Operational Services Review

South Derbyshire District Council

This report has been prepared by Dave Henrys in November 2024

Final Version

APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) is a not-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority front line services, hosting a network for front line service providers in areas such as waste and refuse collection, parks and environmental services, leisure, school meals, cleaning, housing and building maintenance.

APSE provides services specifically designed for local authorities, such as benchmarking, consultancy, seminars, research, briefings and training. Through its consultancy arm APSE delivers expert assistance to councils with the overt aim of driving service improvement and value for money through service review and redesign. APSE delivers in excess of 100 projects a year and clients benefit from the consultancy's not for profit ethical approach to consultancy services.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 At the request of the council, APSE have conducted a high-level review of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing functions within Operational Services. These two services currently run mostly separately, taking little account of the environmental similarities and areas of operation in which their work is undertaken.

1.2 Performance information, which forms a key part of APSE's diagnostic approach to such reviews, was not generally available due to the lack of technology being utilised to run the services, reliance being on outdated paper-based systems that are difficult to interrogate.

1.3 SDDC took part in APSE's benchmarking as part of this exercise, allowing comparisons to be made against other councils in the Association's membership for the financial year 2023/24. The results suggest that both services are running comparatively cheaply, although not all the required financial data was available. However, even if it had been, SDDC would most likely still be the lowest cost per household for Street Cleansing from around 40 participating authorities, with Grounds Maintenance being similarly close.

1.4 Productivity comparisons for Grounds employees suggests that the service is probably running at about the right staffing levels, with "No Mow" areas reducing the amount of regular grass cutting now carried out.

1.5 Street Cleansing has a small workforce, which contributes to it being a low-cost service, but despite that, cleanliness levels are relatively good, particularly for litter, fly posting and graffiti, attested both anecdotally during the review and from annual surveys conducted by Keep Britain Tidy on the council's behalf. However, the council has not generally scored well on the levels of detritus in roadside channels, a situation exacerbated by an inconsistent supply of HGV drivers for mechanical sweepers where Waste Collection takes priority for resource.

1.6 Keep Britain Tidy carry out their surveys once per year, a somewhat unreliable metric as it can be skewed by a number of prevailing factors. It would be better to inspect sites randomly using in-house resources throughout the year and use KBT to validate the results with their annual appraisal. A system such as APSE's Land Audit Management System (LAMS) would cover both Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing and includes both cleanliness and quality checks to proactively monitor performance.

1.7 In addition, efforts should be made to improve quality through reducing demand, particularly on Street Cleansing through both education campaigns and promotions and increased enforcement to punish those who commit environmental crime. At the heart of the education process is trying to change people's behaviour, something that can be achieved in small bites following examples of 'nudge theory' advocated by the likes of the environmental charity Hubbub.

1.8 Within the performance data there is no outcome-based results, particularly the levels of public satisfaction with the current services. This needs to be addressed fairly quickly in order to establish some baseline figures to measure future improvements against.

1.9   Stakeholder interviews within the review suggested acceptance that current standards are reasonably acceptable with just a few areas of concern including biodiversity areas, post-mowing litter on verges and weed growth on roadsides. Four Green Flag accredited sites within South Derbyshire were described as being of a very high standard.

1.10   However, there are no actual standards specified anywhere to drive what should be being achieved across the district. Street Cleansing has a legislative obligation to meet the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and keep relevant land clear of litter and refuse. There is a target on Grounds Maintenance to cut the grass 16 times per annum in many locations. This takes no account of climatic conditions in any given year though, which might reduce that requirement.

1.11   From a variety of sources during the review it has been suggested that productivity is not high enough from some employees and that attention to detail and due care has decreased of late, although again without supporting evidence, which a technological system supporting the service would be able to highlight. It certainly seems that a change in culture and attitudes of some within the service needs to take place.

1.12   With the need to have more performance management data available and make greater use of technology to improve productivity and efficiency within the services (also an outstanding Audit report recommendation), the council has recently procured Whitespace's "Work System" software. Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing are currently prioritised after Waste Collection to have their system set up, which means it could be towards the end of next year before the required data has been input and everything working. It is suggested that an increase in resources be provided to speed up this process with an additional Technical Officer post introduced to populate the system, manage its introduction and ongoing maintenance of the Grounds and Cleansing parts of the system, including the mobile working aspect of it.

1.13   Along with the lack of performance data, there are also very few up to date financial details available to ascertain true costs and value for money of many current aspects of the service, especially those carried out for long-established annual sums, such as Housing land and verges and weed spraying for Derbyshire County Council. The new software will help address this but, in the meantime, there needs to be a review of the actual agreements between both parties. Housing in particular are keen to work more closely to establish what they are paying for and Operational Services need to know that they are getting paid the correct amount for the work that is carried out.

1.14   In addition, the Whitespace system needs to be set up for scheduling work, signing off completions, job costing, raising random inspections to be undertaken and handling reactive jobs via the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

1.15   Some of the current issues in managing these two services should be addressed through the recent appointment of an Operations Manager post positioned between the Head of Operational Services and the two current Supervisor functions. This should free up resource for more monitoring of the workforce on site. Formal in-process inspections should be set up to formally record a proportion of these ensuring that work is being undertaken in the right way, the right methods and health and safety processes being observed.

1.16   Currently there is one Supervisor for each of the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services, which feels about right for the overall number of operatives across both services. However, there is a disparity of numbers across the services, with only 12 employees on Cleansing. To be more equitable and to provide greater understanding and cover across both services, both posts should become "Streetscene Supervisors" (as currently being operated on a temporary basis).

1.17   A geographical split of the district would act further to facilitate a fair apportionment under each Supervisor. It would also offer the opportunity to allocate teams to specific areas giving employees a greater sense of ownership and pride in their work. It also offers an opportunity to combine the functions, especially in more rural areas (where there was identified a need for improvement) where greater visibility and improved standards are required (such as village cleans). This should realise greater efficiencies with not having separate teams visiting such locations. Increased co-ordination with Parish Council's own staff is also needed.

1.18   To provide greater support at ground level, this sub-division should facilitate an increase in the number of working Team Leaders from the current two (both on Grounds) to four (two under each Supervisor) to be empowered to oversee the work of the combined service and be responsible for ensuring that a holistic streetscene-type approach is provided. Teams would undertake all work required rather than the silo working that happens now. This would help with the issue of litter picking and verge mowing that was raised several times during the diagnostic review. Team Leaders on the ground are key to helping change the culture and to the introduction of an attitude of "deal with what you see, report what you can't do", irrespective of whether it is a traditional Grounds or Cleansing task (or indeed any other aspect of council work that they could undertake while they are on site).

1.19   The current structure is very flat and offers little by way of career progression opportunities. Promoting the duties of Team Leaders should also include them being enabled to cover Supervisor absences with the same opportunities for members of the workforce to act up to Team Leader in the same way. This will help prepare employees for roles further up the scale.

1.20   While the combination of Grounds and Cleansing functions can provide an economy of scale and greater efficiencies for more standard tasks like grass cutting, strimming, litter picking and emptying bins, there will still be a requirement for more specialist roles to remain autonomous, including horticultural parks staff, burials staff and mechanical sweeper drivers. Further tasks falling under this heading should include tasks that are currently carried out by external contractors, such as litter bin erection, basic play equipment repairs and other small repair tasks. This would require the facilitation of an additional "Small Works Team" of two suitably trained/qualified operatives who could also undertake other small private jobs to help subsidise the extra resource, as well as assisting with clearing fly tipping and other reactive reported work.

1.21   To provide a greater coverage of the working day, this team might be considered for a later shift start and finish time as part of a review of all working hours to ensure that the resource matches the actual times of service demand.

1.22 The suggested service changes and additional resources will require an element of upskilling for some and training for all employees. A "training needs" strategy should be developed through the establishment of training needs for each role, with a skills matrix produced to match those requirements against staff competencies. This would assist in arranging cover for sickness and holiday absences as well as longer term succession planning. It would include recognition of specific qualifications such as COTS training for burials teams and HGV driving.

1.23 There is a need to address the issue of HGV drivers designated to Street Cleansing and not being lost to Waste Collection when they are short staffed. Improvement in cleanliness for roadside detritus (as well as helping to keep weed growth better in check) is dependent on the mechanical sweepers being more fully utilised. This includes cover drivers as well as designated staff. Like many UK councils, South Derbyshire is struggling to attract HGV drivers against the rates currently being offered by private companies. To address this the council may need to increase rates of pay offered.

1.24 During the review, several concerns were raised that relate to health and safety especially regarding safeguarding of staff, safe working practices for litter picking on high-speed roads and dealing with invasive species such as ragwort and Japanese Knotweed.

1.25 The review identified issues around identification of the different responsibilities of staff within Parks & Green Spaces and Operational Services in the eyes of elected members and the general public, particularly around climate change/ecological issues.

1.26 There still exists a client/contractor type split between the two sections for burials administration and operations. An external contract in the north area of the district has recently been insourced back in-house with an additional post for burials due to be appointed to deal with the additional work. This is an opportunity to bring the service together under one umbrella to better manage it.

1.27 With the declaration of an ecological emergency by the council, "No Mow" areas were introduced for May 2024 as part of moves to increase biodiversity. These were extended into following months as South Derbyshire followed the UK-wide trend of reducing grass cutting for both ecological and financial reasons, although there is little evidence that significant savings can be made through the scale of areas involved.

1.28 Within this council it has been mainly a biodiversity driven move, but there has been a mixed response from parishes containing affected areas despite the inclusion of colourful wildflowering. Some were right behind the initiative, but others prefer to see grass kept mown to enhance appearance, however this is not sustainable in the current 'green' climate.

1.29 A perception of inadequate consultation appears to be behind some of the resistance with insufficient information communicated to the public around the reasons and benefits of what was being tried, as well as ineffective management of some of the sites which produced untidiness at different times of the year, especially at the end of the season or when flowering was over. A complete review of the process should be carried out in advance of the next growing season to try and change some hearts and minds.

1.30 Communication in general was highlighted by this issue. There is felt to be insufficient information on the council corporate website with an update and increase in detail required. This could be incorporated into the role of the additional Technical Officer post referenced in 1.12 above. Additionally, more use needs to be made of social media to raise awareness of the issues faced by Operational Services around environmental crime, biodiversity and generally keeping the district clean.

1.31 Traditional mowing equipment used by Operational Services was bought to cut grass on a regular basis and is unsuitable for dealing with the naturalised areas of grass left uncut for biodiversity and only cut annually, especially as there is a need to remove the cuttings from these areas. The council will need to invest in new machinery like the Amazone "Profihopper" to undertake these tasks. It should also look further into new technology advances in other equipment to assist in safer working, such as the remote-controlled Spider Slope Mower. All new equipment needs to comply with climate change policies on the use of alternative fuel and/or electric.

1.32 Investment in technology such as this should also help in attracting young people into a service with an ageing workforce. Apprenticeship programmes should be considered, particularly if the services become integrated into a streetscene style. It would be worth looking at work experience schemes like Wakefield Council's "Get into Streetscene" to try and attract the right candidates for apprentice roles.

1.33 Weed growth in channels and footways has become more problematic with reduced herbicide spraying via the county council agreement being carried out and dead weeds not being effectively dealt with following spraying. Globally there is an issue over the use of glyphosate, which is contained in the most effective weedkillers, many UK councils having banned its use amidst alleged health concerns, although there has not been an effective or cost-effective solution found yet. The council is picking this up through its ecological processes. Increased spraying through the county council agreement would probably be an additional expense for SDDC. Alternatively, a decision may be made to leave some to grow in certain areas as "pavement plants" as part of the ecological measures.

1.34 An annual schedule of gully emptying is also carried out by the district on behalf of the county council aimed at emptying each one once every year. Anecdotally, some probably require a greater frequency to help alleviate the risk of flooding. Conversely, others probably won't require an annual visit because of their location and a rescheduling exercise alongside Derbyshire County Council should be undertaken to revise the programme.

1.35 Budget constraints are being faced by many local authorities nationally and they are increasingly looking at commercial opportunities to bring additional income in. Although South Derbyshire are currently in a more favourable position, there is still a requirement to start looking at how funding can be maximised and enhanced through income generation opportunities. In the first instance, the council needs to decide whether it can do this within its current organisation or if it feels that the creation of an arms-length trading company would serve it better.

1.36   For Operational Services there are opportunities around waste collection for income generation. However, for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing there are more limits due to the sparsity of large businesses, educational establishments (such as universities) and major health (hospitals) and commercial (retail parks/industrial estates) sites. The services also need to ensure that they are carrying out their own fundamental work to standard which doesn't currently leave much scope for further private work with the current size of the workforce. The creation of a "Small Works Team" (see 1.20 above) would create potential capacity but on a small scale.

