

THE UTILITIES REVIEW

The Effect the Utilities Companies have on the Service Delivery of the Council

(Focused on the work carried out by the major utility player, i.e. United Utilities, and particularly in the area concerning street lighting connections.)

**Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Number 2
June 2003**

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1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

DNO	Distribution Network Operator
REC	Regional Electricity Company
UU	United Utilities Plc
UUNC	United Utilities Network Connections – a subsidiary of United Utilities
UUSD	United Utilities Service Delivery – Manages the connections once they have been established.
Jointer	A person trained and accredited by UU to make connections from UU's network to an item of street furniture e.g. Street lights, signs or bollards
OFFER	Office for the Regulation of Electricity
OFGEM	Officer for Regulation of Gas and Electricity Market
OFGAS	Office for the regulation of the Gas Industry
NRSWA 1991	New Roads and Street Works Act 1991
BVI	Best Value Inspectorate
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
GMADE	Greater Manchester Association of District Engineers
SLA	Street Lighting Agreement
DLO	Direct Labour Organisation
SECTION 74 NRSWA 1991	Section 74 NRSWA 1991 came into force on 1st April 2001. The Section gives Highways Authorities the power to charge Statutory Undertakers for overstaying an agreed period of time when carrying out work on the public highway. The aim of Section 74 is to minimise disruption caused by Statutory Undertakers' street works. The operation of the scheme is complicated but basically Statutory Undertakers have to serve notice on the Authority that they intend to carry out works on the highway and give a start and completion date. If the works continue beyond the completion date and the Statutory Undertaker has not applied for an extension of time, then the Authority can instigate charges ranging from £100 to £2000 per day. There are difficulties in enforcing this Section which are explained in Section 3.5 of the report.

2. INTRODUCTION

The issue of “Quality of Service Provision” provided by the “Utility” companies was raised as an area of concern that required investigating by a Select Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. To this end Select Committee No.2 was formed to consider the issues concerning partnership-working arrangements currently in place for working with the “Utilities” in Wigan Council.

At the beginning of the review Members of the Select Committee set out to review whether the services provided by the Council were affected by the delivery plans of the major utilities. Furthermore Select Committee Members would assess whether the Council was able influence the delivery plans of the major utilities to improve overall Council service delivery. At that time it was acknowledged that due to the nature of the review the terms of reference, along with the title, might be redefined.

As the review progressed Members became focused on the work carried out by the major utility player, i.e. United Utilities, and particularly in the area concerning street lighting connections. Select Committee considered that the review would have greatest impact by concentrating on developing the partnership working arrangements between the Council and United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC). The focus of the review was redefined in this way in order to concentrate on a major area of work that affects everyone in the Borough (almost everyone has a street light!). It is also an area of work that has a great affect on a number of Council improvement initiatives including “Street Scene”, “Community Safety”, and “Road Safety”. It is intended that the recommendations of Select Committee are achievable in the short term and will provide impetus for improvement in this highly visual area of work.

Throughout the review Select Committee also examined and questioned our own Council systems that are in place for working with the utilities. The Select Committee has considered how the Council’s own processes and management information systems can be best implemented, monitored and reported to effectively influence the overall delivery of work carried out by United Utilities Connections UUNC), in order to improve overall Council service delivery.

This report contains evidence collated during the Review and compares performance with other Councils who also work in partnership with United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC). The purpose of the report is to facilitate the reader with a local perspective of the issues involved in working with our partners, United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC), in carrying out street lighting connections in Wigan Council. Furthermore, it is intended that the Select Committee recommendations will provide real improvements with regard to street lighting connections in Wigan Council

Select Committee No.2
June 2003

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Scope

The scope of Select Committee No.2 is *“to review the partnership arrangements currently in place for working with the Council’s major utility partners. The review will focus on examining the quality of service provision of the major utilities”*.

The main aims of the review are to establish:

- a) *Are the services provided by the Council affected by the delivery plans of others?*
- b) *Can the Council influence the delivery plans of others to improve partnership-working arrangements?*

This includes establishing and understanding current arrangements in place for joint working between the Council’s Engineering Services Department and the major utilities. Select Committee considers that the review would have greatest impact by concentrating on developing the partnership working arrangements between the Council and United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC).

3.2 Reasons for the Review

The subject of the review was raised in reference to a number of areas of concern, including:

- Councillors taking on the role of “go-between” or Intermediate Clerk of Works for work undertaken in partnership with utility companies;
- The apparent affect that delays caused by “utility” work has on the Council;
- Financial consequences of delays in “utility” work;
- United Utilities failing to meet performance targets;
- The affect that the whole area of work involving utility partners has on the image of the Council – it was recognised that the public do not always distinguish between the Council and its utility partners and that they may perceive problems related to utility works to be “the Council’s fault”;
- Incomplete works causing problems for the public.

It should be acknowledged that the Engineering Services Street Lighting Section identified that there was problems in this area in September 2001. They had contacted United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC) regarding problems with:

- Poor performance
- Poor day-to-day communications
- Lack of responsiveness to work programmes
- Lack of commitment to service provision

In response UUNC identified its own internal problems as the reasons for poor performance. They blamed the situation on:

- Restructure to management/organisation
- Reorganised service provision
- New sub-contractor employed

Other issues, which may have impacted in this area, were also identified at this time. They included:

- Monopoly service supplier
- Significant increase in workload
- Resource problem - lack of jointers
- Lack of performance monitoring
- Lack of site supervision

As the Review progressed it became apparent that reorganisation at UUNC continued.

3.3 The Monopoly Situation – a national context

The report describes the monopoly situation following the privatisation of the Regional Electricity Companies (RECs) in 1988. To this end United Utilities operates in a monopoly situation concerning the area of streetlighting connections and it is their connections arm that the Council has to deal with i.e. United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC). The report examines the efforts of OFGEM, and particularly the Unmetered Connections (Street Lighting) Sub Group, in opening up the market. Select Committee concluded that it is unlikely that the market would be opened up due to regionalised standards and health and safety concerns.

3.4 Issues Concerning the Work of the Jointer

During the course of the review it was debated whether there was a shortage of cable jointers; evidence gathered from some stakeholders indicated there was a shortage, whilst other stakeholders thought that there was not. This issue has not been clarified and there is no conclusive evidence, apart from overall performance, to substantiate either view.

A jointer makes a connection, disconnection or transfer of an electrical service from a *live connection* on the network to an item of highway electrical equipment. Select Committee examined the issues concerning the work of the Jointer and the apparent shortage of jointers causing lengthy delays. It was found that there was no recognised qualification, however training a jointer is an expensive and lengthy business. UUNC's sub-contractor employs the jointers, however they have to be trained to local UUNC standards and skills are not transferable from one Region to another. Furthermore United Utilities had closed their training school for jointers, and there was a question over whether jointers' certification could continue to be extended forever without training/ refresher training. UUNC and their sub-contractors felt there was not a problem with a shortage of skills in this area.

3.5 The New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 and Section 74 of the Act

Throughout the review the Select Committee collated evidence from UUNC, their contractors and other stakeholders, and was given to understand that Section 74 of the Act was a principle reason for delays; this is evidenced in the body of the report. However the Engineering Services Department clarified the point in the final stages of the review. It was pointed out that it is the NRSWA 1991 introduced in 1993, that stipulates notice has to be given before work can be undertaken on the highway and therefore it is the original legislation that affects targets and not section 74. Section 74, which came into force in April 2001 gives the Council the power to charge contractors if they fail to meet agreed time scales for work undertaken on the highway. Engineers pointed out that all Greater Manchester authorities have implemented Section 74. There is however a number of unresolved issues which require a legal interpretation and it is proving difficult to persuade Undertakers to pay some charges. Wigan Council, supported by a number of other Highway Authorities are appealing against a High Court judgement which ruled that street lighting connections and similar works were not deemed to be subject to the majority of requirements of the New Roads and Street Works Act.(Including the provisions of Section 74) The hearing is expected to take place in the next few months to clarify the issue. In addition there is another case which is also subject to appeal, between Transco and Leicestershire Council which will also attempt to clarify the position in terms of what the Undertakers consider "administration errors". In most cases Councils do not accept that excuse.

3.6 Street Lighting Agreement, Monitoring and Performance

When considering monitoring information provided by Engineering Services Department Select Committee found that UUNC's performance to current targets was unsatisfactory. Initial investigations showed that only 2% of "jobs" were being completed on time, however for the full year this increased to 12%. Select Committee was advised that for a job to be completed meant that all the columns within that "job" had to be classed as complete". As a result a weighted average table has been included in the report to try to give a fairer picture, but still reflects unsatisfactory performance. The report questions whether we are monitoring performance too harshly as failure to connect one column in a "job" of 50 columns is considered as non-performance and the job is not completed.

Assistance has been given to Engineering Services Department in developing monitoring arrangements and Select Committee has made recommendations associated with the issue. Members of Select Committee considered the targets in the Street Lighting Agreement and felt they could be better aligned for the public and thought that we should develop more customer-focused targets.

The Council and United Utilities had signed up to a Street Lighting Agreement (SLA), however the latest one presented to Select Committee was dated 1998. It was apparent that the SLA targets may not be realistic and that could be a reason why they are rarely achieved. Furthermore, penalties included in the SLA relating to poor performance appeared to be weighted in favour of United Utilities with no redress for the Council (S74 NRSWA provides the council with redress, but this is currently the subject of Court proceedings). The Street Lighting Agreement was highlighted as an area for review.

3.7 Evidence Gathered

Evidence and information was gathered from as many stakeholders as possible in order to gain a rounded view of the issues concerning working in partnership with UUNC. Consultees included Council Engineers, UUNC, P.N. Daly (sub-contractors), Members, Chief Officers, Residents, Local MP's, and other councils. Major issues included:

- Increased investment for street related works in recent years resulting in increased demand for jointers
- Engineering Services had set up a monitoring system as a result of difficulties experienced at contract handover by UUNC to new sub-contractors
- All stakeholders are not aware of targets or performance outlined in the SLA
- Section 74 NRSWA implementation was causing delays – this was quoted by a number of consultees however it was found that it was the NRSWA that was causing delays and not the implementation of S74.
- The “Bolton way of working” whereby a full weekly allocation of jobs is planned each week for the following week guarantees the services of a Jointer resulting in reduced delays
- Fewer people could be involved in the process by adopting new working arrangements coupled with alternative delivery options
- Recent innovations have reduced costs and increased efficiency in this area of work in other Councils
- Quality control issues are causing problems for the public and there is some uncertainty when a job is complete
- Delays are causing problems for residents. These include crime-related incidents, tripping on pavements and damage to property
- There are communication issues amongst all stakeholders resulting in lack of information for the public

3.8 Comparative Data

UUNC performance is not just a problem in Wigan as other Councils had experienced difficulties. A number of local councils indicated they were not satisfied with the overall level of service provided by UUNC and that they had received complaints from members of the public. They indicated that service had improved due to the introduction of monthly joint meetings, the services of a dedicated jointer and the DLO dealing directly with the sub-contractor.

3.9 Process Mapping and Service Delivery Options

Select Committee together with Engineering Services staff identified more than 20 different tasks in the process for replacement streetlighting, presenting a high risk of things going wrong. Recommendations reflect the need to review the process in conjunction with alternative service delivery options and therefore reduce the risk of non-performance.

A number of alternative delivery options were researched and are included in the report. Select Committee acknowledges that "one size does not fit all". The "Tameside Slipper" was identified as an innovation worth investigating as a means of improving service delivery, customer satisfaction, and also reducing costs. Moreover Select Committee believes that if the "Slipper" was appropriate for Wigan it would give the Council more control over the process, an element which is greatly lacking under current working arrangements with UUNC.

3.10 Summary

Select Committee recognises that the Street Lighting Service as a whole is well regarded with the highest satisfaction rate of any of the Street Scene services.

As a result of the review, Select Committee acknowledges that Engineering Services has a difficult task in assuring performance in an area of work such as streetlighting connections when reliance is on a partner organisation who is operating in a monopoly situation. Furthermore it is apparent that there is little opportunity for the Council to remedy the situation under the current arrangements.

The Select Committee's recommendations are to be found to the back of the report and are based on empirical observations made during the review process. The Committee wishes to emphasise that without the support and co-operation of the people who took the time and the trouble to write, telephone or speak directly to the Committee the work undertaken by themselves would have been fruitless.

Select Committee would like to thank the Engineering Services Street Lighting staff for their full co-operation throughout the review, and would like to acknowledge their efforts so far in driving improvement in partnership working arrangements with United Utilities Network Connections. Members believe that the work of the Select Committee and recommendations set out in the report will drive further improvement in this area of work.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Select Committee No.2 has been allocated the task of reviewing the quality of service provision provided by the “Utility” companies. To this end Members have concentrated efforts on reviewing the area of work concerning street lighting connections, undertaken by the major utility player, United Utilities and in particular the work of its subsidiary United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC).

