

Report

Report to:	Community Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 June 2012
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Review of Environmental Services
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise of the outcomes of a review of Environmental Services
- ◆ request approval to progress implementation of the recommendations emerging from the review

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the new management structure for Environmental Services, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and implemented by 30 July 2012

3. Background

3.1 Environmental Services have been subject to a series of changes over recent years (see Community Resources Committee reports dated 31 March and 16 June 2009 and 1 March 2011). Against this background, and having regard to the potential to improve overall service delivery via joint/closer working as a consequence of the merger of Community and Enterprise Resources, it was considered appropriate to undertake a review of the current service.

3.2 The objectives of the review were to:-

- ◆ consider the most appropriate operational model for delivering the functions of Environmental Services
- ◆ establish closer working between Environmental Services and other Services, particularly in the areas of policy development, decision making and the provision of professional advice

3.3 The Review Group was chaired by the Head of Roads and Transportation Services, and included officers from across Community and Enterprise Resources.

4. Description of Services

4.1 The services provided are generally very specialist and require well qualified and experienced professional staff.

4.2 The undernoted list, while not exhaustive, provides an understanding of the key services delivered:-

- ◆ Consumer Protection and Safety
- ◆ Licensing Regulation/Approval (firework/petrol etc)
- ◆ Advice to business
- ◆ Metrology
- ◆ Fair Trading
- ◆ Animal Health and Welfare
- ◆ Air Quality
- ◆ Contaminated Land
- ◆ Food Safety and Standards
- ◆ Housing (private/regulation)
- ◆ Private water supplies (checking)
- ◆ Infectious disease (surveillance/investigation)
- ◆ Noise (Environmental and Anti-Social Behaviour)
- ◆ Public Health
- ◆ Dog Warden Service
- ◆ Waste Enforcement
- ◆ Pest Control
- ◆ Health and Safety
- ◆ Home Safety

4.3 One notable feature of the current structure is that the traditional Trading Standards/Environmental Services split has already been integrated, with individual senior officers responsible for both functions.

4.4 The review also considered the impact upon the existing management structure of the Service no longer having responsibility for Financial Inclusion activities and the impending transfer of staff involved in low level environmental crime to Waste Services (see para 7.2. for more detail).

5. Current Performance

5.1 A substantial number of local performance targets are monitored monthly and reported annually. In addition, statutory performance indicators allowed some degree of comparison with performance in other Councils. The group also considered the availability of more ad hoc benchmarking data. This is discussed further below (refer 5.5)

5.2 Generally local performance measures relate to achievements of tasks within target timescales or whether a target level of activity is achieved, for example the number of visits of a particular type.

5.3 The local performance data reviewed was for the 2010/2011 financial year and, in general, performance was very good with no obvious areas of weakness. While a greater focus on “outcome”, rather than “output” measures, is desirable it is also appreciated that the nature of the workload does not readily lend itself to the identification of outcome measures.

5.4 While statutory performance indicators (SPI's) provide data for all Councils, there was considerable doubt as to the reliability of the statistical information which is published nationally. There are two SPI's which are relevant; the first (indicator 20)

relates to noise complaints; the second (indicator 21) relates to trading standards activity. The SPI's for the period 2008 to 2011 were considered and it was noted that the Service had:-

- ◆ the 9th highest level of noise complaints
- ◆ the 7th highest level of domestic noise complaints settled without the need for attendance on site
- ◆ the highest number of consumer complaints in Scotland but were 16th best in terms of resolving them quickly

5.5 It is noted that a number of local authorities are now working together to benchmark performance. While this is a very positive step, the work is currently at an early stage. While a first tranche of results are available covering the main areas of activity of Environmental Health, there are further checks required to ensure that data produced by individual Councils is suitable for "like for like" comparisons. Once this is done, and parallel work in relation to comparators for Trading Standards activity is suitably advanced, it is noted that it is intended to focus attention on best practice and its adoption where appropriate. The Review Group considered that this work was valuable and progressive and is an area which should be continued by the Service.