1.37   There are opportunities for income generation that don't involve regular work such as verge/roundabout sponsorship and advertising on vehicles and litter bins etc. The main opportunity for grounds maintenance work is with arboriculture given the council's location within the National Forest and the proliferation of trees in the district. There is currently no in-house service for tree work with everything going to external contractors. It would require the creation of an in-house team and investment in skills, vehicles and equipment.

1.38   Operational Services are currently responsible for servicing 727 litter bins and 216 dog bins around the district across a range of different frequencies depending on size and location. These have not been reviewed for some time and need updating. The council needs to formulate a Litter Bin Policy in order to standardise on bin types and the criteria for introducing new ones.

1.39   Since a change of national policy in 2016, councils have been able to dispose of dog waste together with all other non-recyclable waste making dedicated dog bins somewhat redundant. The council might consider replacing its own dog bins, which generally have a smaller capacity than ordinary litter bins, especially in areas which have been highlighted as being 'regularly overflowing'.

1.40   New technology has been introduced into litter bin manufacturing of late and there are now 'smart' litter bins available that contain sensors to check and report fill levels and solar compaction units to increase capacity. They tend to be slightly larger giving greater opportunity for advertising. Investing in some of these would help the service run more efficiently.

1.41   It is important to check how full bins are getting between empties in the current environment to ensure the most productive programme of servicing them without them overflowing. Separate sensor equipment can be procured to enable these tests to take place and ensure that the right bins are in the right locations. Barcoding technology is also being more widely used in councils to keep track of when servicing is carried out.

2. Introduction

2.1   South Derbyshire is a local government district in Derbyshire, England. The district covers the market towns of Melbourne and Swadlincote and the town of Hilton, as well as numerous villages and hamlets such as Hatton, Etwall, Aston-on-Trent, Repton, Weston-on-Trent and Willington. About one third of the National Forest lies within the district.

2.2   The administrative base for the council is Swadlincote. The population of the district is 111,133 (2022) made up of over 45,000 households and it covers an area of around 338 square kilometres (131 square miles) with approximately 635 kilometres of maintained roads.

2.3   South Derbyshire District Council provides district-level services. County-level services are provided by Derbyshire County Council. The district is parished with the exception of Swadlincote, which form a third tier of local government.

2.4   The council has been under Labour majority control since the 2023 elections. Since the last boundary changes in 2011 the council has comprised 36 councillors, representing 15 wards, with each ward electing one, two or three councillors.

2.5   Front-line services are provided by Operational Services comprising Waste and Recycling services, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Fleet Maintenance delivered from the Boardman Road Depot in Swadlincote.

2.6   The council still operates a committee system, with these services coming under the remit of the Environmental and Development Services Committee.

2.7   In September 2023 the council declared an ecological emergency in response to the ongoing threat to wildlife and ecosystems. This saw the council add ecological considerations, together with any implications, alongside those for climate, sustainability, and nature recovery in their new corporate plan as strategic priorities embedded within all areas of council engagement. Alongside nature recovery strategies, the council has implemented Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), a tool which is fundamental to natures recovery enacted through the planning process.

2.8   The Operational Services review covers only the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing aspects of the service. APSE have been asked to conduct a diagnostic review of service delivery as it has been several years since such an exercise was last undertaken. The primary objective was to look at how efficiently and effectively the services were running and whether any improvements could be made to increase these measures.

2.9   The review was undertaken by APSE Associate Dave Henrys in October/November 2024. It took place at a high level and provides only a snapshot of the service and its key priorities. It should be recognised that further work will be needed to establish a detailed analysis of current levels of service provision to facilitate the introduction of a comprehensive improvement programme.

2.10 APSE would like to thank all South Derbyshire District Council staff and elected members for their time in engaging with the review.

Operational Services

2.11 Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services currently operate mainly independently of each other, despite the close synergies in the environmental tasks they perform and the areas of the district in which they are undertaken.

2.12 Along with the other front-line services operated from Boardman Road, they fall under the responsibility of the Head of Operational Services. The layer of management beneath that role is currently being recruited, an Operations Manager and a Service Development Manager. There are two Supervisor positions, officially one for each of the two services but currently covering both as "Streetscene Supervisors" due to recent staff changes and recruitment issues, one on an interim arrangement. Support is provided locally by a small technical and administrative team consisting of one Technical Officer and administrative support that mainly covers waste collection and fleet maintenance. All these posts are based at the Boardman Road Depot.

2.13 Grounds maintenance have additional storage at Unit 4B (next door but one to the main depot). Boardman Road is considered too small for the operations now based out of there. The Council will need to consider this in any future plans.

Grounds Maintenance

2.14 As well as traditional grass cutting duties, this service also carries out cemetery maintenance, burials, cemetery memorial inspections, weed spraying, country parks, park rangers, sports pitch maintenance (football / bowls), sports pitch bookings, cleaning changing rooms, planting formal bedding, shrub bed maintenance, hedge cutting, landscaping, play equipment inspections and highway verges etc.

2.15 Sandbags during flooding are also deployed by grounds operatives as well as gritting duties during winter and assisting with operational duties during elections and assisting with events/festivals.

2.16 Assets included in the maintenance programmes have been identified and captured in the GIS mapping system. There is currently no computer system to convert this data into work scheduling and performance monitoring, but the council has recently procured and awarded a contract to Whitespace for its "Work System" software for Street Cleansing & Grounds Maintenance which will do that. (However, with waste collection higher in the priority order it is envisaged that it would be at the end of a two-year programme before it was up and running fully).

2.17 29 x full-time operatives (including one post currently vacant) are employed on Grounds Maintenance along with 3 x Park Attendants (two posts of which are currently vacant), a Relief Park Attendant (currently vacant), a Play Equipment Repair Operative and a Warden based in Swadlincote Woodlands. A seasonal working hours system is in operation that comprises a 44-hour working week in summer when demand is highest dropping to 30 hours per week

(over 4 days) in winter. Summer working hours are generally 06:30 to 15:45 reverting to 07:45 to 15:45 in winter.

2.18   The financial outturn for last year (2023/24) showed just under £1.1 million expenditure, offset by almost £375k income, the majority of which was £204k from Derbyshire County Council for highways verge cutting etc. and £170k as a housing recharge for grass and hedge cutting in communal housing areas. This produced a net cost close to £721,000. As will be seen from the performance analysis later in this report it has since been noted that these figures don't appear to include any depot or other overhead costs.

2.19   Four parks in Swadlincote have been awarded the Green Flag Award - the international quality mark for parks and green spaces. They are the Memorial Park in Church Gresley, Eureka Park, Swadlincote Woodlands and Cadley Park. They all have active Friends Groups in line with the award criteria.

2.20   Maintained land covers around 473 hectares, ownership of which is made up as per the table below: -

SDDC Maintained Land	Area (ha)
Derbyshire County Council	252.46
Parish Councils	18.49
SDDC Corporate Property	8.51
SDDC Parks and Open Spaces	162.60
SDDC Housing	17.46
Other	13.53
Total	**473.05**

2.21   The frequency of grass cutting varies by site. Areas under South Derbyshire council ownership are expected to receive 16 cuts per annum, although this does not account for climatic conditions during the year which could result in less. Highway verges undertaken on an agency agreement for Derbyshire County Council are currently mowed twice per annum (dropped from three/four in previous years) apart from road junctions and other sight lines which are done more frequently for safety reasons (8 cuts). Parks areas receive an average of 16 scheduled cuts per year.

2.22   A total of 83 sites are identified on housing estates for maintenance on behalf of the Housing service, including some sheltered housing units. Grass in these areas is cut on a nine working day cycle where possible.

2.23   Hedges throughout the district receive an annual cut (usually following the grass cutting season) with some being topped during the summer months as required.

2.24   The council carries out all Parish Council grounds maintenance on request and charges for this. Some parishes (Linton, Netherseal, Repton) do not contract with the council for grounds maintenance preferring to find independent contractors.

2.25 A number of grassed areas around the district were identified for naturalisation this year as part of the council's commitment to biodiversity and BNG under a "No Mow" initiative. Many of them have been planted to provide a colourful display of wildflowers during the growing season. These areas receive a cut (and collect) at the end of the summer in readiness for the following season. However, this was a subject which split opinion across politicians and public alike and led to an increasing number of complaints and reactive mowing.

Street Cleansing

2.26 South Derbyshire District Council has a statutory duty under section 89(1) of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 to keep its land clear of litter and refuse, so far as is practicable. Failure to do so can result in the council being taken to court and being ultimately issued a Litter Abatement Notice requiring the land to be cleared of litter within a certain time, with a minimum £2,500 fine for non-compliance.

2.27 In order to comply with the legislation and adhere to an acceptable standard, the Street Cleansing service provides channel and pavement sweeping (mainly through mechanical means), litter picking and servicing of 727 litter bins and 216 dog bins throughout the district, gully emptying (for the county council) and removal of fly tipping. Additional duties include street washing, dealing with graffiti, removal of deceased animals (roadkill), traffic management, sandbags during flooding and gritting duties during winter.

2.28 There is a small workforce comprising 12 full-time operatives who carry out these functions on weekdays throughout the year, with weekends covered through a small amount of voluntary overtime. Working hours are 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. all year round.

2.29 In the previous financial year (2023/24) the service had total expenditure of almost £526k, offset by £35k of income (county council and supply of bins) giving an overall net cost of around £491,000.

2.30 The service operates mechanical sweeping through a large HGV Scarab Mistral sweeper and three compact sweepers (2 x Schmidt / 1 x Johnston 202). The Scarab is employed on roads and channel sweeping, the compact sweepers are also used to sweep footways and pavements.

2.31 The large sweeper requires an HGV qualified driver and SDDC currently employ one driver with one cover driver within the street cleansing service. However, priority demands from the waste collection service can often require both drivers to be pulled on to waste collection in a morning when the priority is to ensure that all refuse collection crews can go out. This has a detrimental effect on the street cleansing schedules making them virtually unachievable under current arrangements.

2.32 Although the operators follow historical sweeping patterns, there are currently only paper-based schedules that haven't been updated for a number of years. A shortage of drivers for all the vehicles (including the HGV issue noted above) results in all these vehicles spending a number of days off the road during the year.

2.33 Street Cleansing performance is monitored through Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) surveys which are currently undertaken once in each calendar year by Keep Britain Tidy based on the criteria of acceptable (grade A or B) / unacceptable (grade C or D) sites randomly selected for inspection. The survey in South Derbyshire assessed the four key elements Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Flyposting. Weeds and Dog Fouling were additional elements surveyed at the request of the council. Results from the past 4 years are analysed in section 4 below.

2.34 There have been no education or publicity initiatives undertaken in recent times aimed at reducing the need for the service through behaviour change. Enforcement action (which sits outside of Operational Services with Environmental Services) is currently low level with very few Fixed Penalty Notices being issued which can be a deterrent. The council is currently one that cleans its streets (continuous operation) rather than one that keeps its streets clean (reducing demand).

2.35 In addition to the functions outlined above, street cleansing also services public conveniences, ensuring they are stocked and generally clean and tidy, but they do not operate a "mop and bucket" cleaning service.

2.36 Derbyshire County Council are responsible for weed spraying with SDDC carrying out the work on their behalf. Feedback from elected members is that the provision is not currently sufficient resulting in this being an area of high complaint, both in dealing with 'live' weeds but also dead ones after spraying has taken effect.

Audit Recommendations

2.37 There have been several Audit reviews undertaken on Operational Services which have resulted in several recommendations being made for improvement. Some of those are outstanding and are relevant to this review.

2.38 **Grounds Maintenance 2019**; This report noted that "The specification and associated bills of quantities were out-of-date, having not been updated since 2011", recommending that "resources should be identified to review and update the specification and associated bills of quantity to reflect the current situation" and that "the updated specification should take into consideration the current corporate priorities of the Council and ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice."

2.39 **Street Cleansing 2022**; This more recent report stated that "Procedures to provide direction on how to establish the Street Cleansing work plans had not been documented." It recommended that "the Council should develop documented policies and procedures to provide direction for establishing the work plans for the Street Cleansing service." These should include detail of land use zoning and how the council deals with its duties under the Environmental Protection Act in each zone, how it monitors compliance, how it prioritises its service and details of strategies for dealing with litter, fly tipping, weed growth, the provision of litter bins, dog fouling etc. including enforcement processes.

2.40 The report further noted that "The Council continued to rely on inefficient, manual processes for managing Street Cleansing tasks and programmed work." The recommendation against

this was that "the Council consider and explore whether a bespoke Street Cleansing job management system would be of benefit." This has been partially addressed by the forthcoming procurement of the "Whitespace" software system, but it is expected to be up to two years before it will be populated sufficiently to act as an effective aid to management.

2.41 Finally, it was reported that the service "did not currently utilise a formal route optimisation planner" with a recommendation "that management perform a cost benefit analysis of whether a route optimisation planner for the Street Cleansing service, would be a worthwhile investment." It further advised that "this is considered in conjunction with any other service area that would potentially benefit." Waste Collection would be an obvious example of this.