Membership of Select Committee No. 2 is drawn from elected members who are part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and two link members from Policy panels. Select Committee No. 2 was originally chaired by Councillor Terry Halliwell but is now chaired by Councillor Mark Aldred. The Committee included Councillor John Ball, Councillor David Kelly, Councillor David Brown, Councillor Robin Atkinson, Councillor Barry Hampson, and Councillor Mildred Millington. Council officers, John Waters and Samantha Worsfold have supported the Select Committee.

4.1 The Terms of Reference set by Select Committee No.2

“To review the partnership arrangements currently in place for working with the Council’s major utility partners. The review will focus on examining the quality of service provision of the major utilities”.

4.2 Main aims of the review are to establish:

- a) *Are the services provided by the Council affected by the delivery plans of others?*
- b) *Can the Council influence the delivery plans of others to improve partnership-working arrangements?*

This will include establishing and understanding current arrangements in place for joint working between the Council’s Engineering Services Department and the major utilities:

1. Consultation	- Identify stakeholders and seek views.
2. Information	- Identify information flows in relation to current Service Level Agreements (SLA’s) – planning, consultation, implementation and monitoring.
3. Communication	- Examine communication flows with the major utilities? - Examine communication issues concerning street works carried out by major utilities.
4. Crosscutting issues	- Effects of joint working arrangements on other Council crosscutting issues e.g. Street Scene.
5. Comparison	- Compare Wigan Council’s arrangements/experience with other Councils.
6. Report	To provide appropriate recommendations to the Director and Cabinet Member of Engineering Services for discussion with the Environment Panel portfolio holder, and Environment Panel Members.

4.3 Tasks identified

1. Identify main stakeholders.
2. Obtain statistics and trend data.
3. Establish working arrangements currently in place through SLA's.
4. Examine scheme monitoring and reporting arrangements.
5. Identify problems associated with current partnership working arrangements between the Council and the major utilities.
6. Identify current communication methodology regarding "working with the major utilities".
7. Obtain data on proposed arrangements to manage/implement Section 74 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA).
8. Compare Wigan Council's arrangements/experience of working with the major utilities with other Councils:
9. Identify any possible related outcome of the House of Commons Standing Select Committee A on the Utilities Bill.
10. Obtain and evaluate all evidence gathered during the review.
11. Make recommendations.

5. METHODOLOGY

The Select Committee has attended formal meetings mainly to receive evidence and question invitees, and has attended a site visit to examine a number of street lighting associated works in the Borough. The Chair of Select Committee has also met informally with the policy officers on a number of occasions, and has conducted further site visits with the policy officers. Progress on the review has been reported in writing to each of the meetings of the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee held during the review. Details:

Formal Meetings	Informal Meetings	Site Visits
7 October 2002	20 September 2002	28 January 2003 Wigan Council street works
21 October 2002	1 November 2002	
11 November 2002	26 November 2002	25 February 2003 United Utilities, Trafford
2 December 2002	10 December 2002	
16 December 2002	24 February 2002	25 March 2003 Wigan Council Highways DLO
14 January 2003	26 February 2003	
3 February 2003	21 March 2003	13 August 2003 Tameside Slipper visit
17 March 2003	16 May 2003	
31 March 2003	29 May 2003	
4 April 2003		
10 June 2003		

The Committee began collecting evidence at the end of October 2002 and during the past months has interviewed all identified stakeholder representatives including senior Council Engineering Services staff, representatives of United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC) and their contractors P. N. Daly, and local Members of Parliament. A number of members of the public, local Councillors, and Council Chief Officers have taken the opportunity to give written and verbal comments throughout the review period and added to the debate.

Other Local Authorities have been consulted about their views and experiences of street lighting connection work, and dealings with United Utilities Network Connections. A focused consultation exercise has been undertaken involving residents living in areas where street lighting activity has been carried out.

During the review, three site visits were carried out. The first visit was to observe and give Members first-hand knowledge of a “live” cable jointing connection, and disconnection, followed by a tour of different locations where street lighting “site-works” had been undertaken in the borough. The second site visit involved a trip to United Utilities Network Connections HQ in Trafford, Manchester, where Members and officers listened to UUNC operational staff relate to how they work in partnership with the Council. The visit also provided a forum to raise questions and to seek clarification on everyday working arrangements. The final site visit was undertaken as a result of recommendation 16.12 and involved a site visit to Tameside to carry out a feasibility study of the Tameside Slipper.

6. WHY REVIEW THE UTILITIES?

Members originally raised a number of concerns in summer 2002. Concerns were primarily about long delays in electrical connections being made to traffic signs and streetlights. As a result of these concerns it was decided that the Utilities and the effect they have on the delivery of Council services would be the main focus of the review.

The subject was raised with reference to specific areas:

6.1 Should Councillors take on the role of go between or Intermediate Clerk of Works?

Members originally debated this at O&S committee, mentioning that they had often seen themselves as an intermediate clerk of the Works, providing a vital link between the local residents and the Council on projects that were delayed or incomplete. Examples of street-lighting works had been discussed.

6.2 The Public utilities and the apparent affect that their delays have on the Council and their projects and schemes.

During the early stages of the review all Utility Companies and GMUTC were the potential areas for scrutiny by the Select Committee. However after initial consultation with Members and a press release it became apparent that the area of work which caused the most problems was concerning street lighting, and in particular the electrical connections aspect. Therefore, Select Committee decided that the focus of the review would be on the subject of street lighting connections.

Anecdotal evidence initially suggested that the utilities have an impact on Council service delivery and that there would be other detrimental consequences to the Council of subsequent delays.

Examples of possible detrimental consequences included:

6.2.1 Financial

Members of Select Committee questioned whether delays by United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC) might have an economic cost to the Council. They asked if there was any evidence to suggest that, for instance, “the DLO might go on site to start, continue or attempt to finish a job, only to discover they cannot undertake the work because UUNC has not completed a task required of them”. There would be a cost element to this, as well as possible “penalty costs” imposed on the Council by other Council contractors.

It was noted that all capital allocations had been fully utilised in recent years. An exercise was carried out to identify whether any Council capital allocation was at risk due to delays in works resulting in unspent monies. Although this had not been the case in the past, it was uncertain whether future regulations appertaining to capital expenditure may affect capital spend in-year. Other costs due to delays (i.e. aborted site visits, etc.) had not been quantified.

6.2.2 Failure to meet Performance Targets

Delays in works undertaken by UUNC can have a much wider affect than just delays to the immediate streetworks; it can also impede the Council’s ability to meet its performance targets. Problems as a result of delays by UUNC, affecting both the Council and for the local population, include, for example:

- Poor lighting attributing to road traffic problems / accidents (BVPI 99)
- Poorly-lit streets and roads (Local BV indicator from Street Scene review)
- Negative influence on the Council’s Community Safety agenda, exacerbated by examples of crime in the form of vandalism in areas of delay in providing street lighting. Delays in the installation of CCTV equipment, due to UUNC cable jointers being deployed elsewhere
- Health and Safety problems – examples of potential risk to local residents (Legal Liability and Risk Management)
- Complaints – Members and Council employees having to deal with complaints resulting from delays in street lighting works.

6.2.3 Image

It was felt that the image of the Council was at risk in situations where delayed works undertaken by UUNC was causing problems for the public. Apparently, members of the public make no distinction between the utility companies and the Council – it was suggested that members of the public regard all such works as being owned by the Council and therefore it was the Council who was to blame.

There might be some benefit to Wigan if we were one of the first authorities in the Northwest to invite United Utilities Network Connections and their sub-contractors to attend Select Committee and discuss partnership-working arrangements with them.

6.2.4 Finally - When things don’t go to plan

Once the review was underway and Members began collating evidence and information from stakeholders it became clear that this was a priority area for review. Whilst the review has been in progress Select Committee has taken evidence through public consultation which suggests that when things go wrong involving this area of work there are many problems and inconvenience caused for Members, residents, and officers of the Council.

In the past the scenario has been such that little could be done by representatives of the Council to pacify those experiencing the problems let alone rectify the situation because the remedy lies in the hands of our partners UUNC.

During the course of the review it has become apparent that UUNC and its partners may not fully appreciate the problems caused by delays in this area of work. The following case study is

included in order to illustrate some of the difficulties experienced when things do not progress as planned. The case study is based on factual evidence submitted by a resident following the issue of a press release by the Select Committee requesting information. The information was immediately passed on to the Council's Engineering Services Department for their attention:

Case Study

A lady phoned regarding the installation of a street light outside her house. On 6/11/02 "the Council" had taken away the old streetlight and installed a new one opposite and across the road. The flags had been lifted in front of her property and workmen had tried to joint the cables, but had left a four-foot hole that had subsequently filled with water. Because of this, she had restricted access to the property. Her sister had just had a baby and they couldn't get the pram in the property because of the hole.

"A three-year-old boy thought it was a puddle and jumped in! Fortunately his grandma was with him and pulled him out but believes he might have drowned if she hadn't have been with him".

There were no barriers around the hole and she had to make endless number of phone calls before barriers were finally erected. Over the next couple of weeks since that, vandals have come along and thrown the barrier equipment at her windows and property.

About two weeks later Daly's/ UU came back with a mole to burrow and do the jointing? The lady was in her house and her property was vibrating due to the effect of the mole burrowing. *"The machine had got stuck so the workmen went away and came back two weeks later"*. Throughout that time she didn't know it was stuck, and didn't know what was going on.

"When the workmen came back they just backfilled the hole with Tarmac and left it in a terrible state with a piece of bendy wire and metal sticking up about one foot into the air. Someone came along on a pushbike and came off their bike". The lady also had people knocking at her door asking for a hacksaw so they could saw the wire and metal off.

She phoned the Council but *"they didn't want to know"* so she phoned United Utilities. *"Someone came out to inspect the work and they thought it was unacceptable. This is now Mid December – six weeks after the initial works"*. She was originally told two-to-three weeks.

Eventually they came back and put the flags down but very uneven and wobbly. Her mother has fallen on the surface and ended up in Casualty before Christmas with a suspected fractured bone in her foot – ruined Christmas for them. The flag is still like that and sinking daily.

"To top it all the street light is still not working and Daly's appear to have gone away". There is no light outside her house and there has been vandalism to both hers and her brother's cars.

Furthermore, this has *"cost her a fortune in phone calls"*. She has phoned the Council again and it has now had to go in as a new job number and would take two to three weeks as originally promised. She is still waiting now.

7. BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE REVIEW.

In order to understand the issues surrounding the review it is important to look at recent work undertaken in this area and also look at the current issues facing the Street Lighting section.

- The first part of this section looks at the Street Scene best value review and the main findings and performance targets set for street lighting.
- The second part of this section looks at Utility Companies and their sub – contractors – How they have come to be now and also the operation of them, their sub-contractors and specifically the work of the ‘jointer.’

7.1 Previous work undertaken in this area

The street lighting service formed part of the Best Value review of street scene. The main findings of the review in relation to street lighting service were as follows:

- a) The service as a whole was well regarded with the highest satisfaction rate of any of the Street Scene services.
- b) The service was also seen as an important service as people perceive good lighting to be important in improving night time safety and security on streets. Good lighting is also known to be a contributing factor in reducing the number of road traffic accidents.
- c) Cost information quoted in the report stated unit cost per streetlight was average when compared with other Metropolitan Authorities.
- d) Street Lights not working were estimated to be 1.6%, which placed Wigan in the bottom quartile. However to comply with the BVPI a night-time inspection must be carried out – in Wigan this had been withdrawn some years ago. It should be noted that the street lights not working in the year 2002/03 was 0.74%.
- e) The main item highlighted for improvement was the street-lighting section's relationship with the utilities and the performance of the connections of new streetlights. Two aspects of the performance were targeted. These included:
 - Timeliness and delays in connections
 - Cost of Connections.

Performance Targets set were:

- 99.2% Of streetlights working as planned. The actual figure for 2002/03 was 99.26%.
- An overall customer enquiry satisfaction of 85% for each of the main street scene services – one of which is street lighting. For 2002/03 the figure is 93% and therefore the target outlined in the Best Value review is achieved

Customer Satisfaction with street lighting overall (Response rate 48%)

	<u>Overall 2002/03</u>	<u>Target</u>
Overall user satisfaction	93.0%	94.0%
Easy to Contact	96.0%	98.8%
Very satisfied with courtesy of staff	93.0%	90.0%
Very satisfied with time taken to carry out repair	72.0%	70.0%
Very satisfied with standard of repair	91.0%	88.0%

In Summary:

The Street Scene services are delivered with clear direction from both the Council through its four Political principles (4P's), clear priorities and the Leader's Forum (the Borough Local Strategic Partnership).

