

Area West Committee – 18th April 2012

## 9. 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 March 2011 – February 2012.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

### Report

**The major focus of the service so far for this period that affects Area West, is listed below.**

- Litter clearance on main roads
- Spring bulb and tree planting
- Preparation for the royal visit and Olympic torch
- Lean review of street cleansing and enforcement
- Restructure of the service following budget savings
- Replacement equipment
- Lean Thinking process for Street cleaning and Environmental Enforcement

### Operational Works

Throughout the year our operational teams continued to deliver the routine grounds, cleansing and enforcement works that present themselves on a day to day basis. We are pleased to inform members that we have successfully managed to deliver these work schedules, which form the core of the service.

Recently our horticultural teams have completed the maintenance of Critical Ordinary Watercourses for the Environment Agency, and carried out the winter maintenance of the SSDC controlled watercourses. These works are prioritised for the beginning of the winter and targeted for completion before Christmas, as we believe that this approach offers the best flood prevention measures. In addition to this work, our teams have routinely inspected and maintained the trash screens that are vital in preventing flash flooding.

We have received indications that the Environment Agency is looking to take their maintenance works back 'in-house' and we expect this change to have taken place by the summer. Currently I have no more details regarding this proposed change, however, it should be noted that this will affect some of the major watercourses in the Area.

A core aspect of our horticultural maintenance is mowing, and a revised grassland maintenance programme has been delivered in response to budget reductions for highway verges. We are pleased with the results and we have completed the winter mowing programme and have started mowing for the spring.

A number of our mowing machines came to the end of their lease periods during the summer, and replacements were acquired. This year we have changed our mowing fleet to reflect the changes in specification of grassland (reduced cutting regimes on highway verges) and to take advantage of developments in mowing technology. This has resulted in a more diverse range of equipment available to us, which in turn will allow us more flexibility and a better outcome.

In addition to these mowers, reviewing our mowing fleet has enabled us to replace our arboricultural teams wood chipper which is an essential piece of equipment for the tree gang and a replacement yard machine which we have needed for some time, the current one is thirty two years old!

A number of vans have also been replaced this year, with more street cleansing and horticultural vehicles due for replacement over the coming months and we have rearranged our operational teams in order to make the best use of the resources available to us.

We have also been fortunate enough to receive capital funding to replace two of our sweeping vehicles that have come to the end of their useful lives; one of these sweepers will replace the town centre sweeper, which works in Yeovil and the other is a 'traditional' sized road sweeper.

Our horticultural teams are currently working on the winter maintenance of shrub beds across the area, and these works will be completed by April. One member of this team is Cat Perham who we were delighted to appoint following her apprenticeship with us; she is a great addition to the team.

During the winter period we continued to extend the tree planting around Snowdon Park with an additional 150 heavy standard sized cherry trees being added this year, accompanied by 95,000 spring flowering bulbs as part of the ongoing development of this site. We plan to continue with this development over the coming years.

In addition to this planting, we worked with the towns & parishes of Crewkerne; West Crewkerne; Lopen; Merriott; Shepton Beauchamp; Ilminster; Misterton; East Chinnock; Winsham & Hinton St George to plant an additional 2,000 bulbs in each location. We would like to thank those volunteers who came out to work with the team.

During the winter period, our teams also carried out risk assessment of all the open spaces that we manage, rectifying any issues that were identified.

This year our landscaping team has 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 Ilminster they have recently completed some works at the Library garden and we look forward to seeing this area used through the spring and summer periods.

Also in Ilminster, we have been discussing ways that we can assist the residents' improvement group at Trafalgar House in Station Road with some small works and materials.

Our street cleaning teams continue to clean the Area on a daily basis, and we currently have a crew litter picking along rural roads.

The team have so far cleaned the accessible areas on the following roads:

- > A303
- > A30
- > A358
- > A356
- > A3066

The inaccessible areas of most of these roads will be revisited with an additional team who will control the traffic while the areas are cleansed. There are considerable health and safety implications of working on the highway where there are no pavements or verges that a team can safely work from and as a result this is a slow and difficult process. We look forward to completing this work and it will make a considerable improvement to the district when it's completed.

Following the reduction in Household Waste Recycling Centre hours, the street cleaning response team has focussed more on clearing fly tipping and compensation for this increased workload has been received from the County Council, a percentage of this will be transferred to Chard Town Council to cover the costs that they incurred as a result of this change.

In March this year the contract for the maintenance of the Cartgate Picnic Area was withdrawn by Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald and this work has transferred with a member of staff to the OCS Group. This was a disappointing development for the team as the withdrawal of the work was unannounced and unexplained.

Following this and as part of work to make our financial targets, we have restructured the service and as a result we have split the supervision of our horticultural & cleansing teams, which were previously jointly supervised. Instead, officers who are part office based and part operational supervise the horticultural team; while the street cleansing teams have been merged with our enforcement team, and one supervisor also supervises the car-parking inspectors as part of their role.

For street cleansing works and enforcement issues, members should contact either Phil Jones or Michael Gottlieb; while for horticultural works Ian Lock and Jon Brown are the supervisors of the operational teams.

Our abandoned vehicle officer, Dave Gorham, has also recently retired after long and faithful service and members should contact either Derek Cordery or Lynette Osment on vehicle related issues.

Finally, we are working on the adoption of open space at the Middle Hill area in Crewkerne and we expect to be maintaining this green space from a later date in 2012.

## **Strategies**

In the last report to committee, we highlighted that work was being done to develop an Open Space Strategy; this was completed and approved by Full Council.

Prior to this Dog Control Orders had been developed and these orders are now fully in place.

## Lean Thinking

As part of the Council's Lean Thinking programme, the 'Lean Team' has been working with the Streetscene team looking at the processes used to deliver our services. These processes have been 'mapped' and we are now undertaking a time study to accompany this.

## Performance Indicators

Following budget cuts, members agreed that we would no longer deliver a formal inspection process and we would suspend the local area quality inspections that we carried out with local members. However should members or councillors wish to discuss their local concerns or priorities, our officers will be pleased to be available to discuss how to find solutions to local matters.

We are once again, pleased to report low levels of 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
- Further Litter control on roadside verges
- Works surrounding the royal visit and Olympic torch procession
- Highway weed control operations
- Development plans for open spaces in Area West for 2012–13
- Completion of the Streetscene 'Lean' process

## 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 report to Area Committees on the Performance of the Streetscene service*