

December 2013

Briefing 13-52

Streetscene benchmarking – what are the main findings?

This briefing provides an overview of the key findings of the new APSE streetscene benchmarking report. It is provided to all APSE contacts in the UK, including Council Leaders and Chief Executives.

Key issues:

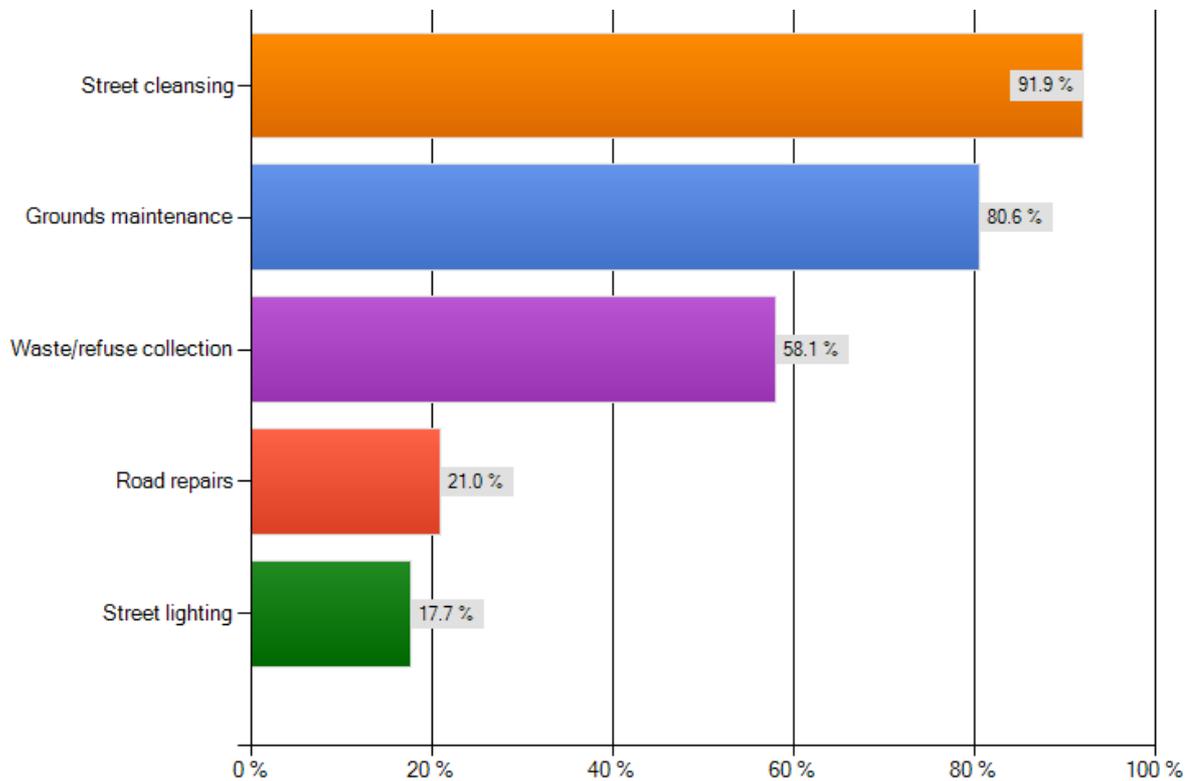
- New streetscene benchmarking report draws on data from the APSE performance networks modules for street cleansing and parks, open spaces and horticultural services
- Demonstrates performance by structural arrangement/method of service delivery
- To get involved in the full report, contact performance.networks@apse.org.uk

1. Introduction and background

As local authorities look at more efficient methods of delivering front-line direct services in light of the budget reductions that they are facing, more and more are restructuring the delivery of those services around a streetscene/neighbourhood approach that merges different facets of their business.

APSE has attempted previously to develop a benchmarking model within its Performance Networks framework but have been hindered by the many different ways in which the restructuring has been undertaken around the UK. Not only have we seen a range of different services included in streetscene set-ups, but some authorities have gone so far as to multi-skill their workforce to operate across different areas, whilst others have merely merged their layers of management to oversee the different services leaving the core services to operate separately as they have always traditionally done.

