

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

13 SEPTEMBER 2017

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

#### BRIDGEND AS A PLACE TO WORK, LIVE AND VISIT

#### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To set out for the attention of Scrutiny the following:

1. Developing Bridgend as a place to work, live and visit.
2. Information on tourism and events, street scene and cleansing the public realm.

#### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 This report embraces all three of the Corporate objectives:

- **Supporting a successful economy**  
A successful, sustainable, and inclusive economy that will be supported by a skilful, ambitious workforce
- **Helping people to become more self-reliant**  
Individuals and families that will be more independent and less reliant on traditional Council services
- **Smarter use of resources**  
A Council that has lean, robust processes and a skilful workforce. A supported third/community sector with the opportunity to take on services that meet citizens' needs

#### 3. Background

3.1 The conditions presented by the reductions in the levels of officers and front line staff, as a consequence of recent budget cuts, present a very unique and unfamiliar environment, where the Council's ability to respond to and meet the public's and businesses' levels of expectation are challenged on a daily basis.

3.2 This report should be read in this context of significantly reduced resources and capacity, and the continued and ongoing pressures on the Communities Directorate revenue budget.

#### 4. Current Situation

##### Street Scene (Public Realm Cleaning)

- 4.1 The Cleaner Streets service has undergone significant change in recent years to update and modify working practices and to meet financial targets set as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 4.2 The first review of street cleaning services took place in 2014 and formed part of the Communities Directorate response to reconciling the financial settlement at the time with the levels of service provision.
- 4.3 The review recognised the objectives detailed in the Corporate Plan at the time under Priority 1 – (Working Together to Develop the Local Economy) to maintain public services so far as was possible within the context of the review and the need to meet significant Directorate savings, clean streets and maintain vibrant public places.
- 4.4 The changes to the service which were implemented represented a significant redesign of the way in which resources were deployed on street cleaning duties. Every effort was taken to ensure the new operating model continued to deliver services with the minimum impact on street cleanliness.
- 4.5 The provision of street cleaning services in Bridgend prior to this review relied on the lengthsman approach to on-street litter picking. This model relied on street cleaning operatives working alone in an area to litter pick and provided little scope for responding to demand and prioritisation of work which resulted in resources being deployed into streets which did not necessarily have a litter issue, or a need to be visited regularly. This also isolated the operative and provided them with little in the way of support during the working day.
- 4.6 The new operational model moved away from the lengthsman system of litter picking and instead now operates on a team based approach where teams of litter pickers led by a team leader hold responsibility for cleansing an area.
- 4.7 Under this arrangement the County Borough has been divided into 5 operational areas, broadly speaking three areas to the south of the M4 and two to the north. In support of the area street cleaning teams, four additional Cleaner Street teams, comprising a team leader and operative, provide street cleaning support for principal roads and rapid response to litter and fly tipping hot spots across the County Borough. In broad terms two of these crews operate in the north and two to the south of the County Borough and report to the respective foreman for their area. This team based approach to street cleaning provides a more flexible deployment of the workforce and allows a targeted approach to litter picking. While teams have been allocated areas where they ordinarily would be deployed, the teams can now work flexibly and are able to be deployed to any area that needs resources allocated to it.
- 4.8 Street cleansing in the main town centres of Bridgend, Porthcawl and Maesteg continue to be undertaken by a street cleaning operative and a mechanical sweeper and driver, on a daily basis. The three main town centre service levels were not reduced with the new operational arrangement.
- 4.9 The County Borough is also serviced by a wet van, whose primary function is to clear graffiti and support other cleaning operations; three 7.5 Tonne road

sweepers pick up detritus and other road litter, these vehicles operate to a schedule. These vehicles operate on a demand lead priority basis, this element was not effected by the restructure.