Commercialism

2.42 The service is under the apprehension from internal legal advice that they would be unable to undertake trading activities without setting up an arms-length "teckal" company to carry out the work. This is stated in the Localism Act 2011 as a requirement if you are trading 'for a commercial purpose', set up to ensure that there is an even tax playing field with private competitors.

2.43 The point of issue is that 'for a commercial purpose' isn't defined. It has been widely interpreted as meaning making a profit rather than just charging for a service. In this case a charge can be made but the income 'for each type of service' can't exceed the cost. This is often considered sufficient as income is measured at the service level and cost is the total cost of providing the service not just the part used for the charge. As overall none of the services make a profit this should be covered by the charging power within the General Power of Competence, so no need for a company to be set up. There are a good number of local authorities applying this interpretation but not every council has.

2.44 South Derbyshire DC will ultimately have to decide how they proceed. However, with local councils continually being asked to find savings, generating income in whatever quantity it decides to go for, the council will inevitably need to explore such options.

2.45 It is worth noting that none of this is applicable to trading with other public bodies as this is authorised by the Goods and Services Act.

3. Diagnostic Analysis

3.1   In order to develop an accurate picture of the headline processes involved in the delivery of each of the relevant services, two workshops were facilitated by the APSE consultant. A cross-section of operatives from each of Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing were invited to attend the first of them. In addition, management attended a separate workshop run on the same lines, the group consisting of the Head of Operational Services and the two Streetscene Supervisors.

3.2   To better understand Operational Services at South Derbyshire it is important to recognise the external pressures that affect each aspect of the service, so both groups were asked to take part in a **P.E.S.T.E.L. analysis**, breaking the factors down between Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legislative aspects. The collective results are attached as 'Appendix A'. This by no means represents all the factors that affect the running of the service, they are merely a snapshot of those items raised by the group at the time.

3.3   The P.E.S.T.E.L. analysis highlights the importance of local politics on the services, the team understands the high level of importance of these visible services for elected members. The analysis also highlighted the impact of the change in council control at the last local elections and the how politics of each party can affect their service although they recognise good relations between SDDC and the parish councils.

3.4   Amongst the other main items to come out of the P.E.S.T.E.L. exercise is that South Derbyshire is a high growth area for property development with corresponding green space and the district is predominantly rural with just Swadlincote as a main town with the perception that "they get everything".

3.5   During the workshop, the group elaborated on some of the main points in the P.E.S.T.E.L. The following are considered particularly significant but are all included in 'Appendix A'.

- No budget growth
- Limited scope for private work
- Some way behind on technology
- Complaints around not collecting grass cuttings

3.6   The groups were also asked to complete a **S.W.O.T. analysis** to take an introspective look at their service and where they thought it performed well (Strengths), where it performed not so well (Weaknesses), where there were areas that could be improved (Opportunities) and what might potentially stop the improvements from taking place (Threats).

3.7   The management workshop considered their S.W.O.T. analysis against one that had already been completed as part of the preparation of the "Operational Services Service Plan 2024-2025" (shown below) which also included waste collection.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• In-house team offering scheduled and reactive front-line services. • Access to a varied range of plant and equipment. • Significant depth of experience and knowledgeable team members.	• Skill set demographic of workforce, significant number of roles within service are unskilled roles. • Ageing workforce in key roles e.g. HGV drivers reaching retirement age. • Size of depot, the introduction of food waste vehicles will bring site to capacity. • Sickness/absence rates - continued short term/last minute absence impacts delivery of service. • Ageing vehicles increase breakdowns and risk of service failure. • Lack of technology limits performance management on oversight.
Opportunities	Threats
• Fleet Replacement Plan • New management roles. • New waste management system. • EV charge points at depot. • Additional staff into Trade Waste team to support growth of service.	• Supplier delays for new vehicles. • Failure to recruit, salary inconsistencies. • Trade Waste service not competitive in market. • Impact of new waste and resources legislation.

3.8   The management workshop considered the major strengths from that list to be the advantage of flexibility and responsiveness from having in-house teams and the training and learning opportunities that lead to the depth of knowledge and expertise of the workforce.

3.9   Conversely, they believe the lack of schedules linked to the lack of technology to be the foremost weakness, along with the lack of qualification opportunities and an apprentice programme to act as a replacement policy for the ageing workforce and the potential amount of knowledge and expertise that is due to be lost in the near future.

3.10   The workforce workshop came up with a list from scratch from their perspective as follows:-

Strengths

- Keeps us employed – there's always work to do
- Well trained workforce
- Good induction process at service level
- Knowledgeable and experienced workforce
- Low turnover
- Decent standards achieved
- Fly tipping reducing
- Communication

Weaknesses

- Not the best paying council locally so harder to recruit
- Communication devices – operatives use own phones
- Lone working – contactability
- Mower breakdowns – due for renewal – same with sweepers
- Lack of wi-fi on play inspection device
- Corporate HR induction
- Old equipment – some not looked after well enough
- Weak HR – especially disciplinary
- Wider understanding of job roles
- Depot size – old vehicles need to be got rid of
- Outsourcing mower repairs – prices? Is it cheaper to buy new rather than keep repairing?

Opportunities

- New equipment – right for the job – operator input in selection – Trials
- Bigger yard – clear current yard of unwanted items
- Staggered starts for waste collection – have them fuel up the previous night not mornings
- Technology to make life easier on site – including training

Threats

- Funding
- Expanding authority in terms of new builds – population and household numbers
- Is tech robust enough?
- Adequate training for new technology
- Leasing vehicles instead of buying them?

3.11 The diagnostic workshops also undertook a brief **Resource Analysis** looking at what the service has to work with in terms of staff, machinery / equipment and depot / buildings etc. They

were asked to comment on whether each of the items that they identified was actually 'fit for purpose' and where improvements could be made. The list below is made up of the combined key issues identified in each.

People

- New management structure incoming
- 2 x supervisors - Should they be one each for grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing or integrated for Streetscene?
- Currently 2 x team leaders (grounds only) – is this enough? Should they be zonal / area based? Or should they be task based? If area based, can Swadlincote be split to create two equal areas?
- Opportunity to 'act up' from below?

Plant/Equipment

- Mechanical road sweepers not used enough
- Large Scarab mechanical sweeper – issue over HGV driver availability (driver used on waste) – insufficient back up
- Insufficient HGV driver resource across whole of Operational Services
- 3 x compact mechanical sweepers – due for renewal - 7.5 tonne licence needed – drivers used on litter bins – training needed for others. currently only 2 drivers (no driver for Johnston) – supposed to be 1 in each of 3 areas – currently 2 covering 3 areas. Question over optimum use for them - channels v pavements?
- Should HGV be replaced with 2 x more compact sweepers instead? They get in areas that the large sweeper cannot.
- Weekend shifts could be introduced for mechanical sweepers to better sweat the asset - resource issue again
- Caged tippers – coming towards end of life
- Suitable grass cutting machine needed to cut naturalised areas – make more use of farmers?
- 3 x tractors – 2 x M/F 1 x John Deere – rotary gang units + 2 x side arm flails (one tractor used for fly tipping
- There are some unfunded areas around plant replacement
- Ransomes mowers – currently rotary decks
- 3 x zero turn Hustlers for sheltered housing areas
- 1 x quad bike for spraying
- Mix of battery/petrol strimmers (aspic not 2-stroke)
- Gully emptier – fairly new
- Jet washer – needs adequate training – extreme heat!
- New Holland digger used for grave digging – long reach (2 cemeteries served – average is about 1 burial per week)
- 'Play Equipment' van – storage capacity issue

Buildings

- Depot at Boardman Road is too small. A larger site is required.
- 4B – next door but one – used by GM
- GM have a compound on Eureka Park
- Toilet cleaning is part of operation - Ticknell & Willington – no on-site storage – cleaned by bin emptying crew – very basic provision & operation – poorly maintained assets
- Bus shelters – agency agreement to clean and repair for county council
- GM clean football changing rooms x 4 (they are not properly cleaned as they are not cleaners)
- Two of the formal parks have buildings that GM use
- One cemetery has welfare facilities
- Vans used for storage – need boxes
- Town centre sweepers have a room at toilet buildings

<u>Technology</u>
- Looking at "Whitespace" software system – priority is for scheduling and to include in cab tech with link to fleet system
- GIS mapping system – majority of GM assets are on it / most litter bins are identified on it
- Play team system (not wi-fi enabled though)
- CRM system – email job requests through – needs to link to "whitespace"
- Website – report fly tipping – also needs to link to "whitespace"
- Supervisors checks and NI 195 inspections need to be tech enabled
- Trackers are on vans (1 no.) and mowers (6 x HR300) but not on any of the sweepers
- Mobile phones / devices needed
- Dash cams required for vehicles
- Equipment for use around the district needs to be GPS enabled

Service Improvement Questionnaires

3.12 As a further part of the diagnostic review and as a way of ensuring all staff had the opportunity to contribute to the process, APSE sought opinion from the workforce as a whole, using a survey form questionnaire to establish the level of understanding that operatives had around the service they are delivering and where they felt improvements could be made.   (A copy of the survey form is attached to this report as 'Appendix B').

3.13 Completion of the questionnaires was encouraged but was voluntary (and could be made anonymously as an attempt to encourage participation). Only 12 staff chose to participate in the exercise, so only 12 forms were returned, around 25% of the workforce taking the opportunity to engage in the improvement process. The replies were generally very concise and concentrated around a need for better mowers, vans or sweepers.

3.14 All those responding who answered say that they have been made aware of the standards that they are expected to deliver. However, the majority also indicated that they would benefit from a better understanding of Operational Services standards.

3.15 Every respondent felt that they have enough time to deliver the expected standard. The majority (58%) indicated that there were no areas that they felt could be improved and only 3 employees suggested any working practices that could be changed to improve efficiency or service delivery (and these revolved around having better equipment).

3.16 83% of replies suggested equipment that they felt would assist them better in their work, but these were limited to improved versions of what they already used, mowers and vans in half the cases but also mentions for ride-on mowers specifically and mechanical sweepers.

3.17 Of the eight operatives who responded to question 7 about training, 75% consider that they have been given the right level of training, the remaining 25% (two operatives) responding that they haven't.

3.18 Only one suggestion was received regarding ideas for improving their own job, which was for there to be "more opportunities".

Stakeholder Interviews

3.19 To complete the diagnostic part of the review it was felt important to understand the perception of the service as it affects different stakeholders, including elected members, senior management of both the council and the service, and other relevant stakeholders whose services interact with Operational Services.

3.20 The following were all interviewed with consistent questions put to each elected member and separate questions to SDDC staff:-

- – Leader of the Council (Labour)
- – Deputy Leader (Labour)
- – Chair of Environmental & Development Services Committee (Labour)
- – Leader of the Conservatives
- – Leader of the Liberal Democrats
- – Independent councillor
- – Chief Executive
- – Executive Director - Environment & Communities
- – Head of Operational Services
- – Head of Housing
- – Parks & Green Spaces Manager
- – Biodiversity Officer
- – Principal Environmental Health Officer (Enforcement)

3.21 The opening question to most of them was about what they felt Operational Services do well. The summary of responses in no particular order is as follows:-

- In-house service – major strength; flexibility; ability to react; responsive

- Overall, standards are generally ok (but more could be done for the money)
- The basic tasks – like cutting grass
- Parks are very well maintained
- Getting better at biodiversity. Some aspects of "No Mow" were successful
- Schedules are generally kept to
- Good response from/relationship with Supervisor
- Some good, knowledgeable, experienced staff
- Prosecutions for fly tipping

3.22 The next question was the converse, asking what it was that they felt Operational Services don't do so well and what needed to improve. The summary of these replies is shown below in no particular order:-

- Focus on environmental issues (climate change/ecology) has been lost a little in recent years
- "No Mow" didn't go down well with everybody – more information boards and publicity needed
- Dog litter bins overflowing sometimes
- Dealing with weed growth
- Some gateway routes need more attention
- Fly tipping resulting from charge for bulky waste – a lot to pay for a single item
- More effort needed around Civic Centre and other high profile sites
- Service needs to be more visible at events
- Not enough litter picking and road sweeping in rural areas
- Tie in between verge cutting and litter picking is inadequate
- Moss on public footways has increased
- Need to find hot-spots before they are reported – proactive inspections
- Review of roles of Parks & Green Spaces and Operational Services needed. Sometimes difficult to know who is responsible for what. Greater communications needed on biodiversity etc.
- Communication and responsiveness. Too big a gap in structure above Supervisors. Capacity issue while waiting for Operations Manager post to be filled
- Inefficient use of resources, including staff, have been noted within the service, not being dealt with by management
- Attention to detail is lacking – care and attention, dealing with grass cuttings etc.
- Operatives don't seem to use much initiative
- Outdated structure with close salary points - no incentive for people to take a lead
- Low paid service, hard to attract the right people, especially HGV drivers

