

Area West Committee – March 2011

6. Report for Area West Committee on the Performance of the Streetscene Service

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Purpose of the Report

To update and inform the Area West Committee on the performance of the Streetscene Service in the Area for the period April 2010 – February 2011.

Public Interest

This report is simply to inform the committee of the work that has been done by the Council's Streetscene team over the last year, and to highlight any changes that may affect the service in the coming months.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

Report

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

- Renewed the Yarlington Housing Groups Grounds Maintenance Partnership And other contracts
- Introduced dog control orders
- Developed the draft Open Space Strategy
- Improved NI 195 (street cleaning) result of 7% in 2009/10
- NI196 (Managing Fly tipping) result of Level 1
- Completed tree planting schemes at Snowdon Park and at the new HWRC

Operational Works

The Horticultural team were delighted to retain the Yarlington Homes Grounds Maintenance Partnership contract earlier in the year. The contract is for ten years and is critical to the appearance of the street scene in the district and to the unit as a whole. We continue to enjoy a great working relationship with our partners at Yarlington and look forward to continuing this work.

The team has also retained the maintenance of Critical Ordinary Watercourses with the Environment Agency,

In Area West, the team maintains the following sites on behalf of the Environment Agency:

- **Shudrick Stream, Iminster** - Upstream of Shudrick Lane, Wharf Road to Station Road & Winterhays Cottages through to Greenlands
- **Goulds Brook, Merriott** - Along the track to Haymore, from Lyewater to the head of the main river & from Brookfield through to Tail Mill in Merriott
- **Chinnock Brook, West Chinnock** - From Poop Hill Bridge to Lower Street bridge, & from Lower Street bridge to the bend in the first field downstream of Yarn Barton

The team also maintains the following ditches for SSDC:

- **Ashill** – Kenny Bridge - 10m upstream & 80m downstream
- **Chaffcombe** - Chard Road
- **Chard Junction** - Station House to disused railway
- **Combe St Nicholas** - Nimmer
- **Dowlish Ford** - Clarks factory, Yarn Barton, Sea
- **Dowlish Wake** - Main Street & Bryants
- **Moorlands** House to Moorlands Court, Moorlands Road to Rill House
- **North Perrott** – Downclose Lane. Grey Abbey Hill
- **Tatworth** – Waterlake Farm, Wreath Gren, Loveridge Lane, Waterlake Road to Bulls Lane, Storage Ponds at Pop Lane, Parrocks Lane, Whitney Lane, Lower Coombes /Waterlake Road, Forton
- **Chard** – Business Park

The team also clears 'trash screens' at the following locations for SSDC.

- **Iminster** – Shudrick Lane
- **Merriott** – Beadon Lane & Moorlands Road
- **Haselbury Plucknett** – Tamarisk opposite the White Horse
- **North Perrott** – Grey Abbey Hill & Downclose Lane

We are currently working to renew the maintenance of the Cartgate Picnic Area.

This year we have also developed and fenced the small amenity area at Reed Close in Chard and renewed the fencing around the Minnows Pond using metal bow topped fencing.

In addition to these works, our mowing team that cuts grass around Chard is now operating from the depot of Chard Town Councils Amenities dept. This is another step in the ongoing partnership working between our two organisations aimed at delivering more cost effective services.

The team have planted an avenue of Cherry Trees around Snowdon Park, as part of the ongoing development of this site and we look forwards to seeing this develop over the coming years.

We have also been involved with the landscaping around the new HWRC in Chard, planting hundreds of trees that will create a green corridor linking the HWRC with the Chard Reservoir.

The Middle Hill development in Crewkerne has recently been adopted and is being maintained by the service and we are currently working on the completion of the Snowdon Collar Works in Chard.

Our street cleaning teams continue to clean the Area on a daily basis, and we currently have a crew litter picking along rural roads. This is a considerable amount of work but makes a considerable difference when completed.

Sadly our long serving Area West Streetscene Co-ordinator, Dave Salter, is retiring in April, we wish him well and would like to officially thank him for all the work he has done caring for Area West over the years and we wish him a happy and healthy retirement. Some would say it's well deserved! We will be reviewing the management of the service as a result, and will be looking for someone to fill his role.

Open Space Strategy

The team has been working with other units within the Council to develop an Open Space Strategy for South Somerset. That is designed to set a clear vision for the management of the open spaces in South Somerset, how this is going to be achieved and provide clear expectations for developers on open space issues in new developments.