- 4.10 All of the Council's street cleaning vehicles have been fitted with electronic systems which allow vehicle use to be monitored, this had led to improved deployment of the vehicles and fuel efficiency gains.
- 4.11 At the time of the review the existing fleet of street cleaning support vehicles, which were limited to carrying driver plus two operatives had reached the end of their leases and were replaced with more suitable vehicles capable of transporting the driver plus up to four operatives.
- 4.13 The overall reduction in staffing numbers was not solely concentrated on street cleaning operatives. This figure also included management posts, enforcement and monitoring officers alongside a small number of posts attached to other Street Works Services.
- 4.14 While every effort was made at the time to limit the requirement to revisit this new operating model in the short term, as a consequence of changes initiated by Valleys 2 Coast (V2C) to take street cleaning services undertaken on their behalf by the Council back under their direct control, it was necessary to carry out a further review of the service in the following year (2015/16). This review saw a further reduction in the numbers of street cleaning operatives to address the £100,000 budget shortfall following V2C's decision and consequential loss of income. In practical terms this meant a reduction of five Cleaner Streets operative posts, which amounted to one operative per area street cleaning team, reducing their numbers from a team leader plus four operatives, to a team leader plus three operatives.
- 4.15 At this time the opportunity was also taken to fully review the overtime practices within the service area. The overtime arrangements were significantly reduced and rationalised, again to ensure the service was operating within the allocated budget available for street cleaning. In total the street cleansing staffing complement has through the above changes changed from an initial total of 75 staff to a current complement of 44 staff.
- 4.16 **Appendix A** presents a series of indicators and information relating to the performance of the Cleaner Streets Service Area for consideration by the Committee included in this information are:
- Details of the Council's Cleanliness Indicator as a comparator against other Welsh Local Councils, as produced by Keep Wales Tidy;
  - The "Red Bag" tonnage, collected per cleaner street operative;
  - The number of fly tipping incidents reported in year;
  - The percentage of fly tipping incidents cleared within five working days.
  - Cleaner Streets 2016/17 L.E.A.M.S. (Local Environment Audit and Management System) STS - 005B

- 4.17 Key observations pertinent to the data include that there is a demonstrable increase in productivity in litter cleansing staff (Kg per operative) collected year on year. Also fly tipping incidents remain at a relatively constant level.
- 4.18 There are approximately 976 litter bins (232 floor mounted and 744 post mounted) across the County Borough. Bins do not have a specific emptying cycle or frequency teams rely on their knowledge of the areas they work and service the bins based on demand management principles or user requests. Typically a request for a bin to be emptied would be responded to within 24 hours dependant on resources available. Bins did not have a specific emptying schedule before review but frequency of emptying was higher due to former linesman presence. When significant events take place in the borough, extra litter picking and bin emptying will take place.
- 4.19 Town and Community Councils can and frequently do contribute towards reviewing the provision of bins in their area. When such requests are received details of the existing bin locations will be viewed from records of the area and the site will be inspected to identify any potential issues. Frequently the existing bin provision will be considered appropriate for the area, but with adjustment to the size or location of existing bins. Where additional or replacement bins are considered appropriate Town and Community Councils are able to contribute to the costs either fully or in part.
- 4.20 The 2017/18 net budget for Cleaner Streets is approximately £1.2 million. Of this staffing costs account for approximately £955,000 and transport costs £321,000. The remaining budget is accounted for across a range of budget heads such as depot and accommodation running costs, Personal Protective Equipment, consumables, etc alongside an income budget of £123,650 which mostly relates to internal re-charges (e.g car parks/ bus shelters).
- 4.21 The service has received approximately 200 referrals and Member requests in the past 12 months which have required detailed investigation. These may or may not have led to Cleaner Street intervention or removal of fly tipping. A number of these referrals would also include follow up correspondence where there is an ongoing issue.
- 4.22 Keep Wales Tidy is a Welsh campaign charity working in association with the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Councils to raise awareness of the environmental impact of littering, fly tipping, and dog fouling. The goal of the charity is to bring about behaviour change amongst those in our community, who through a lack of consideration for their environment and other residents, litter, fly tip or allow their dogs to foul public spaces. Bridgend County Borough Council works collaboratively with Keep Wales Tidy on any initiatives they introduce which assist or promotes achievement of this goal. This work includes working jointly on clean ups and anti-litter campaigns.
- 4.23 Regrettably there is currently no separately identified budget for education or promotion of anti-litter campaigns. Were such campaigns to be included as a work stream in the service area at this time, due to the severe budget restrictions on the Directorate and service area the costs would need to be met from cuts to other front line services.

## The Outlook for the Street Cleaning Service

- 4.24 The service is now at a tipping point where any further budget cuts will shift the balance of the service from one where litter is collected on a proactive basis by cleaner street operatives, to one where litter is primarily picked up on a reactive or demand led basis, with street cleaning operatives responding only to prioritised complaints, fly tipping and bin emptying.
- 4.25 In this scenario the Council will be at risk of falling short of its duties and the minimum statutory requirements laid down in the Environmental Protection Act and other relevant legislation.

