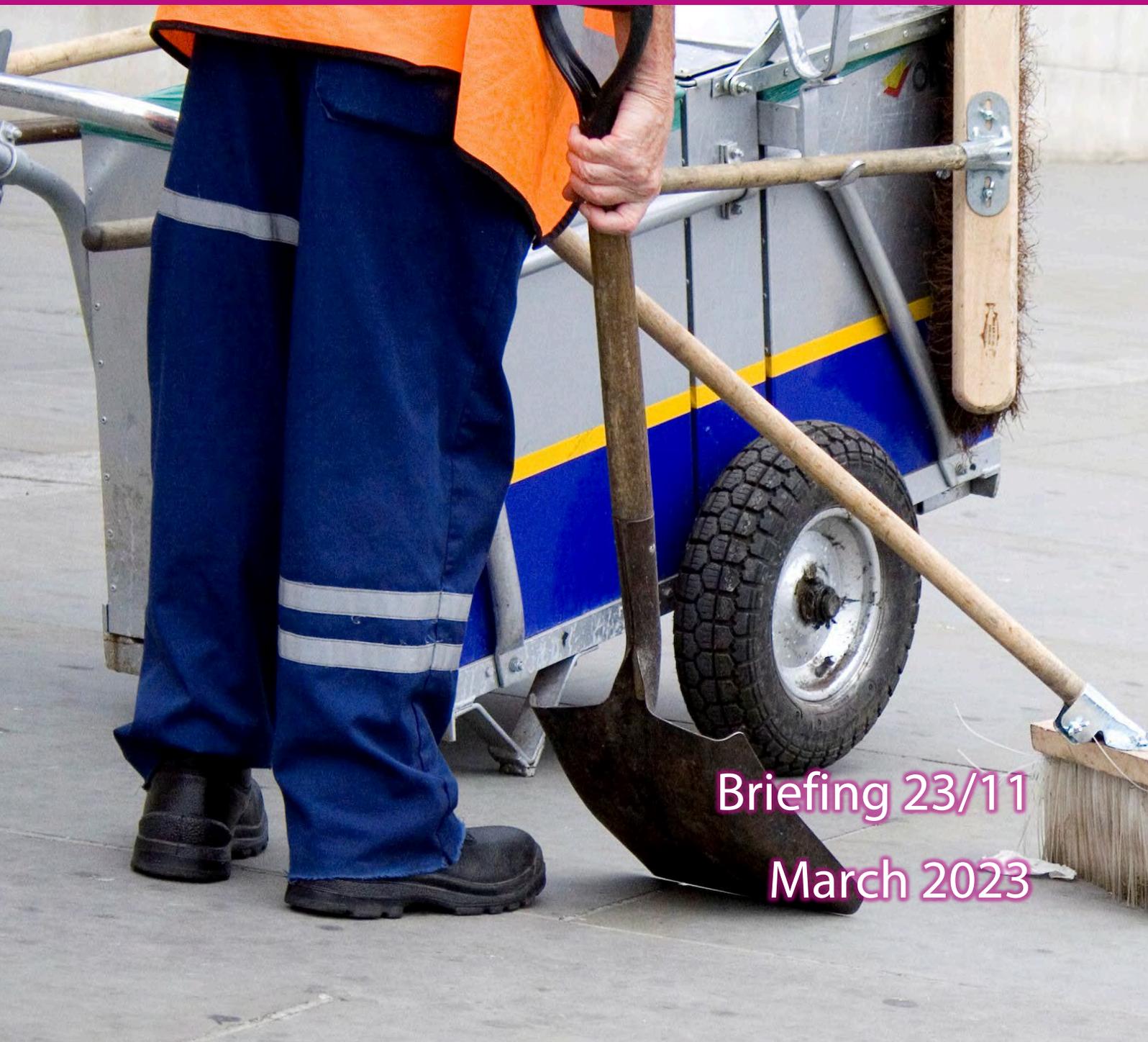




association for public service excellence

# Trend Analysis 2021/22

## Street Cleansing



Briefing 23/11

March 2023

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### **Trend Analysis 2021/22**

#### **Local authority street cleansing**

This analysis was conducted by Wayne Priestley, APSE Principal Advisor for Street Cleansing

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#### **About APSE**

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) is a not-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK.

Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority frontline services and operates one of the UK's largest research programmes in local government policy and frontline service delivery matters.

## **1 Overview**

Street Cleansing data has been collected separately for comparison purposes for APSE's Performance Networks benchmarking service since 2000/01. It is used to populate a set of robust indicators and was created to show performance over a broad range of the service provision, including cost, quality and customer satisfaction. These indicators have been continuously streamlined over the years to ensure the most relevant data comparisons for street cleansing. Every year, APSE has reported on the ongoing trends of these key indicators.

## **2 Trend analysis**

Trend analysis carried out annually has shown average performance fluctuate over the years, reflecting internal changes made by local authorities to negate budget reductions through service reviews in an attempt to maintain standards and provide more innovative ways of managing and operating the street cleansing service.

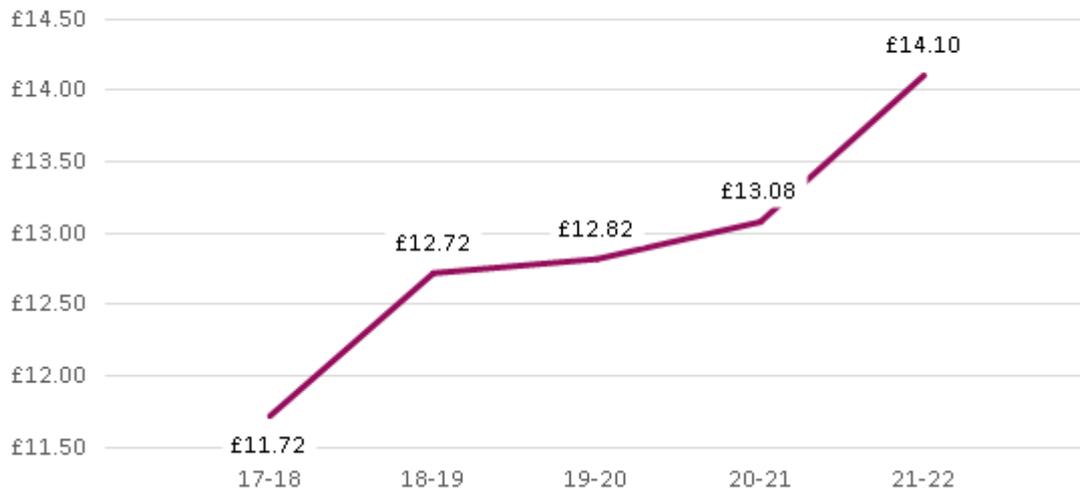
Against the backdrop of austerity measures and diminishing budgets, councils had initially managed to continue to maintain standards of cleanliness and customer satisfaction, but in recent years some reversals have been seen. The Coronavirus pandemic which has necessitated councils to change service delivery and increase or decrease services according to priorities. It may therefore be difficult to compare the past four years trends until normality again returns.

## **3 Cost**

There has been a continuing increase in the costs for street cleansing, but this is perhaps not surprising as 2021/22 saw the continuing impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, albeit to a lesser extent than 2020- 2021, but nevertheless, many of the protective and additional service requirements were still in place in many councils throughout the UK. In addition, as higher levels of normality returned, more people ventured back into public places and as such litter levels will undoubtedly have increased, requiring normal or in some cases even higher levels of cleansing services.

The increase in costs despite the pandemic are a continuing aspect of the service over the past five years, it is just that they certainly accelerated as a consequence of the extra costs placed on street cleaning services during the pandemic. It is envisaged that returns for 2022/23 will perhaps be a better indicator of the levels of future costs.