A succession of surveys carried out by APSE have shown that the most common services to be drawn together are street cleansing and grounds maintenance because of the synergy between the maintenance of land within both services. These are closely followed by refuse collection and highway maintenance. The [APSE 2012 street cleansing state of the market survey](#) found that 77% of respondents had an integrated streetscene service, and of those, the following services were jointly managed:



Rather than try and encompass all the possible variations in one go, APSE approached benchmarking streetscene operations by examining the data provided by APSE performance networks members for the street cleansing and parks, open spaces and horticultural services modules, and created family groups based on the method of service delivery/structural arrangement. On the 2011/12 data templates for the street cleansing and parks, open spaces and horticultural services modules, authorities were asked to indicate where they were up to in terms of developing a streetscene operation. Those authorities who selected one of the choices and submitted data to both modules have been grouped accordingly in one of the three family groups:

SS1 – Streetscene operation with combined staff duties

SS2 – Streetscene operation – no combined staff

SS3 – Non streetscene operation

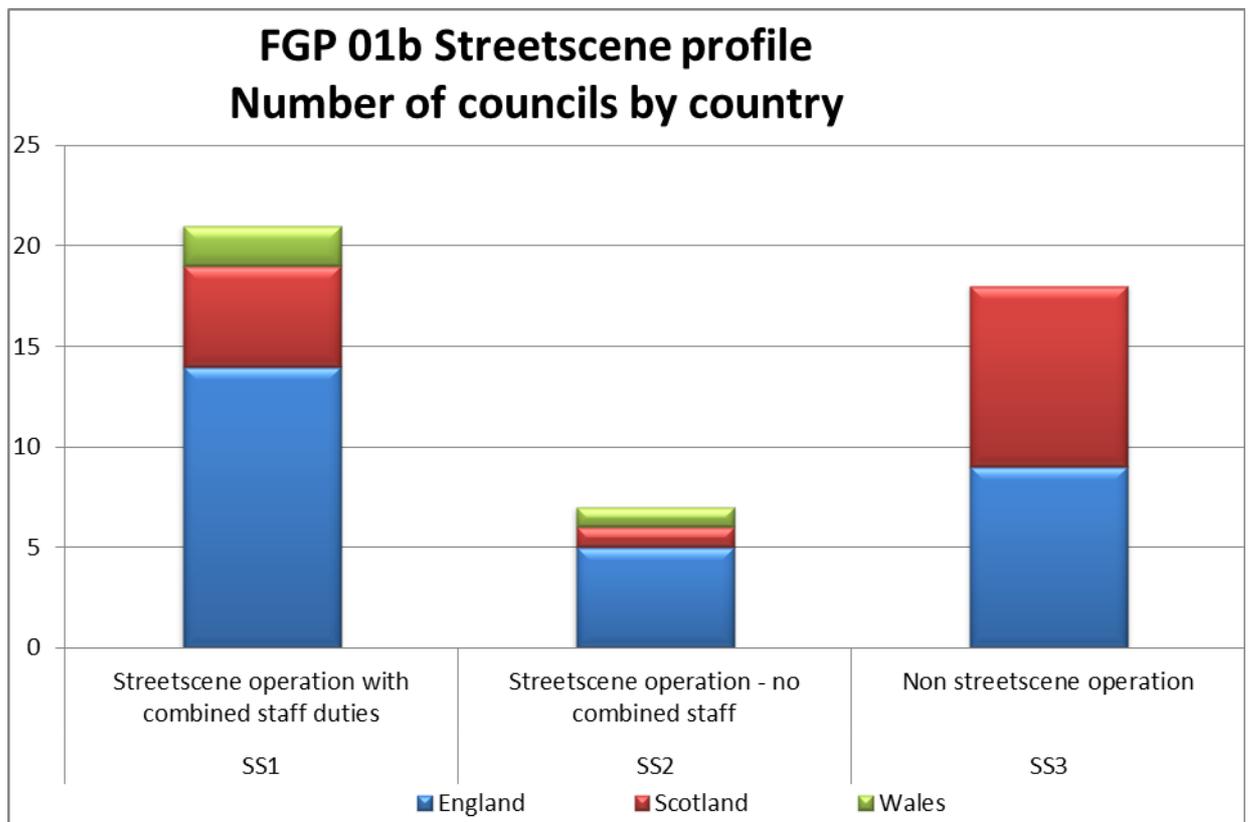
From the 2011/12 data set, APSE extracted key streetscene data from the two modules (*street cleansing and parks, open spaces and horticultural services*) to produce a new street scene performance report. The report brings together data for all three family groups in order to enable comparison between the different types of service delivery and the performance of each council within their respective grouping. The report has been issued to APSE performance networks members who participated in the two modules and this briefing paper is a resume of some of the key findings when comparing the performance of the three family groups.