- More training needed to improve skills and knowledge (including biodiversity/ecological issues)
- Lack of horticultural skills within the service
- No career path for younger people / apprenticeships
- No performance management information
- Cost information / financial analysis for SLAs with Housing and county council, cost of maintaining parks, pricing for commercial work all lacking
- No visibility of work scheduled / carried out for Housing. Service Level Agreement and pricing need reviewing.
- Communication with the public – website not updated. Not enough use made of social media
- Need a small team to handle "low-level" works
- Increase in electrification of fleet/equipment needed
- Timing and frequency of gully emptying – some need more attention
- Lack of technology – paper-based systems that are difficult to interrogate
- Health & Safety processes not up to date e.g. traffic management for litter picking on major routes, dealing with ragwort
- Road signs need cleaning – possibly county council so commercial opportunity

3.23 Elected members were asked specifically whether they thought that the standards set for grounds maintenance and street cleansing meet the council's demands / objectives and do they meet customer demands (where the customer is the council taxpayer or visitor to South Derbyshire etc.). The range of replies is as follows, again in no particular order:-

- Broadly, yes, but more can be done to provide value for money
- No – not what South Derbyshire should look like as a place of beauty and a place to be proud to live in
- Parks are immaculate which helps towards the council's Health & Well Being priorities
- People appear to be generally satisfied
- Customer expectation can be high (for example regarding long grass at start of season when weather was bad) and need managing

3.24 Elected members were asked if they thought Operational Services meet those standards in both grounds maintenance and street cleansing, eliciting the following answers:-

- Not a bad service but could be more proactive on things like litter bins in lay-bys and repeated fly tip locations
- Some issues at peak times (e.g. leaf fall)
- Verges in rural roads are not to standard, grass cutting and litter picking needs to tie in to avoid leaving them in a mess
- Weeds are the main issue

- Dog bins are overflowing on a regular basis
- Wildflower areas need cutting when flowers die off to improve appearance
- Parks in Swadlincote are very good. Parishes have to pick up the tab for extra cuts to bring their parks to similar standard which is not equitable
- Some improvement needed in higher footfall locations in urban areas

3.25 There was a further question specific to elected members around whether the service was responsive enough to them, as well as whether they thought it might be too responsive given the cyclical nature of the work and potential disruption from being diverted to other tasks. The following answers were noted:-

- The service is not over-responsive
- Mixed bag regarding responsiveness, but important to identify to members what their expectations should be
- Some get good response; others have experienced difficulties with staff who should be more available and responsive (even if just an acknowledgement)
- Know to be patient and don't necessarily expect an immediate response. A proportional reaction is generally achieved
- Aware that some elected members go direct to the Supervisor

3.26 Finally, councillors were asked how they saw this service being delivered in the future, bearing in mind budgetary and environmental pressures. Again, the following is a list of replies:-

- Don't believe in outsourcing so in-house service delivery model
- Greater expertise will be required, particularly in ecological areas
- Needs to be some form of progression path for operatives, more incentives for those want to learn, get more employees engaged in the learning process.
- Performance management needs to be more visible
- There will no doubt be a need to raise revenue in future, so looking at ways to do this, such as roundabout sponsorship
- Need to get the basics right first and foremost
- Need to get administrative processes and focus sorted out

3.27 Questions put to senior management around potential future service delivery brought these further answers:-

- There aren't enough staff to effectively deliver street cleansing services
- There is a need to develop ecological and climate practices to match council policy
- There needs to be further answers and suggestions around greater collaboration between Parks & Green Spaces and Operational Services, possibly a joint "Parks Improvement Panel"
- Operational methods need to change. Splitting the district would be better, with area teams in each. Retain specialists for formal parks etc.

- Allow greater focus on individual places like the town centre – need staff to own it
- Need to increase the frequency of visibility in outlying areas
- Double the number of team leaders from 2 to 4 to increase "ownership" of the areas
- Empower staff

3.28 Elected members and SDDC staff put forward the following additional comments/suggestions towards improving the service:-

- The service needs greater monitoring to enable better management
- A change of culture is needed
- There needs to be a "One Council" approach from everybody involved in Operational Services and Parks & Green Spaces
- Standards are missing something in terms of quality at the end of the job. Don't walk past something that needs to be done
- There needs to be a greater use of technology. This would also help encourage younger people into the service
- All staff need to have the means to take and send photographs when required
- Should there be a procedure to follow for logging "No Mow" complaints
- A reassessment of locations for "No Mow" is needed for next year (2025 season). Several parishes have signalled opposition to joining in with this initiative next year.
- Better information about "No Mow" should be on the council website. Perhaps Ecology needs its own website.
- Should look at Smart Bins as part of review of litter bins. Litter bin policy is required
- Grass is cut too often in order to keep to 16 cut promise. Needs to be adaptable to climatic conditions
- Public conveniences shouldn't be cleaned by street cleansing staff, they should be properly managed by cleaning team operating from Civic Centre
- The HGV sweeper driver needs to be dedicated to street cleansing to ensure better utilisation of the vehicle
- A "Members Enquiry" system is needed to regulate councillors complaints / requests for service and improve visibility of responses
- Need to identify to Members what their expectations should be
- More collaborative working is needed between Housing and Operational Services. Monthly meetings would help with communication issues
- There needs to be more environmental development like at Swadlincote Woodlands to get more of the public involved
- More publicity for fly tipping prosecutions would deter others
- Potential savings by collaborating with neighbouring councils on procurement
- There is an overlap with parish council employees that needs working out to be more efficient

3.29 Finally, there were a number of references to commercialism for income generation, although this was within the caveat of ensuring that basic service delivery comes first and maybe it should just be on a small scale. The following were put forward as potential opportunities to explore:-

- County council land (e.g. schools)
- Major employers such as Toyota
- Sponsorship of verges / roundabouts
- Advertising on vehicles / litter bins
- Arboriculture team to carry out tree work
- Some work for Housing and Parks & Green Spaces goes out to contractors that could be done by Operational Services

4. Performance

4.1   During this review, South Derbyshire District Council have become members of APSE's Performance Networks benchmarking service, now in its 26th year of comparing data between local authorities across many front-line services and recognised as the largest benchmarking club for councils in the UK. It covers 16 different council services, including Street Cleansing and "Parks, Open Spaces and Horticulture" (grounds maintenance), each with a set of key and other individual performance indicators all based around the triangulation of cost, quality and customer feedback.

4.2   Where local authorities face severe pressure on public realm services APSE firmly believes that good performance information supports the decisions that will impact upon the future direction of public realm services. Often these services support other council ambitions and outcomes for local communities such as the quality of the local environment, health, and well-being.

4.3   Good performance data can: -

- Help to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.

- Identify the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.

- Assess the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.

- Help to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.

- Identify direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.

- Identify inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.

4.4   Both financial and statistical data is used to feed both performance indicators and 'drivers' that are used to identify the most 'like for like' benchmarking partners to make up 'family groups'. The latter takes account of several factors including demographics, geography and service delivery methods to provide the closest possible matches. The councils within the family group are not able to be listed here due to data confidentiality but are included within the service reports that APSE have supplied to South Derbyshire District Council as part of the membership process. For the avoidance of doubt, the financial indicators used for both are exclusive of Central Establishment Charges (CEC).

4.5   Parks & Open Spaces and Street Cleansing both have their own individual data sets and performance indicators, many of the key indicators being designed to provide a balance between cost, quality, and customer satisfaction. The full set is attached as Appendix 'C' and 'D'.

4.6   Data from both Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural and Street Cleansing services (data collection period 2023/24) has been analysed as part of this review, considering 'Family Group' and 'Whole Service' performance. This information has been used to indicate where

South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) stands against other participating authorities within each service area for the performance indicators listed below.

4.7 Street Cleansing performance data includes the results of inspections carried out by Keep Britain Tidy who have carried out annual Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) surveys for South Derbyshire District Council for the past four years. Inspection results are based on the criteria of acceptable (grade A or B) / unacceptable (grade C or D) sites randomly selected for inspection (as per the Code of Practice for Litter and refuse (COPLAR) attached to the 1990 Environmental Protection Act (EPA). The surveys in South Derbyshire assessed the four key elements of Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Flyposting, as well as Weeds and Dog Fouling as additional elements requested by the council.

4.8 The results have been fairly consistent over the years, as shown in the table below, which shows the percentage of sites surveyed that were in an acceptable condition against the criteria. It shows that graffiti, flyposting and dog fouling are a fairly low level issue in the district. Weed growth has been variable and probably depends on the time of year of the survey more than the other categories. The last survey in Winter 2024 was significantly improved from Summer 2023, but there is an awareness that a survey in Summer 2024 would have most likely seen a much higher figure again. Litter and detritus had both seen a reduction in 2023, but it hadn't been sustained to 2024.

Survey	Litter	Detritus	Graffiti	Fly-posting	Weeds	Dog Fouling
Winter 20024	3.33%	10.30%	0.00%	0.33%	2.87%	0.00%
Summer 2023	1.50%	4.84%	0.5%	0.17%	7.89%	0.67%
Autumn 2022	2.83%	11.19%	0.83%	0.33%	4.56%	0.33%
Winter 2022	4.00%	21.17%	0.67%	1.00%	10.47%	0.00%
Winter 2021	5.00%	11.11%	0.17%	0.00%	0.74%	0.00%
Winter 2020	4.00%	13.65%	1.00%	0.50%	2.39%	0.83%

(from Keep Britain Tidy report – January 2024)

4.9 The timing of the last two surveys, July 2023 and January 2024 meant that they both fell in the financial year 2023/24 used for APSE's benchmarking. For the benchmarking exercise the results for litter & detritus have been combined into an overall score for the year (300 inspections carried out on each of the years), meaning that litter was at 2.42% and detritus (which had seen a very high score in July 2023 which had bucked the trend) was at 7.57%. These two figures are themselves combined for APSE's performance indicator for an overall score of 4.99%. As shown in the analysis below, this is about average for UK authorities at the moment and bears out the comments in the interview stage of the diagnostic part of the review, that standards are generally "ok".

Parks & Open Spaces

Cost comparisons

4.10 The cost analysis below is based on financial information supplied by South Derbyshire DC. It is important for the process to ensure that all councils provide data in the same way. Through validating the data received, APSE tries to ensure that this occurs. Unfortunately, there has not been time during this review to validate the information received from SDDC and as a result, particularly for grounds maintenance as will be seen below, it would appear that not all relevant costs have been included, for example there doesn't seem to be any depot costs in there.

4.11 As a result, the ratio of staff costs to the overall expenditure is higher than normal and has taken the output for the ratio cost indicators outside the parameters for inclusion in the majority of the performance indicators marked * below. However, for indicative purposes, the analysis is shown against the family group and whole service averages as a guide. It is not envisaged that the overall annual investment would increase hugely, so it is likely that SDDC would still compare favourably as a low cost service.

PI 43b - Maintenance investment per household; The maintenance investment accounts for the core grounds maintenance function (excluding parks management, ranger services, one off developments and site security). SDDC, with some costs potentially missing, came in at **£12.75** per household. The 'family group report' average is **£47.41** and the 'whole service' report mean is **£41.80**. SDDC would undoubtedly be top quartile as the lowest in the service of 39 participants is currently **£12.08**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 43b (Family Group)	Parks – Maintenance investment per household	£12.75*	£47.41	N/A	20	N/A
PI 43b (Whole Service)	Parks – Maintenance investment per household	£12.75*	£41.80	N/A	39	N/A

PI 41b - Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land; As above, the same would apply to this indicator where SDDC are currently showing **£1,404** per hectare with the 'family group report' and the 'whole service' report averages at **£5,271** and **£4,881** respectively. The lowest in the service of 34 participants is currently **£1,263**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 41b (Family Group)	Parks – Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land	£1,404*	£5,271	N/A	20	N/A
PI 41b (Whole Service)	Parks – Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land	£1,404*	£4,881	N/A	34	N/A

PI 42b - Maintenance investment per 1,000 head of population; Again, the current SDDC return of **£5,614** is far below the 'family group report' average of **£21,561** and the 'whole service' report average of **£18,451**, with the lowest being **£5,349**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 42b (Family Group)	Parks – Maintenance investment per 1,000 head of population	£5,614*	£21,561	N/A	20	N/A
PI 42b (Whole Service)	Parks – Maintenance investment per 1,000 head of population	£5,614*	£18,451	N/A	39	N/A

PI 21b – Annual investment in service per household); The annual investment figures include parks management, ranger services, one off developments and site security. SDDC has £81,025 accounted for against this, making the totals below higher than for just the maintenance aspect for all the returns. SDDC's score of **£14.36** per household (with the caveat already highlighted of it not being the complete cost) is still well below the average for both the 'family group' report of **£49.81** and the 'whole service' report average of **£43.80**, with the lowest score being **£16.93**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 21b (Family Group)	Parks – Annual investment in service per household	£14.36*	£49.81	N/A	19	N/A