The Council's four Political Principles (4P's) are:

- Performance** - to secure the best possible services that meet the expressed needs of citizens
- Partnership** - to act in the interests of the whole community by working in partnership
- Place** - to make the Borough a more attractive place for people to live and to attract new employment and investment
- People** - to provide opportunities for all citizens to develop their full potential whatever their background and without discrimination

Select Committee felt that this Review of the Utilities has strong links with the following three Political Principles:

Performance	To secure continuous improvement in national and local PI's relating to the Street Scene and Road Safety targets (e.g. local indicators BVPI's 99, 95, 98)
Place	To make the environment safer and improve the general appearance of the places we live in.
Partnership	Working with our partners to secure and deliver good street lighting services.

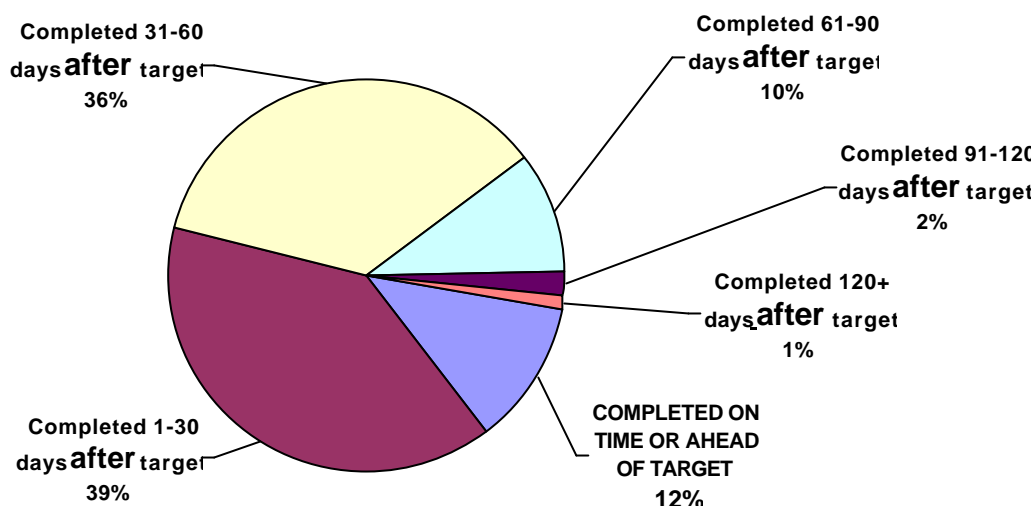
8. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - STREET LIGHTING CONNECTIONS

The Street Lighting Section at Civic Buildings monitors the performance of the United Utilities on a Data Ease system. Each job is input together with the start date, the target time to complete as outlined in the street lighting agreement. The target time to complete varies depending on the number of connections needing to be made. For small jobs the target time is 15 working days – this is then amended to account for postage and receipt and weekends so the number of days allowed is 26 days.

The figures are printed from dataease stating the number of days elapsed. A research officer for the select committee has now set up a monitoring system whereby the information can be collated into more meaningful data. i.e. analyse the number of jobs completed within target and how many were completed outside target.

The chart and table below show the data for 2002/2003 as at June 2003. It should be noted that the data is continually changing as the database is updated. The information does not take into account the number of columns in each job. For example, a job for 50 columns could be completed within target time but the figures are not weighted to reflect this. A table has been included to reflect the weighted average.

8.1 Performance Data for 2002/2003



Status	Quarter 1	%	Quarter 2	%	Quarter 3	%	Quarter 4	%	Grand Total	Total %
Completed on time or ahead of target	18	17%	4	5%	8	7%	8	44%	38	12%
Completed 1-30 days after target	65	60%	36	41%	20	17%	10	56%	131	39%
Completed 31-60 days after target	13	12%	36	41%	68	59%			117	36%
Completed 61-90 days after target	5	5%	9	10%	18	16%			32	10%
Completed 91-120 days after target	5	5%	2	2%	1	1%			8	2%
Completed in more than 121 days above target	2	2%	1	1%		0%			3	1%
Grand Total	108	100%	88	100%	115	100%	18	100%	329	100%

The table below has calculated the figures again using a weighted average. The figure does increase significantly from 12% to 29% but 71% of the jobs are still not completed on time. This figure does vary depending on the number of columns involved and therefore the notice given.

On the larger jobs the number completed ahead of target is 284 (66%) - This is 68 days notice (45 *working days* notice). However on the smallest jobs the number completed on target is only 51 (6%) – This is 26 days notice (15 *Working days* notice)

Target Time Based on a number of columns	On Target	1-30 Days after Target	31-60 Days after Target	61-90 Days After Target	91-120 Days After Target	121 Days over target	Total Weighted Number
26 days – Average of 3 Columns (1-5 Cols)	51	333	324	90	18	9	825
33 Days – Average of 8 Columns (6-10 Cols)	48	112	56	0	16	0	232
47 Days – Average of 15.5 Columns (11-20 Cols)	108	47	15	31	0	0	201
68 Days – Average of 35.5 Columns (21-50 Cols)	284	106	36	0	0	0	426
	491	598	431	121	34	9	1684
As a % of Total Columns	29%	35%	26%	7%	2%	1%	100%

Both sets of figures indicate that performance is poor when compared to the agreed target times as set out in the street-lighting agreement. This raised a number of issues for the select committee:

- Why is the performance of the UUNC and its subcontractors below target by such a large margin?
- Are the targets realistic?
- What are the implications to the residents and Wigan and the Council of the Utility Companies failing to meet their targets?
- Is this just a Wigan Problem, United Utilities area problem, or is it a nation-wide problem for all Local Authorities.
- What powers under the service level agreement does the Council have if United Utilities fail to meet the targets?

These questions are answered in the sections of *evidence gathered* and *comparative information* available.

Despite the time delays around new connection work there appears to be little effect on Wigan's ability to meet its targets in 2006.

8.2 Other Best Value Reviews involving Street Scene Services and Street Lighting

A number of Best Value reviews of street lighting have been inspected by the BVI. However, only one makes a specific reference to the relationship between the Utilities and the LA's. The BVI's comments during the inspection of Wakefield's review stated:

"Members and staff highlighted several unsatisfactory aspects of Yorkshire Electricity....The likelihood of the disappearance of the regional Electrical Companies monopoly for connections and disconnection's should present an opportunity to resolve some of these issues. "

It also states that connections, disconnections and other work carried out by Yorkshire electricity is not satisfactorily monitored and states that:

" the Council accepts reports from Yorkshire Electricity, on work completed, without any systematic checking."

One of the few Councils to receive a Good or Excellent inspection report (Good and Promising prospects) was Sefton Council and they contributed to the Comparison exercise which is discussed in the next section.

9. THE UTILITIES INDUSTRY AND CHANGES TO THE MARKET IN RECENT YEARS.

To understand the market in which the Utility companies currently operate it is important to look back historically to how the Utility companies came into being and in particular how the Electricity Utilities were formed. Up until the late 1980's the Electricity supply industry had been in public ownership since nationalisation in 1948. The Central Electricity Generating Board sold electricity to twelve area boards, which in Wigan's case was NORWEB. In 1988 the Electricity Bill was published and legislation came into effect selling the Area Boards by firstly establishing them as Regional Electric Companies (REC's) and selling them to the public in 1990. Each Regional Electricity Company constituted an effective monopoly and as a result they were governed by OFFER.¹

During 1995 there was a further relaxation in legislation and the various utility companies were allowed to merge and or acquire other businesses. NORWEB was taken over by Northwest Water and United Utilities was formed. UU now sells gas as well as Water and Electricity.

¹ Offer – Office of Electricity Regulation

9.1 The Work of OFGEM and the Utilities Bill 2000

The Utilities Bill 2000 was a further piece of legislation introduced to make the market more competitive and reduce the monopoly that exists. One of the major changes was to merge OFFER and OFGAS to form OFGEM who now regulate the market for Gas and electricity. This reflected the number of mergers and acquisitions in the Utility industry and the way the utilities were conducting their business as many now provide both gas and electricity to consumer as well as water and telecommunications.

Of particular interest and relevance to this review is the work of the OFGEM and in particular the work undertaken by the Unmetered Connections (Street Lighting) Sub group. OFGEM established a steering group to look at the possibility of opening up the market for unmetered connections and the group has looked at alternative service delivery options and made some recommendations these are covered in section 14 - service delivery options. A number of Councils, Utilities Companies and their sub-contractors formed the group together with representatives from OFGEM. P.N. Daly who is the sub-contractor for the Wigan area was also a member of the group is together with a number of Councils including Hull City Council and Devon County Council whose regional DNO is South Western Electricity. The Group was originally formed as a result of a survey highlighting the poor service that the majority of Local Authorities receive from their local DNO (Distribution Network Operator)

It became apparent during the review that whilst the Water and Gas industries have standard procedures and methods of working, the Regional Electricity Boards worked in isolation and standards had been regionalised. It was also found that within regions there were also different standards and so an electrical connection in Wigan could potentially be different to one in a neighbouring authority such as Bolton, Trafford or Tameside. These differences dated back to the time before the Electricity Companies were nationalised in 1948.

As a result of these variations the committee was advised that the work of the Jointer who makes the new connections to the network more specialised and not easily transferable from one region or even a locality to another.

10. JOINTERS

At the start of the review it was often cited that lengthy delays were due to a shortage of 'jointers'. This raised a number of questions by the select committee at the time as it was unclear what a jointer actually did; the issue of jointers also raised a number of other questions:

- a) Do jointers have a nationally recognised qualification
- b) Why was there such a shortage of jointers if at all?
- c) And if this was found to be true how could this situation be alleviated.

10.1 Jointers – How do they operate?

It was found that a jointer makes a connection, disconnection or transfer of an electrical service up to 25 amps from a **live connection** on the network to an item of highway electrical equipment. For our purposes a piece of highways electrical equipment could be a street light, an illuminated sign or bollard, a CCTV column and an illuminated car-parking meter.

The tasks undertaken by a jointer are unusual as it is important to note that working on the electrical network whilst it is 'live' is not good practice. The Electricity at Work Act 1989 requires that connections to be made on a 'dead working' basis unless it is reasonable in all circumstances for somebody to be at work on or near it when it is live and suitable precautions are taken to prevent injury.

Historically, it has been accepted that live working is the only practical way of carrying out street lighting works and because of this a jointer needs to receive on the job training and accreditation from the regional utility company before he/she can operate on the network.

There is no recognised formal qualification, however a new initiative has been introduced by OFGEM to introduced national guidance and framework for all jointers. This will be discussed further under service delivery options. Due to the regional variations to the network, jointers need to receive accreditation, however this is not necessarily transferable into another area. A representative from P.N. Daly informed us that he had attended a training school in the north-east before he could receive accreditation to work in that area. If the regional company does not accredit a jointer then they are not allowed to work on the Network.

Training a jointer is an expensive and lengthy business, from start to finish it takes approximately eighteen months and £12,000 in training expenses before a jointer could be accredited to work on the network. Most of the training is on the job training as a jointer's mate with some time spent at a training school. Historically, before privatisation, the utility companies had their own direct labour organisations that undertook the work and training of jointers.

However since the privatisation of the utility companies a number of sub-contractors have undertaken the work of jointers and therefore the training of them. Many utility companies had their own training schools for jointers but during the course of the review it was found that the training school for jointers in the Northwest in the United Utilities area had closed.

Currently United Utilities sub-contract the work to a number of companies in their area to do the work on their behalf. Most contracts are awarded for a maximum of two years. However, since the Utilities Bill was introduced OFGEM has established a number of working groups aimed at opening up the markets to competition for various aspects of Utility company work.