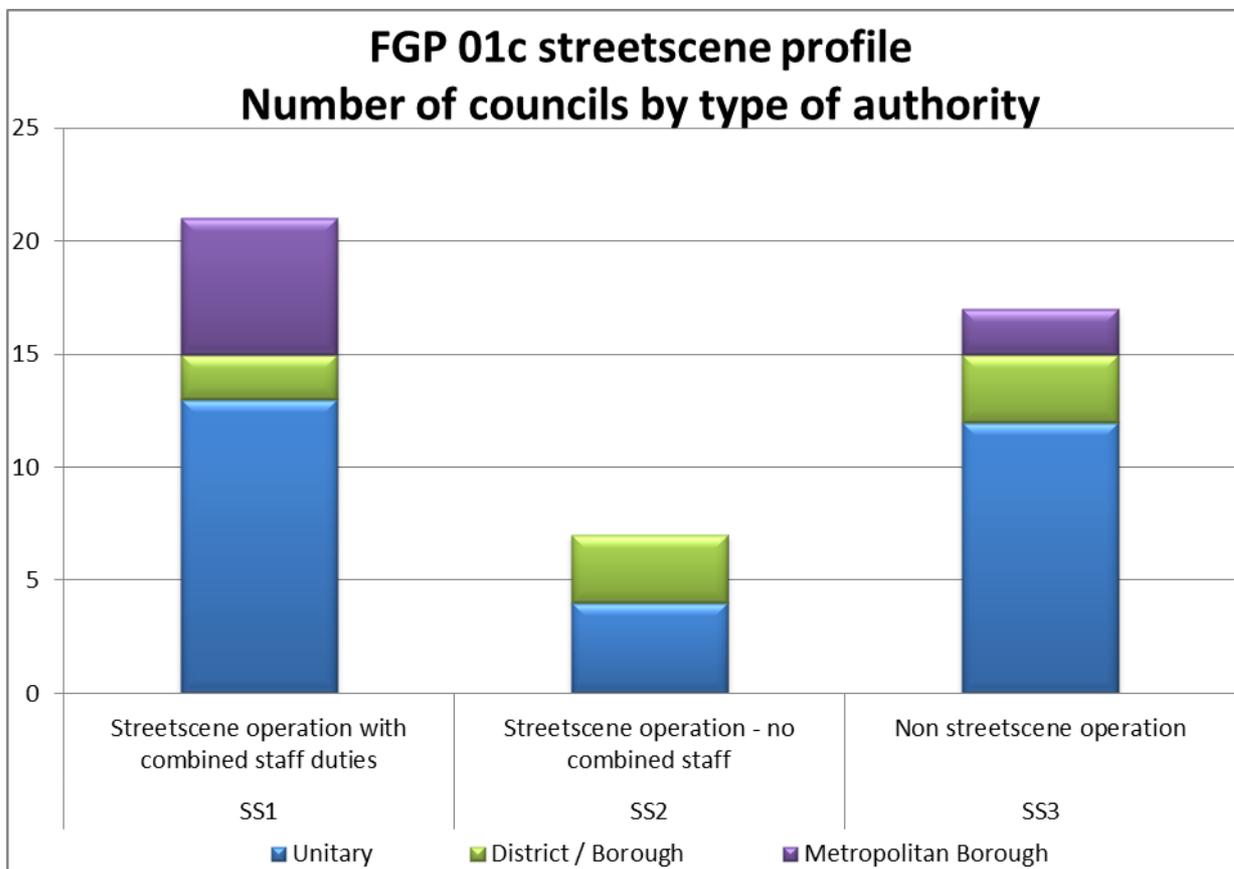
The averages for much of the data appears to indicate an emerging pattern of the type of council that are in each of the groups, both in their profile and how they perform across cost, quality and customer satisfaction. In analysing the data for each, we originally used the mean (average) figures generated. However, this allowed those data extremes (highs and lows) to affect the average, so it was decided that the median (mid-point) would be used in the breakdowns.

