

Committee: Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – For Information	Dated: 23 November 2021
Subject: Service Changes and Outcomes from the Cleansing Service 2021/22 Budget Saving	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4, 11, & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Environment Director	For Information
Report author: Jim Graham, Assistant Director Cleansing	

Summary

This report outlines the impacts on the cleansing standards in the City of London following the £760,000 budget reduction for 2021/22 and the subsequent restructuring of the remaining cleansing resources. It details the results of the independent Local Environmental Quality surveys carried out in September 2021 that show that, although standards are lower, the City Corporation continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and that the street environment is better than the neighbouring central London borough’s benchmark.

The report highlights levels of footfall which are currently around half of pre-pandemic levels and how officers will continue to monitor available data and use this to optimise the allocation of resources to ensure that the revised cleansing standards are achieved.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In January 2021 Members approved a significant change in the Cleansing Service effective from April 2021 as part of delivering a balanced budget in 2021/22. Alongside that service change was an appreciation that there would be a commensurate change in standards to deliver a service more aligned to other central London boroughs. These changes would see a more reactive service which was likely to result in some noticeable changes, and the purpose of this report is to give an early indication of those impacts.

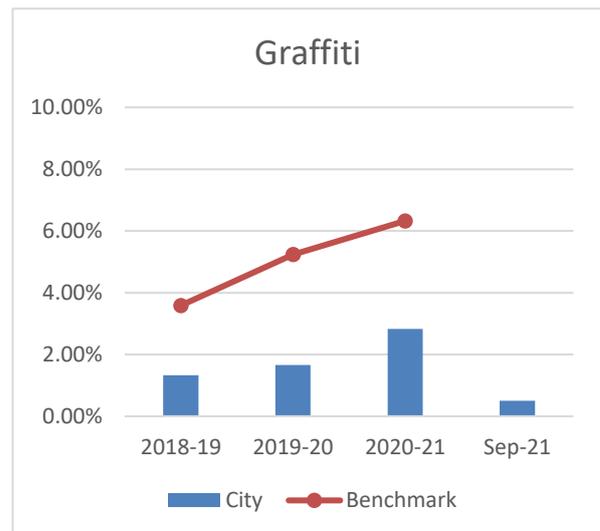
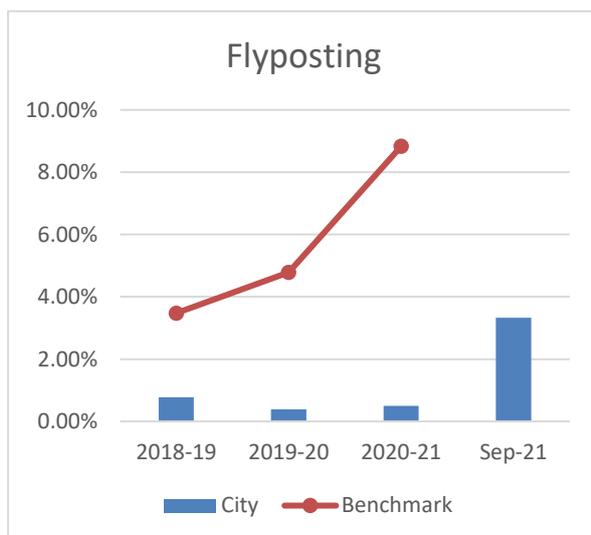
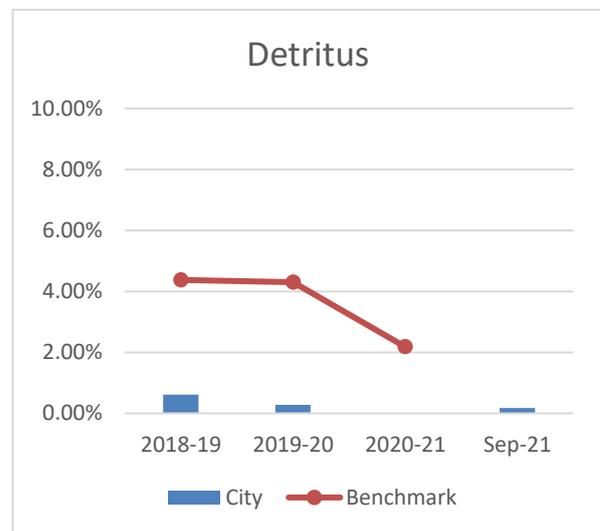
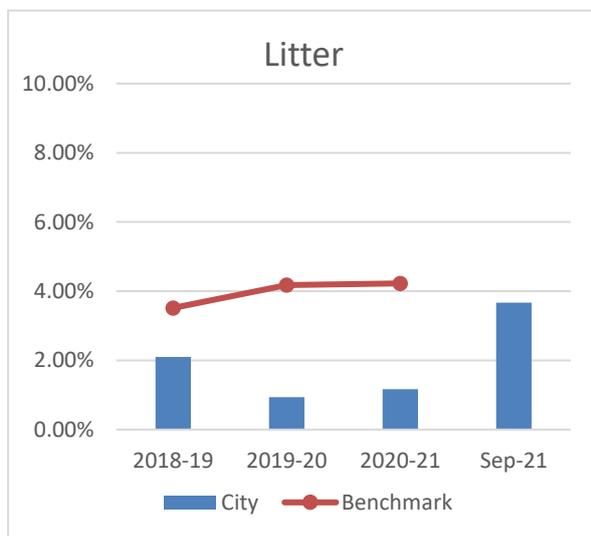
2. The package of savings totalling £760K per annum was taken from the following services:
 - Reduction in daily morning sweeping resource
 - Reduction in weekday afternoon/evening sweeping resource
 - Reduction in night-time cleansing resource
 - Reduction in weekend cleansing resource
 - Reduction in carriageway sweeping and washing resource
3. It was envisaged that these changes would lead to a noticeable lowering of on-street standards and move the service to a more reactive position, with response times to all jobs being longer. However, officers believed that this reduction in service would still achieve the cleansing standards set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990) and would remain comparable to other central London boroughs.
4. The City Corporation has independent Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) survey inspections carried out by Keep Britain Tidy during the year. These inspections are carried out to the previous National Indicator 195 standards set out in the EPA's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse and identify the percentage of areas that are found to have unacceptable levels of litter, detritus, flyposting and graffiti when surveyed. By comparison to the available London and national benchmarks, the City's results are historically excellent. Members agreed that the target for the percentage of LEQ surveys failing to meet EPA 1990 standards be adjusted to be no more than five percent (from two percent previously) from April 2021. This is aligned with the performance of neighbouring central London boroughs.