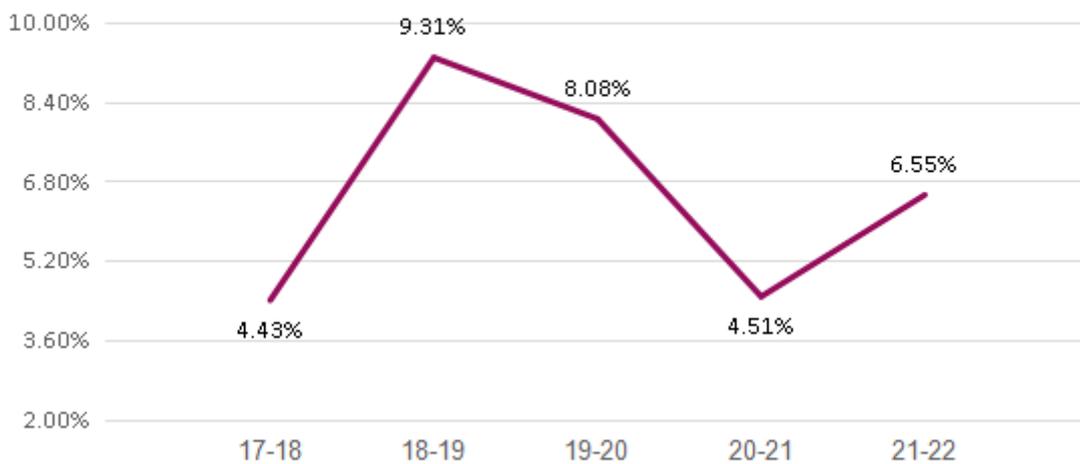
**PI 05 Cost of street cleansing service per head of population (excluding CEC)**



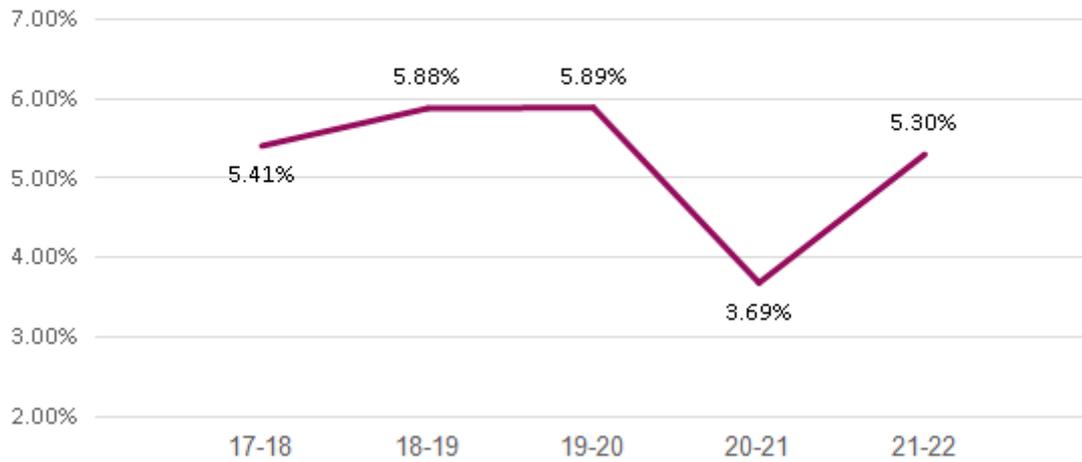
## 4 Quality

As previously mentioned, the pandemic reduced the ability to socialise in public spaces, and as a consequence street litter levels are likely to have reduced, even though people were given limited access to exercise in public streets as part of their recommended daily exercise. Also, many non-essential shops were closed during the pandemic reducing the amount of takeaway litter being generated. These two factors together may have been a major reason why the number of unacceptable levels of cleanliness scores reduced. Although a rise has occurred in 2021/22 in the percentage of unacceptable sites falling below grade B, this rise is still well below pre-Covid levels which is a positive outcome.

**PI 37a Percentage of sites surveyed falling below grade b for cleanliness (England only)  
(LAMS / LeqsPro survey carried out with requisite numbers)**



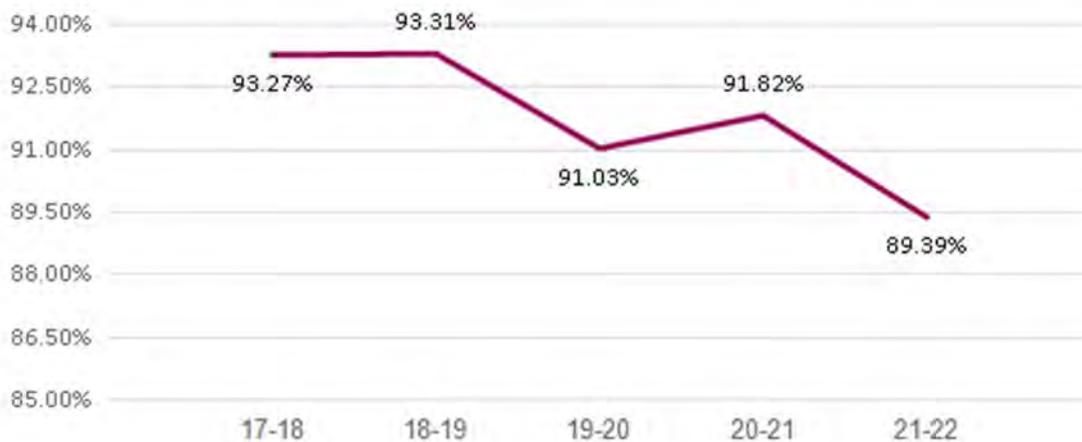
**PI 37b Percentage of sites surveyed falling below grade b for cleanliness (England only)  
(LAMS / LeqsPro survey with reduced survey numbers or other survey type)**