11. EVIDENCE GATHERED

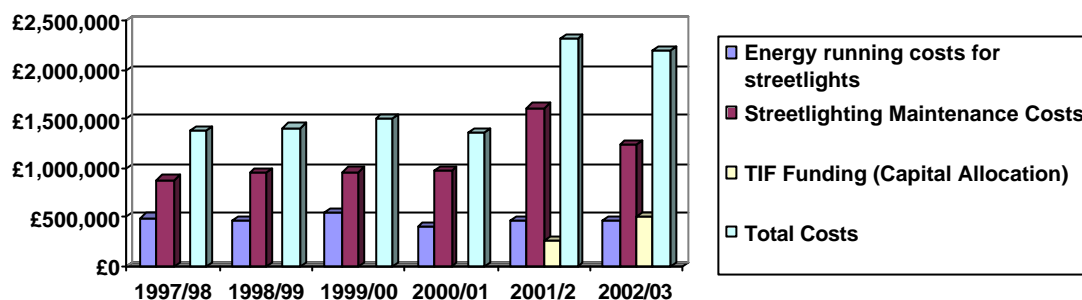
Select Committee attached considerable importance to the consultation element of this Review. The approach to consultation was to gather evidence and information from as many stakeholders as possible in order to gain a rounded view of partnership working arrangements currently in place with UUNC and any issues facing the service. The following stakeholders were identified:

Engineering Services Staff	Attended Select Committee Visit to Street Lighting Section Visit to Highways DLO Observations at Street Lighting meeting with UUNC
UUNC	Attended Select Committee Visit to UUNC area HQ
P.N. Daly (UUNC sub-contractors)	Attended Select Committee Site visit to observe a live cable jointing session
Members	Responded to request for information - via post, telephone, and e-mail Attended Select Committee
Chief Officers	Responded via letter and e-mail
Residents	Press release Focused questionnaire concerning recent works
Local Members of Parliament	Responded via letter Attended Select Committee
Other Councils	Questionnaires

Many of the stakeholders took the time to attend Select Committee personally and tell Members about working arrangements. Select Committee encouraged all of those consulted to highlight the positive aspects as well as any areas for improvement they thought would impact on this area. The following section contains a summary of the evidence gathered from stakeholders followed by the key issues emerging together with some suggestions for improvement.

11.1 Representatives from the Engineering Services Department

Engineers outlined the issues facing the service and the developments in this area:



- During the last three years there has been an increase in investment to all local authorities for street related works. Of the total costs illustrated in the table above Wigan Council will spend in the region of £500,000 with United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC) in 2002/03. Increases in demand from all Local Authorities together with UUNC's own internal reorganisation and the appointment of a new sub-contractor had resulted in some difficulty in meeting service delivery targets. Response times are poor, particularly since October 2001. Other authorities in the Northwest have had similar problems, and these issues have been raised with UUNC at the NW Street Lighting Manager's Group – GMADE.
- At a GMADE meeting last year a representative from UU pointed out that there was a national shortage of cable jointers and they often cannot get enough skilled people to make the electrical connections.
- It was apparent that UUNC rely on the Council to monitor performance against standards set out in the street Lighting Agreement.
- The costs of delayed works on new street lighting schemes or routine upgrades are difficult to quantify as most of the work does not cause any significant problems therefore there are no tangible costs. In the case of emergencies, say perhaps where a lighting column has been damaged, delayed response is easier to quantify. Examples were given of Engineering Services staff having to stay on site for over half a day whilst waiting for UUNC to respond (they cannot leave the site and leave residents at risk). Further examples were given of impeded performance when the DLO could not uproot lighting columns because they had not been disconnected by UUNC.
- Select Committee felt that there was a strong indication that there may be too many people involved in the process, with too many people actually visiting the site of the works. This has been researched further in the "Service delivery and Process Mapping" section.
- The current SLA appears to be in favour of the utility companies without any remedy for the Council when the utilities under-perform. When things go wrong the Council has no power to invoke any penalties, we can only write, phone, and e-mail UUNC. Examples were given to Select Committee whereby Council staff had contacted UUNC on numerous occasions, sometimes to no avail. There were examples of some jobs being delayed "years".

- The Street Lighting Section has set up a performance monitoring system using a database software package. The system is a positive step and enables the service to monitor and report on the performance of UUNC in the area of street lighting connections. Some information such as details of “job histories” are not easily ascertained i.e. number of requests/contacts with UUNC concerning individual projects/jobs. Select Committee acknowledges the positive work undertaken by the Street Lighting Section and hopes that the Review will assist the development of the performance monitoring system even further. The Street Lighting Manager now regularly meets with UUNC and their contractors in an effort to alleviate problems and prevent them occurring.
- Performance to the SLA is covered in the previous section on performance management. Engineers have agreed target times with UUNC however there may be one-off occasions, usually emergencies, when short notice is given to UUNC. Under normal circumstances they are usually given plenty of time to complete work.

Since the start of the review

- ✓ The Policy Officers, together with staff from the Street Lighting Section, have refined the monitoring statistics.
- ✓ Liaison meetings with both UUNC and P.N. Daly have become embedded.
- ✓ Engineering Services and UUNC have agreed a three-week forward plan of working

Observations from the joint street lighting meeting with UUNC

Officers of the Select Committee were invited to attend the above meeting to observe discussions re joint working arrangements.

The main observations from the meeting were:

- Relationships were good and information was exchanged on future workloads and incomplete jobs.
- Recently produced performance management information was shared with all parties and it was apparent that the subcontractor was unaware of the targets that the Council and UUNC were working towards.
- It was apparent that UUNC rely on the Council to monitor performance against standards set out in the street Lighting Agreement.
- There was acknowledgement that the NRSWA 1991 involving schemes interrupting the highway would add to the current 26-day targets outlined in the SLA. Section 74 of the Act requires contractors to give notice of the time they are to spend on work involving traffic sensitive schemes, and may result in penalties for contractors overstaying the agreed time period. These time limits may be wavered at the Council's discretion.
- The subcontractor informed the group of the improvement put in place since January regarding the reinstatement of the carriageway following completion of works.
- Officers viewed the meeting as a positive step to improve working relationships and UUNC's “work scheduler” left the officers with the impression that other sections of Engineers and other departments of the Council would also benefit from attending future meetings.
- Issues arose concerning when a job was classified as “complete” and this was pursued further when Select Committee consulted UUNC and P.N. Daly.

11.2 United Utilities Network Connections (UUNC)

UUNC were invited to Select Committee and were provided with performance monitoring information relating to previous months. UUNC gave the following evidence:

Overall Situation

- UUNC were unaware of any major problems and expressed regret at the amount of time it was apparently taking to complete/ reinstate the work (despite being told at regular meetings and being sent hundreds of e-mails and other correspondence).
- The targets in the street lighting agreement were realistic, however if section 74 of the New Roads and Street Works Act (1991) applies then it would take at least five weeks before work can be undertaken (refer to section/par 3.5).
- Targets and work planning needed to be amended to reflect Section 74. In other Greater Manchester Authorities who have not applied section 74, seven-day targets still apply (refer to section/par 3.5).

Planning of work

- UUNC are aware of the volumes of work required in Wigan through regular liaison with Engineers, and in the region through attending the GMADE group. They sit down with the contractor and discuss a) the price and b) how they are going to resource the work. Price is agreed with LA's and a fixed price matrix is operated which has remained so for a number of years, but is changing this April.
- In October 2001 UUNC took on a new contractor, P.N. Daly, who had already took on more work in the region, however the contract with UUNC represented a significantly bigger workload. The outgoing contractor had promised to complete jobs but did not fulfil that obligation and this added to the new contractors work. P.N. Daly's contract will be runs out at the end of October 2003. Further changes are taking place within UUNC from May 2003:
 - ❖ They are interfacing planning and construction
 - ❖ They will have a manager in charge of the overall process from end to end.
 - ❖ They will monitor the programme and look at the oldest jobs.
- UUNC gave an example of "good planning and working relationships" in the form of the "Bolton way of working". It is apparent that in Bolton Council the Street Lighting Section sets out the number of street lighting columns they plan for the year, and on a specified day each week a Council officer actually delivers to UUNC a guaranteed workload of 25-30 columns for the following week. This guarantees the Council the services of a dedicated jointer for the week. UUNC stated that the only problem was that Bolton has to be on top of their planning process week-in-week-out for 50 weeks of the year. They believe this method of working benefits both the Council and all parties involved in the process.

Liaison with the Council

- UUNC liaises with a number of staff within the Council. Examples were given of at least five points of contact involving different departments and different areas of work. Examples of the areas of work included:
 - ❖ Street lighting, Feeder Pillars, Bollards - Engineering Services (incl Traffic)
 - ❖ Pay and display machines - LAPD
 - ❖ CCTV - LAPD/Community Safety

It was apparent that UUNC would process jobs from the Council depending on who contacted them, and about what. They inferred that on occasions they felt it was up to them to actually prioritise workload on our behalf.

- The joint meetings that have been set up with the Council, UUNC, and their sub-contractors involve only the representatives of the Council's Street Lighting Section i.e. none of the sections identified above are represented.

- UUNC and their sub-contractor have adopted a three-week plan of street lighting works in conjunction with the Council's Street Lighting Section. However other works initiated by other Council officers may affect the plan, depending on their perception of priorities.

When is a job completed?

- There was some debate as to when a job is "complete". Wigan Council pays for work done when the site is reinstated and cleared. The sub-contractor is paid when the "light is lit". Some final inspection work is carried out by Engineering Services staff, however it is clear that in most cases we have to rely on UUNC to inform us when a job is "fully completed".

Jointers and qualifications

- All jointers who operate in the UUNC region need to be accredited by UUNC and therefore be authorised to work on their network. Jointers have received their accreditation through training provided by UUNC – it is only UUNC who can give approval for jointers to be accredited for working on UUNC network. Since privatisation, UUNC have used sub contractors to carry out the jointing. Network cabling is becoming more standard across the UU area and so jointing from one area to another is becoming less of a problem than it has been. UUNC didn't think there was a shortage of jointers and thought the short-term problem was created by the change in sub-contractor (this contradicted previous perceptions of other stakeholders).

Performance

- Evidence of UUNC's overall performance was provided at the meeting and representatives expressed regret at the problems caused to residents, Members, and officers of the Council. They expressed a desire to be kept fully informed in order to alleviate and negate future problems. They put forward reasons of "reorganisation within UUNC" and "appointing a new sub-contractor" as the main problems affecting performance.

Suggested Improvements

- Finally Select Committee asked UUNC for any suggestions they had for improving the partnership working arrangements, and they suggested two areas:
 - i) One point of contact with the Council instead of a number of people, possibly from different departments, dealing directly with UUNC on differing types of work;
 - ii) UUNC also outlined how other Councils in Greater Manchester operated. Bolton, as previously discussed, was quoted. In other Councils the client and the DLO have direct contact with UUNC sub contractors, and that this works well and problems are often avoided because of the close working relationship "on the job". It was suggested that improvements might result from the Council and UUNC's sub-contractor, P.N. Daly, dealing directly with each other once the paperwork for schemes was processed (It should be noted that Wigan Council's Street Lighting Manager had previously been expressly instructed by UUNC not to deal with the sub-contractor directly).

11.3 P.N. Daly (UUNC sub contractor)

P.N. Daly were provided with the same performance monitoring information as UUNC months. The major points to note from the meeting with P.N. Daly staff were as follows:

Overall Situation

P.N. Daly is UUNC's sub-contractor in the Wigan area. P.N. Daly has also represented other contractors on the "OFGEM Unmetered Connections (Street Lighting etc.) Sub Group", established to examine competition in the unmetered electrical connections market.

The Chair of Select Committee outlined some of the problems experienced by residents as a result of delays in this area of work. Members acknowledged the sensitive commercial relationship in that P.N. Daly sub-contracted and reported directly to UUNC, and therefore asked their representatives to describe in general their planning and working arrangements.

Performance

- Representatives of P.N. Daly had not been fully aware of the problems that delays caused to residents and to Members, and expressed their regrets. They were not aware of the targets set between the Council and UUNC and therefore the overall performance (despite being told at meetings with Council Engineers).

Planning the work schedule

- Section 74 was seen to be the possible main cause of delays in Wigan as it attracted a 28-day statutory notice to be applied. In authorities where Section 74 did not apply then targets of seven days could be achieved (refer to section/par 3.5).
- There were problems managing the workload in the Wigan area, as it was often difficult to ascertain the number of “jobs” on a week-to-week basis. Tameside and Bolton were given as examples of where regular volumes of work were planned on a weekly basis. This allowed the P.N. Daly to dedicate one of their jointers to carry out the work. Ability to plan the work was also affected by staff absences in any of the organisations involved. This resulted in peaks and troughs, and bottlenecks in the number of jobs received, and therefore affected the contractor’s ability to schedule workloads, and ultimately affected our targets. An example was given of one Council in Greater Manchester where a key person involved in the process had been off for two weeks and as a result P.N. Daly has not received one single order from that authority during that time.
- Reference was made to “mad March” where the demand from local authorities across the board results in an increase in work towards the end of the financial year. This has resource implications for the contractor and affects their ability to meet time-scales and targets.

Liaison with UUNC and the Council

- P.N. Daly receives work from UUNC and every Friday a work programme relating to the coming three weeks is e-mailed back to UUNC (who then e-mail Wigan Council). This system is new; e-mail has been in operation since January, prior to that, details were faxed.
- The Committee was advised that in some other Greater Manchester Councils UUNC’s contractor deals directly with the DLO once the paperwork has been processed by UUNC. By working this way they have increased their performance and an example was given that in one particular Council, P.N. Daly had improved their 7-day performance target by 15%, i.e. from 80% to 95%. One of their main problems with local authorities is that they arrive on site to attend a job and the lighting column is not there – the likelihood of this happening is reduced when they deal directly with the DLO.
- Representatives of P.N. Daly have attended two of the joint meetings held by the Council and UUNC. They have found this beneficial and look forward to further meetings.