Current Position

5. The full required savings have been achieved and the service was restructured from April 2021 to maximise the efficacy of the remaining resources. This was prior to the relaxation of Covid lockdown rules and the full removal of restrictions on 19 June 2021. Since then, the City has seen a steady increase in footfall with more workers returning.
6. Daily feedback reports from Street Environment Officers and regular meetings with managers from Veolia suggests that the step-down in service levels is having the expected impact, particularly in the evenings and at weekends in line with the reduction in resources at these times. Better weather, more al fresco dining and the return to the City of more workers are all starting to have an impact on littering levels, with al fresco drinking and dining causing issues around new and existing informal seating/gathering areas such as the riverfront and Cheapside (Bow Church, or the new seating areas). However, the Clean Streets Partnership members and hospitality businesses with outside areas are doing well at maintaining cleanliness standards in compliance with their outside dining licences.
7. The Cleansing Service has been able to cope with unexpected events such as the Euro 2020 Final and the Extinction Rebellion protests, but in some cases services had to be diverted that would normally perform scheduled cleansing of

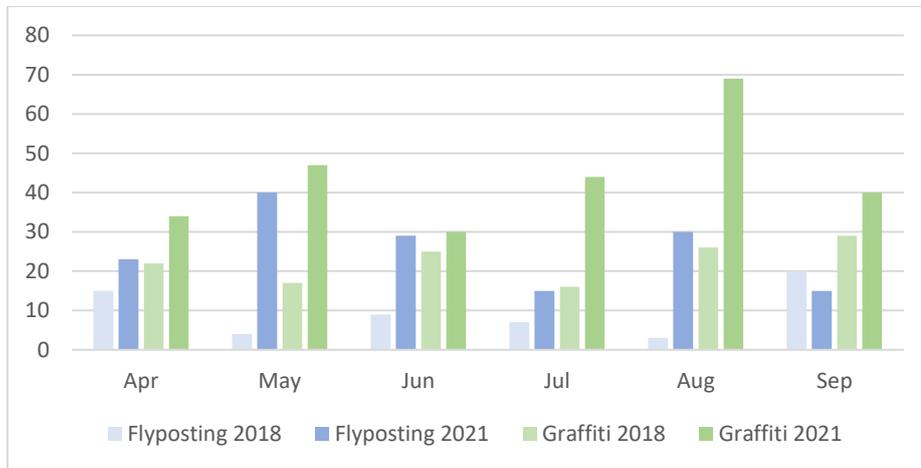
street furniture, gullies and pavement washing. This either put these services behind schedule or they were not carried out as a result.

8. Whilst planning the redesigned service officers expected that the new service would deliver standards similar to our neighbouring boroughs. The results from the LEQ survey data from Keep Britain Tidy, carried out in the second week of September 2021, show an increase in the percentage of sample streets deemed to have 'unacceptable' levels of litter from the pre-pandemic average of around 1.1% to 3.6%. The results are in line with officers' expectations and are generally better or aligned with neighbouring Central London boroughs benchmarks and we are still achieving the minimum standards set out in the EPA 1990. The charts below show the result from the LEQ surveys in September 2021 along with the last three years results for the City against the benchmark of our two neighbouring central London borough. Overall, the City's current results remain good and are better than our neighbouring boroughs previous benchmark.



9. The City has seen a considerable increase in reports of graffiti and fly posting on street furniture, which can be partly attributable to the recent Extinction Rebellion protests, but it also appears that low footfall may have led to an increase in other

forms of anti-social behaviour. Reported incidents of flyposting and graffiti in the first two quarters of 2021 are around double the pre-pandemic levels seen in the same period of 2018. Whilst crews have been removing this on a reactive basis, previously it would have been cleared quicker by scheduled services.



10. Historically the Cleansing Service receives a negligible level of complaints from the public and there has not been any noticeable change to this following the introduction of the revised service from April 2021.
11. The Cleansing Service continues to run regular behaviour change campaigns such as the recent chewing gum campaign designed for heritage areas and the smoking related litter campaign. These campaigns consistently show positive reductions in the amount of litter dropped and, alongside enforcement measures and the Clean Streets Partnership, assist in reducing the pressure on the current services.

Proposals

12. According to the Google Mobility Data that the City Corporation has been using to gauge the number of people returning the Square Mile, footfall is currently between 50-65% of pre-pandemic levels. Officers will continue to closely monitor the cleansing standards and sources of internal and external data available to maximise the allocation of resources to achieve the best cleansing levels possible.
13. The City's next LEQ surveys will be carried out in March 2022 and, unless there are significant issues that need to be reported beforehand, officers will bring a further report detailing the survey results to this committee in May 2022.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Financial implications – none.

Resource implications – none.

Legal implications – Officers believe that the current standards achieved with the available resources continue to meet the City’s statutory obligations under the EPA 1990.

Risk implications – As detailed above the standards being achieved with the current resources are possible due to the current reduced footfall. There is a risk that, should footfall significantly increase, these standards will not remain achievable. As any increase is likely to be gradual, officers intend to mitigate this risk by both continued close internal monitoring and external LEQ surveying and will seek to flex resources as required to achieve the best possible outcomes. Alongside this they will continue to promote the Clean Streets Partnership and deliver effective behaviour change campaigns.

Equalities implications – none.

Climate implications – Whilst officers believe that the City will continue to meet its statutory obligations under the EPA 1990 any increase in litter has environmental implications, particularly as the City is a riverside authority and items, especially plastics, dropped on land can result in marine litter. Increases in detritus and reduction in carriageway cleansing can also contribute to poor air quality, particularly in enclosed and built-up areas. Officers will consider both these issues whilst they continue the close monitoring of the service and seek to allocate resources as necessary.

Security implications – none.

Conclusion

14. Officers will continue to closely monitor the situation as more people return to the City and, using the various sources of data available, will maximise the allocation of resources to ensure that the City’s cleansing standards are maintained to the best possible level. Significant increases in footfall are likely to place serious strain on the service and officers will ensure that this committee is kept informed of these issues and the necessary courses of action to maintain the revised cleansing standards agreed in January 2021.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

DBE Service Changes & Budget Proposals – PHES 20 January 2021

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