## Street Scene (Public Toilet Provision)

- 4.26 As part of the Council's contribution to the public realm and service to the community it has provided a number of public toilets throughout the County Borough. Historically the Council serviced and maintained thirteen public conveniences in various parts of the Borough. Of these several were permanently staffed while others were cleaned and visited on a routine basis
- 4.27 As part of the Council's MTFs proposals, savings against the budget for the provision of public toilets were identified and proposals to achieve these savings were put to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 16 June 2015, including a number of proposed closures. At this meeting Cabinet agreed to the proposals made and also elected to reinstate the previously suspended "Comfort Scheme" which had lost its funding from the Welsh Government as part of changes introduced to grant support from April 2014. The comfort scheme allows a grant to be paid (up to £500 per annum) for a local business to make their toilets available for use by the passing public.
- 4.28 A full list of that original toilet provision is provided below along with their current operational status:

Area	Location	Status
Cheapside	Bridgend	Operational
Bridgend Bus Station		Operational
Derwen Road		Closed
The Rhiw		Closed
Griffin Park	Porthcawl	Operational
John Street		Operational
Rest Bay Car Park		Operational
Grand Pavilion		Closed
Maesteg Bus Station	Maesteg	Operational
Blackmill Square	Blackmill Square	Closed
Pricetown Square	Pricetown Square	Closed
Kenfig Nature Reserve	Kenfig Nature Reserve	Operational when Building is open to the public
Pandy Road	Aberkenfig	Closed

- 4.29 A fourteenth facility, located in Pencoed Square, was transferred to the control of Pencoed Town Council. All facilities have been offered to relevant Town and Community Councils. Porthcawl town council is in the process of taking over the Rest Bay and Griffin Park conveniences.
- 4.30 The provision of public conveniences is currently a discretionary power; however, the Welsh Government has recently published its public health white paper which seeks to place certain new duties on Councils with regard to the provision of public conveniences, which are seen by the Welsh Government (WG) as a necessary service for public health. This will place added responsibility to ensure a suitable provision is in place be that a traditional public conveniences or those provided via a comfort scheme.

### **Street Scene (Green Spaces)**

- 4.31 Highway verge maintenance and open space management play an important part in setting the quality of the street scene. A key part of this is the way in which green spaces are managed and the frequency and extent of grass cutting partnered with the use of natural pollinators, shrubs and trees.
- 4.32 The cutting of open space grass is to all intents and purposes driven by aesthetic considerations. In extreme circumstances i.e. little or no cutting taking place, health and safety concerns may arise i.e. fire risk in dry summers. The cutting of grass adjacent to highways is driven more by safety considerations and the need to maintaining sight lines, vision splays etc., with aesthetics being a secondary consideration. There is no stipulation in highway legislation of minimum maintenance levels. The obligation is simply to implement a regime of maintenance. The level of maintenance adopted is, in principle, a decision for each individual Council.
- 4.33 As part of the Council's response to cuts in public service funding, a report was prepared and present to Cabinet on the 3 February 2015. Following a review of grass cutting arrangements, options for the future delivery of the service were presented to Cabinet for consideration at this meeting. The recommendations attached to this report and the levels of service associated with them, contributed approximately £132,000 of the £437,000 saving for financial year 2015/16 identified against the service area as detailed in the approved MTFS. The remainder of the saving was achieved through a management restructure, which saw a number of management posts removed from the establishment.
- 4.34 The levels of service adopted by Cabinet at this time are detailed in the table below:

<b>Type of Grass</b>	<b>Service Level 2014/15</b>	<b>Service Level 2015/16</b>
Urban Grass (Open Space)	9 cuts at three weekly intervals	7 cuts at four weekly intervals
	Ht of cut 25mm	Ht of cut 50mm
	Ht of grass prior to	Ht of grass prior to cutting

	cutting 100mm to 150mm	150mm to 200mm
Rural Grass (Highway Grass)	5 cuts at six weekly intervals	4 cuts at nine weekly intervals
	Ht of cut 50mm	Ht of cut 50mm
	Ht of grass prior to cutting 200mm +	Ht of grass prior to cutting 250mm +
The maintenance regime for all naturalized areas will be one early and one late season cut (2 cuts per season)		

- 4.35 The review included areas of open space and highway grass verges where a more 'relaxed' regime of maintenance was introduced i.e. 'meadow' and herbaceous regimes. Such areas can improve the biodiversity value and in particular benefited insect pollinators such as bees in the area. In addition areas were also sown with seed mixes to encourage displays of brightly colored annual flowers. As well as providing low cost aesthetically pleasing colorful displays of annual flowers, these features also provide sources of nectar and pollen for insect pollinators. Neither of the above regimes provided a zero cost option, as management practices and procedures are still required to ensure success and sustainability of both.
- 4.36 A down side to the selection of a lower level of service and reducing the grass cutting frequency has been longer grass between cuts, increased quantities of cut grass lying on surfaces, lower quality of cut surface, perceived negative impact on the street scene by some in the community. Grass cutting in open spaces is carried out at the above frequencies by a third party contractor (Total Ground Care Ltd). Council direct staff provide the grass cutting in Parks, playing fields and cemeteries. Some Town and Community Councils have elected to provide extra grass cuts to complement the frequency provided by the Council.