2: Profile

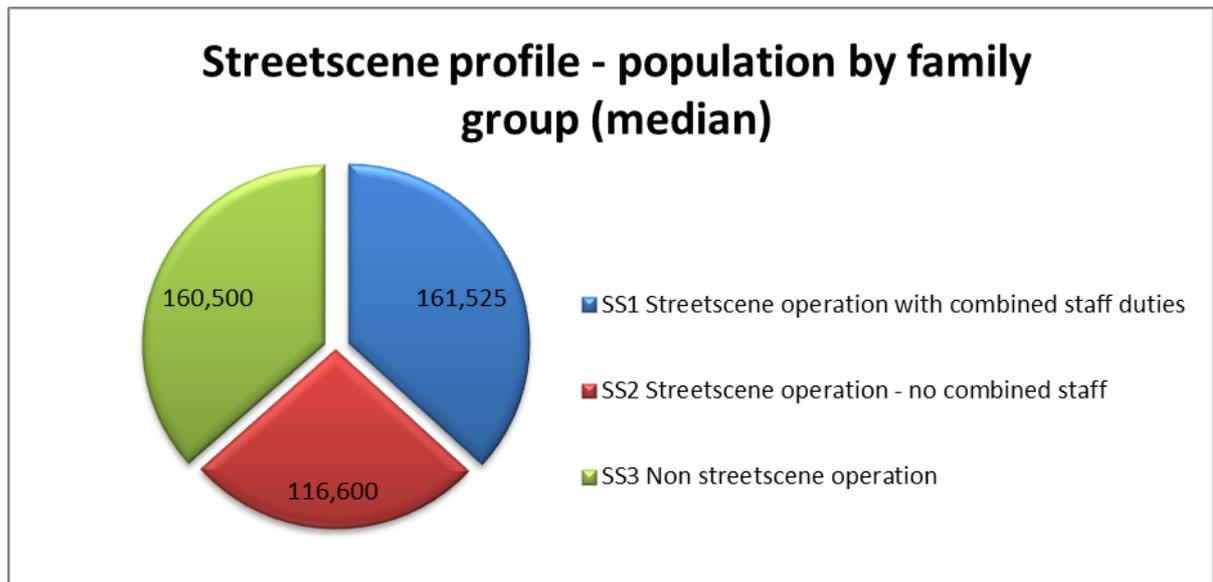
A total of 45 authorities have been included in this analysis, broken down across the UK as follows:-

- **SS1 - Streetscene operation with combined staff duties**
 - 14 England, 5 Scotland and 2 Wales = **Total 21**
 - 13 Unitary's, 2 District or Boroughs and 6 Metropolitan Boroughs
- **SS2 - Streetscene operation – no combined staff**
 - 5 England, 1 Scotland and 1 Wales = **Total 7**
 - 4 Unitary's, 3 District or Boroughs and 0 Metropolitan Boroughs
- **SS3 – Non streetscene operation**
 - 9 England, 9 Scotland and 0 Wales = **Total 18**
 - 12 Unitaries, 3 District or Boroughs and 2 Metropolitan Boroughs

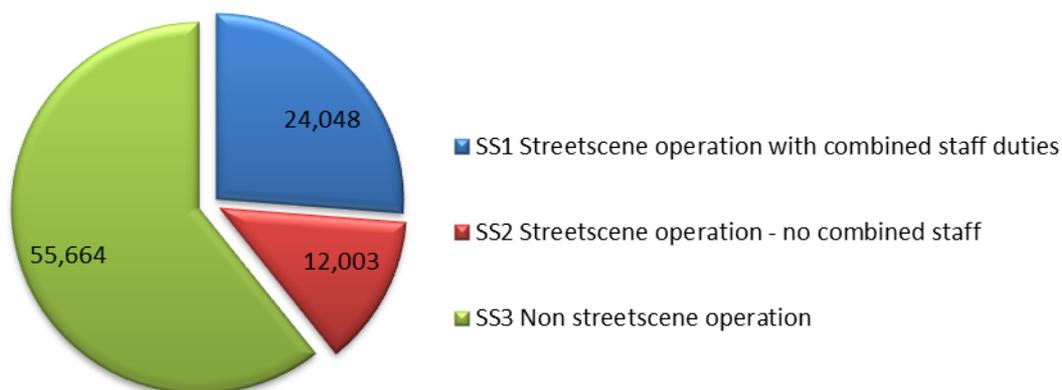




The average and median populations are broadly similar across the three groups, although the boundary area of the three differs greatly, particularly in the non streetscene group (SS3) which has a comparatively very high average hectareage and therefore a fairly low population density pointing to a more rural make up; even though there are no county councils included in the report. By contrast SS2 has a considerably smaller median boundary area and a corresponding population density that is significantly higher than the other groups.



