parks and Grounds and Waste and Street Scene. This may include greater collaboration between services or the harmonisation and clearer distinction of processes to improve the effectiveness of each service individually. To date, improvements have largely focused on individual teams, functions, or specific locations. This review will take a whole service perspective, enabling a strategic assessment of the most efficient and effective ways to maintain a clean and welcoming North Yorkshire.
- 3.9 A common approach across many local authorities is the use of local, area-based teams that take ownership of all relevant Council functions within their locality, rather than operating strictly within traditional service boundaries. Neighbourhood “clean and green” teams - responsible for a broad range of environmental tasks - have proven to be an effective and responsive operating model in numerous councils. Filey provides a strong local example of this integrated approach. In this locality, a single, compact team has taken responsibility for a broad range of functions - including cleaning public toilets, cutting grass, managing parks, removing street litter, gritting and servicing the town’s litter bins - all under the management of the Parks and Countryside team. This approach demonstrates how a flexible, place-based operating model can deliver high-quality outcomes and provides a potential blueprint for other areas. However, this structure differs significantly from arrangements across the wider North Yorkshire area and may not be easily scalable without disrupting the service models introduced as part of LGR. Careful consideration is therefore needed to determine whether expansion would bring clear benefits. Options include piloting the model in another locality, disbanding it to reinforce clarity of roles and responsibilities, or refocusing it to maximise outcomes through closer collaboration with another service - such as Waste and Street Scene - or with partners like NYH.
- 3.10 Work is also progressing with Regeneration colleagues to ensure that the service reset fully aligns with opportunities created through the new Town Centre Investment Plans and Pride in Place programme. This collaboration will help ensure that the street cleansing service plays a strong, visible role in delivering the wider ambitions for key locations across North Yorkshire.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The new Street Scene Policy Officer is a fixed term position for two years.

- 4.2 The service reset will be delivered within existing budgets, any fleet change, or invest to save requirements will go through the normal governance routes.
- 4.3 A key part of the service reset will be transforming how we deliver an effective service whilst delivering the £50k commitment in MTFS for 27/28.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal risks anticipated. Statutory duties under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will continue to be met.

## **6.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The report seeks a decision to undertake a review of the service. The equalities implications of implementing any proposals, will be considered should a decision be sought to implement changes to policies and practices.

## **7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The reset aims to reduce carbon emissions through more efficient routing, modern low emission equipment, and improved recycling of street-collected waste.

## **8.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The proposed improvements will create a more efficient, modern, and community focused street cleansing service.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That members note the contents of this report.

### **APPENDICES:**

None

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

None

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