

Area North Committee – 27 November 2013

## 10. Performance of the Streetscene Service – Area North

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### Purpose of the Report

To update and inform the Area North Committee on the performance of the Streetscene Service in the area for the period June to November 2013.

### Recommendation

That members note the report

### Report

The major focuses of the service so far for this period that affect Area North are listed below:

- Summer Maintenance program
- Clearing up following the recent storms
- Planning the winter work schedules

### Operational Works

Our street cleaning teams continue to clean the area on a daily basis and this forms the backbone of the street cleaning service we provide. To accompany the core work of the teams we have run a weed spraying team to address the issue of highway weeds. This year we purchased a bespoke quad bike sprayer and van to transport the machine around the district in order to speed up the weed killing operation. As a result of this we have completed one spray in all towns and villages and are now focussing on weeds along the main roads which will be followed by the start of a secondary application of herbicide. As well as the weed killing program we have targeted the cleaning of villages across the district and a separate team has visited these; litter picking, cutting back overgrowth and removing build ups of weeds and soil.

So what comes next? Leaves! This year the leaf fall is proving to be later than normal due to the warm weather, but we are equipped and ready to clear up when this happens. Following this, as usual we will be litter picking main and rural roads as the verges die back revealing waste thrown by uncaring members of the community and again we have a work schedule in place for when this work starts. We expect to be rolling this work schedule out in December when the grass on the verges has died back however this may be postponed in line with the unseasonably warm conditions which are resulting in an extended growing season for the grass.

The team continues to focus on managing the number of flytips found and reported across the district, and this number has dropped considerably. In area North we have had 121 flytips reported between June and October this year, compared to 199 last year for the same period. This is in response to the actions we took at the end of the previous year when we diverted more enforcement time to tackling this issue.

The details of the reported fly tips are shown in the chart listed below.

<b>AREA NORTH:</b>	<b>Apr-13</b>	<b>May-13</b>	<b>Jun-13</b>	<b>Jul-13</b>	<b>Aug-13</b>	<b>Sep-13</b>	<b>Oct-13</b>	
Aller							1	
Ash			1					
Barrington								
Beercrocombe								
Bower Hinton				1				
Chilthorne Domer		2		2	1	1	1	
Compton Dundon					2	1		
Curry Mallet							1	
Curry Rivel		1			3		1	
Drayton	1							
Fivehead		1				2		
Hambridge & Westport		1						
High Ham	2			2	1			
Huish Episcopi	1			1			1	
Ilton	2			1				
Isle Abbotts								
Isle Brewers		1		1		5		
Kingsbury Episcopi			2	4				
Langport	3				3			
Long Load								
Long Sutton	1							
Lopen		2		1		2		
Martock	2	2	1	4	1	1	2	
Montacute			1					4
Muchelney								
Norton Sub Hamdon								
Pitney				1				
Puckington								
Seavington	1			1		1		
Shepton Beauchamp	1							
Somerton	2	2		1	3	2	2	
South Petherton	2		2	1	8	2	2	
Stocklinch				2				
Stoke Sub Hamdon	2	1		1				
Tintinhull		1		1		1		
<b>TOTAL AREA NORTH</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total 121</b>

## Street Cleaning works

Our street cleaning teams continue to clean the Area on a daily basis and this forms the core of the service that we deliver. This summer, the team has delivered a program of village clean ups across the district, which gave the villages a deep clean, targeting not only the litter but also removal of unwanted vegetation and moss, with hand sweeping / digging out where necessary. We appreciate that we are unable to manage these works on a routine basis but believe that this will improve the look of our more rural areas which are so important to the look of our district.

We have continued our work with Martock Parish Council, sharing equipment that continues to deliver a higher standard of cleansing and this arrangement has been extended to Somerton. We are delighted that through this kind of joint approach we are able to achieve higher standards of cleanliness to the benefit of our communities.

The quad bike sprayer mentioned in the previous report has proven to be a great success and is far more efficient than the manual method of spraying that was previously employed. As a result, we have started our second spray of the year and we will continue to deliver this in line with weather conditions. We appreciate that there is still room for improvement in this aspect of the service and we are working to find ways that would enable us to deliver a higher standard of weed control without detracting from other areas of service.

The team has recently replaced the last of our 'older' road sweepers. This will result not only in increased reliability, but also reduced maintenance costs and better operational and environmental performance. The machine chosen is a slightly smaller than the one it replaced so it enables us to get into lanes and streets that have restricted access.