When is a job completed?

- P.N. Daly defines completion as being “when the barriers have been collected”. A pick-up driver collects the barriers from the site once reinstatement has been completed. He also takes photographs of the site. Theft of barriers is a problem for them, and in some cases the cost of the barriers is often more than the cost of the job.

Contractual Matters

- Select Committee asked on what criteria contracts were awarded. Contracts are primarily based on price and then on quality of work, however quality of work of a new incoming contractor would be difficult to ascertain. When Daly’s took over the contract there were problems with a backlog of incomplete jobs from the last contractor. The current contract is up for renewal in November this year and it is expected to be tendered and not extended as it was last time.

Customer care

- P.N. Daly now has a call-centre to deal with any enquiries and complaints from the public. The call-centre has been in place since 2002. A local works depot has also been established to deal with work carried out in the Wigan area.

The monopoly situation

- It was perceived that the market in “unmetered electrical connections” would be opened to competition in the coming years. This would allow sub-contractors to deal direct with local authorities and this would generate cost savings for both parties.

Suggested Improvements

- Finally Select Committee asked the representatives of P.N. Daly for any suggestions they had for improving the partnership working arrangements, and they suggested:
 - ✓ We deal directly with them once the paperwork had been processed by UUNC;
 - ✓ P.N. Daly also outlined how Bolton works (the Council guarantees 30 connections per week, week-in-week-out as previously discussed, and have their own dedicated jointer);
 - ✓ ensuring continuity of service during staff absences.

11.4 Members and Chief Officers

Members and Chief Officers were asked for their comments and questions at the start of the review. The main issues that arose from this consultation included the following:

- Is there any benefit of having one point of contact between the Council for all streetlighting queries?
- Issues around removal of barriers – a number of Members commented on the length of time taken to remove barriers once a job has been completed. There were problems around vandalism, and also obstructions to the pavement.
- Time taken to remove the spoil once a lighting column had been erected.
- Difficulties with connections to new / replacement columns on Council housing estates.

CASE STUDY - Select Committee received comments regarding the work involving electrical connections to CCTV columns. The following example outlines the problems encountered by the Council's CCTV section based in Land and Property Department. In this scheme, over £1 million had been invested in the installation of 28 CCTV columns in three town centre locations:

- January 2002 LAPD asked Engineers to place an order with UUNC for the connection of 28 CCTV columns
- During May, June and July when work began on the installation of the CCTV cameras it became apparent that the electrical connections had not been fully completed
- Engineers contacted UUNC on behalf of LAPD
- They continued to pursue UUNC throughout the month of July
- LAPD were subjected to pressure from CCTV contractors who were being delayed as a result of the delay
- LAPD contacted UUNC but did not feel the query had been resolved
- LAPD decided to speak to P.N. Daly direct and when a site visit took place it was found that only 14 of the columns had been connected
- P.N. Daly prioritised the remaining connections, however 4 columns remained outstanding at December 2002
- At the time of the final report writing it was found that the last of the remaining 4 columns were connected in April 2003
- During the last 12 months LAPD has dealt with numerous enquiries from Councillors, CCTV contractors, and members of the public as a result of the delays.

11.5 Residents

Press Release

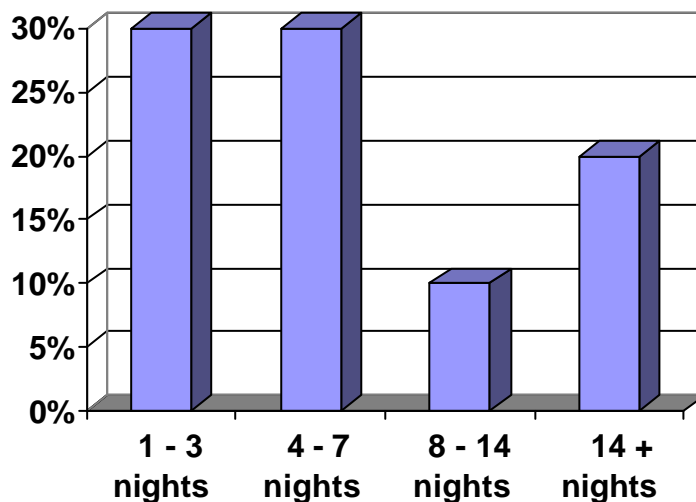
A press release was circulated through the local newspapers, and a number of responses from residents were received. The key issues included:

- Time delays in carrying out the works
- Vandalism taking place in unlit streets
- Children falling down holes
- Unclear as to who to contact regarding streetlighting works – the Council or the contractor
- Unclear as to the length of time that street lighting works would last for
- Having to contact a number of organisations in order to receive a satisfactory explanation or have a query solved
- Removal of barriers – vandalism, obstructions, etc.
- Issues around quality of work and reinstatement following completion of works
- Consultation and subsequent notice of works impending works

Targeted Survey

A targeted resident's survey was undertaken which concentrated on residents living in localities where recent lighting connections and disconnections had been made. One hundred and thirty questionnaires were sent out asking residents for their views on the service. The following represents a summary of the main findings:

- Two thirds of residents were "satisfied" with the information received from the Council in advance of works commencing. The other third were "dissatisfied".
- 17% of respondents felt the need to contact the Council regarding the works. Of these 100% thought the staff they contacted were courteous and helpful, and 60% thought they were "good" or "excellent".
- Of those who responded:
 - 40% thought the length of time taken to complete the job was acceptable
 - 21% did not notice
 - 17% thought it was unacceptable
- Residents affected by street lighting works were asked how long they had been without street lighting:



- 130 residents were asked about the condition of the pavement/roadside after street lighting works had been completed. The response rate was 27%. Respondents said:

The roadside was left in an acceptable condition	60%
The roadside was left in an unacceptable condition	28%
Did not notice the condition of the pavement	12%

- Finally, residents were asked for any other comments they would like to make in respect of street lighting works. The following are examples of responses received:

- ❖ *An officer in the Street Lighting department was very helpful when I complained about the state of my driveway after completion of street lighting. The work on it was done within two days and I was very impressed at this prompt service.*
- ❖ *There is still a hole where lamp was removed*
- ❖ *Street light replaced October 2002, still not connected April 2003*
- ❖ *After electrics were connected and two flags laid we contacted the Council as to when rest of flags would be laid. That was two weeks after electrics were done. Contacted the Council again after another two weeks of waiting. Two van teams turned up Xmas Eve and laid flags except the vital one between the gate and the path. That one took another two weeks and another phone call*
- ❖ *United Utilities said to contact the contractor.. three phone calls to collect their boards*
- ❖ *I have no intention of wasting my time being shunted between the utilities and Council any more*
- ❖ *All pavements in Standish still need doing. I am still waiting to see the light outside my house lit, it has been there since last year but still no light*
- ❖ *My daughter was 7 at the time, and the barrier around the hole where the street light had been fitted was not covered properly and she fell in hole. By the time I had found a number the hole had been filled*

11.6 Members of Parliament

Comments were received from local MP's and both Neil Turner and Andy Burnham attended a Select Committee meeting. They welcomed the review and said that the meeting had given them a deeper insight into the problems caused by the privatisation of the Regional Electricity Companies (REC's). This would help them in dealing with queries regarding this type of work, both on a national and local basis.

MP's offered to write to Ofgem regarding the lack of progress in "opening up the market" in electrical connections. The MP's kindly offered to contact UUNC regarding the poor level of service received by the Council tax payers of Wigan and were happy to assist if it meant Wigan would get a better service from UUNC, and some of the problems caused to residents were alleviated.

11.7 Other Councils

Other local Councils were consulted regarding street lighting connections and UUNC's performance. The result of this consultation can be seen in the following "comparison" section of this report.

12. COMPARISON WORK UNDERTAKEN

As part of the review a number of other Local Authorities were contacted and asked to supply some basic statistical data and information about their authority's street-lighting connections service as well as their perceptions of the service as they see it.

The GMADE (Greater Manchester Association of District Engineers) Street Lighting group was contacted along with a number of other Local Authorities in the region. These included Sefton whose street lighting service had been judged to be Good with excellent prospects for improvement, St Helens – who use both Scottish Power and UUNC due to their geographical location and Warrington who share the same administrator as Wigan at United Utilities.

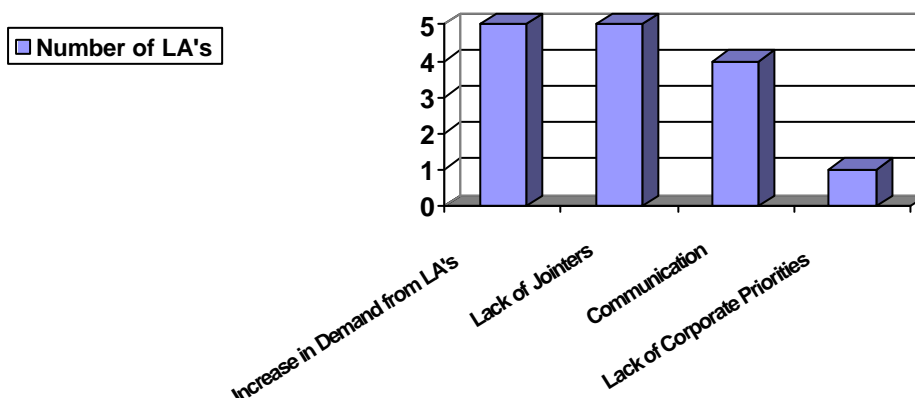
The street lighting manager also supplied us with minutes of a number of GMADE group meetings, which gave us an indication of the work discussed at the group, and who attended. Of the 17 who were sent questionnaires eight replied – a response rate of 47%. The results can be summarised as follows:

- Wigan had the second highest number of street lighting columns (33,000) after Lancashire County Council (150,000).
- Sefton and Stockport were close behind with 30,000 and 32,000 columns.
- Wigan had the highest proportion of new installations (1361). Lancashire County Council listed 2000 but this only represented 1.33% of the number of new installations.

Street lighting managers were asked a number of questions regarding ease of contact, courtesy and helpfulness, overall service and also responsiveness:

- Ease of Contact – All authorities thought their Utility Company was easy to contact
- Courtesy and Helpfulness of Staff – Again all authorities thought the Utility Company was courteous and helpful in dealing with their queries.
- Overall Level of Service - Satisfaction here was lower – 2 were satisfied, 4 were dissatisfied, 2 were very dissatisfied with the level of overall service, one said neither.
- Responsiveness of the Service - Six of the seven had street lighting agreements –. Of the six, four monitored response times but two didn't. The one respondent from out of the area did not monitor response times.

Street lighting managers from various authorities were asked to identify where they thought the problems were. Lack of jointers and increase in demand from Local authorities and communication problems between United Utilities and their contractors were the most common responses. One authority thought that UU lacked clarity and corporate direction and did not see connections as their priority.



Street Lighting managers were also asked if it was the major schemes or small jobs that caused the problems. The majority said there were problems in both areas, two indicated it was on the smaller jobs and one on the larger schemes.

12.1 Improvement in the service – Four local authorities thought the service had improved over the last six months whilst the other three thought the service level had stayed the same.

12.2 Complaints from members of the Public – All street lighting manager received complaints from members of the public as a result of the work carried out by UU and their sub-contractors. Four received complaints regularly with three saying they sometimes received complaints.

12.3 Service Delivery over the last six months

Improvement in the service – four local authorities thought the service had improved over the last six months whilst the other three thought the service level had stayed the same. None thought the service had got worse. One did say it had stayed the same (equally bad).

12.4 Good Practice and Suggested Improvements

Finally respondents were asked for examples of good practice and suggested improvements and the following comments were received.

1. Service has improved dramatically we now have monthly meetings and a dedicated jointer.
2. The introduction of competition and exerting pressure on the Utilities as a collective would be the only way to improve the service.
3. Regular monthly meetings with UU and dealing with the sub-contractor on larger schemes once the paperwork has been processed.
4. Quicker response time to reinstatements together with improved performance monitoring and feedback.