### **Tourism and Events**

- 4.37 The tourism sector is a significant part of the economy of Bridgend County Borough, accounting for total economic impact of £329m (4% increase on 2015), and in excess of 4,200 jobs (3.8% increase on 2015) according to the 2016 STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) report. This statistical model is used by many local authorities across the UK, to measure trends in the tourism economy. The DMP (Destination Management Plan) sets an annual target of 2% growth per annum so we have exceeded the target by 100%. To contextualise these figures, when the DMP was approved by Cabinet in 2013 the figures cited at the time were £268m and 4,100 jobs.

The DMP is focused on the following priorities:

- Product - Support the development of the tourism product
- Experience - Support the development of tourism infrastructure
- Profile - Raise the profile and attract more visitors to Bridgend County Borough

This follows the Welsh Government Visit Wales National Tourism Strategy, Partnership for Growth.

- 4.38 As a result of MTFs savings, the Council closed its entire Tourist Information Centres provision in 2014-15, and shifted to a digital model of providing tourism information, in line with consumer behaviours and preferences and the growth and popularity of user-generated information, such as TripAdvisor. This delivered a saving of £97,000 in premises and staff costs. The remodelling of this service delivered financial savings in relation to staffing and premises costs. The Bridgend Bites website and digital platforms became the primary means of communication with potential customers. A public relations contract was also put in place, with the aim of securing national media coverage. Further cuts of £65,000 were implemented in 2016-17, and non-staffing budgets were reduced by £21,000 in 2017-18. In total, this represents a 43.5% cut, and there is now only one full time officer working on tourism. This has necessitated a significant further shift in the Council's approach, for example, we are now far more reliant on the national campaigns run by Visit Wales, and to continuing collaboration with neighbouring authorities, to attract the travel trade and tourism operators. We can no longer run a Council-led events programme, and instead, effort is targeted on supporting and attracting events providers to deliver successful events in the County, and ensuring that the impact and safety of events is well managed.
- 4.39 The focus of our efforts and limited resources is on attracting events of national significance that will have a significant economic impact, rather than supporting community based, smaller scale events. Our success in attracting events of national significance this year resulted in us hosting the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Pencoed, Seniors Open Championship in Porthcawl and the Porthcawl Elvis Festival is due to take place in September. Together, these events are expected to attract approximately 205,000 visitors to the County Borough, generating approximately £18.7m of economic impact. In 2014 an estimated 43,000 people were in attendance at the Senior Open Championship in Porthcawl, generating an estimated economic impact of £2.16m. This figure includes £1.1m for the accommodation sector, £785,000 spent in shops and cafes and £275,000 spent by the event organisers on services in the local economy. In addition, the Media Equivalence Value from the comprehensive TV coverage for Porthcawl and Bridgend County was calculated at a further £5.2m.
- 4.40 We have also invested in bringing local tourism interests together, through the Coastal Partnership and Bridgend Tourism Association, to encourage joint working and local collaboration.
- 4.41 A key aspect of Destination Management is the delivery of capital projects to enhance the tourism offer. The Service already has a strong track record in this area, delivering property redevelopment, public realm, marine engineering and townscape heritage schemes in Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl.
- 4.42 These schemes are transforming the environment in our major centres, acting as a catalyst for private investment and attracting new businesses. For example, in Bridgend, the multi-million pound redevelopment of the Cae Court boutique hotel and restaurant, and the former Victoria Inn, have increased the hospitality offer in

Bridgend town centre. JD Weatherspoon's has also opened a much needed family pub/restaurant in Maesteg.

- 4.43 The berths in the redeveloped Porthcawl Harbour were fully let on opening and the project has been a catalyst for the multi-million pound regeneration of the harbour quarter.

Porthcawl harbour – before:



Porthcawl harbour – after:



4.44 Investment in the harbour has acted as a catalyst for redevelopment and reopening of the landmark Jennings building, following the sale to a developer, with the benefit of a Townscape Heritage Initiative grant. This high quality regeneration scheme comprises 3 restaurants and 13 live work units. All three restaurants are local businesses, and this development has transformed the harbour quarter, drawing local residents and visitors from outside the area.

