

The public space cross-cutting review considered a wide range of factors affecting the local environment in our communities. Specifically, the review examined government policies, funding and targets to improve the safety and attractiveness of public space. As a result, Government will announce a comprehensive strategy this autumn, introduce targets to measure street cleanliness and environmental improvements, and examine how legal and regulatory provisions could be improved to assist local authorities in this area.

31.1 A wide range of survey evidence supports the view that issues like anti-social behaviour, street crime, litter, dog fouling, graffiti, and the condition of parks and play areas impact greatly on the quality of people's daily lives.

31.2 Levels of health, crime, and children's development, are all linked with the quality of the local environment. The review also found that design quality can impact directly on perceptions of safety and public usage of spaces such as streets, parks and play areas.

Links to other policy priorities

31.3 As local public space is often worse for people already suffering from other forms of deprivation, this agenda also has a strong social exclusion theme. For example, ethnic minority communities often suffer disproportionately from poor local environmental outcomes. Children from ethnic minority groups are more likely to be involved in traffic accidents, while research suggests people from minority communities are less likely than the rest of the population to make use of parks.

Review findings

Principles for improved delivery

31.4 The review identified a number of principles for delivering better public space outcomes:

- mainstream funding should be the key to delivery, while additional programmes should be rationalised to reduce bureaucracy and allow maximum local flexibility for choices on spending;
- the involvement of local people, organisations and businesses in identifying problems and delivering improvements – partnership working – is crucial to getting the right solutions and ensuring their sustainability;
- there should be clear leadership and accountability at both local and national level;
- a robust system of measures and targets is needed to help drive performance, inform day-to-day management and increase transparency for local people; and
- there should be more clarity on the powers and freedoms of, and greater incentives and rewards for, those in the front line.

New approaches

31.5 The review made a number of recommendations which will be taken forward following the 2002 Spending Review.

31.6 Work on promoting Design Quality Indicators (DQIs) will be taken forward. These indicators could provide a valuable tool for measuring design quality input at the very earliest stages of a project. The Government is already participating in a number of DQI Pilot projects and these point to extremely positive benefits from using the DQI process. If further pilots are successful, consideration will be given to how to incorporate the DQI process in evaluation of new-build government capital projects.

31.7 A strategy paper will be published in the autumn to detail the Government's approach to public space over the next three years and the further steps it intends to take to promote safer, cleaner streets and places. It will build on the work of the cross-cutting review, respond to the Urban Green Spaces Task Force report and outline the steps necessary to take forward the new, interdepartmental approach to public space issues which the review has engendered. This document will also recognise the different roles and responsibilities for government, local authorities and non-governmental organisations.

31.8 A cross-government review of the powers and responsibilities that govern and regulate the quality of public spaces and local environments has been set up. This will focus on legislation and guidance that cover issues such as litter, graffiti, fly-tipping, derelict land and highways maintenance. The review will consider how the relevant service providers and agencies can be made clearly responsible and accountable and will assess whether local authorities and other bodies have appropriate powers and guidance to make improvements to their public spaces. It will also consider how to make sure the legal and regulatory framework operates more efficiently, maximising the effectiveness and minimising the costs associated with creating and maintaining a safe, clean local environment. A prioritised action plan with recommendations for reforming the legal and regulatory framework will be published for consultation in autumn 2002.

Targets and measures

31.9 A new Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) target will be introduced on reducing the perception of anti-social behaviour, as measured by the British Crime Survey. This target will be shared by the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

31.10 A new SDA target will be developed by DEFRA on street and local environmental cleanliness. This target will contain a 'floor' (minimum standard) element, reflecting the need to improve the poorest local environments, often found in areas where people already suffer other forms of deprivation.

31.11 DEFRA will also be piloting a performance indicator relating to street and local environmental cleanliness for consideration in Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for local authorities for either 2003–04 or 2004–05.

SPENDING PLANS

31.12 A number of large mainstream budgets impact on the safety and cleanliness of local neighbourhoods. These funding streams will deliver additional investment over the Spending Review period. Local transport plan capital expenditure – which includes expenditure on home zones, cycling, walking and local safety schemes – is doubling in real terms from 2001 to 2011 as part of the Ten-Year Transport Plan. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is being increased from £400 million in 2003–04 to £525 million by 2005–06, in part reflecting an increased commitment to safer and cleaner communities. Other relative funding streams like mainstream support for police and local authority delivered services, are also being increased in real terms.

31.13 Separate neighbourhood and street wardens programmes will be merged into a single programme, while additional resources have been allocated to the ODPM to fund demonstration projects and other activity to support safer, cleaner local environments.