The increase in sites being assessed as below grade B (PI 37b) is probably due to the same reasons highlighted in PI 37a; that of more people now back on the nation's streets. Again, the percentage score of unacceptable site is still statistically below the pre-Covid levels of 2019/20.

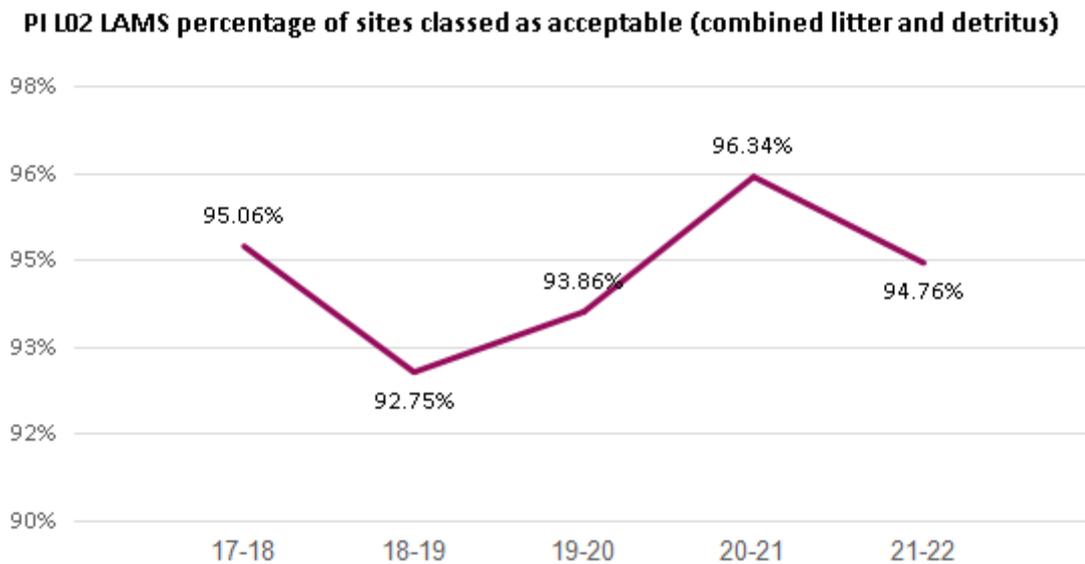
The graph below (PI 37) is a continuing reflection of the impact of the pandemic, in that as fewer people were on the streets during 2019 - late 2020, the number of acceptably clean streets rose in 2021. However, with the lifting of restrictions, more people were back on the streets and as such cleanliness levels fell as did the number of sites inspected which were classed as acceptably clean during 21/22.

**PI 37m Percentage of sites surveyed which were assessed as acceptably clean by Keep Scotland Beautiful (Scotland only)**



The graph below relates to the percentage as measured by APSE Land Audit Management System (LAMS). As previously mentioned, many street cleansing services continued to operate during the COVID 'lockdown' periods and were therefore able to clean street unhindered by pedestrian and

traffic. Coupled with the closure of many non-essential shops and the inability for people to gather, then the reduced incidents of litter and the ability to more easily clear detritus meant scores for this indicator rose. However, 2021/22 has not surprisingly seen a reduction in the number of sites inspected being classed as acceptable, again due to more people now being able to move around freely and therefore increased footfall across the sites inspected.