#### The Jennings



4.45 The Porthcawl submission under the Visit Wales EU Convergence 'Attractor Destinations' programme is one of only 3 regional projects from SE Wales, and 9 in total across Wales being developed for funding. The Porthcawl proposal comprises the Maritime Centre, led by Harbourside Community Interest Company, supported by infrastructure and redevelopment works to the strategically significant Rest Bay Café, and the harbour kiosk. The total investment is expected to be in excess of £7 million, building on the historic harbour quarter, and strengthening Porthcawl as a tourist resort, growing the

value of tourism in the economy and increasing employment and business opportunities.

- 4.46 The first Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme in Porthcawl is nearing completion, with work underway or completed on a variety of significant buildings in the historic harbour quarter of Porthcawl. As well as the Jennings, the buildings include the Customs House and Lookout Tower. The Customs House has been sold and will be brought into use alongside the Jennings.
- 4.47 A successful Coastal Communities Fund project has provided a new 4.5 km cycle route, enhancing the coastal path and associated visitor and business infrastructure from Rest Bay to Newton via the harbour quarter, and linking the beaches and the town centre. It was formally opened in April this year.
- 4.48 Capital funding proposals for Maesteg under the Welsh Government's (WG) Buildings for the Future European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme has been regionally endorsed as one of seven key regeneration projects in South East Wales. This is enabling us to implement the earlier feasibility study completed on Maesteg Town Hall, aiming to create a major cultural centre, increasing the number and diversity of uses in the building, and enhancing both its viability and the visitor experience. A bid for funding from Heritage Lottery Fund has also been submitted, to form the match-funding for the ERDF.
- 4.49 Alongside this, a Heritage Landscape Partnership programme has been developed for the coastal zone from Kenfig to Merthyr Mawr. This will improve the management of archaeological sites and maritime heritage sites, increase biodiversity, and result in an increased number and wider range of people being engaged with the management of landscape heritage of the 7 Bays.
- 4.50 The wider Porthcawl regeneration project at Salt Lake and Sandy Bay which includes a key site set aside for leisure development, and promenade linking Nottage to Rest Bay, has had to be reconsidered, due to changes in market conditions, in particular the shrinking of the 'superstore' market. However, developing Porthcawl as a premier tourist through this project remains a key priority for the Council.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 There are no effects on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There is no impact on specific equality groups as a consequence of this report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 In total the savings identified to date as part of the Council's MTFs have reduced the Other Cleaning service area budget by **£223,000** (£23,000 in particular against overtime). In addition to this further changes to account for the actions of V2C and their decision to take back in-house street cleaning services for their estates further reduced the budget by **£100,000**.

- 7.2 A budget reduction of **£50,000** was identified to the provision of public toilets during 2014/15 and in 2015/16 a further **£50,000** saving was set against the service as part of the directorates' response to make savings approved in the MTFS.
- 7.3 As part of the Council's MTFS the Greener Spaces Service Area introduced changes to the resource levels and operational practices in 2015-16 of **£437,000**.
- 7.4 In 2010, there were 11 staff working exclusively on tourism in Bridgend. This is now reduced to just one. Since 2014-15, cuts of **£183,000** have been made. By carefully prioritising of resources, innovative practice and embracing new opportunities brought about by technological change, the Council is still able to have an influence in this area, and harness the County's natural assets to provide economic value and jobs for local people. The national tourism data would suggest that we are being successful in this, and the sector has continued to grow in Bridgend. However, the service is now running at the minimum level possible, to maintain a meaningful presence. Further financial savings can only be realistically achieved by withdrawing from this sector altogether.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and, if appropriate, comment on the outcomes to date.

**Mark Shephard**  
**CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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## **Background Documents**

None.

## Appendix A

### Cleanliness Index Results for 2015/16

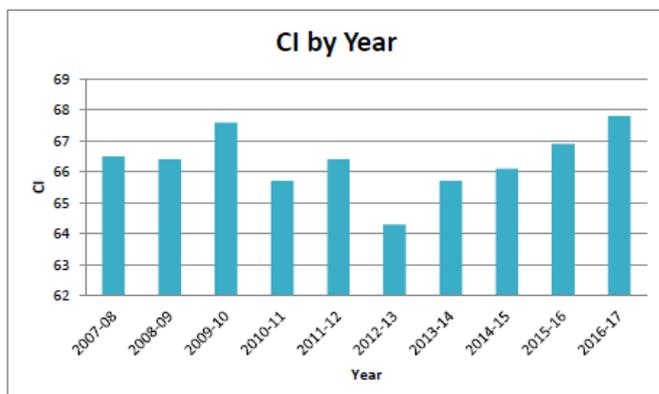
Appendix 3: Headline Local Authority Results 2015-16