Our Landscape Officer, Steve Fox, has been leading this work, and deserves great credit for his contribution towards developing this strategy.

The strategy was presented to the District Executive on the 3rd March and will be passed to full Council for approval.

Dog Control Orders

Following changes in dog related law, the service worked with the Licensing team to introduce Dog Control Orders. These were agreed by full Council in November 2010 and provide the service with the authority to instruct people to put their dogs on leads when they are considered to be out of control; ban dogs from specified areas; and classify dog fouling anywhere on public land as an offence & also to introduce dog exclusion areas to specific areas.

We aim to have these orders fully in place by July 2011.

Our staff have also continued to deliver the Councils 'Out of Hours' service, which deals with dogs, sharps and other hazardous Streetscene related works. They can be contacted via the Council's 01935 462462 and they will be directed through to the service from there.

In addition to this, our enforcement officers have been involved tackling an environmental issue via a Community Justice Panel where an acceptable behaviour contract was delivered.

A Street cleaning response team has been set up and is working well; each week they deal with all reports of fly tips, graffiti, or areas of particularly bad littering. The team can be contacted via Lufton depot by calling 01935 462462 or e-mail via the following addresses:

- horticulture@southsomerset.gov.uk
- esgenforcement@southsomerset.gov.uk
- streetsceneservices@southsomerset.gov.uk

Alternatively people can contact us via the Council's website following the links to Streetscene.

They are dedicated to dealing with requests on an 'Area' a day basis, Monday to Thursday; with Area West having Thursdays as their dedicated day. Fridays are saved for 'larger jobs' regardless of where in the district they are. Recently the team has been involved clearing the rubbish that has been dumped over the banks behind the lay-bys along the A303. A very unpleasant job, but environmentally well worth doing.

It should be noted that since this team has been formed, the Council's performance on NI196 that covers the control of fly tipping has improved to Level 1 performance as the team also searches fly tipping for evidence that is passed to our Enforcement team for action.

Highway Works

Highway Weeds

Two applications of herbicide were made during 2010 with our team controlling weeds in Crewkerne, Misterton, Merriott, Ilminster, Tatworth, Forton, Horton & Broadway; and Chard Town Council's Amenities Department is contracted to carry out weed control in Chard on behalf of the Service. In the villages and along the rural roads, the County Highways department's contractor was tasked with controlling highway weeds in these areas.

Due to cuts in the County Council's budgets in the coming year, it appears that the Highways department will no longer be carrying out any highway weed control. In response to this news, we propose to change our herbicide application frequency to an annual spray but to include all areas that were previously managed via the Highways contractor.

Verge Maintenance

Similarly, there is a proposed reduction in the funding from County Highways towards highway verge maintenance. With regards to the Streetscene team, this relates to the frequent cutting of verges in towns and villages. Currently our mowing frequency is 16 cuts per year, however due to the reduction in funding, we aim to deliver 11 grass cuts and we believe that this will still provide an acceptable level of service.

National Indicators

Following the election of the Coalition Government, a number of National Indicators, including NI195 have been scrapped. This is a disappointment to the service, especially after the team showing has shown such improvement over the years resulting in our most recent years results of 7%.

The other national indicator NI196 relates to our performance on fly tipping and we were delighted to find that the service had retained its level one performance, meaning that we have reduced the number of fly tips reported to us while carrying out more enforcement actions than during the previous year.

We are currently working to develop a new performance measurement process to reflect the work that we are carrying out across the district and plan to base a new system on our current local area quality inspections.

Local Area Quality Inspections

We have carried out monitoring of the overall standards of street cleaning and grounds maintenance via the process of site inspections carried out in conjunction with the local ward members when possible.

I have listed the standards that we inspect to, in the following table:

Area of Operation	Good Pass	Fair Pass	Minor Fail	Serious Fail
Grassland Maintenance	All grassland cut to correct length and backed up. No noticeable arisings. Area left clean and tidy No 'bennets' left showing	Area cut and backed up Area left clean and tidy No major piles of arisings	Grass 'Scalped' or left too long Uneven cut Area needs backing up Arising left on paths, etc.	Area not cut Mowed Litter Area not cleared up Back-up left too long
Shrub Bed Maintenance	No Weed growth Correct pruning Evenly mulched Area tidy around the bed Good edge to bed	Annual weed growth of less than a month old. Adequate pruning Litter removed after operation	Poor pruning techniques Wrong pruning season Slightly overgrown Weed growth of over a month old Litter left after operation	Badly overgrown Shrubs badly pruned Woody weeds present Large perennial weed present Litter left after operation Area not cleared up
Hedges	Level, even cut 'tight' cut No woody weeds present Area clean and tidy 'Correct' tools have been used	Tidy level cut Clean and tidy	Untidy cut Large weed growth in hedge base Arisings not cleared up properly Missed bits in hedge	Hedge not cut Badly uneven cut Debris left on and around hedge Large woody weeds present in hedge
Bedding	Healthy plants Evenly planted Correct plants/colours Bed well edged Firm, level bed No weeds or litter Tidy surrounding area	Weed growth unobtrusive Area lacks 'finish' i.e. Edges not clipped tight enough/ plant spacing not quite even.	Obvious weed growth Beds not edged Poor bed preparation Rogue colours in scheme	Wrong plants in wrong place Large weeds Lack of edging Poor plant health Litter in bed Lack of bed preparation
Hard Areas	Areas clean and weed free Good surface quality Half mooned edges Areas not overgrown	Clean with only unobtrusive weed growth Surface condition acceptable i.e. not causing puddles to form	Some noticeable weed growth Light surface damage Edges obscured by overgrowth	Widespread weed growth Potholes Path Overgrown
Trees	'0 star' rating Visually acceptable Correctly staked and tied Good formative pruning No epicormic growth Good tree growth	'1 star' rating Adequate staking and tying Tree in good health not causing a nuisance	'2 star' rating Missing tree ties Broken stakes Epicormic growth present Incorrect staking Damaged trees	'3 star' rating Dead trees left in Stakes/ties damaging trees Trees causing a serious nuisance Poor pruning techniques Trees in poor health

Area of Operation	Good Pass	Fair Pass	Minor Fail	Serious Fail
Litter & Road Sweeping	NI195 Grade A standard No noticeable litter or detritus	NI 195 Grade B standard Predominantly free of litter & detritus apart from some small items of litter or light scattering of detritus	NI 195 Grade C standard Widespread distribution of litter or detritus but no major accumulations	NI 195 Grade D standard Heavily littered or significant accumulations of detritus

The results from these inspections are reported in the table below.

April 2010 – February 2011

Month	Location	Results
April	East Chinnock Chiselborough West Chinnock	69% Good Pass 31% Fair Pass 0% Fail
May	Crewkerne	49% Good Pass 38% Fair Pass 13% Fail (Weeds)
June	Winsham Tatworth	81% Good Pass 19% Fair Pass 0% Fail
July	Chard	25% Good Pass 75% Fair Pass 0% Fail
August	Broadway Horton Dowlish Wake Donyatt Kingstone	75% Good Pass 25% Fair Pass 0% Fail
September	Haselbury Plucknett	50% Good Pass 50% Fair Pass % Fail
October	Ashill Ilminster	46% Good Pass 45% Fair Pass 9% Fail (Sweeping, Ashill)

Month	Location	Results
November	Combe St Nicholas	100% Good Pass 0% Fair Pass 0% Fail
December	N/A DUE TO SNOW & ICE	N/A
January	East Chinnock West Chinnock Wayford Winsham Chard Tatworth	49% Good Pass 30% Fair Pass 21% Fail (Litter, Road Sweeping - Chard)
February	*Results being calculated	% Good Pass % Fair Pass % Fail
Target Set	90% Pass, 50% at Good Level	
Overall Performance	95% Pass, 60% at Good Level with 5% Fail	

Customer Feedback

The service, as usual, has dealt with a number of calls from customers and a general breakdown of the calls is detailed in the table below:

	Horticulture	Street Cleaning	Enforcement	Total
Request	92	318	140	550
Complaints	12	15	0	27
<i>*complaints listed are for the whole district as they cannot at this time be broken down to areas</i>				
Compliments	1	4	0	5

We are once again pleased to note the lack of formal complaints that we have received regarding the service; the majority of calls once again are for information or requests for work.

What's coming next?

- Summer Maintenance programmes
- Adoption of the Open Space Strategy
- Highway weed control operations

Financial Implications

All issues highlighted in the report will be achieved within service budgets.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

Deliver well managed cost effective services valued by our customers
Ensure safe sustainable communities
Promote a balanced natural & built environment

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications

Moving an operational team to work from the Chard depot has positive benefits in reducing fuel use and thus reducing emissions.

The team is also currently involved in acquiring an electric powered vehicle for use in Area South.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Progress report to Area Committees on Performance of Streetscene*