Streetscene profile - boundary area by family group (median)



3: Family groups

SS1 – Streetscene operation with combined staff duties

Authorities in this group have typically a fairly high population in comparison to the other streetscene group. The mean and median boundary area and population density are around mid-range of all the authorities across all family groups, as significantly several of the other averages tend to be too (such as number of full time equivalent staff and vehicles employed on street cleansing, number of grass cuts per annum and hectares maintained per 1000 head of population).

SS2 – Streetscene operation - no combined staff

Authorities in this group have the lowest median population and boundary area but the highest population density. The other averages and medians also tend to be the lowest (such as number of full time equivalent staff and vehicles employed on street cleansing, number of grass cuts per annum and hectares maintained per 1000 head of population).

SS3 – Non streetscene operation

Authorities in this group have a similar median population to SS1 but a much higher boundary area. However, in complete contrast to SS2, they have the lowest population density. The other averages and medians are all at the high end too (such as number of full time equivalent staff and vehicles employed on street cleansing and hectares maintained per 1000 head of population).

	SS1	SS2	SS3
Population	161,525	116,600	160,500
Area (hectares)	24,048	12,003	55,664
Population density	6.06	10.23	2.92
FTE staff – street cleansing	60.00	25.80	58.37
No. of street cleansing vehicles	25.50	16.33	29.00

	SS1	SS2	SS3
Average grass cuts (Parks)	18	17	17.5
Average grass cuts (Other)	14.5	15	16
Hectares maintained per 1000 head of population	4.20	2.75	4.90
(using median (mid-point) of data range)			

4: Analysis of data

Cost

Whilst accepting that the cost figures supplied to APSE for both of the modules can include other services which may be outside of the streetscene classification (for instance, horticultural work, arboriculture and enforcement activities), we have included some analysis on cost within this executive summary. However, when drawing comparisons from this data, it needs to be used with caution as the costs will not just include the costs of providing a streetscene operation.

The median figures shown below (which follow the mean average figures in trend) suggest that costs for the combined parks and street cleansing service are typically lower in the family group where only management functions have been fully integrated (family group SS2) compared to a fully integrated service (SS1). This may be due to additional wage costs incurred by some authorities who have introduced multi-tasking for staff and as a result of the increased skill set, have paid higher grades.

Where there is no streetscene integration in place, the average costs are the highest of the three groups. This may be due to the type of authority already typically identified in the profile of the group (large area, smaller population) which would require resources to be committed over wider areas; including staff, vehicles and fuel. However, it may also be indicative of potential savings that could be made by adopting a streetscene approach and this is something that APSE will be looking into further as more data becomes available.

	SS1 £	SS2 £	SS3 £
Parks – cost per household	47.45	29.47	59.58
Street cleansing – cost per household	33.53	34.94	37.64
Total of above cost per household	82.01	62.70	100.91

Whilst it may be expected that management cost ratios would be lower for SS1 and SS2, where management is integrated across parks and street cleansing functions, this trend is not borne out by the data.

	SS1 %	SS2 %	SS3 %
Staff costs as % of total costs	62.60	63.84	64.55
Front line staff costs as % of total costs	55.13	50.06	53.70
Management costs as % of total costs	7.09	9.67	6.74

Quality and customer satisfaction

Due to the varying methods of assessing the street cleansing quality in England (Leqse Pro and own methods), Scotland (LEAMS) and Wales (LEAMS), the sample sizes of the data are too small this year to draw conclusions from the data averages. However, it is envisaged that in future years, as participation in this model increases, this data will be available. The below table shows average customer satisfaction across the three groups:

	SS1	SS2	SS3
	%	%	%
Customer satisfaction: street cleansing	65.00	78.50	82.00
Customer satisfaction: parks	70.20	88.00	81.38

On both the averages and the mid-points of the data pertaining to customer satisfaction scores achieved from surveys, SS2 (Streetscene operation - no combined staff) and SS3 (Non streetscene operation) appear to have higher on average customer satisfaction ratings. However, it is important, when analysing customer satisfaction, to take into account public expectations and it will be useful in future years to be able to map this against actual cleanliness of an area.

5. Further information

The 2012/13 Streetscene report will be issued to all APSE performance networks members who have participated in the two modules (street cleansing and parks, open spaces and horticultural services), following on from the second batch of reports in spring 2014. If you would like to get involved in this or would like to find out if your council is a member of the service, please contact performance.networks@apse.org.uk to register your interest.

Debbie Johns

Principal Advisor

Dave Henrys

APSE solutions associate