

Eleven of the responses came from departments that are directly responsible for external public space maintenance and/or the street scene, with titles including Environmental Services, Street Services, Public Services and Contract Services, illustrating the rising prominence of the street scene as a concern within local authorities.

The responses suggested that very few local authorities possess departments dedicated to public space management in a holistic fashion, more typically public space is either managed within a much larger unit taking in many non-public space functions as well, or in much smaller units that break public space and its management down into separate public space types and management functions.

#### DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURES

Analysis of the responses suggested that just less than half of local authorities have two departments<sup>2</sup> with responsibility for the management of public space, and a quarter have a single department responsible for the majority of external public space functions. Beyond those, a further fifth have three departments responsible for public space management, whilst the remainder have four or more departments with responsibility.

Single departments were usually supra-departments discharging the main functions in relation to external public space under a single director. Typical divisions within a single directorate included:

- Planning/Transport/Highways (sometimes Environmental Health)
- Parks/Leisure
- Maintenance (Streets and/or Open Spaces)

or

- Strategy
- Operations.

Two department models tended to be configured in such a way that all or most of the functions relating to the management of public spaces were dealt with by the two departments. The split was either between the street scene services and open space management or between the strategy/client and the operations/contractor functions, for example:

- Planning and Environment/Highways (Street Scene)
- Leisure/Community Services (Open Spaces)

or

- Strategy (Planning, Highways, Parks)
- Operations (Management and Maintenance/Contract).

Three department models showed a variety of permutations, but in essence all seemed to cover:

- Leisure/Parks
- Planning/Highways
- Street Scene/Contract/Management and Maintenance.

Four department structures were a variation on the three-department model, usually resulting from a split between planning and highways, but largely divided into the following functions:

- Leisure/Parks
- Planning
- Highways
- Maintenance/Works.

In their responses, a great number of local authorities recognised that there are no coordinating mechanisms and that the services are delivered in compartments, mainly along professional lines such as highway engineer, planner, urban designer, ecologist, etc. Historically, they confirmed, green open spaces have tended to be treated as a single entity but streets and other hard urban spaces have lacked an integrated approach.

Most local authorities, therefore, continue to operate separate lines of responsibility for the management of open spaces and the street scene. Authorities suggested that having a single supra-department responsible for all public space can help in coordination, but can also act like three or four separate departments if divisions or individuals within the larger unit do not coordinate their activities, or have bad working relationships. Many authorities, it seems, continue to rely on traditional structures, with coordination, if any, achieved through good working relationships between officers.

#### Local authority strategies for managing public space

The survey aimed to establish whether local authorities had an integrated strategy for managing public space, as would be typical in many other services (e.g. a development plan to guide the spatial planning process). The question allowed room for interpretation and it was often very difficult to determine whether a dedicated strategy for the management of external urban space was in place. Where responses conveyed the information requested, the council's own understanding of what constituted 'integration' was accepted in the analysis. However, in the majority of cases, what constituted an integrated strategy had to be deduced from accompanying documents.