13. PROCESS MAPPING AND KEY ISSUES

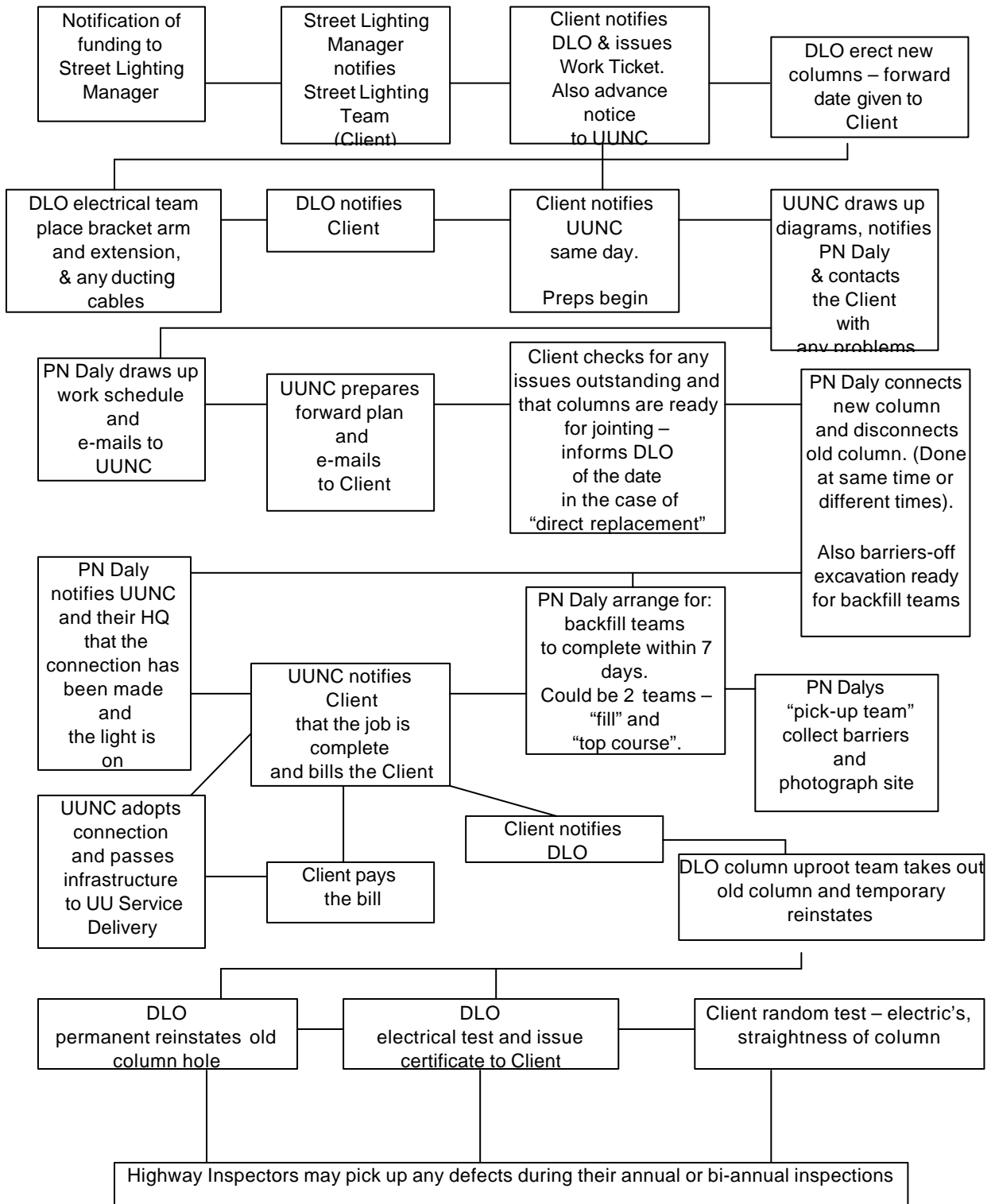
Select Committee has considered other service delivery options with regards to street lighting connections. Members acknowledge that “one size does not fit all” with regard to the process for street lighting connections and that it may be appropriate, and best practice, to adopt an approach involving a number of options.

13.1 Process Mapping

The process map on the next page relates to replacement streetlighting and was mapped by the Officers of Select Committee and Engineers from the street-lighting section. The process map for emergency situations such as knockdowns would involve other processes and would be different from the one below.

Process Map - Current Arrangements

The current process is best identified visually by means of the process map below:



13.2 Key Issues with Current Arrangements

- The process operates through the Client (Street Lighting Section) dealing with UUNC who in turn deal with P.N. Daly. The reverse situation (i.e. P.N. Daly – UUNC – Client) occurs again once the schedule has been drawn up, and again once the work has been completed.
- The process is extended further with the interaction of the Client and the DLO
- A Street Lighting Agreement (SLA) exists between the Council and UUNC, however as identified earlier targets are rarely achieved and the SLA has not been revised for some time. The current SLA appears to be out of date and does not allow the Council to influence and therefore improve the situation.
- Engineering Services staff have implemented a number of initiatives to improve joint working arrangements and ultimately performance. These include joint meetings with UUNC and P.N. Daly to ensure effective communication.
- There was no evidence to suggest that UUNC monitor their own performance against the SLA.
- P.N. Daly is paid for work done when the “light is lit” and not when the job is fully completed i.e. backfilled, reinstated to an acceptable standard, and barriers removed.
- Although 100% testing of the electrical equipment is undertaken there is random testing of the reinstatement work – 30% over 2 years. Therefore it is apparent that the Council is not always aware of the final quality of the completed job.
- UUNC deal with a number of Council staff, often from different departments and often regarding electrical connections other than street lighting e.g. CCTV, street signs.
- Select Committee acknowledges that it is a complex process and believes it is lengthy and involves numerous sections and organisations, which may contribute to UUNC’s unsatisfactory performance to current targets.

14. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

Through the comparison exercise and from research undertaken during the course of the review a number of alternative service delivery options were identified. A brief outline of how they operate is covered in each of the sections below together with a table assessing all the service delivery options against five criteria:

- Performance
- Disruption
- Resources
- Time
- Cost

14.1 Rent-a-Jointer

As discussed previously, the Utility Companies have a monopoly in the connections market and OFGEM has undertaken work in this area to discuss the problems and barriers to competition, and to suggest various approaches to developing the market and increase competitiveness.

A street-lighting sub-group working in this area identified the following issues in August 2002. It noted the following problems in one of the final reports to the sub group:

- a) The main constraints on the development of competition in the provision of un-metered connections relates to the fact that only DNO's are allowed to carry out live jointing on the existing connections.
- b) Ofgem considered it impractical to introduce full competition at this time because of the lack of common safety standards across the DNO's distribution service areas. In order to overcome the differences across the networks the OFGEM working group has developed two initiatives that are designed to facilitate third party access to DNO specific safety rules.

These are

- ❖ National set of framework documents designed to outline design, installation, safety procedures etc. in each DNO area.
- ❖ A national registration scheme to assess the competence of companies who wish to undertake competitive connections work. This would be a development of the existing Lloyds electricity scheme.

During the life of the working group a number of initiatives were piloted and proposed. These were:

- ❖ The rent-a-jointer scheme – Where an LA can rent a jointer from the DNO and undertake all the excavation work and reinstatement works themselves. Some authorities already operate this way in the Southwest of England and a pilot was organised between Yorkshire Electricity and Hull City Council, please see the case study below.
- ❖ The One Stop Shop – which will allow approved contractors to undertake transfers and permanent connections (however it is acknowledged that this is unlikely to happen).

Only routine jobs are covered by the new proposals, e.g. emergency works where a column has been knocked down and can only be rectified by a DNO approved contractor. Therefore any Rent-a-Jointer arrangements would not apply.

Rent a Jointer Scheme Piloted by Hull City Council

As Part of the OGFEM working Group Hull City Council piloted a new initiative termed the Rent a jointer scheme

The process allows the Local Authority to carry out excavation/ reinstatement and manage the work schedule of a jointer hired from the Local Distribution Network Operator (DNO)

The DNO jointer, hired for agreed periods of time by the LA/Contractor carries out live jointing to the main, live transfers and live disconnections and the DNO charges for the jointer's services.

The scheme was trialed in Hull during November 2001 with the aim of identifying the potential benefits and problems of such a scheme. The trial took place between Hull City Council and Yorkshire Electricity Distribution.

Results

- ❖ Due to unforeseen ground conditions that resulted in a mini excavator having to be brought in some way into the trial and resulting changes in working methods to ensure safety and reduce risk, it was felt that the DNO jointer was 50-60% under utilised. As a result instead of averaging six connections a day as originally envisaged the average was 3.
- ❖ The LA enjoyed more control, due to them issuing all relevant NRSWA notices to themselves and time and money was saved.

- ❖ It was possible to open and close highways in such a way that disruption to the public was greatly minimised.
- ❖ The trial removed the need for double reinstatement on disconnections and transfer work, reducing costs and time.

Overall the LA considered the trial a success and felt that if the lessons of the first trial were acted upon the potential savings could be significantly enhanced for future operations of this nature.

The group originally identified potential savings of up to 25% for Local authorities but this was revised down to 15-20% of current costs.

A named contact was given for each DNO but when a policy officer from the select committee contacted them for more information they said that there were still things to be done before rent-a-jointer schemes could operate in this region. He then went on to discuss the possibility of Wigan having a dedicated jointer from the sub contractor and cited Bolton and Stockport who do this.

Having a dedicated jointer assigned to a local authority would operate as is currently taking place in Bolton. The following section describes how the system operates in Bolton Council.

14.2 Dedicated Jointer (Bolton Council)

The system is based on the Local Authority guaranteeing UUNC a minimum number of connections each week e.g. 25 connections. This secures a jointer for the area for a set period of time. The process works as follows:

- Bolton agree a weekly allocation with UUNC
- Monday morning – Council prepares orders / plans for 25 connections for the following week
- Monday afternoon – orders / plans are delivered to UUNC
- Tuesday - all paperwork is completed by UUNC and forwarded to P.N. Daly
- Wednesday – on receipt of the paperwork from UUNC P.N. Daly schedule the work for the following week
- Thursday/ Friday - P.N. Daly will telephone the Council if there are any problem areas
- The following week – P.N. Daly's jointer completes the planned 25 connections
- P.N. Daly's reinstatement team is also part of the process and works in conjunction with the jointing arrangements
- On the Tuesday of the third week – P.N. Daly (not UUNC) confirm direct with the Council that the work has been completed

The DLO completes their work in line and in advance of the Jointer arriving on site. Following confirmation of completion from P.N. Daly the DLO undertakes their share of the final reinstatement. In areas where this method of working operates, jobs can often be completed within seven days from start of excavation to reinstatement. P.N. Daly advised us that in Bolton, Manchester, Tameside and Stockport S74 NRSWA does not apply and so a turnaround time of seven days is normal (refer to section/par 3.5).

Key resource and planning issues involving this way of working include:

- Council officers systematically dedicate time on Monday mornings to planning the following week's connections. This has to be done week-in-week-out throughout the year. Bolton officers informed Select Committee that once the orders and plans have been sent to UUNC on Monday afternoon they could effectively "stand down" from the ordering and planning process for the rest of the week.
- Council officers deal directly with P.N. Daly once UUNC have processed the paperwork. The Council has found this particularly helpful in sorting out potential problems at source, and gaining feedback on completion details.
- Large projects can be planned and scheduled ahead e.g. 100 column installation / connection / disconnection @ 25 per week.
- There is potentially a problem in that the DLO may have erected 30 columns but Daly's can only connect 25 (consideration is being given to the current allocation). However, Bolton intimated that 25 connections are usually completed by Thursday leaving some slack in the system.
- The Sub-contractor still undertakes all the excavating, digging and reinstatement but the work can be organised more effectively as there is continuity.
- The system has been in place for more than ten years and Bolton believe it works well. They have recommended the way of working to the GMADE Group.

14.3 The Tameside "Slipper"

The general problem areas involved in carrying out electrical connections to street lighting columns have been described throughout this report. This section describes how Tameside have adopted a new approach to this area of work. The approach was originally based on financial savings to be made; however Tameside identify some apparent all-round benefits to the Council and its customers.

Tameside's evaluations indicate that Electricity Company's charges for connection jointing accounts for between 40% and 60% of the total cost of installation. It is therefore preferable to replace on a "one for one" basis for all except those installations with unacceptably long spacing, where even the most efficient luminaire and lamp will not provide adequate lighting.



The most obvious inhibition to lighting renewal projects is the very high cost of electricity cable jointing, which has risen at a proportionally higher rate than all other elements of installation costs over the period 1986-1999, as the "pie chart" shows.

Tameside anticipate there will be competition in connections at some time in the future and jointing charges will certainly fall. However the anticipated reduction will at most be in the region of 20% leaving the jointing activity as a continuing high cost.

In order to provide a viable solution to traditional methods of side road column renewal, Tameside, in partnership with the private sector have devised a novel and unique method of column replacement, which totally **ELIMINATES** the involvement and costs of the Electricity Company.