6. Option Development and Appraisal

6.1 The Review identified the existing organisational structures in a number of other local authorities. In undertaking this exercise, the group sought to identify Councils with sound reputations and/or similar characteristics to South Lanarkshire both in terms of size and urban/rural split. The comparator authorities used were:-

- ◆ Fife
- ◆ Perth and Kinross
- ◆ North Lanarkshire
- ◆ Renfrewshire
- ◆ West Lothian
- ◆ Dumfries and Galloway

It was notable that none of the Councils considered had fully integrated their Environmental Health and Trading Standards functions at a senior level.

6.2 To inform an options appraisal exercise the Review Group identified a series of ten potential management structures for formal appraisal. The ten options were formally appraised by individual members of the Review Group. The individual assessments were then collated into a single agreed collective assessment. The unanimous view of the group was that the preferred option was the one set out at Appendix 1. The main reasons for this were that the proposed structure:-

- ◆ builds upon the benefits of integration already achieved
- ◆ broadly mirrors the management arrangements in place in other Services within the new Resource
- ◆ delivers modest downsizing with minimal service risk
- ◆ provides the opportunity for more focussed Trading Standards activity
- ◆ reflects the reduction in size of two of the existing teams

The current structure is provided, for comparison purposes, at Appendix 2.

7. Other Workload Issues

- 7.1 While the purpose of the review has fundamentally been to identify an appropriate operational model, there have been a number of workload issues which have arisen during the course of the review and which it would be appropriate to highlight:-

Waste Presentation Issues

- 7.2 The Service, over the last few years, has noted an increasing trend in issues arising as a consequence of the manner by which households and businesses present their waste for collection. This has placed significant demands on the capacity of the Service's officers and does not reflect the best use of their professional knowledge and skills. Accordingly, in order to address this issue, four officers from the Environmental Incivilities Enforcement Team are being transferred to Waste Services. This will enable closer working between those officers involved in waste collection and low level environmental crime enforcement.

Trading Standards reviews

- 7.3 It should be noted that there are a number of high level, national reviews ongoing considering whether elements of Trading Standards should be delivered on a regional or national basis. Any recommendations emerging from these reviews will require to be considered when they are complete.

Out of Hours Service

- 7.4 It is noted that the Service has no capacity to respond to noise complaints either after 3am or during the daytime at weekends. While this is not ideal, it has not proved to be significantly problematic, with the Police generally assisting particularly during the early hours. It is therefore proposed that the current arrangements are continued.

8. Service Overlaps and interfaces

- 8.1. In parallel with this Review, much work has been ongoing to maximise the benefits available from the merger of Community and Enterprise Resources. This has involved senior staff from Environmental Services and Planning and Building Standards reviewing operational procedures, developing new operating protocols and rolling these out via a series of workshops attended by staff from both services.
- 8.2. The work progressed to date is intended to be complemented by further initiatives, including structured internal training, to further expand knowledge and understanding of the functions delivered by Environmental Services.

9. Employee Implications

- 9.1 The proposed changes to the management structure of Environmental Services reduces the teams from five to four and will result in the reduction in Divisional Officer posts by one. This will be achieved by voluntary severance/early retirement.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 Annual savings through post reduction will be £66,000 per annum.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1 There are no sustainability or risk implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 12.1 This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 12.2 As the review has progressed, both Divisional Officers and trade union representatives have been consulted and feedback offered by them has been considered by the Review Group.

