

# Neighbourhood Services & Enforcement Committee



**Thursday 21 March 2024**

<b>Title</b>	<i>Road Channel Sweeping</i>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note
<b>Report Author</b>	<i>Jackie Taylor Group Head Neighbourhood Services</i>
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Exemption Reason</b>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Community Environment Services
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Committee is asked to:</b> <i>Note the report</i>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	<i>Resolution from NS&amp;E committee on 5 October 2023 that GHNS should produce a report including results from options trialled over the winter period to improve the results of road channel sweeping.</i>

## 1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited access to heavily parked roads which creates the issue that many road channels are not accessible by the mechanical sweeping machines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>achieve better results from road channel sweeping in roads which are inaccessible due to high numbers of parked cars</li> </ul>
This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trial options in terms of parking control to enable the channels in these roads to be swept efficiently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue with trials already underway in various areas of the borough and report back to committee in 12 months</li> </ul>

1.1 This report seeks to *ask members to note the road channel sweeping trials being undertaken in various areas of the borough. The outcomes from each trial over the next 12 months will be conveyed via a to note report for members in March 2025.*

## 2. Key issues

2.1 Keeping our streets clean is a key concern for Spelthorne residents and for many of them it is the one Council service that affects their quality of life daily. The Council has recognised this and makes cleanliness one of its key corporate priorities for the borough.

2.2 Streets including roads in the charge of the local authority, are a public right of way. Residents do not have any priority right to the stretch of road (which includes the footpath/grass verge and carriageway) in front of their property. The property effectively in the resident's possession and control extends to its boundary with the public path or road. This boundary runs along the edge of the footpath that joins the outer face of the residents front wall/fence and continues along the end of their driveway. If car parking is permitted on the road, all motorists, including visitors, have the right to park outside the resident's property provided their car is not causing an obstruction.

2.3 All residential streets in the borough should enjoy high standards of cleanliness irrespective of where they are located. To achieve this requires a flexible approach to street cleaning, which can respond better to the varying demands of various locations.

2.4 Street character types set out not only the basic parameters of streets, such as carriageway and footway widths, but also the street's relationship to buildings and the private realm, and other key details, such as parking arrangements, street trees, planting, and lighting.

2.5 Whilst some streets are more important than others in terms of traffic flow, some are also more important than others in terms of their place function and deserve to be treated differently. The varying schedules of sweeping which are explained within this report allow the Council to treat its different roads within the borough in this way and be more flexible and efficient.

2.6 It should also be noted that cluttering tends to take place over time by the incremental addition of signs to serve a particular purpose, without regard having been given to the overall appearance of the street and subsequently the ability to be able to conduct an effective mechanical cleansing service.

2.7 All adopted highway roads are swept regularly on a schedule. Busy high streets are swept more regularly than residential roads.

2.8 The street cleansing team consists of seventeen operational employees who conduct the following tasks: -

Litter bin clearance	3 employees & 2 vehicles (small RCV)
On foot Beat sweepers	8 employees,
Mobile beat sweepers	1 employee & 1 vehicle (small van)
Mechanical sweepers	5 employees & 5 vehicles (1 large sweeper, 2 channel sweepers, 2 footway sweepers)

- 2.9 Street trees are a feature in most roads in the borough, however some roads have a much greater quantity of street trees than most. This creates increased leaf fall on the footway and the road channels, to tackle the issue of fallen leaves in the streets with a higher number of street trees we conduct an annual leaf clearance programme which can be found on the Council web site.
- 2.10 The annual programme is conducted during the autumn but with changing seasons the date is not set as we rely on the weather pattern and the first hard frosts which is when leaves start to fall.
- 2.11 To manage this annual leafing programme all mechanical sweeping operatives are diverted away from their scheduled programmes and redirected as a group to manage this programme of work. Where staffing allows, we would supplement this with additional staff on foot.
- 2.12 One cycle of the leafing programme takes approx. 2 weeks to complete and depending on weather we may have to complete the whole cycle 2 or 3 times during the autumn.
- 2.13 At all other times of the year road channels are swept mechanically by the channel sweepers on varying schedules which can range from daily to weekly or on a 20-day schedule. Most residential streets are swept on a 20-day schedule whereas high streets, shopping centres & car parks are swept weekly or more frequently depending on the location.
- 2.14 Access to channels due to parked cars (resident, shopper, business and commuter parking) create large pockets of the borough where sweeping cannot be conducted successfully. Sweeping schedules have built into them periods of spare days where drivers can use their own initiative and experience to go back on roads where sweeping has not been effective due to parked cars.
- 2.15 There are occasions where roads are swept within a parking suspension organised and enforced by Surrey County Councils on street enforcement team NSL. This involves parking officers placing signage on lamp columns within a specific road advising that parking is not permitted on a specific day and on a specific time. Parking officers are then tasked with patrolling during the parking suspension period and will issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to any cars who have ignored the suspension.
- 2.16 On-street enforcement function moved to Surrey County Council in April 23, and we are no longer able to carry out on street parking suspensions ourselves. At the October committee members instructed the GHNS to write to Surreys Cabinet member to challenge costs when asking NSL to place a suspension on a given road. The Cabinet member has since advised that as a local authority he would allow parking suspensions for the purpose of street cleaning to take place at a cost of £20 per application.
- 2.17 The large sweeper works on schedules of different frequency and most of the work conducted by this machine is on the main and high-speed roads across the whole borough. A lot of this work is on a 20-day schedule but there are more frequent schedules for main shopping areas which vary from daily to weekly.
- 2.18 The footway sweepers also work to schedules but they are more flexible as they are also required to be very reactive in dealing with issues such as spills,

litter issues, dog fouling etc. They also sweep the pedestrian areas of large and small shopping areas. These sweepers provide a service that is based on need.