This system of lighting replacement, utilising the unique “Slipper Column”, for concrete, steel, aluminium and fibreglass columns, saves approximately 40% of the cost compared to traditional methods. Tameside and Private Sector partners’ estimate of costs:

Slipover column replacement cost		“Normal” Replacement Cost
Replacement Slipover column	£210	£650+
Lantern/Lamp	£ 75	
Electronic Photocell	£ 10	
Cable	£ 5	
Labour (typical time 1hr) (2men + Transport + Materials)	£ 75	
TOTAL COST	£375	

Tameside identified other benefits of equal importance:-

- a) The labour and plant elements are kept wholly in-house by the DSO/DLO.
- b) The time scale of duration of works is totally in Tameside’s hands.
- c) Accords with agenda 21 and sustainability. (Less visits)
- d) This is a working example of Best Value and of Tameside’s initiative at work.
- e) It has enabled a partnership with the private sector and adjacent local authorities to take place.
- f) Substantially minimises concrete waste disposal problems and reduces tipping and landfill costs.
- g) Reduces disruption on the street scene from 5 separate attendances by all involved agencies.

- Example
- 1) Streetlighting column installation.
 - 2) Electricity Company’s excavation for jointers.
 - 3) Jointing team (Electricity Company).
 - 4) Street lighting contractor to remove old column.
 - 5) Final reinstatement of footpath by the Electricity Company.

The above work on a typical installation usually takes between 5 – 6 weeks. However, this can now be reduced to **less than 1 hour**.

- In the case of a road traffic accident (RTA) the cost of replacing a side road column is very expensive because the electricity company must be brought in as an unscheduled emergency to disconnect the column. Tameside estimate the whole process including subsequent reconnection of the replacement column, at a later date, to be a typical cost of £1300 compared to just £500 for a “Slipper Column” (completed as an emergency).

- There is now, a hinged (raise and lower) column available. This is very important because Health and Safety regulations prohibit the use of ladders on columns where vehicular access is restricted. They have also developed a “slip-over sign”.
- The “Slipper Column” also lends itself for use in heritage locations with appropriate embellishments.
- Tameside has already installed over 3000 units and saved more than £750,000.
- Customers for the “Slipper Column” include some 40 Authorities including Manchester, Leeds, Rotherham, Cardiff, North Tyneside, East Lothian, Wirral, Bradford, Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils etc.
- Tameside have said that contractors involved in PFI bids are showing very keen interest in the “Slipper Column”.

The photographs included at Appendix 1 give an illustration of the methodology of the “slipper” together with some frequently asked questions about the “slipper” at Appendix 2.

14.4 Other Service Delivery Issues

14.4.1 OFGEM findings

OFGEM have undertaken a significant amount of research and work into the opening up of the market and also issued further guidance in addition to the Rent-a-Jointer scheme and One stop shop for Jointers. The following issues have emerged from the work:

- The market for connections is highly underdeveloped only 1% of new connections were adopted by Distribution Network Operators.
- The lack of common safety standards across the various regions is a problem and is highlighted as a major problem to DNO’s providing connections outside their area. In order to facilitate competition and third party access Ofgem has developed two initiatives:
 - a) National set of technical framework documents
 - b) A National Registration scheme.

At the time of the final report in August 2002, Ofgem considered it not practical to introduce full competition into un-metered connections.

14.4.2 Regional Variations

In Scotland the jointers work for the Local authority and not the regional utility / electricity companies or their sub-contractors.

In the Southwest of England there appears to be a softer split with the rent-a-jointer scheme already in operation and close working relationships between the Local authorities and the Regional Utility company.

The various service delivery options outlined above have been assessed against five criteria which the select committee deemed to be important as a result of consultation feedback and also take into account cost and performance which are important objectives for the Council.

Summary of Service Delivery Options

	Current Arrangements	Rent-a-Jointer	Dedicated Jointer (Bolton)	Tameside “Slipper”
Performance	Background of unsatisfactory performance with some improvement in recent months.	LA enjoys more control over achieving performance objectives. LA would be working directly with the jointer and therefore experience less impediments.	LA enjoys more control over achieving performance objectives. Close partnership arrangements with fewer people involved resulting in a set number of joints undertaken per week.	LA has total control over meeting performance targets. All work under client / contractor control. One visit for completion of full work with column lit same day.
Disruption	Disruption to the carriageway and residents - double reinstatements and disruptions to the pavement and to the public.	Minimised disruption – removes the need for double reinstatement on disconnections and transfer work.	Minimised disruption – set number of joints planned in advance and undertaken each week.	Minimum disruption to the highway and to residents.
Resources	Lengthy and complex process involving three organisations and numerous people.	Less resource intensive – fewer people involved – one team carrying out the work.	Closer links with the sub-contractor – less resource intensive.	Minimised resource input with one visit to the site.
Time	The process takes at least 3 to 4 weeks from start to finish – if on time. However long delays have occurred.	Simplified process resulting in less time input all round. Time on the highway is minimised reducing potential disruption and obstruction time.	Work undertaken one week after schedule submitted.	Work completed in 1-hour average. Rapid response – ideal for knockdowns.
Cost	Because of the resources and time involved there is scope for cost savings to be made. Other unquantifiable economic savings may be made.	Potential savings. DLO will undertake the sub-contractor work and therefore increase their revenue streams, facilitating a lesser impact of the departmental admin. charge.	Potential savings as some events are eliminated from the process. Unquantifiable costs regarding other Council issues such as “street scene” and “accidents” minimised.	Total cost estimated at £365 compared to £650+. Unquantifiable costs regarding other Council issues such as “street scene” and “accidents” minimised.
Overall	Performance to current targets is low and other options should be given consideration in order to improve service delivery. It may be appropriate to adopt a number of different options depending on the circumstances rather than adopting a “one size fits all” approach.	Minimum number of joints per week required to fully utilise jointer. Hull City Council encountered initial problems. Early indicators suggested savings of 15%-20% of current costs.	Requires dedicated planning each week to ensure a set number of joints. Bolton have found this a worthwhile investment of time in order to achieve consistency of service from sub-contractor	Can only be used as “direct replacement”. Can be used for street signs. No electricity company involvement. One visit to the site rather than numerous. Tameside have now installed 3000+ “slippers”. More than 40 other LA’s and others now using the “slipper”.

15. KEY ISSUES EMERGING

A large amount of information and evidence was gathered throughout the course of the review. The select committee identified the following key issues that form the basis for the recommendations.

15.1 Issues emerging from the Background Information

- The BV review of street scene identified the street-lighting service as being a good performer but the utility connection aspect was identified as an area for improvement.
- Customer satisfaction was generally high.
- OFGEM have established a working group to explore the possibility of opening the Connections market up to competition and looked at alternative service delivery options.
- OFGEM have recommended that Utility Company still maintain their monopoly for Health and Safety reasons above all else.
- Jointers need to receive accreditation from the Utility companies before they can operate on the network and skills aren't easily transferable from area to area.

15.2 Issues arising from Performance

- Performance against the targets outlined in the street lighting agreement is not being met and is unsatisfactory.
- Select committee questioned whether the targets were realistic as most targets were met in within two months of the start date.
- Are we monitoring performance too harshly i.e. Failure to connect one column in a scheme of 50 columns is considered as non-performance and the job is not completed.

15.3 Issues arising from Evidence gathered from Engineers

- There has been a significant increase in the level of street lighting work in the last two – three years.
- The street lighting agreement appeared to be out of date and UU can invoke penalties for non-performance but there is no reciprocal arrangement.
- A performance monitoring system has now been established and was developed in October 2001 when there was deterioration in the service being provided by UU. The system identifies when jobs are completed but cannot assist monitoring of progress when members / the public make enquiries.
- At the time of writing the report there did not appear to be robust system to track progress on jobs to ensure they are completed within target times.
- Poor performance was caused by a lack of communication between UUNC and their sub-contractors and also a change in the sub-contractor for the Wigan area.
- Meeting between the street lighting section, UUNC and their contractors are now established resulting in better communication and a slight improvement in performance.
- A three-week forward plan is now circulated to the Council so we know when jobs are to be completed.

- We rely on UUNC to inform the Council when a job is completed.
- There is 100% testing of electrical equipment but random testing arrangements are in place for inspecting reinstatement work.

15.4 Issues arising from Evidence gathered from UUNC

- UUNC were unaware of any major problems that suggested they did not monitor their performance against the street lighting agreement.
- Targets outlined in the SLA are unrealistic if Section 74 of the NRSWA is to apply, (refer to section/par 3.5).
- As a result of Competition in the Utilities Industry there have been major organisational changes at UUNC and staff changes. Further changes are still happening.
- One point of contact with the Council for all connections work would facilitate better working relationships and planning of the work.
- On major jobs it is beneficial for the DLO to deal direct with the sub-contractor once the paperwork is completed. This works well in other authorities.
- UUNC didn't think there was a lack of jointers.
- UUNC operate a "buddy" system to ensure continuity of service to cover staff absence.
- Job is defined as complete when the light is lit – this is when the sub-contractor is paid

15.5 Issues arising from evidence gathered from P.N. Daly

- P.N. Daly were unaware of the poor performance and the problems and inconvenience caused to residents and Members. They were unaware of the street lighting agreement.
- Application of Section 74 of the NRSWA was a major reason for delays in Wigan. In other authorities where it is not applied targets of seven days were achievable (refer to section/par 3.5).
- P.N. Daly did not know how many jobs they would receive from Wigan on a week to week basis and this made planning difficult. In other authorities where volumes are more predictable, jointers can be dedicated as workloads are assured.
- Costs of training a jointer is approximately £12,000 and it takes 18 months. The UUNC training school for jointers is now closed and also refresher courses need to be done as the certification period has elapsed but continues to be extended.
- Suggested improvements from P.N. Daly included dealing directly with them once the paperwork was processed, particularly the DLO.
- Guaranteed minimum number of connections each week to guarantee a dedicated jointer.
- Continuity of service during staff absences.
- P.N. Daly defines job completed as when all barriers are removed from the reinstated site.

15.6 Issues arising from the Consultation Exercises

- A number of sections in Engineers and other departments in the Council contact UUNC with work other than street lighting connections e.g. CCTV, signs, and car park ticket machines. It was intimated that UUNC prioritise work on our behalf.
- General time delays in carrying out works and lack of information on how long the works would take.
- Issues around having to contact a number of organisations before an enquiry is resolved.
- Delays in clearing the site and the effect of having barriers on the street – obstructions and vandalism.
- Disconnecting the old light before the new light is connected and working.
- Quality of pavements following completion.

15.7 Issues arising from Comparative Data

- There was a general dissatisfaction with the overall level of service.
- Increase in demand, lack of jointers and communication between UUNC and sub contractor.
- Monthly meetings with the sub-contractor and having a dedicated jointer had improved performance in some authorities.
- Quicker response times to reinstatements and improved customer focus.
- One authority from outside the region that used another Utility company and sub contractor reported they received a good service. The authority that responded received a good BVI report.
- All streetlighting managers received complaints as a result of sub-contractors work.
- GMADE group confirmed the poor level of service and also mentioned there is sometimes a delay in billing for work completed.

15.8 Issues arising from Process Mapping and Service delivery options

- The current process is lengthy and involves too many people, three organisation and various sections and departments within them.
- The street lighting agreement needs updating. The copy supplied was dated 1998 and the most recent price matrix provided was dated 1999.
- It is apparent the Council monitor UUNC's performance and not UUNC themselves.
- P.N. Daly is paid when the light is "lit" and not when the job is reinstated/ barriers removed.
- There is no random testing of reinstatement work.
- There are a number of different service delivery options – They are:
 - Rent-a-jointer
 - Dedicated jointer
 - Tameside "slipper"
 It might be appropriate to use various options depending on the scheme/ situation.

- Section 74 of the NRSWA 91 affects the Council's ability to meet service delivery time-scales (refer to section/par 3.5).

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the issues identified above Select Committee makes the following recommendations for consideration by all partners involved in the area of work involving street lighting electrical connections. Where appropriate it is expected that Engineering Services will share the recommendations with stakeholders in order to influence partnership-working arrangements and improve overall service delivery.

Select Committee expects that wherever possible recommendations should be included as part of a revised Street Lighting Agreement.

16.1 Section 74 NRSWA

- In light of the recent Court action and impending Appeal - review the introduction of Section 74 NRSWA 1991 and whether it should apply to sub contractors working on street lighting.
- As a result of the above review of Section 74 NRSWA, set out the implications for the Council in a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

16.2 Review the current Street Lighting Agreement.

- Evaluate whether current SLA targets are achievable particularly in respect of NRSWA 1991 if it is to continue to apply to this area of work.
- Set targets that are realistic, achievable and communicated to all parties involved.
- Select Committee recommends Wigan collaborates with its GMADE colleagues, UUNC and its sub-contractors to develop and update the street-lighting agreement, and ensures that it is fair and equitable to all parties.