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 21b (Whole Service)	Parks – Annual investment in service per household	£14.36*	£43.30	N/A	39	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 02b – Annual investment in service per hectare of maintained land; Again the SDDC output score of **£1,582** is considerably lower than the 'family group' report of **£5,324** and the 'whole service' report average of **£5,017** and closer to the current lowest return of **£1,295**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 02b (Family Group)	Parks – Annual investment in service per hectare of maintained land	£1,582*	£5,324	N/A	20	N/A
PI 02b (Whole Service)	Parks – Annual investment in service per hectare of maintained land	£1,582*	£5,017	N/A	34	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 17b - Annual investment in service per 1,000 head of population; SDDC returns an output score of **£6,325** still a long way below the 'family group' report average of **£21,808** and the 'whole service' report average of **£18,768** even without the additional costs referenced. The lowest score for this indicator is **£5,483** per 1,000 head of population.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 17b (Family Group)	Parks – Annual investment in service per 1,000 head of population	£6,325*	£21,808	N/A	20	N/A

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 17b (Whole Service)	Parks – Annual investment in service per 1,000 head of population	£6,325*	£18,768	N/A	39	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 14 - Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment; Due to the potential missing costs referred to previously, SDDC has an output score for this indicator of **88.27%** which falls a little above the acceptable parameter of 85%, causing this PI, the indicators above and PI 26 below to be excluded from the performance reports. The score is well above the 'family group' report average of **70.05%.** This is also the case when compared against the 'whole service' report average of **67.76%**, the inference being that staff costs would normally be around two thirds of the overall expenditure. Including additional relevant costs in SDDC returns would bring their score nearer to the average.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 14 (Family Group)	Parks – Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	88.27%*	70.05%	N/A	22	N/A
PI 14 (Whole Service)	Parks – Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	88.27%*	67.76%	N/A	41	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 26 - Front line staff costs as a percentage of annual investment; As above, SDDC's excluded output score of **81.11%** (parameter is set at 80%) is well above the 'family group' report average of **58.86%** and the 'whole service' report average of **57.75%**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 26 (Family Group)	Parks – Front line staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	81.11%*	58.86%	N/A	22	N/A
PI 26 (Whole Service)	Parks – Front line staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	81.11%*	57.75%	N/A	41	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 55a – Vehicle and machinery costs as a percentage of annual investment; SDDC returns an output score of **11.65%**, although this would be a little lower if other costs had been included in the total expenditure. This is already somewhat below both the 'family group' report average of **18.71%** and the 'whole service' report average of **19.21%**. The range for this indicator is 6.85% to 32.22%, varying considerably across different councils indicating different levels of investment in this area.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 55a (Family Group)	Parks – Vehicle and machinery costs as a percentage of annual investment	11.65%	18.71%	N/A	23	N/A
PI 55a (Whole Service)	Parks – Vehicle and machinery costs as a percentage of annual investment	11.65%	19.21%	N/A	40	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

Overall, from the 2023/24 financial data returns, despite potentially missing depot and other costs, it can be concluded that the council's grounds maintenance service is being operated at a comparatively low cost and would be very likely top quartile in those performance indicators that compare directly. The ratios for staff costs indicates that there would likely be above average resource (see productivity analysis below). However, there is a high likelihood that vehicle/machinery costs would still be below average, probably bearing out the findings in the diagnostic review in the previous section around these being old and needing replacing.

Productivity data analysis

PI 30 – Hectares of maintained public open space per 1000 head of population; SDDC returns an output score of **4.00**, a little below average when compared against their 'family group' report average of **4.81** (placing the council 12th out of 24 respondents).

The outcome is similar when compared against the 'whole service' report average of **4.66** (placing the council 20th out of 43 respondents – 2nd quartile).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 30 (Family Group)	Parks – Hectares of maintained public open space per 1000 head of population	4.00	4.81	12th	24	2
PI 30 (Whole Service)	Parks – Hectares of maintained public open space per 1000 head of population	4.00	4.66	20th	43	2

PI 12 – Number of hectares maintained per FTE frontline employees; SDDC returns an output score of **13.45** again below the 'family group' report average of **14.2** (9th of 19) and the 'whole service' report average of **15.44** (15th of 29 respondents – 2nd quartile).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 12 (Family Group)	Parks – Number of hectares maintained per FTE frontline employees	13.45	14.20	9th	19	2
PI 12 (Whole Service)	Parks – Number of hectares maintained per FTE frontline employees	13.45	15.44	15th	29	2

PI 13a – Percentage staff absence; This information was not made available so no comparisons are possible.

4.12 Across the productivity-based measures, South Derbyshire are lower than average against other authorities for both the amount of maintained land and the amount maintained per FTE frontline employee. As geography will have an effect on these figures (SDDC has quite an expansive area to cover), the family group comparison will be most relevant as it takes these kind of aspects into account. Against these, SDDC are close to mid-range indicating that the number of FTE employees is about right.

Quality data analysis

PI 38b - Public satisfaction surveys undertaken & PI22b - APSE customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction scores are recorded in the majority of services, irrespective of their source so long as they meet a minimum number of respondent's criteria, Operational Services returned no data around these PI's. As a result of no data being returned, we are unable to provide comparative information other than the 'whole service' report, which identifies an average of **76.68%** and **79.40%** respectively.

PI 45a – Key Quality performance indicator; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of quality inspection surveys, public perception surveys and award participation). SDDC returns an output score of **44.90%,** compared against their 'family group' report average of **30.13%,** (placing the council 6th out of 25 respondents) – see table below.

This compares against the 'whole service' report average of **32.11%,** (placing the council 11th out of 47 respondents – top quartile).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 45a (Family Group)	Parks – Key Quality performance indicator	44.90%	30.13%	6th	25	1
PI 45a (Whole Service)	Parks – Key Quality performance indicator	44.90%	32.11%	11th	47	1

PI 47a – Quality assurance and consultation process score; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of public satisfaction surveys, public information services and quality systems and procedures). SDDC returns an output score of just **6.67%**, compared against their 'family group' report average of **24.13%** and the 'whole service' report average of **28.86%** (placing the council 42nd out of 48 respondents – x quartile).

The scores for this indicator have reduced across the UK over the past few years, indicative particularly of budget savings against formal QA and consultation processes. However, SDDC score particularly poorly here despite that, the lack of public consultation and information having a big impact.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 47a (Family Group)	Parks – Quality Assurance & Consultation Process	6.67%	24.13%	22nd	25	4
PI 47a (Whole Service)	Parks – Quality Assurance & Consultation Process	6.67%	28.26%	42nd	48	4

PI 48a – Human resource and people management; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of employee care, training & qualifications and Health & Safety procedures). SDDC returns an output score of **46.00%**, very close to both the 'family group' report average of **46.70%** and the 'whole service' report average of **47.83%**, (placing the council 23rd of 42 respondents – just into the 3rd quartile).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 48a (Family Group)	Parks - Human resource & people management	46.00%	46.70%	13th	23	3
PI 48a (Whole Service)	Parks - Human resource & people management	46.00%	47.83%	23rd	42	3

4.13   South Derbyshire perform poorly with a lack of quality procedures and public consultation to underpin operations. However they compare better against other authorities within both the 'family' and 'whole service' groups for employee care. Improvement could be made here by including qualification-based training (such as NVQ or equivalent).

Environmental data analysis

PI 49a - Environmental practices; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of climate emergency, awards, biodiversity procedures, recycling and chemical control). SDDC returns an above average output score of **38.82%**, compared against their 'family group' report average of **30.76%** and the 'whole service' report average of **30.88%**, (placing the council 15th out of 48 respondents – 2nd quartile).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 49a (Family Group)	Parks – Environmental practices	38.82%	30.76%	8th	25	2
PI 49a (Whole Service)	Parks – Environmental practices	38.82%	30.88%	15th	48	2

Performance data overview

4.14 In summary, the benchmarking analysis shows South Derbyshire's grounds maintenance to be potentially fairly cost efficient and compares reasonably well against other authorities across a selection of other performance indicators.

4.15 The cost indicators show SDDC are likely to be one of the cheapest, although they also have a lower than average amount of land to maintain and a below average productivity level of hectares maintained per full-time employee, despite a high ratio of staff costs to total expenditure. Vehicle and machinery costs are comparatively lower than average supporting the notion of the fleet being old and in need of replacement that came through the diagnostic part of the review.

4.16 The low score for quality assurance and consultation also confirms aspects of the diagnostic analysis in the need to engage more with the public and other stakeholders. The council should consider conducting a public satisfaction survey as soon as possible to provide a baseline to compare future improvement against.

4.17 A review of the expenditure data should be carried out against the Guidance Notes on the data template which carries a fairly comprehensive list of what should be included. Amendments can be made up to the end of January 2025 in order to be part of the second batch of reports that APSE issue for each service.

Street Cleansing

Cost comparisons

4.18 The financial returns for street cleansing have brought about the same issue as for grounds maintenance in that it appears that there are some costs missing that should have been included, including depot costs. It has resulted in the indicators for cost per household and for cost per head of population being outside the acceptable parameters set for those indicators, but only just. As the major expenditure for the service, staff costs and vehicles, are included, the comparisons on the indicators (as marked * below) can at least be used as indicative comparisons.

PI 04 – Annual investment per household; SDDC's reported expenditure returns an output score of **£9.84** (parameter is it should be greater than £10.00). The 'family group' report mean is **£26.48** and the 'whole service' report average is **£37.79**, which makes it highly unlikely that the additional costs for depot use etc. would affect SDDC being one of, if not even the lowest return, given that is currently **£13.13** per household. (see table below).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 04 (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Annual investment per household	£9.84*	£26.48	N/A	8	N/A
PI 04 (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Annual investment per household	£9.84*	£37.79	N/A	39	N/A

PI 05 - **Annual investment per Head of Population**; The same issue of low cost applies to this indicator also with SDDC returning an output score of **£4.34** (parameter is set at £4.50), again hugely below the 'family group' average of **£12.19** and the 'whole group' report mean figure of **£16.50**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 05 (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Annual investment per head of population	£4.34*	£12.19	N/A	8	N/A

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 05 (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Annual investment per head of population	£4.34*	£16.50	N/A	39	N/A

PI 06 - Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment; SDDC returns an output score of **72.89%** slightly above both the 'family group' report average of **72.46** and the 'whole service' report average of **69.73%.** With some additional costs added elsewhere for the service (as noted above), this would come down probably close to those averages.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 06 (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	72.89%	72.46%	N/A	7	N/A
PI 06 (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment	72.89%	69.73%	N/A	29	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 21 – Front line staff costs as a percentage of total staff cost; SDDC returns an output score of **82.27%** a ratio that is below average for both the 'family group' (**87.73%**) and 'whole group' (**86.67%**).

Overall, this would suggest that costs for direct service management and administration are a little high but this is inevitable with a dedicated Supervisor post in place to support just 12 employees.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 21 (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Front line staff costs as a percentage of total staff cost	82.27%	87.73%	N/A	6	N/A

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 21 (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Front line staff costs as a percentage of total staff cost	82.27%	86.67%	N/A	34	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

PI 08 – Transport costs as a percentage of total annual investment; SDDC returns an output score of **21.51%**, again a slightly higher figure than it should be, but as with the staff costs this would come down probably close to the average for both the 'family group' (**18.44%**) and 'whole group' (**19.57%**).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 08 (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Transport costs as a percentage of total annual investment	21.51%	18.44%	N/A	8	N/A
PI 08 (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Transport costs as a percentage of total annual investment	21.51%	19.57%	N/A	32	N/A

N.B. No 'Standing in service' placings or 'Quartile achieved' figures available as this Performance Indicator has been ranked as a neutral (N) indicator.

4.19 As with grounds maintenance, the anticipated level of additional costs that most likely need to be applied will still leave SDDC in the top quartile for cost performance, if not the very lowest. This is probably where it would be expected to sit given the relatively small size of the operation.

As seen in the Parks analysis previously, the benchmarking picks out the ratio between staff costs and other expenditure, as well as transport costs which can be considerable on this service due to the cost of mechanical sweepers. For both the 'whole group' and 'family group' comparisons the data shows that the ratios would likely be fairly close to the averages in each. Staff and transport costs together make up over 94% of the SDDC total expenditure whereas what would be expected to be seen looking at other councils would be more in the region of 89%.

Quality data analysis

4.20 The quality measure for street cleansing has long been established as a randomly inspected grading of the standard of cleanliness. It was previously a national Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 199 / NI 195), reporting the percentage of sites that were assessed as being below acceptable standard (grade B) for a combination of litter and detritus under the Local Environment Quality Standard (LEQS) (as outlined in the current "Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse – COPLAR – April 2006") across a range of different land types.