Colin McDowall

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

8 June 2012

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- ◆ Efficient and effective use of resources
- ◆ Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for growth
- ◆ Improve community safety

Previous References

- ◆ Review of Service Delivery – Land and Fleet Services - Community Resources Committee 31 March 2009
- ◆ Best Value Service Review, Better Regulation Environmental Health and Consumer and Trading Standards - Community Resources Committee 16 June 2009
- ◆ Management and Staffing Implications of Integrating Environmental Health and Consumer and Trading Standards into a Single Regulatory Service - Community Resources Committee 1 March 2011

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

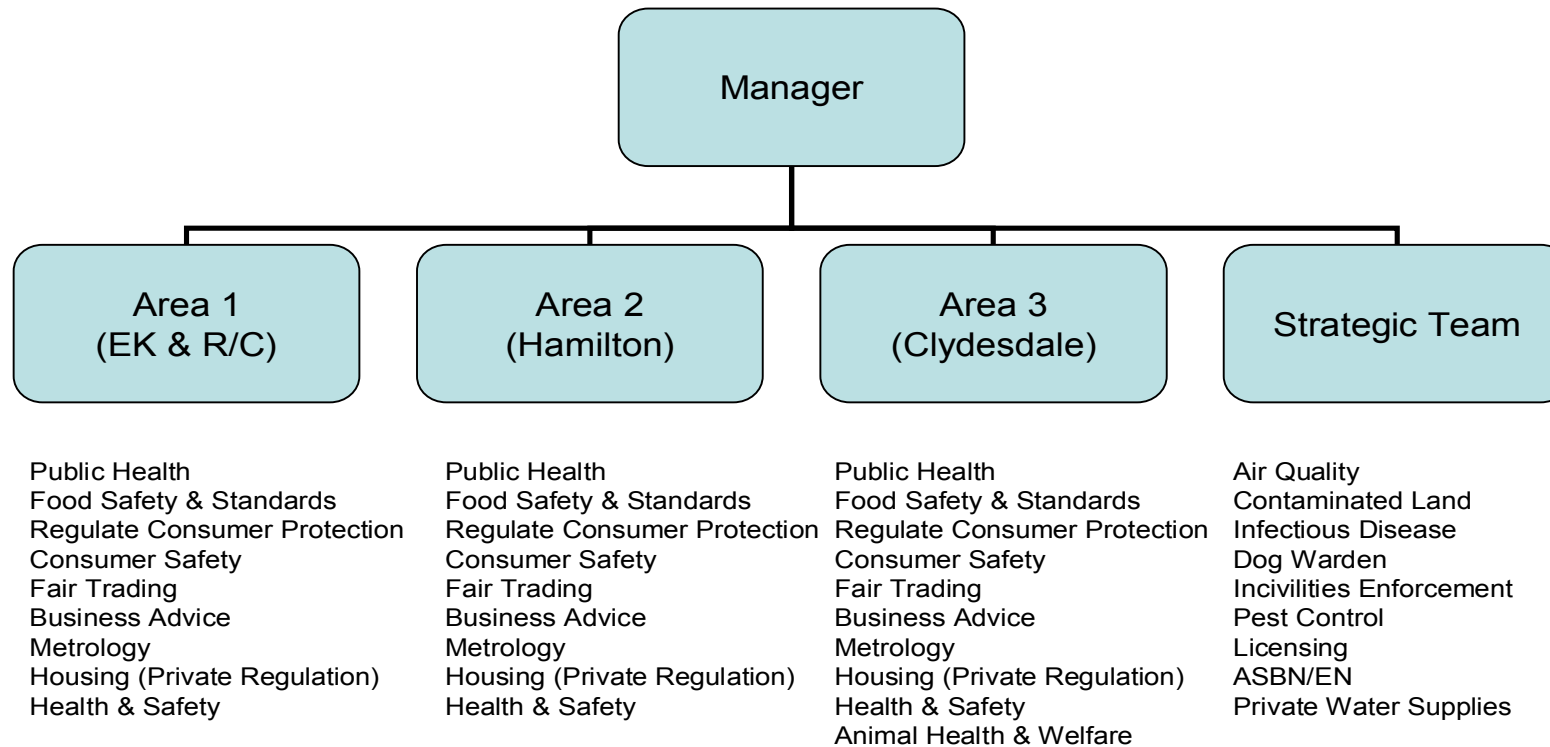
If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: - Gordon Mackay, Head of Roads and Transportation Services

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Appendix 1

Proposed Management Structure



Appendix 2

Current Management Structure

