

Area North Committee – 28 May 2014

10. Performance of the Streetscene Service

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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 November 2013 – May 2014.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report

Report

The major focus of the service so far for this period that affect Area North, are listed below.

- Winter maintenance operations – horticultural & street cleansing
- Flooding response and clean up
- Storm Clear up
- Reduction in the numbers of fly tips
- Village clean ups
- Highway weed control

Operational Works

Last year we purchased a quad bike sprayer and van to speed up the weed killing operation which proved to be a very successful way of delivering the service and as a result we have ordered another machine to further improve on this. In 2013/14, we completed between one and two applications of herbicide in towns and villages across the district and we are aiming to increase this frequency to between two and three applications by using more machinery.

In addition to the highway weed control program, the team carried out a work program that was targeted specifically at the villages across the district carrying out additional litter picking, cutting back overgrowth and removing accumulations of weeds and soil. This program of works was to make sure that all areas of the district receive special attention from time to time, and not just the towns and market towns.

Leaves! This year the leaf fall was later than normal due to the warm weather, but we equipped the teams to clear up when it happened and by using a combination of rakes, brushes, sweepers and leaf suckers the annual clear up went quite smoothly. We continue to work in partnership with Martock Parish Council and Somerton Town Council, sharing equipment and labour when possible to increase the level of service to the public.

Elsewhere in the district we worked with the Probation Service who are using offenders 'pay back' time to carry out additional cleansing and litter picking. We are currently investigating ways of developing this arrangement and delivering it across the district.

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 102 flytips reported between November 2013 and the end of March 2014, compared to 145 for the same period over the previous year. We believe that 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 and our approach of clearing fly tips away as quickly as possible to discourage additional tipping and possibly as a result of the public adjusting to the changes to opening times at HWRC's (Household Waste Recycling Centres).

As usual, we started litter picking main & rural roads during the winter but that work was interrupted by the flooding that have affected large parts of the district. The teams were simply superb, working late nights and weekends as well as their normal hours to not only keep their rounds clean, but also producing and delivering thousands of sand bags wherever they were needed.

We also cleared debris from flood alleviation schemes screens to prevent blockages that compound the flooding issues; and cleared away a large number of trees which had fallen or split due to storms. In all, approximately 9,000 sandbags were delivered by the teams.

We are grateful to the Plymouth Brethren who have worked really hard when the storm arrived, helping to the clear up of fallen trees and delivering sandbags across the district. After the flood receded we worked with the County Councils highway contractors to clean up the mess left by the water, liaising to make best use of the resources available to us in order to help regain a semblance of normality, at least in the areas that we could influence.

In addition to the problems caused by the water, the high winds caused masses of litter as the re-cycling was blown out of the boxes and spread across the estates. We are all glad to see the start of spring!

In addition to this work, the team purchased two gum removal machines which will be used to improve the look of areas such as the town centres, outside schools, shops and other soiled areas. Although this isn't core work for the service, it will enable us to make incremental improvements in standards without large additional investment.

In October 2013, we completed our 14th grass cut of the year and reorganised our teams to start the winter work program. One team was programmed to continue to cut grass throughout the winter, however this plan was washed out as sandbag and chainsaw related work took priority however we are currently mowing and keeping up with the annual work program.

We are pleased to inform members that we have been awarded the tendered grounds maintenance from Somerton Town Council and three areas of Rights of Way maintenance from the County Council, this not only increases the value of the service, but gives us the opportunity to improve the district for our residents and visitors.

Last year the Lufton Plant Nursery followed a new business model with a much wider range of plants being grown directly for use by the horticultural team. This new approach

proved to be very successful financially and enabled us to co-ordinate our landscape plans and plant production schedules in order to give the best value to the service. As a result of this work I am pleased to inform members that the nursery budget ended the year in a much more favourable position than in previous years. My thanks to Sarah and the team for their efforts to achieve this.

The service also submitted 'save to earn bids' which have been successful and have enabled us to replace the plant workshops grinding machine that sharpens the cylinder mower blades of the ride on mowers (the current machine is 20 – 25 years old and is inefficient) and allowed the purchase of a tow-behind wood chipper that has allowed great improvements in efficiency in our horticultural service. We have also sourced a replacement green waste shredder that would update the machine we have in the depot to recycle the green waste which is brought back by our teams. This will be a major step in ensuring the on-going smooth running of the depot while making further efficiencies by increasing the mechanisation of the process.

Over the coming year, we are looking to carry out further open space improvement works in the area with a major focus being on improving signage and accessibility on and around our open spaces. Already the team has been developing their skills in laying tarmac paths, with projects carried out in open spaces in Yeovil and we see the installation of well surfaced footways to be the biggest improvement that we can make at this time.

Enforcement Team

As usual, the main focuses of the team has been dealing with dog related issues and fly tipping. Abandoned vehicle numbers remain very low and the focus of the team has once again changed to start to target graffiti around the district. If you find graffiti on public property please contact us with the details and we will work to remove it. Should the graffiti be on private property, permissions will be sought before this can be removed.

Looking forwards, in order to improve the work of the Environmental Directorate, we are currently working with the Environmental Health team to merge the enforcement aspects of both services. We believe that this will maximise the potential of the services to respond to a wider range of issues. I will update you on this change as things develop.

What's coming next?

- Routine Spring / Summer work programs
- Highway weed control

Financial Implications

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

Council Plan Implications

- 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