4.21 The national indicators have since been dropped from legislation. However, APSE continue to collect the data for benchmarking purposes, as well as to feed into the dashboard for the National Litter Strategy for England administered by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), although the suite of indicators has had to be extended to include those authorities who continue to monitor cleanliness but with a reduced number of inspections (less than 900 per annum). This may be due to budget constraints limiting the inspection resource. It has also been found that some councils have reduced inspections of land use zones that they don't have as much of (such as rural roads and other highways) to enable a better targeted regime. In addition, APSE has developed its own Land Audit Management System (LAMS) which also incorporates grounds maintenance and parks to provide an alternative solution.

4.22 APSE's performance indicators incorporate the combined figure for the percentage of inspected sites that are deemed to be of an acceptable standard for litter and detritus. Detritus is defined in the Code of Practice as "dust, mud, soil, grit, gravel, stones, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, and fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials. Leaf and blossom falls are to be regarded as detritus once they have substantially lost their structure and have become mushy or fragmented."

4.23 It goes on to say that "a significant and avoidable source of detritus is uncollected grass cuttings and weed growth from seeds germinating in moist detritus. Large accumulations of detritus, built up over months and years, can contribute to the uncared-for impression an area exudes. Detritus on metalled highways must be removed as a requirement of the s.89 duty to keep highways clean and it is also recommended that detritus should be removed alongside litter and refuse by duty bodies from all other hard surfaces as well."

4.24 South Derbyshire, as referred to earlier in this section, use Keep Britain Tidy to undertake their inspections, usually 300 at a time. However, as 2023/24 crossed two calendar years, two sets of inspections were carried out. This led to 600 individual surveys being undertaken, resulting in the council being compared on performance indicator PI 37b, as shown below.

PI 37b - Percentage of sites surveyed falling below Grade B for cleanliness (England only) (LeqsPro survey with reduced survey numbers or other survey type); Surveys conducted by Keep Britain Tidy returned a figure of 97.58% for litter but a much lower 92.43% acceptability for detritus, 95.01% combined. Turning this round means that **4.99%** of sites inspected were found to be unacceptable for litter and detritus. This compares very favourably to the family group average of **13.03%** and the whole service average which came in at **8.84%**.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 37b (Family Group)	% of sites surveyed falling below Grade B for cleanliness (partial LEQSPRO)	4.99%	13.03%	2nd	4	N/A
PI 37b (Whole Service)	% of sites surveyed falling below Grade B for cleanliness (partial LEQSPRO)	4.99%	8.84%	6th	12	2

PI 44e – Quality inspection survey indicator; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of cleanliness inspection results, cleansing frequencies & target times and response times). SDDC scored well on this achieving an output score of **69.50%**, well above the 'family group' report average of **49.32%** and the 'whole service' report average of **55.32%,** (placing the council 15[h] out of 46 respondents (2nd quartile) – see table below.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 44e (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Quality inspection survey indicator	69.50%	49.32%	4th	11	2
PI 44e (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Quality inspection survey indicator	69.50%	55.32%	15th	46	2

PI 46a – Quality key performance indicator; (This indicator monitors the method of cleanliness inspections and public perception feedback). SDDC returned an output score of **80.00%,** again well above both the family group average of **67.52%** and the whole group average of **53.60%**. The council score benefitted from having Keep Britain Tidy undertaking surveys that covered much of the former national indicator criteria (although the lack of formal consultation conducted over the past 3 years kept the score down).

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 46a (Family Group)	Quality key performance indicator	80.00%	67.52%	4th	8	2

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 46a (Whole Service)	Quality key performance indicator	80.00%	53.60%	12th	40	2

PI 47a – Quality assurance and consultation process score; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of public satisfaction surveys, public information services and quality systems and procedures). SDDC returns an output score of **12.90%**, compared against their 'family group' report average of **22.13%** and the 'whole service' report average of **28.97%** (placing the council 35th out of 44 respondents – bottom quartile**).**

The score against these is fairly low as no feedback surveys were undertaken, there is no public information other than the council website (no social media feeds either), also there is a 10-day target for rectifying formal complaints which is the bottom category of more than 5 working days.

The scores for this indicator have reduced across the UK over the past few years, indicative particularly of budget savings against formal QA and consultation processes. However, SDDC score particularly poorly here despite that, the lack of public consultation and information having a big impact.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 47a (Family Group)	Street Cleansing – Quality Assurance & Consultation Process	12.90%	22.13%	7th	10	3
PI 47a (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing – Quality Assurance & Consultation Process	12.90%	28.97%	35th	44	4

4.25 The lack of formal street cleanliness inspections and customer feedback for Street Cleansing contribute significantly to the low scores above and identifies a fundamental area of improvement required for the service to measure its performance and effectiveness going forward.

PI 48a – Human resource and people management; (This indicator includes data provided around the themes of employee care, training & qualifications and Health & Safety procedures).   SDDC returns an output score of **50.00%**, (recognising former "Investors in People" processes still in place for appraisals, the low number of days lost to reportable accidents under health & safety and the average of 6.00 training days per employee).

This outcome score is above average when compared against the 'family group' report mean score of **46.88%** and the 'whole service' report average of **42.06%** (placing the council 13th out of 36 participants – 2nd quartile in both**).**

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 48a (Family Group)	Street Cleansing - Human resource & people management	50.00%	46.88%	4th	8	2
PI 48a (Whole Service)	Street Cleansing - Human resource & people management	50.00%	42.06%	13th	36	2

Productivity data analysis

PI 22a – Staff absence (all staff); As with grounds maintenance, this information was not made available so no comparisons are possible.

Education & Enforcement

Education and enforcement are seen as vital components in trying to reduce the demand on the street cleansing service. APSE track both aspects through performance indicators within the benchmarking. Under Education, the amount of the budget spent on publicity campaigns etc. aimed at reducing environmental impacts including littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping is measured. As part of Enforcement, the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued through the year, which have the partial objective of acting as a deterrent against the same environmental crimes, also form part of the indicator suite.

PI 40 – % of street cleansing budget spent on education & publicity initiatives; SDDC spent none of its total budget, similar to a number of other councils who have reduced their expenditure in this area out of necessity. There were however still 21 councils overall who had a contribution towards campaigns to try and reduce demand on the service.

PI 25a – Number of litter offence notices issued per 1,000 head of population; SDDC did not provide data for this for 2023/24. However, we know from other data sources that just six Fixed Penalty Notices for litter offences were issued in the first six months of this year 2024/25, which would extrapolate out to **0.11** per 1,000 people.

The family group average for 2023/24 was **0.04** but for the whole service it was **1.78** per 1,000. There is a mixed view on enforcement from council to council, as evidenced by the range for this indicator which goes from nil to 18.57 at the high end.

The number issued by SDDC is an extremely low amount and is seemingly not a priority area for the council, however litter inspections returned generally positive results without it.

Fly Tipping

Another aspect of Enforcement is related to the number of reported incidences of fly-tipping within the authority boundary. APSE found that there had been a substantial increase during the covid lockdowns of 2020/21 and has been interested to see how those numbers decreased again post-pandemic.

PI 25d – Number of incidences of fly tipping/dumps per 1,000 head of population (England only); SDDC logged 523 fly-tipping incidences in 2023/24 (144 less than the previous year). This works out to **10.41** incidents per 1,000 head of population, below the average for the small sample family group of **13.70** and the wider whole service average of **32.36** (against which SDDC is top quartile).

Fly tipping peaked during the covid lockdown with civic amenity sites closed. In 2020/21, South Derbyshire saw the number of incidences increase by more than 40% to 1,003 from 714 the year previous, a picture seen across the UK as a whole. The numbers nationally have reduced significantly post-covid, but not yet back to pre-pandemic figures in the majority of places.

Performance Indicator	Description	SDDC	APSE Average	Standing	Total no. of participants	Quartile
PI 25d (Family Group)	Incidences of fly tipping per 1,000 head of population	10.41	13.70	2nd	6	N/A
PI 25d (Whole Service)	Incidences of fly tipping per 1,000 head of population	10.41	32.36	6th	46	1

4.26 In summary, the benchmarking analysis shows the street cleansing service to be comparatively cheap, reflecting both the size of operation as well as the topography and environment of the district, but also providing evidence for some of the areas considered for improvement via the diagnostic section previously.

4.27 A review of the expenditure data should be carried out against the Guidance Notes on the data template which carries a fairly comprehensive list of what should be included. Amendments can be made up to the end of January 2025 in order to be part of the second batch of reports that APSE issue for each service.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Performance information within Operational Services is sparse due to the lack of technology in its back office systems, particularly around grass cutting and other grounds maintenance work, and street sweeping and litter bin information for street cleansing.

5.2 APSE's benchmarking gives indicative comparisons with other councils and suggests that both services are running cheaply, grounds maintenance at probably about the right level for the number of employees and the amount of land maintained, street cleansing less so, being amongst the cheapest across the participating group of councils and reflective of the rather small workforce and, aside from the "No Mow" biodiversity areas and the need for better suited mowing equipment, the area for which the majority of the issues were raised during the diagnostic part of the review.

5.3 Despite that, cleanliness standards both anecdotally and as inspected by Keep Britain Tidy are relatively good, especially for litter, fly posting and graffiti. Detritus less so, indicating a need for more mechanical channel sweeping to be undertaken, this an area of work exacerbated by the inconsistent availability of HGV drivers and the lack of cover from within the service.

5.4 Keep Britain Tidy provide an annual independent survey but this should be used to validate year-round formal in-house inspections using the same methodology rather than being the main source of performance management, given that it can only provide a snapshot at one given time.

5.5 Formal random inspections of sites for cleanliness and quality of asset provides the opportunity to be proactive, identify hotspots and measure performance for both the services. This needs to follow a formal process such as APSE's Land Audit Management System (LAMS).

5.6 The council should make more effort to reduce demand on the street cleansing service through changing behaviours, stopping people from dropping litter either through educating them better or by making use of environmental powers to punish those who do. There are good examples from organisations like environmental charity Hubbub of how people's behaviour can be "nudged" at little extra cost (e.g. painted footsteps leading to litter bins, ballot bins and chewing gum boards).

5.7 Operational Services have not carried out a public consultation exercise to establish satisfaction levels with the service and to help shape direction for service delivery. This should be carried out as a matter of priority so that a baseline can be established for measuring future improvement against.

5.8 From the stakeholder interviews carried out as part of this review it is generally accepted that standards are reasonably acceptable across the district (the green flag formal parks were described as being of a very high standard) with just a few particular areas of concern to be addressed, including biodiversity areas, litter on verges after mowing and weed growth on road channels and footways.

5.9 However, the actual standards to be achieved are not specified anywhere. There is an obligation to meet the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act in street cleansing

(keeping areas clear of litter and refuse). On grounds maintenance, the service operates against a target of achieving 16 grass cuts per annum in many of its locations. However, this takes no account of climatic conditions through the year that could make that requirement less.

5.10 Anecdotally from several sources, productivity is not at a high enough level from some of the employees, although again without supporting evidence of how much work is supposed to be being done on a daily basis it is difficult to prove. There have also been claims that attention to detail and due care has decreased of late, endemic of a loss of pride in the job that needs to be reclaimed. There is a need to change the culture and attitudes of some within the service.

5.11 Management find themselves in a difficult position in this respect and the introduction of the new "Whitespace" software system cannot come quickly enough to bring visibility to the work of both services, although current estimates with the available resources are that it could be 2026 before the required data has been input. This is also the subject of outstanding Audit recommendations and needs the process to be speeded up with the introduction of an additional Technical Officer to populate, introduce and maintain the Operational Services part of the system, including the mobile working aspect.

5.12 There is a lack of up to date detail for work undertaken which makes it impossible to monitor performance against. This also means that there is no means of ascertaining value for money against the different aspects of the service, particularly those carried out for a historical annual sum like Housing land and County Council verges and weed spraying. These should be addressed through the new software but there is a need to review the actual agreements with both these parties. Housing in particular are looking for closer collaboration to establish the level of service they should be getting for their money. Operational Services also need to know that they are being paid the right amount for the work they carry out.

5.13 "Whitespace" needs to become the system for scheduling work, signing off completed tasks, costing work, raising random inspections and raising reactive jobs in conjunction with the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

5.14 In the meantime, management need to increase proactive monitoring to improve efficiency from the workforce. The introduction of the post of Operations Manager to the structure should free up resource for formal inspections to take place. These should include "in-process" checks at work sites to ensure that the job is being undertaken satisfactorily, the right methods being employed and health & safety procedures being followed.

5.15 There are currently two Supervisor posts (one each for grounds and street cleansing) and two senior team leader roles on the structure. Two Supervisor posts feels about right for the size of the overall workforce but there is an imbalance between the two services. In recent times one Supervisor has covered both areas with a temporary appointment from below filling the other post. To be equitable and to provide greater flexibility and cover, both Supervisor posts should oversee both services as "Streetscene Supervisors".