Local Authority	CI Score	% of Streets B and Above
Anglesey	70	95.4
Blaenau Gwent	62.1	88.3
Bridgend	66.9	96.7
Caerphilly	66.1	95.9
Cardiff	66.4	94.7
Carmarthenshire	66.7	94.4
Ceredigion	75.8	99.3
Conwy	70.6	94.0
Denbighshire	66.7	94.6
Flintshire	69.8	95.9
Gwynedd	71.7	96.5
Merthyr Tydfil	67.5	97.5
Monmouthshire	69.1	97.9
Neath Port Talbot	67.1	96.6
Newport	65.8	90.3
Pembrokeshire	73.0	98.5
Powys	67.1	97.3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	66.8	98.0
Swansea	68.0	97.5
Torfaen	68.2	98.0
Vale of Glamorgan	69.6	95.1
Wrexham	71.1	97.0

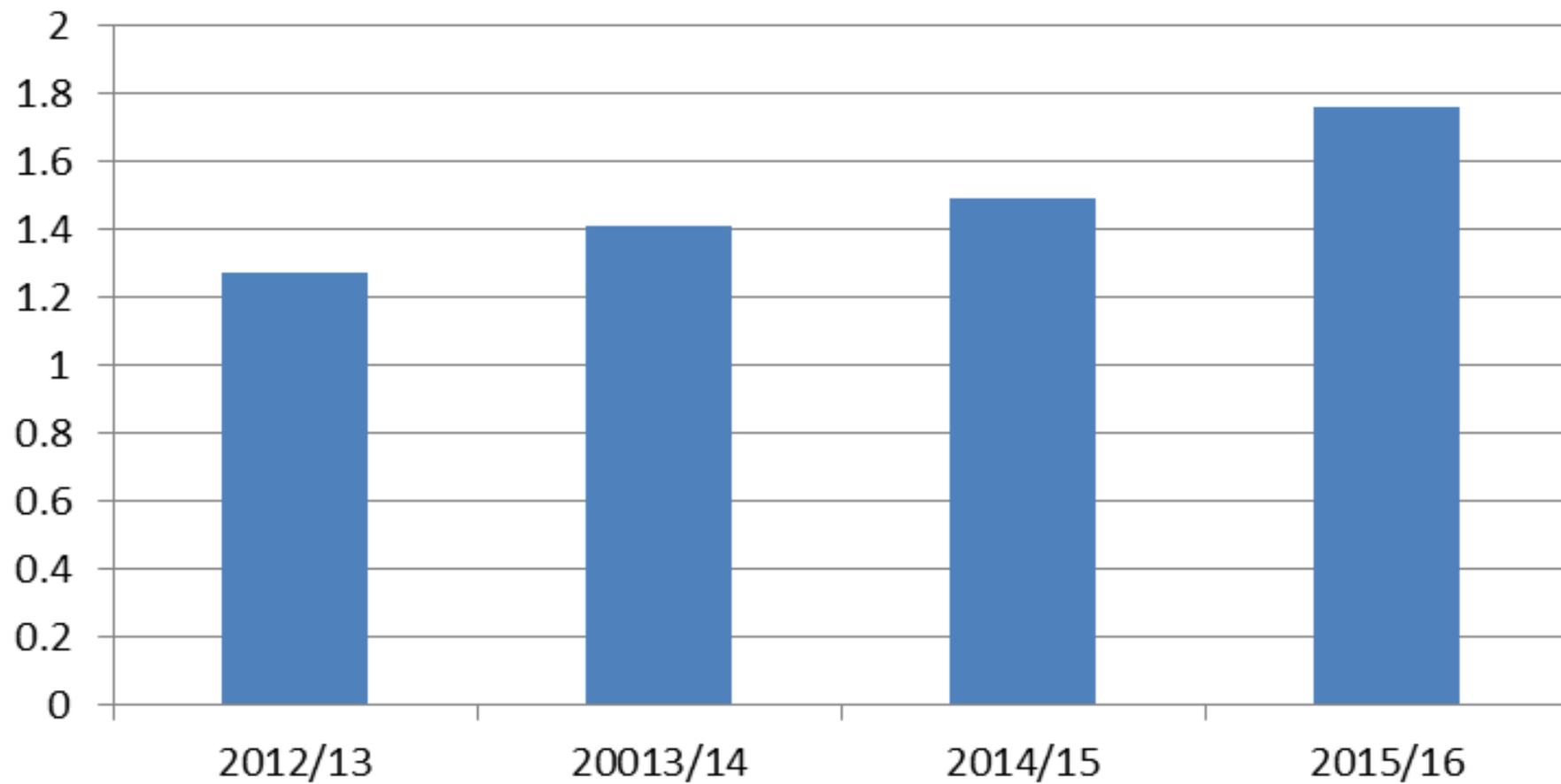
The Cleanliness Indicator (CI) achieved by Bridgend for the survey in 2016/17 was 67.8. This is below the CI recorded across Wales in 2015/16 but above the CI of 66.9 recorded for Bridgend in the corresponding survey last year.. Of the 239 streets visited in the course of this survey, 98.7% were Grade B or above. This is above both the current all Wales figure of 95.9% and Bridgend's figure of 96.7% recorded in 2015/16.