## 5 Customer satisfaction

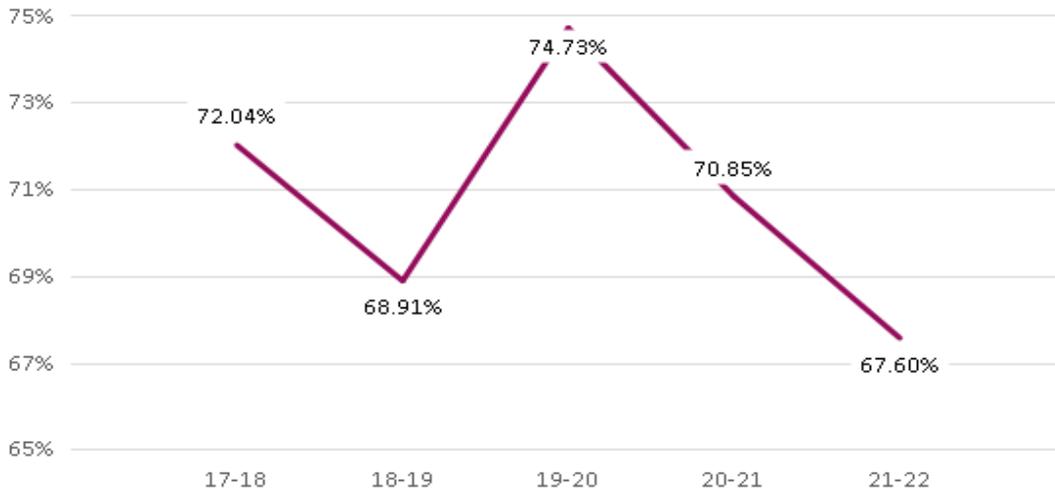
The pandemic meant that many service elements were either suspended or cancelled for a period. Many staff were either advised or instructed to work from home, as such some areas of work particularly street cleansing, may well have suffered as a consequence or been re-prioritised.

It is likely that fewer public opinion surveys were carried out during the pandemic period but where they were, they showed a decrease in the levels of public satisfaction, largely a reflection of street cleaning staff often being redeployed elsewhere to support services such as refuse collection and bereavement.

2021/22 has seen a continued decline in levels of public satisfaction to its lowest point in the last five years. This is perhaps not just due to reduced service provision, as some street cleansing staff may well have been continued to be redeployed late into 2021, but also from comments received for Service Managers at Advisory Groups seminars and one to one conversations. Levels of littering nationally seemed to be increasing. Another explanation for this could be the increasing expectations of the public

This is an area APSE will continue to monitor to see how results are affected in 2022/23.

PI 39 Community / customer surveys undertaken - satisfaction levels

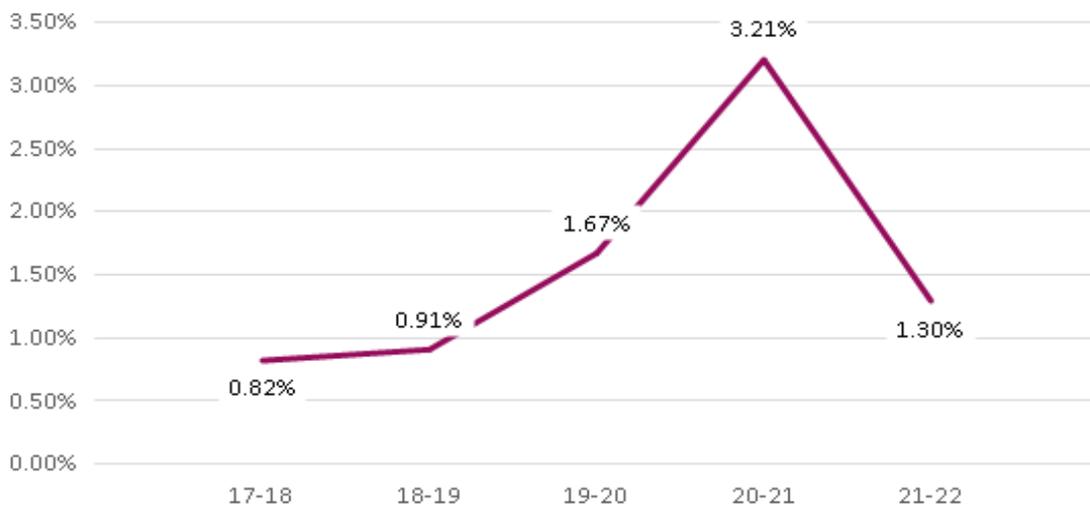


## 6 Education, enforcement and environmental

Clearly during the pandemic, there was a significant increase in the proportion of budgets being spent on education, enforcement and other environmental initiatives. It is likely that the bulk of this was being used to keep the public informed of service changes and promoting positive environmental behaviour through social media, as face to face contact would have been seriously curtailed during the time of the pandemic.