## Horticultural works

Our horticultural teams are currently completing this year's summer maintenance program and it has been a much easier season when compared to last year. This has been further enhanced by the changes we made to the shrub bed maintenance team, developing a weed control team from elsewhere in the unit and our operative Dale Gough has performed superbly making a notable improvement in the quality of the sites which we maintain.

On completion of our 14<sup>th</sup> grass cut of the year, the teams were scheduled for reorganisation and the start into the winter work program, with one team continuing to cut grass throughout the winter while others carry out the winter ditch maintenance program; winter shrub bed maintenance; hedge cutting and the maintenance of the trees. This plan is currently being reconsidered and we may continue with mowing and postpone the winter based operations in line with weather conditions.

We are also currently looking at further arboricultural and landscape works throughout the district and will be creating development plans in line with resources available.

In the last report I informed members that we were trialling a new herbicide that is for use on non-productive porous surfaces and were hopeful that this will perform successfully and be an additional 'tool' for us when maintaining the district. Unfortunately this option proved itself to be too costly for the benefits it offered so we have ceased these trials. We will however continue to investigate ways of improving the service we provide and give the best possible value for money.

In the previous report we also referred to the 'new' fungus which has affected Ash tree species and to date we have found no instances of this fungus on the trees which we manage and reports from the industry indicate that the projected speed of the disease spreading is far slower than was predicted following changes made to combat this problem.

Also mentioned in the previous report, the team was awaiting the arrival of two new apprentices. As a result we currently have one of these working on the sports ground team with the other working in our admin support team at Lufton.

The service has also successfully bid for funding that will enable us to replace the plant workshops grinding machine that sharpens the cylinder mower blades of the ride on sweepers (the current machine is 20 – 25 years old and is inefficient) and allows the purchase of a tow behind wood chipper that will allow great improvements in efficiency in our horticultural service. This change to the service will also offer a cost saving within a reasonable timescale.

### **Storm Clearance**

The recent storm that hit the Country did create some damage. Fortunately it was not as powerful as was predicted however it still resulted in widespread damage that redirected our teams from their normal work programmes to get things 'back to normal'. Most of the damage was from trees splitting apart due to the amount of leaves that have been retained thus preventing the wind from passing through the canopies as would normally be expected at this time of year.

### **Parish Ranger Scheme**

Recently we have carried out a couple of 'trial days' with the ranger at Martock and the parish are considering if they wish to pursue this option. Further information about the scheme is shown in Appendix A.

### **What's coming next?**

- Winter maintenance operations
- Continuation of highway weed control operations
- Winter ditch maintenance operations
- Landscaping and development of open space areas

### **Financial Implications**

All of the matters highlighted in the report have been achieved within service budgets.

### **Implications for Corporate Priorities**

- Continue to deliver schemes with local communities that enhance the appearance of their local areas.
- Continue to support communities to minimise floodwater risks.
- Maintain street cleaning high performance across the district.

**Background Papers:** *Progress reports to Area Committees on the Performance of the Streetscene Service*

## Appendix A - Parish Ranger Scheme

### What does the Scheme offer?

#### Scope of work:

- Ability to undertake additional Works that are beyond the scope of normal maintenance regimes
- Ability to undertake unique work that falls outside of routine responsibilities
- Ability to undertake works that are no longer undertaken or have had their funding reduced
- Ability to undertake responsive works that are requested by the Parish Council

#### This includes:

- Horticultural works / cutting back of overgrowth / bulb & tree planting
- Management of Environmental / conservation areas
- Additional clearance of flood alleviation / drainage systems
- Additional Litter clearance
- Installation / Repairs to fence & gates
- Additional herbicide applications
- Additional clearance of street weeds

#### Reporting Process:

- The Streetscene Team manage the day to day work of the Ranger and are responsible for his management, H&S, training etc.
- An Annual work programme of routine tasks is agreed with the Parish prior to commencement of the scheme and circulated to all members for clarity.
- There is a single point of contact agreed between the Parish & SSDC Landscape Officer to avoid multiple and conflicting demands, usually the Clerk

#### Skills base

The ranger in particular is trained to undertake:

- Conservation management
- Herbicide application
- Minor arboricultural works
- Minor landscaping and countryside building skills (fencing etc)
- Cleansing operations
- Chapter 8

However; when required additional skills can be called upon depending on the project, these can include:

- Major arboricultural works including tree risk and inspection
- Open space risk assessment
- Open space design and management

#### Cost

- There is an hourly rate of £17 per hour +vat (at January 2013)