### BCBC comparison year on year is indicated below:-

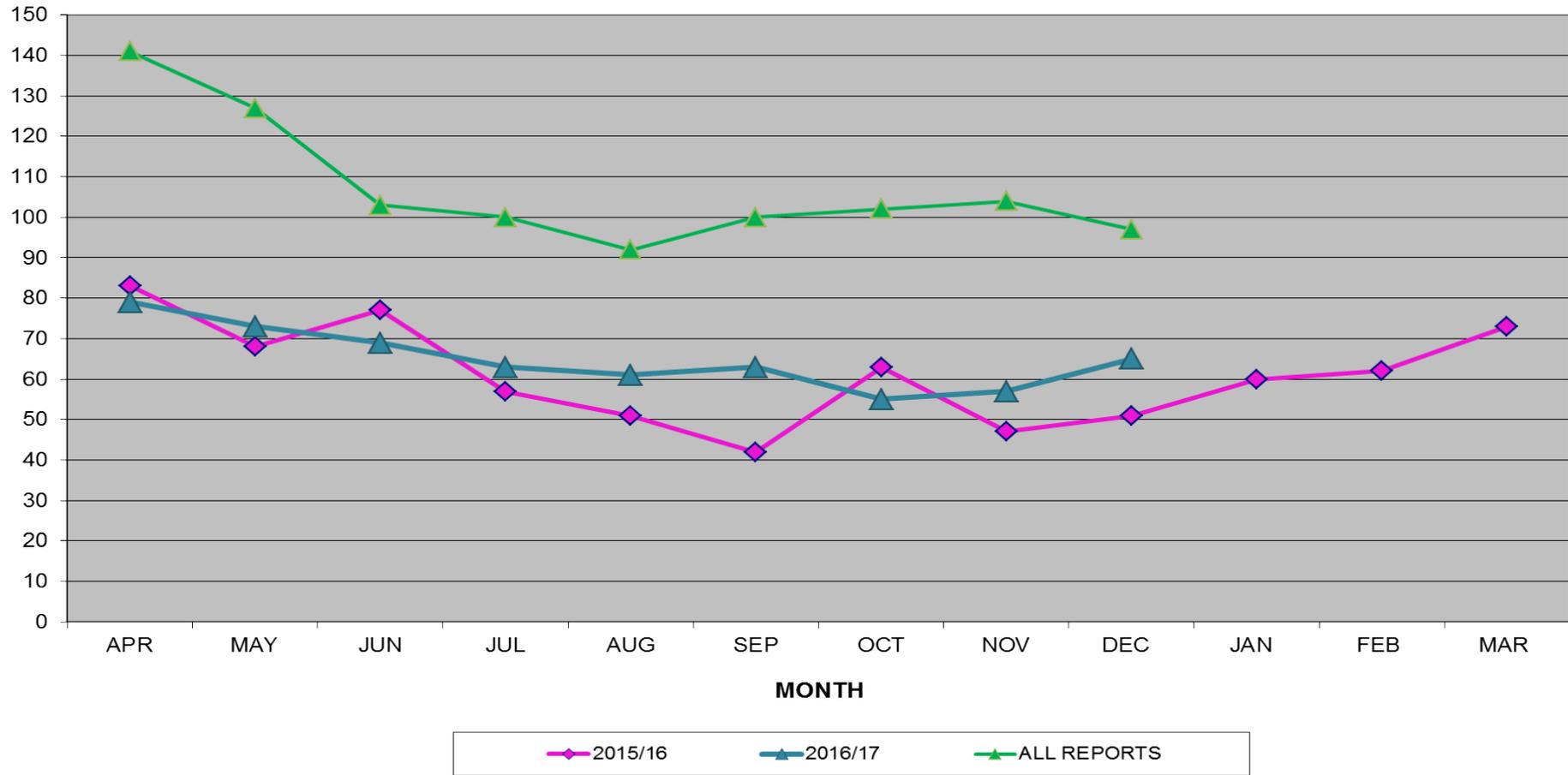
Figure 8: Cleanliness Indicator by Year



## Litter Tonnes per Cleansing Operative (Mth Ave)

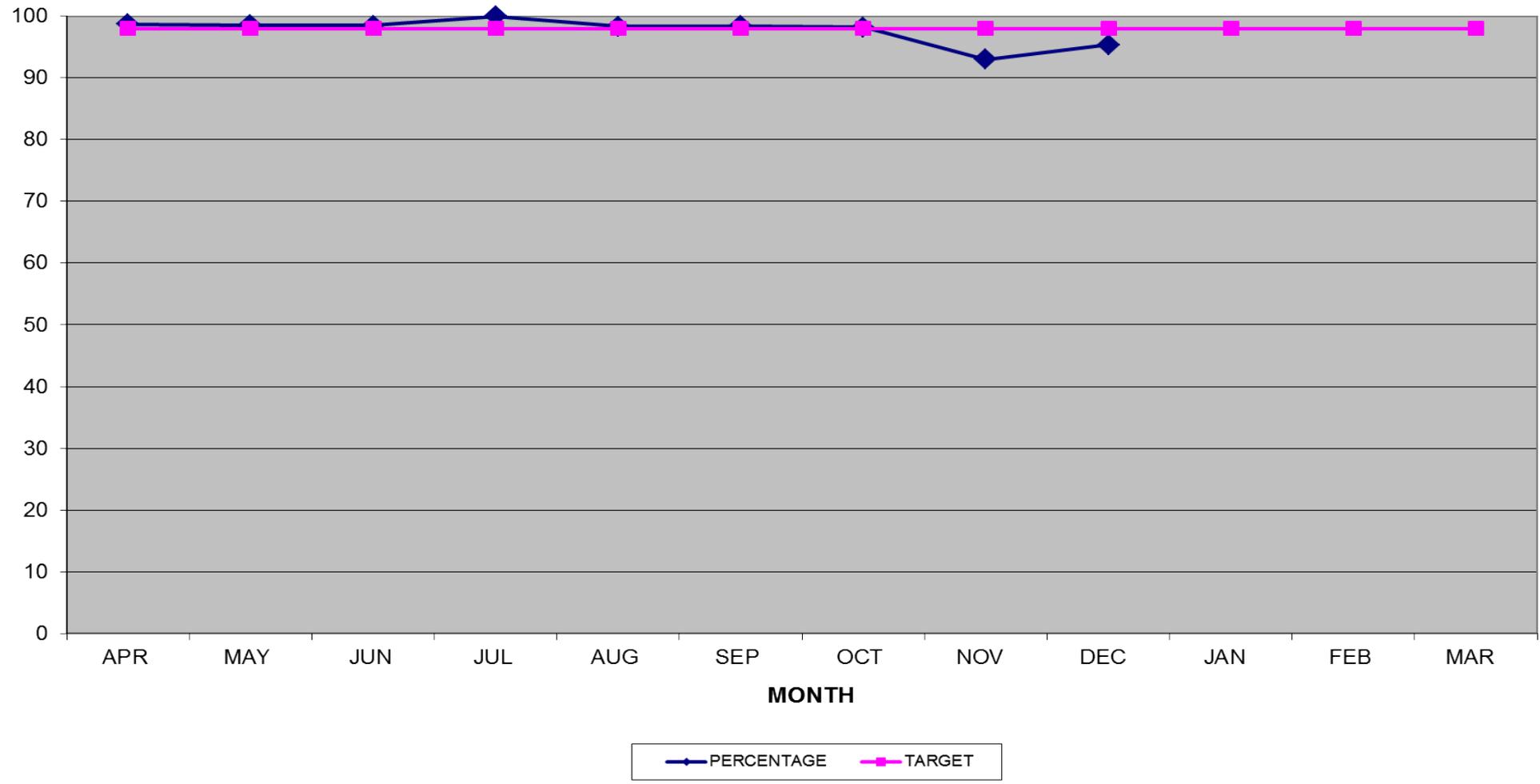


# FLY TIPPING 2016/17 NUMBER OF INCIDENTS REPORTED



# FLY TIPPING 2016/17

## % OF INCIDENTS CLEARED WITHIN 5 DAYS STS-003



# OTHER CLEANING 2016/17

## L.E.A.M.S.STS - 005B