16.3 Target setting and links with the street lighting agreement

- Develop targets that are meaningful and customer focused, e.g. *“the street lighting works will be completed within “x” working days of commencement”*.
- Ensure that a robust system is in place for communicating information and targets to all stakeholders, and where possible provide information and communications regarding delays and any problems arising, particularly to residents affected by site works.
- Ensure that target timescales are consistent with both the street lighting agreement and customer focused targets developed above.
- Establish a transparent definition of a “completed job” i.e. a job that has been backfilled and reinstated to a minimum standard and that the barriers have been removed.
- Select Committee recommends that the Council should only pay for work done when work has been completed as defined above. (i.e. the Council should ensure that payment is not made on the basis of “the light is lit”).

16.4 New street lights are working correctly before old lighting is disconnected.

- Select Committee acknowledges that some streetlights do fail once initially connected but it is important that streetlights should not be disconnected before the new connection is made. This is particularly important on major schemes. This needs to be emphasised to the sub-contractors.

16.5 Monitoring and reporting arrangements

Further develop performance monitoring and reporting arrangements and ensure that:

- all appropriate stakeholders are made aware of targets set and performance against those targets.
- all appropriate stakeholders are made aware of any problems that exist
- all appropriate stakeholders are made aware of any disruptions and/or complaints
- a robust system is in place to track the progress of jobs and ensure they are completed within target times. Select Committee suggests that the Council investigates recognised IT technology for this purpose.

16.6 One Council Point of Contact

- Evaluate whether “one Council point of contact for all electrical connection work” would improve overall service delivery.

16.7 Participation in the “Joint Working Group”

- Widen participation in the “Street Lighting Joint Working Group” to other sections of Engineering Services and other departments to include the DLO, WEDS and T&T section as well as other departments involved in electrical connection work (e.g. CCTV), the Land and Property Department.

16.8 One stop enquiry point for all enquiries and complaints from the public

- Act as a one stop enquiry point for all enquiries and complaints from the public regarding electrical connection work and ensure that all enquiries are dealt with directly by the Council and customers are not referred on to the Utility company or it's sub-contractors.

16.9 Quality control and risk management

- Develop further the inspection process to ensure that all aspects of the completed job are subject to quality control management.
- Select Committee suggests that it may be necessary for the Council to introduce total quality control checking alongside the 100% electrical testing procedure.
- Engineers review the “30% within two years” inspection criteria., - any changes need to be carried out within existing resources.

16.10 Internal working arrangements

- Appraise current processes (see process map in report) and procedures for progressing work on street lighting connections. Examine whether they could be re-engineered/ simplified to facilitate a smoother operation involving fewer people and shorter timescales. It is recognised that alternative service delivery options may affect the process.
- Assess whether it would be beneficial, in some cases, for the Council to deal directly with the sub-contractor (i.e. Daly's) once the paperwork has been dealt with by UUNC. Comparative evidence from other Councils suggests that good working arrangements are achieved where the DLO deals directly with the sub-contractor.

16.11 Continuity of service

- Maintain the continuity of workflows, and negate possible peaks and troughs in service delivery by ensuring that staffing levels are maintained consistently in all organisations throughout the year.

16.12 Alternative service delivery options

- Engineers carry out their own evaluation of the alternative service delivery options outlined in the report in terms of the following:
 - Performance - Affect on overall performance
 - Disruption - Affect on residents and users of the highway
 - Resources - Affect on resources deployed in the process
 - Time - Affect on the overall timeliness of the operation
 - Cost - Affect on overall cost i.e. cost benefit analysis
 - Overall - Affect overall (including non-tangible affects i.e. image, risk, aesthetic look)
- Whilst evaluating the options also give some consideration to the Council's ability to influence and control the process. Select Committee suggests that it might be appropriate to implement a number of different service delivery options depending on the circumstances.
- In respect of the "Tameside Slipper" undertake a feasibility study on its appropriateness for the Wigan area. This should include a site visit with Select Committee to the manufacturer, BW Installations, and to sites where the "Slipper" has been installed/ about to be installed.
- Any savings emerging as a result of Wigan introducing the "Tameside Slipper" should be re-invested into improving street lighting in Wigan.

16.13 Change in Sub-contractor when contract expires

In October 2001 UUNC appointed a new sub-contractor (P N Daly) for the Wigan area. Subsequently it was found that the outgoing sub-contractor had left a legacy of jobs not started or left in an incomplete state. This prompted the Engineering Services Department to develop the current monitoring system. Select Committee note that P N Daly's contract is due for renewal in November this year, and therefore recommends:

- the Council monitors work closely and works with UUNC to ensure a smooth transition in the event of a new sub-contractor being appointed.

16.14 The Monopoly Situation in the Unmetered Connections Market

During the course of the review it became apparent that the market would not be opened up to competition and that arrangements would carry on as they are now. Select Committee accepts that the Council is unable to change the monopoly situation but recognises that changes may be required to improve working practices amongst all stakeholders in order to achieve better performance.

Select Committee acknowledges that not all the recommendations contained in the report are within the control of the Council. However it is recognised that the ultimate responsibility for influencing and driving improvement in this area of work lies with the Engineering Services Department. Therefore Select Committee recommends that:

- The Engineering Services Department endeavours to use this report and its recommendations to improve working arrangements with all stakeholders. Select Committee believes this will improve service delivery and influence overall customer satisfaction.
- All partners honour a revised Street Lighting Agreement.

- Engineers together with their Greater Manchester colleagues lobby UUNC and appropriate bodies such as OFGEM if performance does not improve.

In the event of continued poor performance, and customer dissatisfaction (in the Wigan area) local MPs have indicated to Select Committee that they would be willing to lobby Central Government, OFGEM and the Regional Electricity Companies to improve the situation.

Finally, whilst not being a recommendation as it is out of the control of the Council, the Select Committee feels it is important that the Council together with its partner organisations has a duty of care to Jointers. It is apparent from the evidence gathered that in some instances certification is being extended without training or review. Therefore the Committee recommends that every effort is made to ensure that jointers are offered training to appropriate levels on a regular basis in order to maintain their certification and ensure Health and Safety is maintained.

17. IMPROVEMENT PLAN

In the following pages Select Committee has set out an Improvement Plan in respect of the recommendations identified in the final report. It is expected that the majority of the recommendations are achievable in the short term and will stimulate improvement in the area of street lighting electrical connections.

It is recommended that the Engineering Services Department adopts and develops the Improvement Plan, in conjunction with its partners, and as a result:

“Influences the delivery plans of others to improve partnership-working arrangements”

Recommendations and Improvement Plan				
Recommendation	As highlighted by	Anticipated Outcome	Responsibility and suggested completion date	Suggested Measure
1. Review Section 74 NRSWA in respect of street lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will receive clarification from the Courts as to whether Section 74 is applicable to street lighting. 	DES December 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed
2. Review the current Street Lighting Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineers Department • Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful targets • Improved quality control procedures • Appraise “penalties” for under performance • Improved overall partnership working arrangements 	DES, GMADE group UU and Sub contractor April 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A transparent useable document honoured by all partners resulting in better partnership working arrangements and better performance. • New SLA in place
3. Target Setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public unclear as to how long work is expected to last. • Partner’s perceptions of “a completed job”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful targets for the public e.g. All work will be completed within x number of days of the start date. • Clarity of targets and perceptions of “a completed job” for all partners. • Consistency with the SLA. • Increased awareness overall. • Improved awareness and less complaints/enquiries. 	DES in conjunction with partners and their sub-contractors. Dec 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful targets established and 100% communicated to the public. • % success rate against clear targets agreed and set consistent with SLA.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan				
Recommendation	As highlighted by	Anticipated Outcome	Responsibility and suggested completion date	Suggested Measure
4. Ensure that new street lighting is working correctly before the old lighting is disconnected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation Member consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum disruption effects on residents. Minimised the number of complaints. Increased customer satisfaction and less disruption for customers. 	DES, UUNC, Sub-contractors Oct 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BVPI Number of streetlights working as planned. Develop measure of % of new streetlights working as planned.
5. Monitoring and reporting arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineers Department UUNC and Sub-contractors Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased management awareness of performance Ability to track jobs and take action where needed. Better control over performance. More meaningful information on which to make decisions. 	DES Feb 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust monitoring and reporting system in place.
6. One Council point of contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUNC and Sub-contractors Select Committee Other Council departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communications and prioritisation of work. Better performance. 	DES, UUNC, Sub-contractors Jan 04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council wide prioritisation of all electrical connection work ensuring overall key objectives are considered.
7. Participation in the "Joint Working Group" held by Street Lighting Engineers and their partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select Committee UUNC and Sub-contractors DLO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved overall partnership working arrangements. Improved communication. 	DES Next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All invited to the meeting.
8. One-stop enquiry point for all enquiries and complaints from the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUNC and Sub-contractors Select Committee Public consultation Member consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer satisfaction. Increased Council awareness. 	DES August 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One stop point of contact established.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan				
Recommendation	As highlighted by	Anticipated Outcome	Responsibility and suggested completion date	Suggested Measure
9. Quality control and risk management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation Member consultation Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality finished jobs Fewer incomplete jobs Reduced risk to the public Ensuring payment only on completion. 	DES, UUNC, Sub-contractor Oct 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X % of all jobs inspected
10. Internal working arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineers Department UUNC and Sub-contractors Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved working arrangements and efficiencies – particularly through “dealing direct” with the sub-contractor. Better performance. Increased customer satisfaction. 	DES, UUNC, Sub-contractor Dec 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of internal working arrangements is completed and proposals established.
11. Continuity of service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-contractor Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of workflows securing a jointer for Wigan area. Less risk of peaks and troughs in workflows. 	DES, UUNC Dec 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of jobs submitted and completed is consistence.
12. Evaluate alternative service delivery options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.N. Daly, UUNC and other Local Authorities Select Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure high performance and optimise resources. Decreased costs per unit. % of jobs completed ahead of targets, Higher Customer satisfaction rates. 	DES Oct 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation complete and proposals reported back to Committee. Lower unit costs £xs
13. Change in Sub-contractor when contract expires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engineers Department UUNC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced risk for the Council when contract expires. 	DES, UUNC Before October 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan is in place and performance does not deteriorate at this time.

Recommendations and Improvement Plan				
Recommendation	As highlighted by	Anticipated Outcome	Responsibility and suggested completion date	Suggested Measure
14. Monitor and influence the monopoly situation to ensure a high standard of service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Committee • Sub-contractors • Engineers Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better working arrangements and increased performance levels together with customer satisfaction. • <i>Influences the delivery plans of others to improve partnership-working arrangements</i> 	DES, UUNC, Sub-contractors As soon as is practically possible considering the development of a revised SLA and GMADE meeting schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor performance and explain deviations.
Engineering Services Department should make every effort in encouraging UUNC and their Sub-contractors to continually certify jointers to appropriate levels, and offer appropriate refresher courses.				

Appendix 1 "Tameside Slipper" Operation



1. Support column & excavate base.



2. Cut column across top of door.



3. Remove top section of column.



4. Leaving stump insitu.



5. Slip new column over stump.



6. Connect up & reinstate to complete.

Appendix 2 “Tameside Slipper” Frequently asked Questions

Q. Is the repair an expensive process?

A. A “Slipper Column” is **not** a repair but a 35 year plus, new column.

Q. Is the “Slipper Column” in accordance with the code of practice?

A. The column design accords with BS 5649 and has been validated by “Capis UK Ltd” the design consultancy unit of Manchester University. A modified version, of the standard “Slipper Column”, accords with BD 26/99 and is capable of supporting signs of one square metre.

A hinged version of the ‘Slipper Column’ is available for use on pathways, allowing for maintenance without the use of ladder work.

Q. What about spacing of the columns?

A. Most columns installed in the 1960’s had spacings relating to CP 1004, on side roads, 115 feet (35 metres). This allows for the slipper installation to easily meet category 3.2 of BS 5489 part 3.

Q. What if the column is at the front of the footpath?

A. Well if the existing column dates back over 30 years clearly there is no problem.

Q. Is the column designed for 35 years?

A. Lightweight steel columns with a 30year design life have a wall thickness of 2.6mm. The Slipper has a wall thickness of 3.1mm (20% thicker).

Q. Base foundations; what planting depth is required?

A. Our civil engineering section has designed a range of options that cover for planting depth as little as 300mm.

Q. If the old column is so bad that it needs replacing then surely the stump also is in need of removal?

A. No, the only function of the stump is to carry the electricity company cut-out. The “Slipper Column” is free standing and does not rely on the support of the stump of the old column. In fact the base of the “Slipper Column” provides an additional safety cage around the existing enclosure that houses the electricity company cut-out.