5.16 The geography of the district requires the Supervisors to have more support at ground level. The Team Leader approach successfully operates in other councils, particularly where they are

given greater responsibility for particular geographical areas and are empowered to oversee all aspects of the work within them, grounds maintenance, cleansing and any other work required to provide a holistic streetscene-type approach.

5.17 There was sufficient mention within the diagnostic process to support the need for improvement in the more rural parts of South Derbyshire. The Street Cleansing team is extremely small, hence being one of the cheapest services in the benchmarking comparisons. Those resources are supplemented by some of the parishes who employ their own staff to keep their areas clean. However, there is little or no co-ordination between them and South Derbyshire council. Across all the outlying locations there is seen to be a need for increasing visibility and standards. A programme of "Village Cleans" involving all functions would be a means to achieve this.

5.18 Dividing teams by area has been shown in other councils to provide a greater 'ownership' for staff in their areas and South Derbyshire could potentially follow this model. Greater efficiency can be achieved by combining functions and tasks, creating teams to undertake all the jobs required in each area, rather than silo working between grounds maintenance and street cleansing and having separate single function operatives running out, especially to the far reaches of the district. This would help alleviate the issue of litter picking and verge mowing that was raised many times during the review.

5.19 Team Leaders on the ground are key to helping to change the culture and to adopting an attitude of "deal with what you see, report what you can't do" irrespective of whether it's a traditional grounds maintenance, street cleansing or other task that they are capable of undertaking. This can be supplemented by practical training in what that might include. Wigan Council and others have set up training resources that would be worth looking at.

5.20 It is likely that there will need to be double the number of Team Leaders in order to run this type of joint approach, potentially making up two of the current workforce from one or both services as appropriate. This will have the advantage of opening up what is currently a fairly flat structure in to one that has a clear career progression path and opportunities for more ambitious employees. Team Leaders should also be enabled to act up when Supervisors are absent with the same opportunities for suitable operatives to cover for Team Leaders in the same way.

5.21 There will still be a need for specialist posts including horticultural roles within the formal parks, burial staff for cemeteries and drivers for mechanical sweepers.

5.22 The service is currently affected by a shortage of HGV drivers across all Operational Services including waste collection. The designated mechanical sweeper driver and the cover driver are utilised by refuse collection when they are short leaving days when the road sweeper doesn't leave the yard.

5.23 In order to increase standards, particularly in the level of detritus as identified by Keep Britain Tidy surveys, the council needs to find a way to ensure that there are sufficient HGV drivers available each day to avoid having to take the sweeper drivers. Currently the council is struggling to attract drivers to join the service and to find volunteers from within to undertake training to become HGV qualified. This is an issue affecting most councils at present. It may

require a raise in the rate of pay offered in order to incentivise the role and compete with the outside world.

5.24 The staff numbers suggested lends itself to a 50/50 split of the district, with one Supervisor and two Team leaders in each. Specialist staff would operate between them as required by their areas of responsibility.

5.25 Other more specialist work could potentially be undertaken by Operational Services to avoid having to spend money externally. This includes the erection of litter bins, basic repairs of play equipment and other small works reported by area teams in the course of their duties. Initially a "Small Works Team" of two suitably trained/qualified operatives could also start to take on private jobs that would help to subsidise the roles, as well as being able to supplement core work such as clearing fly tipping and other reactive tasks.

5.26 Street cleansing staff currently work 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day. In order to extend the responsiveness of the service, the "Small Works Team" could work a later shift like 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. allowing to deal with any urgent issues after 2:00 p.m. that might otherwise have to attract overtime for other staff.

5.27 Training will be required to upskill staff to be able to carry out a wider range of tasks. There is currently no 'training needs' strategy based on a skills matrix of staff competencies. Having this in place helps greatly in planning cover for sickness, holiday and other absences, as well as for succession planning and service delivery resilience. This should take in specialisms such as COTS training for burial staff and HGV driving.

5.28 Health and safety concerns have been raised during the review. Safeguarding of staff is key and there needs to be a response to complaints about issues such as safe working practices for litter picking on high speed roads and dealing with invasive species such as ragwort for example, through updating policies and increased monitoring and tool box talks.

5.29 There need to be more links between the work of Parks & Green Spaces and Operational Services. It needs to be made clearer for elected members and the general public who is responsible for what, particularly along ecological themes. There is a historic client/contractor split between burials administration and operations. With a new burials post due to be appointed in the north of the district for the part of the service returning in-house there is an opportunity for it to brought under one umbrella to be better managed.

5.30 The council has declared an ecological emergency and introduced "No Mow" areas for May 2024 as part of its move to encourage greater biodiversity, which ultimately extended into the following months thereafter. Many councils have stopped cutting particular areas of their green space in response to climate change but also in an attempt to save money on the service. It still remains to be seen whether the latter is achievable. A large aggregate of area would be required to be left naturalised in order to merit a reduction in the size of the workforce, more likely is that it creates opportunities to meet other demands that they may have been struggling with capacity for.

5.31 For South Derbyshire it has been mainly a biodiversity driven move, but it has received a mixed response from elected members, parish councils and the general public, despite shows of

colour from wildflowering in places which have been well received. Although it went down well with some, there are others who would prefer to see grass kept as short as possible to enhance the appearance of the district, however that is not sustainable in the current ecological climate.

5.32 It has become clear through the diagnostic analysis that not enough consultation took place and insufficient information was communicated to people about why grass was being left to grow and that some of the areas selected were not managed effectively enough, resulting in them looking untidy at the different times of the year, especially towards the end of season and after the flower shows. A review of the whole process needs to be carried out before next year's growing season to change some hearts and minds and get this back on track.

5.33 Communication as a whole was highlighted by this issue. The council website needs to be updated and contain more specific information where possible around standards and timings. There could be more of a role here for the Technical Officer. Much more use needs to be made of social media to promote awareness of problems faced by environmental crime, the work carried out to keep South Derbyshire clean and tidy and to promote biodiversity and more.

5.34 Traditional mowing equipment operated by the council was purchased to cut grass on a regular basis at a fairly low height. These are wholly unsuitable to deal with naturalised grass areas, particularly as there is deemed a need to collect arisings as well. There needs to be an investment in suitable modern equipment such as the Amazone "Profihopper". The service should look at more modern technology to assist in safer more efficient working such as remote controlled equipment like the Spider Slope Mower. All new equipment should be procured in line with climate change policies on use of alternative fuel / electric.

5.35 Investment in more modern technology should also help in attracting younger people into the service which acknowledges that it has an ageing workforce. Apprenticeships are difficult to create without the scope of opportunity that integrated service roles create. The revised working set up outlined above can help with that. Following an approach like Wakefield Council's "Get into Streetscene" (where young people, often disadvantaged, are given work experience places prior to apprenticeship appointments to assess suitability from both sides) can help to get the right candidates.

5.36 The council needs to address the issue of weed growth on channels and footways. Current spraying operations on behalf of Derbyshire County Council and subsequent follow ups to deal with dead weeds are insufficient and is a source of significant complaint. Nationally there is an issue with the use of the chemical 'glyphosate' which is the most effective herbicide treatment employed, many councils are trying to reduce its use in response to alleged health concerns. Any alternative methods found have been less effective and more costly. SDDC are picking this up through their ecological theme. As it's a county council issue, SDDC would most likely have to pay for any increase in the spraying programme where this couldn't be renegotiated as part of the Public Realm Agreement. Alternatively the council might decide to leave them to grow in certain locations as "pavement plants" as part of the ecological programme.

5.37 Gully emptying is also undertaken on behalf of the county council with an annual programme in place to ensure that each one is serviced once every year. However, it appears that there is potentially a need to increase the frequency in some locations to help alleviate the risk of flooding. There will no doubt be other locations that will not need an annual emptying, which might be used to offset those that require more attention. There needs to be a review undertaken alongside DCC to revise the programme.

5.38 Like most other councils around the UK, South Derbyshire has budget concerns to address, although they are in a more fortunate position than most at present. However, there is a need to start to look at how funding can be maximised and enhanced through commercial income generating activity. Firstly they will have to decide whether it can do this within its current organisation as opposed to feeling the need to create an arms-length commercial company.

5.39 There appears to be limited opportunity for the expansion of Operational Services into the private sector. Toyota is a major employer but there are few other large businesses in the area. There are no major opportunities around education (universities etc.), health (hospitals, major surgeries) or commerce (retail parks, industrial estates).

5.40 Firstly, this service needs to ensure that it carries out its fundamental basic tasks to standard. That won't leave much scope for any larger scale commercial activity with the existing workforce, hence the previous suggestion of a "Small Works Team" to pick up on any small scale work. However, opportunities also exist that don't involve regular work, such as verge/roundabout sponsorship, advertising on vehicles and litter bins etc.

5.41 The main area identified for commercialisation is arboriculture, very pertinent given the council's location within the National Forest. Currently there is no in-house provision, all work goes to external contractors, but there is certainly scope for creating an in-house team although there would need to be an investment in skilled staff, vehicle and equipment.

5.42 There are currently 727 litter bins and 216 dog bins located throughout the district which are serviced at differing times. These frequencies have not been reviewed for some time and needs updating. A Litter Bin Policy is needed in order to standardise on bin types and the criteria for introducing new locations.

5.43 In 2016, the government adapted England's waste policy to allow dog waste to be disposed of together with all other non-recyclable waste. This means that separate dog waste bins are no longer required as dog waste can be bagged and disposed of in any general waste bins like all rubbish. The council might consider replacing dog bins which have been highlighted as being 'regularly overflowing' with larger capacity general litter bins.

5.44 Technological advances have been made with 'smart' litter bins that now have sensors that check on fill levels, some larger sized with solar compaction to increase their capacity (also providing advertising opportunities). Investment in some of these in the right places would help to make the service run more efficiently. It is important to establish how full the bins are at present at the time they are being emptied to ensure a programme that has the right frequency to prevent overspill as much as possible. Barcoding technology is also being used more widely now to keep track of when bins are serviced.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Operational services need to improve performance monitoring in order to address issues around productivity, communication and efficiency. The introduction of the "Whitespace" software system will assist in providing base data but performance processes need to link from that, including productivity checks, generating random site inspections and providing benchmarking data.

6.2 Formal quality inspections need to take place to supplement the Keep Britain Tidy cleanliness surveys and to assess quality on grounds maintenance. A system that uses suitably trained staff, such as APSE's Land Audit Management System (LAMS) or a suitable alternative, should be used.

6.3 Benchmarking data provided to APSE needs to be reviewed in the light of the performance comparison reports produced in order to improve their accuracy for the next set early in 2025, particularly what has been included in the financial returns that have led to SDDC being excluded from some of the performance indicators.

6.4 Efforts should be made to reduce demand for the street cleansing element of the service through education (publicity/campaigns) alongside an increase in enforcement. They could start with some easy win examples from KBT or Hubbub such as poster campaigns or look to nudge behaviour through painted footsteps to litter bins or signs warning that litter wardens are operating in the area.

6.5 As part of the performance monitoring process, Operational Services should carry out a public consultation exercise to establish the current level of satisfaction with its services. This will act as a baseline to repeating the exercise in future years to monitor improvement. This could be undertaken as part of a corporate residents survey depending on the number of aspects of the service that would be considered for feedback.

6.6 The council needs to review the standards for the service. Elected members need to sign off on them and support them. This would include frequencies of grass cutting, hedge cutting, street sweeping and litter picking. Agreed standards then need to be widely communicated and adhered to ensuring the service is run efficiently.

6.7 There needs to be a culture change amongst a number of employees to improve care and attention and attitude towards the job. A greater amount of proactive monitoring by management (including supervisory staff) needs to take place. This can be addressed through formal "In-Process" inspections with results reported back to senior management.

6.8 Levels of productivity need to be assessed through the "Whitespace" system as soon as possible.

6.9 The importance of the new software has been highlighted. However, the current projection is that with current resources and priorities it would be 2026 before it is up and running properly for grounds maintenance and street cleansing. This is too long to wait. Consideration should be made to employing a second Technical Officer, specifically to populate the software and get it up and running with grounds and street cleansing schedules and specifications and

to enable mobile working features. This will also address outstanding Audit recommendations.

6.10 The Service Level Agreements with Housing for grounds maintenance and with Derbyshire County Council for verge cutting, weed spraying and gully emptying need to be reviewed. There is currently insufficient detail around the specification for these making financial analysis impossible.

6.11 Operational Services need to ensure that the income received for Housing and county council work covers the cost of providing the services.

6.12 The two Supervisor posts are not currently equitable due to the different sizes of operation between grounds maintenance and street cleansing. The posts should be redesigned to cover both services as "Streetscene" Supervisors. This would also provide a greater level of cover.

6.13 This could be further aided by splitting the district geographically in half and adopting a "Streetscene" type area-based approach in each. This would need to be supplemented by increasing the number of working Team Leaders on the ground, it is suggested doubling the number from two to four. This can come from the existing workforce as there is no evidence at present supporting an increase in the grounds maintenance workforce.