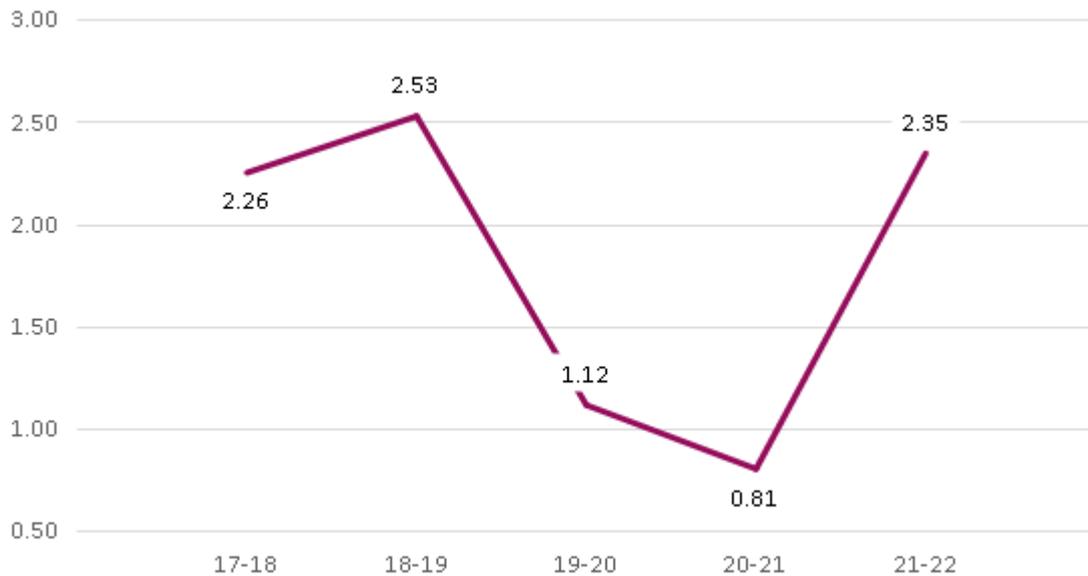
However, the graph below shows that in 2021/22, there has been a significant decline in this area of funding, despite reports of increased littering and fly-tipping levels still remaining high in many areas of the UK.

PI 40 Percentage of street cleansing budget spent on education and publicity of initiatives



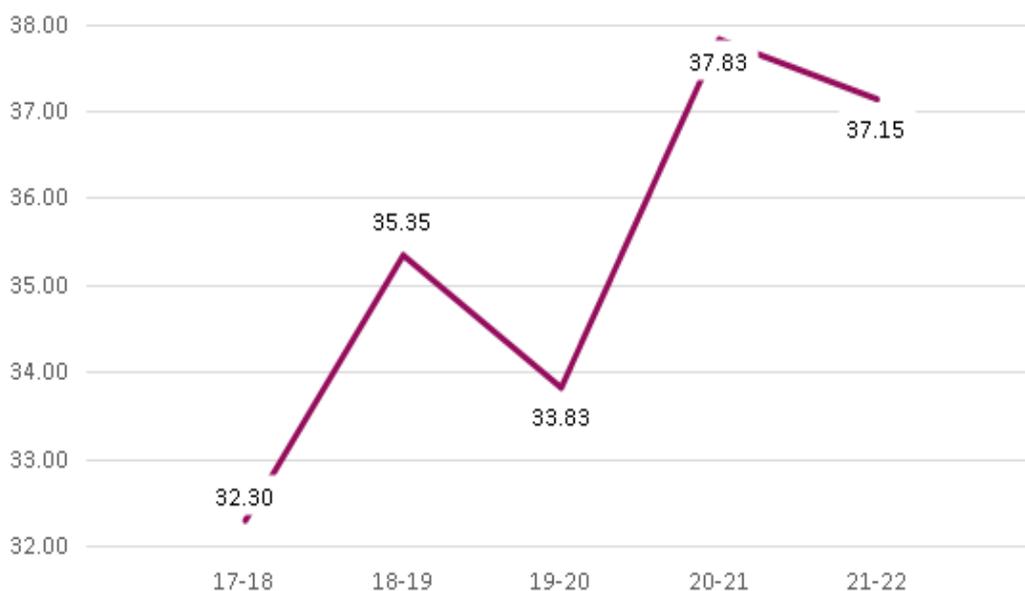
Clearly now that all of the restrictions of the pandemic have been removed and everyday life back to a high level of normality, the task of preventing street littering has been re-established, which is clearly shown in the large increase in FPN's being issued during 2021/22.