- 2.19 Neighbourhood Services do not carry a surplus of street cleaning staff who are able to step in to cover any absences of the drivers. Due to the extremely prohibitive cost of leasing/owning/maintenance of sweeping vehicles we do not carry spare vehicles to cover breakdowns or general maintenance.
- 2.20 All street cleansing and sweeping is subject to operatives and machinery being available on the day. If we have an urgent reactive issue to deal with that cannot wait, we will redirect other staff from their duties to manage the issue.
- 2.21 To assist members to understand the frequencies of channel sweeping and leafing conducted by the Street Cleansing team a spreadsheet is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.22 **Appendix 1** shows that we have 845 roads in the borough and of that 845, 229 of those roads are heavily parked during the day. This is broken down as follows: -

	<b>20% PARKED</b>	<b>50% PARKED</b>	<b>80% PARKED</b>	<b>100% PARKED</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Ashford</b>	27	43	69	75	214
<b>Staines</b>	29	38	43	33	143
<b>Shepperton</b>	50	34	41	28	153
<b>Sunbury</b>	18	61	50	45	174
<b>Laleham</b>	10	3	17	10	40
<b>Stanwell</b>	15	21	46	39	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>845</b>

- 2.23 To mitigate the issues related to these heavily parked roads we have built spare capacity within the 20-day schedules for the drivers to return to areas where accessing the channels to sweep has been difficult.
- 2.24 Due to issues related to shopper, commercial, commuter & residential parking even changing dates and times to sweep some of the roads listed in the 100% parked roads in the table at 2.22 are still inaccessible due to parked cars.
- 2.25 Members at the October committee required the GHNS to look at alternative options which did not have a financial impact on the service, i.e. working with existing machinery and staff to sweep the channels in some of these hard to sweep road.

### **3. Options analysis and proposal**

- 3.1 Following the October committee we have started sweeping trials as listed at **3.2** which will be used in roads over the next twelve months that evidence hard to access issues, these issues being:-

- Shopper parking
- Commercial parking
- Commuter parking
- Residential street parking

3.2 The five options include:-

- **Option 1 Traffic management lane closures (high speed roads)**
- **Option 2 Parking suspensions arranged by SCC**
- **Option 3 A-boards depicting street cleansing dates**
- **Option 4 Leaflet drops by SBC to residential streets**
- **Option 5 Working with Residents Associations**

3.3 **Appendix 2** provides outcomes of a range of existing and ongoing trials included in the options at **3.2**.

#### **4. Financial management comments**

4.1 These trials do not impact on sweeping schedules as they can be picked up during “spare” weeks or during school breaks to reduce impact on road traffic users.

4.2 As the trials do not impact on schedules there is no suggestion at this point that extra staff or machinery are required.

4.3 The extra organisational work in creating and managing any of the options in **3.2** is currently being absorbed within existing workloads. If however these trials are to be increased it will have an impact on both operational and supervisory employees.

#### **5. Risk management comments**

5.1 Having looked at other Surrey boroughs it is very clear that their sweeping schedules create far less frequencies than Spelthorne and some have no frequency just advertising sweeping as “regular”. The risk is that whilst increasing frequencies and managing hard to access road channels we are raising residents’ expectations.

5.2 These higher expectations could have an added impact if when trying to manage the Council challenging financial situation in future years, we find ourselves in a situation where front line service delivery has to be reduced.

#### **6. Procurement comments**

6.1 There are no procurement implications as a result of this to note report.

#### **7. Legal comments**

7.1 There are no legal considerations to consider as part of this to note report.

#### **8. Other considerations**

8.1 As this report details trial being undertaken which do not represent service changes there are no other considerations.

8.2 The current sweeping and leafing schedules have been carried out very successfully this way over several years with changes made to adapt to changing circumstances without incurring additional service costs. This subject of street parking is one that is recognised across all authorities. Where cars are parked, it is not always possible to sweep or cleanse around them, where there is a risk of damage to the parked car.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

9.1 This information is to note and will not have any direct equality and diversity impacts. However, it could be said that any increased level of service especially when considering street services will provide an improvement for those who are elderly or have a mobility disability.

9.2 This is mitigated within the current service level by providing both an initiative-taking and reactive service within the current structure to deal with relevant issues if they arise.

9.3 It should also be noted that extra cleansing services could have a negative impact on some residents if Council resources create a schedule where specific streets have additional resources over and above the current schedules.

9.4 The rationale behind our current cleansing programmes is that it provides a consistent approach, with the same service being provided for all wards and streets. Some wards will inevitably be cleaner than others and remain clean for longer.

## **10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

10.1 The trials have avoided adding additional diesel vehicles to our streets which would have a negative impact on climate change. Most street litter is collected by mobile street cleansing operatives and is disposed of appropriately.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

11.1 Set out a timetable, if required, showing when the proposal in the report will be implemented.

## **12. Contact**

12.1 Jackie Taylor Group Head Neighbourhood Services  
01784 446418

**Background papers: There are none.**

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1 Road channel sweeping schedules**

**Appendix 2 Results from road channel sweeping trials**