6.14 Economies of scale can come from integrating the services, particularly in more rural areas where improvement is needed. A programme of "Village Cleans" needs to be established to tackle as many issues in one visit as possible.

6.15 Collaboration is required with the parish councils who employ their own staff to undertake some of the same tasks as Operational Services in order to prevent overlapping and to improve the effectiveness of the combined efforts.

6.16 There will still be a requirement for specialist roles to be maintained, including horticultural posts for formal parks, burial staff in cemeteries, mechanical street sweeping and gully emptying which would operate within whichever half of the district that their work falls in.

6.17 Team Leaders need to be empowered to support and encourage a "One Council" approach where they "deal with what they see and report what can't be dealt with" to avoid repeat visits.

6.18 There is an opportunity to enhance the service through the addition of two employees to operate as a "Small Works Team" across the district carrying out small works that currently get done by external contractors and to supplement the collection of fly-tipping and other tasks.

6.19 In order to provide a greater response coverage where currently all staff finish at 2:00 p.m., this team could have a later start and finish time to pick up urgent requests that come in the afternoon. However, there will be a need to consider how the team would be supervised as these senior roles also finish at 2:00 p.m. currently. It may be necessary to introduce staggered starting times for Supervisors.

6.20 A review of training needs should be undertaken and a skills matrix developed to map the requirements of the service to training and qualifications gained by existing staff. This can be used for finding training gaps and for succession planning in future.

6.21 The skills matrix will identify the extent of available drivers for the mechanical sweepers. This will be helpful in ensuring that there is enough cover. However, the service must find a way to ensure that the HGV operates more often with the drivers not being pulled on to waste collection because of a shortage of drivers overall. There are issues in attracting HGV drivers to local government due to the competition with private sector who pay more. The council needs to consider increasing rates of pay to encourage more people to join the service and those in-house to train to HGV level.

6.22 Health & safety concerns over safeguarding of staff need to be addressed. Policies are required to address issues raised and safe working practices need to be reviewed for issues such as litter picking on high speed roads and dealing with invasive species such as ragwort.

6.23 There needs to be more integration between Parks & Green Spaces and Operational Services where there are many synergies between management and maintenance roles that require closer collaboration, not least the biodiversity issues. In other councils, such as Torfaen in Wales, these teams are based together at the operations depot such is the integrated nature of their work. Boardman Road doesn't have that capacity but it is possibly worth considering in the future.

6.24 One area where closer working might be more immediately considered is the bereavement administration and burials operation, especially with the north area grave digging duties coming back in house imminently.

6.25 The biodiversity efforts under "No Mow May" and beyond to "No Mow" need to be reviewed urgently. There were obviously issues over communication and information regarding this year's efforts to leave selective grass areas uncut. Despite the ecological benefits being sought, the necessary engagement didn't happen and some parishes have expressed the wish to be excluded from next year's exercise. Policies and processes need to be agreed, wider consultation needs to take place around which areas should be left and the ecological message needs to be emphasised and publicised to try and bring more people along with it.

6.26 The council's website should be used to convey more information and far better use made of social media, not just for biodiversity but to promote all the work the service does that needs publicising, such as fly tip clearances.

6.27 The service needs to look at different mowing solutions for "No Mow" and to enable safer working as technological advances have been made in things like remote controlled mowing on banks and slopes (which can also take in roadside verges). As part of the climate change theme, alternate fuels should be at the fore of specifications.

6.28 Greater use of technology can help to attract younger people into the service, something that has always presented difficulties. A greater range of tasks through "Streetscene" integration as well as more progression opportunities will also help in this respect. South Derbyshire might consider an approach similar to Wakefield Council's "Get into Streetscene" which they

use to assess suitability prior to offering apprenticeships. With an ageing workforce, SDDC needs to look at ways to get younger blood into the workforce and an apprentice scheme offers an ideal pathway if done right.

6.29　There needs to be a review of how weed growth is tackled in the district. Although this is ostensibly a county council problem, the public don't necessarily know the difference and it is an area of complaint. SDDC may have to purchase more spraying to enhance the current programme. A greater frequency of channel sweeping may reduce the number of roadside weeds. An increase in visits might be achieved if greater use can be made of staff resources to reduce vehicle downtime.

6.30　Gully emptying needs to be reviewed with Derbyshire County Council in order to reschedule the programme based on need, some needing servicing more than once per year offset against others that could potentially be moved out to once every two years.

6.31　The council needs to look at its approach to commercial activity and decide if it would support services charging for work with the private sector without having to form an arms-length trading company.

6.32　For grounds maintenance and street cleansing there doesn't seem to be many big opportunities for income generation. Certainly they will have to concentrate on getting the basic functions of its own internal core business right first. The creation of the "Small Works Team" would offer a chance for small scale work to be picked up and opportunities should be explored around verge / roundabout sponsorship and advertising on vehicles and litter bins etc.

6.33　The council should look into the potential for investing in the creation of an in-house arboricultural service for which there does appear to be plenty of scope for paid work given that all work is currently delivered by private contractors.

6.34　There needs to be a review of litter and dog bins within the district. A Litter Bin Policy is needed in order to standardise on bin types and the criteria for introducing new locations. The council might consider replacing dog bins with larger receptacles as there is no longer a requirement to separate this waste.

6.35　The review needs to look at current locations and gather data on how full they are when they are scheduled to be emptied to ensure more efficient servicing routes. The council should look how technical advances in barcoding, fill sensors and smart bins could assist this process and look into potential advertising opportunities on litter bins.

P.E.S.T.E.L. Analysis

Management	Operatives
POLITICAL	
• Labour run council – previously No Overall Control • Committee run – no portfolio holder • No interest in outsourcing • No interest in job cuts • 'Politics' played between main parties • Clearly defined corporate targets – fleet replacement / digitisation	• National – recent change of MP • Local – good relationship between council and parishes • Service reacts to elected member complaints – some in particular
ECONOMIC	
• No budget growth • Small income from parish councils (£10-£12k p.a.) • Housing recharges • Property development – high growth area with corresponding green space • Work for county council – gully emptying, highway verges, weed spraying • Limited scope for private work – maybe arboriculture	• Small equipment funded • Big stuff – different matter! • Operator input needed for opinion on big purchases
SOCIAL	
• Swadlincote – Large urban ("gets everything" perception) • Villages – rural • Some deprived areas (greater demands) • Cross border fly tippers – but not excessive	• Low level immigration • Affluent areas – greater entitlement

TECHNOLOGICAL	
• Digitisation – "Whitespace" being pursued (schedules, job sheets – creates management oversight / performance monitoring) • Play equipment inspection system • E/V – move for any fleet under 3.5 tonnes to be electric • Most hand held tools are battery operated • Move toward full electrification • Look at Smart bins as part of "Binfrastructure"	• Play inspection app – not wi-fi enabled • Some operatives have work phones • Trackers on some vehicles • Some way behind on technology

ENVIRONMENTAL	
• Environmental Protection Act 1990 • Glyphosate • Climate change • Deposit Return Scheme	• Biodiversity – 'No Mow May' became 'No Mow' – website and radio used to promote it – elected member sign up • Complaints around not collecting grass cuttings

LEGISLATIVE	
• EPA 1990 • H & S – inc. glyphosate – currently used in SDDC • Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome HAVS • Continuous Professional Competence for HGV drivers – large sweepers / gully emptier • Procurement Regs	• EPA • COSHH Regs

Service Continuous Improvement Questionnaire

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Name _____

As part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement we would like to seek your views on how the service can become more efficient, effective and meet the needs of the community.

Your views and suggestions are important and we would like you to complete this questionnaire to support this work. You may complete it anonymously, but if you do include your name it would assist us to follow up on ideas raised.

1. Have you been made aware of the standards related to your role that the service is expected to deliver e.g. Grade A, B etc. / number of grass cuts per year?   **Yes / No**

2. Would you benefit in your work from a better understanding of the Operational Services standards? **Yes / No**

3. Do you feel you have enough time to deliver the standard that is expected? **Yes / No**
   - if No explain why

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Are there areas that you feel can be improved or need more attention than they currently get?
   Yes / No   If Yes – Where are they and what do you think needs to be done?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Are there working practices that could be changed to improve efficiency/service delivery?
   Yes/No

   If Yes – What are they and how could they be changed/efficiency improved

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. Is there any equipment (manual or mechanical) that you feel would assist you better in your work and make a difference to the service in terms of efficiency and quality?   **Yes / No**

   If Yes – What are they and how would they make a difference?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. Can we ask a question about training? Do you consider you have been given the right level of training for the role you play. If not, what training would you like and why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Do you have any other suggestions for improving your own job or the work of the Operational Services section as a whole?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you very much for your contribution to improving the service

Parks, Open Spaces & Horticulture
Performance indicators 2023-24 (England)
Key performance indicators

PI 30   Hectares of maintained public open space per 1,000 head of population

PI 12   Number of hectares maintained per FTE front line employee

PI 13a   Percentage staff absence

PI 45a   Key Quality performance indicator

PI 47a   Quality assurance and consultation process score

PI 48a   Human resources and people management

PI 22b   APSE customer satisfaction

PI 38b   Public satisfaction surveys undertaken

PI 23   Output specification

PI 49a   Environmental practices

PI 18a   Local authority playgrounds per 1,000 children

PI 18b   Local authority and community playgrounds per 1,000 children

LAMS performance indicators

PI L02   LAMS percentage of sites classed as acceptable (grounds maintenance)

PI L03   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (litter)

PI L04   Percentage of sites classed as grade A (fly tipping)

PI L05   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (dog fouling)

PI L06   Percentage of sites where bins were over flowing

PI L07   Percentage of sites containing bins classed as acceptable (bin structure)

PI L08   Percentage of sites containing bins classed as acceptable (bin cleanliness)

PI L09   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (hard surface weeds)

PI L10   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (grass cutting)

PI L11   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (shrub bed maintenance)

PI L12   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (flower bed maintenance)

PI L13   Percentage of sites classed as grade A (fly posting)

Key cost performance indicators

PI 43b   Maintenance investment per household (excluding CEC)

PI 41b   Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land (excluding CEC)

PI 42b   Maintenance investment per 1,000 head of population (excluding CEC)

PI 21b   Annual investment in service per household (excluding CEC)

PI 02b   Annual investment in service per hectare of maintained land (excluding CEC)

PI 17b   Annual investment in service per 1,000 head of population (excluding CEC)

Secondary performance indicators

PI 13b   Percentage staff absence (excluding long term)

PI 14   Total staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment

PI 26   Front line staff costs as a percentage of total annual investment

PI 27   Number of FTE non front-line employees per 100 hectares maintained

PI 37   Average NPFA play value score of children's playgrounds

PI 55a   Vehicle and machinery costs as a percentage of total annual investment

Street Cleansing
Performance indicators 2020-21 (England)

Key performance indicators

PI 04   Annual investment in street cleansing service per household (excluding CEC)

PI 20b   APSE Customer satisfaction surveys

PI 37a   Percentage of sites surveyed falling below grade b for cleanliness (England only) (Leqs Pro survey carried out with requisite numbers)

PI 37b   Percentage of sites surveyed falling below grade b for cleanliness (England only) (Leqs Pro survey with reduced survey numbers or other survey type)

PI 39a   Community/customer survey undertaken

PI 44e   Quality inspection survey indicator

PI 46a   Quality key performance indicator

PI 47a   Quality assurance and community consultation

PI 48a   Human resources and people management

LAMS performance indicators

PI L02   LAMS percentage of sites classed as acceptable (combined litter and detritus)

PI L04   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (litter)

PI L05   Percentage of sites classed as grade A (fly tipping)

PI L06   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (dog fouling)

PI L07   Percentage of sites where bins were overflowing

PI L08   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (bin structure)

PI L09   Percentage of sites classed as acceptable (bin cleanliness)

PI L10   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (hard surface weeds)

PI L11   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (detritus)

PI L12   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (graffiti)

PI L13   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (staining/gum)

PI L14   Percentage of sites classed as unacceptable (fly posting)

Other cost performance indicators

PI 05   Annual investment in street cleansing service per head of population (excluding CEC)

PI 06   Total staff costs as a percentage of annual investment

PI 08   Transport costs as a percentage of annual investment

PI 21   Front-line staff costs as percentage of total staff costs

PI 33   Front-line staff costs as a percentage of annual investment

PI 15   Net cleaning cost per public convenience site

PI 14   Cost per gully per annum

PI 40   Percentage of the street cleansing budget spent on education and publicity of initiatives

Staff absence performance indicators

PI 22a   Staff absence (all staff)

Environmental performance indicators

PI 25a   Number of litter offence notices issued per 1,000 head of population

PI 25d   Number of incidents of fly-tipping/dumps per 1,000 households (England Only)

PI 43   Percentage of street cleansing waste that is recycled

NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies