

**NOTES OF MEETING OF THE  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON  
MECHANICAL STREET CLEANSING (COMPACT SWEEPERS)  
HELD AT NELSON TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

*PRESENT*

*Councillor D. Cockburn-Price – (Review Leader)*

**Councillors**

*R. Anwar  
C. Church  
M. Stone*

**Officers present**

*David Walker  
Lynne Rowland*

*Assistant Director, Operational Services  
Committee Administrator*



**1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were reminded of the legal requirements concerning the declaration of interests.

**2. REVIEW PLAN**

A draft review plan was submitted for approval.

The draft plan included proposed terms of reference and provided background information on why the topic had been selected for review by Overview and Scrutiny.

**AGREED**

That the draft review plan and proposed terms of reference be approved.

**3. MECHANICAL STREET CLEANSING (COMPACT SWEEPERS)**

A review of mechanical street cleansing (compact sweepers) had been included in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme as it had been identified that the current compact mechanical street cleansing schedule may benefit from a change. The current schedule followed refuse and recycling collections however, some areas of the Borough had a greater need for resources to be deployed within them.

The purpose of the review was to gain a clear understanding of the current schedule of activity for mechanical street cleansing and to consider whether an amendment could make the service more efficient, reduce service costs, and therefore better deliver on the Council's priorities.

The Group was provided with details on the current schedule of activity for the small mechanical sweepers operating within the Borough, in a report from the Assistant Director, Operational Services. Ways to reduce service costs and possible amendments to the service in response to

the changing operational environment and the needs of residents were also proposed. The Assistant Director attended the meeting to answer questions from the Group.

During discussion of the report and response to questions, the following information was received and considered/noted –

- The Council's mechanical street cleansing fleet consisted of five compact sweepers and one large mechanical sweeper. The compact sweepers were mainly used within urban areas such as terraced streets, housing estates and town centre areas to support manual street cleansing operatives during seasonal peaks in workload.
- For waste collection, the Borough was divided into collection zones. Zones 1-5 covered West Craven through to Nelson, with zones 6-10 covering Reedley, Barrowford, Nelson and areas such as Fence and the outlying urban areas. Each collection team carried out 14,000 lifts on average.
- Two compact sweepers were deployed to work within collection zones 1-5 (the North) and two sweepers deployed to work within zones 6-10 (the South). These four sweepers visited set routes on a weekly basis following the waste collections. The fifth sweeper was deployed on an alternate week basis following recycling collections within both the North and South of the Borough and would mainly be deployed on estates where only front streets existed. There were 30 routes in total.
- The vehicles, which consisted of complex machinery and were up to 7.5 tonnes, were hired through Riverside Truck Rental following their purchase of the contract hire agreement from the administrators working on behalf of Go Plant Fleet Services in May 2024. The hire cost of each vehicle was £24,000 per annum, paid monthly. With the Council budgets set at almost £11,000 per vehicle to cover fuel, equipment, insurance and tyre replacements, the total cost without driver could cost £35,000 each, per annum.
- Riverside Truck Rental was not the only hire company on the market, but the Council was currently tied into the contract until November 2026.
- The Council carried out audits of the area measuring things such as littering, detritus, fouling and graffiti levels. The surveys were carried out independent to the service, in varying wards, and at least 24hrs after the service had taken place. As well as being an audit of the service, it was also an opportunity to assess the behaviour of residents and visitors to the area.
- The areas were rated in line with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) code of practice on litter and refuse, with gradings A (best) – E (worst).
- The internal performance target for Operational Services was to have less than 5% littering, 5% detritus, 5% fouling, and no graffiti. This was a challenging target but reflected the improving service over the years. Performance against the Key Performance Indicator (PI) for littering was reported to the Executive and Council. Other PIs were recorded internally.
- The timespan for turning an urban high intensity of use area from E to A where necessary was half a day. For medium intensity of use areas, such as outside retail or commercial areas regularly used by members of the public, it was 24hrs. The timespans relaxed as you went into other areas.

- The first surveys for 2024/2025 were completed in June in West Craven, Barrowford, Bradley, Higham, Pendleside and Walverden. Overall, the survey results were recorded as being below the target levels. This reflected positively upon the service deliverers who worked hard to maintain the service standards.
- Evidence highlighted the environmental changes that the service now operated within, which included an increased level of vehicles parked on the highway, pavement parking, and blocked access into streets from vehicles or skips.
- The high level of on street parking meant that the mechanical sweepers were often unable to access pavements and kerb edgings, which allowed detritus, weeds and litter to build up. This had been noticed during recent walkabouts with Members and street litterpicks during fly-tipping amnesty events.
- With the current schedule it would be relatively easy to add an extra column to the collection calendar advising of the date mechanical sweeping would be taking place, in a bid to encourage people to park differently at these times. However, it was acknowledged that it wouldn't be easy for homeowners to find alternative parking and, should they manage to do so, their space could soon be filled, particularly in those areas with business premises close by.

The Group was provided with details of a savings proposal that was put forward in 2021 which had recommended a move from the mechanical street cleansing service following the refuse and recycling service, to delivering an independent service with four vehicles. However, as a result of the recent walkabouts and work during the amnesty events it was felt that this may no longer be the best option and that the service needed to be considered wider.

A further proposal was therefore presented for consideration. The detail of this was to reduce the mechanical resource by two vehicles and redeploy the drivers of those vehicles to litterpick the areas of need. The manual litterpickers could either run independently where resources were needed or be linked to the mechanical street cleansing service. They would be able to litterpick areas where mechanical sweepers couldn't go and would be deployed in areas of lesser need to enhance the work of the mechanical teams by litterpicking shrubbed areas or around street furniture.

It was established that vehicles could be hired on an ad hoc basis for weekly periods but would not be financially viable for single day hire. Currently, an additional sweeper was hired for several weeks to help with leaf clearance from November. This was organised in advance, with the order being placed in July.

After recent trials it was estimated that a litterpicking team working upon a mechanical sweeping route would take a month to cover the full 30 routes. It was envisaged that a vehicle would be required to transfer operatives to site and to be used to bulk collect waste items prior to disposal.

A proposed programme, which followed the Council's collection zone arrangements and effectively became an alternate week service across the Borough was included for consideration. The report provided costings in relation to the proposal and identified that the introduction of a manual litterpicking service to support the mechanical resources could achieve savings of £49,000. This was based on the loss of one compact sweeper and the replacement of a second sweeper with a 3.5t vehicle.

Confirmation of any termination fees for the street cleansing vehicles from the vehicle provider were awaited, at which point a more accurate financial assessment could be achieved. An

example of the termination fees with the former hire company Go Plant Fleet Service were provided and, with this in mind, an assessment had been made based on there being 10 months left on the contract.

As the contract wasn't due to expire until November 2026, Members felt that there could be more than 10 months remaining and therefore asked that a termination fee be sought with a view to the contract ending by April 2025. It was acknowledged that this earlier exit from the contract would reduce the hire charges but could potentially increase the estimated termination fee. Once available this information would be circulated to Members.

It was noted that even without any cost savings, it was believed that the proposal would bring a more efficient service to the area if managed correctly.

**Conclusion**

Having considered all the evidence presented in the report of the Assistant Director, Operational Services and in answer to questions of the Group, the Group concluded that, in response to changing operational environment and the needs of Pendle residents, the proposal to reduce the mechanical resource by two vehicles and redeploy the drivers of those vehicles to litterpick the areas of need would provide a more effective service to the residents of Pendle as well as assisting the Council in achieving targets within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Based on the figures provided and taking into account the indicative calculations around the termination fee, the Group was confident that, even with the termination fee, the Council would achieve savings in pursuing the proposal.

The following recommendation was made –

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (1) That the proposal to reduce the mechanical street cleansing resource by two vehicles and redeploy the drivers of those vehicles to litterpick the areas of need be agreed.
- (2) That the proposed programme following the Council's collection zone arrangements be accepted as follows -

**Week 1**

<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>	<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	<b><u>Friday</u></b>
Routes 1	Routes 2	Routes 3	Routes 4	Routes 5
Routes 16	Routes 17	Routes 18	Routes 19	Routes 20
Route 11	Route 12	Route 13	Route 14	Route 15

**Week 2**

<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>	<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	<b><u>Friday</u></b>
Route 6	Routes 7	Routes 8	Routes 9	Routes 10
Routes 21	Routes 22	Routes 23	Routes 24	Routes 25
Route 26	Route 27	Route 28	Route 29	Route 30

**Week 3**

<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>	<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	<b><u>Friday</u></b>
Routes 1	Routes 2	Routes 3	Routes 4	Routes 5
Routes 16	Routes 17	Routes 18	Routes 19	Routes 20
Route 11	Route 12	Route 13	Route 14	Route 15

**Week 4**

<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>	<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	<b><u>Friday</u></b>
Route 6	Routes 7	Routes 8	Routes 9	Routes 10
Routes 21	Routes 22	Routes 23	Routes 24	Routes 25
Route 26	Route 27	Route 28	Route 29	Route 30

Key: Zones 1 – 5 (weekly) - routes 1 – 10  
Zones 1 – 5 (fortnightly) - routes 11- 15  
Zones 6 – 10 (weekly) - routes 16 – 25  
Zones 6 – 10 (fortnightly) - routes 26 – 30

**REASON**

***The evidence presented supports the introduction of changes to the mechanical street cleansing (compact sweepers) service. The changes proposed respond to the changing operational environment and the needs of residents. They will enable a more effective service to be provided and will assist the Council in achieving targets within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).***

***By introducing these changes, it will meet the Council's Priorities 1 and 2 in ensuring the Council is delivering value for money, listening to people and driving a customer focussed ethos, developing a service that is as effective and efficient as it can be and encouraging and fostering community pride for a safer, cleaner environment by protecting our parks and amenity areas through encouraging residents and visitors to take pride in our green, blue and surrounding urban, retail and commercial areas.***

CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_