

Opposition Policy Item – Cllr Kath McGuirk

The state of our street scene

Council recognises that maintaining a clean environment is one of the most significant priorities identified by Barnet residents across the borough, and it is therefore rightly one of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Council also recognises that ensuring Barnet is a clean, green and safe borough is key to improving local residents' quality of life, with research showing that the quality of people's surroundings substantially impacts upon levels of crime and disorder, and how safe they feel.

Council further recognises that while the overall level of satisfaction with environmental cleanliness in Barnet is high compared to other local authorities, the standard of cleanliness across the Borough is not uniform, with residents in more deprived wards, and on Council estates, experiencing a radically different street scene to residents living in more affluent and suburban areas.

Council notes that the street cleaning service has this year been re-configured to focus even more on town centres, but that as a result many Councillors have received an increase in complaints, and requests for extra street sweeps from residents living in roads just off town centres or in more urban residential areas.

Council also notes that the street enforcement service, which deals with enviro-crime on our streets, has also been the subject of re-organisation over the last two years, resulting in a cut to the service of £850,000 and the axing of 18 posts in 2006 - all regardless of a clear need for extra resources to deliver the administration's own Clean Borough Strategy.

Council further notes that the graffiti prevention, education and enforcement service has recently been given a "no assurance" rating by internal auditors, who found that there was no clear service objective, no formal service delivery plan, no clear strategy to meet targets to remove graffiti, that the service was failing to issue graffiti removal notices and had therefore not re-covered up to £30,000 in removal charges.

Council believes that street cleanliness looks like it is getting worse - only 9% of streets in Barnet were judged to be unacceptably dirty in 2005/6, whereas 16.3% of streets were judged to be unacceptably dirty in 2006/7.

Council therefore asks Cabinet to request that the Cleaner Greener Scrutiny review of the street cleaning service is widened to include details of progress against the Clean Borough Strategy Action Plan, a comparison of street cleanliness and street scene issues in different areas of the Borough, a review of Barnet Homes estate cleaning service level agreement, a review of performance targets and data (BVPI 199), and a review of customer enviro-crime reporting arrangements.