**PI 25a Number of litter offence notices issued per 1,000 head of population**

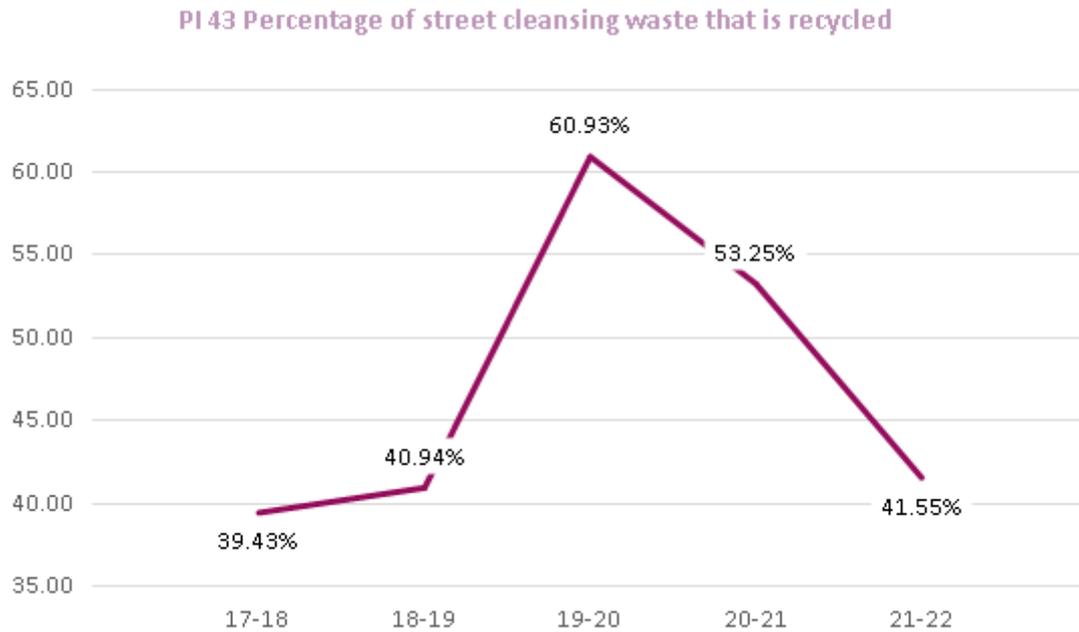


In line with a reduction in the ability to enforce Fixed Penalty Notices due to social distancing and staff availability due to redeployment of many, the ability to monitor and investigate incidents of fly-tipping during the main pandemic period would have been difficult. Also, as many councils suspended bulky waste collections and closed their HWRC's, this may have led to an increase in fly-tipping. What is clear from the 2021/22 results is that councils are now actively pursuing the issuing of FPN's now that the constraints of the pandemic have been removed and those services and facilities suspended or closed now reinstated.

**PI 25d Number of incidents of fly-tipping/dumps per 1,000 households (England Only)**



Levels in the percentage of street cleansing waste being recycled has continued to fall, post pandemic. This is probably a result of disposal routes still being affected by markets being slow to re-establish post pandemic. Also, the nature of the waste means that contamination is still a big issue and this is very much the limiting factor for outlets.



## 7 APSE Comment

It is clear that the findings of the trend analysis have still been affected by the impacts of the pandemic and as such some of the figures and performance levels have been affected either negatively or positively and care needs to be taken when reading this briefing note. It is likely that it will take another twelve months before a more stable picture can be ascertained.

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- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

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